

Forward

From the very start of my teaching career, in a small community center back in 1970, I was taught to always come prepared with a completely written out lesson plan for each class I gave. My teachers in pedagogy at the time were Mme. Nevelska formerly of the Bolshoi Ballet, who gave me my passion for Classical Ballet and my love of the Classical repertoire; and Marguerite de Anguera of the Connecticut Valley Regional Ballet and Hartford Conservatory ballet who gave me my first insights into “movement from the inside out” and the mathematical “perfection” of Classical movement. In the ensuing years I have both taken and taught Classical ballet at many schools and private venues throughout the U.S. and abroad, remembering that very important directive to always create lesson plans so that I have accumulated quite a few notebooks full of lessons.

In 1984 I had my first opportunity to teach Classical ballet to an adult figure skater but it wasn't until 1996 when my own daughters started taking “Learn to Skate” classes at a local rink that I began to teach skaters in earnest. Now, over 10 years later, not only did I find the subject so fascinating that it compelled me to write a book about it, but I have accumulated an equal number of notebooks filled with lesson plans specifically designed for the needs of the figure skater. These lessons, in their entirety, I share with you.

Every teacher likes to have a look at someone else's ideas, even if it is just to spark their own creativity. Thus, it is my hope that by sharing what turned out to be technically good as well as enjoyable classes for me and my students, you will be able to use these complete lessons either “as is” or glean from them what you like to create your own lesson plans. As ballet instructors it is important to keep in mind that for figure skaters this is not their “turf” so Classical movement will often come more slowly to them. Since fine motor skills are acquired gradually and with much concentration, attention to the details of individual movements should be stressed as opposed to the “choreography” of the exercise.

In order to preserve authenticity as well as to prevent injuries the lessons presented in this book essentially follow the Russian Teaching Method but are purposely geared towards the needs of the figure skater. Physiological insights as well body awareness and stretching exercises, some new and some taken from my first book have also been included. Although this present book stands completely on its own the fundamentals laid down in my first book give invaluable insights which cannot be covered here, so that if you are new to teaching skaters you may want to consider having both books on hand.

Since this book is intended for instructors who are well versed in Classical Ballet Technique I have not supplied a vocabulary section nor have I explained technically how combinations should be done. I have, however, included sections on Port de Bras, Hand, Head and Eye training as they tend to be sorely neglected areas of study.

For convenience sake, I have marked out the counts (instead of using measures or bars) for each step in a particular combination as well as placed the number of total counts required for that combination at the beginning so that you can put whatever music to it you like. Also, where there might be a discrepancy between what vocabulary/method is being used I have put the Russian designation first followed by the Cecchetti designation in parenthesis. It is my sincere hope that you will enjoy both reading and using the lessons I have set out for you.