

This Month's Focus: Petit Allegro

1. Turnout in Jumps. Students lie on their backs with their feet flexed and to the ceiling and legs straight in 1st position. Hold a small exercise ball (4-6 inches in diameter) between the heels. Bend the knees in demi plié and stretch. Do 8 reps total. Each rep should be smooth and controlled. For added difficulty, point the feet when stretching the knees.

2. Beats. Students lie on their backs with their feet pointed to the ceiling, legs straight, in 5th position. Open the legs to a straddle toward the floor while flexing the feet. Close to 5th position (bringing the feet up toward the ceiling again) with the same foot front as before. Beat to change the closing of the 5th position. Repeat with the other leg front. That's one set. Do 10 sets total. For added difficulty, lift the upper body in a crunch position and hold during this exercise.

3. Lower Leg Strength. Facing the barre: Rise and lower with straight legs 4x.

Rise, plié on rise and bend over the arches, straighten, lower 4x.

Repeat with a slow, deep demi plié and a spring up to rise 4x.

Sauté 4x.

Do the above in parallel, 1st position, and 2nd position.

4. Take-off. Students lie on their backs with their legs extended toward the ceiling, in parallel with a small exercise ball (4-6 inches in diameter) between their ankles. Do a slow, sustained plié with the feet flexed, then quickly push to point the feet and stretch the knees quickly like you're jumping. Do 8 reps in parallel. Then turn out and do 8 reps in 1st position, 8 reps in 5th position with the right leg front, and 8 reps in 5th position with the left leg front.

5. Foot Strength. Stand in 1st position on quarter or half point (the heels are lower than in 3/4 point). Demi plié on rise 8x. Demi plié on rise and hold for 20 seconds. Stretch the calves and Achilles. Then change to parallel and repeat.