



The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



© 2013 Universal Uclick

from The Mini Page © 2013 Universal Uclick

Stay on Your Toes

Beautiful Ballet

Think of all the different ways there are to tell a story. We can sing a song, such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider.” An author can relate a tale in a book. Actors can tell a story through a movie or play.

This week, The Mini Page leaps into the world of ballet. When it first began, ballet, like many other types of dance, was another way to tell a story.

Ballet’s beginnings

The first ballet was believed to have taken place in 1581 — more than 400 years ago! At that time, kings and queens kept huge courts of people to serve and entertain them. Court entertainers wore fancy costumes and performed speaking and singing roles, along with dancing and music.

The first ballet, the *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, was performed in Paris during a three-day wedding celebration at the court of Catherine de’ Medici, the wife of King Henry II of France. The story it told was of the Greek goddess Circe. The ballet lasted more than five hours.



The French King Louis XIV loved dance. In the mid-1600s, he started a dance academy in Paris and often danced in its ballets.

Ballerinas

In the 1700s and 1800s, ballerinas began to dance on *pointe* — up on their toes in special shoes called **pointe shoes**. Famous ballerinas became known for their special talents — jumps, turns or beautiful arms.



Pointe shoes

Europe and Russia

Ballet became popular in Italy, France and Russia. In the early 20th century, an arts promoter named Sergei Diaghilev started a ballet company in Paris called the *Ballets Russes* (roos), or “Russian Ballet.” Experts say his company changed the way people experienced ballet. During this time, the male dancer became more important to the dance. In addition, great composers began to create music for ballet, and artists such as Picasso began creating sets for the productions.

Royal influences

Ballet de cour, or court dance, called for specific movements — pointed feet and turned-out legs, for example. These positions would later become the basis for the five basic ballet positions.

As ballet became more technical and specific as a dance form, costumes were changed. For example, the enormous wigs and skirts of the time made it difficult for dancers to turn quickly and jump. Skirts became shorter so that legs and feet could be seen by the audience.

Ballet Stories

Classical ballets combine music and stories. Several of them have been performed for hundreds of years and are still popular with audiences today.

Two examples of classical ballets are:

- **“The Nutcracker.”** This is a Christmas story that includes many children in the **company**, or cast. The music was written by a Russian composer, Peter Tchaikovsky (chi-KOFF-skee). The story was based on a tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann called “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King.”



Peter Tchaikovsky

It features a little girl, Clara, who is given a nutcracker doll for Christmas. But her brother, Fritz, breaks the doll.



photo by James Culp, courtesy, Jeffrey Ballet School

Audiences love the holiday story of “The Nutcracker.” The production includes many small children, which is a great way for beginning ballet students to have a chance to perform.

Later that night, Clara sneaks into the parlor to find her doll. She finds that some of the toys have come to life, and mice and gingerbread men are having a battle!

Clara’s nutcracker defeats the Mouse King and turns into a prince, who takes Clara to the Land of Sweets.

When Clara wakes up back in her own parlor, she wonders if her adventures were really just a dream.

- **“Swan Lake.”** Tchaikovsky also composed the music for this ballet, about a prince who falls in love with a maiden who is under the power of an evil spell. The spell turns her into a swan during the day.



“The Waltz of the Swans” from “Swan Lake.”

photo by Paata Vardanashvili

Ready Resources



The Mini Page provides ideas for websites, books or other resources that will help you learn more about this week’s topics.

On the Web:

- nickjr.com/kids-games/doras-ballet-adventure.html
- wish-upon-a-ballet.com/ballet-media/ballet-coloring-pages

At the library:

- “On Your Toes: A Ballet ABC” by Rachel Isadora
- “Ballet” by Lisa Dillman
- “Prima Princessa Presents Swan Lake” DVD



Ballet

TRY 'N
FIND

Words that remind us of ballet are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: AUDITION, BALLERINA, BALLET, CHILDREN, CHOREOGRAPHER, CLASSICAL, COMPOSER, CONTEMPORARY, COSTUME, COURT, DANCE, NARRATIVE, POINTE, POSITION, SHOE, STORY, STUDENT, STUDIO, TOE.



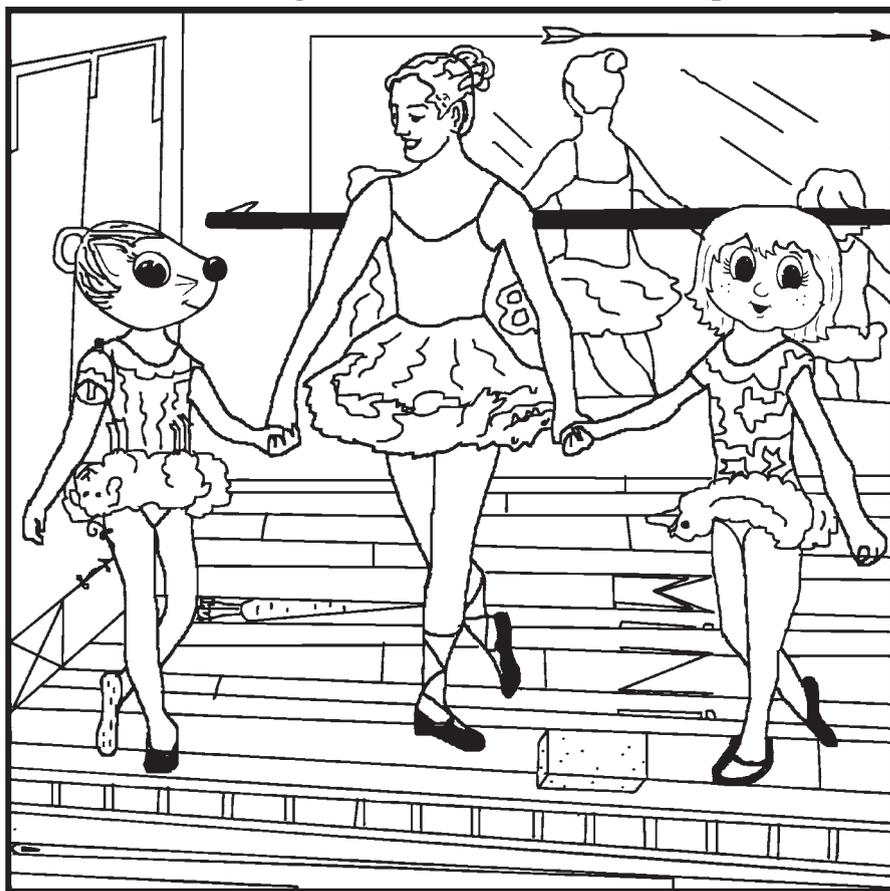
A	F	Y	R	A	R	O	P	M	E	T	N	O	C	L
N	O	I	T	I	S	O	P	N	P	A	T	O	N	A
I	C	O	S	T	U	M	E	O	R	N	M	O	O	C
R	S	H	O	E	T	R	I	R	E	P	I	I	M	I
E	Q	R	T	E	D	N	A	D	O	T	D	J	W	S
L	Y	O	L	L	T	T	U	S	I	U	G	N	Y	S
L	E	L	I	E	I	T	E	D	T	R	U	O	C	A
A	A	H	G	V	S	R	U	S	E	C	N	A	D	L
B	C	R	E	H	P	A	R	G	O	E	R	O	H	C

Mini Spy . . .



Mini Spy loves taking ballet lessons! See if you can find:

- sheep
- bell
- carrot
- brick
- cat
- letter C
- arrow
- number 3
- letter E
- word MINI
- letter A
- duck
- needle
- kite
- ladder
- alligator
- letter B
- peanut



from The Mini Page © 2013 Universal Uclick



Rookie Cookie's Recipe Pumpkin Cake Squares

You'll need:

- 1 (15.25-ounce) box yellow cake mix
- 2/3 cup fat-free evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3 eggs
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 (15-ounce) can pumpkin
- whipped cream

What to do:

1. Reserve 1 cup cake mix. Combine remaining cake mix with 1/2 cup melted butter and 1 egg; mix until crumbly.
2. Grease a 9-by-13-inch baking pan and press crumbly mixture in bottom of pan. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, mix pumpkin, 2 eggs, milk, 1/2 cup sugar and 2 teaspoons cinnamon. Spoon mixture over baked layer.
4. For topping, combine reserved cake mix, 2 tablespoons melted butter, 2 tablespoons sugar and remaining cinnamon in a small bowl.
5. Sprinkle topping mix over pumpkin mixture and bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.
6. Cut into squares and serve with whipped cream.

You will need an adult's help with this recipe.

from The Mini Page © 2013 Universal Uclick

Meet Bella Thorne

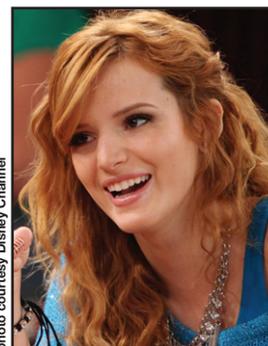


photo courtesy Disney Channel

Bella Thorne stars as the dancer CeCe Jones in the Disney Channel TV series "Shake It Up."

Bella has acted in several movies and TV shows, including the Disney Channel's "Wizards of Waverly Place." She has appeared in several commercials and has modeled for ads and fashion stories.

Bella, 15, was born in Pembroke Pines, Fla. She is the youngest of four children. All her siblings are also actors.

Bella supports the charity The Nomad Organization, which helps give education, food and medical supplies to children in Africa.

She enjoys dancing and playing soccer. She has two dogs, six cats and a turtle.

from The Mini Page © 2013 Universal Uclick

The Mini Page® Book of States

The Mini Page's popular series of issues about each state is collected here in a 156-page softcover book. Conveniently spiral-bound for ease of use, this invaluable resource contains A-to-Z facts about each state, along with the District of Columbia. Illustrated with colorful photographs and art, and complete with updated information, The Mini Page Book of States will be a favorite in classrooms and homes for years to come.

To order, send \$15.99 (\$19.99 Canada) plus \$5 postage and handling for each copy. Make check or money order (U.S. funds only) payable to Universal Uclick. Send to The Mini Page Book of States, Universal Uclick, P.O. Box 6814, Leawood, KS 66206. Or call toll-free 800-591-2097 or go to www.smartwarehousing.com.

Please send _____ copies of The Mini Page Book of States (Item #0-7407-8549-4) at \$20.99 each, total cost. (Bulk discount information available upon request.)

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____

Especially for kids and their families

The Mini Page

By BETTY DEBAM

The Bluegrass State Kentucky From A to Z

Horse breeding and racing have made Kentucky famous. Coal mining is one of the most important industries. Manufacturing of transportation equipment, industrial machinery, electronic equipment and metal products is important. The English and French both explored the area as early as the 1600s. In the 1700s it was part of Virginia, becoming a separate state in 1792. Because Kentucky was right between the North and South regions of the U.S., it was torn apart during the Civil War. It is a surprising fact that both the Union president, Abraham Lincoln, and the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, were born there. Today it is the 26th most-populated state, with more than 4 million people.

Agriculture is important. The state is one of the top growers of corn, soybeans, water wheat and soybeans.

Bluegrass music, with its roots in the folk music of the area, is usually played with stringed instruments such as fiddle, mandolin, guitar and banjo.

The Cardinal is the state bird.

The earliest residents include the Cherokee, Delaware, Chickasaw, Iroquois and Shawnee peoples. The Cherokee Indians gave the state its name, from words meaning "great meadow."

Please include all of the appropriate registered trademark symbols and copyright lines in any publication of The Mini Page®.

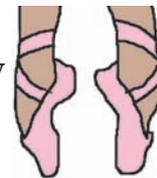
from The Mini Page © 2013 Universal Uclick



MIGHTY FUNNY'S

Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common. Can you guess the common theme or category?



Benjamin: Why do ballet dancers try to avoid banana peels?

Barry: Because they are wearing slippers!

Bonnie: How can you tell that ballerinas like math?

Boris: Because they are always wearing tutus!



Bill: What is a dancer's most important goal?
Barbara: To get right to the pointe!

Ballet and You

Ballet in the United States

In 1934, the School of American Ballet was founded in New York City by George Balanchine, a **choreographer** originally from Russia. (A choreographer is someone who designs a dance for performance.)

This and other ballet companies changed this type of dance again, producing new versions of classic ballets and developing new ballets that were centered around a theme (**contemporary** ballet) instead of a story (**narrative** ballet).

Music for ballet

For narrative ballet, a choreographer and composer work together to create a ballet.

For contemporary ballet, a choreographer takes a piece of music and designs a ballet to go along with it.

In 1944, composer Aaron Copland wrote a piece of orchestral music called “Appalachian Spring” for a narrative ballet choreographed by Martha Graham.

Choreographer
Martha Graham



The Mini Page thanks Jo Matos, director of Children and Young Dancer Programs, Joffrey Ballet School, New York City, for help with this issue.

Getting started

How do kids start in ballet? Most children start between the ages of 3 and 5 in creative movement and tap dance classes. Around 8 to 10 years old, a ballet student may attend class twice a week.

As a student gets to be 13 or 14 years old, he or she must make a more serious commitment to ballet instruction. Classes may be three to six times a week, and students may be expected to practice every day.

Some older teenagers go to boarding programs, where they live and study at the ballet school. At 17 or 18 years old, they begin **auditioning**, or trying out, with ballet companies.

Ballet is hard work, but “it’s fun!” an expert says. “Kids should experience ballet live.”

Kids might think ballet is boring, but a production such as this one by the Colorado Ballet of “Where the Wild Things Are,” with the beasts dancing on the stage, captures the imagination of even young children.



photo by Tony Shapiro,
courtesy Colorado Ballet

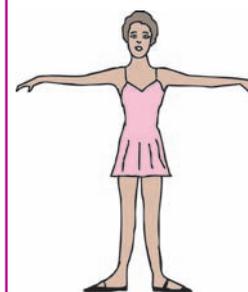


photo by James Culp,
courtesy Joffrey Ballet School

Ballet basics

Beginning ballet students learn five basic positions. These moves are combined to make many different movements in ballet. But every step begins and ends with one of these positions.

First position: Heels touching, toes turned out to the side. Arms forward, hands touching, elbows open.



Second position: Feet shoulder-width apart, turned out. Arms open, hands down, forming a smooth curve.

Third position: Heel of one foot in front of middle of other foot. One arm curved above you, the other out to the side.



Fourth position: One foot crossed in front of the other. Both feet turned out. One arm out in a gentle curve in front of you; the other arm curving above your head.



Fifth position: Heel of front foot against toe of back foot. Both feet turned out. Both arms curve over your head. Fingers and shoulders relaxed.



Next week, The Mini Page is about the Westminster Dog Show.

The Mini Page Staff

Betty Debnam - Founding Editor and Editor at Large Lisa Tarry - Managing Editor Lucy Lien - Associate Editor Wendy Daley - Artist