

Ballet Class Activities

Ballet 1A, 1B, 2, and 3

Video Playlist: [La Esmeralda](#)

Orchestral Music: Not available; [Esmeralda Variation](#)

Tambourine Rhythm

Let your students use a tambourine to tap out and explore the following meters and rhythms.

4/4 - Have your students tap an even beat like a clock. Tell them this is a 4/4 meter. The beats are even. There is no emphasis on one in particular. None are skipped.

2/4 - A 2/4 meter is similar to a 4/4 meter, but every other beat is emphasized. Students can think of tapping louder on the first and third taps of every four taps.

6/8 - Since we're including a waltz step activity in this theme, it can be helpful to talk to students about the musicality of a waltz step. Just like we emphasized every other beat in the 2/4 meter, the 6/8 meter also has an emphasis. This time, however, the emphasis is on the first beat and then the second and third beat are unemphasized. Have your students tap a waltz (1-2-3, etc.) They'll tap louder on the first count and quieter on the second and third counts.

Quarter and Eighth Notes - Next, have your students tap twice as fast. Tell them, if what they were tapping previously were quarter notes, they are now tapping eighth notes. If quarter notes are one second each (in our clock analogy), eighth notes are half seconds. You would have two beats or taps per second instead of one per second. You can explore this further by dividing your class into two groups. Have both groups tap quarter notes (one per second). Have them tap eighth notes (two per second). Next, have group A tap quarter notes while group B taps eighth notes. Then switch. Continue the activity for as long as desired.

Finally, have your students echo you with different rhythms with the tambourine.

Please note: If this is a new topic for your students (or a review from having covered it some time ago), you don't need to cover all of the above in a single class. It can be helpful to initially start with the 4/4 meter to introduce the concept. And it can be helpful to cover the 6/8 if you will be doing a waltz step in today's class.

Gypsy Scarf

Esmeralda is the most beautiful gypsy in town. She agrees to marry a poet to save his life. But when Phoebus saves her life, he is stricken by her beauty and they both fall madly in love with each other. Unfortunately for the two lovers, Phoebus is engaged to another. He gives Esmeralda a scarf that was given to him by his fiancée.

Work on paddle turns today in your lower levels, with a scarf. As students turn, they should hold out their scarf with their leading hand and place their second hand on their hip. How does this change paddle turns? Does it make them easier? More difficult? How about spotting?

For your older students, have them hold their scarfs, stretched between both hands in pirouettes. Hold the scarf in front (similar to a 1st position) as they prepare and then turn. Then try holding it in front of them (similar to 1st position) as they prepare and then raise their arms overhead while holding the scarf (similar to 5th position) as they turn. Using the

scarves in this way will make turning more difficult, but dancers will be forced to use their lower bodies to turn without the help of their arms.

Tambourine Fun

In today's grand allegro combination, allow your students to use tambourines. You can choreograph the tambourine into the combination, or allow students to do so. See what they come up with and how adding a tambourine modifies the combination!

Esmeralda's Variation

First, play the music from Esmeralda's variation. Allow your students to listen to it. Then give them each a tambourine and a few minutes to think about their improvisation to the music. Next, have your students dance as Esmeralda with her tambourine. Let them have fun with it. How would they dance as Esmeralda? When they are finished, ask them why they danced as they did. How does the tambourine change the way they dance? Did the tambourine make improvising easier or more difficult? Why or why not?

Do the same activity in a subsequent week. You can also, optionally, begin the subsequent week by showing your students a video clip of [Esmeralda's variation with the tambourine](#) or the variation from the [full ballet Esmeralda](#). How does watching this influence their second improvisation round?