Renaissance Period This era was all about entertainment. The ballet de court was performed by aristocrats from the royal courts of Europe. Ballet was brought in from Italy to France in the 1530’s when Italian Catherine Medici married Henry II of France. In 1661, the first ballet school opened in France. It was begun by Louis XIV and called Académie de Royale Danse. The five basic foot positions were named and are the basis for all classical ballet steps. At first, only men were allowed to dance. Women were allowed in 1681 but had to wear full length gowns.

Baroque Period In this era, it was common to combine opera, ballet, and music into one performance to tell a story.

Classical Period This era occurred during the late 1700’s and was full of expression and performance. The dancers did not rely on costumes and props but rather their character and emotion through their bodies and faces.

Pre-Romantic Period The early 1800’s was the transition from the Classical era to the new extravagant Romantic era. The Pre-Romantic period is most noted as the origin of pointe work. The Italian dancer Marie Taglioni became very famous for dancing en pointe.

Romantic Era Continuing through the 1800s, ballet became very pretty, elegant, and graceful. The female dancers stole the spotlight because of their increased skill in dancing on their toes.

The Russian Classics During the late 1800’s ballet grew in Russia. As dancers’ abilities increased, Marius Petipa created full length classic ballets to include a pas de deux (dance for two) for the male and female lead. It also included a solo for each of them and a coda (a short, quick finale). The classic tutu (stiff skirt) became popular; many ballets were choreographed such as Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and The Nutcracker, which are still performed today.

The Ballet Russes In 1909, a Russian impresario (a person who produces ballets, operas, and concerts) named Sergei Diaghilev created the Ballet Russes and brought them to Paris. They traveled all throughout Europe, bringing with them innovative new choreography, costumes, and scenery designed by master artists.

Ballet in Europe Ballet continued to grow throughout Europe, and today we have the Royal Ballet in London and the Royal Danish Ballet in Copenhagen. The Royal Ballet opened in England with Sir Frederick Ashton as the choreographer. This was home to one of the most famous ballerinas of all time, Dame Margot Fonteyn. Frederick and Fonteyn were honored from the British Empire for their great contributions. The Mariinsky Ballet in St. Petersburg, Russia was renamed the Kirov Ballet and has produced some of the most famous and influential dancers around; one dancer you might know is Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Ballet in America New York City became the dance capital of America where two very prestigious ballet companies emerged, American Ballet Theatre and the New York City Ballet. The foremost contemporary choreographer of American ballet was George Balanchine. His innovative approach invigorated and revolutionized classical dance. Often working with modern music and the simplest of themes, he created ballets that are celebrated for their imagination and originality.

Take-Aways

**Suggested Primary Questions:**
- Identify the who, what, where, and when at the beginning of the time line.
- Identify the who, what, where, and when at the end of the time line.
- Discuss how ballet changed over time.

**Suggested Intermediate/Middle School Questions:**
- In the Renaissance period, who danced ballet? When did this shift occur and why do you think it shifted?

**Suggested High School Questions:**
- How did costuming evolve over time? How do you think the costuming reflects that era of ballet?
- In the time line where did ballet begin and how did it move geographically? (This can evolve into a mapping activity.)
**BALLEt TRIVIA**

**The Pointe Shoe**
- Pointe shoes are hand sewn.
- They are not made of wood, plaster or cardboard, but of canvas, satin, and lots of glue.
- They typically last 1 performance.
- Pointe shoes cost $90 per pair.
- Dancers must sew on their own ribbons.
- Most ballerinas wear out 2-3 pairs of pointe shoes per week when rehearsing.

**Take-Aways**
- Why do you think ballerinas wear pointe shoes?
- If a pointe shoe costs $90 per pair and a dancer wears out 3 pairs per week, how much does a dancer spend on pointe shoes in a month?
- How do you think a dancer prepares their body to dance on pointe safely?

**Tutus**
- One tutu can cost up to $5,000 to make.
- The same tutu requires 60-90 hours of labor and over 100 yards of ruffle.
- Full-time costume director waits just off stage during every performance, ready to quickly repair torn material or loose threads.

**Take-Aways**
- Why do you think ballerinas wear tutus?
- If a tutu costs $3,000 and the amount of labor put into a tutu is on average 75 hours, how much does a tutu cost to make per hour?

**Dancers are Athletes**
- A male ballet dancer lifts over 1-1/2 tons worth of ballerinas during performances.
- Moderate dancing burns 250-300 calories per hour.
- Ballet dancers get just as hurt and suffer just as serious of injuries as contact sports.
- The level of precision required is comparable to that of an Olympic gymnast.
- The amount of energy needed to perform a ballet is about the same as playing two full soccer matches or running 18 miles.

**Take-Aways**
- How do you think a dancer prepares their body to meet the physical demands of a performance?
- What do you think is the cause of most dance-related injuries?
**BALLEt TERMINOLOGY**

*French is the primary language of ballet because the first academy of ballet was based in Paris, France over 350 years ago. Ballet terminology is a universal language.*

- **adagio** (a-DAHZH-ee-o)  
  A slow dance movement.

- **allégro** (al-LAY-groh)  
  Quick and lively dance movement.

- **arabesque** (ah-ra-BESK)  
  The position in ballet where the dancer stands on one leg with the other leg stretched out to the back, usually at a right angle to the body. The arms usually correspond to the postilion.

- **artistic director**  
  The person at a ballet company who is in charge of choosing ballets to perform, hiring dancers, rehearsing the company for performances, and other artistic decisions. Not all artistic directors choreograph.

- **ballerina** (bahl-lay-REE-nah)  
  The female dancer in a ballet company who is usually an exceptional performer and performs many leading roles. The best ballerina is called the “Prima Ballerina.”

- **barre** (bar)  
  A wooden or sometimes metal hand-rail placed around the walls of the ballet studio. The dancers begin their daily classes using the barre for support.

- **choreographer** (core-ee-og-rah-fer)  
  The person who arranges movements and patterns of dancers in order to form entire dances. They may also develop the concept or idea of a ballet.

- **corps de ballet** (cor duh bal-Lay)  
  The groups of dancers other than principals and soloists who make up a ballet company. They work much like a chorus would for an opera.

- **danseur** (dahn-sooehr)  
  A male dancer in a ballet company.

- **divertissement** (dee-vehr-tees-MAHN)  
  A short entertaining dance.

- **jeté** (zhuh-TAY)  
  A jump in the air. There are many different types, but the most common is the grande jete or big jete. In this movement, both of the dancer’s legs are split in mid air.

- **pas** (pah)  
  In French means “step.”

- **pas de deux** (pah de duh)  
  A dance for two people, usually a man and a woman. Deux in French means “two.”

- **pirouette** (peer-o-WET)  
  A turn or spin on one foot. Doing multiple pirouettes takes very good balance and coordination.

- **plié** (plee-AY)  
  A bending of the legs where the knees point directly to the side. Most ballet steps such as jumps and turns begin and end with a plie. Plies may be done in any of the five positions of the feet.

- **pointe** (pwent)  
  The tip of the toe. Most female ballet dancers dance on the tips of their toes wearing special shoes, called pointe shoes.

- **port de bras** (pawr duh brah)  
  The five basic positions of the arms corresponding to each of the five positions of the feet.

- **premier danseur** (pruh-MYAY dahn-SUHR):  
  A male ballet star or leading dancer of the ballet company. He is the male version of the Prima Ballerina.

- **tour en l’air** (toor-ahn-lehr)  
  A turn in the air. A step in which the dancer jumps straight up in the air and performs one or more turns of the body.
Ballet Arizona is a Crown Jewel of the Phoenix Arts Community

In 2000, the board of directors named Ib Andersen Artistic Director. Anderson was a former principal dancer with Royal Danish Ballet and Balanchine’s New York City Ballet. In 2006 The Arizona Republic called Ballet Arizona, “probably the most consistently excellent arts organization in the state,” and said, “This is why Ballet Arizona is such a treasure for Phoenix.” In 2007 the Republic stated, “Under Director Ib Andersen, Ballet Arizona has achieved ever new heights of finish and professionalism.”

- A professional ballet company of 34 dancers.
- Many of Ballet Arizona’s female dancers have been dancing since they were 4 years old.
- The Ballet Arizona male dancers tend to start at an older age.
- BAZ performs at the Orpheum Theatre and Symphony Hall.
- Ballet Arizona season consists of four to five repertory programs in addition to the holiday favorite, The Nutcracker.
- Every day starts at 9am with a class lasting 1 hour 30 minutes.
- Rehearsals begin at 11am and conclude at 4:30pm.
- Ballet Arizona dancers’ countries of origin: China, Ukraine, Japan, Albania, Canada, Cuba, Argentina, Australia, Dominican Republic, and of course, the United States.
- Approximately 65 performances per year.
- Dancers are on a 36-week contract beginning in August and running through June.
- Total annual expense for pointe shoes is $110,000 with $45,000 of that allocated to The Nutcracker.
- Ib Andersen has been Ballet Arizona’s Artistic Director since 2000 and Governor Janet Napolitano named him Arizona’s Artist of the Year in 2007.
- Since 2010, Ballet Arizona has performed in Chicago, Washington DC, and New York City.
- Between 2003 and 2007, admissions to Ballet Arizona productions increased 61%.
- BAZ education and community outreach programs touch the lives of more than 35,000 children per year.

Take-Aways

- Write a first-person narrative based on a day in the life of a Ballet Arizona Company Member.
1. In what period did pointe shoes originate?  
   a. Ballet in America  
   b. The Russian Classics  
   c. Renaissance Period  
   d. Pre-Romantic Period

2. Who was the foremost contemporary choreographer of American Ballet?  
   a. Mikhail Baryshnikov  
   b. George Balanchine  
   c. Sir Frederick Ashton  
   d. Marius Petipa

3. Pointe shoes are made of wood, plaster, and cardboard.  
   a. True  
   b. False

4. A male dancer lifts over 5 tons worth of ballerinas during performances.  
   a. True  
   b. False

5. Pas de deux is a dance for two people, usually a man and a woman.  
   a. True  
   b. False

6. A premier danseur is who in the ballet?  
   a. The lead female dancer  
   b. The lead male dancer  
   c. The ballet mistress  
   d. The artistic director

7. Ballet Arizona has how many professional dancers in the company?  
   a. 57  
   b. 100  
   c. 34  
   d. 25

8. Ballet Arizona’s annual expense for pointe shoes is?  
   a. $45,000  
   b. $25,000  
   c. $110,000  
   d. $300,000

9. Ballet Arizona performs at the Orpheum Theatre and Symphony Hall.  
   a. True  
   b. False

10. An adagio is a  
    a. Quick and lively performance  
    b. A slow dance movement  
    c. A short entertaining dance  
    d. None of the above

11. Allegro is a  
    a. Quick and lively performance  
    b. A slow dance movement  
    c. A short entertaining dance  
    d. None of the above

12. One tutu can cost up to $5,000 to make.  
    a. True  
    b. False
Student Matinee Study Guide
BALLET HISTORY, TRIVIA AND TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Ballet Terminology Word Search

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photo by Rosalie O'Connor