

THE CECCHETTI CLASSICAL BALLET FACULTY

Established in 1904 the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD) is one of the world's oldest and most influential dance examination boards. Ever since its inception the ISTD has developed new styles and dance genres, and today with 12 faculties, no other dance examination board has the breadth of genres that the ISTD offers.

Our mission is to educate the public in the art of dancing in all its forms, to promote the knowledge of dance, to provide up-to-date techniques, and to maintain and improve teaching standards across the globe. The ISTD is always moving with the times to keep pace with the latest developments in dance. We regularly update our syllabi and introduce new faculties to respond to changes in the world of dance.



The Cecchetti Classical Ballet Faculty has a rich heritage and history. Enrico Cecchetti was one of the most important influences on the foundations of modern classical ballet training. He evolved a method of training in the 19th century that is as relevant today as it was when first created. His influence on British ballet has been far-reaching and resulted in the creation of The Cecchetti Society and the Cecchetti Ballet Faculty of the ISTD. The Cecchetti principles of training continue to produce outstanding artistic and technically accomplished dancers,

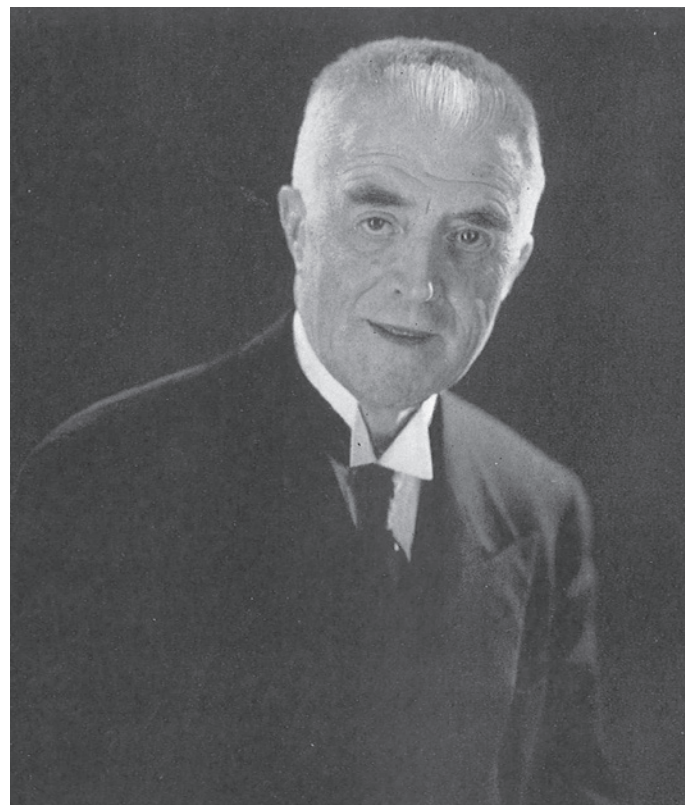
able to work with today's directors across a spectrum of ballet and contemporary dance companies.

Enrico Cecchetti (1850–1928)

Cecchetti was born in Italy in 1850. At the height of his career as a dancer he migrated to St Petersburg, where he joined the Imperial Russian Ballet and created the virtuoso role of The Bluebird and the mime role of Carabosse in the premiere of *The Sleeping Beauty* in 1890. Cecchetti also taught the Class of Perfection in the school and worked with many Mariinsky

Above left: Anna Pavlova with Maestro Cecchetti

Above: A lithograph by R. Schwabe of Maestro Enrico Cecchetti (donated to the ISTD by Mrs Jane Box-Grainger in memory of her Mother, June Hampshire)



Above: Maestro Enrico Cecchetti

Above right: Cyril Beaumont

dancers, including Pavlova, Karsavina and Nijinsky. In 1909 he joined Diaghilev's Ballets Russes as a teacher and mime artist and travelled with the company to France and England. His pupils included Alicia Markova, Ninette de Valois, Marie Rambert and Leonide Massine. In 1918 he opened a school of dancing in London, at 160 Shaftesbury Avenue.

Cecchetti trained under Lepri, a pupil of the great Carlo Blasis who had codified the technique of classical ballet in 1820. Blasis' ideas were developed further by Cecchetti who grouped the vocabulary into six sets of exercises, one for each day of the week. This work was recorded and published in 1922 by Cyril Beaumont, assisted by Stanislas Idzikowski and Enrico Cecchetti himself. Further volumes were compiled by Margaret Craske and Derra de Moroda. In 1923 he returned to Italy and accepted the post of Director of the Ballet School in La Scala, Milan. He died there in 1928.

British ballet and Cecchetti

Cecchetti's influence on British ballet has been far reaching. Ninette de Valois and Marie Rambert, the two architects of 20th century British ballet, both studied extensively with Cecchetti. Rambert called him "the greatest ballet-master of his time"¹ and Ninette de Valois wrote in her memoir "Maestro Cecchetti

left a great imprint on the English School and was my exclusive teacher for four years. The important aspects of his teaching will remain a part of the academic tradition of our English ballet"².

When Cecchetti retired from his studio in London his work was handed down through his disciple, Margaret Craske, to a whole generation of British artists. Many of these were to spread his method abroad where it has become an integral part of the work of many major companies and schools all over the world. Most notable amongst Rambert and Craske's many famous pupils, and the most important link through them to Cecchetti, was Sir Frederick Ashton. He wrote: "If I had my way, I would always insist that all dancers should daily do the wonderful Cecchetti *port de bras*, especially beginners. It inculcates a wonderful feeling for line and correct positioning and the use of head movement and *épaulement*, which, if correctly absorbed, will be of incalculable use throughout a dancer's career"³.

The Cecchetti Society and the Cecchetti Faculty of the ISTD

It was at the instigation of Cyril Beaumont, writer, ballet historian and critic, that the Cecchetti Society was founded in 1922, to preserve and promote the work of 'the Maestro'. The first committee comprised such

luminaries as Cyril Beaumont, Margaret Craske, Jane Forrester, Molly Lake, Derra de Moroda, Marie Rambert and Ninette de Valois. Maestro Cecchetti was President and Madame Cecchetti was Vice President. In 1923 when Cecchetti moved back to Italy, Cyril Beaumont was elected Chairman of the Cecchetti Society, a post he held until his death in 1976. In 1924 the Cecchetti Society was incorporated with the 'Imperial Society of Dance Teachers' (now, the ISTD). Following Cyril Beaumont, the position of Chairman has been held by: Diana Barker 1976–1990; Mary Jane Duckworth 1990–1999; Linda Pilkington 1999–2005 and Elisabeth Swan 2005–date.

The chairmen along with their vice chairmen, committee members and secretaries have made an outstanding contribution, leading the Faculty, promoting the work of the Society and protecting the Cecchetti heritage, whilst also responding to the changing face of dance. Many members of the Cecchetti Society have served on the Faculty committees over the years, offering their time on a voluntary basis and giving invaluable support to the Society through their experience and expertise.

The Cecchetti Society is also very honoured to have the support of a number of esteemed patrons. The current Society patrons are Dame Monica Mason DBE, David Bintley CBE, Lesley Collier CBE and Kevin O'Hare.

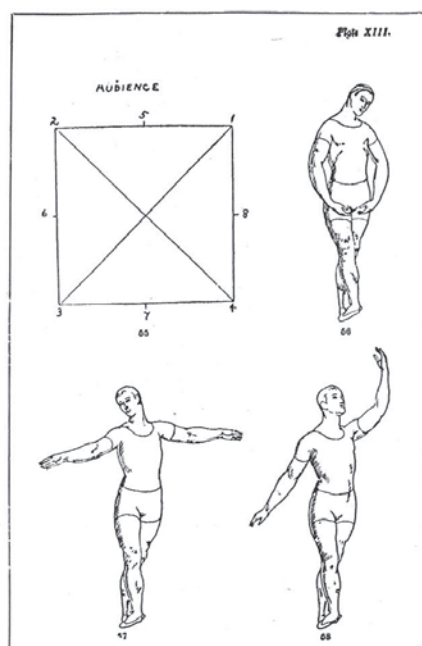
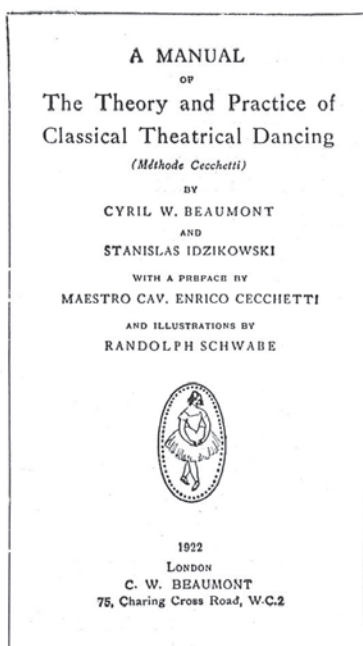
In the 90 years that Cecchetti classical ballet has been affiliated to the ISTD it has evolved and expanded and now provides a very wide range of training and performance opportunities for children, students and teachers. With nationally and internationally recognised ISTD examinations and qualifications, Cecchetti classical ballet is now taught across Europe and beyond. Branches of the Cecchetti Society have also been formed throughout the world and flourish in Australia, South Africa, Canada, Italy and the USA. Together with the UK, these countries are the founder members of Cecchetti International Classical Ballet (CICB), working together to promote the Cecchetti method.

Building on this rich legacy the purpose of Cecchetti classical ballet today is: 'Recreational, Vocational, Professional – a Training for the Future'. To find out more about Cecchetti Classical Ballet go to www.cecchetti.co.uk.

Catherine Hutchon

REFERENCES

- ¹ Rambert, M. (1972) *Quicksilver: Autobiography* London: St Martin's Press, p103
- ² de Valois, N. (1957) *Come Dance with Me: A Memoir 1898–1956*, London: Hamish Hamilton, p62
- ³ Glasstone, R. (1996) 'The Influence of Cecchetti on Ashton's Work' in Jordan, S. & Grau, A. (eds) (1996) *Following Sir Fred's Steps: Ashton's Legacy*, London: Dance Books Ltd, p8



Title-page and page from Beaumont (C. W.) and Idzikowski (S.) *A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Methods Cecchetti)*, London, 1922. The plate shows some positions from the First and Second Ports de Bras.



Above: The current patrons of the Cecchetti Classical Ballet Faculty, from top to bottom: Dame Monica Mason DBE, David Bintley CBE, Kevin O'Hare and Lesley Collier CBE

Photos by Geoff Wheatley
David Bintley photo by Richard Battye