12\textsuperscript{th} July 2012

Dear Member,

As you know, at the Annual General Meeting held on 26\textsuperscript{th} April 2012 Members were asked to consider a Member’s Special Motion relating to the new work for Grades 1-3 and Intermediate Foundation / Intermediate. The Motion was passed, and I am now writing to let you know what steps we have taken to consider the Motion, and to explain how the Trustees, on behalf of the Academy’s Members, propose that it should be implemented.

At a meeting on 21\textsuperscript{st} June, the Board of Trustees unanimously confirmed a detailed proposal from the Creative Team, which sets out an integrated system of training exercises and music as the Academy’s approach to meeting the requirements of the Special Motion. This approach is based on the premise that training exercises should be developed by the teacher interactively with a particular class and the students within that class, in accordance with their physical and psychological levels of understanding and ability. Such exercises will always therefore be dependent on the teacher’s own creativity and their ability to inspire and elicit creative ideas and expression from their students. In other words, a training exercise should be constructed on the principle that the teacher’s judgement is paramount.

In order to ensure that teachers are equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge to enable them to do this successfully, the Academy has developed a comprehensive portfolio of teaching qualifications from Certificate to Masters level. Since their inception, these courses have been designed to provide genuine teacher education rather than a ‘training system’. From July 2013, the introduction of a Continuing Professional Development Scheme will provide further support for teachers. In this way, the Academy has developed structures for teacher education, both initial and ongoing, which are truly integrated with the underlying philosophy of the new examination syllabi.

It is important to remember that the examination syllabus was designed from the outset to incorporate systematic chronological development through all levels, resulting in an integrated and graduated system of exercises and dances both within each level and between different levels. For example, within a single Grade, movements at the barre prepare for and prefigure movements in the centre, and between Grades, movements at one level support and anticipate movements at the next.

Alongside the creation of Grades 1-3, Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate, the Creative Team planned and developed courses to support teachers as they began teaching the new work. These courses began in 2011 and are designed to equip teachers with a secure base from which they can expand and develop their knowledge in relation to the syllabus content. From July 2013 they will be integrated within the Academy’s Continuing Professional Development Scheme.

The Creative Team welcomes the opportunity to develop further resources to support the new examination syllabi. Together with the Faculty of Education, they are in the process of devising an integrated system of resources to support lifelong learning for teachers. Additional courses and materials that cover key concepts of training in classical ballet and character dance, relating directly to the content of the syllabi, are currently in production.
Courses will include Character, Choreography, and Syllabus Surgery (for Grades 1-3) and Variations (for Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate). Resources will be added to the product range, including a DVD for Character which will contain a commentary providing an understanding of the style, musicality and artistry required for the choreography and suggestions for ‘build up’ of steps. Classwork CDs with examples of music for use as free work for training purposes will be introduced for Grades 1-3, Character and classical work and Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate. The CDs will contain a choice of music for each exercise with different tempi, metres, accents, dynamics and other musical characteristics to accommodate different levels and stages of training. Finally, *The Foundations of Classical Ballet Technique* will be filmed on DVD, defining the basic elements, positions and movements, why they are important, and how they are to be performed, and including suggestions for enchaînements that may be used as training exercises.

The attached appendix provides a full overview of the proposed integrated training system, of which the above is a summary. This is however not a definitive list, as more courses and resources will be added when needs arise and in the creative process, and the final format of resources may differ from the outline given.

At the forefront of the Academy’s ethos is a belief in the value of a wide-ranging and varied approach to teaching and learning. To encourage this, the Academy has developed, over a number of years, a range of courses, workshops and resources which not only support the examination syllabus which forms the basis of a significant portion of the day-to-day teaching of its Members, but which also promote wider knowledge and understanding of ballet and current teaching practices. Accordingly, the Trustees are pleased that so much of what we were already planning supports the requirements represented by the Special Motion.

Finally, it may perhaps be helpful to reiterate and clarify that the Trustees did not support the Member’s Special Motion, for no other reason than their firm belief that an Annual General Meeting, with its focus on matters related to governance, is not the appropriate forum for discussion of detailed operational matters, especially when there are so many other channels of communication available to Members who wish to express an opinion, offer ideas or voice concerns. However, the introduction of proxy voting as a part of our revised Charter some four years ago was an important step in enabling the worldwide Membership of the Academy to have a closer involvement with the Academy’s affairs, and while it will never be possible to please every Member, given that there will be times when greatly differing views are expressed (and this diversity is one of the Academy’s strengths), I am sure you will feel that this current matter has resulted in useful debate and a practical, workable and very comprehensive outcome.

With best wishes,

Kerry Rubie
Chairman
Royal Academy of Dance
APPENDIX

1 Members’ motion

‘To consider a resolution “that the Creative Team produce training exercises and (piano) music as part of an integrated system to support the new work for Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate examinations and Grades 1-3 (especially the Character Dances), and incorporate training exercises as part of a system of training to be launched with the rest of the syllabi in future”, submitted in accordance with Bye-Law 16.’

2 Definition of training exercises

In devising resources for training exercises (as outlined in Section 3 of this document), it is important to make clear that these should be interpreted in conjunction with the wider understanding of teaching, learning and teacher education promoted by the Royal Academy of Dance.

The panel’s definition of training exercises is as follows, and is based on principles shared in teachers’ syllabus courses for Pre-Primary/Primary in Dance, Grades 1-3, Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate.

Training exercises are:

Developed by the teacher interactively with the particular class and children within the class, in accordance with their physical and psychological level of understanding and current ability and therefore…

1. Dependent on teacher’s judgement of what is appropriate, based on
   - Broad understanding of child development (physical, motor, cognitive and affective)
   - Knowledge of the children’s current ability
   - Knowledge of the vocabulary and assessment criteria at each level of the syllabus
   - Understanding of pedagogical principles
   - Awareness of current practice
   - Practical constraints such as studio size, floor, barres and other resources

2. Grounded in clear communication and encouragement

3. Developed using a ‘teachers’ toolbox’ to include
   - Simplification of complex movements into individual elements
   - Use of music, rhythm, words and sounds to aid understanding
   - Use of imagery
   - Incorporation of student feedback and ideas
   - Repetition
   - Variation
   - Graduated complexity
For example, in the learning of a specific movement from one of the dances,

1. Assess current stage of student’s training, and thus the movements that need to be individually trained.

2. Practice facing the barre –
   - use of support to assist acquisition of quality of movement
   - use of multisensory imagery, incorporating suggestions from students, and personal experience of teacher
   - use of different types of music to explore dynamic of movement including rhythmic content
   - use of graduated tempo to assist with learning of movements

3. Elicit feedback from student to ensure learning has taken place, if it has then:

4. Take it into the centre – to consolidate what has been achieved at the barre. If learning has been achieved:

5. Add arms, with options according to ability and based on teacher’s judgement: e.g. if they are able already, let them do the choreography as set, otherwise hands on waist, or basic port de bras, or natural arms etc. if learning has been achieved

6. Change alignment, thus adding more elements towards the final complete exercise.

7. Keep assessing progress, adding more elements (e.g. arms) until final choreography has been achieved.

3 Integrated system of resources

3.1 Practical Courses

3.1.1 Character

The aims of this course are to:

- Develop understanding of the appropriate training of the basic technique for each level
- Develop understanding of the different styles and qualities of movement
- Enhance the appreciation of the music including rhythms and phrasing
- Develop confidence in performance

3.1.2 Choreography Course

The aims of this course are to:

- Discuss, explore and expand knowledge and understanding of choreography through the study and realisation of teacher’s own creativity
- Develop the necessary skills to devise suitable material for training exercises, group dances and Solo Performance Awards.
3.1.3 Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate Variations
The aims of this course are to:

- Develop approaches to teaching that enhance understanding of technique, artistry, musicality and creativity in relation to the content
- Explore ways of creating ‘build up’ exercises in relation to the choreography for the Variations

3.1.4 Grades 1-3 Syllabus surgery
The aims of this course are to:

- Provide feedback from examiners on the technical, musical and performance aspects of the new work as observed in examinations to date
- Discuss, explore and develop strategies to strengthen all areas of the work
- Consider the relevance and interpretation of the assessment criteria in selected exercises and dances

3.2 General Resources

3.2.1 Character DVD related to Grades 1-3

- The DVD will contain a commentary providing an understanding of the style, musicality and artistry required for the choreography.
- It will contain suggestions for ‘build up’ of the steps that may be used to train the various movements.

3.2.2 Character CD
The CD will contain examples of music in the style of the character work in each grade which the teacher may use for free work for training purposes in the classroom. Depending on demand, a book of piano music matching the CD may be published.

3.2.3 CDs for classwork (Grades 1-3/Intermediate Foundation/Intermediate)

CD1: Piano music with approximately three choices for each exercise which can be used to follow the format of Grades 1-3, i.e. three warm-ups, three pieces suitable for pliés or port de bras style music, three appropriate for tendus and so on through to music for allegro.

In contrast to some of the music on the syllabus CD, the music on the resources CD will be in regular paired phrases of 8, 12 or 16 counts to provide a simple framework for teachers to develop or quickly improvise custom exercises based on the level and stage of training of the students in the particular class. In each case, the selections will be varied in different ways, for example by tempo (slow, medium, fast), or by metre (2/4, 6/8 or 3/4 for example), accent, dynamics and other musical characteristics.

The music is presented in class order for ease of use. However, sample class plans will be provided that show how particular pieces of music can be ‘re-purposed’ for different types of exercise.
CD2: Similar to CD 1, but with a mixture of piano and other instruments, voice and percussion. Although intended to align with the Intermediate Foundation and Intermediate syllabus, it will be suitable for free classes at any level.

3.2.4 Foundations of Classical Ballet Technique DVD

The DVD will present the foundations of classical ballet technique, defining the basic elements, positions and movements, why they are important, how they are to be performed. It will also include suggestions for enchaînements that may be used as training exercises.