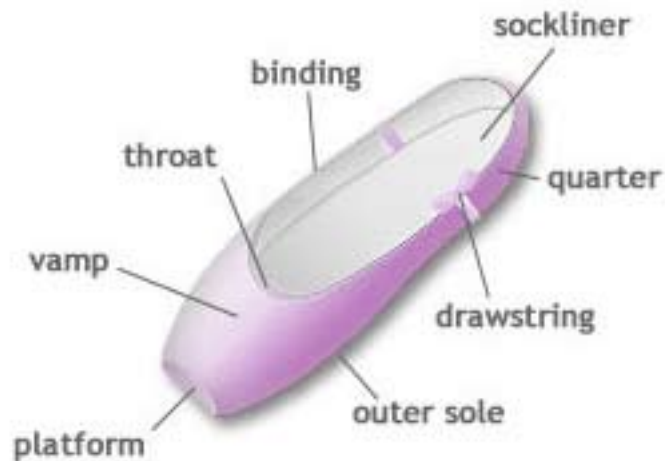


En Pointe

In order to dance on the tips of their toes, ballet dancers wear pointe shoes or toe shoes. The aesthetics of ballet call for a long, tapered line of the leg, which is enhanced by the almost conical shape of the shoe. Ballerinas strive to create an illusion of weightlessness which is achieved by rapidly skimming the floor, spinning and sustaining poses “sur les pointes.” The foot is supported from underneath the arch by a stiff insole, or shank. The box of the shoe tightly encases the toes, so that the dancer’s weight rests on an oval-shaped platform. The shank has varying degrees of flexibility, and the box may have slightly different shapes. The outer material is usually pink satin and can be dyed to match the dancer’s costume. Most pointe shoes will fit either foot; there is usually no left or right. Except in rare cases, pointe shoes are worn only by women.



Although the shoe allows the dancer to poise indefinitely on tiptoe, it is her strength and technique that bring her from the normal standing position through a mid-position, demi-pointe, to the full-pointe position. Once en pointe, she maintains a contraction of the muscles of the feet, ankles, legs and torso to pull herself up out of the shoe. Without proper technique, an attempt at dancing en pointe can cause injury. Children with growing feet should not dance en pointe, nor should anyone lacking adequate strength and training. The introduction to pointe work must be gradual. Dancers should train for several years in soft slippers before they wear pointe shoes. Then only a few minutes of each class are devoted to special pointe exercises. Eventually dancers progress to wearing pointe shoes for half, or all of class.

Retrieved from www.gaynorminden.com. Check this site to peek inside a pointe shoe and read about the history of dancing en pointe.