

Ballet Terms A to Z

Adage, Adagio [French: a-DAHZH] Adage is a French word derived from the Italian ad agio, meaning at ease or leisure. English ballet teachers use "adage," the French adaptation, while Americans prefer the original Italian. In dancing it has two meanings: (1) A series of exercises following the centre practice, consisting of a succession of slow and graceful movements which may be simple or of the most complex character, performed with fluidity and apparent ease. These exercises develop a sustaining power, sense of line, balance and the beautiful poise which enables the dancer to perform with majesty and grace. The principal steps of adagio are pliés, développés, grand fouetté en tournant, dégagés, grand rond de jambe, rond de jambe en l'air, coupés, battements tendus, attitudes, arabesques, preparations for pirouettes and all types of pirouettes. (2) The opening section of the classical pas de deux, in which the ballerina assisted by her male partner, performs the slow movements and enlèvements in which the danseur lifts, supports or carries the danseuse. The danseuse thus supported exhibits her grace, line and perfect balance while executing développés, pirouettes, arabesques and so on, and achieves combinations of steps and poses which would be impossible without the aid of her partner.

Air, en l' [ahn lehr] In the air. Indicates: (1) that a movement is to be made in the air; for example, rond de jambe en l'air; (2) that the working leg, after being opened to the second or fourth position à terre, is to be raised to a horizontal position with the toe on the level of the hip.

Allégro [a-lay-GROH; Italian: al-LAY-groh] Brisk, lively. A term applied to all bright and brisk movements. All steps of elevation such as the entrechat, cabriole, assemblé, jeté and so on, come under this classification. The majority of dances, both solo and group, are built on allegro. The most important qualities to aim at in allégo are lightness, smoothness and ballon.

Arabesque [a-ra-BESK] One of the basic poses in ballet, arabesque takes its name from a form of Moorish ornament. In ballet it is a position of the body, in profile, supported on one leg, which can be straight or demi-plié, with the other leg extended behind and at right angles to it, and the arms held in various harmonious positions creating the longest possible line from the fingertips to the toes. The shoulders must be held square to the line of direction. The forms of arabesque are varied to infinity. The Cecchetti method uses five principal arabesques; the Russian School (Vaganova), four; and the French School, two. Arabesques are generally used to conclude a phrase of steps, both in the slow movements of adagio and the brisk, gay movements of allégo.

Arrière, en [ah na-RYEHR] Backward. Used to indicate that a step is executed moving away from the audience. As, for example, in glissade en arrière.

Assemblé [a-sahn-BLAY] Assembled or joined together. A step in which the working foot slides well along the ground 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. If an assemblé is porté it requires a preparatory step such as a glissade to precede it. If an assemblé is en tournant it must be preceded by a preparatory step. Assemblés are done petit or grand according to the height of the battement and are executed dessus, dessous, devant, derrière, en avant, en arrière and en tournant. They may be done en face, croisé, effacé or écarté. Assemblé may also be done with a beat for greater brilliance. In the Cecchetti assemblé both knees are bent and drawn up after the battement so that the flat of the toes of both feet meet while the body is in the air.

Assemblé en tournant, grand [grahn ta-sahn-BLAY ahn toor-NAHN] Big assemblé, turning. This assemblé is done in the same manner as grand assemblé. It is taken only dessus or derrière. It is traveled directly to the side, on a diagonal traveling upstage, in a circle, etc. It is usually preceded by a pas couru or a chassé. The battement at 90 degrees to the second position is taken facing upstage, then the dancer completes the turn en dedans and finishes the assemblé facing the audience.

Attitude [a-tee-TEWD] 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, the knee bent at an angle of 90 degrees and well turned out so that the knee is higher than the foot. The supporting foot may be à terre, sur la pointe or sur la demi-pointe. The arm on the side of the raised leg is held over the head in a curved position while the other arm is extended to the side. There are a number of attitudes according to the position of the body in relation to the audience.

Avant, en [ah na-VAHN] Forward. A direction for the execution of a step. Used to indicate that a given step is executed moving forward, toward the audience. As, for example, in glissade en avant.

Balancé [ba-lahn-SAY] Rocking step. This step is very much like a pas de valse and is an alternation of balance, shifting the weight from one foot to the other. Balancé may be done crossing the foot either front or back. Fifth position R foot front. Demi-plié, dégagé the R foot to the second position and jump on it lightly in demi-plié, crossing the L foot behind the R ankle and inclining the head and body to the right. Step on the L demi-pointe behind the R foot, slightly lifting the R foot off the ground; then fall on the R foot again in demi-plié with the L foot raised sur le cou-de-pied derrière. The next balancé will be to the left side. Balancé may also be done en avant or en arrière facing croisé or effacé and en tournant.

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Ballerina [bahl-lay-REE-rlah (Italian)] A principal female dancer in a ballet company. In the days of the Russian Imperial Theatres the title was given to the outstanding soloists who danced the chief classical roles. At the Maryinski Theatre in St. Petersburg the ballet company consisted of ballerinas, premiers danseurs, first and second soloists, coryphees and corps de ballet.

Ballet master, ballet mistress The person in a ballet company whose duty is to give the daily company class and to rehearse the ballets in the company repertoire.

Balletomane A ballet fan or enthusiast. The word was invented in Russia in the early nineteenth century.

Cavalier The male partner of the ballerina

Choreographer, choreographer This is the term applied to one who composes or invents ballets or dances.

Corps de ballet [kawr duh ba-LAY] The dancers in a ballet who do not appear as soloists.

Virtuoso A performer with great technical ability.

Ballon [ba-LAWN] Bounce. 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.

Barre [bar] The horizontal wooden bar fastened to the walls of the ballet classroom or rehearsal hall which the dancer holds for support. Every ballet class begins with exercises at the bar. See Exercices à la barre.

Battement [bat-MAHN] Beating. A beating action of the extended or bent leg. There are two types of battements, grands battements and petits battements. The petits battements are: Battements tendus, dégagés, frappés and tendus relevés: stretched, disengaged, struck and stretched-and-lifted.

Battement dégagé [bat-MAHN day-ga-ZHAY] Disengaged battement. A term of the Cecchetti method. The battement dégagé is similar to the battement tendu but is done at twice the speed and the working foot rises about four inches from the floor with a well-pointed toe, then slides back into the first or fifth position. Battements dégagés strengthen the toes, develop the instep and improve the flexibility of the ankle joint. Same as battement tendu jeté (Russian School), battement glissé (French School).

Battement fondu développé [bat-MAHN fawn-DEW dayv-law-PAY] Battement, sinking down, developed. This is an exercise in which the supporting leg is slowly bent in fondu with the working foot pointing on the ankle. As the supporting leg is straightened, the working leg unfolds and is extended to point on the floor or in the air. The movement is done devant, derrière and à la seconde. In fondu forward, the conditional position sur le cou-de-pied devant is used. In fondu back, the basic position sur le cou-de-pied derrière is used.

Battement frappé [bat-MAHN fra-PAY] Struck battement. An exercise in which the dancer forcefully extends the working leg from a cou-de-pied position to the front, side or back. This exercise strengthens the toes and insteps and develops the power of elevation. It is the basis of the allegro step, the jeté.

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Battement sur le cou-de-pied, petit [puh-TEE bat-MAHN sewr luh koo-duh-PYAY] Small battement on the ankle. This is an exercise at the bar in which the working foot is held sur le cou-de-pied and the lower part of the leg moves out and in, changing the foot from sur le cou-de-pied devant to sur le cou-de-pied derrière and vice versa. Petits battements are executed with the supporting foot à terre, sur la demi-pointe or sur la pointe.

Battement tendu [bat-MAHN tahn-DEW] Battement stretched. A battement tendu is the commencing portion and ending portion of a grand battement and is an exercise to force the insteps well outward. The working foot slides from the first or fifth position to the second or fourth position without lifting the toe from the ground. Both knees must be kept straight. When the foot reaches the position pointe tendue, it then returns to the first or fifth position. Battements tendus may also be done with a demi-plié in the first or fifth position. They should be practiced en croix.

Battement, grand [grahn bat-MAHN] 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. The function of grands battements is to loosen the hip joints and turn out the legs from the hips. Grands battements can be taken devant, derrière and à la seconde.

Battu [ba-TEW] Beaten. Any step embellished with a beat is called a pas battu. As, for example, in jeté battu.

Bras [brah] Arms.

Bras bas [brah bah] Arms low or down. This is the dancer's "attention." The arms form a circle with the palms facing each other and the back edge of the hands resting on the thighs. The arms should hang quite loosely but not allowing the elbows to touch the sides.

Brisé [bree-ZAY] Broken, breaking. A small beating step in which the movement is broken. Brisés are commenced on one or two feet and end on one or two feet. They are done dessus, dessous, en avant and en arrière. Fundamentally a brisé is an assemblé beaten and traveled. The working leg brushes from the fifth position to the second position so that the point of the foot is a few inches off the ground, and beats in front of or behind the other leg, which has come to meet it; then both feet return to the ground simultaneously in demi-plié in the fifth position.

Brisé volé [bree-ZAY vaw-LAY] Flying brisé. In this brisé the dancer finishes on one foot after the beat, the other leg crossed either front or back. The foundation of this step is a fouetté movement with a jeté battu. In the Russian and French Schools the raised leg finishes sur le cou-de-pied devant or derrière and the brisé volé is done like a jeté battu. In the Cecchetti method, the working foot passes through the first position to the fourth position, the calves are beaten together and on alighting the free leg is extended forward or back with a straight knee.

Cabriole [ka-bree-AWL] Caper. An allegro step in which the extended legs are beaten in the air. Cabrioles are divided into two categories: petite, which are executed at 45 degrees, and grande, which are executed at 90 degrees. The working leg is thrust into the air, the underneath leg follows and beats against the first leg, sending it higher. The landing is then made on the underneath leg. Cabriole may be done devant, derrière and à la seconde in any given position of the body such as croisé, effacé, écarté, etc.

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Cecchetti method Enrico Cecchetti, one of the world's outstanding teachers of ballet, established a system of passing on the tradition of ballet to future generations of dancers. This system, the Cecchetti method, was codified and recorded by Cyril Beaumont, Stanislas Idzikowski, Margaret Craske and Derra de Moroda. The method has a definite program of strict routine and includes a table of principal set daily exercises for each day of the week. The Cecchetti Society was formed in London in 1922 to perpetuate his method of teaching. In 1924 the Society was incorporated into the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. Entrance to the Society is by examination and students must pass through a carefully graded system which has done much to raise the standard of dancing and teaching throughout the British Empire.

Centre practice Centre practice, or exercices au milieu, is the name given to a group of exercises similar to those à la barre but performed in the centre of the room without the support of the bar. These exercises are usually performed with alternate feet and are invaluable for obtaining good balance and control.

Chaînés [sheh-NAY] Chains, links. This is an abbreviation of the term "tours chaînés déboulés": a series of rapid turns on the points or demi-pointes done in a straight line or in a circle.

Changement de pieds [shahnzh-MAHN duh pyay] Change of feet. The term is usually abbreviated to changement. Changements are springing steps in the fifth position, the dancer changing feet in the air and alighting in the fifth position with the opposite foot in the front. They are done petit and grand.

Chassé [sha-SAY] Chased. A step in which one foot literally chases the other foot out of its position; done in a series.

Cinq [senk] Five. As, for example, in entrechat cinq.

Coda (1) The finale of a classical ballet in which all the principal dancers appear separately or with their partners. (2) The final dance of the classic pas de deux, pas de trois or pas de quatre.

Corps [kawr] Body.

Côté, de [duh koh-TAY] Sideways. Used to indicate that a step is to be made to the side, either to the right or to the left.

Cou-de-pied, sur le [sewr luh koo-duh-PYAY] On the "Neck" of the foot. The working foot is placed on the part of the leg between the base of the calf and the beginning of the ankle.

Coupé jeté en tournant [koo-PAY zhuh-TAY ahn toor-NAHN] A compound step consisting of a coupé dessous making a three-quarter turn and a grand jeté en avant to complete the turn. The step is usually done in a series either en manège or en diagonale.

Couru [koo-REW] Running. As, for example, in pas de bourrée couru.

Croisé, croisée [kmJah-ZAY] Crossed. One of the directions of épaulement. The crossing of the legs with the body placed at an oblique angle to the audience. The disengaged leg may be crossed in the front or in the back.

Danse [dahnss] Dance.

Danse de caractère [dahnss duh ka-rak-TEHR] Dance of character, character dance. Any national or folk dance, or a dance based on movements associated with a particular profession, trade, personality or mode of living. See Mazurka and Polonaise.

Dedans, en [ahn duh-DAHN] Inward. In steps and exercises the term en dedans indicates that the leg, in a position à terre or en l'air, moves in a circular direction, counterclockwise from back to front. As, for example, in rond de jambe à terre en dedans. In pirouettes the term indicates that a pirouette is made inward toward the supporting leg.

Dehors, en [ahn duh-AWR] Outward. In steps and exercises the term en dehors indicates that the leg, in a position à terre or en l'air, moves in a circular direction, clockwise. As, for example, in rond de jambe à terre en dehors. In pirouettes the term indicates that a pirouette is made outward toward the working leg.

Demi-plié [duh-MEE-plee-AY] Half-bend of the knees. All steps of elevation begin and end with a demi-plié. See Plié.

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Demi-pointes, sur les [sewr lay duh-mee-PWENT] On the half-points. Indicates that the dancer is to stand high on the balls of the feet and under part of the toes. Also used in the singular, "sur la demi-pointe."

Derrière [deh-RYEHR] Behind, back. This term may refer to a movement, step or placing of a limb in back of the body. In reference to a particular step, the addition of derrière implies that the working foot is closed at the back.

Dessous [duh-SOO] Under. Indicates that the working foot passes behind the supporting foot. As, for example, in pas de bourrée dessous.

Dessus [duh-SEW] Over. Indicates that the working foot passes in front of the supporting foot. As, for example, in pas de bourrée dessus.

Deux [duh] Two.

Deuxième [duh-ZYEM] Second.

Devant [duh-VAHN] In front. This term may refer to a step, movement or the placing of a limb in front of the body. In reference to a particular step the addition of the word "devant" implies that the working foot is closed in the front.

Développé, temps [tahn dayv-law-PAY] Time developed, developing movement. Through common usage the term has become abridged to développé. A développé is a movement in which the working leg is drawn up to the knee of the supporting leg and slowly extended to an open position en l'air and held there with perfect control. The hips are kept level and square to the direction in which the dancer is facing.

Diagonale, en [ahn dy-a-gaw-NAL] In a diagonal. Indicates that a step is to be done traveling in a diagonal direction.

Divertissement [dee-vehr-tees-MAHNLAY] Diversion, enjoyment. A suite of numbers called "entrées," inserted into a classic ballet. These short dances are calculated to display the talents of individuals or groups of dancers.

Double [DOO-bluh] Double. As, for example, in pirouette double (a double pirouette).

Écarté [ay-har-TAY] Separated, thrown wide apart. Écarté is one of the eight directions of the body, Cecchetti method. In this position the dancer faces either one of the two front corners of the room. The leg nearer the audience is pointed in the second position à terre or raised to the second position en l'air. The torso is held perpendicular. The arms are held en attitude with the raised arm being on the same side as the extended leg.

Échappé [ay-sha-PAY] Escaping or slipping movement. An échappé is a level opening of both feet from a closed to an open position. There are two kinds of échappés: échappé sauté, which is done with a spring from the fifth position and finishes in a demi-plié in the open position, and

échappé sur les pointes, or demi-pointes, which is done with a relevé and has straight knees when in the open position. In each case échappés are done to the second or fourth position, both feet traveling an equal distance from the original center of gravity.

Effacé, effacée [eh-fa-SAY] Shaded. One of the directions of épaulement in which the dancer stands at an oblique angle to the audience so that a part of the body is taken back and almost hidden from view. This direction is termed "ouvert" in the French method. Effacé is also used to qualify a pose in which the legs are open (not crossed). This pose may be taken devant or derrière, either à terre or en l'air.

Élévation [ay-lay-va-SYAWN] Élévation is the ability of a dancer to attain height in dancing. It is a term used to describe the height attained in springing steps such as entrechats, grands jetés and so on, combined with ballon so that the dancer jumps with a graceful elasticity like the bouncing movement of a rubber ball which touches the ground a moment and then rebounds into the air. The elevation is reckoned by the distance between the pointed toes of the dancer in the air and the ground. In alighting after a pas d'élevation the tips of the toes should reach the ground first, quickly followed by the sole and then the heel. All steps of elevation begin and end with a demi-plié.

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Entrechat [ahn-truh-SHAH] Interweaving or braiding. A step of beating in which the dancer jumps into the air and rapidly crosses the legs before and behind each other. Entrechats are counted from two to ten according to the number of crossings required and counting each crossing as two movements, one by each leg; that is, in an entrechat quatre each leg makes two distinct movements. Entrechats are divided into two general classes: the even-numbered entrechats, or those which land on two feet-- deux, quatre, six, huit and dix-- and the odd-numbered entrechats, or those which land on one foot-- trois, cinq, sept and neuf.

Entrechat six [ahn-truh-SHAH seess] Six crossings. Demi-plié in the fifth position R foot front. With a strong jump open the legs, beat the R leg behind the L, open the legs, beat the R leg in front of the L, open the legs and finish in demi-plié in the fifth position R foot back.

Épaulement [ay-pohl-MAHN]] Shouldering. The placing of the shoulders. A term used to indicate a movement of the torso from the waist upward, bringing one shoulder forward and the other back with the head turned or inclined over the forward shoulder. The two fundamental positions of épaulement are croisé and effacé. When épaulement is used the position of the head depends upon the position of the shoulders and the shoulder position depends upon the position of the legs. Épaulement gives the finishing artistic touch to every movement and is a characteristic feature of the modern classical style compared to the old French style. which has little épaulement.

Extension [eks-tahn-SYAWN] Term used to describe the ability of a dancer to raise and hold her extended leg en l'air. A dancer is said to have a good extension if,when doing a développé à la seconde, she is able to hold and sustain the raised leg above shoulder level.

Face, en [ahn fahss] Opposite (the audience); facing the audience.

Fish dive This is a term used in double (supported) work for various lifts in which the danseuse is supported by the danseur in a poisson position. He may hold her above his head in a horizontal fish dive or she may fall from a sitting position on his shoulder and be caught in a fish dive, and so on.

Fondu, fondu [fawn-DEW] Sinking down. A term used to describe a lowering of the body made by bending the knee of the supporting leg. Saint-Léon wrote, "Fondu is on one leg what a plié is on two." In some instances the term fondu is also used to describe the ending of a step when the working leg is placed on the ground with a soft and gradual movement.

Fouetté [fweh-TAY] Whipped. A term applied to a whipping movement. The movement may be a short whipped movement of the raised foot as it passes rapidly in front of or behind the supporting foot or the sharp whipping around of the body from one direction to another. There is a great variety of fouettés: petit fouetté, which may be devant, à la seconde or derrière and executed à terre, sur la demi-pointe or sauté; and grand fouetté, which may be sauté, relevé and en tournant.

Fouetté en tournant, grand (Russian School) [grahn fweh-TAY ahn toor-NAHN] Large fouetté, turning. This fouetté may be done on demi-pointe, on point or with a jump. It is usually done en dedans and may be finished in attitude croisée, attitude effacée or any of the arabesques.

Fouetté rond de jambe en tournant [fweh-TAY rawn duh zhahnb ahn toor-NAHN] Whipped circle of the leg turning. This is the popular turn in which the dancer executes a series of turns on the supporting leg while being propelled by a whipping movement of the working leg. The whipping leg should be at hip level, with the foot closing in to the knee of the supporting leg. Fouettés are usually done in a series. They may be executed en dehors or en dedans. En dehors (Russian School): Fourth position R foot back. Execute a pirouette en dehors on the L leg. Fondu on the L leg, at the same time opening the R leg to the second position en l'air. Relevé on the L point or demi-pointe, executing a tour en dehors and whipping the R foot in back of, then quickly in front of, the L knee. Fondu on the L leg, opening the R leg to the second position en l'air. En dehors (Cecchetti method): Fourth position R foot back. Execute a pirouette en dehors on the L leg. Fondu on the L leg, at the same time extending the R leg to quatrième position devant en l'air (croisé devant). Relevé on the L point or demi-pointe, sweeping the R leg to the second position en l'air, and execute a tour en dehors, bringing the R foot to side and front of L knee. Fondu on the L foot, extending the R leg forward again. Three-quarters of the turn should be made with the R foot in position on the supporting knee. This fouetté may also be executed from a preparation starting with a pas de bourrée en dedans and finishing with a coupé dessous, opening the working leg to quatrième devant croisé. En dedans (Russian School): Fouetté en dedans is done in the same manner as en dehors. After a pirouette en dedans the extension is made to the second position en l'air; next the foot is brought in front of, then in back of, the supporting knee. En dedans (Cecchetti method): After a pirouette en dedans the working leg is extended to the fourth position derrière en l'air; then with a demi-rond de jambe en l'air en dedans the foot is brought to the front of the supporting knee.

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French School The French School of ballet began in the court ceremonies of the French monarchs. Louis XIV studied with the famous ballet master Pierre Beauchamp and established the first academy of dancing, known as the Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse, in Paris in 1661. The École de Danse de l'Opéra was founded in 1713 and is now known as the École de Danse du Théâtre National de l'Opéra. Among its most famous ballet masters were Beauchamp, Pécour, Lany, Noverre, G. and A. Vestris, M. and P. Gardel, F. Taglioni, Mazilier, Saint-Léon, Mérante, Staats, Aveline and Lifar. The French School was known for its elegance and soft, graceful movements rather than technical virtuosity. Its influence spread throughout Europe and is the basis of all ballet training.

Gateway, the This is a position of the arms in which the arms are held rounded in front of the body with the fingertips on a level with the bottom of the breastbone. The backs of the hands face outward with the arms rounded so that the elbows are a little below the shoulders and the wrists a little below the elbows with the point of the elbows imperceptible. This position corresponds to the fifth position en avant of the Cecchetti method and the first position of the Russian and French Schools. When the arms are raised from a low position to a high one, the arms generally pass through the gateway. See Port de bras.

Glissade [glee-SAD] Glide. A traveling step executed by gliding the working foot from the fifth position in the required direction, the other foot closing to it. Glissade is a terre à terre step and is used to link other steps. After a demi-plié in the fifth position the working foot glides along the floor to a strong point a few inches from the floor. The other foot then pushes away from the floor so that both knees are straight and both feet strongly pointed for a moment; then the weight is shifted to the working foot with a fondu. The other foot, which is pointed a few inches from the floor, slides into the fifth position in demi-plié. When a glissade is used as an auxiliary step for small or big jumps, it is done with a quick movement on the upbeat. Glissades are done with or without change of feet, and all begin and end with a demi-plié. There are six glissades: devant, derrière, dessous, dessus, en avant, en arrière, the difference between them depending on the starting and finishing positions as well as the direction. Glissade may also be done sur les pointes.

Grand, grande [grahn, grahnd] Big, large. As, for example; in grand battement. (To find terms starting with "grand," look up the second word of the term.)

Italian School The Imperial Dancing Academy connected with La Scala in Milan was opened in 1812. Its greatest period began when Carlo Blasis, Italian dancer and teacher, became its director in 1837. Blasis published two textbooks, Treatise on the Art of Dancing and Code of Terpischore, in which he codified his teaching methods and all that was known of ballet technique. These books form the basis of our modern classical training. Blasis trained most of the famous Italian dancers of the era, and his pupil Giovanni Lepri was the teacher of Enrico Cecchetti, one of the greatest teachers in the history of ballet. It was Cecchetti who brought the Italian School to its peak. The Italian School was known for its strong, brilliant technique and the virtuosity of its dancers, who astonished the audience with their difficult steps and brilliant turns.

Jambe [zhahnb] Leg.

Jeté, pas [pah zhuh-TAY] Throwing step. A jump from one foot to the other in which the working leg is brushed into the air and appears to have been thrown. There is a wide variety of pas jetés (usually called merely jetés) and they may be performed in all directions.

Jeté battu [zhuh-TAY ba-TEW] Jeté beaten. Both jeté dessus and jeté dessous may be beaten.

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Jeté entrelacé [zhuh-TAY ahn-truh-la-SAY] Jeté interlaced. A term of the Russian School. This jeté is done in all directions and in a circle. It is usually preceded by a chassé or a pas couru to give impetus to the jump. In the French School this is called "grand jeté dessus en tournant"; in the Cecchetti method, "grand jeté en tournant en arrière."

Jeté, grand [grahn zhuh-TAV] Large jeté. In this step the legs are thrown to 90 degrees with a corresponding high jump. It is done forward to attitude croisée or effacée, and to all the arabesques. It may also be done backward with the leg raised either croisé or effacé devant.

Grand jeté is always preceded by a preliminary movement such as a glissade, pas couru or coupe.

Jeté en avant, grand [grahn zhuh-TAY ah na-VAHN] Large jeté forward. A big leap forward preceded by a preliminary movement such as a pas couru or a glissade, which gives the necessary push-off. The jump is done on the foot which is thrown forward as in grand battement at 90 degrees, the height of the jump depending on the strength of the thrust and the length of the jump depending on the strong push-off of the other leg which is thrust up and back. The dancer tries to remain in the air in a definitely expressed attitude or arabesque and descends to the ground in the same pose. It is important to start the jump with a springy plié and finish it with a soft and controlled plié.

Jeté, petit [puh-TEE zhuh-TAY] Christopher Martin demonstrating petit jeté. (331k) Small jeté. From a demi-plié in the fifth position the working foot glides along the floor until it reaches a position à la demi-hauteur. The supporting foot springs from the floor and the landing is made in fondu on the working leg with the other foot extended in the air or sur le cou-de-pied. Petit jeté is done dessus, dessous, en avant, en arrière and en tournant.

Labanotation This is a system of dance notation invented by the Hungarian-born teacher Rudolf von Laban. This system has been developed and perfected by the Dance Notation Bureau, which was founded in New York in 1940 and introduced the term in 1953. Many ballets have been notated by the Bureau, which has compiled a library of works in Labanotation, including the previous edition of the present book (notated by Allan Miles).

Leçon [luh-SAWN] Lesson. The daily class taken by dancers throughout their career to continue learning and to maintain technical proficiency. It consists of exercices à la barre (side practice) followed by exercices au milieu (centre practice), port de bras, pirouette practice and petit and grand allégro. See these terms.

Ligne [LEEN-yuh] Line. The outline presented by a dancer while executing steps and poses. A dancer is said to have a good or bad sense of line according to the arrangement of head, body, legs and arms in a pose or movement. A good line is absolutely indispensable to the classical dancer.

TOP

Manèges [ma-NEZH] Circular. A term applied to steps or enchaînements executed in a circle.

Mazurka or mazurek A Polish folk dance in 3/4 time which has been introduced into a number of ballets as a character dance.

Methods (French: Méthodes [may-TAWD]) Academic ballet as we know it today came into being in the year 1661, when King Louis XIV of France founded the Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse. Although individual Milanese dancing-masters had been renowned since the fifteenth century, the permanent Imperial Dancing Academy connected with La Scala Theatre was not opened until 1812. The Academy at Milan influenced Paris and especially Russia through the rules of education drawn up by Carlo Blasis, who became director of the Academy in 1837 and rapidly made it the centre of ballet activity. By the middle of the nineteenth century the ballet centres of the world had shifted from Paris and Milan to St. Petersburg and Moscow. The Russian School first derived its technique from France but by the middle of the nineteenth century it had acquired an international aspect through the influence of international artists. From the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century Russian ballet was dominated by Marius Petipa, a

Frenchman, and Christian Johannsen, a Swede. Then in 1874 Enrico Cecchetti, the last great exponent of the Italian School, arrived in Russia. These three men working on generations of Russian dancers developed Russian ballet, making it as much a system as Italian or French ballet. Actually the French method is in the greatest proportion in the Russian School.

Mime The art of using the face and body to express emotion and dramatic action.

Neuf [nuhf] Nine.

Notation There is no universally accepted system of recording the choreography of ballets although many systems of dance notation have been devised by dancers and choreographers. At present, there are two systems of notation in general use, Labanotation and Benesh notation.

Ouvert, ouverte [oo-VEHR, oo-VEHRT] Open, opened. This may refer to positions (the second and fourth positions of the feet are positions ouvertes), limbs, directions, or certain exercises or steps. In the French School the term is used to indicate a position or direction of the body similar to effacé.

Pas [pah] Step. A simple step or a compound movement which involves a transfer of weight. Example: pas de bourrée. "Pas" also refers to a dance executed by a soloist (pas seul), a duet (pas de deux). and so on.

Pas de bourrée [pah duh boo-RAY] Bourrée step. Pas de bourrée is done dessous, dessus, devant, derrière, en avant, en arrière and en tournant, en dedans and en dehors, on the point or demi-pointe.

TOP

Pas de bourrée couru [pah duh boo-RAY koo-REW] Pas de bourrée, running. A term of the French School. This is a progression on the points or demi-pointes by a series of small, even steps with the feet close together. It may be done in all directions or in a circle.

Pas de chat [pah duh shah] Cat's-step. The step owes its name to the likeness of the movement to a cat's leap.

Pas de deux, grand [grahn pah duh duh] Grand dance for two. It differs from the simple pas de deux in that it has a definite structure. As a general rule the grand pas de deux falls into five parts: entrée, adage, variation for the danseuse, variation for the danseur, and the coda, in which both dancers dance together.

Pas de quatre [pah duh KA-truh] A dance for four. The most famous pas de quatre in ballet history took place in London on July 12, 1845, at a command performance for Queen Victoria, when the four greatest ballerinas of the nineteenth century, Marie Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Fanny Cerrito and Lucile Grahn, appeared together.

Pas de trois [pah duh trwah] A dance for three. Similarly, a pas de cinq is a dance for five people; a pas de six is a dance for six people; etc.

Pas de valse [pah duh valss] Waltz step. Done with a graceful swaying of the body with various arm movements. May be done facing or en tournant. The step is like a balancé, but the feet do not cross.

Pas marché [pah mar-SHAY] Marching step. This is the dignified, classical walk of the ballerina and the premier danseur.

Penché, penchée [pahn-SHAY] Leaning, inclining. As, for example, in arabesque penchée.

Petit, petite [puh-TEE, puh-TEET] Little, small. As, for example, in petit battement. (To find terms starting with "petit," look up the second word of the term.)

Pieds, cinq positions des [sen paw-zee-SYAWN day pyay] Five positions of the feet. There are five basic positions of the feet in classical ballet, and every step or movement is begun and ended in one or another of these positions, which were established by Pierre Beauchamp, maître de ballet of the Académie Royale de Musique et de Danse from 1671 to 1687. First position (Première position): In this position the feet form one line, heels touching one another. Second position (Seconde position): The feet are on the same line but with a distance of about one foot between the heels. Third position (Troisième position): In the third position one foot is in front of the other, heels touching the middle of the other foot. Fourth position (Quatrième position): In the fourth position the placement of the feet is similar to that in the third position, the feet being parallel and separated by the length of one foot. This is the classical fourth position but it may also be done with the feet in the first position, only separated by the space of one foot. The former is known as quatrième position croisée (crossed fourth position), while the latter is called quatrième ouverte (open fourth position). Today quatrième position croisée is done with the feet placed as in the fifth position, parallel and separated by the length of one foot, instead of the third position. Fifth position (Cinquième position): In the fifth position, Cecchetti method, the feet are crossed so that the first joint of the big toe shows beyond either heel. In the French and Russian Schools the feet are completely crossed so that the heel of the front foot touches the toe of the back foot and vice versa.

Piqué [pee-KAY] Pricked, pricking. Executed by stepping directly on the point or demi-pointe of the working foot in any desired direction or position with the other foot raised in the air. As, for example, in piqué en arabesque, piqué développé and so on.

Pirouette [peer-WET] Whirl or spin. A complete turn of the body on one foot, on point or demi-pointe. Pirouettes are performed en dedans, turning inward toward the supporting leg, or en dehors, turning outward in the direction of the raised leg. Correct body placement is essential in all kinds of pirouettes. The body must be well centered over the supporting leg with the back held strongly and the hips and shoulders aligned. The force of momentum is furnished by the arms, which remain immobile during the turn. 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 to the spectator, with the eyes focused at a definite point which must be at eye level. This use of the eyes while turning is called "spotting." Pirouettes may be performed in any given position, such as sur le cou-de-pied, en attitude, en arabesque, à la seconde, etc.

Pirouette à la seconde, grande [grahrul peer-WET a lah suh-GAWND] Large pirouette in the second position. This pirouette is usually performed by male dancers. It is a series of turns on one foot with the free leg raised to the second position en l'air at 90 degrees.

Pirouette piquée [peer-WET pee-KAY] Pricked pirouette. A term of the French School. Same as piqué tour en dedans. This is a pirouette in which the dancer steps directly onto the point or demi-pointe with the raised leg sur le cou-de-pied devant or derrière, in attitude, arabesque or any given position. This turn is executed either en dedans or en dehors.

Plié [plee-AY] Bent, bending. A bending of the knee or knees. This is an exercise to render the joints and muscles soft and pliable and the tendons flexible and elastic, and to develop a sense of balance. There are two principal pliés: grand plié or full bending of the knees (the knees should be bent until the thighs are horizontal) and demi-plié or half-bending of the knees. Pliés are done at the bar and in the centre in all five positions of the feet. The third position is usually omitted. When a grand plié is executed in either the first, third or fourth position croisé (feet in the fifth position but separated by the space of one foot) or the fifth position, the heels always rise off the ground and are lowered again as the knees straighten. The bending movement should be gradual and free from jerks, and the knees should be at least half-bent before the heels are allowed to rise. The body should rise at the same speed at which it descended, pressing the heels into the floor. In the grand plié in the second position or the fourth position ouverte (feet in the first position but separated by the space of one foot) the heels do not rise off the ground. All demi-pliés are done without lifting the heels from the ground. In all pliés the legs must be well turned out from the hips, the knees open and well over the toes, and the weight of the body evenly distributed on both feet, with the whole foot grasping the floor.

Pointes, sur les [sewr lay pwent] On the points. The raising of the body on the tips of the toes. Also used in the singular, "sur la pointe." First introduced in the late 1820s or early 1830s at the time of Taglioni. There are three ways of reaching the points, by piqué, relevé or sauté.

Pointe shoes Pointe shoes The satin ballet shoes used by dancers when dancing sur les pointes. The ballet shoes of Marie Taglioni, the first major ballerina to dance on her points, were not blocked but were padded with cotton wool. Later (about 1862) the toes of the ballet slippers were stiffened (blocked) with glue and darned to give the dancer additional support. Today the toes of pointe shoes are reinforced with a box constructed of several layers of strong glue in between layers of material.

Poisson [pwa-SAWN] Fish. A position of the body in which the legs are crossed in the fifth position and held tightly together with the back arched. This pose is taken while jumping into the air or in double work when the danseuse is supported in a poisson position by her partner. See Fish dive.

Polonaise A processional dance in 3/4 time with which the court ballets of the seventeenth century were opened. It may be seen today in such ballets as The Sleeping Beauty and Swan Lake. The polonaise is a march in which two steps are taken forward on the demi-pointes and then the third step is taken flat with the supporting knee bent in fondu and the other leg raised in front.

Port de bras [pawr duh brah] 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 of 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. The arms should be softly rounded so that the points of the elbows are imperceptible and the hands must be simple, graceful and never flowery. The body and head should come into play and a suggestion of épaulement should be used. In raising the arms from one position to another the arms must pass through a position known in dancing as the gateway. This position corresponds to the fifth position en avant, Cecchetti method, or the first position, French and Russian Schools. In passing from a high position to a low one, the arms are generally lowered in a line with the sides. Exercises on port de bras can be varied to infinity by combining their basic elements according to the taste of the professor and the needs of the pupil.

Porté, portée [pawr-TAY] Carried. Refers either to a step which is traveled in the air from one spot to another (such as assemblé dessus porté) or to the carrying of a danseuse by a danseur.

Premier, première [pruh-MYAY, pruh-MYEHR] First.

Promenade, tour de [toor duh prawm-NAD] Turn in a walk. A term of the French School used to indicate that the dancer turns slowly in place on one foot by a series of slight movements of the heel to the required side while maintaining a definite pose such as an arabesque or attitude. The turn may be performed either en dedans or en dehors. In a pas de deux, the ballerina on point holds her pose and is slowly turned by her partner who walks around her holding her hand.

Quatre [KA-truh] Four.

Quatrième [ka-tree-EM] Fourth.

Relevé [ruhl-VAY] Raised. A raising of the body on the points or demi-pointes, point or demi-pointe. There are two ways to relevé. In the French School, relevé is done with a smooth, continuous rise while the Cecchetti method and the Russian School use a little spring. Relevé may be done in the first, second, fourth or fifth position, en attitude, en arabesque, devant, derrière, en tournant, passé en avant, passé en arrière and so on.

Retiré [ruh-tee-RAY] 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.

Rise This is a smooth relevé from a position à terre through all the levels of the foot (quarter-point, half-point and three-quarter point). The toes do not move from the spot at which the rise began.

Rolling Dancers who do not have a good turn-out should not force their legs to turn out too much at first, as this usually results in rolling ankles. If the weight is on the inside of the feet, dancers call this rolling in; if the weight is on the outside of the feet, it is called rolling out. The toes and heels should be flat on the floor and the turn-out must come from the hip joints.

Romantic ballet A style of ballet produced during the early nineteenth century in which the accent was on the conveyance of a mood to a story. Examples of romantic ballets are La Sylphide and Giselle.

Rond de jambe [rawn duh zhahnb] Round of the leg, that is, a circular movement of the leg. Ronds de jambe are used as an exercise at the bar, in the centre and in the adage, and are done à terre or en l'air. When used as a step, ronds de jambe are done en l'air and may be sauté or relevé. All are done clockwise (en dehors) and counterclockwise (en dedans).

Rond de jambe à terre [rawn duh zhahnb a tehr] Rond de jambe on the ground. An exercise at the bar or in the centre in which one leg is made to describe a series of circular movements on the ground. Both legs must be kept perfectly straight and all movement must come from the hip, along with the arching and relaxing of the instep. The toe of the working foot does not rise off

the ground and does not pass beyond the fourth position front (fourth position ouvert) or the fourth position back. This is an exercise to turn the legs out from the hips, to loosen the hips and to keep the toe well back and heel forward. There are two kinds of ronds de jambe à terre: those done en dedans (inward) and those done en dehors (outward).

Rond de jambe en l'air [rawn duh zhahnb ahn lehr] Rond de jambe in the air. Ronds de jambe en l'air are done at the bar and in centre practice and may be single, or double, en dehors or en dedans. The toe of the working foot describes an oval, the extreme ends of which are the second position en l'air and the supporting leg. The thigh must be kept motionless and the hips well turned out, the whole movement being made by the leg below the knee. The thigh should also be held horizontal so that the pointed toe of the working foot passes at (approximately) the height of the supporting knee. Ronds de jambe en l'air may also be done with the leg extended to the second position en l'air (demi-position) and closed to the calf of the supporting leg. The accent of the movement comes when the foot is in the second position en l'air. The movement is done en dehors and en dedans.

Royale [ruah-YAL] Royal. A changement in which the calves are beaten together before the feet change position. Also termed "changement battu."

Russian School The Russian School was founded in St. Petersburg in 1738 by the French dancer Jean-Baptiste Landé. The French influence continued under such great teachers as Charles Le Picq, Charles Didelot, Christian Johanssen, Jules Perrot, Arthur Saint-Léon and Marius Petipa. In 1885 Virginia Zucchi, a famous Italian ballerina, appeared in St. Petersburg and created a sensation with her forceful and brilliant Italian technique which differed from the soft, graceful elegance of the French technique prevalent in Russia until then. Other Italian dancers such as Enrico Cecchetti arrived in Russia and continued to astound the Russians with their amazing dexterity, brilliant pirouettes, tours and fouettés. The Russian dancers rapidly absorbed everything the Italians had to teach and incorporated it into the Russian system. Thus, the Russian School of Ballet is a development of the French and Italian Schools. During the 1920s the Russian ballerina and teacher Agrippina Vaganova developed a planned instructional system which later became known to the whole world as the Vaganova system. This system has become the basic method of the entire Soviet choreographic school.

Saut de basque [soh duh bask] (French and Russian Schools). Basque jump. A traveling step in which the dancer turns in the air with one foot drawn up to the knee of the other leg. Fifth position R foot front. Demi-plié with R foot retiré devant; step on the R foot in demi-plié to the second position, turning en dedans one half-turn and thrusting the L leg to the second position en l'air; push off the floor with the R foot and complete the turn, traveling to the side of the extended leg and landing on the L foot in fondu with the R leg bent in retiré devant. Both legs should be fully turned out during the jump. Saut de basque may also be performed with a double turn in the air.

Sauté, sautée [soh-TAY] Jumped, jumping. When this term is added to the name of a step, the movement is performed while jumping. As, for example, échappé sauté. Note: In all jumping movements the tips of the toes should be the first to reach the ground after the jump, then the sole of the foot followed by the heel. In rising from the ground the foot moves in the reverse order.

Seconde, à la [ah la suh-GAWND] To the second. A term to imply that the foot is to be placed in the second position, or that a movement is to be made to the second position en l'air. As, for example, in grand battement à la seconde.

Sept [set] Seven.

Sickling This term is used for a fault in which the dancer turns his or her foot in from the ankle, thereby breaking the straight line of the leg.

Sissonne [see-SAWN] Sissonne is named for the originator of the step. It is a jump from both feet onto one foot with the exception of sissonne fermée, sissonne tombée and sissonne fondue, which finish on two feet. Sissonne may be performed petite or grande. The petites sissonnes are sissonne simple, sissonne fermée, sissonne ouverte at 45 degrees and sissonne tombée at 45 degrees. The grandes sissonnes are sissonne ouverte at 90 degrees, sissonne renversée and sissonne soubresaut.

Sissonne fermée [see-SAWN fehr-MAY] Closed sissonne. A step of low elevation performed to a quick tempo. This sissonne finishes on two feet with the working foot gliding along the floor into the demi-plié in the fifth position. It may be performed en avant, en arrière and de côté in all directions, such as croisé, effacé, écarté, etc.

Sissonne ouverte, grande [grahnd see-SAWN oo-VEHRT] Big open sissonne. This sissonne is usually performed with high elevation and is done from a demi-plié on both feet and finished on one foot with the other leg raised in the desired pose, such as attitude, arabesque, à la seconde, etc. It is performed en avant, en arrière, de côté, en tournant and is done with a développé or a grand battement at 90 degrees.

Six [seess] Six.

Supporting leg A term used by dancers and teachers for the leg which supports the body so that the working leg is free to execute a given movement.

Temps lié sur les pointes [tahn lyay sewr lay pwent] Connected movement on the points.

Terre, à [a tehr] On the ground. This term indicates: (1) that the entire base of the supporting foot or feet touches the ground; (2) that the foot usually raised in a pose is to remain on the ground with the toes extended.

Tour de force [toor duh fawrss] An arresting, vital step; a feat of technical skill such as a series of brilliant pirouettes or a combination of outstanding jumps and beats.

Tour en l'air [toor ahn lehr] Turn in the air. This is essentially a male dancer's step although contemporary choreographers use this tour for girls. It is a turn in the air in which the dancer rises straight into the air from a demi-plié, makes a complete turn and lands in the fifth position with the feet reversed. The turn may be single, double or triple according to the ability of the dancer. The arms assist and the head must spot as in pirouettes. Tour en l'air may also be finished in various poses such as attitude, arabesque, grande seconde or on one knee. It may also be done in a series.

Tour Jete *see Jete entrelace

Tournant, en [ahn toor-NAHN] Turning. Indicates that the body is to turn while executing a given step. As, for example, in assemblé en tournant.

Trois [trwah] Three. As, for example, in entrechat trois.

Troisième [trwah-ZYEM] Third. As, for example, in troisième arabesque.

Turn-out This is the ability of the dancer to turn his or her feet and legs out from the hip joints to a 90-degree position. This turn-out, or en-dehors, is one of the essential principles of the classical dance, giving the dancer freedom of movement in every direction.

Tutu [tew-TEW] This is the short classical ballet skirt made of many layers of tarlatan or net. The romantic tutu is the long skirt reaching below the calf.

Vaganova, Agrippina [ah-gree-PEE-nah vah-GAH-naw-vah] The greatest Russian teacher of her day (1879-1951). She was a graduate of the St. Petersburg Imperial Ballet School, where she studied under Ivanov, Vazem, Gerdt, Legat and others. She was accepted into the corps de ballet of the Maryinski Theatre in 1897 and became a ballerina in 1915. She left the stage in 1917 to devote herself to teaching. In 1921 she became a teacher at the Leningrad State Ballet School (formerly the Imperial Ballet School, St. Petersburg) and began developing the instructional system that later became known to the world as the Vaganova system. In 1934 she became head of the Leningrad Choreographic Technicum and published her textbook Fundamentals of the Classic Dance Vaganova's method has become the basic method of the entire Soviet choreographic school. This method is still being developed by Vaganova's followers.

Variation [va-rya-SYAWN] Variation. A solo dance in a classic ballet.

Virtuoso A performer with great technical ability.

Working leg A term used by dancers and teachers to denote the leg that is executing a given movement while the weight of the body is on the supporting leg.