

## The Premises for Valuing Ballet Pedagogical Studies

By: Annette T. Thomas

*Definition of Pedagogy: "The act, process and art of imparting knowledge"*

Most ballet teachers in America teach what and how they remember their teachers teaching them. This promulgates misconceptions of what a teaching method might be but is not an actual Teaching Method itself. Even professional dancers will merely teach what they remember being taught...very few have actually taken ballet pedagogy courses. In Russia a teacher of classical ballet in any sizeable school must take and have graduated from 8 years of ballet pedagogical studies before they are allowed to teach even the beginning class.

No one would feel qualified to teach high school just because they graduated from high school, so how is it that we think we can teach ballet just because we took classes? Most of us can't even remember what we did in the first year or two of our own lessons so we tend to teach close to what we ended with...but slower. This approach merely teaches the outward appearance of a movement but disregards the building block process (Method) of forming a ballet artist. This is also why few but the very gifted actually become world-class ballet artists in America because the understanding and impartation of the full pedagogical process is missing.

Pedagogy provides the building blocks for true training "from the inside out", not merely the choreography (appearance) of the movement. It takes into account the entire development of the dancer/artist through every point of their progress mentally, physically and emotionally in a comprehensively methodical manner. Pedagogy courses demonstrate that teaching ballet is not just about teaching choreographic pieces of "end form" exercises slowed down, but that there is an *entire progression of "forms"* which lead up to the ending form of each and every step in the classical ballet repertoire.

### **Ballet Pedagogy:**

- Provides a blue print of each form of each step in the entire repertoire and when it is physically and mentally appropriate to teach each one.
- Provides a clear understanding of the step itself so that in its final form it will always be "clean" (not trying to clean things up after the fact).
- Is "age appropriate" meaning that at every level the students find it to be an approachable challenge while still providing elements of creativity, self-expression and fun.
- Gives the teacher and the student confidence in both the process and the outcome.