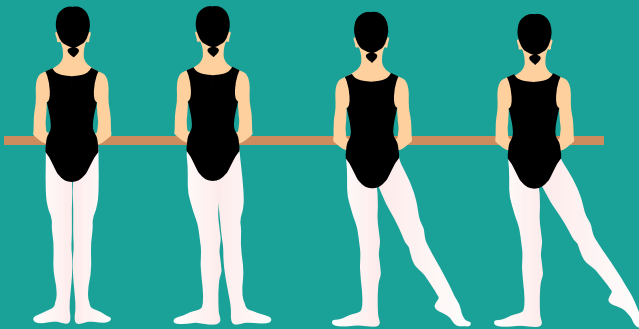


Heli Santavuori

Ballet

for
Everybody



The Basics of Ballet
for Beginners of all Ages

Ballet for Everybody

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The Basics of Ballet
for Beginners of all Ages

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Welcome to the World of Ballet!

The Finnish edition of this book has been very well received.

One reader wrote to me that she had begun studying ballet at the age of 75. That was four years ago. One room in her home was now a studio, she wrote, and as training help she had my book! Her letter really made me happy.

When I was young and training hard, I always thought that everybody should learn ballet, it gives you so much joy and physical self-knowledge.

The basic technique of ballet is of a great use to many. Even the stars in Soviet Union's ice hockey team learned from ballet technique in order to become better ice hockey players.

Ballet technique gives strength and mobility in a balanced way. Your posture will improve. You will also find deep satisfaction in the emotional and artistical side of the training.

The popularity of adult ballet is, in my mind, a back to basics thing in a time when different dance styles are abundant. To master different styles has one precondition: to master the basics. There is no better way to achieve this than studying ballet.

Heli Santavuori

May 4th 2017 in Helsinki, Finland

Index

(For a more detailed index, se page 116.)

It is a Good Idea to Practice at home, 8

General Instructions, 9

The Basic Posture, 10

Barre work, 21

 Plié, 21

 Elevé, Relevé, 28

 Cambré, 33

 Tendu, 39

 Jeté, 45

 Passé, 48

 Rond de jambe, 52

 Frappé, 62

 Rond de Jambe en l'air, 64

 Petit battement, 64

 Fondu, 65

 Developpé, 72

 Grand Battement, 77

 Sretching, 79

Center Floor Exercise, 82

 Plié and Elevé, 83

 Adagio, 84

 Steps, 92

 Pirouette, 96

 Allegro, 99

 Reverence, 105

Ballet class – an Example, 106

Links, 113

A Glossary of the French Ballet Terms used in this Book, 114

It is a Good Idea to Practice at Home

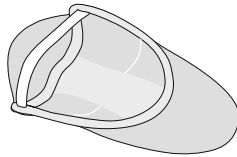
Especially,

- if you dream of taking ballet classes but hesitate for some reason. You will learn what kind of exercises a ballet class consists of. You can experiment in practice and find out if this is your thing.
- if you have been dancing ballet in your youth. This book is a memory help – especially when some of the rules are a bit difficult and therefore easy to forget.
- if you practice ice skating, gymnastics, aerobic, or any other training form and want to make progress.
- if you are already taking ballet classes. Then it is a good idea to go back to basics from time to time. You have now the possibility to concentrate on things that are especially difficult for just you.
- if you only have the possibility to take classes only once or twice a week, and want more.
- if you study some other dance form (or forms) and don't have the possibility to take ballet classes as well.
- if you are a beginner and perhaps not so fit. The basic barre exercises are good for everybody, just follow the instructions carefully. Additional pilates exercises can help you to understand the basic posture, if there is a problem. Stretching is also recommended; better mobility is always an advantage.

General Instructions

At home, you can train with socks on, if the floor is not too slippery. Gymnastics or jogging shoes are not good for ballet.

If you decide to go on with ballet training, the first thing to buy is a pair of soft ballet slippers. They are made of cloth or leather. Bend the heel of the slipper as in the picture: this shows the place where you must sew a rubber band.



Silk ribbons round the ankle are for pointes ballet shoes, they are not necessary with soft slippers. (Dancing on point is a thing that requires a live instructor and a few years of ballet studies. It is not something you can learn from a book at home.)

Next, you need a barre. A steady couch or arm chair is fine. Sport shops also sell different kinds of barres – for ballet, for push ups or chin-ups.

Anyway, you should not lean on the barre or couch with all your weight – your hand on the barre should be light, relaxed. Preferably, you should hold the fingers, the thumb included, on top of the barre.

A mirror helps a lot, at least occasionally.

Your hair should be tied so that it is out of the way. Otherwise it is not so important what you are wearing. But you should keep yourself warm in the beginning of the training session. And of course, tights and leotards are good when testing postures in front of a mirror.

Music is an essential part of ballet training. I recommend dancemelody.com where you can download music especially designed for ballet practice. It's free. (See page 113.)

The Basic Posture

“A dancer must maintain the correct posture through the entire performance, otherwise the whole movement collapses. The strength required in this upward striving posture comes from the muscles in the belly, buttocks and back.

A good, upward striving posture makes it possible for the upper body, neck and head to move freely without any sign of muscle strain, and for the arms to move smoothly and effortlessly from the shoulder blades.”

Birgitta Kiviniemi-Cheremeteff

A former principal ballerina in the Finnish National Ballet
and a ballet teacher

In the following, the basic posture is described in a somewhat pedantic manner.

You should not underrate these rules. Only when your posture – from the tip of the toes to the fingertips – is controlled and becomes a conscious habit, you will have an almost meditative experience from your ballet training. It is not gymnastics anymore, but a comprehensive practice of body and mind. This makes you relaxed, refreshed, and gives you profound satisfaction.

Remember that all barre workout is, at the same time, exercise in learning the basic posture. Your posture, balance, and control of your body improve if you do these exercises in a conscious way – and only then.

Can you study ballet with the help of a book?

Yes you can - if you have the right book!



This book is for complete beginners who, for some reason, cannot take classes. It is also helpful for ballet students who want to improve their technique, as well as for students of other forms of dance or even sport. For parents whose children are studying ballet, reading this book can be of great help.

In short, this book is for everybody interested in ballet technique - of all ages and fitness levels.

The basic posture, all barre exercises, and some center work are presented

here with accurate descriptions and illustrations. Even the most common errors are described in detail.

Professional dancers need personal guidance. But everybody else can very well acquire a basic understanding of ballet studying at home. Even if you attend ballet classes, a very big portion of what you learn there, is in fact based on verbal instructions. You cannot learn ballet only by watching (for ex videos). But you can learn ballet by listening to instructions or reading them, and combining this with the study of illustrations and videos.

Heli Santavuori

is a Finnish journalist, graphical designer, and ballet teacher. She studied under ballet masters from the Finnish National Ballet, where the Russian style dominated. She also took classes in contemporary dance under the American dancer Cora Cahan.

"The love of ballet has never left me", she says. "It gives so much joy and physical self-knowledge. Even the elementary exercises can cause an almost meditative experience, when performed correctly. I am convinced, that ballet is for everybody."

PHOTO: The author performing ballet at the age of 58 / Vesa Laine.

