

# Ballet Class: An American History

Ballet class is an essential part of the training of any dancer, regardless of their style or level of experience. It is a place to learn and practice the basic techniques of ballet, as well as to develop strength, flexibility, and musicality.

But how did ballet class come to be? And how has it evolved over time?



## **Ballet Class: An American History** by Melissa R. Klapper

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 20240 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 432 pages

Lending : Enabled



In this article, we will explore the history of ballet class in the United States, from its early beginnings in the 1800s to its development into a standardized and codified form in the 20th century.

## **The Early Years**

The first ballet classes in the United States were taught by European immigrants in the early 1800s. These classes were typically private and catered to wealthy families.

In 1834, the first public ballet school in the United States was founded in New York City by Carlo Blasis. Blasis was a renowned Italian dancer and choreographer who had taught at the Paris Opera Ballet. His school offered a rigorous curriculum that included ballet class, as well as classes in other dance styles, such as ballroom dancing and folk dancing.

Other ballet schools soon followed, and by the end of the 19th century, ballet class was a common part of the dance education of young women from wealthy families.

### **The Development of a Standardized Curriculum**

In the early 20th century, a number of dance educators began to work on developing a standardized curriculum for ballet class. The goal of this effort was to create a common set of exercises and terminology that could be used by all ballet teachers in the United States.

One of the most influential figures in the development of a standardized ballet curriculum was Cecchetti Enrico Cecchetti was an Italian dancer and choreographer who taught at the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg, Russia. In 1908, Cecchetti came to the United States to teach at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet School. He developed a method of teaching ballet that emphasized the importance of correct body alignment and precise execution of movements.

Cecchetti's method of teaching was widely adopted by ballet teachers in the United States. It became the foundation of the standardized ballet curriculum that is still used today.

### **The 20th Century and Beyond**

The 20th century saw the rise of ballet as a popular form of entertainment in the United States. The establishment of major ballet companies, such as the New York City Ballet and the San Francisco Ballet, helped to raise the profile of ballet and attract new students to ballet class.

In the 1960s, the advent of the Balanchine technique revolutionized the way ballet was taught and performed in the United States. Balanchine's technique emphasized speed, precision, and athleticism. It also introduced new movements, such as the "grand jeté" and the "pirouette à la seconde."

Today, ballet class is a vital part of the training of any dancer. It is a place to learn and practice the basic techniques of ballet, as well as to develop strength, flexibility, and musicality. Ballet class is also a place to develop a sense of discipline, self-confidence, and artistry.

Ballet class has a long and rich history in the United States. It has evolved over time to meet the needs of the changing dance world. Today, ballet class is an essential part of the training of any dancer, regardless of their style or level of experience. It is a place to learn and practice the basic techniques of ballet, as well as to develop strength, flexibility, and musicality. Ballet class is also a place to develop a sense of discipline, self-confidence, and artistry.



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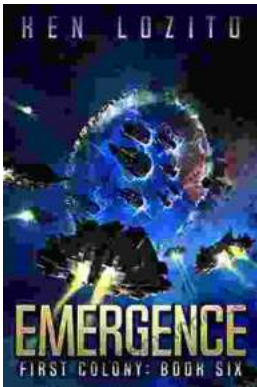
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