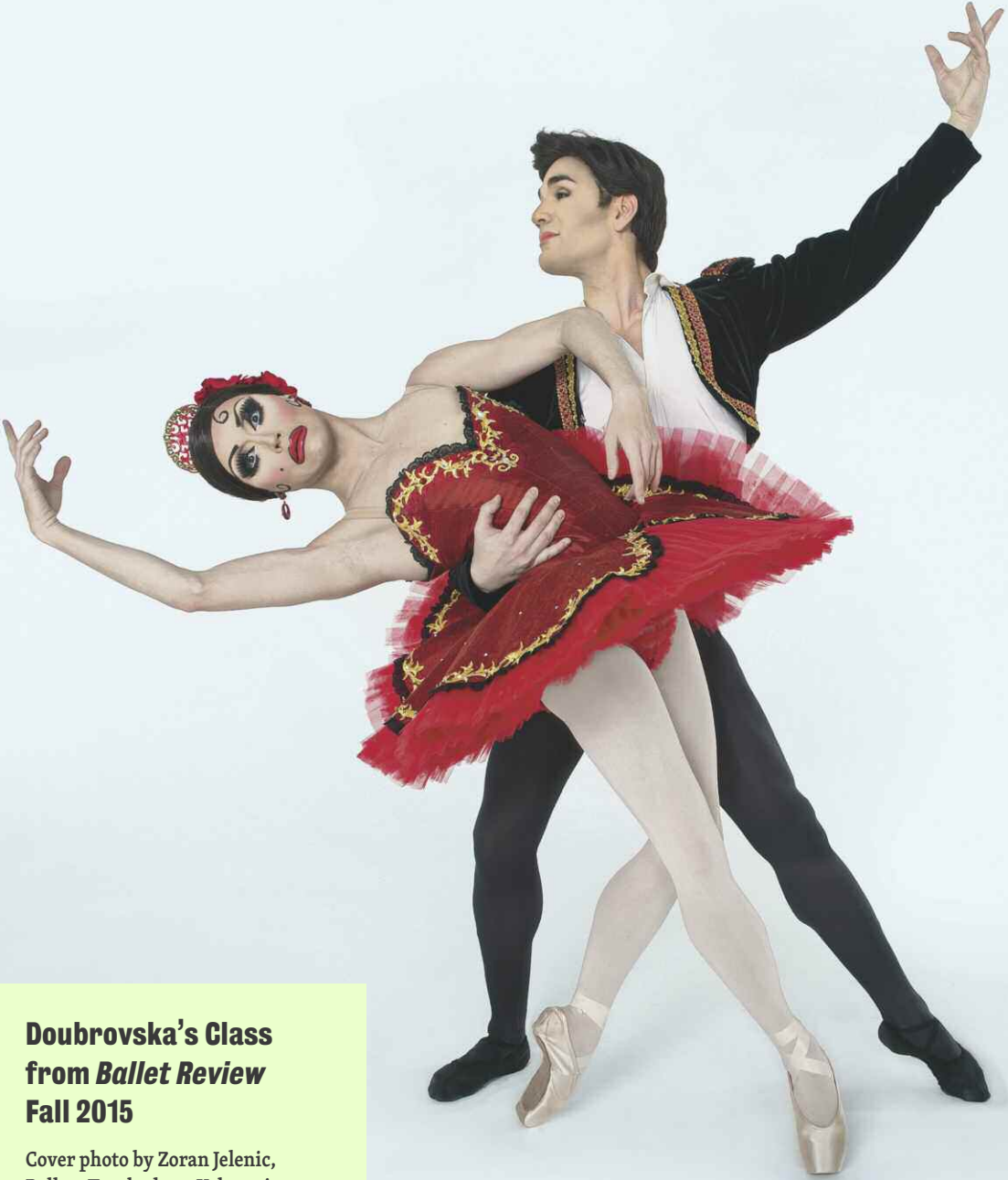


Fall 2015

Ballet Review



**Dobrovska's Class
from *Ballet Review*
Fall 2015**

Cover photo by Zoran Jelenic,
Ballets Trockadero: Yakaterina
Verbosovich (Chase Johnsey) and
Vyacheslav Legupski (Paolo
Cervellera) in *Don Quixote*.

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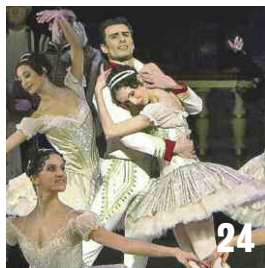
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Cover photo by Zoran Jelenic, Ballets Trockadero: Yakaterina Verbosovich (Chase Johnsey) and Vyacheslav Legupski (Paolo Cervellera) in *Don Quixote*.



Felia Doubrovska and Balanchine in *Le Bal*, Ballets Russes, 1929.

Dobrovska's Class

Barbara Walczak

Felia Dobrovska was born in 1896. She graduated from the Imperial Ballet School in St. Petersburg in 1913 and subsequently danced with the Imperial Russian Ballet. In 1920 she left Russia to join Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, where she performed with her husband Pierre Vladimiroff until 1929.

Dobrovska created the role of the Siren in Balanchine's *Prodigal Son* and was one of the muses in his *Apollo*, among other roles. She danced with Pavlova from 1929 to 1931. In 1932 she danced with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, in 1934 with Nijinska's Théâtre de la Danse, and in 1937 with de Basil's "Original Ballet Russe" in London. Her final performances were as prima ballerina with the Metropolitan Opera from 1938 to 1939.

Dobrovska taught at the School of American Ballet from 1949 until the year before her death in 1981. Balanchine had tried to get Dobrovska to teach for a long time. When she finally agreed, he personally ushered her into the studio, his arm linked in hers. She was shy and nervous and wrote her steps on a small piece of paper – just in case. When Balanchine popped in to watch class, it was hard to tell who was more nervous, Dobrovska or the dancers.

From the start, it was evident that Dobrovska had no need to worry. The first tendu she demonstrated was so delicate and perfectly regal! We realized immediately that she was a dancer who possessed all the attributes that Balanchine looked for. Dobrovska was tall and thin with delicate features, a small head, long neck, and beautifully sloping shoulders. She had long arms and fingers, and her port de bras was pure poetry. Balanchine called her the tall Pavlova. Her legs were long and beautifully proportioned, ending in a magnificently arched foot. Her dark hair was

caught in a net and framed her face closely.

Dobrovska always wore a navy blue chiffon ensemble with a low-cut neckline, small cap sleeves, and a circular, flowing skirt to her knees. She wore pink tights and ballet slippers tied with ribbons, and jewelry (sometimes small earrings and a pendant on a chain).

There are photos of her in a white leotard and tights, on toe, arching back. These photos show a body that would be envied by any dancer of any generation. Balanchine told us to observe how beautifully she moved. Dobrovska was influenced by Balanchine and Vladimiroff, who also taught at SAB. (Apparently she and her husband did barre together in the morning.)

Her classes were difficult and contained a great many adagios. The following exercises I call Dobrovska toe class number 3. Many of the toe combinations came from ballets that she had danced. Her classes were difficult, but above all, she taught us how to dance with quality, simplicity, and elegance.

Dobrovska must have known what a beautiful dancer she was. She was very aristocratic and carried herself with great elegance. Just watching her walk, sit down, and prepare to show a combination was a lesson in pure feminine movement.

When she showed *développé*, she would hold the end of her skirt in her hand and look down with pleasant amazement at how perfectly her foot left the floor. Then she would raise her eyes as the leg extended out through space and at the peak of the *développé* her beautifully pointed foot would extend even farther before arcing into a breathtaking descent. Even though she was retired, none of us could *développé* as magnificently as she.

I have chosen to use the terminology that was used by SAB and Balanchine. It is a mixture of imperial Russian ballet, the French school, and Cecchetti, who taught for the Diaghilev company.

The arabesque positions are a mix of different schools. The first, second, and third arabesques are Cecchetti technique: First arabesque is with the right leg lifted in an open

arabesque position (ouverte), with the left arm forward looking past the hand. The second arabesque has the right leg lifted in the open arabesque position with the right arm forward and the head looking front. The third arabesque (ouverte) has both arms forward.

The third and fourth arabesques croisés are from the Russian school. The third arabesque croisé has the right foot pointed back croisé and the right arm forward with the head looking toward the front arm. The fourth arabesque is with the right foot pointed croisé back and the left arm forward with the head tilted left and looking front.

Attitude effacé with the leg lifted in back is Cecchetti technique: the head looking in the direction of the lifted arm with the chin up. Attitude croisé with the leg lifted in back is from the Russian school, the head looking toward the shoulder of the side arm (not up to the lifted arm, although sometimes this pose was also used).

In my notes, the arms were indicated, not named, and consequently I will usually describe the pose rather than give it a number. Oboukhoff was the only teacher who taught us the arm positions by number, and his port de bras came from Legat.

There seems to be no conventional term for a pose I will call "B+," the position that one arrives at by standing in fifth position and raising the heel of the back foot so that only the big toe touches the floor. This is the position corps de ballet stands in most of the time. Danilova was emphatic that the knees in this position should touch, crossing the foot slightly more behind. She wanted no space between the knees because, as she pointed out, in a tutu the space between the legs was ungainly. B+ can also be referred to as "attitude à terre." (See Gretchen Ward Warren's *Classical Ballet Technique*).

An assemblé with beats our teachers called "entrechat cinq." Gale Grant's *Technical Manual and Dictionary of Classical Ballet* calls it "entrechat-six de volée," or "cinq de volée." Our teachers used coupé for both the movement and the position. Coupé (cut) is the move-

ment; the position the French dictionary calls "conditional" cou-de-pied. Fondu (melted) applies only to the plié, but has come to mean the entire exercise. We said "passé" for both the movement and the pose. The pose would be called by the French "retiré."

For the purpose of direction, as to where a step should face, the dancer should imagine that she or he is standing in the center of a box drawn on the floor, so that the right front corner pertains not to the room but to each dancer's right front corner.

Barre

Relevés

Face the barre in first position. CT 1: Demi-plié.

CT 2: Straighten the knees. CT 3: Slowly roll up to toe. CT 4: Slowly lower the heels with straight knees, and CTS 5-8: Repeat. CT 1: Demi-plié. CT 2: Relevé to toe. CTS 3-6: Repeat two more times. CTS 7-8: Demi-plié and tendu to second. Repeat the combination in second position, finishing with tendu side and close to fifth. CTS 1-2: Demi-plié and sous-sus bringing feet together. CTS 3-4: Demi-plié in fifth and passé the right foot up and close back. CTS 5-8: Repeat to the left side. CTS 1-4: Repeat but passé the left leg and close fifth front. CTS 5-8: Repeat with the right foot passé and closing front; the last passé is a balance.

Tendu

Start fifth position right foot front. CTS 1-2: Tendu the right foot front and demi-plié in fourth position. CTS 3-4: Relevé in fourth and come down in demi-plié. CTS 5-6: Point the right foot front again and close fifth demi-plié. CTS 7-8: Sous-sus bringing feet together and turn to the left side. Repeat to the left ending facing the right side again. CTS 1-2: Tendu front and close fifth in demi-plié. CTS 3-4: Roll up to toe not bringing feet together and return to demi-plié in fifth. CTS 5-8: repeat en croix. On the last sous-sus, turn toward the barre to the other side. Repeat to the left.

Développé 1

Start fifth right foot front, preparation sous-sus to toe crossing the feet. CTS 1-2: Dévelop-

pé front with the arm to the side. CTS 3-4: Carry the leg to the side. CTS 5-6: Passé with the right arm coming up. CTS 7-8: Balance with both arms up and close fifth back. Repeat en croix. After the last passé, close fifth

on toe and turn toward the barre to the other side. Immediately repeat to the left.

Ronds de Jambe

Start fifth right foot front, preparation sous-



Felia Doubrovskaya in the late 1970s at the School of American Ballet. (Photo: Gerald Ackerman)

sus to toe crossing the feet and *dégagé* right leg side waist high. CTS 1-3: Three ronds de jambe en l'air en dehors. CT 4: Remaining on toe demi-plié on the left and lower the right to tendu side. CTS 5-6: Bring leg to fifth on toe with straight knees and again demi-plié on the left pointing the right foot tendu side. CTS 7-8: Close fifth with straight knees again and *dégagé* to second again waist high. Repeat the exercise en dedans. Then remaining on toe with the right foot front, turn toward the barre to the left side and repeat the exercise to the left.

Développé 2

Face the barre, fifth position right foot front and sous-sus to toe crossing the feet. CTS 1-2: Développé the right leg to the side. CTS 3-4: Bring the leg to passé behind the knee. CTS 5-6: With the right arm coming out and up bend to the left. CTS 7-8: Come up and turn to the right side, staying in passé. CTS 1-2: Développé front and roll off toe into demi-plié. CTS 3-4: Piqué out to first arabesque with the left hand holding the barre. CTS 5-6: Let go of the barre and balance. CTS 7-8: Slowly lower the leg to fifth. Turn back to face the barre, bringing the left toe front and repeat to the left.

Relevé 1

Face the barre in second position. CTS 1-2: Demi-plié and relevé. CTS 3-4: Repeat. CTS 5: Swivel to the right side into demi-plié, fourth position. CT 6: Relevé in first arabesque on the right foot. CTS 7-8: Lower the leg to tendu back while coming off pointe and turn to face the barre again in second. Repeat the combination to the left, then repeat right and left again.

Relevé 2

Face the barre in second position. CTS 1-2: Demi-plié and relevé in second. CTS 3-4: Repeat. CTS 5-6: Demi-plié bring the left to cou de pied back as you relevé on the right. CTS 7-8: Remaining on toe demi-plié on the right then straighten, lowering the left leg to second. Repeat the combination to the left, then repeat right and left again.

Center

Temps Lié

Part 1: Start fifth position right foot front croisé.

CTS 1-2: Demi-plié arms bras bas and slide right leg to tendu front croisé and glissade forward to fifth on toe with the left arm coming up and the right arm side. Then roll down into demi-plié in fifth and remain in demi-plié. CTS 3-4: Slide the right leg side and glissade to toe to the right side with the left foot ending in front fifth position on toe with the left arm opening side, then demi-plié in fifth. CTS 5-8: Two slow *échappés* side to toe ending the first one with the right foot front and the second with left foot front. Repeat to the left, then reverse starting with the left foot tendu back. Corrections: on the glissades step very far out to toe bringing the second leg in very quickly to a well crossed fifth position on toe.

Part 2: Start fifth position right foot front croisé. Repeat the step but instead of glissade to toe, piqué forward and left leg to attitude back and lower to fifth plié. When doing piqué to the side the leg does *dégagé* side, and instead of the *échappés* do two *passés* moving back. When doing the step to the back piqué back to croisé and développé the leg to croisé front, rather than just doing the attitude and the *passés* move forward.

Ronds de Jambe en l'Air 1

Start fifth position right foot front. CTS 1-2: Demi-plié slide right leg to the side waist high as you relevé on the left and do two fast ronds de jambe en l'air en dehors and roll into demi-plié on the left, body turning to face *effacé* devant. CTS 3-4: Piqué out onto the right as the left brushes through to attitude front croisé with the right arm up. CTS 5-8: Two relevés in attitude, the last extending the leg, and close to fifth with the left foot front. Repeat the step to the left.

Ronds de Jambe en l'Air 2

Start fifth position left foot front. CTS 1-2: Plié relevé on the left as the right brushes out to the side waist high. Two ronds de jambe en

l'air en dedans then turn the body to forward left corner, ending in tendu effacé back in demi-plié with the arms in first arabesque position. CTS 3-4: Lifting the right leg, do two relevés in arabesque, then remaining on toe, bring the right foot to fifth back and pas de bourrée under to the left. Repeat to the left. Then repeat this and the preceding exercise in one combination, starting the en dehors part right-left and the en dedans left-right.

Piqué in Various Positions (Opening of Sugar Plum Fairy's Variation)

Part 1: Stand B+ on the left. CTS 1-2: Pas couru to the right front corner ending in tendu right foot effacé front in demi-plié with arms open to second. CTS 3-4: Relevé on the left as the right does serré ending in tendu effacé again. CTS 5-6: Relevé on the left and passé the right, arms coming together in first and end in demi-plié on the left with the right tendu back effacé, arms in first arabesque position. CTS 7-8: Very tight and fast pas de bourrée under yourself, ending on right foot in B+. Repeat to the left.

Part 2: Stand in B+ on the left. CTS 1-2: Glissade to the right with the left foot finishing in front and piqué out to the right side with the left coming up to attitude croisé back with the right arm up. CTS 3-4: Turning toward the left shoulder while lowering your leg to coupé fondu, glissade to the left facing the back of the room, right foot front and head toward the right front corner. Piqué onto the left in attitude croisé back with the right leg up and the left arm up. CTS 5-6: Glissade to the right side ending with left foot front and piqué out to the side on the right again with the left going to attitude back croisé with both arms up. CTS 7-8: Step back onto the left foot and go through fourth in demi-plié, while lowering arms through first (reverence). Finish with right pointing croisé front, arms in second, in preparation to do the step to the left.

Bourrée and Passé

Part 1: Start fifth position right foot front, preparation sous-sus. CT 1: Bourrée in place.

CT 2: Demi-plié on the left on toe as the right leg comes to passé in front of the knee and lower the leg in fifth. CT 3: Bourrée in place again. CT 4: Demi-plié on toe on the right with the left coming up to passé behind the knee. CTS 5-8: Repeat the step but the last demi-plié is off toe on the right foot. CTS 1-2: Piqué far out on the left to the left side of the room, right foot coming to passé. Lower the right foot to fifth. CTS 3-4: Repeat. CTS 5-6: Repeat but the passé (right foot) lowers to fifth on toe and quickly lift the left to passé behind the knee. CTS 7-8: Demi-plié and slide right leg out and step far out in a piqué in first arabesque and remain on toe closing the left back. Pas de bourrée to the right ending left foot front. Repeat to the other side.

Part 2: Start fifth on toe, right foot front. CT 1: Bourrée in place. CT 2: Demi-plié on toe on the right while the left rises to passé in back of the knee without coming front. CT 3: Bourrée in place. CT 4: Passé the right foot up in front of the knee in demi-plié on toe. CT 5: Bourrée in place. CT 6: With straight knees passé the right foot in front on toe and quickly lower to fifth on toe. CT 7: Passé the left foot behind the knee and lower to fifth on toe. CT 8: Passé the right leg up in front of the knee and lower to fifth in demi-plié as left foot does tendu side and assemblé to toe with the left foot ending in front. Repeat part 2 to the left.

Part 3: Start with the right foot front on toe. CT 1: Passé the right in front of the knee and close fifth on toe. CT 2: Passé the left to behind the knee and close fifth on toe. CTS 3-4: Repeat. CTS 5-6: Demi-plié in fifth off toe and échappé to toe to fourth in effacé. CT 7: Demi-plié on the right with the left pointing effacé back in arabesque position with the arms forward. CT 8: Quickly pas de bourrée under left foot back and front finishing on toe. Repeat to the other side.

Échappé

Part 1: Start fifth position right foot front croisé, with the left arm up. CTS 1-4: Four échappés to croisé front, the last remaining on the right

toe. CTS 5-8: Quickly bring the left foot around to fifth front and do four chassés on toe to croisé front (really jumped and legs together in the air). Repeat the step to the left.

Part 2: Start fifth position right foot front croisé, with the left arm up. CTS 1-4: Four échappés to effacé front and quickly bring the left foot around. CTS 5-8: Four chassés to croisé front. Repeat to the other side.

Chassé on Toe

Part 1: Start right foot front fifth position croisé and sous-sus with the left arm up. CTS 1-4: Four chassés to croisé front on toe. CT 5: Staying on toe demi-plié on the right foot bringing left foot quickly around to tendu front croisé in demi-plié on toe and, like a ballotté, spring up to fifth on toe and demi-plié on the left remaining on toe. CT 6: Right extends to tendu croisé back with the right arm coming up and the left opening side. CTS 7-8: Ballotté front and back again and end in fifth position on toe. Repeat to the other side

Part 2: Repeat the combination with the chassés and ballottés done in effacé position.

Pirouettes 1

Start on left foot front in B+. CTS 1-2: Extend the right leg to effacé and tombé pas de bourrée ending in fourth. CTS 3-4: Pirouette en dehors to the right ending in fourth. Repeat three more times to the same side, then cointretemps and immediately start the left side.

Pirouettes 2

Start left side of the room right foot back in first arabesque position. CT 1: Face the right side step out on the right, bring the left to fifth front on toe lifting the right foot in cou de pied back and double turn en dehors to the right with the arms up. CT 2: Fall out to the right foot to the right side and big balancé with the left arm sweeping to second arabesque position in extreme croisé so the body faces the right back corner but looking front

over the left shoulder. CTS 3-4: Face front and piqué out to the left side in first arabesque on the left leg and relevé arabesque. CTS 5-8, 1-4: Fall back onto the right foot and repeat the step. Repeat the step two more times. CTS 5-8: Three piqué turns en dehors (step-up turns); the third turn is a double and balancé out to the right side. Repeat the combination to the left.

Turns across the Floor

Start fifth position right foot front croisé. CT 1: Piqué turn en dehors (step out on the right foot bring the left across to toe and turn to the right) but with the right foot in a wrapped cou-de-pied position, doing one and a half turns ending facing the back of the room. CT 2: Piqué out onto the right foot in first arabesque toward the left side of the room and coupé the left foot under to face the front of the room. Repeat the step across the room.

Fouettés

Preparation: from fifth right foot front, passé relevé with the arms up and the right leg up and take leg to fourth back. CTS 1-32: 32 fouettés to the right. Repeat to the left.

Petit Allegro

Part 1: Start fifth position right foot front. CTS 1-2: Entrechat quatre and passé relevé right foot up and close fifth back. CTS 3-4: Repeat with the left doing passé and closing back. CTS 5-6: Two échappés side. CTS 7-8: Two passés relevés with the right leg up and close fifth back, then left leg up and close fifth back. Repeat part 1.

Part 2: CT 1: Passé relevé with the left foot up behind the knee and close fifth back. CT 2: Passé with the left foot up coming to the front, close fifth front. CTS 3-4: Passé the right foot close back and passé the right close front. CTS 5-8: Four passés relevés moving forward, with the left up then the right, closing front. Repeat Part 2.