

Introduction

What makes this method different from other typical ballet lessons?

Russian Method Ballet* gradually and methodically forms the body from the inside out so that every movement and pose is biomechanically sound. This means that while other types of ballet classes emphasize choreography (outward appearance) this method emphasizes precise muscle control and systematic artistic understanding in order to produce the highest quality of development while remaining injury free.

Russian Method Ballet trains the mind as well as the body given the high levels of concentration required by the students. The method teaches the student to listen, observe, think, feel and remember what correct technique feels like within their own body and then use the mirror to confirm that what they are feeling is accurate. This high level of concentration and critical thinking develops an objective perspective so that the student learns to accurately assess his or her own progress based on a precise standard rather than on a subjective one. Good technique is never subjective:

Styles change but the physics of movement does not

Everything learned in Russian Method Classical Ballet is part of a jump, spin or “adagio” (slow sustained movement). This is a true method where each movement is broken down and practiced in the smallest possible increments so that it can be built with integrity into the whole. Each exercise is practiced in a specific progression; first facing the barre, then with one hand on the barre and then in the center of the room. This works stability and assurance in accuracy into the student so that they can perform with both artistic and technical confidence.

Introducing and practicing each exercise while facing the barre is crucial for figure skaters because they particularly need the corrective balancing which this method produces. Skaters normally jump and spin only in one direction and the majority of skating is done in only one direction around the rink so that muscles never really have the chance to develop in a balanced manner. Forming the body as well as the sensibilities in a completely aligned manner gives the skater every technical, biomechanical and artistic advantage.

Attention to detail is another hallmark of Russian Method Ballet training as is exemplified in the carriage of the arms, hand training and positions of the head and eyes in relation to the rest of the body. These details are habitually left out of or merely choreographed into specific recital dances in many schools today. Unfortunately many children today are often convinced that if they understand something intellectually that their bodies are automatically performing it accurately so that slow repetitions of what they feel they already “know” may seem boring and pointless. This method helps to train and discipline the mind and sensibilities to value working hard to reach “personal perfection.”

In combining Russian Method Ballet training techniques with the specific training needs of the figure skater the lessons presented in this book offer the skater a complete and relevant education in Classical training.

*The teaching method of the Vaganova Choreographic School in St. Petersburg, Russia (for full study please read *School of Classical Dance* by Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev; Dance Books ©1995).