

HISTORY

Pointe is the signature of the Ballerina! It entered the scene in the early 1800's; the outgrowth of increasing emphasis on technical skill and the desire for the illusion of lightness. The shoe originally was nothing more than a reinforced slipper; leaving the dancers to rely primarily on the strength of their feet and ankles. Over time, the increased demands of the technique brought about improvements in the construction of the shoe.

Today's Pointe shoe is made from densely packed layers of fabric and paper, which are shaped and dipped in glue, with inner and outer soles supporting the dancer's instep.

READINESS

All little girls dream of the day they can wear them! But the decision to dance in Pointe shoes is not just a matter of desire. There are many variables affecting individual readiness. Pointe should only be considered after an assessment of posture, placement and skill level.

It takes commitment. Putting on Pointe shoes is not what makes a dancer. In one sense, it is a rite of passage; but it must be earned with very, very hard work. It would be irresponsible teaching and disrespectful to the art form to imply otherwise.

Be prepared ... Pointe may not be for you. But don't quit! There is no doubt that all students benefit from the unique combination of mental and physical challenges, discipline, poise, and grace that Ballet training provides. However, not all are meant to, or care to be put on their toes – and that's okay! There are many very talented dancers who choose not to pursue Pointe.

The acquisition of Pointe shoes should not be regarded as the ultimate measure of a dancer.

COST

The cost of Pointe shoes is also a consideration. Pointe shoes cost approximately \$90-\$130 per pair. Though beginners may only need one or two pairs per year, more advanced dancers likely require several pairs per year.

AGE / ELIGIBILITY

Dancers are eligible to test for Pointe at 11/12 years old. Dancers are eligible to begin Pre-Pointe at 10 years old. (Special exceptions are solely at the discretion of Director and Instructor.)

The bones of the foot approach final ossification around the age of 11/12 years old. Putting unnecessary pressure on the bones of the feet before this age is unwise and unsafe. Bear in mind that the Ballet student begins preparation for Pointe in her first Ballet class. Careful attention to placement and hard work in the first years will lay the foundation of strength and balance.

THE EXAMINATION

Dancers who wish to have approval for Pointe must successfully demonstrate the following:

STAGE FACINGS: Devant/front and Derrière/back. (With the proper arms for each.)

- Croisé (crossed)
- Effacé (erased)
- En Face (one face)
- Ecarté (thrown apart)

A GRAND PLIÉ in the Centre, from 5th position. (Smoothly, without wobbling or altering proper ankle alignment.)

PORT DE BRAS: (Smoothly, while balanced on Relevé 5th, without wobbling the ankles.)

Bras Bas 1st 2nd 3rd High 3rd 5th Bras Bas

ARABESQUES: (With the proper arms for each.)

- First Arabesque
- Second Arabesque
- Third Arabesque

A BALANCE on Relevé, in Cou de Pied or Retiré, for 10 seconds. (Without wobbling or lowering the supporting heel.)