

*Pointe Shoes**

*(NB: The original text of this sample contains a number of photos and illustrations, as well as a video clip. Due to copyright restrictions, they are not included below, but their location in the original text is marked by an appropriate label.)

[photo]

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INTRODUCTION

If you have ever gone to see a *ballet* you will probably see some of the *dancers* on the tips of their toes. These dancers are on *pointe shoes*. These shoes are meant to

make an *illusion* that they are dancing on air. And even though they look gorgeous and allow dancers to amaze *audiences*, they usually bring with them a lot of *injuries*. In this book you will see the ups and downs to *pointe shoes*. Enjoy!

[Photo]

Chapter 1 Preparing for Pointe Shoes

Training for pointe shoes takes a very long time. You have to strengthen your feet to handle your *full body pressure*. Being able to be on *pointe shoes* is being able to support your full body pressure on the size of 2 quarters. Also if you're on *pointe shoes* too early and your bones are still forming it can really hurt your feet and it would be extremely pain full to dance, this also causes *arthritis* at a relatively young age. Tragically, this happens far too often and usually ruins young dancer's *careers*.

[Photo]

Chapter 2 The Making of a Pointe Shoe

Pointe shoes are made by *cobblers*; they make the *pointe shoes* by putting several layers of fabric, slight cushioning, glue and *satın* to make **the box of the shoe**. The *shank*, which runs down the length of the shoe, is made out of layers of fabric and *paste*. *Cobblers* sew the *shank* in to the *sole of the shoe* and then glue and sew the *satın* sides of the shoe onto the *shank*. Because *pointe shoes* are so difficult to make and take so much time to make one pair usually costs 60 to 90 dollars a *pair*.

[Photo]

Chapter 3 The Parts of the Pointe Shoe

The most important part of dancing *en pointe* is the shoe. In the diagram it shows the parts of the *pointe shoe*. The *ribbons* keep your *ankles* supported; the *vamp* helps

your toes stay in place, the *drawstring* helps the shoe stay on your foot; the *toe box* and the *platform* make it so that you can actually stand *en pointe*. All of these make up the perfect *pointe* shoe.

[Illustration]

Chapter 4 The Importance of the Perfect Fit

If you don't get the right size *pointe shoe* you could really hurt your feet. If it's too big it could fall off or it might not support you enough. If it's too small it could give you really bad *blisters* or your toes could *scrunch*, you can really hurt feet by doing that. That's why at *pointe shoe* fittings there are people who fit your *pointe shoes*. They go through dozens of *pointe shoes* from all different brands, *Grishko, Gaynor Minden, Freed of London* etc... then they ask you to go *en pointe* to see if they are the right size. If there too small then the *fitter* gives you a bigger size and so on, until they find you exactly the right fit.

[Photo and caption]

Chapter 5 Pointe Shoe Accessories

To be able to dance on *pointe shoes* you have to have *padding* in your shoes. The most common padding is just an ordinary *toe pad* that goes around your toes. Some dancers put paper towels on their shoes. Also some dancers use *toe spacers* and *toe tape* with *lamb's wool*. Depending on the durability of the shoe and the dancer's preference they will either put in more or less *padding*.

[2 Photos, 2 captions]

Because sometimes studio floors can be slippery, some dancers *darn* the end of their shoes; you cut off the *satin* covering on the *platform* and start sewing a covering for the platform of the shoe by making tiny stitches onto the harder fabric underneath. This makes the *platform* that is less likely to slip. Although this makes it harder to slip it is very time consuming. Some dancers just cut off the satin on the *platform* and sew the edges. And if you're really lazy you can just cut the satin off from the *platform* and not sew it or not cut it off at all. Also if you don't want to cut off the *satin* from the *box* you can just rub *rosin powder* on the *box* of the shoe to keep from slipping. The bad thing about this is that it can leave on the floor and some theaters don't like it.

In order to support your ankles and so the *pointe shoe* doesn't fall off dancers have to sew *elastics and ribbons* onto their shoes. You can use *satin* or *nylon ribbon*. You fold over the heel of the shoe and sew the end of the ribbons right where the fold ends. Make sure that the ribbons are sewn on neatly and the color of the thread is the same color as the ribbon and the shoe. To put on the elastics start sewing the end of the elastic right under where you sewed the ribbon and do the same on the other side.

[2 Photos, 1 illustration, 2 captions]

Chapter 6 Breaking Them In

In order for your pointe shoes to look nice, you have to break them in. breaking in your pointe shoes means bending and shaping your shoes so they shape your feet, are more comfortable to dance in, and show the line of your legs. *Gaynor Minden*, a *pointe shoe company*, that makes a kind of *pointe shoes* that already come broken in, no matter

how much you bend them they will return to their original shape. These shoes last a lot longer than regular *pointe shoes*, are more comfortable but cost a lot more.

[Photo, caption]

There are a lot of ways to **break in your point shoes**, one way is to take the shoe and fold it over in the middle then sit on it. You may hear some cracking but that's normal, it means that the **shank** is bending. Then step on the box to soften it. This allows more **mobility** in the shoes. There are many other ways to break in your **pointe shoes**. Some dance instructors don't recommend breaking in your shoes. Doing this makes the shoes last less and pointe shoes are quite pricy.

Chapter 7 Maintenance

Taking care of *pointe shoes* is a big responsibility. Since *pointe shoes* cost so much you have to make a pair last as long as possible. Keeping your *pointe shoes* "danceable" is your main priority. You should always air out your *pointe shoes* after dancing in them because sweat "kills" *pointe shoes*. Same with *toe pads*, if you keep them in your *pointe shoes* or in your dance bag 24/7 they will not last as long as they could if you aired them out.

Also sometimes the thread that keeps the *ribbons and elastics* on the shoes pops off. Instead of quickly pinning on a safety pin to just keep the *ribbon* on, take the time to re-sew the *ribbon* on. This is part of what you have to do to make sure that your shoes last as long as possible.

[Photo]

Chapter 8 Injuries

While *pointe shoes* make dancers seem like they're dancing on air, a lot of tears, blood and sweat go into making everything look so effortless and graceful. *Pointe shoe injuries* are part of dancing *en pointe*. Some of these can be because that person was on *pointe shoes* too early; others can be because they came down from a *relevé* wrong. There are hundreds of ways that you could hurt yourself on *pointe shoes*. But if you have proper *training, technique*, and muscles you have more protection against *injuries*.

[Photo]

Chapter 9 “Goodbye Dear Pointe Shoes”

The term “*dead pointe shoes*” means that when you dance in your *pointe shoes* a lot they wear down and they become too soft to support your *full body weight*. If you dance in really “*dead*” *pointe shoes* not only is it painful but it can also lead to *injuries*. *Pointe shoes* support you so that you're able to go on the tips of your toes. But when the shoes are too bendy they don't have the strength to support you anymore and it can crush the bones in your foot. To “*re-strengthen*” *pointe shoes* some dancers use *Jet Glue* or *Gorilla Glue*. To put in the *box, shank*, and sometimes the sides to “*re-strengthen*” *pointe shoes* to make them last longer.

[Video clip]

Chapter 10 Company Pointe Shoes

When you get into a *professional company* such as the *New York City Ballet*, the company usually pays the *pointe shoes* for you. They have a HUGE room called the *shoe room* that stores all of the *pointe shoes*. Each

of the dancers have a “*bunny hole*” [as they call it] to keep their *pointe shoes*. And when they need a new pair, they go to the shoe room, find their *cubby* and take as many *pointe shoes* as they need. NYCB spends around half a million dollars each year on *pointe shoes*.

[Photo]

Conclusion

If reading this has not convinced you that dancing *en pointe* is a really hard thing then go to ballet school and see the girls’ feet after they dance in their *pointe shoes*. You will see how much blood, sweat, and tears go into dancing *en pointe*.

[Photo]