

Hello!

The content here is for the sixth and twelfth month of our Contemporary Lesson Plan Sets that go along with our Once Upon a Ballet Story Ballet Curriculum for ages 7 to 12 years old. In the first month you teach these materials, you'll want to introduce the material to your students. The goal here is exposure. In the second month you teach them, you'll be revisiting these same materials. You'll want to further refine your students' technique and their grasp of the concepts taught the second time around.

The ballet side of this curriculum is all about teaching ballet through the stories of classical ballet. When we decided to add a contemporary element to the curriculum, it seemed fitting to continue our historical approach and follow the pioneering artists of modern and contemporary dance.

This curriculum follows six artists in total. This month's artist is José Limón. Limón was a dancer a choreographer born in Mexico in 1908. He is the founder of what is now known as Limón Technique, as well as the José Limón Dance Company.

Like several of the artists we've studied so far, Limón's work focused on the human experience. His movement also had a strong focus on fall and recovery, as well as balance and breath. This likely stemmed from the fact that Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman were teachers of his. He even danced in their company.

The following lesson plans have been inspired by Limón's work and adapted to younger, beginning age groups. We hope you and your dancers enjoy this introduction to contemporary dance. If you'd like to share more resources with students, you'll find them below. You'll also find recommended music links and class lesson plans. Contemporary A is designed for ages 7+ (correlating with our Ballet 1A and Ballet 1B levels). Contemporary B is designed for ages 9+ (correlating with our Ballet 2 and Ballet 3 levels).

Rooting for you, friend!

Ashley

Ashley Hartford, Director of Once Upon a Ballet

Resources + References

[José Limón \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[José Limón Dance Company](#)

Recommended Music

[José Limón Music Playlist in Spotify](#)

Videos

[José Limón Video Playlist for Inspiration](#)

[OUB Contemporary Lesson Plans Videos: Months 6 and 12 - José Limón-Inspired](#)

Warm-up (10 Minutes / Ages 7+)

[Warm-up Video](#)

Breath and Movement

Do the following sequence 2x through. The first time, do it at half speed. The second time, do it at normal speed.

- Start sitting with knees to sky. Breathe in and extend legs out as you breathe out.
- Tuck the belly button when breathing in, and release the breath as you roll to the back.
- On your back, the top leg swings left, then to center. Roll up and over straight legs to come back to sitting.
- Breathe in, tucking the legs in. Extending the legs out as you breathe out.
- Tuck the belly button when breathing in, and release the breath as you roll to the back.
- On your back, the top leg swings left, then to center. Roll up and over straight legs to come back to sitting.

Arms and Plié

- Leading with the head, side lean plié to right. Straighten legs. Plié as the left arm breathes out, over, and around. Stretch and come up to center. Repeat to the left.
- Reach out the right arm, concave in, as you plié. Straighten. Reach out the left arm, concave in, as you plié. Straighten.
- Both arms breathe to open, concave in to cross, and then breathe to open.

Arms and Rise

- Rise and breathe in with arms floating up. Lower heels and breathe out. Repeat this 4x in first and 4x in second position, turned out.
- Step forward onto the right foot (on flat), with the back leg in sur le cou de pied. Step backward on the left foot (on flat), with the front leg in sur le cou de pied. Step to the right side (on flat) with the left leg in sur le cou de pied. Step to the left side (on flat) with the right leg in sur le cou de pied.
- Repeat the stepping into sur le cou de pied section starting forward on the left foot.

Battement Swings / Fall into Plié

- Swing the right leg front, back, front, and back in an attitude battement. Fall back into a plié on the right leg, keeping the left leg straight in front. Transfer the weight forward to stand on the left leg again. Repeat on the right. Then repeat 2x on the left.

Across the Floor (10 Minutes / Ages 7+)

[Across the Floor Video](#)

Weeks 1 & 2

- Step right (1), left (2), right (3), left (4), battement the right leg front (5), run off.
- Step right (1), tuck the left leg and roll, coming up to standing (2-5), run off.
- Step, battement front, all the way across.
- Step left, swing the right leg in a low attitude front, back, front. Continue across.
- Tombe pas de bourrée sequence: upright only.

Weeks 3 & 4

- Step right (1), left (2), right (3), left (4), battement the right leg front (5), run off.
- Step right (1), tuck the left leg and roll, coming up to standing (2-5), run off.
- Step, battement front, all the way across.
- Step, battement side, all the way across. (The foot that steps will cross in front each time.)
- Step and brush into attitude front. Fall onto the front leg. Step, step. Continue across.
- Tombe pas de bourrée sequence: upright, leaning, and concave.

Exercise 1 (Ages 7+)

[Exercise 1 Video](#)

Part 1: Tag, You're It! (5 min)

The purpose of this exercise is to emphasize Limón's technique of using continuous movement. To start this exercise, the class is split to each side of the room. One dancer starts out on one side of the room to go across the floor freestyle. That person will tag someone on the opposite side of the room to go next. Students should try to keep their movements continue, even when tagging the next person to take over. There shouldn't be any pauses. Keep moving while traveling across. Continue the exercise until everyone has been tagged.

Part 2: Finish Each Other's Sentence! (15 min)

Week 1: Have your students stand in a line. Assign each student a 2-count movement phrase. Once each person has their phrase, have your students each do their phrase, one after another down the line. Students should try to continue their movement one after another so there are no pauses. Repeat as many times as desired.

Weeks 2 through 4: Repeat the exercise from the first week, but have students create their own 2-count movement phrases. Standing in a line, have one person make up a 2-count move, wherever that person ends, the next person starts, and so on. When creating the movements go slow—complete the movements without skipping a beat to flow all of the movements into a single movement. Add variety in weeks 3 through 4 by adding variety. For example:

- Each student repeats their 2-count phrase 2x before the next student goes.
- Each student comes up with a 4-count phrase instead of a 2-count phrase (non-repeating).
- Give students something they must do in their movement phrase, such as a certain step, or a concept. Maybe alternate so every other student does a different size: big/small/big/small. Or alternate through levels: high/middle/low/high/middle/low, etc.
- Get creative! The possibilities are endless!

Exercise 2 (Ages 7+)

[Exercise 2 Video](#)

Keep Breathing: Flow Progressive Choreography Combo

Week 1

In this exercise, we'll explore movement and breath, and create unique movements in small groups. Start by introducing how we inhale and exhale using our limbs or parts of our body. As a group, lead breathing (inhale for 4 counts and exhale for 4 counts) with your head, shoulders, arms, torso, legs, etc. Do this as an example for your students.

Next, divide students into small groups and have them come up with their own inhale/exhale movements (inhaling for 4 counts and exhaling for 4 counts). Go around to each group and help them as needed.

Week 2

Review the full group inhale/exhale combination you lead your class in during Week 1.

Next, allow small groups to review their choreography.

Next, have everyone stand in the space together, but next to their small group members. The entire class does the full group combination. Group 1 does their phrase. Group 2 does their phrase. Etc. Movements should continue from one group to the next. (There should not be a pause between one group ending and one group starting.)

Week 3

Review the final part from Week 2. (With the whole group followed by the small groups.)

Next, divide the small groups into pairs. Each pair repeats the process of coming up with their own inhale/exhale movements (inhaling for 4 counts and exhaling for 4 counts).

Repeat the process: whole class, small groups, then pairs perform their choreography one after another.

Week 4

Repeat the same process from Week 3, but add individual choreography.

When performing the choreography combinations as a class, it will go in the following order:

- Entire class, together
- Group 1
- Group 2
- Group 3, etc.
- Group 1, Pair 1
- Group 1, Pair 2, etc.
- Group 2, Pair 1
- Group 2, Pair 2, etc.
- Group 3, Pair 1
- Group 3, Pair 2, etc.
- Then all individuals do their individual choreography at the same time
- Finish with the entire class, together (repeat from the beginning)

Warm-up (10 Minutes / Ages 9+)

[Warm-up Video](#)

Breath and Movement

Do the following sequence 2x through. The first time, do it at normal speed. The second time, do it at a fast speed.

- Start sitting with knees to sky. Breathe in and extend legs out as you breathe out.
- Tuck the belly button when breathing in, and release the breath as you roll to the back.
- On your back, the top leg swings left, then to center. Roll up and over straight legs to come back to sitting.
- Breathe in, tucking the legs in. Extending the legs out as you breathe out.
- Tuck the belly button when breathing in, and release the breath as you roll to the back.
- On your back, the top leg swings left, then to center. Roll up and over straight legs to come back to sitting.

Arms and Plié

- Leading with the head, side lean plié to right. Straighten legs. Plié as the left arm breathes out, over, and around. Stretch and come up to center. Repeat to the left.
- Reach out the right arm, concave in, as you plié. Straighten. Reach out the left arm, concave in, as you plié. Straighten.
- Both arms breathe to open, concave in to cross, and then breathe to open.
- Repeat the entire sequence.

Arms and Rise

- Rise and breathe in with arms floating up. Lower heels and breathe out. Repeat this 4x in first and 4x in second position, turned out.
- Step forward on the right foot into piqué with the back leg in sur le cou de pied. Step backward on the left foot into piqué with the front leg in sur le cou de pied. Step to the right side into piqué with the left leg in sur le cou de pied. Step to the left side into piqué with the right leg in sur le cou de pied.*
- *If needed, students may do this exercise on flat before on rise.
- Repeat the piqué section starting forward onto the left foot.

Battement Swings / Fall into Plié

- Swing the right leg front, back, front, and back in an attitude battement. Fall back into a plié on the right leg, keeping the left leg straight in front. Transfer the weight forward to stand on the left leg again. Repeat on the right. Then repeat 2x on the left.
- Repeat the above with straight leg swings instead of attitude swings.

Across the Floor (10 Minutes / Ages 9+)

[Across the Floor Video](#)

Weeks 1 & 2

- Run right (1), left (2), right (3), left (4), battement the right leg front (5), run off.
- Step right (1), tuck the left leg and roll, coming up to standing (2-5), run off.
- Step right (&), left (1), battement the right leg front (2), step right (&), left (3), battement side (4), step right while pivoting (5), battement the left leg back (6), turn to run forward left (7), right (&), left (8). Run off.
- Step left, swing the right leg in a low attitude front, back, front. Continue across.
- Step forward on the left, float the right leg up to à la seconde, cross the right leg in front to step, and balance with a flat back. Continue across.
- Tombe pas de bourrée sequence: upright, leaning, and concave.

Weeks 3 & 4

- Run right (1), left (2), right (3), left (4), battement the right leg front (5), step onto the right leg, tuck the left leg and roll, coming up to standing (6-8).
- Step right (&), left (1), battement the right leg front (2), step right (&), left (3), battement side (4), step right while pivoting (5), battement the left leg back (6), turn to run forward left (7), right (&), left (8). Repeat all the way across.
- Step and piqué into attitude front. Fall onto the front leg. Step, step. Continue across.
- Step and piqué into attitude front with a half turn. Fall onto the front leg. Step, step. Step and piqué into attitude front with a half turn. Fall onto the front leg. Run off.
- Tombe detourné sequence: upright, leaning, and concave.

Exercise 1 (Ages 9+)

[Exercise 1 Video](#)

Part 1: Tag, You're It! (5 min)

The purpose of this exercise is to emphasize Limón's technique of using continuous movement. To start this exercise, the class is split to each side of the room. One dancer starts out on one side of the room to go across the floor freestyle. That person will tag someone on the opposite side of the room to go next. Students' should try to keep their movements continue, even when tagging the next person to take over. There shouldn't be any pauses. Keep moving while traveling across. Continue the exercise until everyone has been tagged.

Part 2: Finish Each Other's Sentence! (15 min)

Week 1, Part 1

Have your students stand in a line. Assign each student a 2-count movement phrase. Once each person has their phrase, have your students each do their phrase, one after another down the line. Students should try to continue their movement one after another so there are no pauses. Repeat as many times as desired.

Week 1, Part 2

Next, repeat the exercise, having students create their own 2-count movement phrases. Standing in a line, have one person make up a 2-count move, wherever that person ends, the next person starts, and so on. When creating the movements go slow—complete the movements without skipping a beat to flow all of the movements into a single movement.

Week 2

Repeat part 2 from the previous week. Next, add variety. For example:

- Each student repeats their 2-count phrase 2x before the next student goes.
- Each student comes up with a 4-count phrase instead of a 2-count phrase (non-repeating).
- Give students something they must do in their movement phrase, such as a certain step, or a concept. Maybe alternate so every other student does a different size: big/small/big/small. Or alternate through levels: high/middle/low/high/middle/low, etc.
- Get creative! The possibilities are endless!

Week 3

Try the previous week's activity, but splitting up into small groups to come up with assigned movements in place of individuals. It will be harder for more people to stay in sync with one another but will be great for teamwork!

Week 4

Repeat any of the sequences from this exercise in the previous weeks.

Exercise 2 (Ages 9+)

[Exercise 2 Video](#)

Keep Breathing: Flow Progressive Choreography Combo

Week 1

In this exercise, we'll explore movement and breath, and create unique movements in small groups. Start by introducing how we inhale and exhale using our limbs or parts of our body. As a group, lead breathing (inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts, inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts) with your head, shoulders, arms, torso, legs, etc. Do this as an example for your students.

Next, divide students into small groups and have them come up with their own inhale/exhale movements (inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts, inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts). Go around to each group and help them as needed.

Week 2

Review the full group inhale/exhale combination you lead your class in during Week 1.

Next, allow small groups to review their choreography.

Next, have everyone stand in the space together, but next to their small group members. The entire class does the full group combination. Group 1 does their phrase. Group 2 does their phrase. Etc. Movements should continue from one group to the next. (There should not be a pause between one group ending and one group starting.)

Week 3

Review the final part from Week 2. (With the whole group followed by the small groups.)

Next, divide the small groups into pairs. Each pair repeats the process of coming up with their own inhale/exhale movements (inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts, inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 2 counts).

Repeat the process: whole class, small groups, then pairs perform their choreography one after another.

Week 4

Repeat the same process from Week 3, but add individual choreography.

When performing the choreography combinations as a class, it will go in the following order:

- Entire class, together
- Group 1
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- Group 3, etc.
- Group 1, Pair 1
- Group 1, Pair 2, etc.
- Group 2, Pair 1
- Group 2, Pair 2, etc.
- Group 3, Pair 1
- Group 3, Pair 2, etc.
- Then all individuals do their individual choreography at the same time
- Finish with the entire class, together (repeat from the beginning)