A Day in the Life of a

Ballet Dancer



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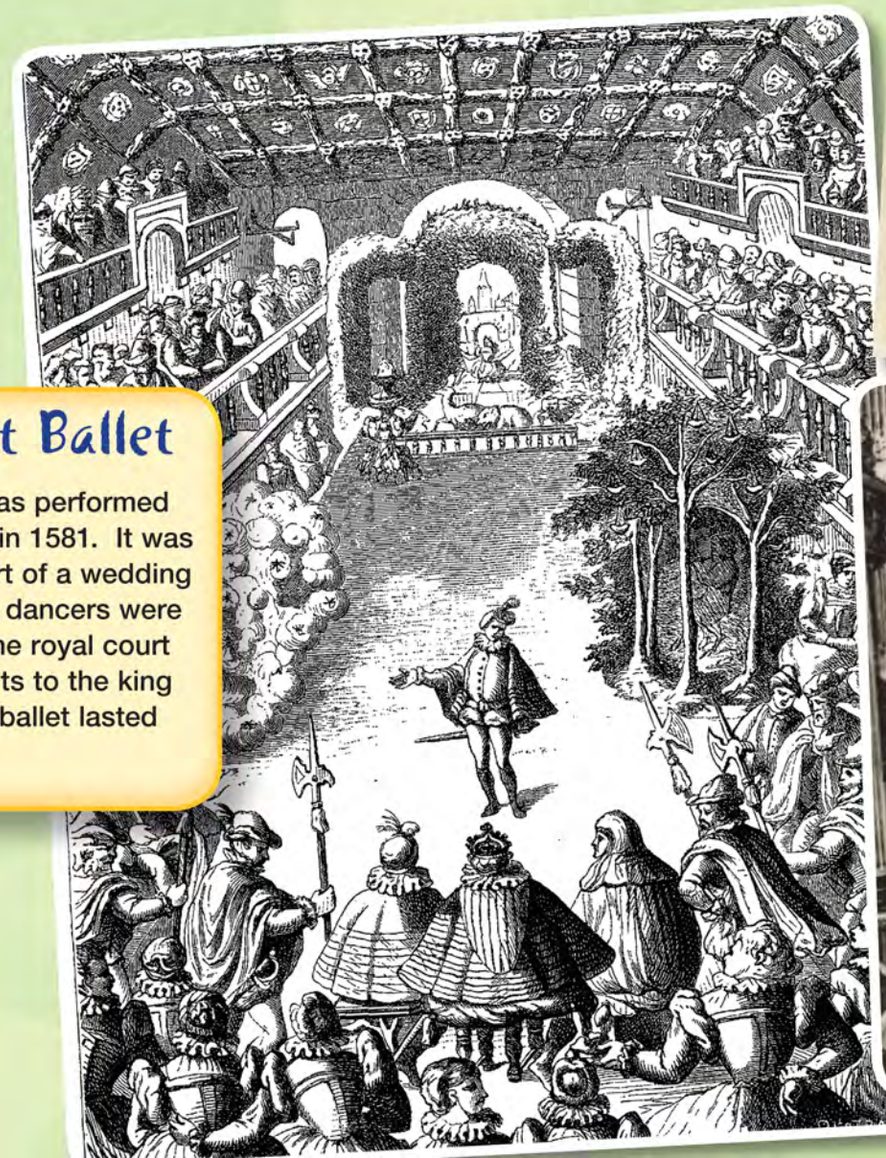
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The History of Ballet

Long ago, the first **ballet** (ba-LEY) was performed in France. Ballet is a dance performed with special body movements and positions. It often tells a story.



a ballet performance in 1582

The First Ballet

The first ballet was performed in Paris, France, in 1581. It was performed as part of a wedding celebration. The dancers were all members of the royal court and the attendants to the king and queen. The ballet lasted for five hours!

Italian ballet costume designs from the 16th century



Ballet began in Italy. But the first ballet school was in France, so all the words used in ballet are French. It was the French who turned ballet into the beautiful art form we know today.

ballet at La Scala in Milan, Italy, in the 18th century



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Young Ballet Dancers



There are five basic ways to position the feet in ballet.

The First Ballet School

The Royal Dance Academy began in France in 1661. It was started by King Louis XIV. The Academy was the first to name the five basic foot positions in ballet.

Ballerinas are girls. A boy who dances is a **danseur** (dan-SOOER). Ballet dancers may begin their training with classes at the age of 3 or 4. They learn about music and the **basic positions** of ballet.



By 11 or 12, ballet dancers may take lessons daily. They must work very hard. If they have enough desire and talent, they may be lucky enough to join a professional **ballet company** when they are older.

Professional Ballet

There are professional ballet companies in large cities throughout the world. Some of the most famous are in France, Russia, and the United States. Even if a person doesn't want to become a professional dancer, ballet can be a fun and exciting part of life.



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The Dancer's Day

Professional ballet dancers often work Monday through Saturday. If they have a **performance**, they may work Sunday, too.

A ballet dancer's day begins with a light breakfast. They eat healthy food to give them energy to dance.

A Ballet Dancer's Day

A ballet dancer's day might look something like this.

7:30 A.M.	Wake up and get dressed.
8:30 A.M.	Have a light breakfast.
9:00 A.M.	Go to ballet class.
11:00 A.M.	Take a break.
11:15 A.M.	Rehearse.
1:00 P.M.	Have lunch.
1:30 P.M.	More rehearsal, costume fittings, and pictures.
5:30 P.M.	Eat dinner.
6:30 P.M.	It's costume and makeup time.
8:00 P.M.	Time to perform!
10:00 P.M.	The performance ends.
10:30 P.M.	Relax and get ready for bed.
11:30 P.M.	Go to sleep.



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Why So Many?

Ballet dancers pack several pairs of slippers. They need different kinds of shoes for different classes. Some slippers are soft and bendable for easy movements. Others have hard, flat toes for dancing on tiptoe. Both types wear out quickly. Dancing is hard on dancers' feet, so they need good shoes.



After breakfast, dancers pack their bags to bring to the dance studio. They pack **leotards** and tights, **leg warmers**, and several pairs of ballet slippers. They'll need to wear different slippers throughout the day. Then it's off to ballet class.