
A global guide to male ballet styles

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France

Charles Jude, Manuel Legris, Laurent Hilaire and Nicolas Le Riche, the generation raised by Rudolf Nureyev when director of Paris Opera Ballet in the 1980s and '90s, ideally combine the aristocracy of refined classical style with the supreme stage confidence of the French. Their supremacy descends from France's centuries-long dominance of world ballet and such formative stars as Auguste Vestris, the 18th century's Baryshnikov. In the mid-20th century, the charismatic Roland Petit and Jean Babilé pioneered the mould-breaking dramatic realism of modern ballet.

Russia

The vast country that masterminded the rise of men from props for ballerinas in the 19th century to the 20th century's biggest stars did so thanks largely to three famous escapees: Vaslav Nijinsky, Rudolf Nureyev and Mikhail Baryshnikov. But Yuri Soloviev, Vladimir Vasiliev, Irek Mukhamedov, Farouk Ruzimatov, Igor Zelensky and others have proved Russia to have strength in unmatched depth. Whether from the refined French-style Kirov or the earthier Bolshoi, every man danced as if answering a call from Russia's collective soul, as well as showing a technical magnificence that, even if it can sometimes look dramatically wooden, still makes the men from the East the men to beat.

Denmark

The Danes, with a tiny population but a 500-year-old ballet tradition, have long produced an improbable string of world male stars, the quickest foot-beaters and some of the true aristocrats of the art. Erik Bruhn, Henning Kronstam, Peter Martins (who became Balanchine's leading man at New York City Ballet) and Peter Schaufuss (later London Festival Ballet) laid the ground for the current global admiration of Johan Kobborg, now at the Royal Ballet, who shows that a Dane can do everything better than almost anybody.

Spain & Argentina

Despite having little ballet tradition, a cluster of recent stars have made Spain and Argentina the new nations to watch after Cuba. Spaniards Angel Corella (American

Ballet Theatre) and José Martínez (Paris Opera Ballet), and Argentinians Julio Bocca and Maximiliano Guerra have Cuban-influenced technical brilliance and Hispanic sensuality tempered by their innate cultural expressiveness and eagerness to learn abroad. Spain,

Argentina and Cuba form a sizeable Royal Ballet contingent for both sexes, reinforcing the message that Latin is the new Russian in ballet.

Britain

The Royal Ballet's founder, Ninette de Valois, blamed Oliver Cromwell for fostering the ingrained British embarrassment at boys doing ballet. English male dancing, epitomised by Anthony Dowell, is pure and cleanly classical, concealing its virtuosity in an eloquent, musical gracefulness that is a magnet to Russians, Cubans and Danes. However, many of the roles of Britain's world-renowned balletmakers Ashton and MacMillan were created on less famous but more theatrical all-rounders, such as Robert Helpmann, David Wall, Christopher Gable and Leslie Edwards.

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