

Classical Ballet 2



SAMPLE

Classwork & Teaching Suggestions *for the
Ballet Teacher of Students Ages 9 to 13*

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The Teacher Must Decide

The Ballet Arts series of manuals provides information, activities and suggestions for the teaching of ballet to children. The materials in these books have worked well for the author, and for other teachers of her acquaintance. However, the author cannot know what approach or which physical activities will be appropriate and safe for any particular teacher, class, or student. It is the responsibility of each ballet teacher to use his or her best judgment in applying the information and teaching suggestions contained herein, and in using the activities, enchainements, dances and teaching materials contained in the Ballet Arts series from The Ballet Source.

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I. Preparing To Teach

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Posture and Movement

It's easier to stand correctly than to transfer that into movement.

First, each person has a posture that is right for them, and it may not look exactly like someone else's best posture.

Ballet asks a classic adaptation of posture, that at times seems impossible to do, or to get from students.

Lynette Kelly* said to start your Primary age students (age 6-8) with the idea of pulling up and down from the waist. In front, pull upward from the waist; in back, pull down.

Michael Onsted** suggested for pirouettes, and developpés: imagine you have a partner holding you, balancing you, supporting you with his hands just behind your waist. Push your waistline back very gently into those imaginary hands, and it should stabilize your pirouettes and developpés.

When you get them standing correctly, do a slow port de bras, lifting the arms sideways and breathing in slowly; then breathe out while lowering the arms. They should concentrate on maintaining the posture. The arm movements and breathing transform the static posture into meaningful movement.

A second breathing exercise: keep the mental concentration on the posture,

breathe in as you demi plié, breathe out as you straighten the knees.

Third idea: when the first two exercises are easy and automatic, add a rise to quarter or demi pointe to the first exercise.

While sitting on the floor, legs folded, hands relaxed on knees: teach them to breathe in by expanding the lungs sideways instead of lifting the collarbone. Sitting helps to stabilize the posture, enabling them to concentrate on the breathing.

Caution: Yoga recommends that you do only two or three repetitions of a breathing exercise, and only one such exercise on any one day. There must be a reason for this. Dance teachers would be wise to follow this recommendation.

With lessons once or twice a week, it takes about twelve weeks time to establish a change in posture habits, strength, or movement patterns. Be patient, and teach them to be patient with themselves.

Usually the body likes to stand in perfect alignment with gravity, because it takes less muscle action, less energy! So, if the position is found, even for short periods of time each day, the body itself should eventually want to stand and move in that way.

* Royal Academy of Dance Instructor

** Former Principal Dancer, Ballet West

Perfect ballet posture requires less effort, less energy, than sloppy posture. Remember the muscles for smiling and frowning? That it takes less energy and fewer muscles to smile than to frown?

Correct skeletal alignment is like that. The right way is the happy way, the way that once it is learned, takes less effort, and lets the body move more easily.

There are two parts to correct skeletal alignment. First, alignment with gravity—"stand between the raindrops"—imagine raindrops falling straight down to the ground, then try to stand between them, so you won't get wet.

Second, the skeletal alignment within the body has a "happy place," a place where everything feels comfortable, at ease, where the least amount of energy is needed to maintain the position. Students need to find it, and experience it, then teach it to their muscles.

Learning and Teaching the Best Posture

Bad muscle habits took a long time to form (Ten years in a ten year old!). Muscles have been strengthened within this habit.

Change will not happen overnight! First the right way has to be felt, consciously felt, by the student, and by their muscles. That feeling may be uncomfortable at first, because it is different from what they are used to feeling.

Next, the muscles must practice that position, and gradually strengthen within it.

Weeks or months later, the new way will feel comfortable. More weeks or months later, it will replace the old incorrect habits.

Be patient. Let it happen gradually.

Muscle Balance Is Needed

Nearly everyone has a tendency for more strength in the lower back than in the abdominals. Poor posture often comes from the lower back being so much stronger than the abdominal muscles. Do exercises that encourage contraction of the abdominals.

A few exercises that will help the abdominals:

Turtles
Rag Dolls
Port de Bras while sitting on the floor. Leg Lifts while sitting tall
From Yoga: Tummy Lift and Triangle, possibly others.

Idea from an adult student: If they drive, have them contract the abdominals at every stop sign, and when they are waiting at a stoplight. Passengers can also do this!

There is no magic wand that will cause correct posture. Some bodies will never appear to have it.

The more freely the body moves, the more likely it is that it will gravitate towards correct muscle use and correct

placement. Too much attention on traditional “corrections” may defeat any improvement, because of the social and/or emotional stress it causes in the student.

Muscle use is important. The correct combination of muscular effort and relaxation produces the desired appearance, both for positions, and for movements.

Posture and Placement Are Side Effects of Muscle Use.

It is the muscles that create movement, and it is the muscle action that can enhance or destroy the quality and appearance of the movements.

Ballet (and other forms of dance) should ideally be a refinement of natural movement. Ballet evolved from folk and court dances.

If there is pain in the lower back, that is a danger sign. Never have the head arched over the back, as that will cause problems in the lower back.

Idea to try—Establish the feeling of correct posture for one minute, then let the students move freely and feel that same posture as they are dancing for the rest of the class period.

“If you work for me on placement for just one minute at the beginning of

class, I won’t correct you later.”

Put each one in their “ideal” posture and have them stand perfectly still for one minute, at the beginning of each class. Have a clock with a second hand that they can watch. As you finish with each student, they watch the clock for exactly one minute, then do some personal warm-ups while you finish with the other students.

Make no further posture corrections during the barre. At the end of the barre, or at the end of class, ask them to put themselves into that correct, ideal ballet posture. Make no corrections, just note which ones can do it.

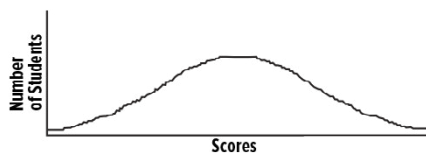
Give words of encouragement and sincere praise as you see the correct efforts, and slight improvements. Give these compliments to the class as a whole, not to individuals.

A period of no correction should remove the stress that is caused by constantly being corrected, reminded, “nagged” about their posture. This enables the dancers to move more freely, and their bodies to explore and find the “ideal” posture that you helped them find at the beginning of the class. After a few weeks, the body should be more likely to begin using the “ideal” or ballet posture.

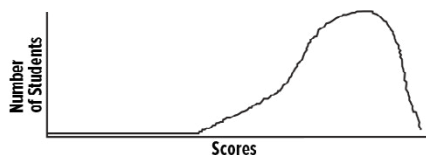
Are Teaching Skills Necessary?

Education specialist Madeline Hunter defines instruction as “a process of deliberate decision making and action that makes learning more probable and more successful than it would be without teaching.”

Remember being graded “on the curve”? Did you feel offended by this process? Rightly so! The so-called “learning curve” is a normal result of random activity! Skillful teaching should change this curve:



— to a curve more closely resembling this one, which indicates that a higher percentage of students will be above the “average” middle of the curve:



When do you feel the most satisfaction after teaching a class?

- When just few of the students have been able to master the material presented at that lesson? Or,
- When the entire class has succeeded in learning to do the items you have presented?

Would you like to take the credit for what your students learn, and be able to honestly say, “they learned this because I did _____”?

There are decisions you can make that will make learning easier for your students. You can make a difference beyond the mere demonstration of the dance skills!

Decisions that teachers need to make:

1. Selecting The Objective
 - a. The level of difficulty must fit the students.
 - b. The teacher must know her objective, reason, or goal. In other words, where are you going with this?
2. Teaching To An Objective
 - a. Decide on the student behaviors that will lead logically to the objective. (How do you expect them to respond to what you are teaching?)
 - b. Use your creativity to present in ways that will make the learning easy. (What can you do to get their attention, to reach their understanding, to motivate them?)
3. Check For Learning, and Adjust Presentations
 - a. Draw out a behavior from the students that shows whether or

not learning is happening. (How do you know they learned it?)

- b. Try to see ballet skills “in embryo” so as to not misjudge a student’s efforts to learn a skill. (Is the basic movement pattern there? Or partly so?)

4. Using the Principles of Learning

- a. You can make effective use of known skills to make the learning of new ones easier. (“You can do this, now try it this way,” or “add this to it”, etc.)
- b. Give them reasons for learning, reasons that mean something to them, whenever possible.

Decisions concerning the above points, made or not made, do affect the accomplishment of the students.

Selecting An Appropriate Objective

When the objective does not relate to the student’s previous experiences and skills, frustration or boredom sets in.

That blank stare on a student’s face may not be boredom, but an inability to understand what is expected. Effective teaching starts where the student is comfortable, and progresses forward from there.

Teaching To The Objective

Activities of the teacher and the student should lead to the selected objective. In a dance class, there will be several ongoing objectives covered in each lesson. Selecting a “theme”

that recurs throughout the class can improve the students’ learning!

Using the “theme” method can improve the learning of basic principles.

Examples: “Today we are going to work to see that both legs are turned out equally.” Or, “Today we will work on using our heads and eyes to give expression to our dancing.”

Objectives chosen for dance class are sometimes too difficult, or move too fast for good learning to take place. Students can often follow a teacher as she demonstrates, but then not be able to do it or remember it on their own.

If the student possesses the necessary background, the material will flow easily, and there will be little or no difficulty in learning it. A good general rule: if a skill takes more than two lessons to accomplish, it is probably at the frustration level. Drop it, and try again in a few weeks.

Principles of Learning

Learning follows predictable rules. Using these rules will enable a teacher to make better use of class time, to increase the rate of learning, to increase the degree of retention.

Just for starters, anything taught “just beyond the middle” of the class period will most likely not be remembered. Motivation will be at its lowest during this part of the class.

The very last activity will be remembered best. Next best is the first

one. Things repeated throughout the class in between other things, will be remembered better than those taught only once, even though the “once” might be a good slice of class time.

A Self Help Worksheet:

Decide on a goal for one of the exercises:

Exercise: _____

- a. Expectation: _____
(What do you expect the class to do?)
- b. Objective: _____
(Why are you teaching this item?)
- c. Future ballet exercises or steps that will be built upon this exercise:

It helps to know why you are teaching each item in your class. If you do not know why, then your teaching will not connect as well into the total picture of ballet instruction.

Put Meaning and Purpose Into Your Plans.

Example: Why are we teaching “exercises for feet” at every level from the 3 year old class to Ballet II?

Is there a logical increase in difficulty from grade to grade? Is there an eventual goal to be achieved with the students from these exercises? Will the goal be completed upon completion of Ballet II? Or will it need further reinforcement in the higher grades?

Suppose we teachers become “bored”

with doing these foot exercises. Can we dress them up by doing variations on them? Will the changed exercises still accomplish what we want for the students? Or will it confuse the students, and the original goal become sidetracked, or lost?

If the teacher understands the reasons for the item being taught, she can do creative variations on it without losing sight of the purpose.

Focus on the Students

Demonstrating is a part of teaching, but teachers should not try to be “dancers” in the dance class.

The teacher’s focus needs to be outward, on the progress of the students.

A dancer’s focus is, of necessity, inward, towards self-improvement and self-expression, self-entertainment. You cannot be both performer and teacher at the same instant.

Teachers who focus on the students rarely become bored. Seeing the students catch on, improve, progress, and grow in the art of dance can be very exciting. To see a student with coordination problems begin to overcome even one difficulty can be very rewarding. To realize that you as a teacher have succeeded in bringing this about is gratifying.

Teaching and Learning are a Partnership.

Help students to understand a tiny bit about why they are doing what they

are doing. Give them reasons for doing things, reasons that mean something to them.

For example, five year olds won't understand about "not being ready for pointe shoes". Tell them that standing on those soft little toe bones will bend them out of shape, and make ugly feet! Those ugly feet won't fit into the toe shoes when they are twelve! Little girls don't like the idea of being ugly. Relating what you want them to do to their inner value system of wanting to be pretty makes it more likely that they will cooperate.

In a teenaged class, keeping the hips level is a problem. Tell them that the side abdominals are not designed to lift the leg in second position or in arabesque. When a muscle does a job it isn't designed to do, it gets bigger. So, if they don't keep their hip bones in place, they will wind up with a fat waistline!

Motivation that works with all ages: connect what you want them to learn or do with something that is important to them, and they will be more likely to work with you, and to teach their own muscles to dance correctly.

Teaching Notes for Classical Ballet 2

Creating a Class

Warm up activities, one or two:

- a. A basic locomotor enchainement in the circle, to get the whole body warmed up.
- b. A floor exercise from the earlier grades.
- c. Something gentle facing the barre: use of feet, demi pliés and rises, etc.

Demi and Grand Pliés, facing the barre.

Example:

1-2 Demi plié & straighten in 1st.

3-4-5-6 3/4 plié & straighten in 1st.

7-8 Hold, or rise & lower in 1st.

About Grand Pliés:

1. Do not use grand pliés in 3rd until those in 1st & 2nd are correct and secure for several months.
2. Do not do full grand pliés with children under 9, or those who have had less than six months of ballet, or those whose strength does not permit them to time the rising of the grand plié correctly.
3. In teaching the grand plié use the 3/4 plié for several weeks, then gradually have them go deeper, until they have the strength to maintain placement all during a grand plié in 1st, going low enough that the thighs

are almost parallel to the floor, but not quite, and never beyond.*

Rules for Grand Pliés

- *1. Hips must remain above knees for correct use of muscles in grand pliés, and to avoid knee damage.
2. The shape and placement of the pelvis should not change at any time during the plié, both demi and grand.
3. Legs must be somewhat warmed up before doing grand pliés.
4. If a student complains of grand pliés hurting her legs, then she must only do demi pliés, but can practice them at the slower timing of the grand plié.
5. The correct foot to leg alignment taught in earlier grades must be maintained at all times.

Battements Tendus en Croix

Recommended as a first exercise, facing the barre:

Two devant, two a la seconde.
Repeat with other leg.

Learn that from first position, you extend to an open fourth; from third position, you extend to the closed fourth. Open fourth is used for all leg positions off the floor, and for all ronds de jambes a terre.

Work for accurate positioning, even

turnout, and correct centering of weight over the standing leg. Center the hips carefully; they should not “follow the leg” during a battement tendu.

An understanding of how to close to third front, and third back from second will need to be learned. The movement is a V shape, not a straight line, and most students will need some “hands on” help with the correct pathway for the foot to take.

For illustrations of this, see “Ballet Is Spoken Here” Book 1, Chapter Five.

Rules for Battements Tendus:

- *1. All five toes must brush the floor when the foot moves out of 1st, 3rd, or 5th, and when it returns. This needs to happen in all three directions: devant, derriere, a la seconde.
2. Posture habits and weight placement will be affected more by this exercise than any other, so it is very important that the weight (hips) is exactly centered over the standing leg, and that the standing leg is turned out to the student’s ability, but not further, and that each leg is turned out the same amount.
- 3: The metatarsal joint needs to be used correctly at this level, to prepare the feet for more advanced work in allegro, and for the strength and alignment needed for pointe work later on.

*Students need to realize that the feet are supposed to work in this way every time, regardless of the speed of the exercise, and regardless of where the foot ends up. (Tendu, glisse, grand battement, retire, etc.)

Battement Glissé

Common Problems:

1. Keeping the weight over the standing leg.
2. Finding their true second position with the lifted leg.

Second position off the floor will be a bit more forward than a tendu for most students, due to lack of strength. As the year progresses they will get stronger and be able to gradually bring the leg further back into second position.

Watch that they are not using the muscles in the upper gluteal area or the back or side of the waist to lift the leg. Emphasize that it feels as if you are lifting the leg from underneath the thigh, and turning it out within the hip joint. Actually, it is not the muscles underneath that lift—but it usually feels this way when the correct muscles are working.

Rule for Battement Glissé:

Correct muscle use in lifting the leg to the student’s “2nd position” is far more important than the exact location in space. Strengthening the correct muscle groups is the goal!

Incorrect use of muscles now will become a permanent and serious fault in more advanced work, in grand battements and developpés, and all allegro work involving second position.

The slow, careful, correct learning of the battement glissé to 2nd is a foundation for all future work involving Second Position en l’air!

Rond de Jambe a Terre

An idea for introducing this movement: extend to a battement tendu devant from first position, move to a tendu in second, then close into first position and hold the 4th count. Next, do a forward bending port de bras and recover in four counts. Extend to a tendu derriere, move to 2nd, close 1st, then finish with a rise and lower in 1st. Repeat.

Teach and use the “rag doll” action—the relaxed and rounded back version—for all forward body bends. “Flat backs” are not used in ballet anymore because they are damaging to lower backs, and often cause incorrect body placement for arabesques and pointe work.

Introduce Petit and Demi Retirés, Rises, and Relevés, facing the Barre

1. Facing the barre, do two petit retirés in the side position, then a slow 1/4 pointe rise & lower. Repeat with other leg. Be sure the weight is shifted over the standing leg for the retirés.
2. Repeat with demi retirés.
3. Teach the petit and demi retirés devant and derriere, and the demi-pointe rise.

Students can learn the terminology associated with retiré (the position), and passé (the movement) by giving them simple enchainements facing the barre. Refer to “Ballet Is Spoken Here!” for illustrations of these positions,

and ways to help them learn the terminology.

Use only one or two new items per enchainement. Review, reinforce, and associate the terms with as many other things done in class as possible. This helps their memory.

Grand Battements Devant and a la Seconde:

For the first exercises, try two front and two side, done in four counts: point, lift, point, close.

Side grand battements are usually learned best facing the barre until they understand the feel of the correct position. It is a continuation of the glissé.

It helps control and placement to do Grand Battements in four counts, as above, or in three movements (lift, point, close, hold).

Keep the height low enough to allow correct placement and equal turnout of both legs. Repeating the Grand Battements in the center can help placement and balance.

Sautés, Changements, Echappés Sautés, facing the Barre

Basic jumps facing the barre enable students to use their turnout more correctly, and to build strength for landing in the turned out position.

Classical Ballet 2 students need to jump to develop leg strength so they can have beautiful jumps. Legs should be

correctly stretched and turned out in the air, with knees matching feet when landing.

Practice sautés in first, second, and third, and echappés and changements. Echappés should be learned in both first and third positions, but not to fourth just yet. Jumps in fourth are not recommended for this grade.

Students sometimes have a problem with “popping heels” on landing from jumps. This is caused by an incorrect use of the lower leg muscles. The calf muscles must relax as they land and go into the demi plié. The shin muscle is the one that does the demi plié. If the calf muscles tighten on landing, the heels will pop off the floor.

An exercise to correct this: facing the barre do a demi plié, hold the plié and lift the toes off the floor. Lower the toes, straighten. Repeat. This trains the shin muscle to be active in the demi plié.

Petit Jetés

Introduce them facing the barre. Teach them as a variation on the spring points.

Preparing for Pirouettes

Facing the barre: point to 2nd, close and demi plié in third front, rise or relevé, lifting the leg to pirouette position, close to 3rd back with demi plié. Repeat with other leg.

Students will need a lot of practice in

centering their weight, keeping hips level, especially on demi pointe. Take the time to practice the actual pirouette preparation without music. Have them take hands off the barre for a moment to check their balance.

After the Barre

Students enjoy a chance to move, and relax after the stress and concentration of the barre: give some floor exercises, gallop and polka enchainements, running and posing on the diagonal, etc.

Port de Bras

Take the time to show and have them practice the path of each arm separately. Then put them together. This helps. Occasionally review port de bras from earlier grades, or give “free” port de bras.

Review Spring Points, Gallops, Polkas, etc.

For warmups, or a rest after the barre, create fun enchainements with these and other steps from previous grades. Keep the steps appropriate to the music: 2/4 steps need to be done with 2/4 rhythms, and 3/4 steps with 3/4 rhythms.

Music and Choreography

Continue their education in the basics of choreography. They can understand stage patterns, variety in movement, rhythm and speed, etc.

They will enjoy working with a partner or in small groups to create their own enchainements. Give them a “start”: one or two steps that must be included.

Order of Difficulty in Learning Correct Placement:

Easiest place to learn: facing the barre. Second easiest place to perform correctly: surprisingly, this is in the center!

The hardest place to perform correctly is sideways to the barre. Leave this until they seem well placed most of the time.

Finally

Muscles are still somewhat soft, and classical ballet is difficult. Joints and bones are not fully formed until about age 14-16. Therefore, it is best to not put legs on the barre, and not do any falling down into splits. Injuries are all too common from these activities.

Don't have them stand too long on one leg. Keep the class fun. Keep the reminders and improvements simple. Repeat concepts a lot. Help them feel the correct positions. Use patience. Give informal mini exams on the things you think you have taught them.

Reteach, repeat, give positive comments, praise for efforts to improve. Above all, don't just “tell”. They often have no idea what these strange concepts and words really mean in terms of how they and their muscles feel until they somehow can actually experience it.

Enjoy your students! Enjoy their progress! They are a wonderful age to work with!

Artistic Principles and Classifications

A. Karsavina's Analysis of Ballet Movements (1953)

1. The positions and poses and main steps are like the pearls in a fine necklace.
2. The connecting steps are the string which holds the pearls together—it must be strong and secure if the pearls are to be brilliant and not lost.

B. The Seven Movements of Dancing

This classification method is often attributed to Cecchetti, but it actually began with John Weaver in 1723. He listed four basic movement categories: bend, stretch, raise, turn.

In 1760 Noverre added three more: jump, dart, glide. Students are often asked to think of examples of each type of movement.

Supposedly all movements in ballet can fit into one or more of these categories. Remember that these terms do not refer to any particular exercise, step or movement, but are merely categories of movement.

1. Plier—to bend.
2. Etendre—to stretch.
3. Relever—to rise.
4. Sauter—to jump.
5. Elancer—to dart.
6. Glisser—to glide.
7. Tourner—to turn.

C. Petipa's Vocabulary of Steps

One idea per classification is included as an example of this teacher's approach to the art of ballet.

1. **Preparatory Steps**—"To be a preparation or provide a link between one movement and the next." (Quotes are from the Petipa Archives). Rules of classical ballet are applied. As an enchainment begins, the dancer must be aware of the flow of movement to come, and align head, arms, etc. to promote that flow.
2. **Petite et Grande Elevation**—"To add lightness, depth and breadth to the dance." Jumps occupy space, and move in a direction. Jumps have port de bras: raising the arms with the jump enhances the lightness of the jump.
3. **Grande et Petite Batterie**—"To add brilliance and sparkle, even wit." Petit battements are considered the basis of the batterie.
4. **Port de Bras**—"To lend continuity to the flow of line, help to give impetus to the movement and complete the total pattern of the steps." Arms convey style as they frame the head. Arms also have the function of assisting the dancer to maintain balance.
5. **Pirouettes**—"To add speed and excitement". The word pirouette was

originally a term used to describe a turn in place by a horse. This reminds us that the first ballets in France and Italy were “horse ballets”. Pirouettes are often used to give emotional content to a dance.

6. **Poses** (Arabesques and Attitudes)—“To become the highlight or finishing point of an enchainement or dance.” In Petipa’s choreography, a pose is struck and held to give the audience time to admire the balance of the dancer. Fokine, by contrast, had his dancers move through the poses (i.e. Les Sylphides).
7. **Pointes**—“To add the finishing touch to the whole picture”. Bournonville had criticized Petipa’s choreography, accusing him of using technicalities and effects in place of artistry. Petipa’s “Sleeping Beauty” was his answer to this criticism. A great variety of artistic effects is created with the choreographic vocabulary in this ballet (i.e. the six fairy solos in the Prologue).

Note: One must remember that pointe work is not the finishing touch for the male dancer! Petipa only choreographed for the ballerina. Most of his male dancers, Cecchetti included, had to do their own choreography!

D. Elements of Artistry

As defined by Sandra Noll Hammond (Beyond The Basics, Mayfield Publishing Co., 1982)

1. Rhythm
2. Shape
3. Space

4. Dynamics
5. Sustaining the Image
6. Economy of Movement
7. Embellishment of Movement
8. Three Dimensional Image
9. Neglected Basics (locomotor steps)
10. Use of the Eyes

E. The Seven Basic Principles of Classical Ballet

Defined by Ninette de Valois, expanded by Joan Lawson. (Ballet Class, Principles and Practice, Theatre Arts Books, NY, 1984)

The Rules of Classical Dance were first set down definitively by John Weaver, 1723. Each generation has had its great teachers of ballet who have added insights and details to these rules and principles.

1. Standing Correctly

- Tail down, spine up;
- Shoulders & hips face same direction;
- Shoulder blades flat,
- Weight balanced on the triangle of the foot;
- Head erect and centered;
- Body centered over pelvis.

2. Turning Out

- Legs rotate from hip socket, feet follow.
- Knee remains in natural alignment with leg and foot, whether bent or straight.
- Ankle joints must flex and extend in line with the knee joints—no inversion or eversion.

3. Moving Correctly

- Each body part needs to be in the natural relationship to all others, and to the dancer's center of balance.
- Eyes and head lead the movements; arms and shoulders, body, legs and feet follow.

4. Balance

- Opposition: the leg in front is balanced by the opposite arm coming forward.
- Epaulement:
 - Natural—the leg in front is matched by a slight forward movement of the same shoulder.
 - Opposition—the opposite shoulder moves slightly forward.
- The weight is evenly distributed throughout the body, using the least amount of energy for the balancing as is possible.

5. Basics of Classical Technique

- The Head:
 - Head moves independently, and leads movements of the body.
 - Eyes look front.
- Feet and Legs:
 - Legs can stretch or bend.
 - Heels make contact with the floor as movements start, and as they end.
 - Movements pass through the center of the leg and the longitudinal center of the foot.
- Principles for Arms
 - A continuous flow of arm

movements brings life and artistry to port de bras.

- Arms do not go behind the shoulders.
 - Arms are rounded for the basic positions.
 - Arms do not cross the center line of the body, unless expression dictates otherwise.
 - Arm movements should be sensed throughout and coordinated with the movements of the entire body.
- Principles for the Body
 - Shoulders & hips face the same direction and are level, except where use of correct muscles and body structure determines otherwise.
 - Where hips face determines the direction the body is facing.
 - Nothing must inhibit the breathing.

6. Transferring Weight

- The entire body weight must go to the new supporting leg, moving through the center of balance.
- Dancer must be completely balanced against gravity all through the movement.
- Three of the five basic jumps contain a transfer of weight while in the air:
 - Sissonnes—2 to 1
 - Assemblés—1 to 2
 - Jetés—1 to the other
- Arms and feet move from one position to another through first position whenever practical.

7. Coordination

Noverre stated: "Accuracy in classical dance is what matters, and if there is to be accuracy then there must be unity and discipline. Only then will there be coordination."

Another author says that if all the other principles are present, coordination will not be a problem.

I would suggest that without a solid foundation of natural coordination, the other principles would be very difficult to perform.

About Coordination

Lawson assumes that if the other principles are in place, coordination will be there as well. I feel that what actually happens is that if natural coordination is present, the technique and other artistic skills can be learned.

Coordination in students must be there before technique can be taught, and skills learned. The usual age for natural coordination to form is from age two to age seven. When coordination is slow to develop, movement activities based on the principles taught in [Ballet Arts For Young Children](#) need to be included to help students "catch up".

Without a thorough development of natural coordination and kinesthetic awareness, ballet technique cannot be taught very successfully. Physical training and sports specialists all recognize that skill training in any movement activity is counter

productive when attempted before before the fundamental movements and a foundation of natural coordination is present in the student.

It is interesting to note that the Kirov school does no ballet center work the first year, (age 9-11). The students practice marching, gallops, polkas, and other natural movements that encourage coordination.

Students often like to play on trampolines. They need to know that this is not helpful for ballet or for basic coordination. On the trampoline or mini tramp, the legs are used in exactly the opposite way from what nature intended. So, it actually has a negative effect on coordination, and on the correct muscle use for ballet.

In ballet, and other skills involving jumping, the leg muscles strengthen and learn to act as the shock absorber on landing. On the trampoline, the trampoline acts as the shock absorber, and the legs do not learn to do that.

If students play on a trampoline, then after a rest, or later in the day, they should also do that many jumps on the ground or floor, so the legs can strengthen their ability to absorb the landing.

Summary

There are two ways of defining ballet movements: the technical names which give the exact movements that are wanted, and a means of describing the artistic effect that is wanted. Speaking

the language of one's technical craft is important. But artistry can only be taught through the use of artistic descriptions.

Both ways of defining ballet movement are important to a good teacher—one cannot do one's best when one is at a loss for words to describe what you are trying to teach!

Permanent learning must involve as many of the senses as possible—seeing, hearing, thinking, moving, feeling, etc.

II. In the Classroom

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Dances

Ballet Principles

Expectations

Teaching Ideas

Classwork For Classical Ballet 2

I. Warm up

1. Polkas, Gallops

- Forward polkas in a CCW circle, with or without partner.
- Forward gallops (4 with each foot, alternating) CCW circle, with or without partner.

2. Review the positions of the feet. Check to see that correct amount of turnout is used by each student; turnout of feet must match knees.

3. Floor Exercise

Sitting tall, legs straight in front, hands on floor next to hips.

1-8	Flex and extend feet (ankles) four times.
1-8	Turn legs out, in, out, in, out in, out and stay.
1-8	Lift R leg 6 inches, lower, repeat with L leg, R, L.
1-4	Lift arms overhead, then fold body and head forward over legs, using all four counts to bend forward as far as is comfortable for each individual student, hands reaching towards ankles.
5-6	Stay.
7	Lift body to sitting position, arms overhead.
8	Lower arms to side, relax.

II. Barre

4. Pliés in 1st position, facing the barre, working towards a grand plié. Use the 3/4 plié for about six to ten weeks to build strength at that level, then introduce the grand plié.

1-4	2 demi pliés.
5-8	One 3/4 plie in 1st.
1-8	Repeat.
1-8	Repeat.
1-2	Lift R arm to 5th and bend sideways to left.
3-4	Straighten and return R arm through 5th to barre.
5-8	Repeat side bends the other way.

5. Battement Tendus from 1st

- a. Sideways to the barre, hand on waist at first; later use demi 2nd. Teach the centering of the weight over the supporting leg: hips will shift to accomplish the centering of weight from two feet to one foot, etc. Be sure they use the metatarsal joint: “stretch arch, stretch toes, relax toes, relax arch & close.” All five toes are in contact with the floor until the final stretch of the toes.

1-6	3 devant.
7-8	Rise and lower in 1st (elevé).
1-8	Repeat to 2nd.

- b. Facing the barre. Be sure the hips stay square to the barre, and the turnout of the working leg is equal to that in the supporting leg. We want to build a secure foundation for more advanced technique in years to come. Turnout needs to be equal in both legs at all times. This gives a more correct muscle balance, without which advanced technique is impossible. Use the metatarsal joint, all five toes brushing to the final pointing of the foot.

1-6	3 battement tendus derriere.
7-8	Rise and lower in first position, weight centered.
1-8	Repeat with the other leg.

6. Battement Glissé (or Battement Degagé)

Facing the barre, in first position. Teach the sharp, staccato feel of the glissé. They need to feel the difference between slow, connected movements and sharp quick movements that hold a position slightly before closing.

1-6	Three battement glissés with right leg to 2nd closing 1st.
7-8	Shift weight to the other leg.
1-8	Repeat with left leg, then center weight over both feet.

7. Retirés (to the demi retiré height) facing the barre.

1-2	Lift, lower, quick and sharp, like the glissés.
3-4	Repeat, same leg.

5-6	Lift slowly to the demi retiré position
7-8	Lower and close, slow and smooth.
1-8	Repeat with other leg.

8. Rond de Jambe a Terre

Sideways to the barre, hand on waist so they can concentrate on this new kind of movement. Learn en dehors only for several weeks, then try it en dedans. From First Position to an Open Fourth Position uses and strengthens the turnout muscles. (Ronds should not be done to the crossed fourth because the turnout muscles cannot work as well once the leg crosses in front of the body. Try it—move your foot slowly from the open fourth to the crossed fourth, and you can feel the outward rotators letting go.)

1	Extend R foot to open 4th devant.
2	Move R foot with a circular movement to 2nd.
3	Move R foot with circular movement to open 4th derriere.
4	Close smoothly into 1st position, flexing ankle as needed; maintain equal turnout in both legs.
1-8	Repeat twice more.
1-2	Bend upper body towards barre, arm moving through 2nd to 5th
3-4	Straighten body and return arm through 2nd to bras bas.

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