

Exercises for Pointe and Pre-Pointe

To be performed 6 days per week.

As you do these exercises, please keep these things in mind:

- Always maintain good posture (don't bend over to see your feet, stand straight with your abdominal muscles engaged, feel your shoulders over your ribs, your ribs over your hips and keep your hips level)
- Never allow your feet to "sickle" (roll to the outside of your foot) or "wing" (roll to the inside of your foot) when you are on relevé. You should always relevé with your weight over the front of your foot, mostly over your big toe. In pointe shoes, you need to feel the box of the shoe on the floor.

Stretches:

To be done either barefoot or in soft shoes.

- Standing in parallel, cross one foot (working foot) over the other (supporting leg) with the front of the toes of your working foot on the floor. Gently plié with the supporting leg, pushing the working foot into a stretch for the arch. Make sure your foot is straight and not sickling or winging. Also be sure the you feel the stretch in your arch and you are not just crunching your toes.
- Sitting, with one foot crossed over your leg. Point your foot, then with your hand push down on your toes and the front of your foot to feel the arch stretch. Then flex just your toes and push on the bottoms of them so your foot is in a relevé shape and you can feel the stretch on the bottom of your foot.
- Sitting, both legs extended in front of you. Practice rolling through the foot to a fully pointed position, working through demi-pointe as you go into the point and out of the point. Keep your legs straight and try to get you toes all the way to the floor. Repeat at least 8 times with each foot. This exercise is also excellent to do with a Theraband (purchase at a dance store or a sports store or online). The Theraband offers extra resistance so that the exercise is more beneficial.
- Calf and Achilles stretch: start with feet parallel, step forward onto one foot so that the front leg is bent and the back leg is straight. Press forward onto the front leg, keeping the heel of the back leg on the floor to feel the stretch in the back calf. Hold for at least 10 seconds. Then gently bend the back leg to feel the stretch in your achilles tendon. Hold for at least 10 seconds. Repeat with the other leg.
- You should also do some sit-ups and crunches to strengthen your core (abdominals) as they are ESSENTIAL for successful pointe work.

Exercises:

All of these should be done in both bare feet/soft shoes AND pointe shoes (except the demi-pointe strengthener). Use your counter or a chair for support like you are at the barre. At the top of each relevé, it is a good idea to let go of your support to make sure you are balanced.

- Slow relevé s: 8-count relevé (4 counts up and 4 counts down), concentrating on fully working through all the joints in your foot each time. On flat, be sure to reach to absolute top of your demi-pointe to strengthen and stretch your feet and toes. On pointe, be sure to not "pop" or "spring" onto relevé, but roll through your full demi-pointe before and after you rise to full pointe. Do this 4 times in 1st position, 4 times in second position, and 4 times in 6th position (parallel). Don't rush.
- Forced Arch stretch: do a demi plié, rise to a relevé with your knees still bent, straighten knees, then reverse the actions to return to your beginning position. On flat, you will feel the stretch mostly on the bottom of your arch and toes. On pointe, you will feel the stretch on the top of your arch. Do this 4 times in 1st position, 4 times in second position, and 4 times in 6th position (parallel)
- Echappe: start in 5th position, plié and spring out to a 2nd position echapp, then return to plié 5th. Do 16 of these. Make sure you are centered between your feet and that they are going out to the sides equally and at the same time.
- Dem-Pointe Strengthener (only for pointe shoes): plié count 1, relevé to full pointe count 2, demi-pointe count 3, full pointe count 4, demi-pointe count 5, full count 6, demi count 7, full count 8, hold in relevé and balance counts 1-7, plié count 8
- As you gain strength and confidence, you can add this exercise: piqué onto the right foot with the left foot pointed in a coupé position in the back and then plié and relevé on the right foot 3 more times. Repeat to the left. Do this at least 4 times on each side. Make sure you are working with your leg and foot, not pressing down on your support (counter, chair, or barre). Make sure you are standing with correct posture.

Go to youtube and watch "The Art of Pointework Level 1-Finis Jhung" for an excerpt of some of these exercises and excellent technique. All of Finis Jhung's videos are excellent. I recommend them.