

1 Teaching Classical Ballet : educational features and health
 2 conditions Study of the plantar stance of the students of the
 3 school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples
 4 (Italy) while performing the ballet

5 Dr.Palumbo C.¹

6 ¹ University of Salerno-Italy

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8

9 **Abstract**

10 Many neurophysiological and biomechanics studies researched the importance of the foot as
 11 main receptor of the postural system, highlighting the importance of the podalic afferents in
 12 the regulation and control of the body both in static and dynamic positions. Hence, a specific
 13 study of the dancers' feet shows the complexity of their anatomical structure stimulated by
 14 many stresses which can produce some pathological changes. The dancer's foot is a specific
 15 field of research since the foot is a strong, steady, precise and powerful structure which is
 16 highly sensitive and fast and which is constantly stimulated according to the muscular work
 17 required by the dance at loads that affect the capsular ligaments. Moreover, the performances
 18 required by the dance demand complex, static, dynamic, and, in some cases, 'extreme'
 19 conditions from the foot. In fact, unlike ordinary actions such as walking, running and
 20 jumping, the classical ballet demands an alternation of the bipodalic and monopodalic stances
 21 and a redistribution of the load of the body at the level of the arch of the foot; so the foot is
 22 constantly required to ensure conditions of equilibrium and at the same time to test the limits
 23 of its biomechanical structure.

24

25 *Index terms—*

26 **1 INTRODUCTION**

27 Fokine, who was the first choreographer of the Ballets Russes and a forerunner of the neoclassical style, stated:
 28 "To judge a dancer, all you have to do is to see how he uses his feet ?" Posture has a main role in the classical
 29 ballet, since it is essential to put all the parts of the body in the right position. Specifically, its anatomical
 30 supports are the following ones:

31 ? forefoot, arch of the foot and heel ? coxo-femoral and sacroiliac joints ? spine

32 **2 ? blades**

33 The right position is given by the exact relation among the above mentioned elements, which should be perfectly
 34 balanced and linked by an ideal line which starts from the occiput and goes down till the heels. The head should
 35 be hold up high and be on the same vertical line of the feet. Moreover, it is important that the trunk is always
 36 hold up and stretched out, with the shoulders down and the neck stretched. The right position of the body
 37 expects the trunk to be upright and stiff, thanks to a counter-rotation movement (back tilt) of the pelvis, and
 38 a consequent reduction of the width of all the physiological curves of the rachis and a horizontal position of the
 39 pelvis itself.

40 According to this theory, the horizontal position of the pelvis allows the coxo-femoral joint to move more freely,
41 since the head of the thigh-bone can widen the rotation inside the acetabulum. This introduces a new factor,
42 the en dehors, which completes the right position of the body of a ballet dancer. The French word dehors means
43 "outside" and it refers to a 90°extra-rotation position of the coxo-femoral joints and of the whole lower limbs.
44 Anyway, this position, which fixes the direction of the movements and the main positions of this technique, can
45 be also a natural talent of the ballet dancer and so it can be considered a bent.

46 There is an extension of all joints of the foot in the execution of the tip; in this case the most important
47 role is played by the tibio-talar, involved in the formation of the "neck of the foot ". The plantar flexion in
48 fact leads to the alignment of the bones of the foot so that the weight is unloaded only along an imaginary
49 "kneemalleolus-metatarsal head-foot fingers" axis.

50 Many neurophysiological and biomechanics studies (Bricot, B., 1998Villeneuve, P.,2010) showed the impor-
51 tance of the role of the foot as main receptor of the postural system and the importance of the podalic afferents
52 while regulating and controlling the posture. In static conditions, the foot rests on the ground mainly with the
53 head of the first metatarsal, on the fifth metatarsal and on the back M alcaneal tuberosity.

54 these points you should download, respectively, 33%, 17% and 50% of the body's weight.The posture of a
55 person depends on a specific muscle activity known as "postural". This activity is mainly carried out by the
56 extensor muscles of the lower limbs, the muscles of the trunk and those of the neck. It aims at maintaining
57 the projection on the floor of the center of gravity of the subject within the bearing surface (polygon). The
58 maintenance of the orthostatic posture also requires the integration of visual, proprioceptive, labyrinthine and
59 foot information.Many experimental protocols use stabilometry as a method of measuring postural equilibrium in
60 man. Stabilometry records the coordinates of the center of pressure (COP) on a platform on which the subject is
61 in an orthostatic position. Starting from these coordinates, it is possible to calculate many different parameters
62 which Chiari, Rocchi and Cappello (2002) have classified into three different categories: a) The first one includes
63 the most common parameters in literature which consider the space and time features of COP. For example, it is
64 possible to calculate the type of postural balance and the needed energy to maintain it, the COP area, distances,
65 the speed, etc. Moreover, it is possible to calculate the COP average position in terms of a fixed reference or
66 relation to anthropometric data (for example, the size of the polygon, Kirby, Price e MacLeod, 1987). b) The
67 second category consists of parameters such as the specific type of the frequency (Fast Fourier Transform: FFT).
68 c) The third one represents the stochastic parameters ??Collins e De Luca, 1993). Hence, the second and third
69 categories allow to evaluate the dynamic aspect of the control of the orthostatic posture. The study of the dancer's
70 foot has to consider complex elements, because of the many stresses the foot anatomic structure receives and the
71 many pathological changes that might rise. In fact, the dancer's foot is a strong, steady, particularly sensitive,
72 fast and exact structure, which is constantly stressed during the exploitation of its capsule-ligamental structure
73 according to the required strong muscular work.Actually, unlike other motor activities, such as walking, running
74 or jumping, it is evident that during the classical ballet the foot has to continuously change its trim, repeatedly
75 and almost cyclically going from bipodalic stances to monopodalic ones; in this way it distributes the load on
76 the arch of the foot. These changes of the balance, causing muscle-skeletal imbalances, constantly undermine
77 not only the foot but also several areas of the body.The research studied the dancers of the Ballet School of the
78 San Carlo Theatre of Naples. The course attended by the students provides an eight levels program; besides
79 the study and the practice of the ballet, there are other subjects such as solfeggio, the history of the music, the
80 history of the dance, gym, athletic training, modern dance, character dance, Spanish dance, pas de deux and
81 physio-technique. The student's training starts with a tree time a week course which lasts 1.30 hour a day for
82 the preliminary students. First class students attend a 1.30 hour training daily course 5 times a week. Seventh
83 and eighth courses students attend a 3 hours training daily course 6 times a week.The training schedules a two
84 phases lesson, during the first phase there are bar exercises. These exercises gradually help the joints mobility,
85 the strength of the legs and the feet, the motor control and the movements coordination. The second phase of
86 the training schedules exercises to be performed in the center and new elements of the allegro, tours, aplomb and
87 jump elevation and ballon are gradually introduced.

88 Therefore it is a kind of training which demands highly concentrated physical activities, which become more
89 and more demanding as years go. The training program, which during the seventh and eighth year courses has to
90 reach an excellent technical and performing perfection, diversifies the male and female technical activities starting
91 from the second year course. This different kind of training is carried out through some specific exercises, that
92 is the study of the tips for the women, starting from the second year course (11/12 years old), and the jumping
93 technique for the men. It is useful to highlight that the female dancers make greater efforts because they use the
94 pointe shoes. These shoes expose them to continuous trauma and their use may cause aches and dysmorphology
95 of the foot, because of the poor distribution of the load and the support, with consequences borne by the rachis
96 and the lower limbs.

97 The required performance, the strong technique and the severe and systematic training techniques, make the
98 dance a highly competitive sport activity.The subject can get a great advantage from this activity which, especially
99 when practiced since a very young age, can develop in a harmonious way the muscular system, increasing the
100 joints mobility and giving tonicity and suppleness to the muscular system. (Morris N.R. Van de Wetering A.W.,
101 De Rooij and. Sabapathy S., 2009).The research studied the possible relationship between the biomechanic
102 conditions demanded by the technique of the ballet and by the possible changes of the plantar support, analysing

103 any possible effect on the posture. The survey also meant to highlight any significant difference between the
104 plantar support of the female and male students.

105 **3 II.**

106 **4 METHODS**

107 The protocol of the research has been previously set thanks to the joint action of the researchers of the University
108 of Salerno and the management of the Ballet School, which promoted and download, respectively, On Teaching
109 Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the students of the
110 school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

111 shared the aims of the survey. The adopted procedural choices scheduled the following: 1) A specific agreement
112 between the two bodies;

113 2) The group of research of the University of Salerno and the teachers of the San Carlo Theatre shared the use
114 of the technology aimed at a descriptive study about the possible relationship between the foot structure and the
115 practice of the ballet technique, studying the students of the Ballet school of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples.

116 In our case, the area of application covered the simple and fast static analysis of the load distribution, in order
117 to fix the functionality of the foot in young dancers performing the classical ballet as a high competitive sport.

118 The actions performed at the school to carry out the experimental phase have been :

119 1) Setting up an integrated plan Ballet School of the San Carlo Theatre-University to share the aims, the
120 methodologies and the procedures of the research. 2) Setting up an information sheet to collect data on the
121 age, anthropometric data, the diet, the lifestyles and the type of sport practiced by students. 3) Analysis of the
122 plantar support through a practical and prompt system of analysis : PDM -Platform of multi-functional strength.

123 It seems worthwhile to underline that the sharing of the research project has provided a first opportunity
124 for comparison among the researches, the teachers and the director of the school in order to discuss about the
125 organizational and executive methods of the research and obtain specific information about the training of the
126 subjects observed. A later meeting with the students has been organized to obtain personal anthropometric
127 information (parameters of structure, age, sex, height). The criteria of inclusion have been:

128 ? absence of dimorphism.

129 ? standard weight and height, ? postural treatment performed during sports training.

130 On the basis of the data collected, it has been expected the following: III.

131 **5 SAMPLE**

132 The research has been carried out on a survey of 31 students of the Ballet School of the San Carlo Theatre, of
133 whom 23 students (aged between 10 and 11) belonged to the first course, and 11 students (aged between 17 and
134 20) attended the seventh and eighth Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study
135 of the plantar stance of the students of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy)
136 while performing the ballet.

137 courses. Twenty-three students of the first course have been studied (eight males and fifteen females) with an
138 average age of about 11,2 years. With regard to the seventh and eighth courses, eleven students have been studied
139 (three males and eight females), with an average age of about 18,9 years.

140 IV.

141 **6 INSTRUMENTS**

142 The group of research carried out a Stabilometric and Posturometric Examination on the group of control.
143 The evaluation has been performed with a postural MULTIFUNCTION MEASUREMENT PLATFORM, Zebris
144 FDM 153X60.5X2.1 cm (L x W x H), which works with 8064 capacitive sensors arranged in a next-generation
145 matrix of 144 by 56 cm.

146 This platform provides a method that measures the distribution of plantar pressure in the upright position,
147 during both the static phase (position of attention) and walking, providing graphical images and numerical
148 values. The examination is carried out to identify the shape, the pressure, the surface, the acceleration of the
149 foot and ground contact time to better assess any abnormal movement and areas of overload. The study of
150 the posture and the gait highlights how the load distribution on the plantar surface may vary according to the
151 structural characteristics of the subject and how it can be influenced by possible alterations of different bone
152 segments (tarsus and metatarsus, tibia, femur, pelvis).

153 The application areas cover a quick and simple dynamic analysis of the rolling and a static analysis of the
154 distribution of loads. This analysis can easily be used to determine the functionality of the foot because: -It can
155 register an unlimited number of tests and the calculation of the average value will automatically appear in the
156 "Report".

157 **7 -**

158 The system records the ground reaction forces during the foot-ground contact.

159 **8 -**

160 The development of the load distribution can be displayed in 2 and 3 dimensions charts and in a color scale.

161 -Up to 4 simultaneous tracks facilitate the direct comparison between the left and the right side and the
162 comparative analysis in terms of interest.

163 - First course students:It

164 The following four doses have been given:

165 Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the
166 students of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

167 1.

168 **9 2.**

169 3.

170 **10 4.**

171 **11 5.**

172 ? The first one, at T0 time, i.e. before the lesson and at the beginning of the course, in bi-podalic position and
173 with open eyes; i.

174 ii.

175 VI. 3. The forces are always balanced on the left and right forefoot and on the left and right hind-foot. 4.
176 The support on the hind-foot is higher than that on the forefoot. 5. The average support forces are steady on
177 each of the four points (left and right forefoot and on the left and right hind-foot).

178 **12 EMERGED DATA**

179 I

180 6. The values of the force on the left foot (forefoot and hind-foot) are highly concentrated around the mean
181 value of the sport gesture with closed eyes. It shows a low variability of the behavior.

182 2. The force on the forefoot and the hind-foot is almost constant in each of the four cases.

183 **13 I course**

184 Histograms of the Ellipse Area, COP Length, Left Forefoot, Right Forefoot, Left foot and Right Hind-foot
185 variables

186 **14 VII. RESULTS**

187 Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the students
188 of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

189 **15 VIII course**

190 Histograms of the Ellipse Area, COP Length, Left Forefoot, Right Forefoot, Left foot and Right Hind-foot
191 variables

192 Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the
193 students of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

194 Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the
195 students of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

196 Teaching Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the
197 students of the school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet.

198 **16 Key: A = I Course B= VIII Course**

199 Comparing the values of the first course with those of the eighth course and analysing the following table of the
200 p. values, it can be stated the following: 1. There are no significant differences between the first course and the
201 eighth one with regard to the Area of the Ellipse (AE) and the mean of the forces (MF) both on the left and the
202 right foot. This is true for the bipodalic support both with the open and the closed eyes. Hence, the attendance
203 in the courses doesn't significantly modify the AE and the MF. 2. The length of the COP is different in the first
204 and eighth course as regard as the support both with open and closed eyes, and the difference goes beyond the
205 99,9% (i.e., there is less than 0,1% probability to make mistake in admitting that the values are different). The
206 study carried out in the following eight years of the course significantly changes the length of the COP.

207 **17 During the bipodalic support with open eyes,**

208 between the first and the eighth course there are significant differences at 95% for both the forefoot and the
209 hindfoot, and in both cases both for the left and the right foot (there is less than 5% probability to make a

210 mistake if it is assumed that the values are different). 4. During the bipodalic support with open eyes, between
211 the first and the eighth course there are significant differences at 95% for both the right forefoot and the right
212 hind-foot. 5. During the bipodalic support with closed eyes, between the first and the eighth course there are
213 significant differences at 99% for both the left forefoot and the left hind-foot (in this case, there is less than 1%
214 probability to make a mistake if it is assumed that the values are different). 6. The influence of the study carried
215 out during the following eight years of the course, involves more significant changes on the left foot rather than
216 on the right one.

217 18 CORRELATIONS

218 The following important correlations have been identified: -A high force on the left forefoot implies a high force
219 on the right forefoot and vice versa, a low force on the right and left hindfoot, particularly in the case of the
220 bipodalic stance.

221 -Increasing the length of the COP increases the Area of the Ellipse, particularly during the sport activity.
222 X.

223 19 CONCLUSION

224 The survey meant to examine the relationship between the technique of the classical ballet and the possible
225 appearance of abnormalities of the plantar support and the possible effects of these changes on the posture. The
226 survey also meant to highlight every significant difference between the plantar support of both the female and
227 male students. It should be clear, indeed, that the female dancer does greater efforts due to the technical features
228 and to the pointe shoes, which expose her not only to frequent and sudden injuries; moreover, their use may also
229 cause dysmorphism and foot pains, poor load distribution and support, with effects borne by the spine and the
230 lower limbs.

231 The results showed: ? In the first year students, the support on the hind-foot is greater than that on the
232 forefoot, while the eighth year students stand more on the forefoot than on the hind-foot. This might mean that
233 the constant study would tend to encourage an adequately distributed support over the whole foot. Teaching
234 Classical Ballet: educational features and health conditions. Study of the plantar stance of the students of the
235 school of Classical Ballet of the San Carlo Theatre of Naples (Italy) while performing the ballet. ^{1 2 3 4 5 6}
236 ^{7 8 9 10 11}

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Figure 1: ?

11

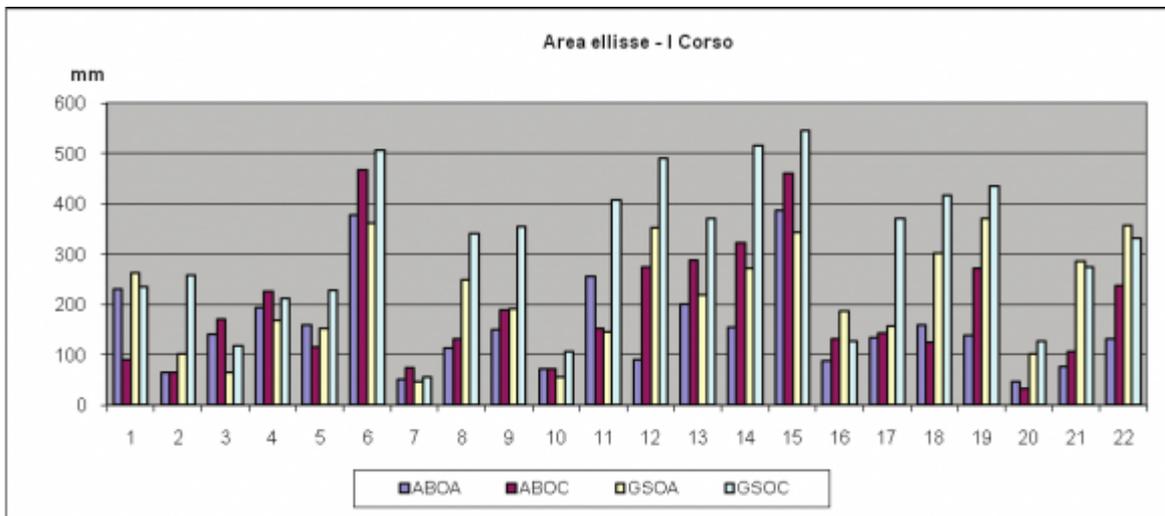


Figure 2: Course 1 . 1 .

V.

a) Time, subjects and methods of implementation of the protocol:

The subject was positioned to evaluate the static standing position without shoes, with only the socks on.

Tests

Plumb test and a bipodalic Romberg test

1. head in neutral position with eyes to infinity (no staring point: drawings, etc.)

2. upper limbs lowered and along the trunk and thighs

3. aligned feet, tips slightly apart, heels almost together

4. the person is not allowed to speak or make any voluntary movement during the test.

5. it always begins with open eyes, then, it goes on with the eyes closed.

Plumb test and a monopodalic Romberg test

1. head in neutral position with eyes to infinity (no staring point: drawings, etc.)

2. arms crossed in the chest;

3. the supporting leg is bent of about 30 degrees and the other is slightly bent;

4. the person is not allowed to speak or make any voluntary movement during the test.

5. it always begins with open eyes, then, it goes on with the eyes closed.

Test of the technical movement:

head in neutral position with eyes to infinity (no staring point: drawings, etc.)

upper limbs lowered and along the trunk and thighs

getting the first "en de hors" position with the with heels jointed and the points of the toes turned 180 degrees.

the person is not allowed to speak or make any voluntary movement during the test.

it always begins with open eyes, then, it goes on with the eyes closed.

Duration of the test

The literature generally indicates that the length of the test is 30" both with the eyes open and closed for the bipodalic stance test and 10" both with the eyes open and closed for the monopodalic stance test. The team of the researchers, considered the main technical

- It records the ground reaction forces during

Sport
Ac-
tiv-
ity
with
Open
Eyes

size means
AE Different
MF (sx e dx) Different (both with open and closed eyes)
Lungh. COP The same
AvSx The same
AvDx The same
RpSx The same
RpDx The same

Sport Activity with Closed Eyes

size means
AE Not Comparable Data Because Of The Difference

MF (sx e dx) The same
Lungh. COP The same
AvSx The same
AvDx The same
RpSx The same
RpDx The same

CLUSTERING

IX.

According to the general features of the stances, it has been possible to split the students of the first group into subgroups with a 30 distance in each of the four cases:

Bipodalic Stance with Open Eyes

AvamSx AvamDx RetropSx RetropDx P_Value Tables To Compare The Values Between The I Course And

Cluster 2	45.5	Cluster 3	24.5	36.3	54.5	75.5	63.7
				24.5			Bipo- dalic Stance with Open Eye 75.5

size AE Bipodalic Stance with Closed Eyes means The same (both with open and closed eyes) MF (sx e dx)

RpDx Sport Activity with Open Eyes Different (both with open and closed eyes)

AvamSx AvamDx RetropSx RetropDx Bipodalic Stance with Closed Eyes Cluster 1 37.6 40.8 62.4 59.2

Cluster 2	37.6	size	62.4	means	59.2
		40.8			

Cluster 3	22.6	9	AE	77.4	The same (both with open and
			24.88		

MF (sx e dx) Lungh. COP Different (both with open and closed eyes) The same (both with open and closed eyes)

AvSx AvamSx AvamDx RetropSx RetropDx Different (both with open and closed eyes)

[Note: i vi viii About 64.7% of Chinese entrepreneurs interviewed declared that they had only Portuguese clients (Oliveira, 2005: 117). ix For further details, see: Chan and Cheung (1985:149), Waldinger et al. (1990: 142) and Light and Gold (2000: 119). x See: Chan and Cheung, (1985:149), Portes (1999:58).]

Figure 5:

237 ? In the eighth year students the force on the forefoot tends to strongly reduce while going from the bipodalic
238 support to the sport gesture (and vice versa on the hind-foot). This might mean that the en dehors study
239 improves an adequately distributed support over the whole foot. ? The length of the COP is different in the first
240 and eighth course (both for the open and closed eyes support) and the difference is beyond 99,9% (i.e. there is a
241 probability of less than 0,1% to make mistake if it is assumed that the values are different).

242 The study carried out during the following eight years of the course changes the length of the COP very
243 significantly, improving a lot the centre of gravity of the studied subjects. ? The influence of the study carried
244 out during the eight year course shows greater changes on the left foot rather than on the right one. This might
245 be due to the fact that the activities tend to favour the use of both the parties of the body in a symmetrical
246 way, while performing all the routine activities. ? During the sport gesture with open eyes there is a significant
247 differences at 95% with regard to the Area of the Ellipse of the first and eight year course and this might mean
248 that the influence of the study done during the eight years of the course implies changes on the motor control
249 abilities.

250 The results of the survey highlighted, indeed, a possible relationship between the motor activity of the
251 ballet and the features of the support on the foot. The research opens up further studies on the modelling
252 and characterizing features of the practice of the academic ballet technique, because the quality of the body's
253 movement, even in the air phase, depends on the control and on the refinement of the support of the lower limb.

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19 CONCLUSION

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