Articles

An Examination of the Pointe Shoe as Artifact through Ethnographic and Gender Analysis

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Résumé

Les chaussures de danse jouent surtout un rôle utilitaire, apportant soutien aux danseurs et beauté aux spectateurs. Mais en fait, dans divers styles de danse, le choix des chaussures peut également jouer un rôle symbolique et signifier des attitudes à l'égard de l'appartenance à un sexe, le pouvoir et l'individualité. Cet article examine les chaussons de ballet et les chaussures modernes au moyen de l'analyse de la danse et du folklore ainsi que de l'analyse féministe et ethnographique.

Abstract

Footwear in dance is largely utilitarian, providing support to the dancer, and aesthetic to the audience. However, choice of footwear in various dance styles may, in fact, act as a symbol as well, signifying attitudes towards gender, power, and individuality. This paper examines ballet and modern footwear through dance, folklore, feminist and ethnographic analysis.

When thinking of dance, the mind's eye can easily conjure up images of willowy women in gossamer dresses, perched on their toes as they are supported and lifted by their male partner. Why is this the predominant ideal of ballet? Ideas of gender in dance relate not only to plot, character and choreography, but to costume as well. Footwear used is of especial interest. In the dance world, the pointe shoe is an essential tool in the creation and execution of ballet. It has been used since the early nineteenth century, and lingers as the penultimate image of the ballerina even today. It would be difficult, perhaps even impossible to imagine a conventional production of *Swan Lake* without the thirty-two fouettés, or *Romeo and Juliet* danced in bare feet. Furthermore, the pointe shoe can be regarded as the harbinger of numerous messages; that is, it can imply strength, delicacy, ethereality or dependence.

However, not all ballet dancers wear pointe shoes. Male dancers, children, and women offstage almost always wear the soft ballet slippers that are not often found on stage. The commonality of the humble ballet slipper also bears examination. Why is it that men only wear soft shoes? Why do women usually wear the same during classes, yet perform ballets in pointe shoes? Why does aesthetic dictate footwear so strongly? In contrast to the world of ballet, numerous dance forms do not require shoes at all. Modern dance and classical east Indian dance styles, among many others, require their dancers to dance barefoot, regardless of location or performative situation. Attitudes towards the body, towards gender and towards dance itself all culminate in the uniform that is de rigeur for the dancer of a particular style. The cultural determinants affect how dancers perform and what their footwear will be.[1] All these factors provide a comprehensive indication of some of the differences inherent in these dance forms.

The primary focus of this paper is on ballet, a dance form that contains a class structure, internal hierarchy and strict gender divisions. In order to acquire an emic perspective on this style, I interviewed Kate Cornell, a freelance dance writer, and ballet teacher and dancer.[2] I have also drawn on my own experiences in the dance world to complement my informant's information.[3] I will reflect also on how ballet functions in contrast to modern dance in terms of footwear and the affect that it has on various issues. Finally, I have applied a combination of a folklore, dance and feminist analysis in order to obtain a multifaceted analysis of footwear in dance.

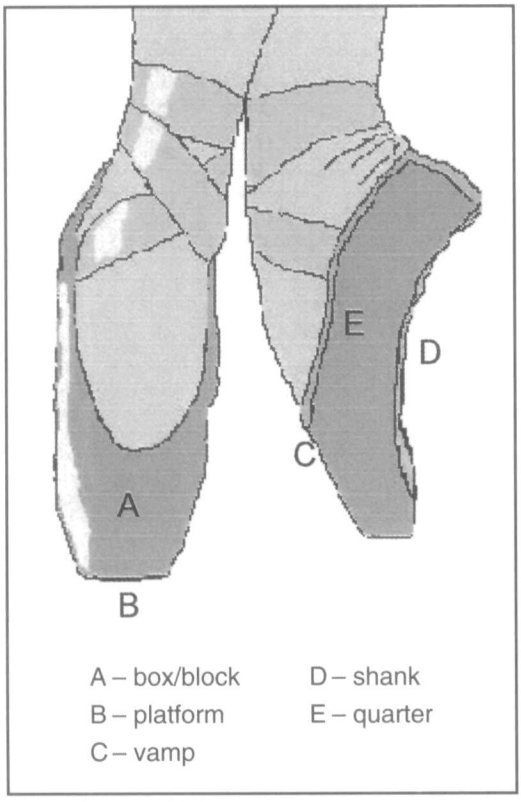

Fig. 1
The various parts of the pointe shoe (Photo: Kieran Walsh)

In order to begin looking at ballet, it is perhaps useful to explicitly state that the pointe shoe, as the principal image of ballet, can be regarded as an artifact.[4] Its physical components are uniform, and have remained largely unchanged for several hundred years. Because pointe shoes are often handmade, each shoe differs slightly. However, as can be seen in Fig. 1, the basic shape is uniform. The shoes are made in numerous colours, but the most common colour is pale pink. The outer covering of the shoe is satin. The shoes fit snugly to the foot, but lengthen the look of the foot with the addition of a blocked toe on the end. This stiff cup is called the block or box, and the flat part of the shoe that the dancer stands on is the platform. Other important elements of shoe construction are the vamp, which covers the top of the toes and foot, the shank, the stiff sole that supports the insole, and the quarter, the soft material that covers the heel and sides of the foot. These elements can vary slightly in length or width, yet they all maintain the same function: to aid and support the dancer as she performs on pointe.

Thus it would seem that the pointe shoe has one function; however, it can be seen to be multifunctional and polysemic. Dancers spend a great deal of time breaking in their shoes; that is, breaking or softening the stiff shanks, as well as darning the platform, and sewing on ribbons and elastics.[5] These activities are a ritual for all ballet dancers and, consequently, are an integral aspect of a dancer's life. Furthermore, the shoes function as the demonstration of technical and artistic ability, since it is evident on pointe if a dancer is poorly trained or is not a strong performer. Finally, the shoe conveys the entire aesthetic of the ballet world. From her own experiences, Kate speaks of the physical difference between dancing on pointe and dancing on a soft ballet slipper:

> *Someone who hasn't done it would think that you're concentrating on the foot. When I first tried to do it, I was concentrating on the foot, and I think that's why my feet were cramping, I was getting blisters, ingrown toenails and all that stuff. And then I realized when I had a strong teacher in pointe work, it's really about the pull-up in the butt. It's your legs that are doing the work and I didn't have strong legs when I was fourteen, fifteen, sixteen and then I started building up strength. And I always have trouble — my feet don't work in the same way. So on demi-pointe, I'm always trying to get my arches over, which, that same thought in pointe work, tends to push you over and you hurt your big toe. So the feeling is completely different — stretch your knees as much as you can and stay on your platform. Because I was one of those people who was back on the platform and I always had to push over...So I had to learn that where I was trying to sort of force my arches over and get a good platform on demi-pointe, I wasn't supposed to do that as much on pointe and I had to find the real straight column of the strength in my legs as opposed to just depending on my feet. And it took me two, three years to realize the importance of the platform and to get the right shoe to find the platform...So that was always a big struggle for me to not only understand the difference between standing on demi and standing on pointe, but getting the shoes to help me understand what the difference was.*

There are numerous frames of reference that can relate to pointe dancing. Depending on the piece, the dancer, on her pointe shoes, can convey lightness, pain, clumsiness, beauty or effortlessness. This also relates to the shoe's ability to communicate. To a dancer, the right pair of shoes can make her feel powerful and can physically assist her dancing. A poor pair can cause immense pain and therefore can affect her ability to perform. Through the shoes themselves, the dancer communicates to the audience. She relays her own feeling about dancing as well as her character's

feelings and expression. Thus the shoe functions as both an artist-centred and performance-centred artifact at the same time. The ensuing cultural contextual interpretation varies, depending on the interaction. For example, the dancer experiences the shoe in a very different context from the audience member. Moreover, each audience member will understand the shoe in various ways, depending on their own personal history and experience with pointe shoes.[6] Although the image will be the same, the visual message that the artifact sends will be vastly different.

On the other hand, the soft shoe conveys very different meanings. It can be made out of leather or canvas, and comes in pink, black and white. While all three colours are available for women, pink remains the standard. White or black are equally acceptable for men. The shoe is essentially the same shape as the pointe shoe, with a few notable constructive exceptions: the soles are softer, there is no blocked toe, and the shoes are generally more flexible, as is illustrated in Fig. 2. This leads to a much greater comfort level for dancers wearing these slippers. The technique that the dancers can achieve is far less; however, most steps can be fully performed or modified to an acceptable extent.[7]

Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate the visual difference between a dancer on demi-pointe in a soft shoe, and full pointe in a pointe shoe. Therefore, pointe shoes are the usual choice for dancers in class and sometimes even in rehearsal. Moreover, soft shoes (or the equivalent in boot form, for stage) are the norm for male dancers. With a few rare exceptions, men never dance on pointe. Kate points out two instances where men do dance on pointe: some "old school" training styles require their male dancers to spend one year dancing on pointe, and companies such as the Ballets Trockaderos, an all-male troupe that dances on pointe. Therefore, men are given far greater comfort with their shoes, and don't have to suffer the same physical pain and strain on their bodies in the same way as female ballet dancers. The technique that is preferred in male ballet dancers differs also — they focus more on high leaps and grand turns rather than the quick footwork and multiple turns that are ideal for the female dancer on pointe. However, Kate believes that pointe training for men can be extremely helpful in their other dancing as well:

> *I really think you can see the difference between men who have had to train on pointe, and I think you can see the difference in the articulation of the foot and I'm sure in pas de deux, men who have danced on pointe appreciate how difficult it is to stand in that pirouette position without sinking*

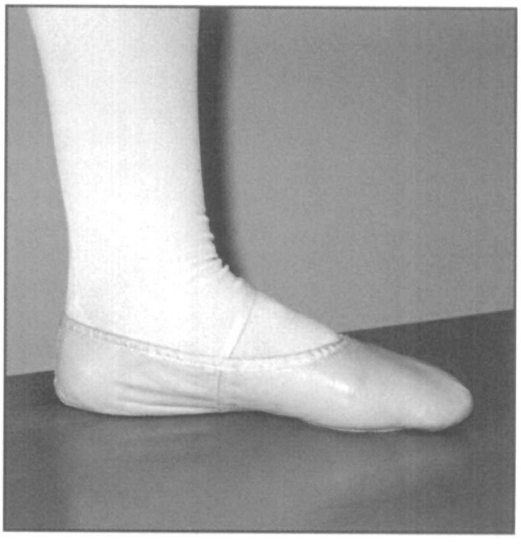

Fig. 2
The author's split-soled, soft ballet slipper (Photo: Kieran Walsh)

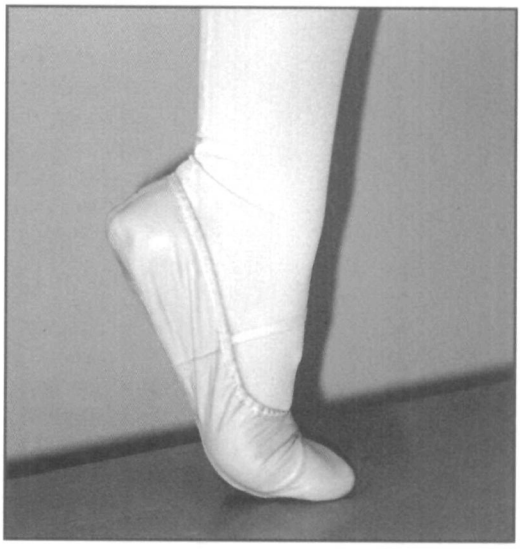

Fig. 3
The dancer is on demi-pointe, to demonstrate the flexibility of the soft ballet slipper. (Photo: Kieran Walsh)

Fig. 4
The dancer is easily able to stand on full pointe using the pointe shoe. (Photo: Kieran Walsh)

into your pointe shoe and understand how important it is to support the woman in the right way.

As a means of dress, shoes can imply certain codes, or socially acceptable ways of wearing and using the item.[8] "Fashion has a social significance... Distinctions among garments imply distinctions among people."[9] Berger's thoughts can well be applied to the argument at hand. Footwear in ballet implies the various differentiations that can be made between dancers. The first and most obvious is the gender difference. Women wear pointe shoes, and men wear soft shoes. While this is almost always true on stage, the dance class may differ slightly. In this situation, women will often wear soft shoes constructed in the same way as the men's. However, the variation this time will come with the colour of the shoes themselves. Finally, onstage, not all dancers will wear either of these types of shoes. Character roles will usually call for character, or heeled shoes, which will differ slightly for both men and women. This then creates a hierarchical difference between those dancers who require the more "balletic" shoes to perform as opposed to those who wear the more "theatrical" shoes and therefore, do more acting than dancing. A class system is quickly put in place.

Pointe work is controversial also in the gender differences it implies. From an aesthetic point of view, the pointe shoe can be considered the primary balletic visual manifestation. In the history of ballet, the Romantic era promulgated the idea of the supernatural being, ofttimes in contrast to a more earthy character. In these ballets, the primary costume and choreographic difference is that while the ethereal character embodies all that is light, gossamer and vertical, her earthy counterpart wears soft slippers or character shoes, and dances in a more grounded, solid way. Therefore the pointe shoe easily indicates the desired, the unattainable, the beautiful, themes which run through all Romantic ballets. This is in direct contrast to many twentieth century choreographers, such as George Balanchine, who demanded a long, lean, athletic look from his dancers. There is a duality between these two aesthetics. Romantic ballets, particularly in the traditional pas de deux, require that the female dancer be supported and lifted by her male counterpart. She turns, balances, jumps, while he assists her movements and ensures that she remains upright. The gaze is on her, not only from the audience but from her partner as well. It has been seen as a patriarchally constructed frame. Conversely, female solo pointe dancing (such as Balanchine) displays the woman as incredibly strong and in control. Because pointe work is extremely difficult to perform, particularly without any support, a woman dancing on pointe on her own makes a powerful visual statement. While the gaze is still on her from the audience, this kind of dancing can be seen as counter-hegemonic, as it is clearly the woman who is in control.

From a personal point of view, pointe dancing can be extremely liberating. When I asked Kate about the emotional feeling she gets from dancing on pointe, her response mirrors how I, and likely many other female ballet dancers, feel about it:

You would think that it would be, "I hate this, this is so painful, this is so awful." I still have dreams about dancing on pointe. The feeling is like no other in the world. Part of the reason why I wanted to start dancing in the first place was because I love to jump and I love the feeling when you're in the air — that split second — that takes your breath away. And then all of a sudden I got pointe shoes and it's like that but better. It's just standing in that fifth position, completely pulled up, you have a sense of every muscle in your body. It's an incredible feeling, despite all the pain, despite all the frustration. And I still miss it.

Feminist dance criticism has often focused its attention on the ballet genre, and the typical heterosexual and power relations that it often connotes. Ann Daly, Judith Lynne Hanna, Susan Leigh Foster and Susan Brownmiller have all presented interesting arguments dealing with movement and dance in terms of how it has regarded women. Further, Laura Mulvey's discussions on issues relating to the gaze are also extremely relevant and applicable.[10] The arguments presented by these women all build upon one another to provide a framework within which to explore how the pointe shoe helps to construct a gender analysis within the ballet genre. The underlying message of all these scholars is similar. "Traditional" ballets are often seen as presenting an old-fashioned, patriarchal hierarchy that has forced women into particular iconographical roles on stage and has suppressed feminine creative and administrative talents off stage. There have been few women ballet choreographers and artistic directors, and female dancers typically portray princesses and wronged lovers, relying (both in plot and choreography) on a man to arrive and support them. While it is true that males dominated the dance world of yore, this should not imply that all women were subservient, either as dancers or as characters. It is interesting, therefore, to examine several theories relating to ballet, and ascertain how the pointe shoe, as the

primary artifact of the female ballet dancer, fares under this particular microscope. Daly suggests:

> *Dance classicism is an ideology devoted to tradition, chivalry, and to hierarchy of all kinds — gender, performer's rank, the distinction between types of roles, spectator's placement, stage organization, the canon. Romanticism's emphasis on personal expression also relies on the theatricalized dichotomy of feminine and masculine temperaments.*[11]

Indeed, dancing on pointe can be regarded as ascribing to these notions, particularly when examining classical or romantic ballets. Certainly, the ability to dance on pointe (and to dance it well) indicates gender differences, that is males, in almost all instances, dance only in soft shoes. Kate asserts that the legacy from the Romantic ballet pervades into dance classes today:

> *Taglioni is the epitome of ethereal, of unattainable, of hovering, even with the wires with the Sylphides. And that establishes a classist idea in the dance studio that female dancers who can dance on pointe are somehow better than dancers who can't... Teaching a couple of years ago, thirteen-, fourteen-, fifteen-year-old girls, the ones who couldn't dance on pointe, when we did that fifteen minutes at the end of class, were the saddest things on the face of the earth. They were so dejected. And somehow, rather ironically, somehow they weren't women because they couldn't dance on pointe but the perfect woman who dances on pointe really looks like a boy anyway, if you think of the Balanchine aesthetic that goes with it. So I think definitely, established from 1830s onwards, there're two types of dancers: ones who can dance on pointe and ones who can't.*

This ultimate symbol of femininity in dance, the pointe shoe, continues to infiltrate the soul of even the most spirited and feminist-minded young female dancer today. Furthermore, there is a certain class structure present in the professional dance world in that there are solo dancers, corps dancers and character dancers. Character dancers rarely wear pointe shoes, and may wrongly be seen as less able dancers than those who are on pointe for the entire performance. The shoe is the signifier for the entire ballet canon.

It is also true that there are differences between male and female forms of dance. This is particularly evident when examining which steps are allotted to various dancers in the ballet. The pas de deux receives particular scrutiny. In her article, "Classical Ballet: A Discourse of Difference," Daly discusses Romantic ballet's fondness for the grace and beauty of its dancers, particularly required of female dancers.[12] Daly argues that stage dynamics in Romantic ballets consist of male denoting power, and female denoting fragility. This leads to an asymmetry, the two polarities of which create the balance in the male/female relationship on stage.[13] Hanna also raises the notion of the pas de deux as the penultimate representation of heterosexuality in dance. Furthermore, it reinforces two ideas: sexual proximity and tension between the two dancers, and (a more contemporary reading) a metaphor for the idea of romantic love.[14] The pointe shoe is the indicator of these heteronormative ideals that are inherent in these pieces. Through the shoe, the choreography is structured so that the pas de deux is the central item of a ballet, and gendered ideas are epitomized through the steps. The structure of the choreography of the pas de deux conforms to our prescribed notions of male/female relationships.

In her article entitled, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," Susan Foster asserts that all bodies in dance are gendered, through their costuming as well as choreography.[15] She argues that the common dynamic on the stage is for the female to be presented to the audience by her male counterpart. "*He* and *she* do not participate equally in their choreographic coming together. *She* and *he* do not carry equal valence. *She* is persistently put forward, the object of his adoration."[16] While this is the norm in the ballet genre as a whole, contemporary ballets can allow the female dancer to present a very different image on pointe.

Kate presented these arguments from her own perspective:

> *I think it has a lot to do with power relations and, when we're talking classical Petipa ballets, the woman is, with the pointe shoe, put on a pedestal and with the pas de deux, the man stands behind the woman and is always subservient to her dancing and to her style and to her raised position with the pointe shoe doing that both metaphorically and physically. But then when you get into twentieth-century ballet, the pointe shoe takes on a different meaning for me. With Balanchine, the pointe shoe accentuates how beautiful the woman's leg is, and really adds a sensual line to the end of the foot because with the black bodysuits and the white tights, he just shows off the woman's leg and there's a real arrogance in the way I think his women dance a lot of the time... Then going into William Forsythe who extends the pointe shoe even more and...again, the woman is really*

sensual, the woman is not the centre of attention like she is in Petipa, with the pointe shoe and the delicateness and the femininity, but she's strong, she uses the pointe shoe as an exclamation point. And I think the pointe shoe is pivotal to expressing the characters that happen in Forsythe ballets. But then, talking about the relationship between men and women and the shoes they wear, I think an important choreographer is Jyri Kylian who doesn't put the women in pointe shoes and really, in his pas de deux, men lift men, women lift women, women lift men, and there's a real equality there, and again equality in shoes... they wear the same shoes. So I think he's a really pivotal choreographer in terms of how gender is perceived through the shoe.

In this passage, Kate provides an historical and thematic account of how footwear has differed through several eras in the development of ballet as a dance style. The Romantic style of the 1800s epitomized lightness, grace and ethereality, and the verticality of the pointe shoe emphasized these ideals. The contrast between the earthy, almost peasant-like female character and her unattainable, supernatural counterpart evidenced what was considered desirable in terms of femininity. However, more recent and contemporary ballet choreographers have taken a different stance when it comes to representations of the woman through the pointe shoe. Be it the portrayal of women as strong characters, dancing solo on pointe (a difficult feat) or female dancers wearing soft slippers along with the men, equality and/or female dominance can now be found in many instances. The power dynamics are constantly shifting.

Fig. 5
The tapered, blocked toe elongates the foot. (Photo: Kieran Walsh)

These issues of power relate well to Armstrong's assertion that, "a very different problem is posed by the man-made thing or event which, while perhaps not having been created primarily for the purpose of being affecting, is nonetheless intentionally concerned with power, as an inevitable condition of being what it is."[17] These ideas accord well with the thoughts put forward by the feminist dance theorists. The pointe shoe is a symbol of power, regardless of how that power is seen to be wielded. Contemporary readings into the pas de deux do portray it as a stereotypical heterosexual dynamic. The woman leans on the man who supports her and enables her to perform the steps that the audience sees. The shoe forces her to depend on her partner, as she would be able to dance some of these steps on her own if she was wearing soft ballet slippers. With Foster's theory of the pointe shoe as phallus, this further pushes the patriarchal power imbalance. Conversely, some dance scholars believe that the ballerina's prominence, in terms of character importance and choreography, forces the male dancer to seem subservient.[18] Also, as I have argued, women dancing solo on pointe demonstrate their own strength and dominance on stage; therefore, the typical dynamic can be averted and a counter-hegemonic ideal can be achieved.

When discussing footwear for an art form that relies so heavily on the foot, body image and physical exertion must also be taken into consideration. Women's feet may be physiologically more suited to pointe shoes than men, but it is for a largely aesthetic reason that women are the ones who don the blocked toe and lace up the pink ribbons. Because of the constant weight and pressure on the foot, women who wear pointe shoes often have bloody feet, ingrown toenails, blisters, bunions, and other unpleasant side effects. Men's feet then will suffer far less while wearing softer shoes. It is an interesting juxtaposition, then, that the pointe shoe is seen as a thing of beauty, elongating the foot and making it seem elegant, as seen in Fig. 5:

K: And I think it's interesting that, having taught boys, and just seeing the way that male dancers consider their feet, I think there's this connotation that male feet are ugly. And the pointe shoe just makes the female foot just so beautiful.

KMH: Especially because professional dancers have terrible feet anyways because of the pointe shoe.

K: Yes, because of the pointe shoe. But as soon as you cover it up and put the pointe shoe

on it, "Oh, it's so beautiful, oh, it's so gorgeous, so feminine," but I think that men are really made to be conscious of their feet. Because you know the boots they wear, like in Romeo and Juliet *that almost hide their footwork, whereas the women with the tutus, or whatever dress really, accentuate the foot. And you're really drawn to the foot.*

So the pointe shoe is the means by which female dancers can cover up the ugliness of their feet and, at the same time, draw attention to them. Costumes, particularly those that are short, emphasize the leg, which is elongated by the blocked toe of the pointe shoe. By sheathing the foot in delicate pink satin, the ballerina can execute steps, leaps and turns while projecting the appropriate aesthetic. This is in direct contrast to male footwear, which can be seen to disguise the footwork that men are able to perform. Soft shoes subvert the male foot, allowing the audience's gaze to focus on the grandeur of his leaps and turns.

While ballet footwear contains these apparent gender differences, modern dance eradicates these by eliminating artificial footwear. Rather, it focuses on the foot itself as the shoe, resulting in an equality between men and women that is not found in the traditional realm of ballet.

Physically, dancing in bare feet is vastly different from dancing in any kind of shoes. Any kind of footwear creates a physical boundary between body and floor, resulting in a less intimate experience. However, technique in different dance styles tends to suit its prescribed shoes. Modern dance tends to be far more grounded and into the floor than the upward verticality of ballet. It is not unheard of, though, for ballet to be performed in bare feet. I asked Kate about her feelings on this:

Ballet barefoot. Yeah, but not very often...And I don't think it was until my grade thirteen year when I first did modern that I realized the importance of the floor. Which I don't think you can get unless you dance barefoot. But...I really haven't done...any ballet barefoot...The thing that really bothers me, because I love to turn, is that I have so much trouble turning in a modern class because your feet sweat and then you stick to those plastic floors. It's just so frustrating, when you can do a triple easily in slippers, you can do a double with hardly any push at all in pointe shoes, and then you get in bare feet and it's like, "I can't get around in a single!"

For the exclusively ballet trained dancer, the shoes can become an essential tool for the performance of particular steps. Kate's experience seems similar to many others. Ballet dancers are used to ease in terms of friction on the floor, thereby enabling them to perform multiple turns with little effort in terms of push from the legs. Modern dance ofttimes relies on this friction as a part of both its technique and aesthetic. Therefore, any kind of crossover (that is, performing ballet in bare feet or performing modern in shoes) can result in emotional or physical discomfort on the part of the dancer.

The choice for modern dancers to perform barefoot is one that was born with the very notion of modern dance. In contrast to ballet's existence as a remnant from the French courts of the seventeenth century, modern dance came from the United States and grew out of the idea that, "it is not so much a system or technique as an attitude towards dance, a point of view that encourages artistic individualism and the development of personal choreographic styles."[19] Early proponents of modern dance revolutionized not only choreography and vision, but dance uniform as well. Perhaps the most notorious of these women was Isadora Duncan, who shocked audiences by wearing loose tunics draped around her, and by dancing barefoot.[20] This led the way for numerous other modern artists who also advocated dancing in bare feet as a part of this new aesthetic. Another item of note is that most of the modern dance pioneers were female. This meant that women were finally in control of not only dancing, but of choreography and artistic direction as well. This truly revolutionized the dance world and stands in sharp contrast to the realm of ballet. Additionally, gender roles for men and women seemed more closely entrenched. As Novack writes of her own experiences with modern dance, "the movement vocabularies for individual women and men and for dancers interacting varied far more in modern dance than in ballet."[21] Therefore it is evident that modern provides a far different set of values and expectations from ballet.

While others might place value judgments on one over the other, I hesitate to do so. I have practised both forms of dance and have found joy in both. I spent a short time training in modern dance, and enjoyed the grounded, solid feeling that performing in bare feet gave me. I felt as though it were a "natural" way to dance, feeling every muscle and bone in my foot contact with the floor and engage in a way that I had never felt before. I also love my soft ballet slippers. They are extremely comfortable to wear, and provide enough traction so that I can dance without fear of falling, yet are slippery enough so that I can turn effectively and smoothly. These two artifacts

symbolize the equality that can be present in dance, as represented by the primary instrument through which to perform. These two types of footwear differ greatly to my final, and most personally controversial article of dance shoes — my pointe shoes.

Intellectually, I understand that ballet is fraught with issues that I am used to confronting in daily life. There is a distinct gender inequality present, and men, for the most part, still do run ballet companies. While the prima ballerina is often the centre of attention, I do understand theories that relate her in subordination to her male partner. And I do think, in some ways, that the pointe shoe is an extremely uncomfortable tool that functions only to create an illusion of femininity that is unattainable for most women and is, in fact, essentially non-existent outside the fantasy world of the stage. However, I easily relate to Kate's comments about performing ballet, particularly dancing on pointe. I found it excruciatingly painful and eventually gave it up because of the strain it was putting on my body. However, there will always be a small part of me that will remember the anticipation of tying the ribbons, of warming up the feet and finally, that perfect moment where every muscle is engaged and the potential is endless. This, to me, is the perfect indication of what footwear can mean to the individual who is wearing it and what it can do for a dance performance.

NOTES

1. By "culture," I am implying a dual meaning — the culture of the dance form, as well as the larger culture in which the particular dance form exists.
2. I conducted a personal interview with Kate Cornell in the winter of 1998. I would like to thank Kate here, whose input was invaluable to the writing of this paper.
3. My personal bias here is as a dancer from a young age, mainly in the ballet genre, but in other dance forms as well.
4. Barbara Babcock, "Artifact," in *Folklore, Cultural Performances and Popular Entertainments*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 204–217.
5. Dancers have developed alternative methods, or shortcuts, to bypass some of the more labour-intensive practices. For example, rather than darning the toe, a dancer may place a piece of moleskin, or textured stick-on bandage, to provide the necessary friction. Dancers often burn the ends of their ribbons to prevent fraying, rather than hem the ends.
6. That is, a spectator who has danced in pointe shoes will likely better understand the pain and joy inherent in dancing on pointe, whereas someone who has never danced on pointe will appreciate the dancing from a purely visually aesthetic point of view.
7. Any steps performed on full pointe, that is, on the platform of the toe shoe, can often be performed on demi pointe, on the ball of the foot in soft shoes. The effect and feel will be different, but it will usually be adequate for the dancer when not fully performing.
8. In this case, the society to which I am referring is the dance world.
9. Arthur Asa Berger, *Cultural Criticism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), 91.
10. Mulvey's writings deal with the visual, and are often used to discuss film and visual arts. In order to fully appreciate her arguments, it is useful to be familiar with Lacan's theories on the gaze as well.
11. Ann Daly, "Classical Ballet: A Discourse of Difference," *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane Desmond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 58.
12. Ibid., 59.
13. Ibid., 61.
14. Judith Lynne Hanna, *Dance, Sex and Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 166.
15. The pointe shoe can be regarded as a part of dance costuming as well as a tool for the achievement of technique.
16. Susan Leigh Foster, "The Ballerina's Phallic Pointe," *Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture and Power*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.
17. Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 6.
18. Mary Clarke and Clement Crisp, *Ballerina: The Art of Women in Classical Ballet* (London: BBC Books, 1987), 52.
19. Jack Anderson, *Ballet and Modern Dance: A Concise History*, 2nd ed (Princeton: Princeton Book Company Publishers, 1992), 165.
20. Helen Thomas, *Dance, Modernity and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 61.
21. Cynthia Novack, "Ballet, Gender and Cultural Power," *Dance, Gender and Culture*, ed. Helen Thomas (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 38.

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