

## ***Bringing it Home to the Figure Skater***

Allow for some time during each lesson to relate what is being taught in class to on-ice specifics (some are already included in each lesson plan marked in blue), and, if possible, try to be available after class to answer any questions which individuals might have. This is essential as the skaters need to know why and how a particular movement/exercise applies to their skating needs. Suggestions can be made as to how to implement certain exercises during on-ice practice times which can be found in the *Ballet On-ice Application Classes* provided in this book. You can encourage students to purchase one of the ballet class CDs you use in class for use during on-ice practice of simple movements and poses before trying to incorporate what they are learning in their ballet lessons directly into their skating programs. This will help to further in-grain Classical movement technique versus taking movements out of context to merely add onto a piece of pre-existing skating "choreography." Skaters are not used to working with different pieces of music every day so familiarity with the pieces being used will help to clarify movement for them in very specific ways.

### *Study sequence "forms" used in this book*

Even though the lessons presented in this book introduce each movement in basic and incremental forms, they are not always initially presented in their most preliminary forms (such as in my introduction to frappé which is presented in its secondary form and the immediate use of relevés at the barre). This is done for several reasons: the Russian curriculum is based on the assumption that the student is preparing six days a week for six to eight years to become a professional ballet artist. The skater, on the other hand, is preparing (presumably) for competitions and exhibition venues and, although they need much more than mere "style augmentation," there are certain aspects of Classical ballet training which are of more immediate concern to the skater. A target approach to teaching an appreciation for the details of a true art form meshed with the immediate needs of the skaters is the objective of these lessons.

### *A few details to pass along to your students:*

The use of degrees in leg extension (22.5°, 45°, 90° and 120°) has a very practical as well as artistic explanation. Classical ballet is normally done in groups of several if not many dancers (as in synchronized skating), so there must always be an accurate measurement of every angle of the body: legs, head, arms etc. On the stage, the angles need to be even more accurate as the poses are often held much longer and there is no velocity to distract the viewer from possible discrepancies. Also, Classical ballet is based on the poses of classical sculpture which are very precise and even mathematical in their precision. These geometrically precise poses and body lines have long been considered the most aesthetically pleasing to the eye. From a purely technical point of view teaching to ingrain precision within the mind-body connection helps the student to perform with consistent accuracy throughout their career.

As has already been discussed in the sections on port de bras and head, eye and hand training, this precision in movement execution applies to every part of the body for a specific visual effect. This accuracy extends to the five positions of sur le cou de pieds (conditional, conditional high, conditional low, basic "wrapped" and back) which might seem "tedious" to the figure skater particularly since there is not even a remote correlation to these foot positions in figure skating. Nevertheless attention to the details of the geography of the feet and ankles will bring a much needed sensitivity and awareness to this area of the body.