

NFMC DANCE DEPARTMENT – MODERN DANCE SYLLABUS

JR 17-6

BEGINNERS I

1. Knee bounces: Sitting on floor with soles of feet together, knees apart - i.e.: dropped out to the side - and hands holding front of feet, bounce knees downward and relax them sixteen times. Counts 1 and = down/up.

Transition: Keeping feet on floor, place hands on bent knees which are brought together (Cts. 1-4) and then extended as feet slide forward, and remain in pointed (Cts. 5-8).

2. Leg Rotations: Rotate straight, parallel legs outward (Ct. 1) and return to parallel position (Ct. 2). Repeat through Ct. 8.

Transition: Bend both knees till they are close to torso (as per first transition) - Cts. 1-4 - and drop them out to the side (Cts. 5-6). Hands hold front of feet (Cts. 7-8).

3. Body Bounces: Torso is rounded and dropped forward (Ct. "And"). Led by the head, the rounded torso bounces (even lower) and relaxes. (Cts. 1 and = down/up.) Repeat through Count 8 or Ct. 16.

Transition: Torso straightens from the center upward, successively. (Cts. 1-2.) Weight is shifted to the left hip as both legs bend to the right. (Cts. 3-4.) Rise onto both knees (Ct. 5). Left knee remains in place as the right foot steps forward low - i.e.: bent to knee - (Ct. 6). Right leg straightens as it takes full support of the weight (Ct. 7). The back leg is brought to place (Ct. 8.). Note: Alternate rise from floor may be prepared by teacher.

4. Positions of the Feet: In first position, both supports are in place - i.e.: directly under the center of weight - and legs are rotated outward approximately 90 degrees. Feet form a V, with heels touching one another. Ideally, the knees should be over the middle toes. In second position, the left support is to the left of place, and the right support is to the right of place. Feet are perpendicular in third position. The heel of the front foot touches the instep of the back foot (i.e.: upsidedownish letter T). Both feet are in place. In fourth position, one foot is forward and the other is in back of place. Fifth position, like first and third, is a closed position, and both feet are in place. The heel of the front foot touches the toe of the back foot. (Beginners should work only in first and second positions, at least until they have mastered proper alignment of the body. They should be introduced to each position, however.) The arms are placed low during first position - i.e.: hands directly under the shoulders. Arms in second position mean that the left arm is to the left of the left shoulder, and the right arm is to the right of the right shoulder. Demi-second indicates lower level. There are three fifth positions for arms: low, middle and high. The fingertips are in front of the center of the body, and almost touch. (Turn-out of the leg must begin in the joint where hip and thigh meet.) Preparation for Pliés: Standing in place, with legs parallel, turn both thighs outward. Feet remain parallel. (Count) Feet open

into turned out first position (Ct. "And"). Thighs and feet return to parallel position (Ct. 2). (Repeat through Ct. 8.)

5. Pliés: In turned-out first position, knees bend (2 Cts.) and straighten (2 Cts.) With arms remaining in first position, but slightly away from the body. Torso is lifted during each plié but shoulders remain down. Thighs open from the top as legs continuously rotate outward. Knees should be over the middle toes. Heels remain on the floor during demi-pliés As legs straighten, heels press against the floor. Four pliés in first position should demonstrate proper alignment of the body.

6. Brushes: Starting in first position, brush right foot towards second position, keeping whole foot on floor as long as possible. (Ball of foot continues toward the right, and finally, the toe reaches its destination.) The foot will be very stretched, and the leg very straight. The toe retains its contact with the floor. (Cts. 1-4.) The working leg returns to place - first the toe, then the ball of the foot, and finally the whole foot slides to place - (Cts. 5-8). Repeat three more times to the same side, and four times to the other side. Avoid bending of either knee. Knees must be very straight.

7. Steps: Walk forward in middle level, or in low level (4/4.) Transfer weight thus: Toe touches first, then ball of foot, finally, heel. Preparation for jumps: Plié in first position (Ct. 1). Straighten knees (Ct. 2) Releve - i.e.: rise onto balls of the feet so that feet, above the toes, are an extension of the straight legs - (Ct. 3). Lower the heels (Ct. 4). Repeat three more times. Then plié (Ct. "And").

8. Jumps: Starting in first position plié, jump into the air and land in second position. (Cts. And 1.) From second position plié, jump into first position (Cts. And 2). Repeat through Ct. 8 or Ct. 16.

BEGINNERS II

Body Bounces: As per Beginners I, but with hands on the ankles. Feet together and knees apart = first position. Transition to rise as per Beginners I. Brush right foot towards second position, as per Beginners I, No. 6, but in one count. Lower the heel so that feet are in second position. Arms should move into low second position during pliés; return to first during straightening of the knees. Counts are identical to pliés in first position. Technique is the same. Legs should be turned out.

Pliés: In second position. (Ideally, the legs will be in the shape of a house, the thighs forming the roof. So as not to allow the roof to cave in, keep thighs well turned out, and knees above the middle toes. Heels press against the floor as knees straighten.) Brushes: As per Beginners I, but timing changes. Heels beat one another on each count. Or, fast 3/4: Beat (1), brush (and), hold (2-3).

Preparation for Jumps: As per Beginners I.

Jumps: as per Beginner I, but traveling forward and/or backward, or jump in first position, traveling sideways.

Skips: Skip (step/hop) forward for four measures of 6/8 or eight measures of 3/4. Repeat traveling backward.

Runs: Run across floor freely, with arms back, low.

BEGINNERS III

Body Bounces: As per Beginners II. Torso straightens from the center upward, successively (Cts. 1-2). Legs are extended forward (Ct. 3). Legs open into second position (Ct. 4). Torso is rounded over the front (Ct. "And"). Bounces are performed in 2nd Position with hand resting lightly on the ankles. Knees are straight and parallel to the ceiling.

Transition: Straighten the back. Slide legs to forward position, in front of the body. Continue as per transition in Beginners I, following No. 3 *Note** Standing warm-up may be substituted for bounces. Stand in parallel 2nd. Head leads inward succession of torso to place low. (4 Cts.) Torso returns to place high in outward succession. (4 Cts.) May be repeated with torso to Right and Left. Arms hang.

Pliés: In fifth (or third) position. Maintain original front - i.e.: avoid tendency to turn body toward back leg during demi-pliés. Or, in first position, releve (Ct. 1), bend knees (Ct. 2), lower heels to floor (Ct. 3), straighten knees (Ct. 4).

Brushes or Beats: As per Beginners II, but off the floor. Or, parallel brushes forward, with toe remaining on floor, & toe released from floor. (Counts 1 and 2 and = out-in-out-in.) Or, in 1st position, bend Right knee. (Ball of foot remains on floor, Ct. 1.) Lift knee higher. (Pointed foot is just off the floor, Ct. 2.) Toe, then ball of foot return to floor (Cts. And 3). Heel is lowered to floor (Ct. 4). Lift Right knee to side high (Ct. 5). Toe, ball of foot, heel return to floor (Cts. And 6). Repeat Cts. 5 & 6. Repeat 8 Cts. to other side.

Five Basic Jumps: Jump in 1st position twice, then into 5th or 3rd, with the Right foot in front, and then in back. (4 jumps=4 counts.) Jump into 2nd position and into 1st twice, while traveling backward. (4 jumps=4 Cts.) During Meas. 3, jump forward onto right, and hop forward. Leap forward twice. Meas. 4=1 jump in 1st, the next in a crossed 2nd with Right foot in front, then jump into true 2nd and into 1st.

Preparation for Triplets: Walk forward in low level, then in high level. As if limping, step into plié on Right foot, & into releve on Left foot. Repeat traveling across floor. Repeat to other side. Releves should reach as far as possible.

Triplets: "Down-up, up, up" traveling forward, each step reaching. (Slow 3/4 at first, then moderate tempo, & finally, so fast that feet barely touch ground during releves.) Arms remain in place low, moving only passively. Triplets may be performed traveling backward, circling, or sideways in a grapevine pattern.

Preparation for Prances: Step to Right on Right foot. Cross left foot behind Right. Repeat, but crossing Left foot forward of

Right (4 Cts.) Continue stepping from 2nd to 4th across floor. Arms remain in low level throughout. Repeat to other side.

Note: Gesturing leg passes through "coup de pied" on way to each step. (i.e.: toe passes through place.)

Prances: Traveling to the right in fast 4/4, from 2nd to 5th in back, to 2nd and 5th in front, across floor. Right arm remains forward low, left arm, side low. Repeat to the other side. Prances should have a bouncy quality.

Leaps: Leap across floor in low level, aiming for distance rather than height. Or, gallop and skip across the floor, traveling forward, or holding partner's hand, "face to face and back to back". (Gallop = step/leap.)

INTERMEDIATE I

Body Bounces and Leg Stretches: Sitting in 2nd position, turn torso to Right. Round the torso over the Right leg and bounce 16 times. Palm of left hand rests on Right thigh, and palm of Right hand rests just above ankle (or both palms may rest on floor) during bounces. Palms release during turn of the torso to the left (which follows straightening of torso-Cts. "and-a"). Repeat to other side, end facing front, arms in demi-second.

Pliés: In fourth position. (Be sure to maintain original front, and distribute weight evenly to both legs.)

Brushes: Parallel brushes to forward middle (i.e.: hip level), or from 1st position to side middle, with arms in opposition to aid balance. (i.e.: for Right side beats, Right arm is forward low, left arm is side low.) Or, swing relaxed leg forward and back, passing through turned-out 1st position. Arms swing in opposition. Standing leg bends as working leg passes through 1st. Start with Right leg in back, swing freely, 4 times - forward & back - (cts. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8) Transfer weight onto back leg. (Ct. And). Hold for one Ct. Swing free leg to back and continue forward and back through Ct. 8.

Turns: Inside turns, 4 steps forward, starting on Right foot. After 4th step turn ½ to the Right (on left foot). Repeat. Then repeat to other side twice. (Cts. 1-2-3-4-and.) Arms are side low. Outside turn are same as above, but ½ turn on left foot is to left. Turn on Right foot is to right.

Triplets: Full turn on the second count - down-up, up-turn, up - of each triplet. Beginning on the right foot, step forward low to high (1). Step forward high on the left foot and turn to the right on that foot (Ct. 2). Step forward high on the right foot (3). Repeat to the other side. Repeat turning triplets across floor. (Note: Step-turn should be simultaneous.)

Jumps: 1 - Four jumps in first position, traveling forward, and four leaps traveling forward. Repeat, traveling across floor. (4/4). 2 - Traveling forward, step on Ct. 1, and hop, landing on Ct. 3. Repeat to other side, and continue step-hops across floor.

INTERMEDIATE II

Bounces: As per Intermediate I. Or, sitting with straight, parallel legs forward middle (i.e.: forward of hips), and hands holding lower legs or ankles, round the torso forward and bounce 8 or 16 times. Straighten the back successively from center upward. (Rise as per transition in Beginners I.)

Pliés: As per Beginners I or II, but with “ports de bras”. (During plié arms move from fifth position low through high and go to second position as knees straighten, continuing downward to place low.) Or, in second position (feet and arms), bend alternate knees, moving in one plane, two Cts. to right, two Cts. to left. (Start with bent left leg, continue for total of four times to each side.)

Brushes (or Beats): As per Intermediate I. Or, from 5th position, lift knee to hip level with toe touching knee of standing leg. Begin with right foot in front. Foot to knee and close 5th in back (Cts. And 1). Foot to knee and close 5th in front (Cts. And 2). Repeat. Then repeat same to the other side. (This may be performed with foot to ankle or calf rather than knee.)

Triplets: Two triplets forward with ½ inside turn on second half of last Ct. Two triplets backward with ½ inside turn on second half of final Ct. Repeat across floor. Repeat to other side across floor.

Jumps: Step-hop, step-leap across floor. (6/8 or 3/4.) Skips to the side. Step to right on right foot and hop on same foot to the left. Repeat on opposite side. (6/8) Ball of foot may slide on floor during hop. (Step to side is very small distance from place, or it may be taken in place.)

INTERMEDIATE III

Bounces: Any of preceding bounces may be demonstrated for Festival audition. Or, entrant may choose to invent his or her own bounces.

Pliés: In first position, deep plié with arms in first position, moving out to demi-second position. Keep heels on ground as long as possible during descent, and return them as soon as possible during ascent. Knees go to sides, over middle toes. Heels press into floor as knees straighten. (Alternate arms: as per Intermediate II ports de bras.) Timing may be 4/4 or 6/4.

Brushes: Any of preceding brushes may be demonstrated. Or, brush working leg to the back. Toe remains on floor. Working leg returns to place. Repeat 3 more times, and repeat to other side four times. Begin in either 1st, 3rd, or 5th position. (Working leg in back if 3rd or 5th.) Brushes to back may be off the floor - disengaged -. Or, parallel brushes from 1st to 2nd.

Triplets: Invent triplet combination. Or, add 4th Ct: brush free leg to forward middle or high. Repeat triplet and brush across floor. (4/4.)

Prances: With legs parallel, prance forward, across floor, keeping knee of supporting leg straight, and foot of working leg stretched downward. Prances should have a bouncy quality.

Jumps: Sissonnes to the side. (Sissonne is jump from two feet to one foot.) Feet parallel, sissonne to Right. Left foot to place. Repeat across floor to same side, then repeat to other side. (Cts and 1 = sissonne, close.) Or, sissonne and assemble forward, across floor. (Assemble = jump from one foot to two feet.) I.e.; from 1st to Right to 1st to Left, etc. (Cts and 1 = jump/land.)

ADVANCED I

Contraction-Release: The contraction-release begins with a backward “somersault” of the pelvis. The waist is moved backward. The rounded torso remains lifted and the shoulders are in line with the hips. The breath goes out during the contraction. The body will be “in breath” during the release which begins as the pelvis, then the waist return to normal. The spine is straight. Sitting in 1st position, contract, (Cts. & 1,) and release (& 2) in outward successions, from the base of the spine upward. Repeat. (Students studying Graham technique should present more interesting material using contraction-release, which is a manifestation of breathing.)

Pliés: Deep pliés, in 2nd and or 5th positions. Use of “ports de bras” is optional.

Brushes: Three tendu - i.e., toe remaining on floor - brushes. 4th time, after heels beat together, there is an outside 1/4 turn on standing leg as working leg brushes toward 2nd. Repeat till facing front again, and repeat all to other side.

Body Wave: Standing in wide 4th position, with front leg bent, tilt torso forward over bent knee with chest leading. Contract, pulling back to starting position. Forward wave takes place over very turned out legs. Arms may be in back with hands clasped.

Triplets: Four triplets as per Intermediate II, followed by four triplets as per Intermediate I.

Prances: Eight prances forward, with legs parallel, then “push-off” - from ball of free foot, landing on the other - twice. Eighth prance, preceding push-offs, may have plié, and both push-offs are in place. Repeat pattern traveling across floor, then repeat to other side. Arms remain low throughout. (Pattern has 12 Cts.)

Jumps: Combine five basic jumps traveling through space. Try to be inventive. Repeat pattern.

ADVANCED II

Floor work: Sitting in 2nd position with arms in 5th high (overhead, but with fingers visible with peripheral vision), tilt torso sideways so that Right ear aims for Right knee. Return torso to vertical position and repeat to other side. (Both hips remain on floor.) Then shift the torso to the Right, return to normal, and repeat shifting to the other side. (Cts. 1 & etc.) Repeat all to other side.

Pliés: As per Advanced I. Or, in 2nd position, releve, bend knees with heels still raised, lower heels, straighten knees.

Brushes: As per Advanced I but with ½ turns. Or, from 1st position, brush to side middle or high, close (in 1st) and repeat to other side, and continue, alternating sides, for a total of 8 or 16 Cts. (Cts. 1 & = up, close.) Arms may swing in opposition.

Side Fall: Cross left leg behind right, sliding it to floor toward right, & lie down on left side. Arms may be used. Recovery from fall is optional. Repeat to other side. Or, on both knees, swing both arms in clockwise direction, and fall to left side. Recover, and repeat to other side.

Triplets: Two triplets, traveling in a grapevine pattern - side, Diagonal, Backward, side, Diagonal, Forward, etc. - to the Right, followed by six steps in low level which define a circle, thus: Step to Right, then Diagonal, Forward, Right on left foot, and Diagonal, Forward, left on Right foot. Repeat these to other side, but Diagonal, Backward. Arms in 2nd, and body reach toward Right during first 3 steps, left during last 3. All steps reach and cover distance. Repeat whole pattern across floor, then repeat to other side.

Jumps: As per Advanced I.

ADVANCED III

Floor Work: As per Advanced I or II. Or, demonstrate advanced work taught by own teacher.

Pliés: Demonstrate pliés combined with contraction-release, or with standing warm-up described in Beginner III. Or, deep plié in 5th position - Ports de bras is optional. (Turn-out of legs may approach approximately 135 degrees at this level.)

Brushes: As per Advanced I, but with full turns. Or, demonstrate straight legged - circular - walk forward and/or backward.

Traveling in Space: In releve, step forward, then turn 1/4 to right on right foot. (Cts. 1, 2.) Step forward, low onto left, then right foot. (Cts. 3, 4.) Repeat to the other side, then repeat whole sequence, but with 1 1/4 turns. Then, in faster 3/4, leap, run, run 4 times in a clockwise circle. During slower pattern, arms swing freely as body tilts, and head has "space hold" during turns. Repeat combination across floor.

Jumps: Stag Leaps. Or, step Diag. Forw. Right on left. Hop in place as gesturing leg goes to side middle or high. Left arm swings right on way to over head, & Right arm goes to 2nd (shoulder level). Repeat to other side and continue. (3/4.)

Note to entrants and teachers:

Modern Dance seems to defy codification. It has been called a "state of mind", and an arbitrary syllabus may seem too simple to some and terribly difficult to others. Therefore, choices have been offered in several instances. Teachers of specific techniques should feel free to use those techniques instead of this syllabus, as per instructions in the *Junior Festival Bulletin*. This syllabus may serve those who do not choose to adhere to specific techniques. Nevertheless, there is much more to the Modern Dance than this syllabus implies. Therefore, as an adjunct, *Modern Dance Fundamentals*, by Nona Schurman and Leigh Clark is recommended. (Macmillian Co.) It is suggested that entrants who have had ballet training, and those taking two or more weekly classes, should not enter as Beginners I.

Additional copies may be ordered from:

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