

## Ballet Class Activities

### Ballet 1A, 1B, 2, and 3

Video Playlist: [Balanchine Ballets \(Focus on Serenade\)](#)

Ballet Class Music: [Thank You, Mr. B by Steven Mitchell](#)

Orchestral Music: [Balanchine Album](#)

#### **Serenade Opening**

Balanchine's very first work after he came to the states was Serenade. He did not have a company yet, so he choreographed on students of the School of American Ballet. Some say, in the opening pose, dancers are shielding their eyes from the moonlight.

#### Port de Bras

Show students a clip of the opening of Serenade. Next, play the music and let them improvise to create their own port de bras, inspired by Balanchine's Serenade.

#### **A Modern Take on Classical**

Balanchine brought modern elements to his ballets in his choreography. While it is still very much classical ballet, a foot may be flexed. Arms may be crossed or in a V. Legs may be parallel.

Use of high V and low V in place of arrondi positions:

Ballet 1A/1B: Paddle turns for spotting, with the arms in a high V then low V.

Ballet 2/3: Bourrée turns to practice spotting with arms in a high V then low V.

#### Across the Floor

Ballet 1A/1B: Runs on demi pointe across the room in parallel. Arms sweep into 3rd arabesque then press the air away into a low V slightly behind you.

Ballet 1A/1B: Runs on demi pointe across in parallel. Arms sweep into 3rd arabesque then press the air away into a low V slightly behind you. Run or chassé and temps leve in a parallel passé.

#### **Brisk Choreography**

One of Balanchine's signatures was quick, brisk choreography, especially in jumps.

Have your students do the day's petite allegro at regular speed. Then speed it up. Talk to your students about how they felt in the faster version.

Continue to have our students work on their petite allegro at a faster tempo than usual for several weeks. On the final week of this activity, have them complete it at the faster tempo. Next, have them do it to the original, slower tempo. Now ask them how they felt during the faster tempo? How about the slower tempo?

There is no right or wrong answer here. This exercise is simply to get students thinking and to learn a little more about Balanchine's style. You can also try this approach with a short piece of choreography in place of petit allegro.

## **Corps de Ballet**

One thing that set Balanchine's works apart from many classical ballets in his day was the corps danced often rather than posing decoratively to the side or back of the stage for most of their time on stage.

Have your students stand in one line across the back of the room. This is the "corps" part. One or two at a time, have students do the "solo" part while the rest of the students dance as the corps. Continue until all students have had a chance to be the "solo".

The "solo" part can be a combination you make up, or ballet improvisation by the student(s).

For the "corps", one week, have them dance—doing something simple like balancés (or a preparation for balancés) or pas de basques side to side. The next week, have them pose like in a more traditional, classical ballet.

For discussion, ask your students how they felt as a still corps? How did they feel as a dancing corps? What do they think the audience would think of the two options? If they might prefer one option over the other, should choreography be like that all the time? Or should it vary?