

Ballet Dictionary

Adagio: A series of very slow movements performed together to look graceful and effortless, floating. It can also mean the beginning of a pas de deux dance where a man and woman dance together, performing slow lifts, turns, and other supported steps.

Air, en l': Movement that is made in the air, like a rond de jambe en l'air.

Allegro: Quick moving steps, often containing jumps, performed to a quick tempo of music.

Allongé: To stretch, to elongate, usually referring to stretching and straightening a leg or arm.

Arabesque: When one stands on one leg with the other leg extended straight back.

Arabesque en l'aire: Arabesque where the back leg is lifted and parallel to the floor.

Arabesque penchee: Arabesque where the back leg is lifted as high as possible while the upper body is tilted forward to help the dancer maintain her balance.

Arrière: A step that is performed backwards, en arriere.

Assemble: Means to bring together. It is a step where the working foot slides against the ground before swinging it up into the air, as the other leg pushes off the ground then landing in fifth position.

Attitude: The working leg is raised, bent from the knee at an angle of 90 degrees and turned out so that the knee is at the same level as the foot. This position can be done from the front, side, or back.

Attitude devant: The leg is in attitude in the front of the body

Attitude derrière: The leg is in attitude in the back of the body.

Avant: Means forward, en avant is any step moving forward.

Balancé: a series of steps that swing in a balancing motion, often several together.

Ballerina: a female ballet dancer.

Ballet: A classical dance form characterized by formalized steps and technique.

Ballet Slippers: shoes worn for ballet.

Ballet: A dance where a choreographer has created movements for the performers with a musical accompaniment, usually on stage with costumes, lighting, and scenery.

Barre: A long, rounded piece of wood attached to the walls of a ballet studio (or on free standing supports) that dancers hold onto for support during "barre exercises"

Battement: A French term meaning "kick."

Battement Frappes: A movement in which the dancer begins in fifth position with her left hand on the barre and her right foot wrapped in front of her left ankle bone. She brushes her right foot down so the ball of her foot strikes the floor. Next she points her right foot hard and snaps her right knee straight, lifting her leg up into the air a few inches. She finishes by bending her right knee and setting her foot down behind her left ankle and then wrapping it at the anklebone.

Battement Tendu: an exercise in which the leg is extended to the front, side or back and generally repeated several times. When the leg is fully extended, the knee should be straight with the foot pointed.

B+ Pose: The dancer stands on either foot with other leg behind her. The rear leg is slightly bent and placed behind the standing foot with knees touching. The big toe on the back leg touches the

floor.

Bourrée: A step performed in releve where one leg pulls the other leg to close both in a tight 5th position in a series of tiny and quick steps either in place or moving.

Bourrée, pas de: a series of three steps linked together, for example step up on the right leg, step side on the left leg, close the right leg to 5th position front.

Brisé: Quick moving step where the feet and legs beat together in a jump from 5th position to 5th position while traveling either forward or backwards.

Center Work: Exercises performed in the in the center of the room without any support of the barre.

Changé: Mean to change.

Changement: A small jump in 5th position, changing legs legs from front to back.

Chassé: A movement where one foot moves forward and the other quickly follows behind, chasing it.

Choreographer: An artist who creates dances by arranging steps to music.

Choreography: The way in which dance steps are combined to create a visual expression of the music.

Circle Time: The beginning of a Creative Movement class during which the teacher greets the students and lets them know what they will be doing in class.

Composer: A person who writes music.

Corps de ballet: Dancers in a ballet company that perform the group dances as opposed to solo parts.

Costume: An outfit which is worn onstage in order to portray a character.

Coupé: A sharp movement where the foot quickly moves off the floor and circles the ankle in either the front or the back. Mean to cut.

Creative Movement: Class A class for young dancers that encourages free and creative movement to music.

Croisé: A position in which the dancer's legs appear crossed to the audience.

Dedans, en: A turn inwards.

Dehors, en: A turn outwards.

Demi-Plié: A half bend of the knees.

Demi-pointes: Rising up to the ball of your foot, not on full point of the toe shoes. Means half point.

Developpé: A movement in which a dancer stands in fifth position and holds the barre for support. The dancer slides one leg up the side of the other to the knee and then extends her leg as her arms are raised. The leg is held still for a moment and then lowered.

Dress Rehearsal: A final run through in costume of a ballet before it is performed for an audience.

Écarté: A position in which the dancer's body faces one corner of the room with her leg pointed to the other corner and her arms in fourth position, with her head looking behind the raised arm.

Échappé: A French term that means "to escape." A movement in which the feet move in a level manner from a closed to an open position.

Échappé Sauté: A jump in which the dancers springs from fifth position and lands in demi-plie with the feet opened in second position, then springs into the air again and closes the legs back to fifth position, landing in demi-plie.

Effacé: A directional term where one leg is either front or back, moving to the side.

Enchainment: The linking together of steps.

Échappe Relévé: The dancer demi-pliés in fifth position then springs quickly up into second or fourth position on pointe or demi-pointe. The dancer then reverses the movement and brings the legs back into fifth position demi-plié.

Effacé: A position in which the legs look open or uncrossed to the audience.

Enchaînement: The linking together several dance movements.

En face: A position in which the dancer's arms and legs are held in any position and her body completely faces the front of the room.

Fermé: To close.

Fifth Position Arms: A position in which the arms are lifted over the head. The arms are rounded, with the elbows lightly bent, and the hands are held close together but without the fingers touching.

Fifth Position Legs: A position in which one foot is placed in front of the other, with both feet touching and the toes of each foot

lined up with the heel of the other.

First Position Arms: A position in which the arms are curved in front of the body and held as if they are forming a circle.

First Position Legs: A position in which the balls of the feet are turned out completely so that the heels touch each other and the feet face outward, trying to form a straight line.

Fouetté: A whipping movement on one leg while changing the hip and upper body direction.

Fourth Position Arms: A position in which the left arm is held forward and rounded at the same height as the chest, and the right arm is raised above the head and slightly rounded.

Fourth Position Legs: A position in which the feet are placed as in fifth position but they are separated by the length of one foot.

Frappé: To strike or hit, quick action of the leg and foot.

Glissade: A gliding step that moves the dancer across the floor and links other ballet steps together. The dancer begins in fifth position with her right foot in front. She demi-plies and then slides her left foot out across the floor into second position. She jumps slightly off of the right foot and lands on her left foot, and the right foot moves into fifth position.

Grand Battement: A French word meaning "Big Kick." The dancer begins in either first position or fifth position with her left arm on the barre. She slides her right foot into tendu front and raises her right leg up as high as possible in a turned out position. She then lowers her leg, bringing it back to first or fifth position.

Grand Jeté en Avant: A large, horizontal jump in which the dancer splits her legs while jumping in the air and then lands on one foot.

Grand Plié: A full bend of the knees . The heels are lifted when the full bend is reached (except in the second position, where they remain on the floor) and are then pushed back down to the floor as the dancer passes through a demi-plie and straightens the knees.

Jete: A French term meaning "to throw."

Melody: A pleasing arrangement of sounds within a piece of music

Musicality: Musical sensitivity.

Pantomime: A set of gestures used in ballet to tell a story, explain events, or indicate specific ideas or feelings.

Pas de Chat: A movement starting in fifth position, in which the dancer looks in the direction she is moving. The dancer lifts her

back foot to her calf and plies on the front leg. Then she jumps into the air, picking up both legs at once underneath her body and pointing both feet toward each other. She lands on one bent leg with her other leg pointing to the mid-shin and finishes in fifth position.

Pas de deux: A dance performed by two people.

Passé: Passé refers to both a position and a movement. As a position, one leg is turned out and bent at the knee with the foot placed in front or in back of the other knee. As a movement, the working foot—the foot that is moving—slides up the front of the standing leg until the toe reaches the knee and then the foot passes to the back of the knee and slides back down to fifth position.

Pianist: Someone who plays the piano.

Pirouette: A turn or a spin around on one leg done on pointe or on demi-point.

Plié: An exercise in which the dancer bends her knees and then straightens them.

Pointe Shoes: A type of ballet shoe used by advanced dancers that has special reinforcements in the toe and sole so that a ballerina can stand on her toes while dancing.

Pointe Work: Dancing that occurs on the tips of the toes. This is performed in pointe shoes.

Positions: There are five basic feet positions in ballet and there are also five basic arm positions.

Posture: How one holds one's body.

Preparatory position: premiere en bas A starting point pose to get your body ready, or prepared. The preparatory position is the beginning pose used to start and end a floor combination. To reach this position, hold your back straight and your head high, relax your arms in front of you, slightly away from your body. Both arms should be rounded like you are holding a beach ball, with your fingers close together but not touching.

Props: Items used during a performance to help tell a story.

Relève: A movement in which the dancer rises to demi pointe or pointe. The dancer begins in first or fifth position and smoothly lifts both of her heels as far off the floor as she can. When she reaches the balls of her feet, she slowly goes back down and ends again in first or fifth position.

Ronds de Jambe à Terre: The movement of the leg in a circular pattern.. The dancer begins in first position with her left hand on the barre and tendus her right foot to the front, then traces the

pattern of a circle as she moves her leg to the side, to the back, and then back to first position.

Ronds de Jambe (en Dedans): A version of the Ronds de Jambe in which the foot does the reverse movements, starting with tendu back.

Rosin: A crumbly powder that turns white and rough when the dancer steps into it. Rosin makes ballet shoes less slippery and safer for difficult and dangerous pointe work.

Sauté: Sauté means "to hop" in French. This term is added to the name of a step to indicate that the step is performed while jumping.

Saute Passé: A passé while jumping. The dancer jumps up on one leg. The foot of the other leg passes up the front of the straight leg until it reaches the knee and then slides down the back of the leg and lands on two feet.

Second position (en seconde) Arms: In second position arms, the arms are opened to one's sides with the elbows slightly rounded as in first position.

Second position (en seconde) Legs: In second position for the feet, the balls of both feet are turned out completely, with the heels separated by the length of one foot. This is similar to first

position, but the feet are spread apart.

Stage Makeup: Makeup used by performers, which serves to accentuate the features of a performer on a brightly lit stage.

Sur le coup de pied: In this position, the working foot is wrapped around the ankle of the other leg. Sur le coup de pied means "on the neck of the foot" in French.

Sous-Sus: In this position the dancer relevés in a tight fifth position, with one foot almost on top of the other foot. The feet are touching and the ankles are crossed with the dancer on pointe or demi-pointe.

School of American Ballet (SAB): The official academy of the New York City Ballet, founded in 1934 by the famous choreographer, George Balanchine, and patron of the arts, Lincoln Kirstein. SAB is located in New York City at Lincoln Center.

Spotting: A technique used by dancers to keep themselves from getting dizzy when turning.

Soubresaut: Soubresaut is French for "sudden leap". This is a jump in which the dancer both takes off from and lands in fifth position with the legs tightly crossed and feet pointed in the air.

Tempo: The speed or pace of a piece of music.

Third Position Arms: A position in which the arms are curved as in first position and raised a little above and forward of the head.

Third Position Legs: A position in which one foot is placed in front of the other foot. The heel of the front foot should touch the middle of the back foot.

Tour en L'Aire: A jump, which involves a complete 360 degree turn or multiple turns in midair. The dancer starts in fifth position. He demi-pliés and pushes off the floor into the air and makes a complete turn (or two) before landing on the floor in fifth position demi-plié, .

Turnout: The turning out of the legs and feet from the hips . With perfect turnout, a dancer's feet point in opposite directions from each other to form a straight line, with the heels touching.

Waltz: Music or a dance performed in counts of three with a strong accent on the first beat.

Wardrobe Mistress: The person that alters costumes to fit each dancer, and cares for them in every way.