

Ballet terms (A-Z):

Adage, Adagio [French: a-DAHZH]

Slow, sustained and gentle movement. Adagio is a center combination consisting of controlled, lyrical and continuous steps. It is characterized by the ease and grace of the positions and connections, and builds the dancer's control and endurance. An Adagio is composed of static positions where the dancer's lines and extensions can be appreciated, and of promenades and turns in which the dancer must show control and elegance.

Adagio can also refer to one of the composing parts of a classical pas de deux, in which the ballerina shows her lines, control and extensions while being supported by her male partner.

Air, en l' [French: ahn lehr]

This term is used to indicate that a movement will be performed in the air (en l'air). It can refer to the working leg, meaning that this leg will be lifted from the floor while the supporting leg is still in contact with it; for example, rond de jambe en l'air; or to a movement done completely in the air with no contact with the floor; for example, tour en l'air.

Allégro [a-lay-GROH; Italian: al-LAY-groh]

Fast and lively movement. Allégro is used to describe all movement combinations that are done at a fast tempo and require agility and precision from the dancer. In Ballet, it is normally associated with jumping combinations, in which the feet and legs must move very fast, but the arms and torso must show tranquility and grace.

Allongé

Lengthened, straightened position. It normally refers to the action of lengthening the arms into a straight line for a balanced or static position. For example, arabesque allongé.

Arabesque [a-ra-BESK]

Pose in which one leg is extended behind the body forming a right or acute angle with the back, while the supporting leg is straight or in demi-plié. The position of the arms is determined by the type of line that the dancer has to create with his/her body. There are four different arabesques, each type is differentiated by the arms' position. Arabesque is one of the most used positions in classical repertoire.

Arrière, en [ah na-RYEHR]

To go backward. En arrière is used to indicate that the execution of a step will move the dancer away from the audience. For example, chassé en arrière.

Assemblé [a-sahn-BLAY]

To assemble or join together. Assemblé is a step that can be executed as a small (petit) or big (grand) jump. The dancer will start from a demi-plié in fifth position, then one leg will brush the floor and be extended to the side. After this, the dancer will push off the floor with the supporting leg and fully extend the toes. Both legs will be joined in the air and then land in a demi-plié in fifth position. For small jumps, the legs may remain separated in the air and only come together as they land in demi-plié.

Assemblés can be done in all directions: dessus, dessous, devant, derrière, en avant, en arrière; and also while turning in the air: en tournant.

Attitude [a-tee-TEWD]

Pose in which the body is balanced in one leg while the other leg is lifted to the front, to the side or to the back. The leg that is en l'air will be turned out and bent at an angle of 90 degrees or more, this depends on the school. The arms may be positioned according to the line that wants to be created (over the head, or just one arm over the head and the other extended to the side).

Avant, en [ah na-VAHN]

To the front or to go forward. En avant is used to indicate that the execution of a step will move the dancer towards the audience. For example, glissade en avant.

Balancé [ba-lahn-SAY]

Step that shifts the weight of the body from one foot to the other; this shift gives the illusion that the dancer is rocking his/her body from side to side. It is similar to the pas de valse. The dancer will start from a demi-plié in fifth position, the foot that is in the front (FF) will dégagé to the side, then the foot that was back (BF) will gently push off the floor and land in a demi-pointe behind the FF that is in a demi-plié. After this, the weight will be shifted to the BF and both legs will be straightened, lifting the FF slightly off the ground. Then the weight will return to the FF in demi-plié and the BF will be positioned in cou-de-pied derrière. This would normally be followed by another balancé to the opposite side. Balancé can also be done en avant or en arrière.

Ballet foot positions

There are 5 foot positions. They were established by Pierre Beauchamps, the director of the Académie Royale de Danse. These positions can be divided in fermée (closed) and ouverte (open) positions. Fermée positions are the ones in which the feet are together: 1st, 3rd and 5th position. Ouverte positions are the ones in which the feet are separated: 2nd and 4th. The five positions can be done à terre (in the floor), sur la pointe or sur la demi-pointe.

Ballon [ba-LAWN]

Refers to the smooth and elastic quality of the jumps performed in Ballet. A dancer with ballon will push off from the floor, stop for a second in the air in a static position, and then come back down very lightly. This quality of movement allows the dancer to execute various jumps in a row, and to look very light and graceful when doing so.

Ballonné, Pas [pah ba-law-NAY]

Literally: bouncing step. The dancer will start in cou de pied, while the supporting leg is in demi-plié. Both legs will be extended at the same time, with the leg that was in cou de pied towards the front, the back or the side. After this the dancer will return to the initial position. This step can be done from cou de pied, where the working leg is extended at 45 degrees; or from retiré, where the working leg is extended at 90 degrees or higher.

Ballotté [ba-law-TAY]

Step composed of two cou de pieds done in the air, followed by a développé. It can be done as a jump, especially for allègre combinations, or as a weight shift with no jump, normally for adagio combinations. Ballotté can be performed en avant or en arrière, and it can also be done with retirés instead of cou de pieds.

Barre [bar]

It is a horizontal tube, generally made out of wood, that is attached to the classroom's walls. It gives the dancer's support to perform the exercises that are done at the beginning of every ballet class.

Battement [bat-MAHN]

Refers to a beating action performed by the working leg, it can start from a flexed or extended position. Battements can be divided into two main categories: petits battements and grands battements. Petits battements are where the leg is extended at 45 degrees or less and grands battements are where the leg is extended at 90 degrees or more.

Battement dégagé [bat-MAHN day-ga-ZHAY]

It is a step similar to battement tendu, but it is done faster. In battement dégagé, the working foot is brushed off the floor and separated about 4 inches from it. The working leg must be completely straight and the foot fully-pointed. After this, the leg is brought back in brushing the floor and returned to first or fifth position. This step strengthens the muscles that are used to jump and gives flexibility to the feet. It is also known as battement tendu jeté.

Battement développé [bat-MAHN dayv-law-PAY]

To develop the leg outwards. The dancer will start from fifth position, sliding the foot up along the working leg until it reaches the retiré position. Then the leg will be extended to the front, to the side or to the back, being careful to keep it turned out. Once the leg is fully extended at an angle of 90 degrees or more, it is lowered to the floor and returned to the fifth position.

Battement fondu [bat-MAHN fawn-DEW]

To perform this step the dancer will start from fifth position. The leg that is in front will be taken to cou de pied while the supporting leg is bent into a demi-plié. Then both legs will be straightened at the same time, and the pointed foot of the leg that was in front will be gently placed on the floor. After this, the extended leg will return to cou de pied and the supporting leg to demi-plié. This step can be performed devant, derrière or a la seconde.

Battement fondu développé [bat-MAHN fawn-DEW dayv-law-PAY]

This step follows the same movement pattern of a battement fondu, but instead of placing the pointed foot on the floor, the leg will remain en l'air and will be extended at 45 degrees or higher. When the leg is extended at 90 degrees or more, the working leg must be brought from cou de pied to retiré before doing the développé.

Battement frappé [bat-MAHN fra-PAY]

It is a step where the dancer starts from a cou de pied and then extends the leg to the front, to the back or to the side, while keeping the supporting leg completely straight. The foot of the working leg is fully pointed and the step must be done with force, in order to develop the strength and agility to jump.

Battement, petit [puh-TEE bat-MAHN]

It is a step where the dancer starts from cou de pied devant and then shifts quickly to cou de pied derrière by slightly opening the working leg to the side. The shift is done continuously and as many times as the music allows. In petit battement the supporting leg is completely straight and can be à terre, sur le pointe or sur le demi-pointe.

Battement tendu [bat-MAHN tahn-DEW]

Literally: stretched battement. This is the basic step of ballet and is normally the first exercise of the barre. The dancer will start from a first or fifth position and will extend the working leg devant, derrière or a la seconde while brushing the floor with the foot. After brushing, the foot will reach a fully pointed position, but won't be lifted from the floor. Then the foot will return to the initial position by brushing the floor again. Battement tendu can also be done with the supporting leg in demi-plié.

Battement, grand [grahn bat-MAHN]

Literally: large battement. It is a step where the working leg is raised above the hip and brought back down in a fast, controlled movement. In grand battement both legs remain completely straight and the torso must not be affected in any way by the movement of the leg.

Battu [ba-TEW]

Term used to describe the beating or striking together of the legs in the air. The majority of small jumps can be performed battu, like assemblé battu or jeté battu.

Bras bas [brah bah]

Literally; low arms. Term used to describe the preparatory position of the arms, in which they form a circle and rest close to the dancer's thighs. The elbows are slightly bent and should not touch the torso.

Bras, positions des [paw-zee-SYAWN day brah]

Unlike the foot positions, the arms positions in ballet are not standard and can vary depending on the method or school. However, they all follow a similar line in which the elbows are slightly bent and the hands are positioned in a gentle manner, continuing the line of the body.

Brisé [bree-ZAY]

It is a jumping step. A brisé follows the same principle as the assemblé, but – when executing it – the dancer will travel in the air towards the leg that was extended. It is also a beaten jump, and can be performed from one or two feet and land in one or two feet. Brisés can be done dessous, dessus, en avant or en arriere.

Brisé volé [bree-ZAY vaw-LAY]

Literally: flying brisé. It is a brisé where the dancer lands in just one foot after beating, with the other leg crossed to the front or to the back.

Cabriole [ka-bree-AWL]

It is a jump where one leg is thrust into the air while the other pushes off the floor and follows the first leg. Both legs are extended as the second leg beats against the first one. The second leg then returns to the floor in a demi-plié while the other leg is held for a second in the air before returning to the floor. Cabriole can be done petite (at 45 degrees) or grande (at 90 degrees), and can be executed in any direction.

Chaînés [sheh-NAY]

Literally: chains or links. In Ballet, chaînés are a series of consecutive turns executed on both feet. Chaînés can be done in a straight line or in a circle (manège). The dancer alternates the weight between the feet very quickly; this allows the turns to gain speed and be consecutive, creating a “chain” dynamic in the movement.

Changement de pieds [shahnzh-MAHN duh pyay]

Literally: change of feet. It is usually shortened to “changement”. Changements are jumps from the fifth position in which the legs change in the air; meaning that if the right foot starts in front, it will end behind the left foot after the jump. Both legs are completely straight during a changement. This jump can be done petite or grand, depending on the elevation that the dancer gives to the jump.

Chassé [sha-SAY]

Step in which one foot “chases” the other and moves it away from its original position. Chassés are a traveling step and can be done in any direction. They are done with straight legs and pointed feet.

Cloche, en [ahn klawsh]

Cloche means “bell” in English. This term is used to refer to grand battements that are executed continuously. To execute a grand battement en cloche, the dancer will swing his leg to the front and the back in a bell-like movement. Both legs will be completely straight and the working leg will always pass through first position before going devant or derrière.

Côté, de [duh koh-TAY]

This term is used to describe that a movement or step will be done to the side. De côté, however, does not specify whether the step will go to the right or to the left.

Cou-de-pied, [koo-duh-PYAY]

Literally: “neck of the foot”. This term is used to refer to a position where one foot is pointed and placed above the ankle of the supporting leg. It can be done devant, derrière or wrapped around the working leg (sur le cou-de-pied).

Coupé jeté en tournant [koo-PAY zhuh-TAY ahn toor-NAHN]

It is a jumping step that is done while turning (en tournant). Coupé jeté en tournant consists of a three-quarter turn in cou-de-pied derrière in demi-plié, and a grand jeté en avant that travels and completes the turn. This step is normally done in a manège and is normally executed by male dancers because it requires a lot of power and strength.

Couru [koo-REW]

From the verb “courir”, which means “to run”. This term generally accompanies the name of a step, as in pas de bourrée couru, and implies that the step will travel through space rapidly.

Croisé, croisée [kmJah-ZAY]

Literally: crossed. This term is used to describe a position in which the dancer stands according to the audience’s perspective. A croisé position is where the dancer’s body is placed at an oblique angle from the audience and the legs appear crossed.

Croix, en [ahn krwah]

Literally: in cross or in the shape of a cross. This term is used to indicate that a step must be done to the fourth position front, then to the second position and then to the fourth position back, in a consecutive manner. A step that is done en croix can also start to the back and finish in front. For example, battement frappé en croix.

Danse de caractère [dahnss duh ka-rak-TEHR]

Dance of character or character dance. It is a style of dancing that generally portrays an specific profession or living style through characteristic movements. Danse de caractère combines movements from classical ballet and folklore, and its classes are normally composed by exercises done at the barre and then in the center.

Dedans, en [ahn duh-DAHNN]

Literally: inwards. This term is used to indicate that a step is to be executed “inwards”. It can refer to the circular movement of a leg: from the back to the front. For example, rond de jambe en l’air en dedans. Or to the direction of a pirouette: towards the side of the supporting leg. For example, pirouette arabesque en dedans.

Dehors, en [ahn duh-AWR]

Literally: outwards. This term is used to indicate that a step is to be executed “outwards”. It can refer to the circular movement of a leg: from the front to the back. For example, rond de jambe en l’air en dehors. Or to the direction of a pirouette: towards the side of the leg that is not touching the floor. For example, pirouette arabesque en dehors.

Demi-plié [duh-MEE-plee-AY]

This term is used to describe the position of the supporting leg(s). In a demi-plié the knees are fully bent without separating the heels from the ground and the legs are completely turned out from the hip joint. This step can be done in any of the feet positions, and always comes before and after a jump or turn.

Demi-pointes, sur les [sewr lay duh-mee-PWENT]

Literally: on the half-points. This term is used to describe the position where the dancer stands high on the ball of the feet with the heels as far away from the floor as possible. It can be used in the singular form: *cou de pied sur la demi-pointe*; or in the plural form: *relevé sur les demi-pointes*.

Derrière [deh-RYEHR]

Literally: behind or back. This term is used to indicate that a specific step or the placement of a limb is to be done to the back or behind the body.

Dessous [duh-SOO]

Literally: under. This term is used to indicate that, after the execution of a step, the working foot will finish behind the supporting foot.

Dessus [duh-SEW]

Literally: over. This term is used to indicate that, after the execution of a step, the working foot will be placed in front of the supporting foot.

Devant [duh-VAHN]

Literally: in front. This term is used to indicate that a specific step or the placement of a limb is to be done to the front or in front of the body.

Développé, temps [tahn dayv-law-PAY]

This term has been abbreviated with time to “développé”. It refers to a movement in which the working leg is brought up to the retiré position and extended (developed) en l’air. Développé is a slow movement that can be done in any direction with the supporting leg à terre, sur la demi-pointe or sur la pointe.

Diagonale, en [ahn dya-gaw-NAL]

Literally: in a diagonal. This term is used to indicate that a movement will be done in a diagonal and that the dancer will travel in this direction when executing said movement.

Divertissement [dee-vehr-tees-MAHNLAY]

Entertainment or diversion. This term is used in ballet to describe a short dance performed by a dancer or a group of dancers. These short segments are also called “entrées” and are included in ballets to show specific skills or talents of the dancers. Generally, divertissements lack of a storyline and don’t add anything to the plot of the ballet.

Double [DOO-bluh]

Literally: double. This term accompanies the name of a step to indicate that it must be done twice. For example, battement frappé double.

Écarté [ay-har-TAY]

This term is used to describe a specific position of the body in relation with the audience. In écarté, the dancer will stand facing one of the front corners of the stage or room, and extend the leg that is closer to the audience á la seconde. This leg can be in battement tendu or en l’air. The arms will be held in third position and the head will be tilted towards the hand that is up. This position is from the Cecchetti method, but has been adopted by the majority of the styles.

Échappé [ay-sha-PAY]

This term refers to the movement of the legs from a closed position to an open position. There are two types of échappés: échappé sauté, in which the dancer starts from a demi-plié in fifth position, opens the legs in the air and lands in a demi-plié in an open position (fourth or second); and échappé sur les demi-pointes, or les pointes, in which the dancer also starts from fifth position, but slides the feet through the floor and ends in an open position (fourth or second) with the legs completely straight. In both types of échappés, both legs open to the same distance from the original position.

Effacé, effacée [eh-fa-SAY]

Literally: shaded. This term is used to describe a position in which the dancer stands according to the audience’s perspective. An effacé position is where the dancer’s body is placed at an oblique angle from the audience and the legs appear to be “open”. Effacé is the opposite to the croisé position.

Élévation [ay-lay-va-SYAWN]

Literally: elevation. This term refers to the height of a dancer’s jump.

Entrechat [ahn-truh-SHAH]

Term derived from the Italian word “intrecciare” that means “braided”. Entrechat refers to the beating of the legs, in front and behind, while the dancer is elevated from the floor. Entrechats are named after the number of crossings or beats that the dancer does in the air, each beat counted as two (one for each leg). For example, an entrechat quatre requires the dancer to jump and cross the legs twice before landing.

Entrechats can be classified into two general categories: even-numbered entrechats (deux, quatre, six, huit, dix) that start and land in fifth position; and uneven-numbered entrechats (trois, cinq, sept, neuf) that start from fifth position, but land in one foot.

Épaulement [ay-pohl-MAHN]

Literally: shouldering. This term is used to describe a specific position of the shoulders in relation with the lower body, in which one shoulder is brought forward giving the back of the dancer a “twisted” look. In épaulement, the waist and the legs remain still and the head is slightly tilted toward the shoulder that is in front. The main directions of épaulement are croisé and effacé.

Extension [eks-tahn-SYAWN]

In ballet, this term refers to the ability of the dancer to raise his/her extended leg en l’air, and have the strength and control to hold it there. It is common to hear the phrase: “X dancer has beautiful extensions”, referring to the height and shape of the leg that is en l’air.

Face, en [ahn fahss]

Literally: in front. This term is used when the dancer is facing the audience in a right angle, as opposed to a croisé or effacé position.

Fermé, fermée

Closed. This term accompanies the name of a step and indicates that it finishes in a closed (fermé) position. For example, *sissonne fermée*.

Fondu, fondue [fawn-DEW]

A melting or sinking down movement. This term describes the action of slowly bending the supporting leg into a demi-plié, while the working leg is in cou de pied or en l’air.

Fouetté [fweh-TAY]

Whipping movement. This term refers to the rapid change of the body's direction (from the front to the back, or vice versa), while the working leg is en l'air and also changes direction (from a devant position to a derrière position) after passing through a demi-plié in first position. Fouettés can be done petite or grande, depending on the height of the working leg; and also à terre, sur la demi-pointe, sur la pointe, sauté or en tournant.

Fouetté rond de jambe en tournant [fweh-TAY rawn duh zhahnb ahn toor-NAHN]

Literally: whipped circle of the leg turning. Fouetté turns are one of the most popular steps in ballet. The dancer starts with a pirouette in the retiré position, then fondues the supporting leg while extending the other leg devant at hip level, the working leg is whipped energetically to an à la seconde position and then brought back in into the retiré position. The whipping of the leg allows the dancer to gain speed and keep turning on the supporting leg. Fouetté turns are done in a series and can be executed en dehors or en dedans.

Glissade [glee-SAD]

This term is derived from the french verb "glisser" which means "to glide". It is a transitory step, generally preceding a petit or grand jump. The dancer will start from a demi-plié in fifth position and glide the working foot through the floor until the leg is completely extended, and the pointed foot is separated a few inches from the floor. After this, the supporting leg will push off the floor and reach an extended position in the air. Before descending, the legs will create an "A" shape in the air. Then, the first foot that left the floor will come back down into a fondu and the second leg will be glided along the floor until closing into fifth position.

Glissades may be done devant, derrière, dessous, dessus, en avant or en arrière. All glissades will start and finish in a demi-plié in fifth position.

Grand, grande [grahn, grahnd]

Literally: big or large. This term accompanies the name of a step, such as grand plie or grande rond de jambe.

Grand plié [grahn plee-AY]

This term refers to the "full" or "maximum" bending of the knees while maintaining the legs completely turned out from the hip joint. In a grand plié the knees are fully bent and the heels are separated from the ground in first, third, fourth and fifth position.

Jeté [zhuh-TAY]

This term refers to a jumping step in which the weight is shifted from one foot to the other. To execute a jeté the dancer will brush one leg off the floor and throw it into the air. The other leg will push off the floor and land in cou de pied with the first leg in fondu. Jetés can be done in all directions.

Jeté battu [zhuh-TAY ba-TEW]

Jumping step. Jeté battu follows the same mechanic of a jeté, but is embellished by a beating of the legs before landing. It can be done dessous or dessus.

Jeté entrelacé [zhuh-TAY ahn-truh-la-SAY] – Tour Jeté

Literally: interlaced jeté. This jump is done by doing a dégagé in front with one leg while pushing off the floor with the other. Then, the leg that is in dégagé will do a fouetté to an arabesque and, simultaneously, change the direction of the body. After this, the leg in arabesque will switch positions with the other leg. All of this will happen in the air. Jeté entrelacé lands in an arabesque position and is normally preceded by a chassé or a pas couru.

Jeté, grand [grahn zhuh-TAV]

This term refers to a jeté in which the legs are thrown into the air at 90 degrees. The back leg can be in an attitude or in an arabesque position. Grand jeté is a jump that requires great elevation and power, and that travels – generally, forward – while in the air.

Jeté, petit [puh-TEE zhuh-TAY]

A small jeté in which the legs are thrown into the air at 45 degrees. It lands in fondu with the other leg en l'air or in cou de pied. Petit jeté can be executed dessus, dessous, en avant, en arrière and en tournant.

Line

In Ballet, this term refers to the line that the dancer creates with his/her body. Dancers aim to achieve a beautiful line through straight legs, fully-pointed feet, long and delicate arms, and an elongated neck.

Manèges [ma-NEZH]

This term describes the trajectory that a dancer follows when executing a step around the stage, in a circle. For example, copé jeté en tournant in manège.

Mazurka or mazurek

It is a traditional polish dance in which the music is counted in $\frac{3}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$. It is generally danced in a circle and has a lot of clicking heels and stomping feet. Mazurka has been incorporated into many ballets as a character dance.

Ouvert, ouverte [oo-VEHR, oo-VEHRT]

Literally: open. This term refers to feet positions (second and fourth), limbs, angles and steps that are done or finished in an open position. For example, *sissonne ouvert*.

Pas de basque [pawh duh baask]

This is a traveling step that changes the direction of the dancer's body. The dancer will start in fifth position with the right leg in front. The left leg will do a demi-plié while the right leg is brushed through the floor and positioned in a *tendu devant croisé*. Then, the right leg will do a half *rond de jambe* and change the direction of the body to an *écarté derrière* position, while the left leg is still in demi-plié. After this, the weight will be transferred to the right leg and the left leg will be extended to an *écarté devant* position. *Pas de basque* will finish in a demi-plié in fifth position after brushing in the left leg through the floor.

This step may also be done with a small jump in order to shift the weight from one leg to the other, and can be executed *en avant*, *en arrière* or *en tournant*.

Pas de bourrée [pah duh boo-RAY]

This term refers to a step that has many variations and can be done in any direction. A *pas de bourrée* is composed of a series of small steps in which the legs come together for a moment before opening again. It is normally done *sur la demi-pointe* or *sur la pointe*, and it is used to travel *en avant*, *en arrière* or *à la seconde*. *Pas de bourrée* is generally preceded by a *tombé*, as a preparation for *pirouettes* or big jumps.

Pas de bourrée couru [pah duh boo-RAY koo-REW]

Literally: running *pas de bourrée*. It is composed by a series of small and quick steps that are done in the fifth position, and help the dancer travel *en avant*, *en arrière*, *à la seconde* or *en tournant*. *Pas de bourrée couru* is done *sur la demi-pointe* or *sur la pointe*.

Pas de chat [pah duh shah]

Cat's step. It is a jumping step in which the dancer will start from demi-plié in fifth position. The back left will be lifted into the air in a *retiré*, closely followed by the other leg in the same position. The jump travels in the air towards the direction of the first leg and lands in fifth position.

Pas de valse [pah duh valss] - Balancé

Literally: Waltz step. This term refers to a combination of steps that accompanies the rhythm of the traditional Waltz music. It is composed of a *degagé* and two steps done *sur la demi-pointe*. *Pas de valse* can be done *en avant*, *en arrière*, *à la seconde* or *en tournant*, and is always decorated with graceful *port de bras*.

Pas marché [pah mar-SHAY]

This term refers to the delicate and graceful walk that a dancer uses to enter or leave the stage.

Penché, penchée [pahn-SHAY]

This term generally accompanies the name of a step to indicate that it is to be done “leaning” or “inclined”. The most common use for this term is arabesque penchée, which is normally abbreviated to “penchée”.

Petit, petite [puh-TEE, puh-TEET]

Literally: small. This term accompanies the name of a step, such as petit jeté or petit battement.

Piqué [pee-KAY]

This term refers to a step in which the dancer shifts the weight to one leg by directly stepping into the demi-pointe or the pointe and leaving the other leg en l’air. Piqué is generally accompanied by the name of a step that describes the position that the en l’air leg will reach when doing the piqué. For example, piqué arabesque or piqué attitude. It can be done in all directions.

Pirouette [peer-WET]

This term refers to a complete turn or a series of consecutive turns that a dancer does while being supported in one leg. In a pirouette, the supporting leg is completely straight and can be sur la pointe or sur la demi-pointe. Pirouettes can be done en dehors or en dedans; and in various positions, such as: cou de pied, retiré, arabesque and attitude, among others.

Pirouettes require great strength, control and coordination, and are a clear demonstration of a dancer’s technique and ability.

Pirouette à la seconde, grande [grahrul peer-WET a lah suh-GAWND]

This term refers to a series of consecutive turns done with one leg extended à la seconde at 90 degrees. Each pirouette is divided by a demi-plié in the standing leg that allows the dancer to continue turning and gain speed. The leg that is en l’air remains à la seconde through the entire consecution of turns, and the arms are firmly held at second position as well. To finish the pirouette, the dancer will bring in the leg that is en l’air to a retiré and perform various turns in said position, while maintaining the supporting leg completely straight and closing in the arms to first position. Grande pirouettes à la seconde are generally executed by male dancers sur la demi-pointe.

Plié [plee-AY]

This term refers to the bending of the knees and can be done demi or grand. Pliés strengthen the muscles, while also making the tendons flexible and giving the dancer a sense of balance. They are generally done at the barre in first, second, fourth and fifth position, and are considered one of the most important and fundamental steps in classical dance.

Pointes, sur les [sewr lay pwent]

Literally: on the points. This term is used to describe the position where the dancer stands on the tip of the toes. It can be used in the singular form: cou de pied sur la pointe; or in the plural form: relevé sur les pointes.

Pointe shoes

These are the specialized ballet shoes that allow dancers to dance en pointe or sur les pointes. Pointe shoes give the dancer support, and highlight the beauty of the dancer's feet and line.

Polonaise

A marching step adapted from the traditional polish dance that was performed at noble events in the 16th century. A polonaise consists of two steps done in relevé, followed by a step done in demi-plié while the other leg brushes off the floor and is slightly lifted in front. This step is generally seen in processional dances inside a ballet, where a group of dancers enters or leaves the stage.

Port de bras [pawr duh brah]

This term refers to the movement of the arms. A port de bras is the action of gracefully changing the arms from one position to another, and is generally accompanied by slight adjustments of the head's position and épaulement. The term port de bras can also refer to a series of specific exercises that are made to improve the arms' mobility and increase the elegance of these movements.

Porté, portée [pawr-TAY]

Literally: carried. This term can refer to a jumping step that travels in the air and moves the dancer from one spot to another. Porté is also used to describe the action in which a male dancer carries his partner through the stage.

Promenade, tour de [toor duh prawm-NAD]

Literally: turn in a walk. This term refers to a step in which the dancer holds a position while slowly turning in the standing leg. This turn is done with the standing foot à terre through small and almost imperceptible movements of the heel. Promenade can be executed en dehors or en dedans and in any position en l'air, such as arabesque or développée à la seconde.

Relevé [ruhl-VAY]

This term refers to the rising of the body on the toes (sur les pointes) or on the balls of the feet (sur les demi-pointes). Relevé can be done in any position with the supporting leg(s) completely straight.

Retiré [ruh-tee-RAY]

Literally: withdrawn. This term refers to a position where the working leg is raised à la seconde with the knee fully bent, so that the toes of the foot are placed in front of the knee of the supporting leg. Retiré can also be done with the toes placed behind or to the side of the supporting leg. Pirouettes in the retiré position are one of the most common turns that can be found in classical variations.

Reverence

This term refers to the bow or curtsy with which the dancers greet the audience and receive the applause. It is generally done with an elegant port de bras that has a style similar to the variation or the ballet that was just performed. Reverences are also used by dancers to greet the teacher or ballet master after a ballet class, as a sign of respect and gratitude.

Rond de jambe [rawn duh zhahnb]

This term refers to a circular movement done by the working leg while keeping the hips square and passing through first position. In rond de jambe, both legs are completely straight and the working foot is fully pointed. It is an exercise done at the barre and in the center, and can be done en dehors, where the working leg is taken to the front, to the side and then to the back; or en dedans, where the working leg is taken to the back, to the side and then to the front.

Rond de jambe is an exercise that loosens the hips and allows the dancer to develop control over his/her turn-out.

Rond de jambe à terre [rawn duh zhahnb a tehr]

This term refers to a rond de jambe in which the working foot remains in contact with the floor throughout the entire movement; it is never taken en l'air.

Rond de jambe en l'air [rawn duh zhahnb ahn lehr]

This term refers to a circular movement done by the bottom half of the working leg while it is held à la seconde. To execute a rond de jambe en l'air, the dancer will begin by raising the working leg à la seconde and drawing an oval in the air. The starting point of said oval is the extended leg, the middle point is a retiré position and the finishing point is the extended leg, once again. This movement can be done en dehors or en dedans, and the working leg can be à terre, sur la demi-pointe or sur la pointe.

Rond de jambe en l'air can also be executed at 45 degrees, where the middle point of the oval will be a cou de pied.

Royale [ruah-YAL]

This step is also known as changement battu. The dancer will start from demi-plié in fifth position and spring into the air. The legs will open slightly before beating together and then changing positions (from the front to the back, or vice versa). The jump lands in a demi-plié in fifth position.

Saut de basque [soh duh bask]

This term refers to a jump that travels in the air with one leg held in the retiré position. The dancer will start from a demi-plié in fifth position with the right foot in front. While keeping the left leg in demi-plié, the right leg will be taken up to retiré and then be extended towards the floor á la seconde. The weight will be shifted towards the right leg in a fondu while doing a half-turn. After this, the left leg will be thrown into the air and reach an à la seconde position at 45 degrees. The right leg will push off the floor and bend until being positioned in retiré devant; while doing so, the dancer will complete the turn. The jump lands in fondu on the left leg and retiré devant with the right leg. Saut de basque travels in the air towards the direction of the leg that is brought up to retiré and can also be done with a double turn in the air.

Sauté, sautée [soh-TAY]

Literally: jumped. This term accompanies the name of a step to indicate that it is to be done with a jump. For example, échappé sauté.

Seconde, à la [ah la suh-GAWND]

Literally: to the second. This term is used to indicate that a movement is to be done towards the side. It can refer to the position of the limbs or to the direction in which a step travels.

Sissonne [see-SAWN]

This term refers to a jump that is done from two feet and that lands in just one foot, in which both legs open outwards in the air. Sissonne can be done petit or grand, depending on the elevation of the jump and the height that the legs reach in the air. This step can be done ouverte, fermée, devant, derrière, dessous, dessus, en avant or en arrière.

Sissonne fermée [see-SAWN fehr-MAY]

Literally: closed sissonne. This term refers to a sissonne that lands in a demi-plié in fifth position. In this jump, the second leg reaches the floor an instant later than the first, and then reaches the fifth position by brushing the floor and passing through the demi-pointe. Sissonne fermée can be done in all directions.

Sissonne ouverte, grand [grahnd see-SAWN oo-VEHRT]

Literally: big open sissonne. This term refers to a sissone that has great elevation and in which the legs are open at an angle of over 90 degrees. Grand sissonne ouverte starts from a demi-plié in fifth position and lands in fondu, while the other leg is held in the position that it had in the jump. This position can be arabesque, attitude, à la seconde or développé devant, among others.

Soussus [su-suu]

This term refers to a relevé in fifth position in which the toes of the leg that is forward are placed directly in front of the toes of the back leg. In soussus, both legs are completely straight and turned out.

Soutenu [soot-new]

Literally: sustained. This term refers to a turn done in soussus, in which the legs switch positions in order to allow the dancer to turn in the spot.

The term soutenu can also accompany the name of a step to indicate that it must be held in a specific position before landing. For example, assemblé soutenu.

Supporting leg

This term refers to the leg that supports the dancer's weight while the other leg is executing a movement. It can be in fondu, à terre, sur la demi-pointe or sur la pointe. The supporting leg must be very strong and steady, so that it remains still while the other leg is moving.

Terre, à [a tehr]

This term indicates that a movement or step must be executed on the ground; without losing contact with the floor.

Tour en l'air [toor ahn lehr]

This term refers to a jumping step in which the dancer performs a whole turn in the air before returning to the floor. The dancer will start from fifth position with the right leg in front and push off the floor with both feet. The arms will close to first position and the body will turn en dehors in the air. The jump will land in fifth position with the left foot in front. Tour en l'air can be done single, double or triple; and can also land in other positions such as arabesque, attitude, à la seconde or on one knee.

In classical repertoire, tour en l'air is a step done exclusively by male dancers.

Tournant, en [ahn toor-NAHN]

Literally: turning. This term accompanies the name of a step to indicate that it is to be done turning. For example, assemblé en tournant or chassé en tournant.

Turn-out

This term refers to the ability of the dancer to turn the legs outwards (en dehors) from the hip-joint. All of the steps in ballet must be executed with turn-out.

Working leg

This term refers to the leg that is executing a movement or a step. It can be à terre or en l'air. The working leg is the opposite of the supporting leg.

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