

The Commonwealth Society of Teachers of Dancing (CSTD) – Classical Syllabus

THE GRADES SYLLABUS

PRE-GRADES: Pre Ballet & Primary (age 4 & above)

These courses are for beginning students of ballet and form an introduction to basic technique and to different rhythms in music, which will later develop into musicality and enjoyment in their dancing. They learn coordination of the various body parts and how to mime, which promotes self-expression and confidence.

LOWER GRADES: Grade 1–Grade 3 (age 6 & above)

Here the teaching of true ballet technique commences, along with increased emphasis on correct posture, placement and line. Flexibility and strength building are also necessary components. A variety of steps are introduced and students learn both the vocabulary and how to join these together in different ways, and importantly to show enjoyment in what they are doing. The development of elevation, presentation and dance quality is ongoing here.

HIGHER GRADES: Grade 4–Grade 6 (age 8 & above)

Movements become increasingly complex and varied and students learn to develop quick responses through the use of unset work. Turning steps, beaten steps and demi-pointe exercises are practiced and developed, so greater strength and control is required. An increased sense of performance, awareness of space and dynamics and the development of choreography are emphasised. Grade 6 lays the foundation for Major work which follows. The section also includes the Dorothy Gladstone Award, an optional public performance at a transitional level, for candidates who have passed Grade 6 but not Sub Elementary.

THE MAJOR SYLLABUS

SUB ELEMENTARY (age 11 & above)

Students need a sound knowledge of vocabulary and an understanding of technique in order to commence Major work. Unset work is increased. Strength, flexibility and stamina are further built up for the demands of Elementary work and beyond. Pointe work is introduced at this stage. The examination is completed with a performance-length dance which requires a range of interpretation and expression.

ELEMENTARY

Students by now will have increased awareness of the use of the body in both stationary and travelling movements. Balances are sustained, requiring core stability and technical accuracy. Use of phrasing, dynamics and response to music are key components. The ability to project to an audience should be demonstrated, especially in the performance dance. This examination is the qualifying stage for preparation of the Teaching Certificate.

INTERMEDIATE

This is an important level as it prepares students for advanced performance study or teacher training in specialist institutions, colleges, universities etc and may constitute one of the admission requirements. Technical proficiency, ability to perform complex exercises, confidence and artistry are finely tuned so that students can demonstrate these with ease. Pointework is more demanding and comprehensive and is required for the Repertoire dance. Unset work, vital at this pre-professional stage forms a large component. The Martin Rubinstein Award, an optional public performance of a high level follows Intermediate. This examination is the qualifying stage for preparation of the Teaching Diploma.