



ROYAL  
BALLET  
SCHOOL

## PRIMARY STEPS

Issue  
Three!

### PRIMARY STEPS WORKSHOP NEWSLETTER

Welcome back to the Primary Steps workshop newsletter where we learn more about all things ballet! We will be exploring the history of ballet, ballet mime and ballet as it is performed today.



#### BALLET HISTORY

Ballet has a long and quite complicated history! The earliest forms of ballet began in Italy, however, it was in France that ballet as we know it, was born.

The very first ballet school and company was opened by Louis XIV in France in 1661, called the Académie Royale de Danse. The school and company are still in existence to this day but are now called Paris Opéra Ballet.

#### BALLET THROUGH TIME

This video talks about the history of ballet but also explains about how the uniform ballet dancers wear to class has changed over time. You will see three different snapshots of ballet over time.

See if you can spot three changes that have happened and write them down in your notebook.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EjfGgvsldM>



#### HISTORY OF THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

The Royal Ballet School is in London. A famous ballet dancer named Dame Ninette de Valois created the school in 1926 and originally called it the Academy of Choreographic Art.

Then in 1939 the School was renamed **The Sadler's Wells Ballet School** and then in 1956 Queen Elizabeth II gifted a **Royal Charter** to the School, so it was renamed again as **The Royal Ballet School**.

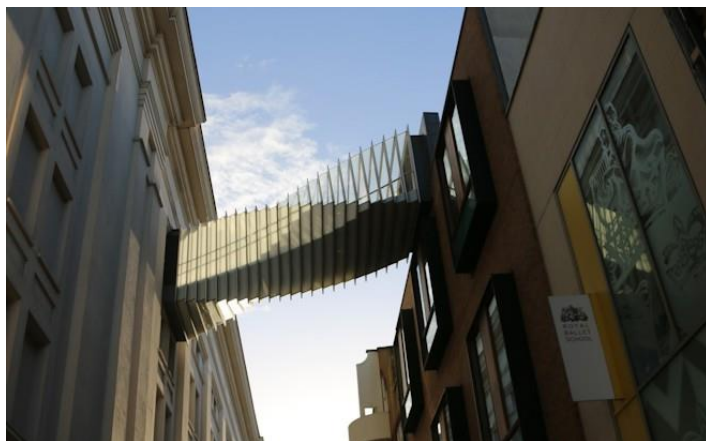
#### Ballet Dictionary

Royal Charter - a document issued by a monarchy (royal family) that gives rights to a person or group

The Royal Ballet School is made up of two schools. Students aged 11 to 16 study at White Lodge in the middle of Richmond Park. White Lodge was originally a hunting lodge for King George I.

Students aged 16 to 19 study at the Upper School in Covent Garden. The School is linked to the Royal Opera House by a bridge called the Bridge of Aspiration (picture on right).

All students hope one day to cross the bridge to become a professional ballet dancer with The Royal Ballet Company at the Royal Opera House.



## BALLET TODAY

People often think that ballet is very old fashioned and that all ballets look the same, but they are wrong, it's not just about girls wearing tutus and fairy tales!

Choreographers (a person who creates dances) can choose any story or theme (idea) for their dances. They work with designers who create costumes, sets and special lighting effects to make their dances look fantastic.

Watch the clips below to see how different ballet can look.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS1cUOVpxyQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOiK2G88sbw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvvd8TTWedE>

Now that you are an expert on ballet mime, why don't you have a go yourself?

Below are some examples of mime that you could try:

I/Me - Point to own chest

You - Point to person with palm up

Queen/King - Touch both sides of the head with the back of the hand forming a crown

See - Tap index finger under each eye in turn

Listen - Cup hand over ear leaning towards sound or tap face twice with a flourish close to the ear

Why - Open both arms out with palms up towards the other character

Love - Cross hands over heart

Angry - Bend elbows with fists clenched whilst shaking arms

Engaged/Married - Point to ring finger

Forget/Think - Tap forehead with index finger

Die - Cross arms low in front of the body with hands in fists

## STORY TELLING

**Mime** is a very important part of ballet. Ballet dancers use mime to tell a story rather than words. A lot of the traditional mimes are not performed in the order you might expect. For instance, instead of saying 'I love you', the mime gestures would be 'I you love'. The dancers also have to make sure that their movements fit with the music, just like they do with the steps. The Royal Ballet has kept this tradition alive and they use mime in many of their ballets.

### Ballet Dictionary

Mime - using only gesture and movement to tell a story

## SOMETHING TO DO

Miss Gibbs is going to show you how you can use your hands and arms to tell a story. In ballet we use mime to let the audience know what is happening. Get ready to learn some mime basics!

<https://vimeo.com/796107557/890857d52f>



We hope your child enjoys their workshop this week. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch – [primarysteps@royalballetschool.org.uk](mailto:primarysteps@royalballetschool.org.uk)

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with news, photos and videos from The Royal Ballet School.