

## Ballet Class Activities

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

Video Playlist: [The Firebird](#)

Orchestral Music: [The Firebird](#)

#### The Firebird

When we watch the ballet, The Firebird, similar to the swans in swan lake, the dancer must dance the part of a bird. But this is not just any bird, this is the firebird! The firebird is a magical, enchanted bird. She is quick and fluttery. Have your students dance as the firebird.

For a younger class, you can allow them to free dance. Play music from the ballet and suggest movements like quick flying arms (from low V to high V), runs en demi pointe, bourrées, and quick leaps.

For an older class, you can give them specific choreography. You can assign this to your class' petit allegro or even grand allegro combination for the day—telling students their jumps should be more brisk as if they are the firebird. Another good one for Ballet 3 would be soutenu turns or pique turns across the room or diagonal. Students should make their dancing quicker and sharper. Arms can be modified to be more bird like (for example, one turn in a low V and one turn in a high V).

If your students need a visual, show them a clip of the classical ballet choreography from the [Firebird YouTube video playlist](#) to spark their imaginations.

#### Classical Ballet vs. Contemporary Ballet

While the original choreography in the Ballets Russes' premier of The Firebird was classical, many ballet companies today adapt it to a more modern ballet style. Have your students watch the clip from the [San Francisco Ballet in Uri Possokhov's The Firebird](#). Then have them watch a minute or two of [Diana Vishneva in The Firebird](#). (Around 7 minutes in is equivalent to the San Francisco Ballet clip.)

What differences do your students notice between the two sets of choreography?

For an activity, have your students break into two groups. Assign classical ballet choreography to one group and contemporary ballet choreography to the other group. Play music from the ballet and give your students about 5 minutes to come up with their own choreography. Each group should show their choreography, then as a class, discuss how the choreography differed between groups. What was different? What was similar? What was classical about the choreography? What was contemporary about it? Why do your students think this ballet choreography is often modernized? Because of the story? (Probably not.) Because of the music? (Probably!)

In a subsequent class, you can repeat this activity, allowing two group to switch which is classical and which is contemporary.

This activity is a more time consuming one, but can be great for introducing your students to the idea of different types of choreography—even done to the same music! It can also be a good way to have them think about how music can be interpreted differently and how ballet choreography has evolved over the last century. This is a great ballet to follow up from the Balanching Ballets theme, as that has introduced the idea of adding more modern elements to classical ballet.