A Comparative Analysis of Two Methods of Teaching: The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and the Royal Academy of Dance

Barbara Ann Ruemenapp

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF TWO METHODS OF TEACHING:
THE CECCHETTI METHOD OF CLASSICAL BALLET
AND
THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

by

Barbara Ann Ruemenapp

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Barbara Ann Ruemenapp
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significance and Background of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delimitations of the Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND LITERATURE AND A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BALLET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>THE CECCHETTI METHOD OF CLASSICAL BALLET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>SUMMARY AND EVALUATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Under the stress of joy, Man makes words. These words are not enough, he prolongs them. The prolonged words are not enough; he modulates them. The modulated words are not enough, and without even perceiving it his hands make gestures and his feet start to move." ¹

Dance is a part of one of the oldest of the arts, the art of movement. To trace the origins of dance, it is necessary to go back beyond the beginnings of history into prehistoric times. As nearly as can be determined, primitive dances are concerned with the seasons of the year, including the seasons of vegetation, the seasons of the tribe's development or history, dances with social overtones (family birth and death dances, marriage and sexual dances, war and welcome dances, and tribal initiation dances) and dances with religious overtones (worship of the tribe's deity). Many cultures have produced their own forms of "dance" or motion of the body. In this way, we view dance as a daily use of expression and not as an art form devised to interest an audience.

The art of theatre, of which theatrical dance is a part, is an art of relatively recent times. It emerges during the very beginning of modern history in the period known as the Renaissance.²


The term Renaissance, or rebirth, reflects man's emergence from the Dark Ages into the Age of Enlightenment.

The Renaissance began in Italy during the fourteenth century. The rulers of this time (Lorenzo the Magnificent, the Medici ruler of Florence, Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan) were overly concerned with the brilliance of their courts. It mattered greatly to these rulers that they should appear important in the eyes of their neighbors. It was these people who became patrons of the arts and provided artists (those who worked in the visual and the performing arts), scientists and philosophers with the opportunities to achieve in their various fields. Professional dancing-masters were important figures at these Italian courts. Under their influence, dancing developed from a pastime into an art form. They created this art form to include a definite, elaborate and systematic technique because of their hope to rise above and outshine their neighbors. Our present ballet technique has developed from this influence.

The French discovery of this example of Italian culture was significantly valuable in the development of ballet. Although court dancing was common in France, it had little value other than as a form of merriment. With the appearance of the Italian dancing-masters at the French court, dancing became a refined and essential part of courtly activities. French court ballet had been born.

Catherine de Medici, who married Henri II and became Queen of France, brought to the French court the Italian's fondness for dancing. On October 15, 1581, by her command, the Ballet Comique
de la Rein was performed. It was choreographed by Beaujoyeulx and considered to be the first real ballet ever presented.\(^1\) The death of Catherine de Medici in 1589 made little difference in the popularity of French court ballet because the impact of dance was so great that it became permanent. This type of dance was enhanced by the French courts and was further nurtured by the personal interest of Henri IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV.\(^2\)

Under Henri IV, simple ballet-masquerades of a comical nature were performed. During the reign of Louis XIII, court ballet deteriorated and became melodramatic and music began to play an important role. The most brilliant phase of court ballet emerged under Louis XIV. It was during this time that the five positions of the feet, as defined by Beauchamps, were accepted as a basis for ballet technique. Louis XIV appreciated the value of good teaching and in 1661 he founded the Academie Royale de Danse. Initially the Academie Royale de Danse consisted of thirteen dancing-masters, who were to "re-establish the art in its perfection".\(^3\) This was to be an institution where teachers of dance would arrange a ballet training program and curriculum for students desiring to become professional dancers.

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\(^2\)Guest, op. cit., p. 99.

\(^3\)loc. cit., p. 20.
In the mid-eighteenth century, Jean Georges Noverre began his career as the most influential choreographer of his century. Noverre's contributions to the art of ballet are still in use today. In his *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, published in 1760, Noverre states that

"Ballets should be unified works of art. That every element contributes to the development of the main theme, that technical exhibitions for their own sake should be discouraged, and that such implements to movement and expression as heeled shoes and cumbersome skirts should be abolished."

These proposals are relevant to the ballet d'action as well as to modern ballet.

During the nineteenth century, Carlo Blasis made considerable contributions to the art of dance. Ballet vocabulary expanded tremendously during this period as did the necessity for structured teaching. Balsis began to codify ballet by instructing teachers, who in turn taught other teachers. In addition, his book, *A Theoretical, Practical and Elementary Treatise on the Art of Dancing* was comprised of a study based on dance and the "theory and practice and a history of its rise and progress from earliest times: intended as well for the instruction of amateurs as the use of professional persons". As a result of this publication, the teaching of classical ballet became more rigidly structured. An interest in ballet was aroused.

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1Anderson, op. cit., p. 35.
2Kirstein, op. cit., p. 237.
Significance and Background of the Study

The theories and methods behind the teaching of classical ballet are still serious concerns of the dance enthusiast. It is vital to the dancer, professional or non-professional, to have adequate training throughout his career. Without proper training the young dancer can expect no future in the art and is susceptible to bodily injuries.¹

From the beginning, and as the dancer progresses, it is crucial to study with a qualified and knowledgeable instructor.² This instructor must be well versed in the mechanics of classical ballet, as well as concerned with the physical needs and emotional balance of the dancer. The dance teacher is dealing with an entire personality in addition to an ideally proportioned body. A dancer's frame of mind is just as important as the height of the extension or the depth of the plié. The focus of the teaching by a qualified instructor will concentrate on the entire growth of the individual. This includes a knowledge of the anatomy of the body and the concern of the teacher for the development of the student's mind in regard to the principles of ballet.³

Methods of teaching classical ballet were formed because of

²loc. cit., p. 136.
³Terry, op. cit., p. 135.
the great concern to raise the level of classical ballet training and to create international standards of ballet.\textsuperscript{1} Two well-known and highly respected methods are The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance. It is the aim of each method to ensure and maintain high standards of teaching.

As a part of this study, the history and theory will be traced as well as the practices involved in each method of teaching. A check-list of the systems will be developed for comparison. Because no such check-list exists, this will hopefully be a unique contribution of this study.

Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present study is to examine two systems in the teaching of classical ballet: The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance. It is the intention here to analyze two respected methods. A comparison will show the similarities and differences and the strengths and limitations of these two approaches and provide a basic understanding of these methods. Therefore, the major consideration of the present study is: In using this check-list as a guide will one system prove to be more effective than the other?

Need for the Study

Methods of teaching classical ballet are rigorous systems devised with a careful regard for the laws of kinesiology and designed to create qualities essential to the dancer. These include, among others, qualities such as balance, poise, strength, elevation, flexibility and ballon.¹ Ideally, this is the technical aim of all methods concerned with the teaching of classical ballet. Each system possesses its own theory by which to best achieve these results. The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance have produced professional dancers with these qualities. Anna Pavlova, Leonide Massine, Serge Lifar, Frederick Ashton, Marie Rambert and Anthony Tudor were Cecchetti trained, while the R.A.D. system produced dancers such as Margot Fonteyn and Tamara Karsavina, and others. However, no comparative method studies contrasting these two systems have been undertaken to date. Therefore, it would seem that such a study would add to the existing body of knowledge for teaching ballet.

Delimitations of the Study

The present thesis is confined to the study of the teaching methods of two systems: The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance. Dealing exclusively with ballet,

this study makes no provision for other forms of dance. It is primarily concerned with the structure of these two systems in regard to the teaching of classical ballet. A history of each system will be provided and, in addition, the purported intent and purpose of each system. The educational process for ballet instructors will be reviewed as well as contributions made in the field of dance education.

Both systems are considered superior approaches.¹ The aim of this study is not to judge these systems but to evaluate their strengths and limitations and present the findings of these different but substantial and effective methods of teaching.

Definition of Terms

Technical terms germane to the present study are defined below.


Adage - Slow and controlled movements.

Allegro - Brisk, lively. A term applied to all bright and brisk movements.

Assemblé - Assembled or joined together. A step in which the working foot slides well along the ground before being swept into the air. As the foot goes into the air the dancer pushes off the floor with the supporting leg, extending the toes.

¹ibid., and Joel, op. cit., p. 30.
Ballet - An artistic dance form characterized by grace and precision of movement and an elaborate formal technique; a theatrical work or entertainment in which a choreographer has expressed his ideas in group and solo dancing to a musical accompaniment with appropriate costumes, scenery and lighting.

Ballet d'action - A ballet with a plot or story. For example, The Sleeping Beauty.

Ballon - Bounce. Ballon is the light, elastic quality in jumping in which the dancer bounds up from the floor, pauses a moment in the air and descends lightly and softly, only to rebound in the air like the smooth bouncing of a ball.

Barre - The wooden structure, placed along the wall, that the dancer lightly holds during side practice.

Battement - Beating. A beating action of the extended or bended leg.

Choreography - This term is used to describe the actual steps, groupings and patterns of a ballet or dance composition. A choreographer is one who composes or invents ballets or dances.

Combinations - A chain of steps, enchainment.

Enchainment - Linking. A combination of two or more steps arranged to fit a phrase of music.

Frappe - Struck. A striking movement of the foot on the floor.

Jeté - Thrown. A jump from one leg to the other in which the working leg is brushed into the air and appears to be thrown.

Pirouette - Whirl or spin.

Placement - Correct alignment of the body.

Plié - Bent, bending. A bending of the knee or knees. This is an exercise to render the joints and muscles soft and pliable and the tendons flexible and elastic, and to develop a sense of balance.

Pointe - The raising of the body on the tips of the toes.

Port de bras - Carriage of the arms.

Quick-study - The dancer performs a combination that has been shown to him only one time.
R.A.D. - The abbreviation for The Royal Academy of Dance.

Rond de jambe - Round of the leg, that is, a circular movement of the leg.

Style - A manner by which ballet technique is performed.

Tendu - Stretched.

Unseen enchainments - The dancer performs a combination that has been explained to him in only verbal terms. No demonstration has been presented.

An outline of the remainder of the thesis is as follows. The next chapter will deal with a review of related studies and literature. Chapter III, The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet, is an historical description of this method. Chapter IV, The Royal Academy of Dance, will provide an historical sketch of this system. Chapter V, Summary and Evaluation, a check-list will be presented together with the summary and evaluation of the systems.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND LITERATURE AND A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BALLET

The purpose of the second chapter is to provide a review of related studies and literature and a brief historical perspective of dance. An examination of a number of sources including the Dissertation Abstracts was undertaken. There were no listings of studies describing, analyzing or comparing either The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet or The Royal Academy of Dance. Through examining the publications Dance Magazine and Dancing Times it was found that each method was studied alone and not compared to any other system.

Written requests for information were made to The Cecchetti Council located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and The Royal Academy. The Royal Academy has two headquarters; the main headquarters are located in London, England and the United States headquarters are located in Upper Montclair, New Jersey. However, all information received was documented in other sources. A written syllabus was not received from either system.

Guest\(^1\) maintains that the first curriculum for the training of ballet was established by Louis XIV in 1661. This system was called the Academie Royale de Danse. Today, in addition to The Cecchetti

\(^1\)Guest, op. cit., p. 99.
Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance, the most common methods concerned with the teaching of classical ballet are the Russian, Vaganova and Bournonville methods.

The Russian method of teaching encompasses the style and technique of Marius Petipa (actually French-born). The Russians have adopted the standardized French vocabulary. This is not a graded and precise method, but rather a style of performing ballet which leaves the training to the discretion of the instructor.

The Vaganova Method is a specific system developed from the Russian school. This is the accepted state supported teaching method which now prevails throughout the U.S.S.R. and is also taught in various parts of the world. The Vaganova Method is based upon the pedagogical theories of Agrippina Vaganova.

The Bournonville Method consists of several pedagogical guides composed by August Bournonville. His system is preserved in six set classes. When taught by his most dedicated disciples these classes remain basically the same from year to year.

Dancers who train at a variety of schools and with different teachers often find contrasting methods of instruction stimulating.

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1Anderson, op. cit., p. 64.
2loc. cit., p. 145.
3ibid.
4loc. cit., p. 46.
and helpful. However, it is believed by Terry\(^1\) that studying within an individual method may be an excellent way for some students to train. These systems encourage and produce individuality. On the other hand, in studying only one system, those who do not possess a natural drive and imagination may not achieve the qualities essential to become a professional dancer. Such qualities include, among others, the need to be daring and experimenting, and by being exposed to more than one system these qualities may be achieved. Although ballet technique is fairly standard; the different methods of teaching it may mean that the style might vary. Students have individual needs which can be accommodated in some systems better than in others.

Of course, it is not possible for every ballet student to train in a specific method. Although these methods are well-known and widespread throughout the world, they are not available everywhere. The student then faces the task of finding an adequate instructor. Few states require licensing and those that do are concerned basically with the physical facilities of the studio. The law has no provisions for the requirements of ballet instructors; anyone is allowed to teach ballet. Unfortunately, people who have not had adequate training themselves or do not have the proper understanding of ballet technique teach in this field. It is not unusual to find these people teaching ballet in their homes on a cement or tile

\(^1\)Terry, op. cit., p. 148.
floor which is a completely unsuitable medium in regard to the safety of the dancer's body. Without proper guidance, the uninformed student may fall into the hands of these charlatans.

A workable procedure is for the student to study where professional ballet dancers receive their training. In a small community, if possible, the student should study at the local studios where professionals stop to "take class" while on tour.

Regional ballet companies, which are products of local dance studios, form the regional ballet associations and perform in annual ballet festivals. By attending these festivals the student is exposed to the strengths and limitations of their local ballet schools.

However, some fine ballet teachers are interested only in teaching and not the organization of a ballet company. The student must visit the schools in the area to find the knowledgeable and dedicated teacher. As a guideline, the student should look at the progress made by the graduates of the school.

Even when the student finds a qualified instructor with whom to study, he realizes that this is only a stepping stone to the mastery of his art. Whether he studies within a structured system or with an independent teacher, certain qualities cannot be taught. If the ballet steps mastered in the classroom are going to have

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1Ibid.

2Terry, op. cit., p. 155.
meaning on stage they must be treated like "movement words".\textsuperscript{1}

The motions of the body must have meaning. Eloquence is given to otherwise meaningless steps by color, stress, accent, timing, sharpness, softness, flowingness, speed and placement of the head and limbs among other characteristics.\textsuperscript{2}

The key word in ballet technique is style; style is what distinguishes the professional dancer from the amateur. It is the quality possessed by the dancer to dazzle the audience. Some believe it to be almost magical and call it artistry.\textsuperscript{3} Although it can be nurtured, the basic potential is innate; for this reason, no two ballerinas ever dance in the same manner.\textsuperscript{4} Innate potential is also reflected in the student's dance training. It is this potential and training which helps them develop their unique style of dance.

A classical role makes special artistic demands on the ballerina. There is an unending variety of possible interpretations in a classical ballet. The artistic dancer does not permit the role to become a standard series of steps. Each step becomes a part of the character in the role. This is unique with every dancer. It is style which gives a classical ballet its beauty and meaning.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}ibid.

\textsuperscript{2}ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}ibid.

\textsuperscript{4}loc. cit., p. 157.

\textsuperscript{5}ibid.
With this aspect of style in mind, it is important for the dancer to remember that although he can train within an excellent method and with a qualified and knowledgeable instructor, his success in the performance aspect of classical ballet is largely determined by his hard work and special talents.¹

The purpose of this chapter was to review studies and literature in this field as well as render a brief historical overview of ballet. The latter was achieved, the former was not because only a limited number of studies were found. However, this itself is an important discovery indicating perhaps more should be done and this poses a question for us to ponder, "Why haven't more studies been written in regard to these highly respected methods of dance?"

¹ibid.
CHAPTER III

THE CECCHETTI METHOD OF CLASSICAL BALLET

Enrico Cecchetti was born in Rome on June 21, 1850. His parents were dancers and saw to it that he began his dance training at an early age. As a student of Giovanni Lepri, who had studied under Carlo Blasis, Cecchetti developed a brilliant technique. During his career as a performer, Cecchetti was popular throughout Europe and was successful in both La Scala and London. He was especially noted for his virtuosity with pirouettes. It was in 1887 when Cecchetti appeared at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg (now the Kirov Theatre in Leningrad) that he created the roles of Bluebird and Carabosse in Tchaikovsky's The Sleeping Beauty.¹

Cecchetti was the principal teacher of the Imperial Russian Ballet and its affiliated school from 1890 through 1902. It was here where he taught Olga Prebrajenska, Tamara Karsavina and Vaslav Nijinsky. Cecchetti was the official instructor of the Diaghilev Ballet Russe from 1910 to 1918 but briefly left the company in 1913 to tour with his famed pupil, Anna Pavlova. He and his wife, the dancer Giuseppina de Maria, opened a school in London in 1918. Among their pupils were Alicia Markova and Serge Lifar. He then

directed the ballet school at La Scala from 1925 until his death on November 13, 1928.¹

The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet was originally formed in London, England as the Cecchetti Society Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet, as we know it in the United States, was formed in 1939. This was a result of a division of the Michigan Chapter of Dance Masters of America into an organization dedicated to maintaining the standards and methods of ballet training established by Enrico Cecchetti.²

The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet organizes Cecchetti’s teachings and writings into a sequence of grades which are carefully measured as to the degree of difficulty and physical development. It provides a system of accredited examinations to test the student’s proficiency within these grades. The Cecchetti Council of America bases its syllabi on those of the Cecchetti Society Branch of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing located in London, England. The Michigan organization was the first state society to sponsor a ballet committee with a rigid system of teaching and examination.³

Anna Pavlova was the most famous pupil of Enrico Cecchetti.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., “Meet The Cecchetti Council of America.” Dance Magazine, XLII (October 1968), 68.

³Ibid.
She is considered the model student by the Cecchetti Council.\textsuperscript{1}

Pavlova\textsuperscript{2} speaks of Enrico Cecchetti in this manner:

"The feeling of deep gratitude I have for what you have taught me is blended with my love and respect for your personality.

In an age when people no longer understand that to teach others it is necessary first to work hard and long oneself, and to have an actual experience of the stage; when by the aid of self-advertisement anyone can take the name of "professor"; when schools are opened at random where pupils are taught anything except the art of dancing - you, with infinite patience and loving care, have honestly and modestly pursued the great work of inclucating your pupils with the covenants of true art.

When you finished your brilliant career as the first dancer of your day, you devoted your life to the difficult art of teaching others, and with what proud satisfaction you can now look round, for, in every part of the world, nearly all who have made a name for themselves in choreography at the present time have passed through your hands. If your goddess, Terpsichore, is still in our midst, you, by right, are her favored High Priest."

The principle objective of The Cecchetti Method is to create high standards in the training of students for classical ballet.\textsuperscript{3}

It endeavors to reduce the dancer's training to an exact science by imposing a formula, evolved over the years, to train the dancer.\textsuperscript{4}

Proper training in the Cecchetti system will condition the dancer to withstand the pressures of public performance. It will also strengthen the dancer's muscles, tendons and nerves to readily respond to the requirements of the choreographer.


\textsuperscript{2}ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}Beaumont, op. cit., p. 1.

\textsuperscript{4}ibid.
The Cecchetti Method is an unalterable regime in which each day of the week has its own particular set of exercises. This ensures that all types of steps are religiously practiced in a planned sequence. The muscles of the body are toned to a carefully calculated degree by properly stretching and contracting each set of muscles. Exercises are always executed to the left as well as the right, beginning with the right side one week and the left side the next. There is no variation to this practice.

Hilda Butsova,\(^1\) a student of Enrico Cecchetti comments,

"The sequence escapes me, but I think it was allegro on Mondays, beginning with assembles front, back etcetera; jetés on Tuesdays; beats on Wednesdays; pirouettes on Thursdays, center barre with big jumps and pointe work. We had pointe work every day at center or barre and wore pointe shoes all the time. Soft shoes were considered 'men's shoes'. I liked Wednesdays and avoided pirouette days. Cecchetti would say, 'Butsova, I notice that Thursdays you always have something the matter with you.' But I still got away with it.

His center work was tendus, ronds de jambe; frappés done sixteen times; port de bras with battements. The port de bras was from Bournonville or Vestris upon whom he enlarged. Cecchetti was not a great innovator. It was his discipline and his being such a perfectionist that made him great. If one did things hard enough and long enough, they worked for you."

In The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet the student is taught to think of the movement of the foot, arm, leg and head in relationship to the entire body, not as a separate movement. This develops a feeling for the correct body alignment. Cyril W. Beaumont,\(^2\)

\(^1\)Butsova, Hilda, "Cecchetti." \textit{Dance Magazine}, XLIV (November 1972), 68.

\(^2\)op. cit.
ballet historian and expert in the Cecchetti system, describes The Cecchetti Method as

"...classic in its purity and clear-cut style; it is classic in its strenuous opposition to all extravagance and fussiness of movement; it is classic in its insistence on the importance of line."

The Cecchetti Method contains an entire vocabulary of movement. The student should not learn to dance by trying to imitate the movements of his teacher.\(^1\) The Cecchetti Method demands that the student learn to dance through studying basic principles governing the art. This requires consistent attitudes of personal and professional integrity on the part of the instructor.

Although Cecchetti insisted upon his strict program of daily practice, he advocated that each day the lesson be followed with studying unseen enchainment composed by the instructor. This will develop the student's quick-study ability in regard to new steps and enchainment.\(^2\)

Many dancers believe that practicing a certain set of exercises each day of the week can be soul-destroying and the student may lose interest. The advocates of The Cecchetti Method reply to this question by asking if a student attends class in order to amuse himself and be entertained by the teacher, or whether he is taking

\(^1\)loc. cit., p. 2.

\(^2\)ibid.
classes for the sole purpose of learning to dance. Just as it is vital to the musician to practice scales and exercises daily, they believe it is vital to the dancer to tone his body with daily regimens. The planned physical development of the student is a concern of The Cecchetti Method. It offers the teacher a completely balanced and analyzed system of theory and execution of ballet technique.¹ Those who espouse the Cecchetti system believe that others who claim to be able to train a dancer through "intensive training" over a short period of time are deceiving the student. Those who believe in The Cecchetti Method think that "the dancer is truly born of toil, tear and sweat."²

The dancer cannot dance until he has forged a body instrument completely suited to his art. It is for this purpose that Cecchetti devised his series of adages. These adages are extremely difficult and designed to produce expression in ballet technique. It is not until the dancer can perform these movements as second nature that he will dance with expression and the true quality of style as we believe were envisioned by Cecchetti.³

The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet is composed of seven grades consisting of four children's grades and three professional

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²loc. cit., p. 3.

³op. cit.
grades (Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced). The Cecchetti Council of America is governed by an Executive Board which operates within a framework to administer and advise its committee areas, establish criteria for teacher participation and student progress and to ensure informed teaching practices. The Executive Board consists of ten Charter Members, the Chairman of the General Board who is elected by the General Board Members, the Junior Branch Chairman and two Elective Board Members who are elected by the Executive Board from the Associated "A" members.

There are branch committees in Ohio, Texas, Illinois, Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania, Northern and Southern California. The Cecchetti Council's activities encompass five major regions of the United States and are represented by the following committees: East Coast, South East, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Western Michigan, Midwest, South West, Northern and Southern California.

The Council is responsible for the tri-annual examinations in the Detroit area as well as in various committee areas. Candidates for teacher examinations are accepted only after intensive study and training and upon the recommendation of a sponsor. When students are properly prepared, they are presented for examinations by their teachers. In addition, Training Courses are continually held throughout the year by the Branch Committee and the Executive Board. The Cecchetti Council offers a wide program of publications, refresher courses and ballet conferences.
Cyril W. Beaumont\textsuperscript{1} gives his account of The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet as follows:

"I believe the Cecchetti system to be infallible and physicians have testified to the soundness of its anatomical principles. Given a suitable body, it will, in the course of a few years, change the neophyte into a skilled dancer endowed with all of the desireable qualities I have already cited, provided its principles are followed with care and attention. But, as in all walks of education teachers vary. It is not enough to have the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge, one must know how to impart it and possess the experience and taste to adapt it when the student falls short of the required standard physique."

Although The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet had its origins in London, England, the popularity of this system has caused it to spread throughout the world. It is not unusual to find this method professionally taught in the smallest of cities.

\textsuperscript{1}ibid.

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CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE

The Royal Academy of Dance is an examining body concerned with creating international standards of ballet training so that a high standard of teaching may be ensured and maintained. To achieve this end, the Academy has developed graded syllabi for students in addition to methods of instruction and examination. It is not a style of dance, but rather a systematic approach to the study of ballet.¹ The Royal Academy of Dance is a comprehensive method of teaching which encompasses the best of the Russian, Danish, French and Italian schools.

The Royal Academy of Dance was founded in London, England, in 1920, by P. J. S. Richardson, E. Espinosa and Dame Adeline Genee. It was then known as the Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain. A small committee was formed of representatives of the Russian, French and Italian schools. Phyllis Bedells represented the obscure English school. The first examination was devised from their knowledge.²

In 1936, the Association was granted a Royal Charter and subsequently became The Royal Academy of Dance. The Academy's

¹Joel, op. cit., p. 30.

first President, Dame Adeline Genée, resigned in 1954. She was succeeded by Dame Margot Fonteyn, the current President, who continues to participate actively in the Academy's work.¹

A teacher of the R.A.D. method can have her training from any system. It is what the teacher is teaching the students that is the concern of the Academy. As a member of the R.A.D., the teacher should not shy away from other organizations. Knowledge may be gained by combining the strengths of the R.A.D. and a system where set syllabi goals are not established.²

The Royal Academy of Dance provides Teacher Training Courses.³ The need for an academic training course for teachers was recognized by the R.A.D. in 1939. However, the war prevented any action being taken until years later. In 1946, the Teacher's Training Course was founded by Kathleen Gordon, director of The Royal Academy at that time. Miss Gordon⁴ speaks of those beginnings as,

"In the early days everyone was hard up, everyone quarrelled and according to present day standards their work was incredibly bad. But they were individuals with a gift of laughter and vision. On their arched backs, knock knees and cramped arms was built an edifice of grand design."

¹Joel, op. cit., p. 31.
²ibid.
⁴Gordon, op. cit., p. 571.
During the 1960's the course was expanded rapidly under the direction of Lilian Charlesworth and Keith Lenter. They laid the foundations for the approach that is currently enforced. Entrants are accepted by audition and interview where they are evaluated on their ability and potential as teachers. The student must be at least seventeen years of age and must hold a R.A.D. Elementary Certificate. This course extends over a period of three years. Students complete required courses during the first two years and during the third year the student has a choice of three subjects out of six.¹

Students spend approximately four hours in dance classes and two hours in lectures and seminars each day. In the third year, students are assigned to a school at which they complete their requirement for practice teaching. In order to satisfactorily complete this course, students must pass written and/or oral examinations in the following areas: the teaching of the R.A.D. syllabus, anatomy and physiology, dance history, folk dance, choreography for children and educational theory. In addition, the student must attain the Intermediate Certificate of the R.A.D. before graduation. The curriculum leading to the Teacher Training Course diploma also includes labanotation, costuming, movement analysis, repertory, music and composition, modern dance, jazz and ballroom.

¹op. cit.
To achieve permission to use the letters L.R.A.D. (Licentiate Royal Academy of Dance) the student who has passed the course must apply to the Executive Committee. These instructors are now qualified by The Royal Academy of Dance to teach within the system.¹

The activities of the Academy are concerned with both the professional and amateur dancer. The professional activities deal with young people who are seriously studying ballet with dance career objectives as a dancer, teacher, or choreographer. These students who are seriously training, work within the framework of the courses of study outlined in the R.A.D. syllabus. This in turn will prepare them for examination. The Major Examinations are divided into four stages of graded classification: Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced and Solo Seal. Separate syllabi are studied by boys and girls. There is also a similar series of teacher examinations.²

Another aspect of the Academy's professional activities is the R.A.D. Production Club. This club gives students their first opportunity to show their choreographic work in a theatre. John Cranko, Robert Helpmann, Meriel Evans and Felicity Gray choreographed their first ballets for the Production Club.³

¹ibid.


The R.A.D. course for Retired Professionals is designed for the professional dancer who has given up his performing career. The syllabus is geared for those who wish to channel the experience and skill gained through performing into the teaching of dance. These participants study dance history, notation, music and business, in addition to the ballet syllabi. Candidates must now pass a complete set of children's and professional syllabi. These syllabi may be of the R.A.D. system or The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet. This course is a six month intensive program where the student works in the studio from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily and practices teaching from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Oral and practical examinations in classical ballet are given as well as oral and written exams in anatomy and dance history which must be satisfactorily completed to receive the course diploma.¹

The amateur activities of the Academy are concerned with children and young people who study ballet but have no intention of making it their profession. "Ballet in Education" is designed for children who study dance once or twice a week with a local dance teacher. This syllabus has been carefully designed to give the child a basic vocabulary of steps and to make use of them in simple dances. The required technique and the dances taught are systematically built up from a primary class (ages six to seven) through grades

¹ibid.
one to five (ages fourteen to sixteen). These grades are based according to ability as well as age. Dancing is a multifaceted art, closely linked to music and drama. For this reason, "Ballet in Education" includes a musical analysis and interpretation and studies in mime. In this syllabus, the system is clearly defined and the grading is uniform throughout the world.¹

There exists a separate syllabus for boys called "Dancing for Junior Boys".² This syllabus encompasses ages nine to thirteen and is taught in some general education schools as well as ballet studios. This syllabus has been effective in developing concentration, coordination of thought and movement, quickness of response and improvement in sporting activities.³

"Ballet in Further Education" is a syllabus devised for teenagers and young working people who wish to continue in their study of ballet.⁴

Another amateur activity of the Academy is the R.A.D. program of ballet training designed especially for athletes. In 1954, the Whip and Carrot Club (the British high jumpers club of the Amateur Athletics Association) approached the Academy for advice. After Claude Newman of the Academy presented the Club with a lecture

¹ op. cit.
² loc. cit., p. 65.
³ ibid.
⁴ ibid.
demonstration, a discussion was held between leading athletes of the A.A.A. and leading dancers of the R.A.D. As a result, in 1955, a committee of athletes and dancers was formed to provide a series of balletic exercises for athletes. This is now a part of the R.A.D. syllabus.¹

Margot Fonteyn,³ President of The Royal Academy of Dance, speaks of the Academy in this manner,

"It was because my Mother cared about ballet and wanted me to study that she took me, when I was six, to study with a teacher who had her studio at the very corner of the street in Ealing where we then lived. This lady (Grace Bosutow) happened to be a R.A.D. teacher - a member of The Royal Academy of Dancing - and, since my Mother arranged for me to have a weekly private class, at which she sat in, as well as the Saturday morning group class - Mother was very well aware of what I was learning.

In my own case, I was eight when my father's work as an engineer of the China Organization of the British-American Tobacco Company took us - my parents, my brother and me - to the Orient. For six years we lived in China - Tientsin, Hong Kong and Shanghai. (We went by way of the U.S., and I even went to school for a short while in Louisville, Kentucky.) Mother, determined that I go on with my ballet study, took me to every ballet teacher she could find during those China years. And she yanked me out of each school after just one or two lessons. If the teacher permitted me to put weight on the insides of my arches or to sit back in plié or kick with an uneven hip, Mother knew immediately this was not the kind of correct training I should be having. Eventually, and fortunately, she found well-trained Russian teachers with whom I was permitted to study. But just the same, when

¹Joel, op. cit., p. 52.

Mother wanted to know how well I was doing, she brought me back to London, when I was twelve, to be tested by a R.A.D. examiner. I was fourteen when we returned to London permanently. And at fifteen I was at the Sadler's Wells School, where, of course, I continued to take my R.A.D. exams.

But if there hadn't been a way to measure my aptitude and training during those years, I feel quite sure I would not be a dancer today. And quite possibly those early years of erratic training have been the reason for all my weaknesses as a dancer. My feet are still not very good, you know."

The Royal Academy of Dance began in London, England and has now expanded it headquarters to include Europe as well as the United States. This method is recognized as a respected form of ballet training wherever it is taught.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

There are many advantages to studying within any of the specific methods of classical ballet. The system itself provides graded classes which allows children to properly begin with the most elementary aspects of technique and progress to the professional level of dancing. As the student gains strength, the system provides more difficult ports de bras, adage, and enchainments which may reveal his talent and allow him to be passed on for further training.

The fact that the dancers of a particular school tend to move similarly can be considered a strength or a weakness. It proves to be an obvious asset to corps de ballet members, while to achieve solo status the dancer must develop and show an individual style.1

Ballet technique must be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Technique is needed in order to have a vocabulary of movement. It will help the student acquire the ease of execution and possible virtuosity. The ultimate goal in acquiring technical skills is not to pass technical examinations imposed by a method but to acquire a skill so great that the audience is unaware of the technical skills but only of grace and beauty. "To make a fetish

1Terry, op. cit., p. 136.

33
of technical rules and impose them rigidly is to misunderstand completely the purpose of technique."\footnote{1}

The two systems which this study deals with are The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance. These two methods can be evaluated in terms of their strengths and limitations by the check-list which appears on the following page.

The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet is an excellent approach to the teaching of classical ballet.\footnote{2} The chief strength of The Cecchetti Method is its scientific approach to ballet technique and its ability to build strength and control. The most important aspect in the early stages of ballet training is the correct alignment of the body, referred to as "placement".\footnote{3} Without proper placement, balance and ease of execution are impossible. The Cecchetti Method is a completely balanced and analyzed system of theory and execution in regard to the training of classical ballet.

However, it is important to remember that although Enrico Cecchet\footnote{4} himself was an inspired master, he is no longer with us to elaborate on his principles of teaching. They have been passed on by his former pupils and through various text books.

\footnote{1}{Mara, Thalia, "Cecchetti Isn't Everything." \textit{Dance Magazine}, XXVII (August 1953), p. 36.}
\footnote{2}{Beaumont, op. cit., p. 1.}
\footnote{3}{loc. cit., p. 37.}
# A Comparison of the Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and the Royal Academy of Dance

## Check-List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet</th>
<th>The Royal Academy of Dance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> To achieve high standards of teaching classical ballet; to create an international standard of ballet.</td>
<td><strong>Purpose:</strong> Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method:</strong> Based on the teaching principles of one man, Enrico Cecchetti.</td>
<td><strong>Method:</strong> Encompasses the Russian, Danish, French, and Italian schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization:</strong> Specific syllabi divided into grades with respect to physical development of the child and degree of technical difficulty.</td>
<td><strong>Organization:</strong> Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training:</strong> Trains dancer's body from beginning to advanced stages, strict schedule of routine combinations, specific exercises each day.</td>
<td><strong>Training:</strong> Trains dancer's body from beginning to advanced stages, some &quot;set&quot; combinations, others left to discretion of instructor; tones the body of the retired professional, once-a-week dancer and the athlete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examinations:</strong> Separate examinations for students (four children's grades, three professional grades) and teachers (divided same as student's grades, however, teachers need pass only student grade for the grade which they are taking the teacher's examination, not the entire set of student's grades)</td>
<td><strong>Examinations:</strong> Separate examinations for students (Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced, Solo Seal) and teachers (set forth by the Teacher Training Course, teacher must first pass Intermediate student's syllabus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career:</strong> Directed toward the student who wishes to pursue dance as a career.</td>
<td><strong>Career:</strong> Provides for the student who wishes to pursue dance as a career, the once-a-week student, retired professionals, athletes, choregraphers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Training:</strong> Workshops for updating certification.</td>
<td><strong>Teacher Training:</strong> Three year Teacher Training Course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governance of Examinations:</strong> The Cecchetti Council; committees: East Coast, South East, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Western Michigan, Mid West, South West, Northern and Southern California.</td>
<td><strong>Governance of Examinations:</strong> Controlled by President and board of examiners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Realizing that no pupil, no matter how close he is to the master is ever a carbon copy, we understand that what the teacher is presenting is his interpretation of what the master taught.\(^1\)

Some pupils never attain a real understanding or knowledge of the master's teachings; others achieve a greater virtuosity in the art. It can never be the same thing because it is colored by a different understanding, feeling, and viewpoint.\(^2\) Therefore, the students of Cecchetti's followers might not receive the original concept of Cecchetti's technique but a variation. This is a definite limitation as the system provides only viewpoints of Cecchetti's actual teachings.

Although Cecchetti has recorded some of his principles of teaching, a text can only set forth a concept of ballet movement. It cannot bring forth the feeling behind the movement or the style with which the movement is intended to be performed. If the teacher attempts to strictly follow the system "to the letter" he becomes bond by certain imposed rules and believes any deviation is wrong. Using written material as a prime source, it is difficult to realize the master's true intention. "For what is important in teaching ballet technique is not to have memorized a series of set exercises but to understand the principles of body placement and the functional

\(^1\)op. cit., p. 36.

\(^2\)ibid.
exercises, and to know their purpose and value."\(^1\) Therefore, the teacher can justly teach an exercise set by someone else or can compose one of his own. If these exercises are taught without the basic understanding of the principles of ballet it makes for rigidity of movement and a lack of fluidity and spontaneity of movement.\(^2\)

In comparison, a strength of The Royal Academy of Dance is that it is not based on the teachings of a particular individual. To some degree, it has tried to encompass the Russian, Danish, French and Italian schools. However, it takes on its own national characteristics. According to Beaumont, a limitation of this system is that the English are more reserved and less emotional and that their dancers reflect these traits.\(^3\)

The Royal Academy of Dance is also an excellent teaching method.\(^4\) It provides the student with a systematic approach to the study of ballet. In addition, it focuses on the "once-a-week" dancer, the athlete and the retired professional as well as the serious minded ballet student and teacher. Although The Cecchetti Method provides excellent training for the serious minded dance student and teacher it makes no provisions for the "once-a-week" dancer, the athlete or the retired professional.

\(^1\)ibid.
\(^2\)ibid.
\(^3\)loc. cit., p. 37.
\(^4\)Joel, op. cit., p. 37.
The Royal Academy of Dance has been criticized for making a god of mediocrity.\textsuperscript{1} Margot Fonteyn,\textsuperscript{2} the Academy's President states,

"It's quite possible that there are students who are not very gifted, but through diligence will pass our examinations - but at least talent will not slip through our fingers."

This statement could also be made about The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet in which the diligent student may pass the examinations through sheer determination and not have the innate ability to become a professional dancer. But, just as in The Royal Academy of Dance, the value in any method used is that the talented dancer will be recognized.

Both systems can be commended for their effort in keeping their syllabi up-to-date with respect to the current style of ballet technique. Ballet is an ever growing art with an ever changing style.\textsuperscript{3} The Cecchetti Method Council has recently revised the syllabi and The Royal Academy keeps a close eye on ballet technique throughout the world in order to keep syllabi current.

However, each system has its own basic theories and practices through which proper technique is best achieved. The more advanced student will learn, through a realization and understanding of his

\textsuperscript{1}ibid.
\textsuperscript{2}ibid.
\textsuperscript{3}ibid.
own technical abilities, what methods are the best for him.

Butsova\(^1\) comments,

"Cecchetti's work wasn't good for every student. Personally, it was bad for me at that time. Everything was plié until you thought you'd die. It was good for Pavlova, who did not have a soft natural plié; but for me it overstretched my knees, and my good jump began to disappear."

The use of a structured method in the teaching of classical ballet is a valuable contribution in the field of dance education.\(^2\)

The instructors of both The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet and The Royal Academy of Dance attend Teacher Training Courses and refresher courses that are provided by the system. Instructors are taught in these training courses to teach within the specified syllabus. They are kept up-to-date with the changes of the system through refresher courses sponsored by the individual councils.

Instructors who teach within The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet or The Royal Academy of Dance have great faith and pride in their systems. Jane Caryl Miller,\(^3\) one of the Council's leaders states, "If we didn't believe it was a good system we wouldn't have stayed with it all these years." Ruth Carney,\(^4\) a member of the Cecchetti Council says, "The Cecchetti system is valuable in its

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\(^1\)Butsova, op. cit., p. 68.

\(^2\)ibid.

\(^3\)Interview with Jane Caryl Miller, January 23, 1979.

training of Children." Elaine Keller, 1 the executive secretary of the U.S. Branch of The Royal Academy of Dance believes, "It is difficult to know its possibilities without being a member of the Academy." Margot Fonteyn, 2 still an active member of the Academy speaks of The Royal Academy of Dance in this way, "I find the R.A.D. a solid and satisfying structure, flexible to the demands of time and place."

In summary, the serious student's choice should be based upon the degree of variation he hopes to find within the actual exercises of the system. If he prefers a strict and regimented syllabus, The Cecchetti Method is best suited for him. If he needs a more loosely structured system The Royal Academy of Dance will best suit his needs. If the student desires to learn the technique of a master that has been passed down from his disciples, The Cecchetti Method is the system that will serve this purpose. However, if the student is not contemplating dance as a career, is a retired professional or is an athlete he should realize that The Royal Academy of Dance has special programs for his special interests. The Cecchetti Method makes no provisions for these students. Therefore, if a serious student chooses either The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet or The Royal Academy of Dance, after careful research, he can be assured that the method chosen

1Interview with Elaine Keller, January 30, 1979.

2Joel, op. cit., 31.
will provide him with excellent training.

In conclusion, studying within a specific method can be a valuable tool to the dancer with aspirations of a professional performing career if he combines it with a knowledge of all types of training. It is believed that to limit oneself to any one of the methods and to say that "this and this only is correct or good" is a mistake on the part of both the teacher and the student.¹ The dancer of today must be very strong technically. Professional competition is keen and the dancer must be versatile in style and movement. The dancer must also have a quick mind to pick up whatever is demanded of him by the choreographer. The dancer and teacher must understand the basic principles of ballet technique regardless of the training method or the school of thought. Therefore, if a student decides to train within The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet or The Royal Academy of Dance, he must realize that there are other methods and he must intelligently use the best elements of the chosen system and blend it with other aspects of training. When a dancer studies a variety of methods and styles he will achieve a knowledge of the science of technique and an understanding of beauty of line and freedom of movement.² It is at this point that the dancer will realize the scope of ballet

¹Mara, op. cit., p. 37.
²ibid.
technique. He will build an appreciation for its training and realize the full potential of studying within a method geared to his special needs.
APPENDIX

Following are copies of the cover letters received from the Cecchetti Council and the London headquarters of The Royal Academy of Dance. A cover letter was not included with the information received from the New Jersey headquarters of The Royal Academy of Dance.
Miss B. Ruemenapp,  
1116 Summit,  
Kalamazoo,  
Michigan 49007.  

Miss B. Ruemenapp,  
1116 Summit,  
Kalamazoo,  
Michigan 49007.  


Dear Miss Ruemenapp,

I enclose the information that you require for your Masters thesis on the Royal Academy of Dancing. I hope that you will find sufficient material here for your purpose.

Perhaps you may need further help in which case please do not hesitate to contact me again.

Yours sincerely,

Valerie Taylor, ARAD.  
Principal

Valerie Taylor, ARAD.  
Principal

VT/hh
February 13, 1979

Dear Barbara,

I was unable to send you the Enrico Cecchetti biography, however, I have enclosed the other material on the Council.

Best wishes,

Jane Caryl Miller
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