

# An Introduction to Ballet and the Characters of The Jungle Book

Study Guide for the performance of Mowgli



Student Outreach – October 16, 2017  
CSI Fine Arts Auditorium

## Objectives

Through a presentation of Mowgli and study guide materials, students will:

- ❖ be introduced to ballet
- ❖ develop an understanding of the level of training that goes into being a ballet dancer
- ❖ be introduced to the five ballet positions
- ❖ discover the reasons behind and requirements of dancing en pointe
- ❖ be introduced to the Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling
- ❖ Learn about the characters in The Jungle Book so they will be prepared for the ballet

## A Good Audience Member Will...

- ❖ behave respectfully towards the performers and other audience members
- ❖ listen attentively to the music, narration, and instructions
- ❖ participate at appropriate times in the program
- ❖ attempt to remember elements of the program for later discussions

# An Introduction to Ballet



## Welcome to Ballet

Ballet is very pretty dancing! You probably have seen ballet on television or in the movies. We know that the “t” on the word “ballet” is silent, so we say “ballay.” You may take ballet lessons, or watch dancers in the movies and on television. Perhaps you will enjoy going to the ballet. How would you describe the way a ballerina dances? They are usually very graceful and light on their feet. It almost looks like they float across the dance stage. Whatever your association with ballet, it is a beautiful, graceful kind of dancing!

## What do ballerinas wear?

Ballet dancers spend many years training their bodies to be strong and flexible. Ballet dancers wear special clothing to demonstrate the beautiful lines they create as they dance. For performances, the ballerinas wear tutus, which are short, full skirts, often made of netting or satin material. Sometimes, they wear a slightly longer skirt, which flows gracefully as the ballerinas dance. Ballerinas traditionally wear their hair in a bun, pinned high on the head. Male dancers, simply called ballet dancers, always dance in soft-soled shoes. They do not dance en pointe. The men must be in good shape to be able to lift the ballerinas into the air. All ballet dancers wear tights on their legs. They are like stockings and cover the entire leg.

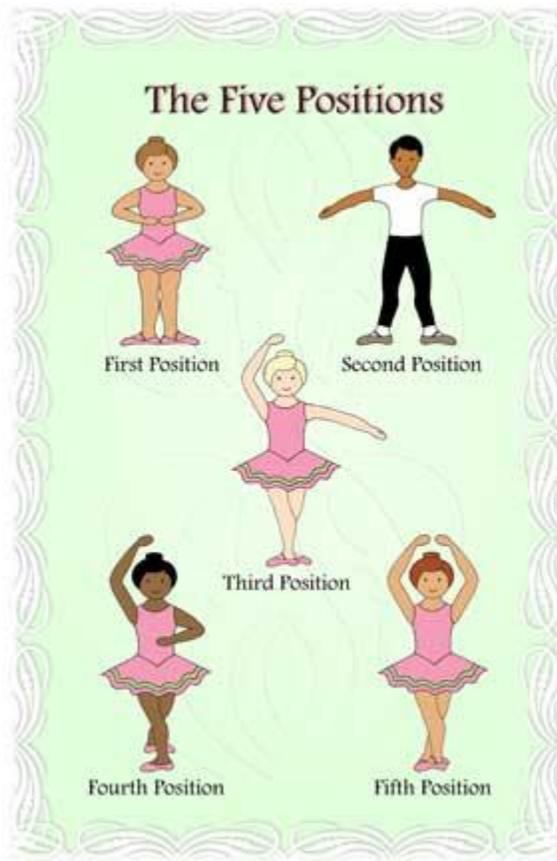
## Training to be a Ballet Dancer

Ballet dancing is very hard to do and takes much practice and years to master. Much of a ballet dancer’s training takes place at a barre, which is the French word for bar. The barre is like a wooden pole. It is fastened horizontally to the wall about 38 to 45 inches above the floor. The dancers use the bar in many ways. They place one leg upon the bar, by hooking their heel over it. Then, they can do stretching exercises. Sometimes, they stand with their side toward the bar, and hold the bar with one hand. This helps them to balance as they do plies, which are kind of like deep knee bends. Plies (plee-ays) are done with the back held straight.



## The Five Ballet Positions

The basic five ballet positions were created in the 1600's by a French ballet teacher whose name was Beauchamps. These arm and leg positions helped the dancers to balance while still looking graceful. Most ballet steps and combinations begin with one of the basic positions. All the basic positions require the dancers to turn out their legs and feet. This takes years of training and practice.



### First Position

The balls of the feet are turned out completely. The heels touch each other and the feet face outward, trying to form a straight line.

### Second position

The balls of both feet are turned out completely, with the heels separated by the length of one foot. Similar to first position, but the feet are spread apart.

### Third position

One foot is in front of the other with the back of the front foot touching the middle of the back foot.

### Fourth Position

The feet are placed the same as third position, but one step apart.

### Fifth Position

With both feet touching, the toes of each foot reach the heel of the other.

## How do ballet dancers dance on their toes?

One of the styles of ballet dancing is called en pointe. That's when ballet dancers stand up on the very tips of their toes. The technique developed from the desire for dancers to appear weightless and otherworldly. It's not easy to do, and it takes a lot of practice. It takes considerable strength in the feet, ankle, leg, knee, and abdomen to dance en pointe. The ballet dancers really are standing on the very tips of their toes. They're able to do it with the help of special pointe shoes. These shoes are designed with a special tip called a box that has a flat bottom and also supports the toes inside of it. Some dancers use extra toe pads for even more support because this style of dancing is difficult!



Ballet dancers shouldn't try to dance on their tip-toes until they get permission from a teacher or doctor. This is because, if pointe dancing is tried when a person is too young or when his or her feet aren't grown enough, it can actually cause a lot of damage to the foot. For those of us who aren't ballet dancers, pointe dancing is best left to the professionals.

## The Jungle Book

In Mowgli, the Eugene Ballet will be telling the stories of The Jungle Book Through ballet dance and puppets. You might have already seen the cartoon or movie of the Jungle Book!

The Jungle Book is a collection of stories written by Rudyard Kipling in 1894. In the Jungle Book stories, Rudyard Kipling uses something called **anthropomorphism**, where he gives human emotions and characteristics to the animals. His stories have **morals**, where the characters and the person reading the story learns a lesson on how the world works or how to be a better person.



The most famous stories from The Jungle Book include the three stories that tell the adventures of Mowgli, an abandoned "man cub" who is raised by wolves in the Indian jungle. The other famous stories are "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi", the story of a brave mongoose who saves a human by killing a dangerous snake, and "Toomai of the Elephants", the tale of a young elephant-handler.

## Characters in the Jungle Book

### Mowgli

Mowgli is the main character in the book. Taken from his village by Shere Khan the tiger, he escapes and runs into a cave where a wolf family live. They treat him as their own and he is raised like a wolf cub. His wolf mother names him Mowgli, which means Little Frog. He is a happy-go-lucky boy who considers himself to be a wolf. He is brave and spunky as a young child and as he gets older his skills come to match his spunk. He is lithe and athletic, more animal in movement than human, and visually striking to look at. He is wily and smart and able to strategize well. Occasionally his imagination runs away with itself and he is brought back to reality by Bagheera or Baloo. He deeply loves his wolf family as his own. Mowgli is a good, strong leader who honors Jungle Law and respects the jungle traditions. He is eager to fight and defend his pack whenever he feels they are threatened.

### Shere Khan

Shere Khan is a tiger who has a limp due to once being shackled. He is aggressive and extremely predatory, disrespectful of the Jungle Laws regarding killing, and a troublemaker. He stole Mowgli from a village on the outskirts of the jungle and never stops trying to hunt and kill him. He is also very political, creating alliances against Mowgli and turning pack members against him.

### Bagheera

Bagheera is a black panther the color of ink, who most in the jungle are in awe of, and also a little afraid of. He is one of Mowgli's main teachers, the other being Baloo, and is a great guide and example to him. He loves the man-cub dearly and the two spend much time together.



### **Baloo**

Baloo is a large brown bear who is the only non-wolf to be allowed at Council Rock. He is Mowgli's "sponsor" into the pack and also his primary teacher, teaching him Jungle Law, greetings, and how to stay safe and protected. He is fairly lazy physically because of his substantial weight. He loves to open honey combs by hitting them against the rocks until they break so that he can devour all of the honey within them.

### **Kaa**

Kaa is a giant python blessed with a beautiful polished skin that he regularly sheds. He and Mowgli are great friends and Mowgli likes to lie

on his coils as if they are a pillow. Kaa saved Mowgli's life when he was taken by monkeys, and was also instrumental in killing the red dogs by transporting Mowgli in silence to the other side of the water. Although he does not like to associate with the wolves he has great affection for their man cub.

### **Akela**

Akela is a gray lone wolf and the leader of the pack. He is wise and fair, making decisions and keeping the pack working and strong from the top of Council Rock. He went out of his way to protect Mowgli as a cub and this debt is replayed when Mowgli saves the jungle from the red dogs. Akela is a source of great knowledge and inspires great respect from the rest of the pack.

### **Mother Wolf**

Mother Wolf is very protective of Mowgli and raises him as her own. She attends the Council the night of the looking over of cubs fully prepared to die in order to protect him. She is strong and brave and when angered quite the fiercest wolf in the pack.

### **Father Wolf**

Father Wolf is also very protective of his new human cub and fully supports his wife in wanting to keep him. He is instrumental in helping Mowgli free the humans who helped him.

### **Gray Brother**

Gray Brother is the oldest of Mowgli's four wolf brothers. He and Mowgli are extremely close, never losing touch even when Mowgli leaves the jungle. He is loyal and dependable and always the first to support Mowgli's battle plans.

### **Hathi**

Hathi the elephant is king of the jungle and a wise, inspiring leader. He is the voice of authority in the jungle, for example, calling the water truce during the drought, and leading his sons to help Mowgli drive the humans out of the village. There is no force in the jungle as destructive as Hathi when injured or angry.