

Ballet Class Activities

Ballet 1A, 1B, 2, and 3

Video Playlist: [Swan Lake](#)

Ballet Class Music: [Swan Lake Ballet Class Vol. 1](#) and [Swan Lake Ballet Class Vol. 2](#) by Debbi Parks and Norman Higgins

Orchestral Music: [Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake](#)

The Prince's Birthday

Swan Lake opens with Prince Siegfried celebrating his birthday. His friends and the village peasants celebrate with a waltz. His mother, the queen, interrupts his fun and tells him she will be throwing a ball the following evening in which he should choose a bride.

Peasant Waltz

Practice the waltz step currently appropriate for your students' level and have them travel across the room, waltzing, as peasants. How might they act as peasants? The prince is with them and it's his birthday. Would they be in a celebratory mood? Happy? Joyful?

Birthday Ball

The following evening, the prince is at a ball—in his honor. At first, he does not want to be there. He has fallen in love with Odette and does not want to choose a bride other than her. In spite of his solemn mood, he is still royalty. Do you think he slouches and mopes at a royal ball? No! He may not be cheerful, but the prince would still stand tall (like we do with correct ballet posture!). Have your students walk proudly and gracefully, step and brush, or march across the room as a royal procession. At first, have them simply travel, focusing on royal posture (and solemn expression for this activity).

Once your students have the steps and posture down, divide your class in half. Have half of them stand on opposite sides of the room along the wall, facing upstage. The most upstage student begins the traveling pattern, traveling downstage on the diagonal. Both sides of the room go at once, with the stage left student always crossing in front of the stage right student. A new pair (one student from each side) begins every 4 counts. Students continue their processional pattern: along the downstage diagonal, upstage, along the other downstage diagonal, upstage, etc. for as long as desired.

The Lake

At a lake in the forest, Prince Siegfried meets Odette and a flock of swans who are really girls with a spell cast over them by the evil sorcerer, Rothbart. There are many iconic moments in this ballet scene. You can incorporate a few of them into your classes.

The Four Little Swans

Have your students do your petit allegro combination, in groups of four while holding hands. For these younger levels, students do not need to cross their arms as well, they can simply hold hands. This is great for teaching students to travel in groups together as one.

The Two Big Swans

There is a section where the two big swans dance. This part involves lots of jumps and grand allegro. Have your students travel during grand allegro in pairs of two—one student starting in each upstage corner. They do the grand allegro combination traveling down their diagonals, crossing midstage (stage left crossing in front of stage right).

For an introduction to the corps de ballet posing while small groups and solos dance, have students who are not traveling across the room as the two big swans, pose on each side of the room as they wait their turn. They can stand in B-plus with their arms low and crossed at the wrist as they wait their turn to be the big swans.

Corps de Ballet

The corps de ballet does dance as well! For traveling turns, traveling steps, or grand allegro, have students travel in a large circle around the room, just like the swans traveling in a circle, “around the lake”.

Odette and Odile

The personalities between Odette and Odile are starkly different. Do the following activity for Odette at the end of one class and Odile at the end of another. Show a video clip of either Odette or Odile. Tell your students a little about the character. Odette is more innocent and gentle. Odile is a bit more flashy and evil as she helps her father deceive Prince Siegfried. After the video clip, play the music for a minute or two for students to listen to as they think about their ballet improvisation as either Odette or Odile (whichever you are studying on that day). Then play the music as students improvise in creating their own dance as the assigned character. After students have danced, talk to them about what they did. Ask them why they chose the movements they did. After they have done both Odette and Odile, ask them about the differences between the two characters. You can also tell them how the same ballerina dances both parts. Think about what it would be like to dance the two very different characters that physically look the same (besides the white vs. black tutu) in the same ballet.