

ballet

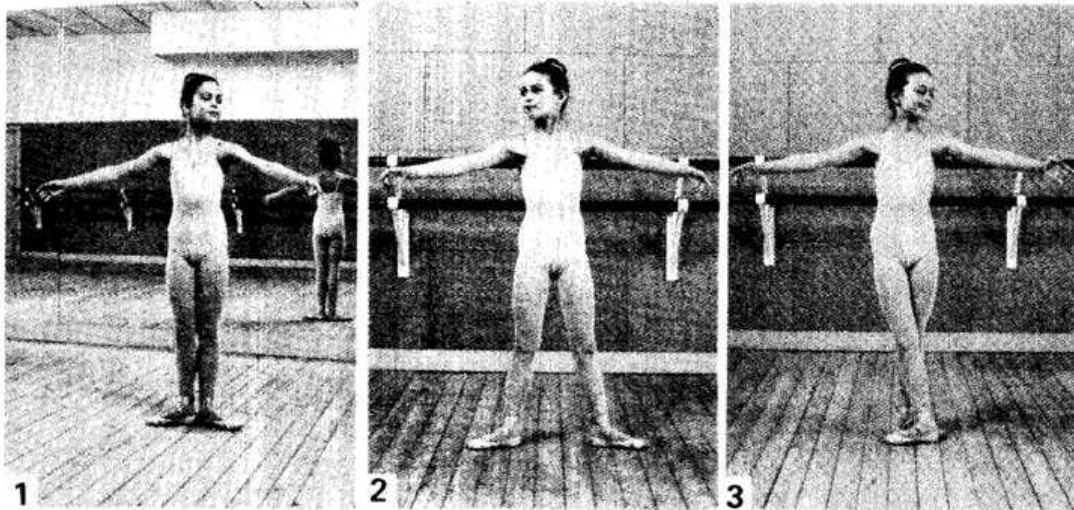
(Excerpts from
Your First Book of Ballet
by Odon-Jérôme Lemaître
& Yvette Chauviré.)

Turn-out

One of the essential peculiarities of classical dance is called "turn-out". This is the outward turning of the legs in the hip sockets, to give the legs a purer line.

The "turned-out" position is not mere convention, but is anatomically necessary

to give a dancer freedom of movement in every direction. It also looks more pleasing and assists a dancer's line; it is an aesthetic necessity in ballet. The five positions of the feet in classical dance are based on this absolute principle of the turn-out of the legs in the hip sockets and anyone studying ballet must try his best to execute it.

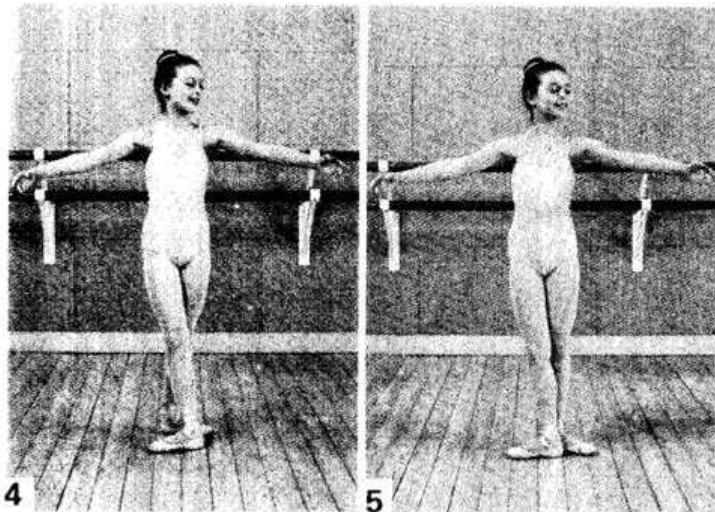


1 The first position. The legs are fully turned-out and stretched. The heels touch, the feet form a straight line.

2 The second position. The same straight line is kept but the legs are slightly apart and the heels do not touch.

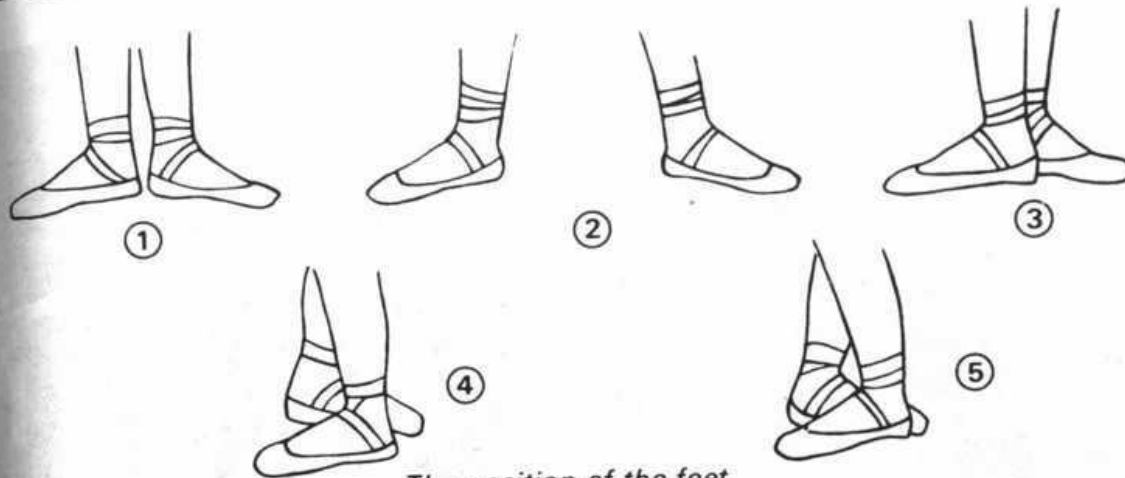
3 The third position. The feet are still perfectly facing outwards, the heel of one foot pressing against the middle of the other.

4 The fourth position. The feet are parallel to one another, the legs fully turned-out with one foot slightly in front of the other.



5 The fifth position. The legs are fully turned-out with the feet flat against each other, the toes of one pressing against the heel of the other.

The feet positions



The position of the feet

The barre

The lesson begins at the barre. (A chair may be used for home practice.)

It concerns a series of exercises which students perform while standing in profile at, and with one hand supported by, the barre.

Training starts with a series of bends, or **Pliés**, in the five feet positions. The heels remain firmly on the floor, except in the full Plié in the closed and fourth positions when the heels leave the floor at the depth of the Plié. Generally **Dégagés** follow (disengaging and pointing movements of the feet), then **Ronds de jambes** (circular movements) either on the floor using rotation of the leg in the hip socket or in the air with the lower part of the leg, from the knee, in second position.

After, there are **Frappés**, a series of sharp accented foot movements, followed by **Battements**. "Battements" means "beatings", and they can be small, using the foot along the floor, or big, when the leg is thrown into the air.

Depending on the level of the class, the teacher may elaborate on the basic barre exercises by amalgamating some of them or by asking the pupil to take his hand off the barre and balance on point. In general, a series of arm movements called **Grands ports de bras** (arm and upper body movements) are worked into the lesson, breaking up the concentration on the legs.

Once work at the barre is finished, the students take their places out on the floor, where they execute a series of exercises to develop precision, balance and grace: turns, pirouettes, leaps and choreographed steps.

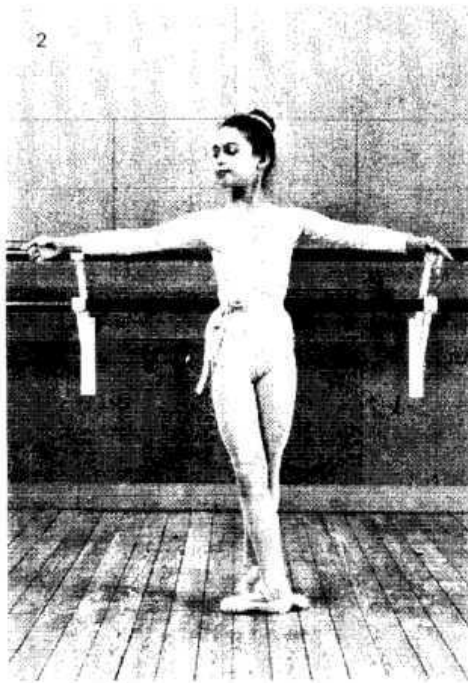


The barre



The floor

The arm positions



1 Arms symmetrical, held in a circle almost horizontal with the stomach, the palms of the hands turned gently inward.

2 Arms separated, held lightly to the side in line with the shoulders, elbows rounded, hands in profile.

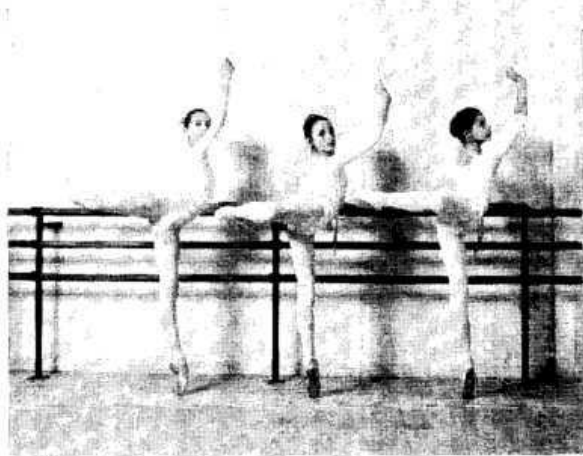
3 One arm held out to the side as in the second position, the other in a Demi-couronne (half arc) position over the head, the elbows rounded, hands facing inward.

4 One arm raised above the head as in the third position, the other remaining as in the first position, palms facing inward.

5 The two arms form an arc over the head (En couronne) without the hands touching but with them placed slightly in front of the body.

The five arm positions complement the five feet positions, but they can be studied independently.

Attitude and Arabesque · Adage



Attitude executed to the side and back

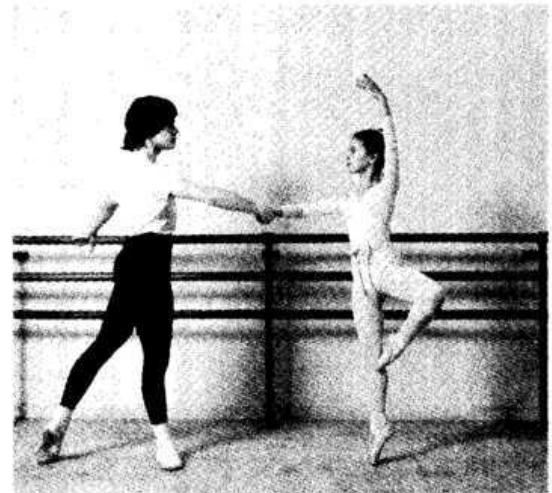
These very beautiful and basic classical positions can be executed in any alignment, e.g. in profile or in open alignment, and this attitude can also be maintained during a pirouette on point.

Attitude

Stand on one straight leg, bend the other and raise it to form a right-angle with the first; the raised leg is also bent at the knee. The arm corresponding to the raised leg is also raised and slightly rounded while the other arm is held in second position.

Adage

The Adage is an important section in the lesson: students are taught how to work out the various combinations offered by the use of the Attitude and the Arabesque positions. The Adage is, besides, an expression of sensitivity, a preparation for a Pas de deux, a love duet danced by a dancer and her partner.



Adage

Arabesque

Stand on one leg and extend the other out behind you at a right-angle to the first. The arm opposite to the extended leg is held out straight in front, while the other arm is held back on the side. For this movement to be successful the lower body must be well braced and the supporting leg held straight.



Academic Arabesque

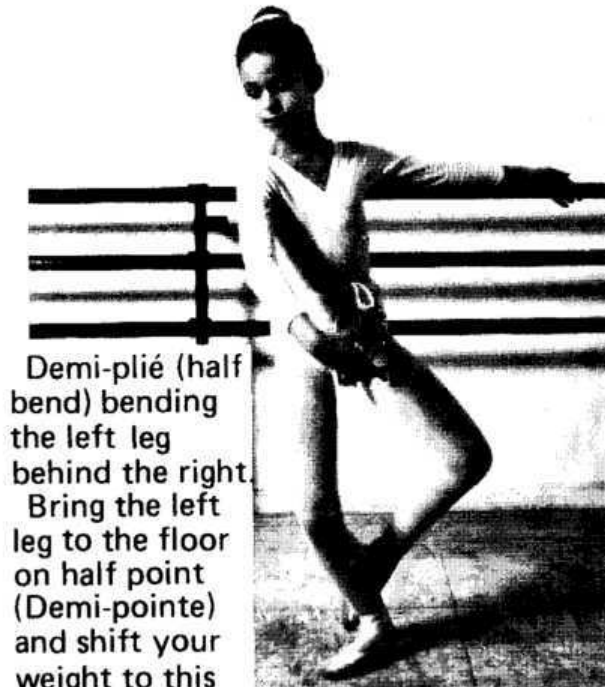


Romantic or interpretive Arabesque

Pas de bourrée



Start in the fifth position, right foot in front.



Demi-plié (half bend) bending the left leg behind the right. Bring the left leg to the floor on half point (Demi-pointe) and shift your weight to this leg. The axis of the body is to the right.



Stretch out both legs and continue on to the second position on half point. Note: The body must remain straight. Notice that you change your foot position during this exercise.



Finally bring the left leg in front in the fifth position, again in Demi-plié after changing the axis of the body by leading with the left shoulder.

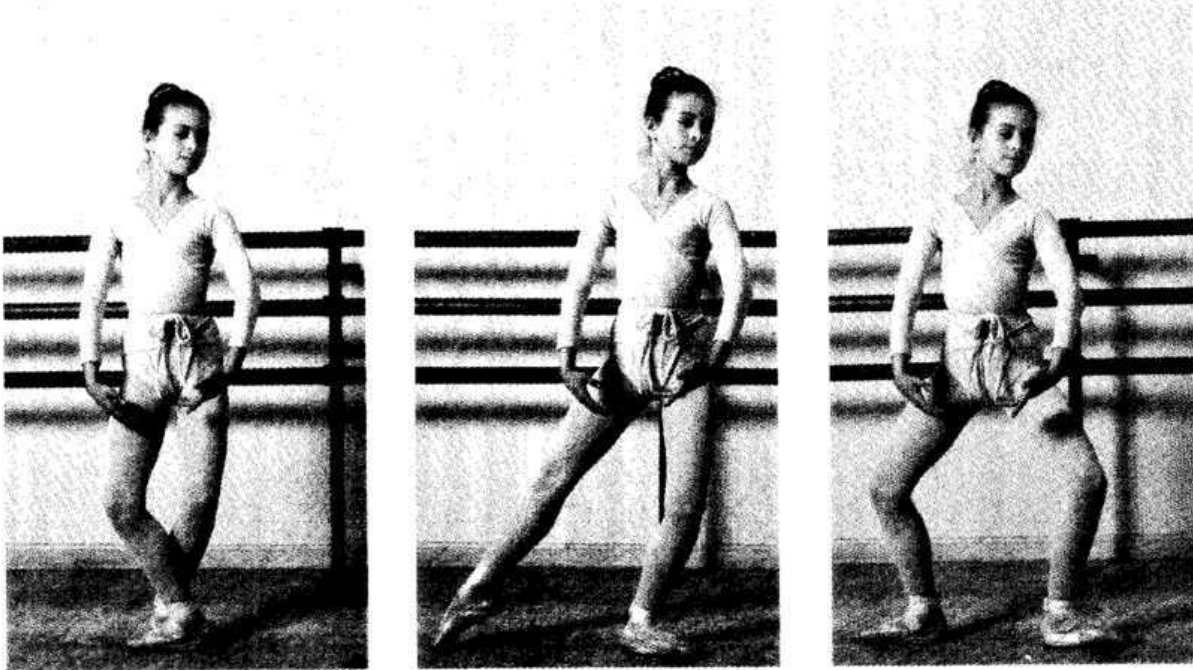
Pas de basque



A **Pas de basque** is composed of sliding movements. It is executed by sliding one leg in a circle (Rond de jambe) from fourth to second position (first two photos). Weight is transferred to that leg, the other foot then slides

through the first position (third photo) to the fourth position. Finally weight is transferred onto the front leg and the step finishes by closing in the fifth position (last two photos).

Glissade



The **Glissade** is a small movement on the floor, often used as preparation for other movements and leaps. It is executed with or without changing the feet.

Demi-plié (half bend) with the feet in the fifth position, left foot behind the right, and point the right leg to the side. Lightly balance your weight on the right leg, and quickly pass through the second foot position. Bend the right leg slightly, straighten the left leg, and finish in the fifth position.

