

# b.creative

This resource provides a creative introduction to ballet for secondary school dance teachers and pupils. With its highly specialised technique and long history, ballet can seem inaccessible. **b.creative** aims to demonstrate that the underlying principles of ballet are based on our natural human movement, and are therefore accessible to all.

Just as pupils study classical literature, art and music in the curriculum, so exploring the classical roots of ballet will provide a sound foundation from which to appreciate Western dance.

**b.creative** is based on two facets of The Royal Ballet School's work – the Upper School Choreographic Course and the Dance Partnership & Access Programme, which works with state school pupils throughout the country. On the accompanying DVD you will see young dancers aged 14-18 years. Some are full time students at The Royal Ballet School, others study GCSE or A Level dance at secondary school. All demonstrate how classical ideas underpinning ballet can be used to create new and exciting dance work.

This resource focuses on key movement principles of ballet, rather than specific steps or repertoire. This ensures that the resource is accessible without need for previous experience of ballet. As it is only possible to represent a small sample of this rich and complex dance genre, we have focused on features of ballet that will enhance pupils' technical and choreographic understanding of dance.

## CONTENT

**b.creative** introduces key ideas of ballet through the 3-stranded model of exploring, composing and appreciating dance. The resource comprises a DVD, written pack and CD of accompanying music. At the heart of the resource are lessons based on four chapters:

IN PLACE – *en place*

IN SPACE – *on the stage*

IN THE AIR – *en l'air*

IN THE GROUP – *corps de ballet*

On the DVD each chapter includes: an introduction for pupils; a filmed lesson for teacher reference; and extracts of classical ballet repertoire and student choreography to illustrate the key movement ideas. Each chapter can be explored as an individual unit or developed into a scheme of work to support the delivery of GCSE, A Level or BTEC dance.

## BACKGROUND

**b.creative** is the result of a collaboration between The Royal Ballet School's Choreographic Course Co-ordinators and the Dance Partnership & Access Programme. Teachers from these departments are featured on the DVD, along with 1st year students (16-17 years) at The Royal Ballet Upper School and GCSE and A Level dance pupils from Barking Abbey School, London.

The Royal Ballet School provides full time, vocational training in ballet for young people aged 11-19 years. The School comprises two sites. The Lower School is residential for pupils 11-16 years. Pupils here study a full academic curriculum through to GCSE, alongside daily ballet training. The Upper School offers a 3 year course for students aged 16-19 years. Along with daily classes in ballet technique, the students study solos and *corps de ballet* repertoire; *pas de deux*, character dance; body conditioning; contemporary dance; choreography and dance appreciation.

The **Choreographic Course** is an important feature of the professional ballet training of students at the Upper School. The course takes the basic movement principles of classical ballet as its starting point. In the first year, students work on inventing solo material. In the second year, students broaden their invention by making longer pieces for performance.

The **Dance Partnership & Access Programme** was established in 2004 to broaden access to ballet and the work of The Royal Ballet School. Since then it has grown rapidly into a national programme of primary and secondary school projects. The vast majority of this work comprises practical dance activities that creatively explore elements of ballet. The secondary school programme particularly focuses on extending this creative process to develop finished performance pieces, using ballet as a stimulus.

One of the aims of **b.creative** is to provide a 'window' into the daily work of The Royal Ballet School. The professional dance world is, inevitably, guided by different ethos and expectations to dance in school. This includes variations in use of language and clothing. When teaching dance in school you should ensure that:

- pupils are dressed in loose, comfortable clothing
- both pupils and teacher work in bare feet or dance shoes
- clothing does not impede movement
- all jewellery is removed

The teachers featured on the DVD employ an extensive range of dance, movement and expressive terms. In particular you will notice use of the French ballet vocabulary. We have endeavoured to provide equivalent curriculum terminology where appropriate.

Ballet is a classical art form and so draws on the classical ideals of balance, harmony and proportion. These qualities are found throughout nature including the human body, which is naturally symmetrical and balanced. Although the technical movement of ballet looks extraordinary it is, in fact, firmly rooted in our natural human movement potential. This chapter will explore how movement happens within our body; how this natural movement forms the basis of ballet technique; and how we can use these same ideas as a stimulus for choreography.

#### ■ **Previous Experience:**

This chapter provides a foundation for IN SPACE, IN THE AIR and IN THE GROUP. No previous experience of ballet is required.

#### ■ **Suitable For:**

- Key Stage 3 and GCSE dance pupils – to establish posture, alignment and explore innate movement of the body as an introduction to the principles of ballet technique.
- A Level and BTEC dance pupils – to refine innate movement and explore principles of ballet technique as a stimulus for choreography.

#### ■ **Key Movement Ideas:**

**Vertical posture and alignment**

**Body design:**

- Circle
- Horizontal and vertical lines
- Spiral

**Personal space:**

- Centre and periphery
- Kinesphere

**Actions:**

Twist and stretch = opening outwards (*en dehors*)

Twist and bend = closing inwards (*en dedans*)



The balletic term *en place* literally means 'in place'. This refers to the idea of being balanced 'on the spot' – a starting point for movement. In this chapter we will begin our exploration of ballet by thinking about our bodies from the inside. By looking at the internal structure of our bodies, we will discover how natural human movement forms the starting point for the art form of classical ballet. The accompanying lesson plan demonstrates how these classical ideas can be used to inspire new choreography.

One of the unique things about humans is that we have vertical bodies. Before we even begin to move we can sense a straight line running vertically through the body – from the centre of the head, through the torso, and down between the two feet. This imaginary vertical line allows you to feel your centre of gravity and so remain balanced 'in place'. A distinctive thing about ballet is how the dancer utilizes this verticality to balance, spin and leap.



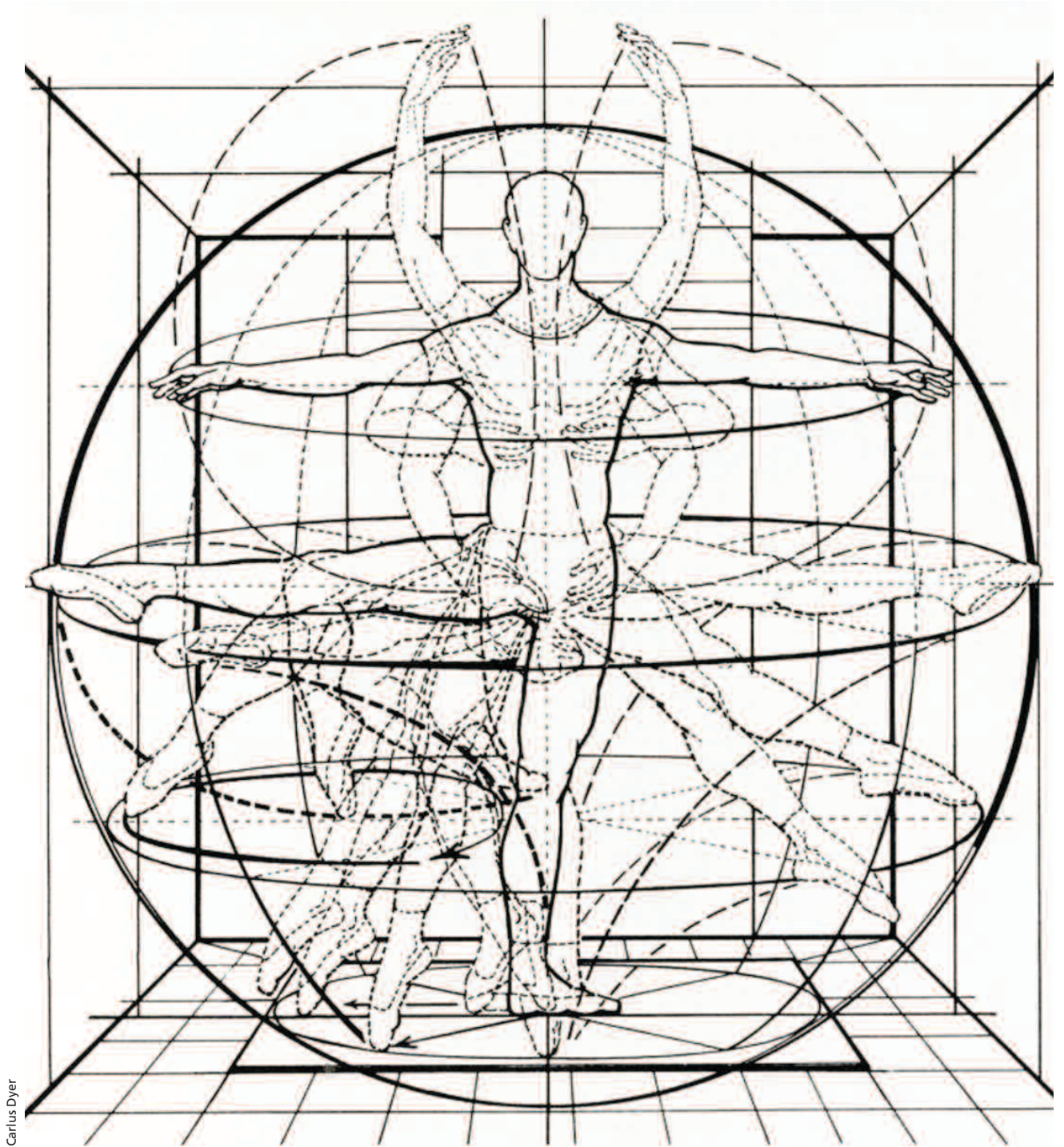
All the movements that your body performs take place in your kinesphere – an imaginary circle around your body. The drawing of a man by Leonardo de Vinci illustrates the range of the kinesphere as well as the symmetrical nature of the body. Placed within the circle, we can clearly see the navel as the 'centre' of the body, from which movement radiates outwards. The ballet dancer uses his / her 'centre' to initiate and control all their movement.



The vertical nature of the human body lends itself to movements on horizontal and vertical planes, which extend out from the centre of the body to form geometric patterns in space. Ballet draws on this natural range of movement and the body shapes that it produces. The diagram of movement lines by Carlus Dyer shows balletic movement patterns of the limbs radiating outwards from the dancer's 'centre'.

In order to create a wider range of movement, the ballet dancer rotates the arms and legs outwards around their imaginary vertical line. This twisting action creates spirals in the body and results in turned out positions of the legs. Twisting spirals with the body outwards (*en dehors*) and inwards (*en dedans*) occur. This leads to movements that open and close which, in turn, create light and shade in the dance. These opening and closing movements mirror natural rhythms, such as breathing, and can add emotional depth to a dance.

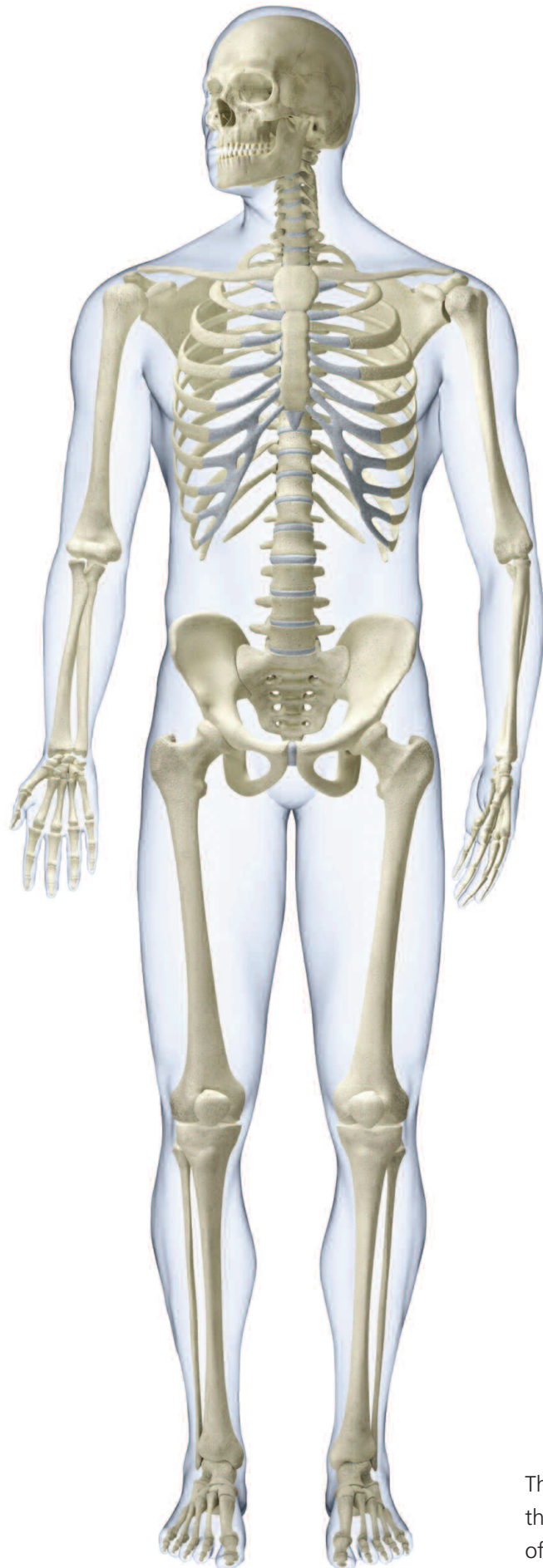
The following lesson ideas explore the natural movement patterns of the body with the aim of developing a sense of being 'in place' and centred in your own body.



Carlus Dyer

Carlus Dyer's drawing of Academic Ballet Positions is inspired by da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* and the ideas which inform it. Ballet has grown out of classical ideas of movement and form: laws of geometry and physics, principles of verticality, symmetry, proportion, harmony and truth - and above all a deep appreciation of the beauty of the human body.





The human skeleton clearly illustrates the vertical and symmetrical nature of the body.