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If you can say it, you can do it...

If you're serious about learning classical ballet, you will learn the vocabulary. And if you're serious about learning the vocabulary, you will make a small investment in this very valuable book... *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* by Gail Grant. It is tiny (fits conveniently in a dance bag) and remarkably inexpensive (under \$5) but it is packed with useful information. It is considerably more detailed than any of the online ballet dictionaries. You can order it right now from amazon.com or barnsandnoble.com. Excerpts from this book are used throughout this technique page.



Positions of the Body

I teach [Cecchetti](#) (Italian) ballet technique and as such use the Cecchetti body positions. I borrow one position (efface derriere) from the Vaganova (Russian) school since no comparable position exists in the Cecchetti vocabulary.



croise devant



quatrieme devant



efface (devant)



a la seconde



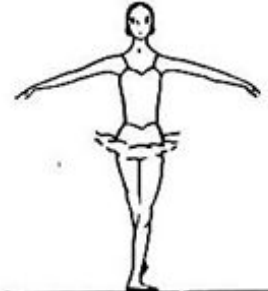
croise derriere



ecarte



epaule



quatrieme derriere



efface derriere (Vaganova)

Although I do not teach from the Vaganova (Russian) school, the Vaganova positions here are given for completeness.

TECHNIQUE

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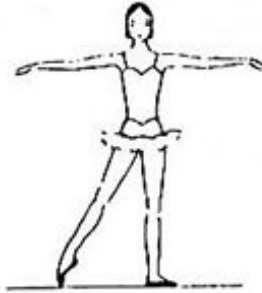
croise devant



quatrieme devant



efface devant



a la seconde



croise derriere



ecarte devant



epaule devant



quatrieme derriere



epaule derriere



efface derriere

Vocabulary

ADAGIO - a series of exercises consisting of a succession of slow and graceful movements, . These exercises develop a sustaining power, sense of line, balance and poise which enables the dancer to perform with majesty and grace

ALLEGRO - a term applied to all bright and brisk movements. The most important qualities to aim at in allegro are lightness, smoothness, and ballon

ARABESQUE - One leg extended behind and the arms held in various harmonious positions creating the longest possible line from the fingertips to the toes.

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1st Arabesque



2nd Arabesque



3rd Arabesque

ASSEMBLE: A step in which the working foot slides on the floor before being swept into the air. As the foot goes into the air the dancer pushes off the floor with the supporting leg, extending the toes. Both legs come to the ground simultaneously in the fifth position.

ATTITUDE - a particular pose in dancing derived by Carlo Blasis from the statue of Mercury by Giovanni da Bologna. It is a position on one leg with the other lifted in back, with the knee bent at an angle.

BALANCE - Rocking step

BALANCOIRE - like a seesaw

BALLON is the light, elastic quality in jumping in which the dancer bounds up from the floor, pauses a moment in the air and descends lightly and softly, only to rebound in the air like the smooth bouncing of a ball. . .

BALLONNE - bounced, ball-like

BALLOTTE - tossed

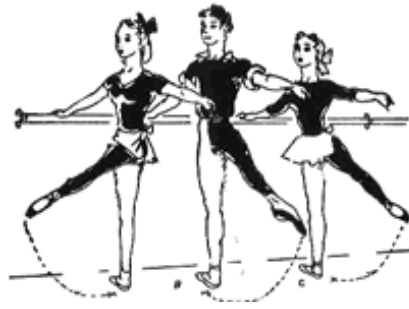


BARRE - side practice

BATTEMENT - beating. This is a demonstration of GRAND BATTEMENT (Large battement) - An exercise in which the working leg is raised from the hip into the air and brought down again, the accent being on the downward movement, both knees straight. This must be done with apparent ease, the rest of the body remaining quiet.

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334 days, 19 hours, 3
minutes until the end of the
Bush presidency.



BATTEAU - Beat.



BRISE - broken

BRISE VOLE - flying brise.

CHANGEMENT - to change. . .

CHAINES or DEBOULES - progressive turn across the stage

CABRIOLE - from the Italian CAPRIOLA, a she-goat, a caper. . . All steps of elevation begin and end with a plie. CABRIOLE can also be done a la quatrieme derriere.



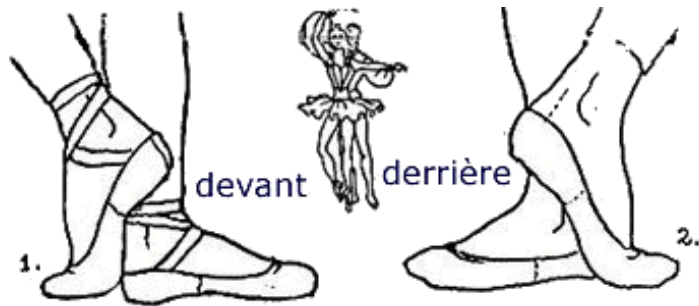
CAMBRE - arched

CHASSE - chased

EN CLOCHE. . . like a bell

COU-DE-PIED - neck of the foot. SUR LE COU-DE-PIED - on the neck of the foot. In the Cecchetti method, sur le cou-de-pied devant is the position of the working foot placed

with the outside face of the heel in front of the supporting foot just above the ankle bone with all five toes resting on the floor sur la demi-point. Sur le cou-de-pied derriere is the same position with the inside face of the heel placed behind the supporting foot just above the ankle joint.



COUPE - cutting

COURU - running

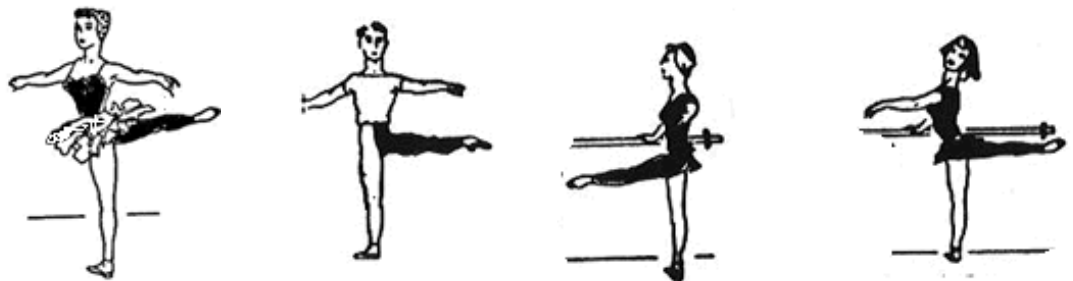
EN CROIX - in the shape of a cross

PAS DE CHAT - cat step.

DEGAGE - disengaged

DETOURNE - backward turn on one foot

DEVELOPPE - developed



ECHAPPE - Escape - Saute' or sur les pointes, in each case echappes are done to the second or fourth position, both feet traveling an equal distance from the original center of gravity

ELAN - Attack

ELANCE - Darting

EMBOITE - fitted together, boxed

ENTRECHAT - Interweaving or braiding

EN DEDANS - inside, into your center

EN DEHORS - outside, away from your center

JETE - thrown. A jump from one foot to the other preceded by a brush with the working leg. There are 37 variations of jete. GRAND JETE EN TOURNANT - large jete turning.



EPAULMENT - The placing of the shoulders

FONDU - Sinking down or melting

FOUETTE - Whipped...



FOUETTE ROND DE JAMBE EN TOURNANT. . . .

FRAPPE - to strike or hit.

GARGOUILLADE - Gurgling, to quote Kay Ambrose: "You do so much with your feet that you don't know what you've done."

GATEWAY - This position of the arms corresponds to the fifth position en avant

GLISSADE - to glide. A traveling step used to link other steps.



GLISSADE PRECIPITEE - Glissade hurried.

PAS COURU - Running step

PAS DE BASQUE - step of the national dance of the Basques. This movement is found in some form in almost every folk dance the world over

PAS DE BOURREE - also from a folk dance from Auvergne, an old province of France

PAS DE CHAT - step of the cat



PAS DE CHEVAL - step of the horse

PAS MARCHE - a walking step.

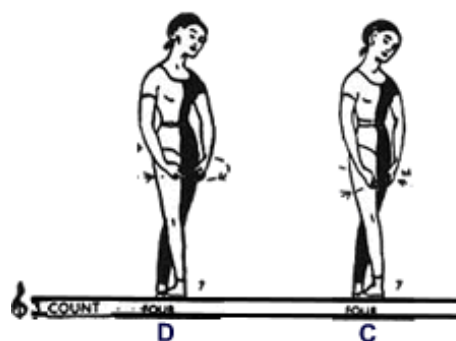
PAS DE DEUX-TROIS-QUATRE - dance for two, three, four

PIED - foot. . . . Dancers' feet are all important to them. They must take care that blisters and bunions do not interfere with their careers. DRU KRAFT was tired of me telling you about the 26 bones in the feet, so she gave me a pair of socks that shows them all.

PIQUE - stepping directly en pointe from a plie

PORT DE BRAS - Carriage of the arms. The term port de bras has two meanings: (1) A movement or series of movements made by passing the arm or arms through various positions. The passage of the arms from one position to another constitutes a port de bras. (2) A term for a group or exercises designed to make the arms move gracefully and harmoniously. In the [Cecchetti](#) method there are eight set exercises on port de bras.

In the execution of port de bras the arms should move from the shoulder and not from the elbow, and the movement should be smooth and flowing. In raising the arms from one position to another the arms must pass through a positions known in dancing as the "gateway". This position corresponds to the fifth position en avant.



PROMENADE - turning on one foot in place

PIROUETTE - to whirl or spin. Pirouettes require perfect balance and every pirouette is entirely dependent on the preparation which precedes it. The dancer should make use of all the toes of the supporting foot, pressing them strongly against the ground to increase the area of support. The opening arm gives the lead and the incoming arm gives additional impetus. The head is the last to move as the body turns away from the spectator and the first to arrive as the body comes around toward the spectator.

RACCOURCI - Shortened. A term of the French School. (1) A position in which the thigh is raised to the second position en l'air, with the knee bent so that the pointed toe rests against the knee of the supporting leg (retire). (2) A sharp bending movement of the knee, as in battement raccourci.

RELEVÉ - Raised.

RENVERSE -

RETIRÉ - Withdrawn. A position in which the thigh is raised to the second position en l'air with the knee bent so that the pointed toe rests in front of, behind or to the side of the supporting knee.

RÉVÉRENCE - Curtsey. The elaborate curtsey performed by the female dancer to acknowledge the applause of the audience. It is also done at the end of a ballet class to show the respectful admiration of the pupils for their teacher.

RIVOLTADE - A French term derived from the Italian "rivoltare" - to turn over.

RONDE DE JAMBE - Round of the leg - that is, a circular movement of the leg.

ROYALE - Royal. A changement in which the calves are beaten together before the feet change position.

SOUBRESAUT - Sudden spring or bound.

SUR LE COU-DE-PIED - see [COU-DE-PIED](#)

TEMPS DE CUISSE - Thigh movement. A compound step consisting of a battement degagé and a sissone fermée.

TEMPS DE FLECHE - Arrow movement. This step is so named because the first leg acts as a kind of bow and the second leg the arrow.

TEMPS LEVÉ - Time raised, or raising movement. This is a hop from one foot with the other raised in any position.

TEMPS LIÉ - Connected movement. Temps lié, an exercise used in centre practice, is composed of a series of steps and arm movements based on the fourth, fifth and second positions. A very valuable exercise for the achievement of a soft demi-plié, it teaches control and balance in transmitting the weight of the body from one position to another with a smooth rhythmical movement. TEMPS LIÉ SIMPLE EN AVANT - Simple connected movement, travelling forward. Fifth position croisé R foot front, arms bras bas. Demi-plié and glide the pointed toe of the R foot into fourth position croisé and raise the arms to the gateway. Demi-plié in the fourth position, then shift the weight onto the R foot, straightening both knees and raising the L foot pointe tendue croisé derrière and the arms en attitude, L arm high. Close the L foot to the fifth position back in demi-plié, body en face and lower the L arm in fronto to the waist. Slide the pointed toe of the R foot to the second position, leaving the L foot in demi-plié; shift the weight onto the R foot in demi-plié, straighten the knees opening the L arm to the second position and turning the head to the left. With pointed toes, slide the L foot onto the fifth position croisé devant and demi plié, lowering the arms to bras bas. Repeat the whole movement of the other side.



TENDU - Stretched.

TOUR EN L'AIR - A turn in the air



TOUR JETE - this is a corruption of the term [GRAND JETE DESSUS EN TOURNANT](#).

TIRE-BOUCHON - Corkscrew

TENDU - stretched

TOMBE' - falling down

TOUR EN L'AIR - turn in the air

VARIATION - usually a solo dance in a ballet

VOLE' - flying

VOYAGE' - traveling

Pure balance is the second greatest feeling in the world.

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