

Unit 44: Applying Classical Ballet Technique

Unit code: **L/502/4918**

QCF Level 3: **BTEC National**

Credit value: **10**

Guided learning hours: **60**

● Aim and purpose

This unit provides dancers with opportunities for working in the studio with a choreographer and a ballet master or mistress, learning dance to be interpreted as a performer.

● Unit introduction

Ballet dancers, like all other performers, must be able to use their skills confidently in the studio and on stage. Classical ballet is the basis of so many styles of dance, it is important to master the steps and develop performance technique as well. This is a great advantage for those wishing to make their way in the world of dance today.

This unit allows dancers to experience what it is really like to be in the studio with a choreographer and a ballet master or mistress who is going to teach them dance to be interpreted as a performer. Learners will master dance that is choreographed specifically for them, learn something from dance notation interpreted for them by their tutor or re-work something they have seen.

Mastery of classical ballet technique will take a lot of dedication; dancers need to push themselves both physically and mentally if they are going to succeed. In ballet class, dancers develop the enormous stamina and energy needed for whole ballets. They also develop the wide range of movement and flexibility to enable the body to get into the shapes this form demands.

Dancers must learn to appreciate music or the accompaniment that is used for dances. This requires understanding of timing, an ability to tune into music and sound or simply to count inside your head. Learners will also have to be comfortable dancing in costume.

Above all, dancers must be aware of the needs of their audience and they must refine their communication skills so that their interpretation of the choreography, their role or character is clear and appreciated by all.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to learn and interpret classical ballet choreography
- 2 Be able to develop and improve classical ballet technique
- 3 Be able to rehearse a role in a classical ballet dance
- 4 Be able to perform a role in a classical ballet dance.

Unit content

1 Be able to learn and interpret classical ballet choreography

Application of dance techniques: preparation for class; technical discipline; being warmed-up and ready; approach to choreography; positive approach to ideas; willingness to take risks; developing movement memory; accuracy

2 Be able to develop and improve classical ballet technique

Technical skills: understanding and appreciation of classical ballet class, barre, adage, petit allegro, grand allegro; demonstration of accurate technique; demonstration of stylistic features of classical ballet; combinations of advanced and complex movement in set studies, solos, duets and group dances

Physical skills: classical body line and alignment; centring; turning; elevation; balance Improvement: identification of targets; rehearsal; repetition; re-evaluation

3 Be able to rehearse a role in a classical ballet dance

Mastery of a role: adapting personal technique; repetition of movement; accurate recreation of movement over time; accepting criticism and moving forward; self-appraisal and objectivity; character or role embodiment; working in costume

Mastering the space: solo; working with others in at least two of the following: duets, trios, small group; using the performance space; scenic elements; entrances and exits

4 Be able to perform a role in a classical ballet dance

Physical features: interpretation of classical ballet role; musicality or response to accompaniment; accuracy of choreographic interpretation; awareness of space; entrances and exits

Communication: focus; concentration; projection; role embodiment; mood; emotion; interpretation; with other performers; with audience

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 realise choreography using classical ballet technique [SM, IE]	M1 sensitively interpret and realise using classical ballet technique	D1 interpret and realise choreography, showing thorough application of classical ballet technique
P2 demonstrate awareness of classical ballet technique and alignment [RL]	M2 demonstrate how to refine classical ballet technique	D2 demonstrate how to refine and improve classical ballet technique
P3 use classical ballet technique and skills appropriately in rehearsal [SM]	M3 use the appropriate classical ballet technique and skills in rehearsal to refine a role.	D3 use the appropriate skills and classical ballet technique autonomously in rehearsal to refine and embody a role
P4 perform a classical ballet role that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience. [EP, SM, TW]	M4 perform a classical ballet role that communicates a refined interpretation, relating clearly and appropriately to other performers and the audience.	D4 perform a classical ballet role with confidence, precision, clarity of line and expression, encompassing the work of other dancers and awareness of the audience.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

The work for this unit should take place principally in the dance studio, then in rehearsal and on to the stage.

Regular class will be essential for all dancers undertaking this unit so that the necessary skills, strength, stamina and flexibility can be gradually built up. Where learners have little experience of classical ballet, they will need to be given a good technical grounding. *Unit 43: Developing Classical Ballet Technique* will be a good partner to the work of this applied unit, since learners will then have the chance to really hone their skills and undertake some simple dance creation of their own, through the learning and interpretation of movement combinations that are integral to that unit. This unit does not concentrate on learning the vocabulary of the classical ballet class; rather it uses the vocabulary in the studio towards its ultimate end: the creation of dance as a performance art.

The application of the technique will take place where choreography is created and applied to the dancer's body. Simple movement phrases and studies can be created for learners by both tutor and learner, bearing in mind the skill level and talent of individuals. These combinations can grow in complexity with time, so that whole dances are developed. Learners should be encouraged to contribute, as professional artists frequently do, to the choreographic process. This is how professional dance is made around particular dancers' bodies and individual styles.

Variation in accompaniment, including silence, should be used, from live music to sound, traditional to contemporary. Similarly the number of dancers for whom dance is choreographed should vary, from solo, to duet, trio and small groups.

When it comes to choices for performance work, dances can be choreographed for a variety of occasions. Simple studio performances through to complicated productions can be considered, depending on circumstances and the other units being studied. Complete ballets might be performed by some centres, but it is more likely that sections of ballets will be used. Ballet dances may be choreographed as sections of other performances, such as variety shows or musicals. The important thing is that tutors must gauge the work according to the skills and expertise of their learner group and the facilities available at the centre.

Rehearsals will take place in the studio and then eventually in the performing space. The repetition of work allows the dancers to discover how performance evolves, refines and is made their own through a process of self, peer and tutor evaluation and criticism. This is invaluable to young ballet dancers. Communication between performers and the audience must be part of the learning process, as well as how dancers use the space, eg how to enter and leave the performance area and put across their personal role interpretation.

The role undertaken may involve the development of a character through dance, or it may be more abstract, according to the needs of the performance. Viewing a range of classical dance live on stage will be an invaluable addition to study for this unit, as well as watching dance on film or video/DVD.

Learners may need to keep a performers log, which can take the form of a written diary or logbook, or may be captured as a video diary or audio recording. The log should provide clear supporting evidence for the development of choreographic ideas and notes on terminology and technique.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to the unit.
Class etiquette and behaviour, including health and safety.
Assignment 1: Learning Some Dance – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P4, M4, D4
Learning a role; repertoire study.
Study of two contrasting roles from existing choreography.
Refining a role, developing and making it your own, taking risks, creating excitement.
Performances, assessments and evaluations.
Assignment 2: New Ideas from Old – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3
Visit to professional performance, review the style and influences.
Learn choreography, refine the role, absorb the technique.
Develop work as a group for a showcase.
Rehearsals and performances.
Assignment 3: Creating a New Role – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4
Dance interpretation from notation/tutor-taught choreography.
Individual interpretations, creating your own style; getting into costume and make-up.
Assignment 4: Growing a Role – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4
Group development of roles towards performance, rehearsals, evaluations.
Performances, assessments, evaluations.

Assessment

Dancers will be assessed in the studio and on stage.

The application of technique will be measured during regular class, where learners have the chance to apply their skills in both simple and gradually more complex movement combinations. This is where tutors monitor the progress in their learners, through direct observation, so allowing them to assess learning outcomes 1 and 2.

Tutors and learners may provide choreography but learners must be sufficiently challenged, with opportunities to hone their skills and techniques. Learners' relative skill levels will need to be carefully assessed on entry to the course, so that the challenges offered are commensurate with those levels.

Those dancers who already have a good level of classical technique, who perhaps take class outside of the school or college setting, should not be held back by those who have a less-developed technique. These learners should be encouraged to choreograph other dancers, but will also need to be challenged with more difficult combinations and enchainements.

Professional work may form the basis of both development work and performances. Part of the assessment process for learning outcomes 1 and 2 will be carried out when learners are introduced to new choreography, allowing tutors to measure how well dancers' skills are progressing in absorbing dances quickly and accurately.

Rehearsals will be taken and observed by tutors and learners and will provide evidence for learning outcome 3. This will encourage objective self and peer evaluation. Learners may be asked to evaluate dances formally, in writing, or to provide oral feedback. Tutors may wish learners to record their progress in a working notebook and on video/DVD.

The assessment of the application of classical ballet technique, for learning outcome 4, should take place in at least two workshops, each lasting at least three minutes (one of which should involve the learning of new choreography and one the rehearsal of known choreography), and one performance lasting at least three minutes.

Stagecraft will be best observed during on-stage rehearsals and performances. Tutor notes on assessments will form the evidence base of the unit, backed up by video/DVD recordings of workshops, rehearsals and performances. Performances may be dedicated to the assessment of this unit alone or form part of larger productions.

To achieve grading criteria P1, learners must show they are capable of absorbing choreography and recreating it accurately. P2 calls for demonstration of the technique and alignment in both class and rehearsals. Work for P3 must provide for learners to employ their skills particularly in the rehearsal of work for performance. For P4, they must perform that work so that its inherent ideas and messages are apparent to its audience.

To gain M1, learners must show sensitivity towards the choreography they are interpreting, giving their work some individual personality. For M2, they need to show how they are improving technically, through applying and accepting objective criticism. Where learners make use of their techniques to refine and develop a classical ballet role they will achieve M3 and then where they perform the role, clearly communicating the intended meaning to the audience and relating to the other performers, they will achieve M4.

For D1, learners must demonstrate the thorough application of classical ballet technique through the realisation and individual interpretation of choreography. For D2, they will demonstrate improvement in all aspects of their technique. To achieve D3 learners will autonomously apply those skills to the refining of a role that they embody, for performance. Finally, to achieve D4, the role will be performed to an audience, confidently, with precision and clarity of line, taking full account of the other dancers and the audience.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P4, M4, D4	Learning Some Dance	You have been asked to perform two short classical ballet dances in contrasting styles to help sell your course to Year 11 learners in your centre.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tutor observations• self assessment• rehearsals• performances live and recorded on DVD/video.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3	New Ideas from Old	You are developing some new work based on an existing piece of dance. Using a work from the classical ballet repertoire, take a short section and rework it to new accompaniment, ready to show your ideas to your company choreographer.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dance development log • evaluations • notes or DVD of work in progress • final workshop interpretation live and recorded on DVD/video.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Creating a New Role	Your company is performing a short ballet to celebrate the opening of an arts centre.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations • self-assessment • role learning and interpretation captured on DVD • performance live and recorded on DVD/video.
P1, M1, D3, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Growing a Role	Your company have been asked to perform in a charity ballet gala performance. The title of your piece is 'Swans' and will be based on choreography from Swan Lake, with a modern twist.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical workshop exploring short sections of taught choreography • role development captured on DVD and through tutor observations • rehearsal log • performance.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Dance Skills	Performing Dance	Rehearsing for Performers
	The Development of Dance	Performing to an Audience
		Dance Performance
		Choreographing Dance
		Developing Classical Ballet Technique
		Movement in Performance

Essential resources

Centres will need a suitable clean, heated studio space, with ballet barres and preferably fitted with wall mirrors, sprung floor, sound system and space for changing. Access to DVD/video recording/playback facilities for recording learners' work and watching dancers at work is essential.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres may wish to develop links with local providers of higher education and training so that learners may have access to outside expertise. Many dance training providers run community classes that learners can access, such as the University of Surrey community dance programme. Such providers are often hubs for visiting dance companies that learners can then see in performance. National dance competitions provide opportunities for learners to showcase their talents in a broader setting than that offered within their own centre.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Craine D and Mackrell J – *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

ISBN 9780198607656

Crist L – *Ballet Barre and Center Combinations: Volume 1: Word Descriptions* (Princeton Book Company, 2001)

ISBN 9780871272201

Glasstone R – *Classical Ballet Terms: an Illustrated Dictionary* (Dance Books, 2001) ISBN 9781852730802

Grosser J – *ABC of Ballet* (Dover Publications, 2003) ISBN 9780486408712

Koutedakis Y and Sharp C – *The Fit and Healthy Dancer* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999) ISBN 9780471975281

Mara T – *Third Steps in Ballet: Basic Allegro Steps* (Princeton Book Company, 1994) ISBN 9780916622558

The Royal Academy of Dancing – *The Foundations of Classical Ballet Technique* (Royal Academy of Dance, 1997) ISBN 9780952484820

DVD

Jiri Kylian's Black and White Ballets (Nederlands Dans Theatre, 2000)

Journals

Dance Now

Websites

www.dancebooks.co.uk

Dance Books – retailer and publisher of dance books

www.surrey.ac.uk/NRCD

National Resource Centre for Dance

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	learning and realising choreography using classical ballet technique using classical ballet skills autonomously in rehearsal to refine and embody a role
Reflective learners	demonstrating awareness of classical ballet technique and alignment
Team workers	performing a classical ballet role that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience, when working in a group
Self-managers	learning and realising choreography using skills and classical ballet technique appropriately in rehearsal performing a classical ballet role that communicates an appropriate interpretation to an audience
Effective participants	performing a classical ballet role to an audience.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Independent enquirers	exploring classical ballet choreography and interpreting it in an individual way finding ways of interpreting choreography through experimentation
Creative thinkers	exploring classical ballet choreography and adapting it to suit personal, group or performance needs organising running orders for performance to suit performance and event requirements
Reflective learners	reviewing strengths and areas for improvement setting appropriate goals taking and giving objective criticism
Team workers	planning and collaborating in performance events planning and taking part in rehearsals
Self-managers	attending regular class seeking out new technical and interpretive challenges monitoring and planning for individual maintenance of fitness levels positively contributing to the rehearsal process maintaining appropriate dance wear and shoes
Effective participants	participating and contributing in rehearsals performing as part of a group.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	giving objective criticism to group members planning and organising performances attending production and performance planning meetings
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	completing rehearsal log/dance diary.