

Ballet History

Ballet in Italy



Origination

- Renaissance Courts in 15th Century
- Took on much pageantry serving as entertainment to the upper class
- Men did much of the performing
- Lavish costuming, gesturing and music



Moving Out

- Catherine de Medici (an Italian) married Henry II (French heir to throne) and shared her love for dance
- First ballet production was *Ballet Comique de la Reine* in 1581



17th Century – France and Court Dance

- Ballet became popular in France in the 17th Century
- King Louis XIV established *Academie Royale de Danse* in 1661 and later became known as *Paris Opera Ballet*
- First mention of 5 positions was by Pierre Beauchamp



Court Dance Continued

- Jean-Baptiste Lully served in French Courts
- He created *Sun King* and cast King Louis XIV as a performer
- Was the first to utilize musical phrasing with choreography



France Continued

- First ballet school appeared in France and was taught by Juliette Blanche
- Terminology was codified through this school
- French terminology still most prevalent today



18th Century Growth

- Moved much toward Opera form
- Jean-Georges Noverre (1760) staged *Lettres sur le danse et les ballets* and was known as ballet de a'ction
- First time dancers were portraying character and telling stories



19th Century Changes

- Shift away from aristocrats
- Marie Taglioni was one of first ballerinas to experiment with pointe work
- Women were now seen as key figure in ballet
- First sight of “light” movement



19th Century Continued

- Ballets began to revolve around uncanny spirits and romanticism
- *La Sylphide* is oldest romantic ballet still danced today

Marie Taglioni
first person on pointe



Continued Growth in Europe

- Ballet in Russia became popular in late 19th Century
- Marius Petipa was most noted for his work with Tchaikovsky (music composer) to produce:
 - Sleeping Beauty (1890)
 - The Nutcracker (1892)
 - Swan Lake (1895)



European Influence

- Also the first sight of the “tutu”
- Sergei Diaghilev brought ballet back to Paris forming *Ballets Russes* creating such works as:
 - Firebird
 - The Rite of Spring (created controversy due to human sacrifice theme)



Russian Influence Continued

- Michael Fokine followed Petipa as a great choreographer of the time
- Famous pieces with Russian influence from time period:
 - *Romeo and Juliet*
 - *Cinderella*



US Growth

- Fokine left Russia and brought the growth of ballet to the US by settling in New York
- His choreography in the US includes:
 - Cleopatra
 - The Dying Swan (performed by Anna Pavlova)



US Notables

- George Balanchine is attributed with the continued growth in the US
- He opened ballet schools in Chicago and New York
- Contributed with preserving ballet as an art form

