Osipova M.K.**Development of elevation and ballon in the study of high-flying leaps in classical dance***Osipova Ballet Academy
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In classical dance, jumping movements play a very special role. Allegro is the summit of male dance and an integral part of female dance. A successful mastery of jumping movements in class is essential for their effortless execution on stage, which helps to create a memorable and multi-faceted artistic portrayal. The specific nature of modern art in the new millennium lies in the broadening of choreographic language and transformations in the aesthetics of executing jumping movements.

We shall discuss the development of elevation and ballon among ballet school students.

Elevation refers to the ability of the dancer to perform high leaps with movement (flight). Natural elevation among children is extremely rare. This ability is developed through the daily training of large traveling leaps.

The ballon effect is considered to be the height of professional mastery. Ballon means floating in mid-air. This is a kind of optical illusion that is created by virtue of the dancer's ability to swiftly strike a pose in the air and hold it for as long as possible.

Swiftness in striking a pose depends in many ways on the execution of the push. A short, strong push not only makes it possible to leap high, but to take the required pose quickly. It is important that the leg which makes the push take the required position during flight as swiftly as possible (attitude, arabesque, passé etc.) The pushing leg enters into a pose almost at the same time as the push of the leading leg occurs, and at the same time the leg and head assume ready position. Naturally, the higher the leap, the greater the possibility of holding the pose in the air. On landing, the pose is preserved for a moment, even if the jumps have been carried out in succession and at a quick tempo. To achieve this in carrying out jumping movements that land on one leg, the leading leg must rise. The arms and head must also hold the pose for as long as possible.

In discussing elevation, we mean large flying leaps that travel through space. A study of these leaps begins around the fourth year of training. But even in junior classes, with simple jumps on the spot, and especially those that travel, students learn the initial skills of ballon. From the second year on, the program of classical dance includes the study of the first big leaps - grande echappé and grand changement de pied. In carrying them out, students try not only to push off strongly, but also to stay suspended in the air for a moment (ballon). In executing leaps en tournant, it is important that the turn is carried out in the air, i.e. initially a jump is made, and then the entire torso is turned along with the shoulders. This is only possible if the body is suspended in the air.

By around the fourth year of study, pupils must have sufficient strength in their legs and back, possess proper coordination of their arms, and the ability to transfer the torso and hips precisely in the air onto the leg when landing.

But not all dancers who have mastered the grand leap can use it to achieve the effect of elevation; and vice versa, quite frequently artists who have not mastered the grand leap can create the effect of elevation. We shall examine the mechanism of elevation in detail.

The three crucial components of all great leaps that make it possible to achieve elevation are: a push from the supporting leg, a strong thrust by the leading leg, and an active "spread" of the arms. In many ways, the height of the jump, breadth of execution, and fixation of the pose in flight depend largely on the coordination of these components, i.e. full use of all the prerequisites for elevation. By the time they begin studying large leaps, students should already have mastered a strong push and swift and strong leg sweep. But there is another,

even more important aspect, which should be given attention in the process of developing elevation: working with the torso and especially the hips in all phases of the large leap.

We will analyze the execution of big leaps. All big leaps develop elevation, but particular attention should be given to studying the grand assemblé and grand pas jeté. These leaps are the basis for the successful mastery of all subsequent large leaps, since all the main large leaps – saut de basque, assemblé en tournant, pas jeté entrelacé, grand jeté en tournant, grand jeté passé, and many others – are executed according to the same principle as the grand assemblé and grand pas jeté, and are executed with the method of *push* and strong thrust, after which the transfer of the torso and a stable landing on one or two legs should follow.

Grand assemblé is a high-flying leap. Its difference from petit pas assemblé lies in the fact that the pushing leg in the air is quickly pulled up to the throwing leg. Thus, the flight follows the throwing leg. Grand assemblé is studied from different approaches — coupé step, pas glissade, sissonne tombée, développé tombée, and pas failli. Coupé step produces a push from the floor, while the pas glissade device provides an opportunity to perform a truly large traveling assemblé jump.

Let's consider the execution of grand assemblé with the approach of pas glissade. As an approach to a big jump, pas glissade is performed with greater breadth and more resiliently, but at the same time its form is preserved: two inverted stretched legs in a jump above the floor. Pas glissade ends up not in the V position, but in the narrow IV position. You should not linger after pas glissade; the ending of pas glissade and throwing the feet into grand assemblé should be completed at the same time. After pas glissade the torso is exactly over the supporting leg, otherwise it is impossible to push off and make a quick swing. Then comes a strong quick throw of the leg to the side by 90° and at the same time a push with the supporting leg from the floor. The trajectory of the jump is made through the top, lengthwise: the push is made upward and the hips simultaneously rise to the top and move behind the throwing foot. There is a feeling in the jump that, instead of the leg going down after the throw, it is the thighs that are pulled up simultaneously with the pushing leg towards the throwing leg at the moment of the highest point of the jump. There is a common error made when performing a grand assemblé: the student throws the leg while the hips remain at rest, thus not participating in the jump. In this case, it is impossible to achieve elevation in the jump. There should be a sensation of the legs connecting at the highest point following the throw, with the torso rising even higher above the legs.

The hands are of great assistance in implementing this jump. Their precise coordination is important — in pas glissade the hands are opened slightly and closed, then with lift through the I position they open up in position (II and III pos. allongée). The hands open a little earlier than the throw, so as to be in position at the time of the flight. At the same time the shoulder and hand, in the direction of which the throw of the leg is being performed, move forward slightly. The execution of grand assemblé develops elevation and ballon only if all the muscle groups are involved in the jump work properly and there is precise coordination of body movements.

Grand pas jeté is a large jump from one leg to another, i.e. in its execution it is important not only to jump high and fly, but also to land steadily on one leg. Grand pas jeté is studied after students have mastered the grand assemblé. It is performed in poses attitude croisé, attitude effacé, I, II, III arabesques with methods pas glissade, coupé — step and pas couru.

At first, students study grand pas jete into attitude croise through the coupé — step method. This technique is the most difficult, but it is the one that allows the student to develop the correct push for grand pas jeté. The hands open up in II and III positions, actively helping to perform a strong push.

The initial position is epaulement croisé. Standing on the left leg, the right leg is elongated back with the toe to the floor, the hands in a low II position. Every jump is performed on 2/4.

On “and”: the right foot moves forward freely across the floor, without holding the I position, while the left foot does a demi-plié. Before jumping, the elongated toe of the right leg slides forward along the floor. It creates inertia for a strong push. The gaze “remains” at first directed towards the mirror, and then just before the jump itself the head turns to the right and downward, and the body leans slightly down and to the right.

On “one”: having pressed down on the right foot, there is a push simultaneously with a sharp throw of the left leg on 90° and a strong jump up and forward; the hands, simultaneously with a throw through the I position, quickly assume a pose (the left hand opens to the II position, the right - to the III position), and the head turns to the left. The right leg, pushing off from the floor, is thrown back 90° to the position attitude croisé. The pose in the air is built as quickly as possible: the left foot elongated forward, right feet in attitude, the hands in a big pose croisé. In the jump, there should be a feeling that the left leg does not descend after take-off, but for a moment, keeping the pose, “cuts through” the air.

On “two”: the landing is done as far as possible into the elastic-taut demi-plié and onto the left foot. The plié continues as this happens. The landing is done gently from the toes, pushing the heel forward to the reverse position. The right leg maintains the pose of attitude croisé and smoothly rises. On landing, the back is tightened. For “three and four” — the left leg is pulled out of the demi-plié, the right foot drops back with the toes to the floor, the right hand is opened from the III position, and at the same time the arms come to the low II position.

Let’s turn our attention to the work of the torso during grand pas jeté. At the moment it is bearing down on the right foot for a subsequent strong push, the body is exactly over the foot. This is followed by the main phase of the jump – flight, during which the body and hips rise above the throwing foot. The back is tightened during the jump. At the moment when the right leg cuts through the air, the hips move up and forward, thus ensuring greater jump distance and a steady landing. The work of the torso and hips plays an important role in the execution of grand pas jeté. The torso first bends, and then, straightening quickly, helps the body take off into the air. Further, the torso is strongly pulled up and there is forward movement. Often, in trying to fly as far as possible in a jump, students try to lead with their shoulders, whereupon the pose in the air becomes incorrect and the main feature of the jump – the takeoff – is lost. In the jump, the torso should rise up, and the forward movement is performed by the hips.

Further, grand pas jeté in an attitude croisé is performed from the pas couru method. In this case, it is easier to feel the flying nature of this jump, since it is more convenient to push off from the floor with an easy run.

Having examined the execution of grand pas jeté, we see that the active work of the torso and hips ensures a proper upward thrust and correct trajectory of the jump. In this jump, there are three phases of the corps work: a slight movement backward, a sharp upward thrust, and a flight forward along with the hips.

The last important point that I want to dwell on, in terms of elevation and ballon, concerns the psychological factors that influence the performance of flying jumps.

So what is it that distinguishes ballet dancers who, even with an average level of elevation, manage to create on stage the appearance of a large flying leap? Thus the great Russian ballerina Galina Ulanova, who did not possess a great natural jump, according to contemporaries, was able to create an image of flight by means of her skill.

It is the “image of flight” that should become the main goal in the work of mastering big jumps; it is the creation of this impression of flying that all techniques the future dancer must master are subject to. A person ascends through a thrust from within, intertwined with a thrust that is external. Physical effort is not enough to achieve the effect of holding the body in the air. The performance of large jumps requires a strong-willed upward striving. By strong-willed upward striving we mean not only the thrust of the body as high as possible, but also the dancer’s enormous desire to linger in the jump above the floor.

As stated earlier, jumping is the most important expressive tool in ballet. The task of the teacher is, along with development of technique, to be able to reveal the individuality of the student. It is necessary to choose a repertoire that corresponds to the temperament and emploi of the future artist.

The role of jumps in portraying characters on stage is undeniable. Allegro is a kind of apotheosis of the lesson of classical dance, demonstrating the technical capabilities of the student. The ultimate goal of mastering all the jumping movements in the classroom is the ability to perform them with freedom on stage to create a complete and memorable character and artistic expression.

There can be no dance without jumps. Jumps adorn most female variations. Not a single male dancer can do without them. All forms of classical dance, whether it be *pas de deux*, *pas de trios*, *pas de cinq* or *grand pas* and *pas d'action* end with a coda where jump combinations are necessary and validated by time and tradition. The coda reveals and definitively establishes further artistic details of individual characters and entire groups of the *corps de ballet* (*Swan Lake* Act II, *Giselle* Act II, *Paquita* Grand pas).

Ever since the thirties of the XIX century, jumps have been actively used by ballet masters in both male and in female dance, setting aside their level of difficulty. There is particular diversity in the combinations of well-known Allegro elements in variations. However, the set of jumps in classical dance is concrete and clearly defined.

Indeed, the variation is the height of the artist's performance mastery, and it always includes jump movements. Agrippina Vaganova asserted that the female variation based on Allegro demonstrated the pinnacle of a ballerina's technical mastery. But it is not necessary to focus excessively on the desire to surprise an audience with technical skill. Jump execution should not become an aim in itself. The goal is not merely to jump higher and further (it is possible to see such jumps in many sports), but to portray the character or emotional state of one's hero or heroine with the utmost musicality and expressiveness. In the tradition of the Russian school of classical dance, "the soul-filled flight" is inherent not only to ballerinas but to male dancers. In this way, the jump becomes a strong and laconic artistic tool.

Let's examine the use of different groups of jumping movements in depicting the nature or emotional state of characters in ballets of the classical repertoire.

Small movements and *batteries* define the character as young, agile, restless and playful. Recall the first appearance of *Giselle*, which is based on elementary jumps *pas ballonné*, *pas chassé*, and *pas ballotté*. These small easy movements emphasize an image of a young and carefree girl.

The second variation is from the *pas de trois* (*Grand pas* "Paquita") and is impressive in its virtuosic intricacy of dance. This dance consists of various delicately interwoven small jumps and *batteries entrechat quatre*, *pas de chat*, *pas brisé dessus-dessous*, *entrechat royal*. These movements, adorning and enlivening the variation, facilitate the portrayal of a graceful and coquettish young woman.

Sometimes a choreographer uses small jumps and *batteries* to demonstrate the comicality of a character. An example is the luckless Alain from the ballet *La Fille mal gardée*. The absurd and somewhat silly nature of this character is revealed through deliberate uncoordinated classical movements, with *pas-entrechat six* serving as a recurrent leitmotif. These periodically appearing jumps characterize the young man as a harmless, ingenuous fool.

We see another illuminating example in a character from *The Sleeping Beauty*. The enchanted prince appears in the form of a fantastical Blue Bird, whose flight is weightless, aerial and whimsical. It all concludes with a joyful coda, the hero dexterously executing *pas brisé* and spraying bright sparks of *batteries* onto the stage. This fluid and joyful dance affirms the fairytale's happy ending.

The great soaring Allegro combinations, which circle around the full space of the stage or cut across it with diagonals, also serve to define a protagonist's character and feelings

(emotional experiences). These jumps contain within a great range of emotions, from positive to sharply negative. We will discuss some of the positive emotions and characterizations.

In Aurora's first appearance, she is "light and active, cheerful and charming." This is how many generations of audiences have seen the princess. This impression is created through quick, scintillating *pas de chat* and flying grand *pas de chat*. Their function here is to show the triumph of youth and happiness, delight, the ecstasy of life and dance.

Whether it is the regal and sweeping *sissonne fondu* of the Lilac Fairy in the prologue to *The Sleeping Beauty* or the magnificent and strong *grand cabriole* and *grand pas de chat* in Gamzatti's variation from the third act of *La Bayadere*, these jumps work to develop characters that are specific and cannot compare with any others. In the first case the result is a good and powerful fairy, in the second – a proud, arrogant beauty.

The variation of Basil from the *Don Quixote* consists entirely of the most complicated jumping *pas*. Double *grand cabriole*, *sissonne simple en tournant*, *pas jeté en l'air en tournant* into arabesque in a circle – characterize him as strong, courageous, deft, and in the context of the plot as the jovial and resilient joker. We base our conclusions about the attributes of various characters entirely on such examples of jumping movements, used by choreographers to create these characterizations.

This example shows how jump combinations allow a colorful, memorable characterization to take shape from the first moment of a character's entrance onto the stage. And if the character is a villain, the big jump combinations can reveal hidden danger, and authoritativeness that tolerates no objection, and ruthless power...

For example, the variation of Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis, is saturated with various jumps: *cabriole en effacée*, *grand jeté*, *jeté en tournant*, *jeté entrelacé*. These movements create an incorporeal and airy image. At the same time, despite the visual lightness of the character, the audience feels the weight of her inexorable imperiousness. It manifests even more distinctly in the coda, which concludes with *saut de basque* in a circle. Myrtha soars in her jumps like a menacing bird, affirming her might and power.

Sometimes it is possible to create a portrayal that is expressive and memorable even using minimal technical means. But this requires the performer to have complete mastery of transformation as an actor. Recall Rothbart's whirlwind entrance in *Swan Lake*. In order to create an image of a powerful wizard, confident in the boundlessness of his evil force, the ballet master uses *grand jeté*, *jeté entrelacé*, *grand pas de chat*, which are supplemented with sweeping, flying steps (nearly a chain of *jeté*).

Let's note also that the same jump executed to different music can portray completely opposite emotional states and temperaments. For example, the *grand cabriole double* is present in the variations of both Solor (*La Bayadere* Grand pas) and Young man (*Chopiniana*), but the goals of the ballet masters were quite different. In the first case, Solor is someone who easily overcomes difficulties. He is young and strong and demonstrates an entire cascade of difficult jumps. The youth from *Chopiniana* is, on the contrary, contemplative and reserved by nature, lost in his dreams. Here, *grand cabriole double* serves to reveal the daring of this starry-eyed romantic.

Let's consider one more example of the use of the same jump with differing artistic aims. In the aforementioned Blue Bird coda, an entire diagonal *pas brisé* is performed. In that scene the jumps are perceived as the graceful flight of a fantastical bird, light and whimsical in its movement. Meanwhile, the exact same flying-headlong diagonal *brisé* is involved in the characterization of Albert (*Giselle*). As it is performed, the hero experiences a great range of emotions, from the tragic realization of the irreversibility of his transgression, to despair and grief, to the ecstasy of dance.

The given examples demonstrate the great role of Allegro in creating the choreographic image. Combinations of certain jumps help to define the specificity of a character, his emotions, as well as the nature of the psychological components of the performance as a whole and of the flying jumps in particular.