

## **Pirouette Technique**

This information regarding best practices for the pirouette is set in a classical ballet context utilizing turn-out. Most of the technique may also be applied to performing turns in parallel.

### **HEAD**

- the eyes remain level
- keep the jaw and tongue relaxed; any undue tension will affect the alignment of the spine
- spotting is a technique that helps to refocus the eyes and aids in balance
- spotting allows a dancer to produce multiple turns with precision and consistency
- know where to spot before you begin a turn
- know where to end the spot if it is different from where you started
- the spot, along with the arms, controls the speed of the turn so adjust as needed
- spot on the second step of a pas de bourrée turn

### **UPPER BODY**

- joints such as the shoulders and hips should be balanced on both sides of the body for correct alignment
- complete the entire revolution of a turn with the shoulders and hips squared to the desired ending
- if falling to one side, think of stretching vertically versus turning
- drop the shoulder blades and gently pull down the upper back or trapezius in opposition to the body rising in relevé; this affords the dancer with a more secure balance
- placement of the arms will either aid or hinder the momentum in the ability to turn; consistently practice the correct placement
- at the beginning of the plié the arms are placed in third position; in relevé the

- arm rounded in front of the sternum opens to a demi-second before both arms close in first for the turn
- when the arms are placed in first position the fingertips remain level with the sternum
- the arms should be placed as follows: elbows are lower than the shoulders; wrists are lower than the elbows; fingers are lower than the wrists
- longer arms may need to cross while turning
- release any tension in the fingers and thumbs by simply shaking the hands vigorously

### **LOWER BODY**

- turn-out must be maintained in the duration of the turn for classical ballet technique; rotating inward during the turn will result in a loss of force in the spin
- relax the hip in turn-out so that tension does not cause misalignment
- hips should remain aligned when the working leg is lifted in retiré or any other desired position
- experiencing the opposition between the working leg and the opposite hip is the key to maintaining turn-out throughout the duration of the turn
- plié adequately for the number of revolutions performed
- consciously control the turn by breathing out on the plié and by breathing in for the relevé
- rise into a fully stretched relevé on demi-pointe
- remain in relevé during the entire revolution of the turn
- the working leg should be held in position without slipping during the turn
- complete the turn with a final pose

### **FEET**

- understand the proper preparation from which to begin the turn
- turned-out turns require a turned-out preparation; parallel turns require a parallel preparation
- shift the weight forward over the toes on a three-quarter point
- balance with equal weight distribution between the big and little toes
- keep the toe connected to the ankle in coupé and to the knee in retiré during the entire revolution

Sawyer, Gina. *The Performance Dictionary*. Dallas: Backstage Coach Productions, 2005.