

The Cecchetti Project

The Cecchetti Method of Classical Ballet training is named after its originator, Maestro Enrico Cecchetti. Born in Italy, Cecchetti was a dancer, mime, choreographer and ballet master, and is one of the most important teachers in the history of ballet. His influence ranged from Petipa's Imperial Russian Ballet, the origin of so much of the canon of 'classical' ballets still danced today, to Diaghilev's ground breaking Ballets Russes company, which contributed so much to the birth of modern classical ballet.

Cecchetti's legacy is preserved by the Cecchetti Society, founded in London in 1922, and through Cyril Beaumont's definitive 1922 publication *The Manual of Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Cecchetti Method)*, written with the help of Stanislas Idzikowski. However, as is common in the history of dance, the handing down of the Cecchetti method from one generation to the next through oral tradition has resulted in multiple interpretations and differing versions of the material.

Impressed by the specificity of the Cecchetti method when studying with Margaret Craske, a senior exponent of the method, Ann Hutchinson Guest began recording the enchaînements and adages in Labanotation in the 1950s. She subsequently studied with Antony Tudor, Peggy van Praagh, Mary Skeaping and Fridericka Derra de Moroda and recorded the sequences she learned, also making note of the differences and identifying each variation with the initials of the teacher. After moving to London, she continued her Cecchetti studies with Laura Wilson, Molly Lake, Diana Barker, Nora Roche, Nesta Brooking, Margaret Marsh and other members of the Cecchetti Society, encountering yet further differences in stylistic detail. The Cecchetti notations were eventually set aside as other notation projects took priority.

In the 1990s Ann met Toby Bennett, who is a faculty member of the dance department at the University of Surrey-Roehampton. Ann and Toby's mutual interests in Cecchetti and Labanotation inspired them to begin working together to compare the different versions of the Cecchetti method and to refine the notation and standardise the 'spelling' of key positions and movements. To broaden their discussions, they consulted Richard Glasstone, Michael Holmes and Angela Bailey on their understanding of the Cecchetti method as teachers and former performers. As research progressed and the sheer volume of material became evident, Ann and Toby saw the need to take editorial decisions in an attempt to determine the difference between minor variations of no real significance and those that had real value. Consideration has always been given to the Beaumont/Idzikowski book and the books *The Theory and Practice of Allegro in Classical Ballet (Cecchetti Method)* by Beaumont and Craske and *The Theory and Practice of Advanced Allegro in Classical Ballet (Cecchetti Method)* by Craske and Derra de Moroda.

Their collaboration has developed into a University of Surrey-Roehampton joint research project (Ann is a Senior Research Fellow at Roehampton and Toby is a Senior Lecturer), that was published with funding support from the Radcliffe Trust by Dance Books in 2007. *The Cecchetti Legacy* provides a more detailed account of the Cecchetti Method than has hitherto been available. Running to nearly 400 pages, and based largely on Ann Hutchinson Guest's notations from the 1950s and 1960s, this is a complete record of all of the enchaînements recorded in the Cecchetti Manuals, including some, which although not 'original', reflect important principles of the Method. The book will be of great use to anyone making an in depth study of Cecchetti's enchaînements as well as those interested in a more general study of their style and technique. It contains an extensive, discursive analysis of the Cecchetti style and technique using word descriptions and Labanotation example. In addition, all of the exercises and enchaînements are notated fully in Labanotation, providing a detailed account including some alternative versions taught by early teachers of the work.

