

Ballet Class Activities

Ballet 1A, 1B, 2, and 3

Video Playlist: [Jewels](#)

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

Orchestral Music: [Balanchine Album](#) (Emeralds), [Capriccio for Piano](#) (Rubies), and [Symphony No. 3](#) (Diamonds)

For this particular ballet, we recommend alternating focus between Emeralds in one class and Diamonds in the next. In this particular theme, we are studying the stylistic nuances among different styles of classical ballet. This may be a difficult concept for your younger students, but covering it in your Ballet 1A or 1B class will make it more easy for your Ballet 2 and 3 students to understand, as they would have previously visited the concept in Ballet 1A or 1B (if you are doing a two-year rotation of story ballets for these levels).

Because Rubies veers farther away from the classical—with occasionally flexed feet and parallel legs, we've included a study of this as an improvisation activity you can do at the end of class each week.

Emeralds

Each of the three sections of Jewels is meant to represent a different geographic style of ballet and what influence each has had on the artform.

The first section is Emeralds. Emeralds represents the French style of ballet and uses music by the French composer, Gabriel Fauré. If you watch the choreography of this section, it is more fluid. It is softer and has a different elegance than what we see in the last section, Diamonds.

As your students do the following sections of class, have them imagine they are dancing in the Emeralds section of Jewels. You can even show them a short clip from the video at the beginning of centerwork so they have a more visual idea of the particular quality of dancing.

- Port de Bras
- Adage (for older levels)
- Preparation for Soutenu and Traveling Turns
- Balancé and Waltz Step

Diamonds

The final section of Jewels is Diamonds. Diamonds represents the Russian influence on ballet. It has a more imperialistic style. You can think of Emeralds as elegant and Diamonds as proud and royal. Diamonds is more grand. Diamonds is set to music by Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

Optionally, you can show your students a short video clip of Diamonds at the beginning of centrework to give them a visual. In today's class, have your students dance, imagining they have the same quality of Diamonds in the following exercises:

- Port de Bras (Will this be different from thinking of Emeralds? Ask your students what they think.)
- Spotting and Pirouettes; Traveling Turns in a Circle (Ballet 3)
- Mazurka Step
- Allegro Steps

Rubies

If you've studied Balanchine's works in the past (#11 in our story ballet themes), ask your students if they remember anything about Balanchine's style. Balanchine created many purely classical works. But he was also a pioneer in ballet, creating many modern ballets with modern elements. While it is still ballet, he might add a flexed foot or have the legs in parallel. The arms might be elongated in a high V or low V instead of being held in an arrondi position.

Rubies is meant to cover American style. The movement is much more "Balanchine" and the section is set to music of Igor Stravinsky. While Stravinsky was born Russian, he later became an American citizen and is known for his more modernist music style.

Show your students a video clip from Rubies. Ask them if they notice anything different in Rubies from either Emeralds or Diamonds? Is it more modern? Do they think it's still ballet? Why or why not?

Allow your students to do this activity at the end of class as you are studying Jewels. If students tire of improvising to Rubies, allow them to do the same activity with Emeralds and/or Diamonds.

Finally, you can end your final class covering Jewels, with discussion with your students on the following. (Note, this may resonate more with your Ballet 3 students than your younger students.) What do they think about the three stylistic representations? Do they think Balanchine was accurate? And particularly for American students, what do they think about the fact that the "American" section was choreographed to the style of a choreographer (Balanchine) and to the music of a composer (Stravinsky) who were both Russian-born rather than American-born, but did immigrate to America? Finally, what do your students think about ballet companies from different parts of the world, performing Jewels. Do they think it might be easier or more difficult for a Russian, French, American, or other company to perform certain sections?