

Girls' and Boys' Training

The most obvious difference between girls' and boys' training is that **pointe work** is included in girls' training. During pointe work the female dancer balances on the tips of her toes. Pointe shoes need to be worn for this work to support the dancer's foot.

The speed of girls' pirouettes (turns) is quicker than the boys, although the boys focus on developing their pirouettes so that they can complete multiple turns. Boys also perform turns in the air as they jump - **tour en l'air**.

In ballet class boys and girls train separately, however they also dance together in **pas de deux** - step for two. In pas de deux the boys support and lift the girls. To perform these movements the boys do weight training to develop their upper body strength.

Dance Partnership & Access Programme

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The Royal Ballet School's end-of-year performances at the Royal Opera House are the highlight of the dancers' year, the result of many hard hours of training in ballet class.



THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL



Dance Partnership & Access



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Ballet Class Basics

It is only through daily exercises, classes and rehearsals that a dancer can learn and refine the complex movements of ballet. So just like any professional dancer, a student at The Royal Ballet School starts each day with a ballet class. The students use the classes to warm up and strengthen each part of their body in preparation for the day ahead.

Ballet dancers start class at the **barre**. This is usually a pole that is attached to the wall of the dance studio. The barre is used as a support for the dancer and is held lightly. Exercises are performed with one hand on the barre for support and these exercises are then repeated 'on the other side'. Once the dancer has prepared thoroughly using barre work, they will move on to work in the centre of the studio.

One key element of ballet is the turnout of the legs from the hip joints. This leads to 5 positions of the feet – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th.

Wherever you are in the world, the movements of ballet are named in French. Here are a few key words that you might hear throughout the ballet class:

- A la seconde** - to the side
- Devant** - to the front
- Derrière** - to the back
- Arabesque** - lifting one leg behind
- A terre** - on the ground
- Batterie** - beaten steps
- Bras** - arm
- En croix** - in the shape of a cross
- En l'air** - in the air
- En dehors** - outwards
- En dedans** - inwards
- Jambe** - leg
- Pas** - step
- Pirouette** - spin/turn
- Plié** - to bend
- Relevé** - rise up

Barre Work

Reverence - curtsy (girls) or bow (boys)

Before the dancers begin the class they perform a short reverence. This is to acknowledge their teacher and pianist and any guests that might be watching.

Warm-up

This may include a combination of exercises to awaken the dancer's mind and body for the work ahead.

Plié - to bend

Demi-pliés (small) and grand pliés (large) will be included. This is an excellent exercise for conditioning the muscles of the whole leg. *Can you see the different positions of the feet used in this exercise?*

Battement Tendu - to stretch

The focus of this exercise is to develop a good use of the foot and ankle. *In how many directions does the leg move?*

Battement Tendu Jeté - to throw

In this exercise the leg is thrown **en l'air** (just off the floor). This exercise is particularly useful in developing the instep of the foot and increasing the flexibility of the ankle joint.

Rond de Jambe à Terre - circle of the leg on the ground

This exercise develops turnout from the hip. The working leg moves in a circular motion and can be executed **en dehors** (outwards) or **en dedans** (inwards). *Look out for the circling patterns made on the ground and in the air.*

Frappé - to strike

Battement frappé teaches the dancer the attack needed for neat foot work in **petit allegro** (small jumps) and **batterie** (beaten steps). You will see these exercises later on in the class.

Battement Fondu - to melt

In this exercise both legs bend and stretch at the same time. The knees and muscles in the leg are exercised in such a way as to make them supple and to develop the strength needed to lift the weight of the body upwards.

Développé - controlled unfolding of the leg

This movement helps the dancer to gain strength in the thigh, which in turn helps the development of controlled and supple movements in the centre.

Grand Battement - big throw

This exercise loosens the hip so that the leg will move freely while rotated outwards to its fullest extent.

Centre Work

Port de Bras - carriage of the arms

There are 5 basic positions of the arms which form the basis for this exercise.

Adage - controlled movements of the leg in the air

Initially port de bras exercises are taken separately to adage in the centre. Eventually they are combined. *Watch out for the various lines and curved shapes made by the dancers during this exercise.*

Pirouettes - to turn or spin

A pirouette is a turn which is executed on one leg. The head and eye movement is very important to the turn. The eyes should focus on one particular point at the beginning of the turn; then the head whips around with the eyes returning to the same spot immediately. This is referred to as **spotting**. Turns can be performed on the spot or travelling diagonally. The dancer will perform multiple pirouettes both **en dedans** (inward) and **en dehors** (outward). *How many turns can the dancers perform in one go?*

Allegro - jumping steps

Terre à Terre These jumps are only high enough for the dancer to straighten their legs and stretch their feet in the air; the toes will only just leave the floor. This work relies on quick and neat footwork.

Medium Allegro The height of the jump now starts to increase and the dancer will begin to cover more space.

Batterie - beaten jumps

As the dancer performs these steps they will change the position of their feet in the air. However, it is not just the feet that beat but the whole leg from the calf to ankle.

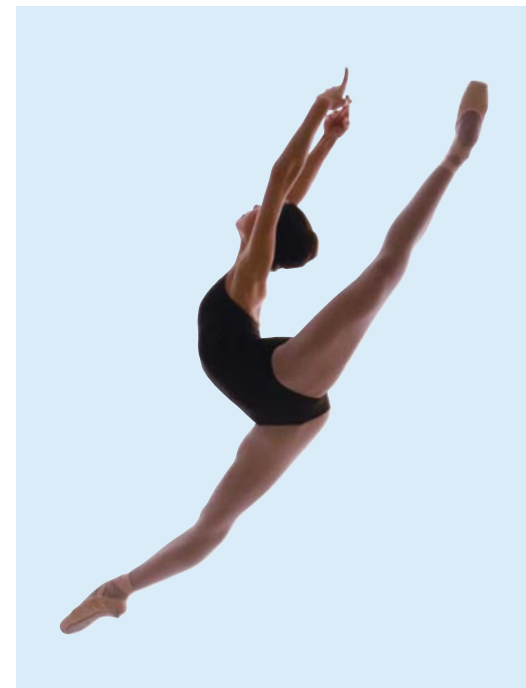
Grand Allegro The dancer is aiming to perform their biggest jumps. As well as jumping high, the dancer will need to combine many of the elements practised earlier in the class.

Reverence - curtsy (girls) or bow (boys)

At the end of class, dancers reverence to thank their teacher, the pianist and their audience. A reverence is also given at the end of a performance when dancers take their curtain calls.



Photos Johan Persson



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