

FirstWorks Virtual Learning Series: Jillian Davis

Artist Biography

Jillian Davis, a Kutztown, PA native began her ballet training at the age of three under the mentorship of Jerzy Golek, Janie Ross-Morgan, and Kip Martin. She studied extensively with Risa Kaplowitz and Susan Jaffe at Princeton Dance and Theater Studio in Princeton, NJ and attended San Francisco Ballet, School of American Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet on scholarship, and LINES Ballet on scholarship. Professionally, Jillian choreographed at Missouri Valley College, developing the Jillian Davis Dance Project in 2013. Her piece, Tiel, was featured at Jennifer Muller's Hatched Series and was selected as a finalist for Rider University's Emerging Choreographers Showcase. Jillian joined Complexions Contemporary Ballet as a company member in 2014, where she has been part of the creation process for several Dwight Rhoden world-premieres, including Headspace, Strum, Gutter Glitter, Stardust - a tribute to David Bowie, and Bach 25. She also performed installation works by Desmond Richardson and an excerpt of Approximate Sonata by William Forsythe. Jillian is a faculty member for Complexions Academy Intensives and conducts master classes while the company is on tour. She is in her sixth season with Complexions. Her Instagram: [@jillange93](https://www.instagram.com/jillange93)



Complexions Contemporary Ballet was founded in 1994 by artistic directors Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson. Born of their lifelong appreciation of the beauty and artistry of the multicultural, the two set out to reinvent dance by mixing dance methods, styles, and cultures. Since the founding of Complexions, Rhoden and Richardson have set over 80 works for the Company and toured across the globe with great acclaim. Audiences everywhere ask, "How do you get dancers to move like that?" Their philosophy has always encouraged a strong technical foundation, physicality and versatility, coupled with an artist's uniqueness, individuality and passion.

Introduction

FirstWorks brought Jillian Davis and Complexions Contemporary Ballet to Providence in April 2019 as part of our 15th anniversary celebration. As part of our Arts Learning program, Jillian visited schools in Providence and Pawtucket to conduct Master Classes for dance programs and Introductory to Movement workshops for non-dance programs. The accompanying workout video is a wonderful introduction to incorporating movement into our daily lives. A outline with suggestions about how students and their families can ease into this practice is outlined in the accompanying materials.

VIDEOS: Find out more about Complexions Contemporary Ballet [HERE](#) and work out with Jillian [HERE](#)

1. “Work Out with Jillian”

a. Supplies:

- i. Solid, flat floor with some room to move and lie down upon;
- ii. Yoga mat or towel;
- iii. Wear sneakers or socks with sticky bottoms so you will not slip.
- iv. A water bottle (remember to hydrate before, during, and after moving your body!);
- v. Pay particular attention to the warm up at the beginning of the workout and the stretching at the end; this will prepare your muscles.
- vi. Concentration;
- vii. Eagerness to move and learn.

b. This workout may be a very new experience for some students. Try **your** best, but, feel free to go slow and build up to the complete workout. Outlined below is a sample of how students can build up to the complete workout.

i. Week One:

1. Do just the warm-up on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
2. Rest on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday.

ii. Week Two:

1. Do the warm-up and strengthening exercises on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
2. Do just the warm-up on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.
3. Rest on Sunday.

iii. Week Three:

1. Do the warm-up, strengthening, and cardio on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday
2. Do the warm-up on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.
3. Rest on Sunday.

iv. Week Four:

1. Do the warm-up, strengthening, cardio, and stretching (the whole video, approx., 15 minutes) on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
 2. Do the warm-up on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.
 3. Rest on Sunday.
- v. Once students are used to the routine, they can incorporate the workout into their daily routine as best they can.

Dance Vocabulary

- Aesthetic - what we judge to be beautiful, ugly, valuable, or worthless, and how and why we make those judgements.
- Balance - a state of stability with equal weight and energy on either side of a dancer's "center."
- Ballet technique - the foundational principles of body movement and form used in ballet. The techniques found in classical ballet are a framework for many other styles of dance, including jazz and contemporary ballet.
- Choreography - the art of composing dances and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers.
- Choreographer - a person who creates or composes dances.
- Classical ballet - traditional, formal styles of ballet that exclusively employ classical ballet technique. Classical ballet is known for its aesthetics and rigorous technique (such as pointe work, turnout of the legs, and high extensions), its flowing, precise movements, and its ethereal qualities. See "principles of ballet".
- Contemporary – modern; of the present time; happening now.
- Contemporary ballet - a form of dance that incorporates elements of both classical ballet and modern dance. It takes its technique and use of pointe work from classical ballet while allowing a greater range of movement than the strict body lines permitted in classical ballet.
- Cultural norm – what a group of people or a society see as normal, average, or expected; can apply to behavior or beliefs.
- Cultural values – what a group of people or a society believes to be important, valid, or moral; cultural values often shape what a society thinks is beautiful or ugly (its aesthetics).



Vocabulary continued



- Duet - two dancers performing together.
- Energy - the force applied to accentuate the weight, attack, strength, and flow of a dancer's movement. Adjectives such as explosive, smooth, free, restrained, wild, etc., describe some different types of energy that dancers can exhibit.



- Ensemble - a group of dancers performing together.
- Multicultural - representing people of many different cultures, ethnicities, and ideologies; a multicultural group can have many different cultural norms, cultural values, and aesthetics involved at one time.
- Poly-rhythms - different rhythms happening at the same time.
- Rehearsal - practice in preparation for a public performance.
- Repertory - the group of dances a company actively performs.
- Solo - a dance performed alone (one dancer) or set apart from other dancers on stage.
- Teamwork - to work jointly with others to solve a problem or create something new.
- Tempo - the time, speed, or rhythm of the beats of a piece of music; the pace of movement.
- Unison - the same movement or series of movements performed at the same time by more than one dancer.



Every art form has its instruments, artistic medium, and design elements. For dance, they are summed up in the sentence, “Dancers move with energy through time and space.” This statement includes the basic components that dancers work and play with. People dancing are themselves their own instruments, expressing themselves through their bodies. Their body states and movement are characterized by variations in the use of energy, time, and space.

Dance Instrument

The art of dance takes place through the dancer. Human beings are both the creators and the instruments. The physical manifestation of the dancer’s ideas and feelings is the living, breathing human body. In dance, the body is the mobile figure or shape: felt by the dancer, seen by others. The body shape is sometimes relatively still and sometimes changing as the dancer moves in place or travels through the dance area. Whether moving or pausing, dancers are alive with inner movement, feelings and thoughts.

Artistic Medium of Dance

Movement is the artistic medium of dance, just as sound is the artistic medium of music. The movement of human beings includes a wide range, from large and obvious to so small and subtle that it appears to be stillness. Periods of relative stillness are as effective and essential in dance as are silences or rests within music. The movement vocabulary of modern dance is made up of human actions. A few of many possible actions are run, hop, crawl, stop, rise, jump, fall, bend, hold, shake, stand, walk, twist, turn, balance, roll, stretch, slide, leap, jiggle, pull, push, kick, hover, reach, and hang.

Dance Design Elements: Energy, Time, and Space

Dancers make choices as to how, when, and where to do each action. In other words, dancers apply the variables of energy, time and space to their actions. While elements of dance design may be categorized and described in a variety of different ways, they are used, whether consciously or not, by all dancers, from beginning explorers to seasoned practitioners.

Together, they provide a broad menu from which to make dance choices. Choices about any of the three elements tend to affect the others, but analyzing them separately can help dancers understand and use them.

Energy

“How?” is a question about the energy, force, or dynamic quality of an action. Choices about energy include variations in movement flow and use of force, tension and weight. Here are some examples of action driven by different energy choices: a run might be free flowing or easily

stopped, and it may be powerful or gentle, tight or loose, heavy or light. A skip might have a sprightly, listless, rollicking, smooth, or other quality of energy. A person might roll heavily across the floor or use explosive energy to jump. Pushing might be done with gentle or powerful energy.

Energy choices may also reveal emotional states. For example, a powerful push might imply aggression or confidence depending on the intent and situation. A delicate touch might reflect affection and timidity or perhaps precision and skill. Some types of energy can be described in words; other spring from the movement itself and are difficult to label with language. Sometimes differences in the use of energy are easy to perceive; other times these differences can be quite subtle. Variations in movement flow, force, tension, and weight can be combined in many ways and may communicate a wide spectrum of human emotional states.

Time

“When?” is a question about time or timing. Choices about time include such things as duration, speed, divisions of time (e.g., beats and intervals), timing of accents, and rhythmic patterns. Timing choices are applied to actions. Here are some examples: a twist could be gradual or quick. A stop might be sudden followed by a pause. Leaping might speed up, slow down, or be paced by even beats. A series of sitting, standing, and stretching actions could occur with an even pace taking a short or a long time. Such actions could be accented with pauses at regular intervals or occur sporadically. Bending, jumping, and shaking actions might be arranged in a rhythmically patterned sequence. Rising and curling might ride on the rhythm of breathing. There are endless possibilities for timing one’s movements because timing variables such as speed, duration, accents and rhythmic patterns, simple to complex, can be applied to actions in many different combinations.

Space

“Where?” is a question about space and spacing. Choices about use of space include such variables as position or place, size, or range, level, direction and pathways. Here are some examples of space choices applied to actions: the dancer might choose to move or pause at any specific place in the dancing area. A skip could be in any direction such as diagonally forward and toward one side of the room. A twist might be high in the air or low to the ground or in between. A run or turning action could be in place or perhaps travel a certain distance along a particular pathway.

The pathway might be curved, straight, zigzagging, or, meandering. The dancer’s movements can also trace pathways in the air as in an elbow drawing loops, a hip jutting out straight to the side, the head swooping down and up through an arc. The range of these movements can vary from so small as to be almost invisible, to as large as the reach of the dancer or the size of the dance area. There are countless variations and combinations of ways that movement can occur in space.

Is All Movement Dance?

The dancer moves with energy through time and space. But then, who doesn’t? Are we always dancing every moment we are alive? Or are there some special features that lead us to call some

of our movement experiences dance? It does seem that in dance, people tend to be more consciously involved in their movement, taking particular enjoyment or interest in their body.

Language

Dance is a language. It is spoken through the movement of the human body. It tells stories, expresses emotions and creates images. All dance is based upon a universal experience: the rhythms and movement of the human body. At a party, at home, or even on the street, most of us have felt the urge to dance. Whether it is hip-hop, swing, salsa, meringue, foxtrot, waltz, or twist, we all know a style of dance.

In dance we take in, synthesize and transmit our ideas and feelings about life through our bodies. Dance is a medium for learning about oneself and one's world. It is truly a universal art since all humans relate body movement and the need to communicate with each other.

As we dance, we sense our bodies and the world around us. We learn how and where our bodies can move, expanding our movement possibilities and enjoying our sense experience as we dance.

Dance is a vehicle for understanding life experience. Through dance, we give form to our experience of self and the world. Dance is a way to generate and give dynamic form to our thoughts and feelings. It symbolizes our thoughts and feelings kinesthetically.

Dance is a unique form for communicating. As we manifest our experience of life in dance, we send out messages through our bodies. We can appreciate these messages ourselves, and others can receive them. Dance communicates in ways that words cannot.

Practice

Sometimes, dance is designed to be performed and seen by an audience. In those cases, no matter what the style, dancers must train their bodies and their imaginations to be more expressive. Dance artists extend the vocabulary of their movement language through classes, rehearsals, and performances. What they practice are the basic building blocks of dance.

What is Ballet?



Ballet is a style of dance that originated in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The earliest kind of ballet was seen in court dances performed for kings, queens, and other powerful figures. Movements were mostly small gestures of the hands and feet, performed with an upright spine, and dancers moved around the room in patterns. Respect, manners, and conventions of politeness were built into these dances because they were designed for presenting to royalty; for example, performers curtsied or bowed to their audience before and after they danced as a sign of deference to their rulers. In this way, social hierarchies of the time directly influenced the way ballet developed and the movements that became part of its vocabulary.

As ballet developed from courtly entertainment into a more robust and physical dance form, its movements became more lyrical and its storytelling more elaborate. However, the style retained its specificity of form and many of the "polite" conventions from its earlier days. As ballet was practiced in different parts of Europe, local cultures influenced how the movement developed; eventually, ballet in Russia, for example, looked very different from ballet in France because of the differences between the people teaching, learning, and performing ballet in each of those places. Cultural values and aesthetics continued to shape how ballet evolved in the different places it was danced.

All variations of classical ballet, however, hold a few things in common, most of which can be traced back to its origins being performed in courts for kings and queens.



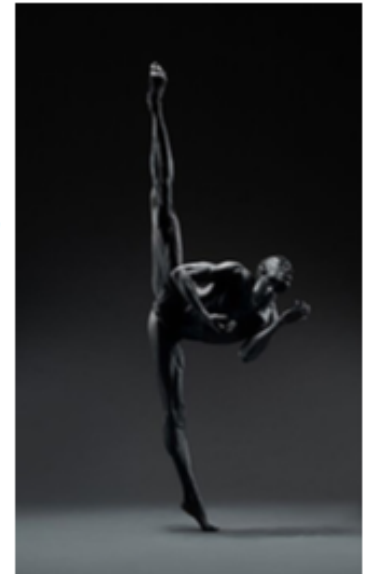
The Principles of Ballet

Alignment: Keeping the head, shoulders, and hips vertically aligned. Upright posture is very important both to the aesthetic of ballet and to its execution – ballet movements are hard to do if you don't have your whole body aligned.

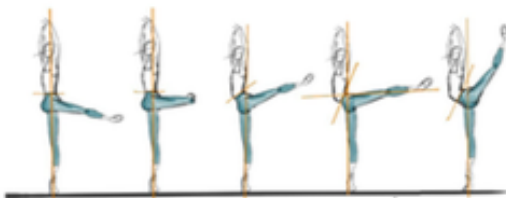
Ballon: The appearance of gravity-defying lightness during jumps, making it seem as though a dancer effortlessly floats in the air and lands softly.

Dancing En Pointe: A convention for extenuating line, pointe shoes allow dancers to rise up onto their toes, making their legs even longer.

Effortlessness: Ballet is a strenuous art form, but dancers are intended to make it look easy to the audience. Lightness of foot and buoyancy in the extremities, as well as upright posture help achieve the illusion of effortlessness.

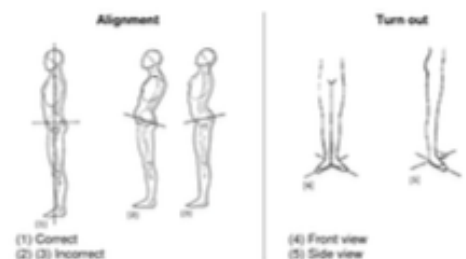


Line: Most ballet movements establish several distinct lines through the body, and give the illusion that those lines reach out indefinitely. Good ballet dancers have legs that look like they go on forever. Line is equally important in both contemporary and classical ballet, but how the two achieve line can be different.

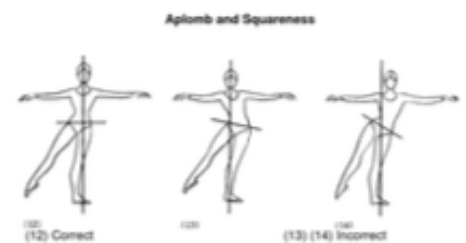


Placement and Squareness: How the hips relate to the rest of the body; in classical ballet, hips are aligned with the shoulders and spine and kept square as often as possible – the few exceptions include the arabesque when it is permissible to open the hip to achieve maximum height. In contemporary ballet, there is more freedom in the hips, and their movement is often part of the choreography.

Turn Out: Rotation outward of the legs at the hip which allows the feet and knees turn out away from the body. In classical ballet, everything must be done in turn out. In contemporary ballet, turn out is still used but not exclusively.



Toe Pointing and Shape of the Foot: In ballet, to complete the line of the leg, toes are kept pointed when they are off the floor. The shape of a pointed foot is extremely specific, toes curving towards the floor and heel curving upwards. In contemporary ballet, feet can be pointed or flexed or in between; the form seldom strays from the traditional shape of the ballet pointe.



Weight: In classical ballet, dancers strive for upward lightness, opposing gravity and moving upward in space. In contemporary ballet, the movements can become weighted, closer to the floor, and originating from the center of the body in addition to using the lightness of classical ballet.

Compare and Contrast: Classical and Contemporary Ballet

Classical Ballet is still widely taught and performed; however, in the time between its first rise to popularity and today, other kinds of Western concert dance have arisen. Modern dance came onto the scene at the turn of the twentieth century, gathering steam throughout the 1900s and developing its own stylistic branches, just like ballet before it. Hip hop, tap, and street styles have filtered into the Western concert dance tradition through their own socially complex and historically significant ways. And then, later in the 1900s, contemporary ballet found its way to the stage.



Contemporary Ballet is ballet through the lens of modern day aesthetics. The dance form incorporates ideas from other styles, like the grounded feeling and floorwork of modern dance, or the staccato hits and body isolations of hip hop, into the existing principles of ballet. Contemporary ballet is not confined by strict definitions of positions or choreographic conventions in the same way as classical ballet, although it certainly draws from those conventions. Sometimes contemporary ballet uses the upright spine and turned out technique of ballet, and sometimes it calls for a fluid, curving spine and parallel legs. This combining and relating of different styles with classical ballet creates a highly dynamic and, in more ways than one, a more accessible

How Contemporary Ballet Helps Us Understand History

Contemporary ballet uses its own historical form (classical ballet) to influence its vocabulary, as opposed to rebelling against its past or leaving it behind. In this sense, contemporary ballet contextualizes itself for the audience, showing where it came from and where it is now at the same time. Knowing where something came from can often help you understand it better.

Contemporary ballet also helps us understand that history is not a set-in-stone record, but a collection of stories that are not necessarily all told at the same time or given the same importance. Pieces of history come to light every day; the picture is never fully developed. Partly, this is because of how humans remember and try to make meaning out of things that happen; partly it is because of who has been allowed to tell their story, and whose experience of an event counts as that event's history. For example, there have been major gaps in America's commonly understood history due to the exclusion of people's stories because of their color, where they come from, what their religion is, or who they love. Contemporary ballet is an example of how including many different voices in the narrative can create not only a more complete, but a more vibrant record of human experience, without erasing the fact that there were at one point gaps to be filled. Remembering history has not always reflected every version of the story helps us keep in mind how important inclusion and representation are.

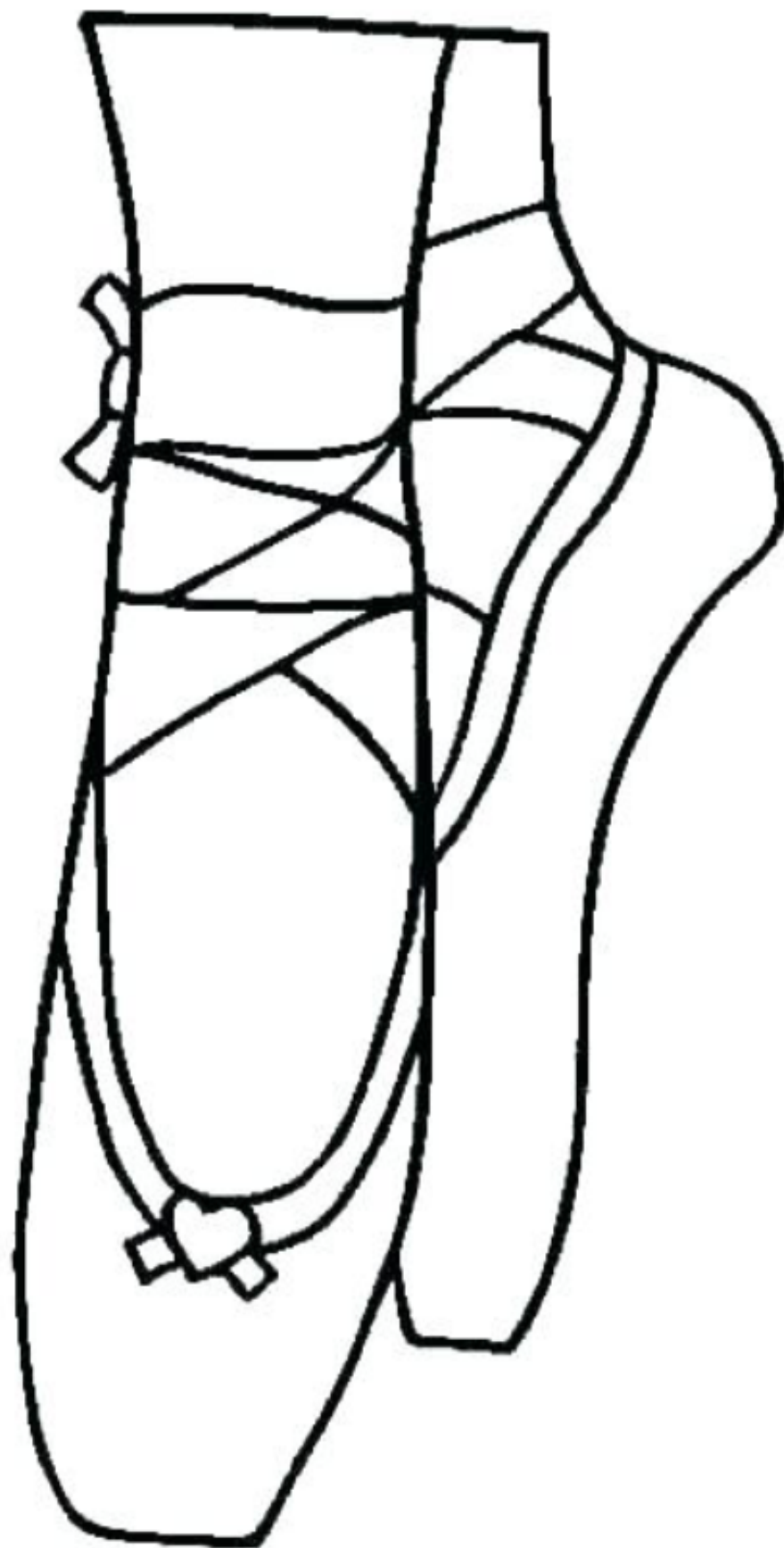
Solo Dancer Coloring Page



Dancing Duo Coloring Page



Ballet Pointe Shoes Coloring Page





Dance Word Search

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

AESTHETIC
BALANCE
BALLET
CHOREOGRAPHER
CHOREOGRAPHY
CLASSICAL

CONTEMPORARY
DUET
ENERGY
ENSEMBLE
REHEARSAL
REPERTORY

SOLO
TEAMWORK
TECHNIQUE
TEMPO
UNISON