



The Indiana Ballet Conservatory curriculum emphasizes the classical ballet technique based upon the Russian tradition of training called the Vaganova Method; this method has produced many of the world's finest dancers. The Vaganova method of ballet instruction consists of eight standardized levels of instruction. The goals of this methodology, as structured by Artistic Director Alyona Yakovleva-Randall for use in our Conservatory, are, but are not limited to, the following:

- To foster a love of ballet
- To teach a comprehensive, high level of ballet technique
- To incorporate use of the arms, hands, and fingers in harmony with technique to enhance beauty and assist turns and jumps
- To promote technical use of the back and shoulder blades as expressive instruments
- To employ coordination to develop dance expression
- To instill musicality by translating the character of a piece of music into a story or a feeling

The Vaganova method, developed in Russia over the course of 300 years, embodies the classicism of the Russian Imperial Ballet (now known as the Kirov or Mariinsky Ballet). Its goal is the creation of classical ballet dancers who are instruments of artistic and creative perfection. Derived from earlier Italian and French forms of ballet instruction, the Vaganova (Vah-GAH-no-vah) method used by instructors of IBC provides students with a structured, scientific and methodological approach to dance which takes the human anatomy into consideration. Hallmarks of the Vaganova system are the continual flow of the body with the coordination of arm and head positions. IBC prides itself on providing students with the best professional ballet training available and made possible by employing a systematic and consecutive method of instruction.

IBC also expands upon this eight-level system of training to include a specially designed Preparatory Program for students ages approximately 3-9 to fully prepare them for entrance into the levels of the Vaganova method curriculum in the Pre-Professional Division. As a professional trade school, students progress through the

eight levels of Vaganova training and graduate at the age of 18, fully prepared to join professional companies or college dance programs.

An abbreviated Curriculum Appendix for the Preparatory Division and Pre-Professional Levels 1-8 follows:

Preparatory Division

Preparatory Division classes are designed for students ages approximately 3-9 and serve as an introduction to ballet and to IBC's training program. Preparatory 1 classes use familiar, fun movements to stretch and strengthen the body and to teach fundamental ballet skills. Since this is usually the child's first experience in a ballet class, we work first in the center, warming up our bodies with simple stretches and strengthening exercises. Then we use playful movements to teach rhythms, patterns, shapes, counting, and musical phrasing. Preparatory 2 classes focus on building memory and listening skills, while creating a fun and energetic atmosphere for young dancers to improve upon previously learned elements. Students will begin Floor Barre exercises that have been carefully arranged by IBC Artistic Faculty to suit the needs of its youngest students; these exercises are strongly emphasized throughout the student's tenure in the Preparatory Division, and are designed to build muscle strength, correct posture, and proper alignment in a safe, effective manner. Students will also learn age-appropriate repertoire and classes will introduce ballet stories and ballet history through games, movement, and interactive activities designed to enhance the students overall understanding of the material.

Preparatory 3 and 4 is designed for young students (ages 7-9) who are new to IBC or who have had limited dance training, or for those students who have progressed through Preparatory 1 and 2 classes at IBC. These levels cover the elementary exercises of classical ballet training emphasizing creativity, posture, flexibility, foot exercises, stage direction, as well as focusing on the development of musical and rhythmic awareness, memory and focus for the training process, and understanding of the protocol and etiquette of the ballet studio. Floor Barre will be further emphasized in these levels, and increasing difficulty will be added to the student's Floore Barre routine with each semester. Students will be introduced to the study of acting in ballet classes through the use of games, imagery, and exercises, while also continuing their study of age-appropriate repertoire and dances. Preparatory 3 and 4 classes also begin introducing the student to Pre-Pointe exercises in order to build appropriate foot, ankle, and body strength for beginning pointework in the early levels of the Pre-Professional Divison. Students will continue to build upon

fundamental skills and muscle development as they progress through the highest level of the Preparatory Division, Preparatory 4, before entering the Pre-Professional Division at approximately ages 9-10. The goal of the Preparatory Division, as structured by the IBC Artistic Faculty, is to fully prepare the student for entrance into the eight-level Vaganova system of the Pre-Professional Division. In doing so, students who have completed the Preparatory Division curriculum at IBC will have received the proper foundation for their future ballet training and careers as well as a lifelong appreciation for dance.

Pre-Professional Level 1

The fundamental requirement of the first level is the placement of the body, legs, arms and head in the exercises at the barre and in the center of the studio. Along with the primary mastering of jumps and placement of the body on the toes, the development of elementary skills and the coordination of movements are studied. For the easiest and most correct fulfillment of exercises, one begins studying with the face to the barre. In the following years, the studying continues with one hand at the barre. In order to fully understand the role of turnout, one begins studying exercises to the side and then forward and backward. Level 1 classes at IBC also concentrate on Pre-Pointe exercises, in preparation for beginning pointework. Level 1 students who are ready to begin to work en pointe (see "Pointe" in the Family Handbook for more information) will do so first with exercises at the barre, followed by beginning exercises in the center.

Pre-Professional Level 2

There is a repetition and development of skills learned in the first level with an addition of epaulement. In order to strengthen the legs, there is an increasing amount of repeated similar movements in a more advanced musical tempo. In order to strengthen the feet, a sequence of movements is done at the barre on demi-pointe. Large poses at 90 degrees in attitude and arabesque are introduced and practiced in exercises and in adagio. In all divisions of the class, attention is devoted to the development of coordination in the movement of the legs, arms, and head. For those not en pointe, Level 2 classes will continue to concentrate deeply on Pre-Pointe exercises, in preparation for beginning pointework. Level 2 students who are ready to begin to work en pointe (see "Pointe" in the Family Handbook for more information) will do so first with exercises at the barre, followed by beginning exercises in the center.

Pre-Professional Level 3

There is a further development of natural talents, strength of the legs, stability, and introduction of demi-pointe in exercises in the center of the studio. The exercises are now done in an accelerated tempo. There is the introduction of movements en tournant, pirouettes, and battus. The continuing development of coordination of movements in all parts of the class, as well as the development of expressiveness in each exercise, is demanded and stressed. Level 3 continues the development of beginning pointework as students gain muscle strength and control.

Pre-Professional Level 4

Stability on demi-pointe and pointe is stressed further with the introduction of grand or “big” poses. There is the introduction of preparation for turns and tours lent in grand poses, as well as the technique of tours in mens class and pirouettes in womens class. In center combinations, the use of movements en tournant is stressed, as are the basics of battus, jumps landing on one leg, and grand allegro. Coordination is developed by adding difficulty to movements, and there is a focus on softness and coordination of the arms and upper body.

Pre-Professional Level 5

Students continue to develop balance and stability. In center combinations, there is the introduction of movements en tournant on demi-pointe, turns in big poses, and pirouettes from different preparations (both stationary and on a diagonal). There is a focus on learning the technique of different turns on pointe, and developing flexibility and cohesiveness in transitions from one pose to another. More difficult forms of grand adagio with different tempos are introduced, and stress is also placed on developing elevation in grand allegro. Mens class stresses the polishing of tours.

Pre-Professional Level 6

Tours in big poses with double pirouettes, and with different preparations, are studied. There is a focus on polishing combinations and technique of different turns on demi-pointe and pointe (stationary and traveling), as well as developing the technique of multiple pirouettes. Adagio is expanded into a larger form, much like a small variation, and there is further stress on polishing the technique of battus and grand allegro from different preparations.

Pre-Professional Level 7

The most difficult forms of adagio are introduced, including adagio with big jumps, and there is a continuation of polishing the technique of turns and more advanced

sections of allegro (such as sissonne with battus and en tournant). Allegro is further developed and stress is placed on dancing each combination as if one were dancing a variation. There is also a focus on allegro combinations with traveling (on a straight line and on a diagonal) as well as en tournant, and an even larger focus on the individual presentation of each combination.

Pre-Professional Level 8

The final level stresses polish on the foundation of everything one has learned in previous years, as well as polish in an artistic sense and a knowledge of stylistic differences in combinations depending on the character of each piece of music. There is further development of combinations in adagio, allegro, and exercises on pointe, with the use of both classical and contemporary music. The main focus is on the development of exceptional technique and specialties, artistry, and individualism.

For further reading, we recommend the following two reference books below. We also encourage all of our families to speak with our faculty or schedule an appointment with the Artistic Director if you are interested in more information or details of the Vaganova method and curriculum. We would love to answer your questions, so please do not hesitate to schedule an appointment through the office.

Basic Principles of Classical Ballet by Agrippina Vaganova.

Dover Publications, Revised Edition 1969. ISBN 0486220362.

School of Classical Dance by Vera Kostrovitskaya and Alexei Pisarev.

Princeton Book Company Publishers 1995. ISBN 1852730447.