

The Healthy Dancer

Dance Technique and Injury Prevention

Dr. Rachel Loeb and Dr. Sara Perry

Fall 2015

Are you ready for pointe shoes?

A Guide to Pointe Readiness

Traditionally the best criteria for determining if a dancer is ready to go en pointe have been age (12 years old) and good technique, however, recent scientific studies have found that there are many different levels of development and skill in the 12 to 15 year old age group. Many factors can change how an artist develops as a dancer like number of years trained, their commitment to mastering technique, and cross-training. Because there are so many variables in skill level, it is very important to be knowledgeable about what it takes to dance en

Ankle range of motion: Point your foot and hold a pencil on top of it lengthwise. It should be parallel to the ground to ensure enough flexibility to begin dancing en pointe.

Calf strength: Stand on one leg with the other leg in coupé and elevé on the standing leg. You should be able to perform 20 heel raises (elevés) in parallel and turned out.

Balance: Stand on a single leg in parallel with your arms crossed over your chest and close your eyes for 30 seconds without letting your other foot down.

*"We know how exciting it is to get to dance on pointe, but if your dance teacher does not feel you are ready, do not take it personally. Take that time to really focus on building up your strength. It is better to wait a year then get injured and have to stop dancing."
-Dr. Rachel*

pointe and to use some great simple exercises to see if dancers are ready. There are several dynamic movement tests for determining pointe readiness. Dynamic movement tests are ways to challenge the body to detect areas that need improvement. Here are the tests for determining if a dancer is ready for pointe work that are most commonly researched in dance science.

Single leg passé relevé: Hold a passé position in full elevé for 15 seconds without falling over.

Double leg lower test: Lie on your back on the floor with your legs straight up in the air perpendicular to the floor. Lower your legs until you can no longer hold your lower back to the floor. You must be able to go to 45° (half way) or lower without lifting your low back to pass this test.

Featured Fall Events



SCRA Riverfront Dance Festival
September 13, 2015

Broadway Actress Nikki Snelson Master
Class at SLAD
September 20

Dine on Dance Performance (Ashleyliane
Dance Compnay with Karlovsky and
Company Dance)
September 24, 2015

"Give Dance a Chance"
Little Theatre in Alton
September 26

Ashleyliane Dance Trivia Night Fundraiser
October 2, 2015

Saint Louis Ballet's "Best of Balanchine",
presented at the Touhill in October 10-11

Variety's Mary Poppins at the Touhill
October 23-25

Halloween Trick or Treat Fundraiser (ADC
with the Gateway Chapter of the Leukemia
and Lymphoma Society)
October 28, 2015

Big Muddy Fall Friend-raiser in the new
space (Marcelle Theater)
October 29

ADC Fall Dance Showcase
October 30, 2015

SIUE Dance Concert
November 11-15

Big Muddy "Season Kickoff" performance
(Edison Theatre, Washington University),
November 21

Single leg step down: Stand with one foot on a platform that is approximately 9 inches tall and plié to touch the heel of the other foot to the floor with the hips remaining level and neutral. Repeat 4-5 times with control to pass.

Airplane: Stand on one leg in parallel, bend the torso forward and lift the back leg to create a straight table top appearance with the body. Reach the arms straight in front of the chest toward the ground. Maintain control of the body and do 4 pliés to pass.

Topple test: Perform a single en dehors pirouette from fourth position, landing in fourth position with a fully straight knee and supported passé position with full control.

Single leg sauté test: Perform 16 single leg sauté jumps in a row maintaining proper technique, specifically neutral hips and extended knee and foot while in the air, landing toe heel and with an upright torso. 8 of these must be performed with proper technique in order to pass.

The best tests for predicting pointe readiness are the airplane test, the single leg sauté test and the topple test. These moves are the most challenging and best

indicators of strong technique, core strength and lower extremity strength and function. It is understandable that many students will be anxious and eager to begin dancing en pointe, but without being properly trained and skeletally mature enough to begin, there could be serious consequences of putting a dancer en pointe too early. If weaknesses are found and the dancer is unable to pass these tests, they may need to complete a rehab program to balance out their muscle tone and improve flexibility. Chiropractors can quickly pin point areas in need of rehabilitation and prepare dancers for pointe work at an optimum age. They will also treat any aches and pains associated with the dancer's training. Regular chiropractic adjustments and muscle work are key to preventing injury and properly preparing young dancers for a successful career with longevity.

By: Dr. Sara Perry, Chiropractic Physician and dance medicine specialist at Clayton Chiropractic Center

For images and research about these tests, go to our website ClaytonChiropracticSTL.com

Drea's Dream Dance Therapy Program



"Our Drea's Dream Gala on March 7th was a HUGE success. We were joined by the Big Muddy Dance Company, The Ashleyliane Dance Company and Omar Olivas at the Edison Theatre. It was our most successful event to date. 50% of the proceeds go to fund the Drea's Dream Dance Therapy Program at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital and we are thrilled to announce that we raised enough money to fund 8.45 months of dance therapy. Pazazz is the sole funding source of the Drea's Dream Program at Cardinal Glennon. We launched the program in May 2012 and had enough funds to pay for our dance therapist to work at the hospital once a month. As of January 2015 we have expanded the program to once a week! The success of this year's Gala helps us to continue to serve the patients at Cardinal Glennon and to continue to grow the program!" - Emily Edwards

Next performance is on September 25th at 5:30 "Schon Presents an Event to Benefit Pazazz Performers"



We have moved!
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