

BALLET BASICS

THE BASIC STANCE (TBS)... Body Placement...without the basic stance, nothing is possible

Head erect, eyes level (projection)

Spine long

Neck long

Shoulders back and down

Sternum lifted

Rib cage in

Tummy scooped (in and up)

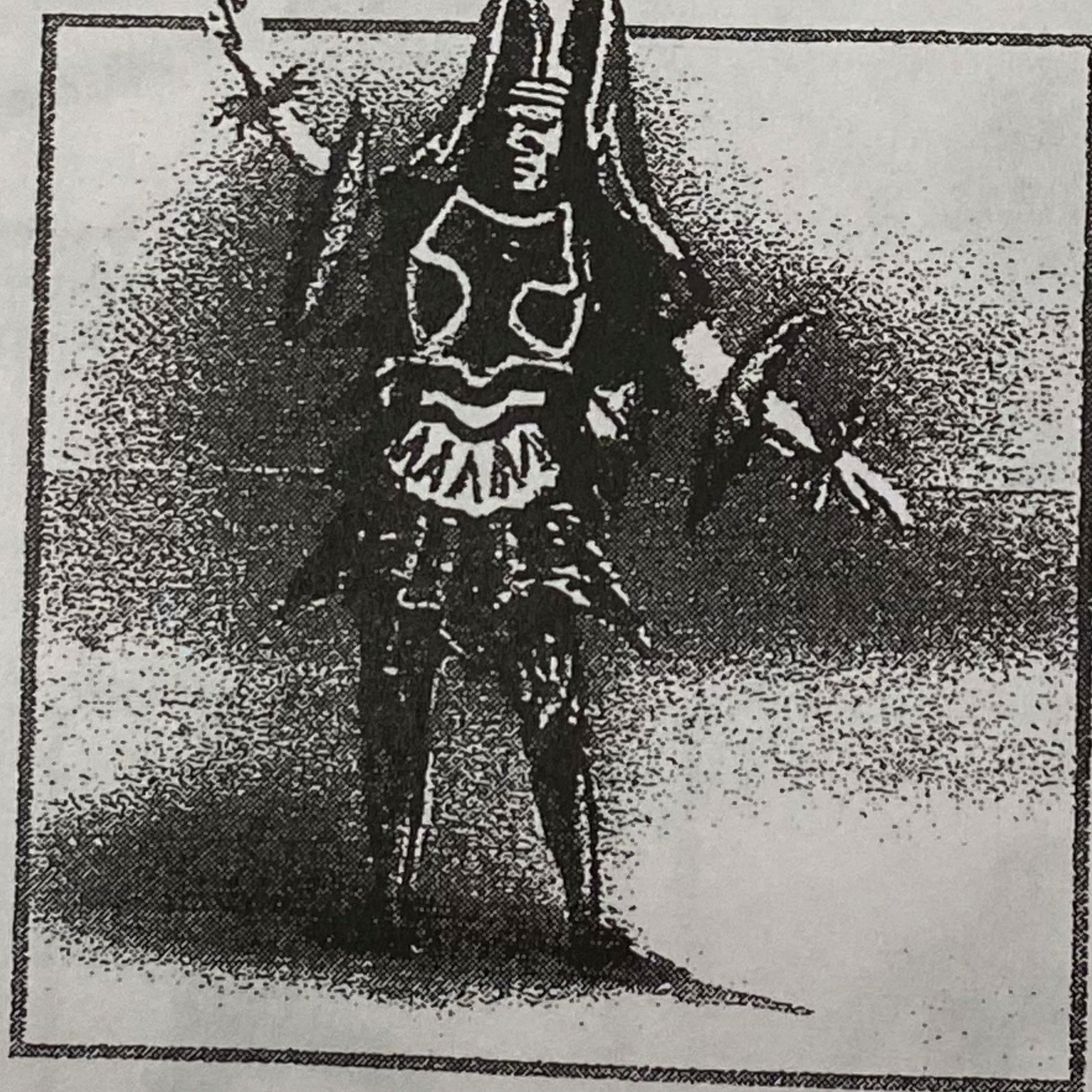
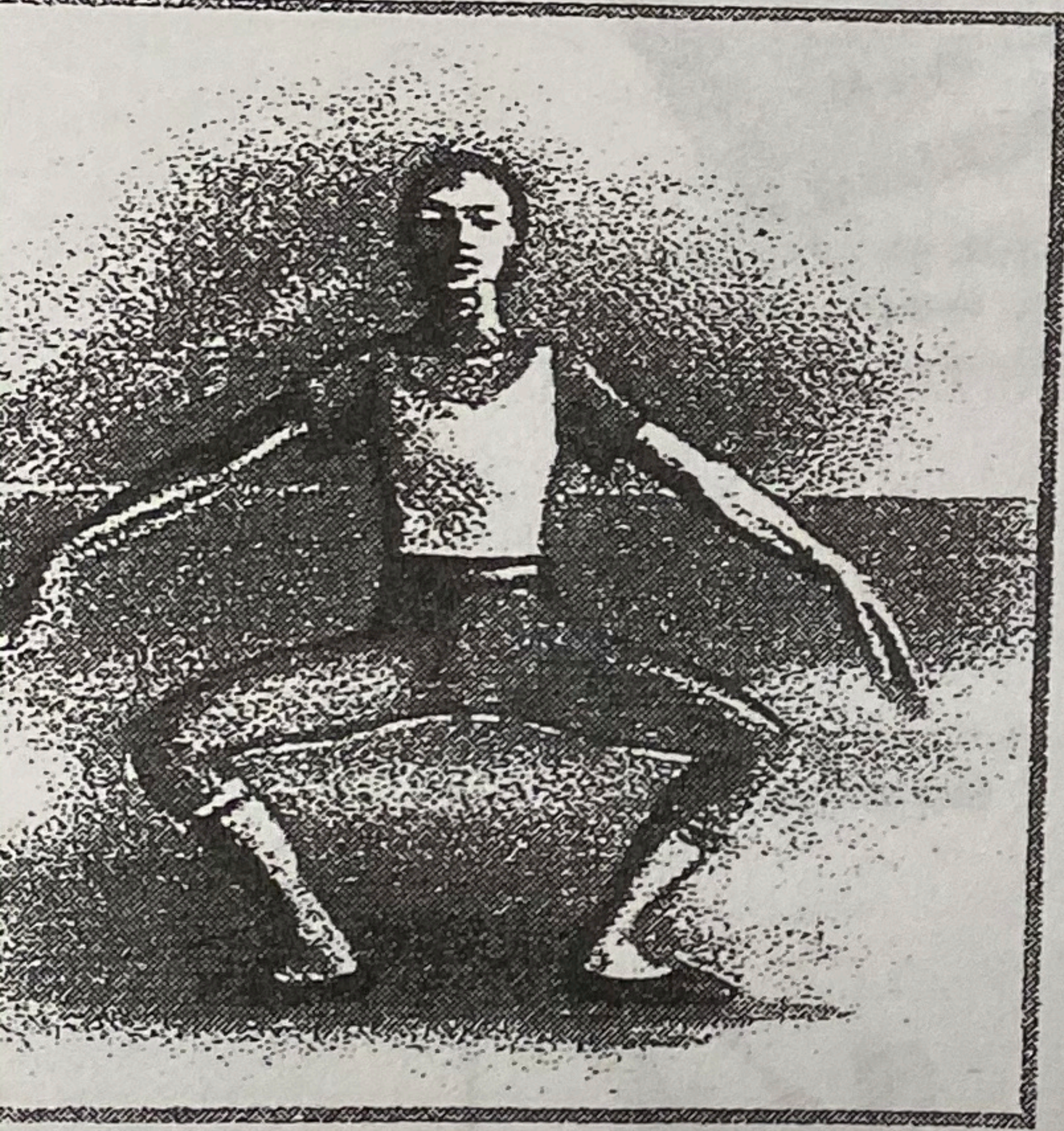
Legs long and pulled up

Weight equally on both feet and on 3 points (big toe, little toe, heel)

TURN OUT

In ballet, the feet and legs have to be turned out from the hips so that your knees and toes face sideways to facilitate movement and create the classical lines. Dancers first began to turn out their legs in Louis XIV's day. It showed off the calves and elegant, heeled shoes of the male dancers. Turn-out is now essential to the technique of classical ballet. Turning your legs out enables you to lift them higher. Without it your hip joints would lock up at a certain height and the streamlined look of ballet would be impossible to achieve.

Turn-out



In ballet, the feet and legs have to be turned out from the hips so that the toes and knees face sideways instead of forwards. This is called turn-out. It takes years of practice to do it properly.

Dancers first began to turn out their legs in Louis XIV's day. It showed off the calves and elegant, heeled shoes of the male dancers. Turn-out is now essential to the technique of classical ballet.

Turning your legs out enables you to lift them higher. Without it your hip joints would lock up at a certain height and the streamlined look of ballet would be impossible to achieve.

POSITIONS: Feet, Legs and Head

A. Feet: Cinq Positions des Pieds (Grant p.139)

First position (*en première*)

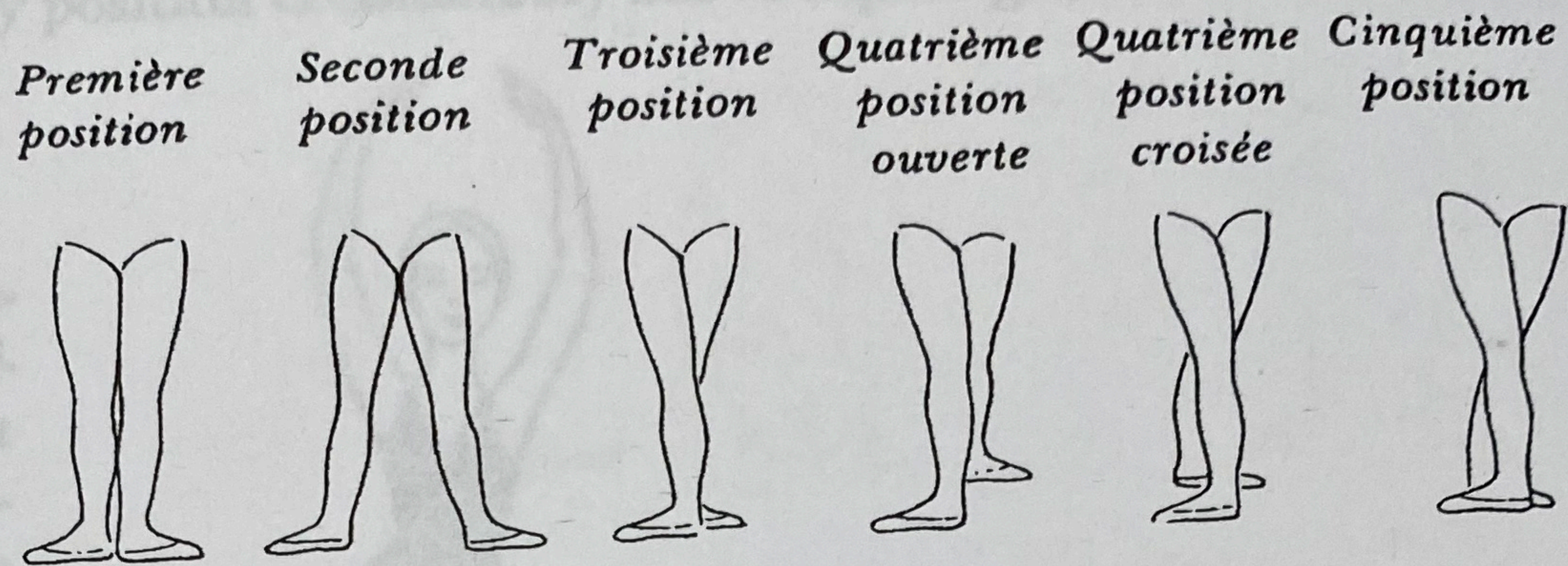
Second position (*en seconde*)

Third position (*en troisième*)

Fourth position open (*en quatrième ouverte*)

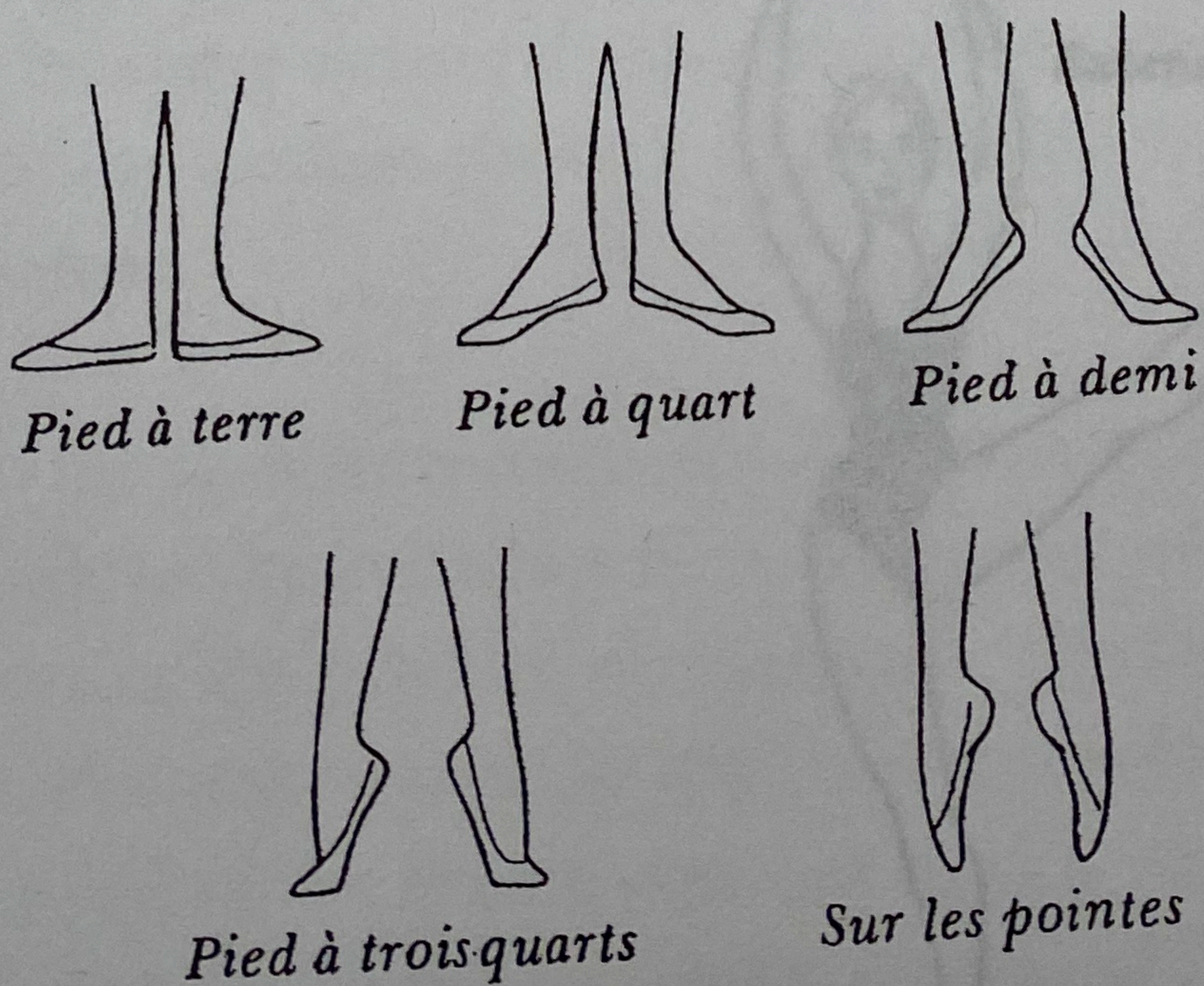
Fourth position crossed (*en quatrième croisée*)

Fifth position (*en cinquième*)



B. Positions of the foot on the floor. There are five levels at which the foot may be placed on the floor.

1. Pied a terre, or foot on the ground.
2. Pied a quart, or foot on the quarter-point.
3. Pied a demi, or foot on the half-point. The dancer stands with the weight on the ball of the foot with the heel raised off the floor.
4. Pied a trois quarts, or foot on the three-quarter point. The dancer stands with the weight high on the ball of the foot and on the toes with the heel raised off the floor. (This is the raised version most often used by girls.)
5. Sur la pointe, or on the full point. The dancer stands on the tips of the toes.

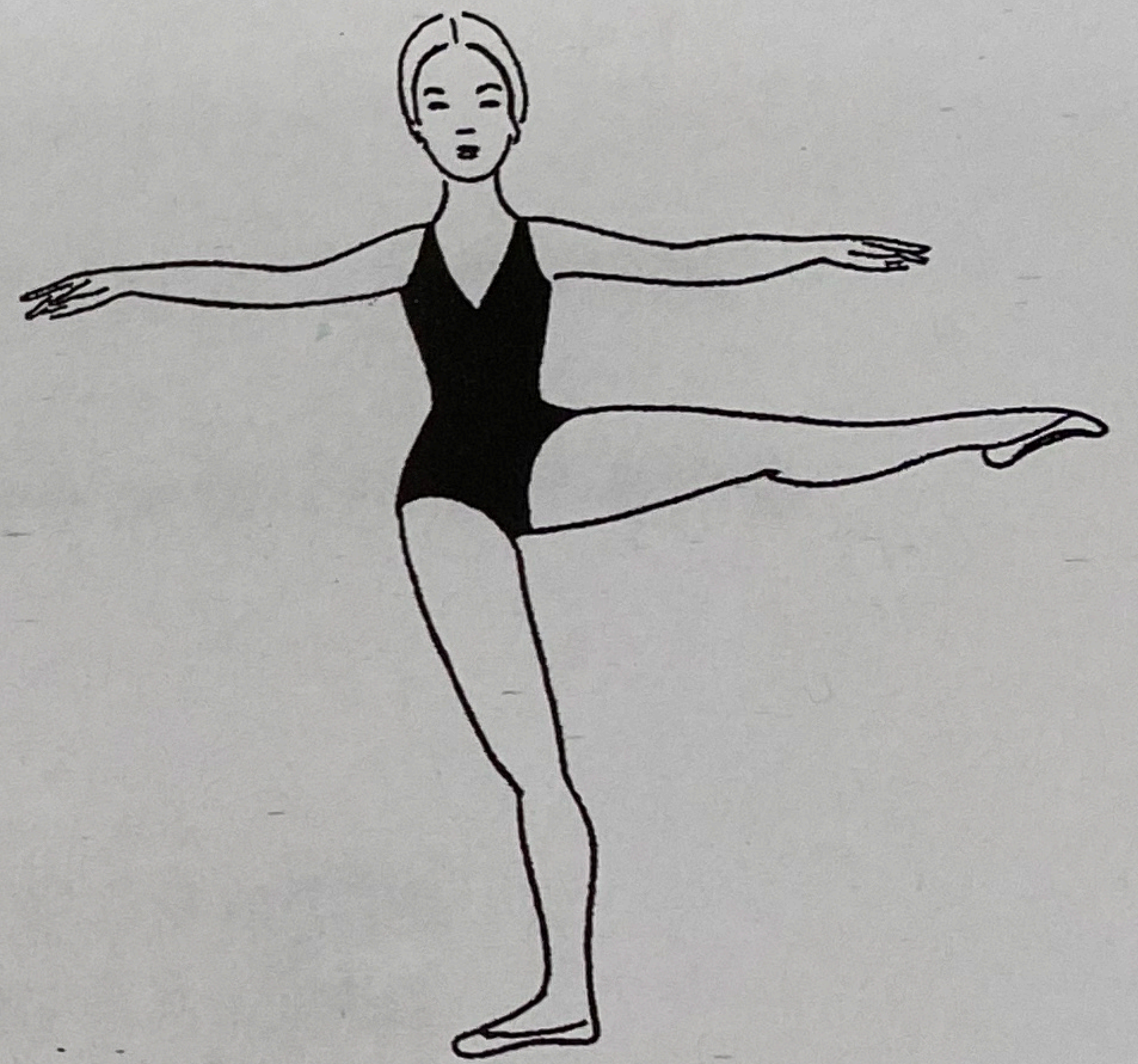


C. Positions of the foot/leg on the floor and in the air.
 Positions soulevees: raised positions. This is a term of the French School and refers to the positions of the feet: *pointe tendue* and *en l'air*. The positions soulevees are: From second position: *pique a terre*, *a la demi-hauteur*, *a la hauteur*. From the fourth position: *devant* or *derriere*, *pique a terre*, *a la demi-hauteur*, *a la hauteur*. These positions are taken *en face*, *croise* or *ouvert* (*efface*).
 In the Russian School the angle formed by the legs in relation to the vertical axis of the body is measured in general terms. For example, 45 degrees for half height (*demi-hauteur*), 90 degrees for a horizontal position with the toe at hip height (*a la hauteur*) and 135 degrees for any position considerably above hip height.

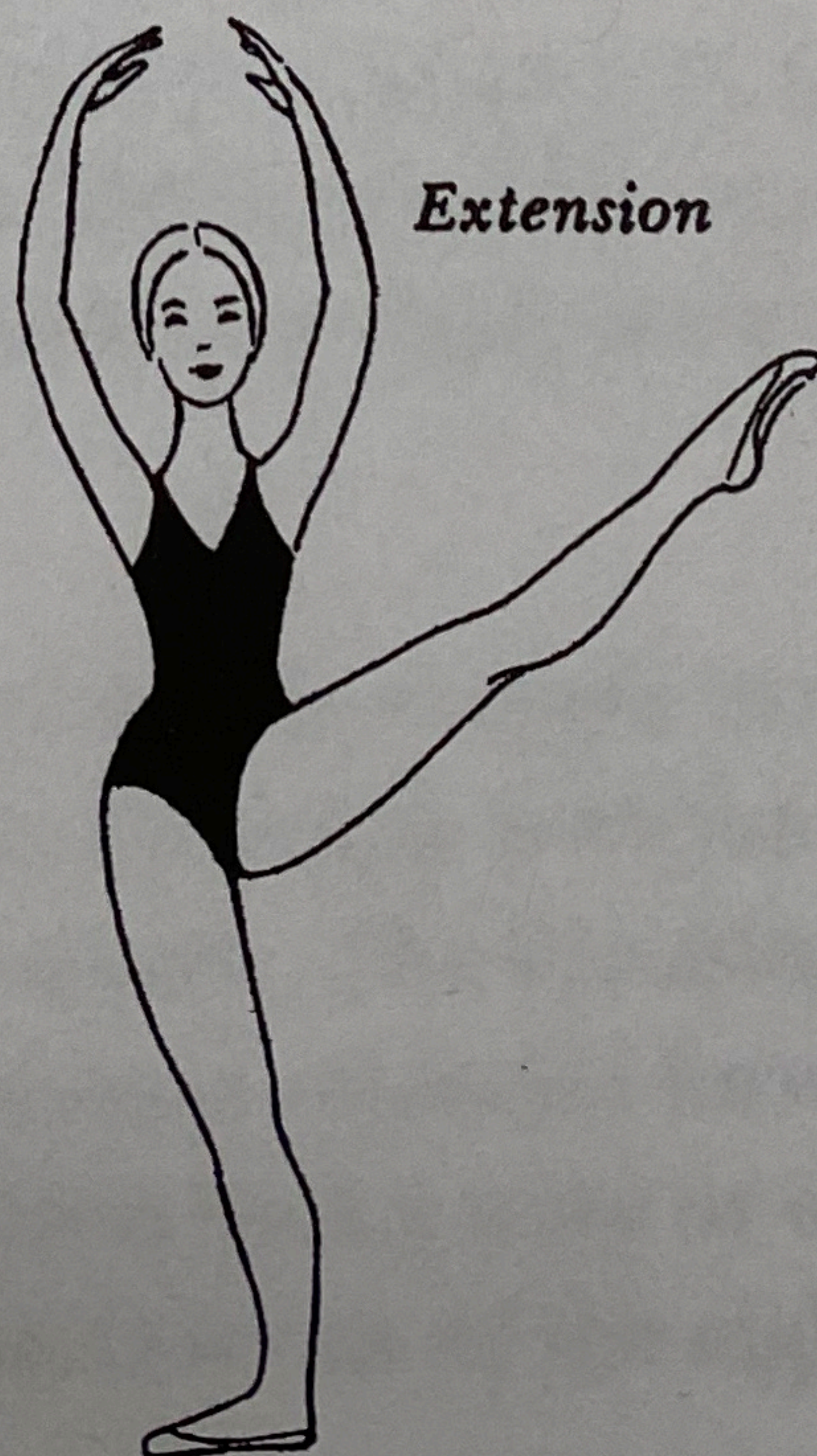
DEMI-HAUTEUR (d'mee-oh-TUHR). Literally, half-height. A position of the foot at midheight. The leg is considered at full height, or 90°, when it extends in the air at hip level. *Demi-hauteur* is a position of the leg at 45°, or midway between the ground and hip level. Also called *demi-position*.



Demi-hauteur



EXTENSION (egz-tahn-SYON). The act of extending the legs into space. A dancer is said to have a good *extension* when able to hold the leg at a 135° angle.

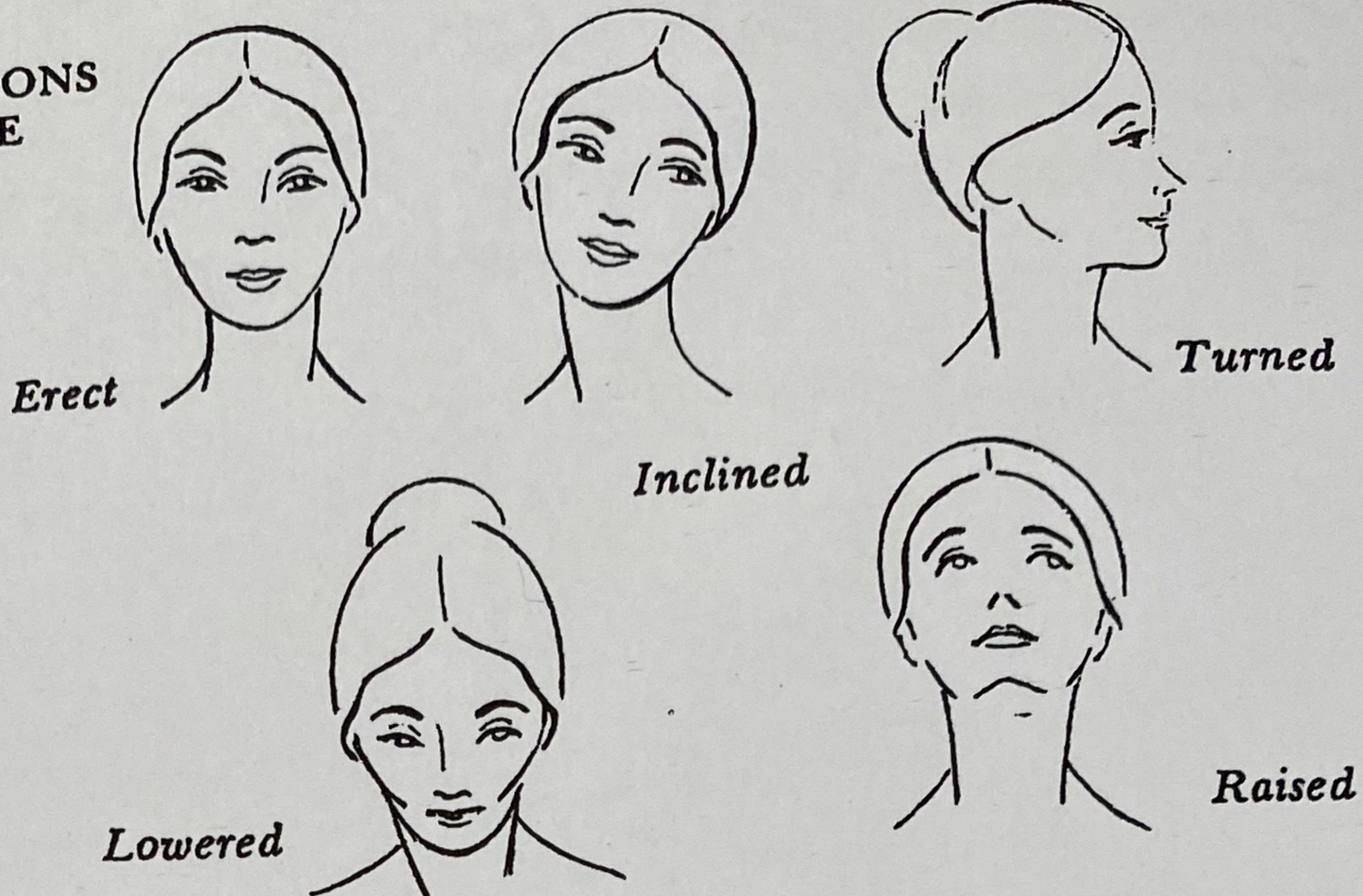


Extension

D. Head: In the Cecchetti method there are five principal positions of the head.

1. Erect
2. Inclined to one side (R or L)
3. Turned to one side (R or L)
4. Raised
5. Lowered

POSITIONS
OF THE
HEAD



E. Epaulement (Shouldering or shoulder position)

Basic rules are: (Corresponding or opposition)

1. Incline the shoulder and head toward the working leg in movements coming over.
2. Incline the shoulder and head away from the working leg in movements going under.

Fundamental positions of epaulement:

1. Croise: shouldering croise. Facing dsl 5th (r front) head to r shoulder
2. Efface: shouldering efface. Facing dsl 5th (l front) head to r shoulder

When epaulement is used, the position of the head depends upon the position of the shoulders and the shoulder position depends upon the position of the legs.

Epaulement gives the finishing artistic touch to every movement and is a characteristic feature of the modern classical style compared to the old French style, which has little epaulement.

Epaulement is also a term of the Cecchetti method to indicate a pose in which the dancer stands at an oblique angle to the audience in an arabesque position (2nd arabesque) with the body facing one or the other of the corners. The shoulders are held square to the line of direction, the arm nearer the audience extended forward and the corresponding leg extended to the fourth position back a terre or en l'air. The head is inclined and turned toward the audience. Epaulement is one of the eight directions of the body, Cecchetti method.

BALLET BEGINNINGS

LE TRIOMPHE
DE
LA MOUR,
BALLET ROYAL,
MIS EN MUSIQUE



A PARIS.
Par CHRISTOPHE BALLARD, Seul Imprimeur du Roy pour la
Musique, rue Saint Jean de Beureaux, au Palais National.
Et se vend à l'Entree de la Porte de Valenciennes, Royale de Musique
rue Saint Mammes.
M. DC LXXXI
AVEC PRIVILEGE DE S. M. LE ROI.

The Triumph of Love
This is the program for
Beauchamp's ballet, *The
Triumph of Love*,
performed on stage at
the Paris Opéra in 1681.

BALLET BEGAN IN ITALY in the 15th century and the word ballet comes from the Italian word *ballo*, meaning "dance." Ballet was taken to France from Italy by Catherine de Medici, and developed at the French courts of the 16th century. It was a part of court entertainment – grand spectacles with scenery and costumes, which included speeches, processions, music, and dancing. The first performance of ballet on stage in theaters was in 1669, when it was presented as a part of an opera.

Louis XIV as the
Rising Sun in *Le Ballet
de la nuit*, performed
at Versailles in 1653

Magnificent
headdress
suggests the
Sun's rays.

Posture is similar to
that of today's dancers.

Hands and
fingers are
poised in
positions still
used in ballet.

An early ballet
Ballet comique de la reine
was performed on
October 15, 1581. It was
created by Balthasar de
Beaujoyeux for a wedding
celebration, and was a
mixture of
recitation,
singing, and
dancing. Watched
by 10,000 people, the ballet
showed scenes from Greek
and Roman mythology, and
lasted six hours.



Louis XIV
The magnificent Sun
King, Louis XIV, loved
dancing and took part
in his first ballet when
he was 13. He and his
dancing master, Pierre
Beauchamp, set up the
Académie Royale de
Danse, where the five
positions (see
page 12) were written
down for the first time.
French is still the language
of ballet today.

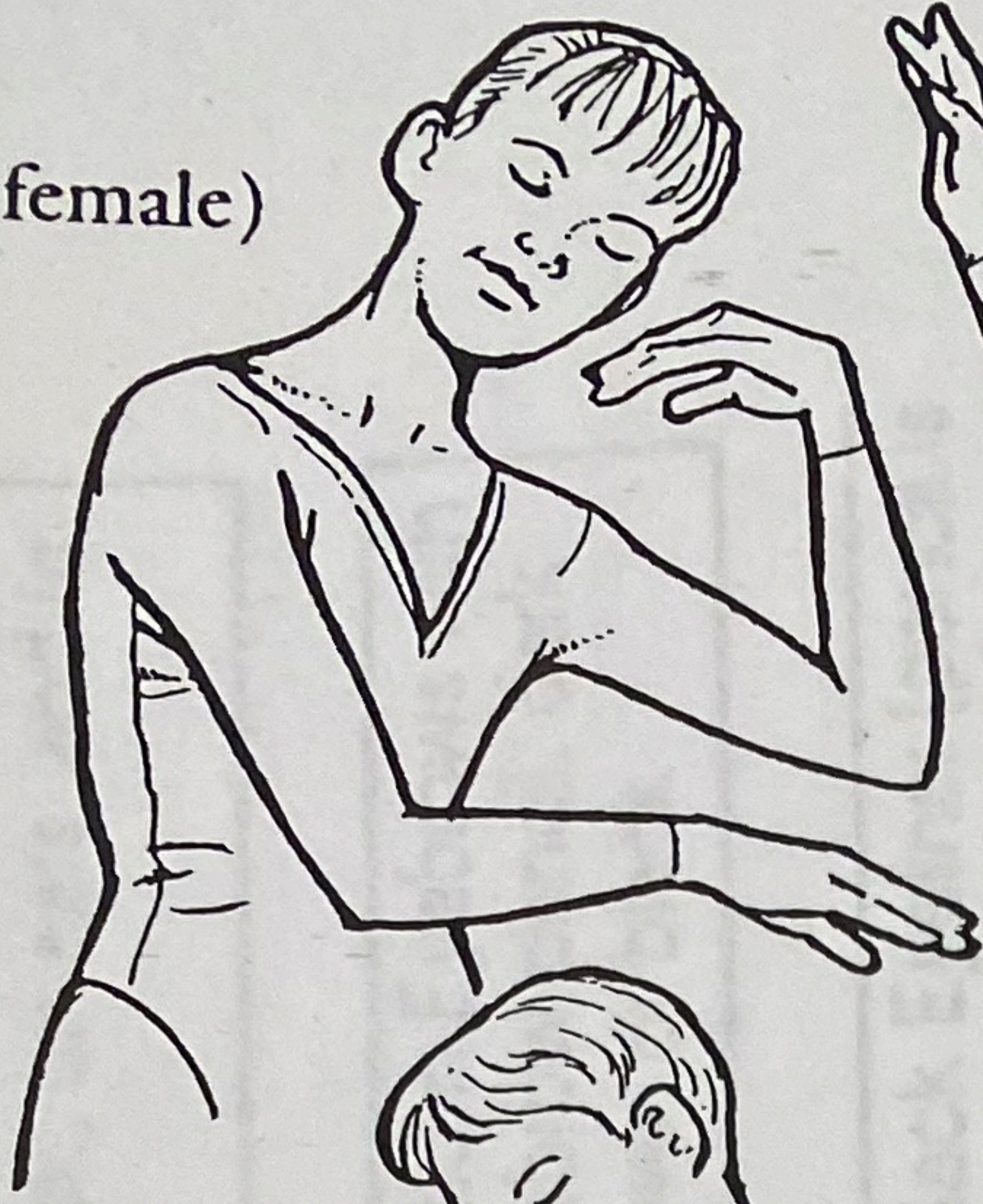
Legs are
turned out to show
off calves
and ankles.



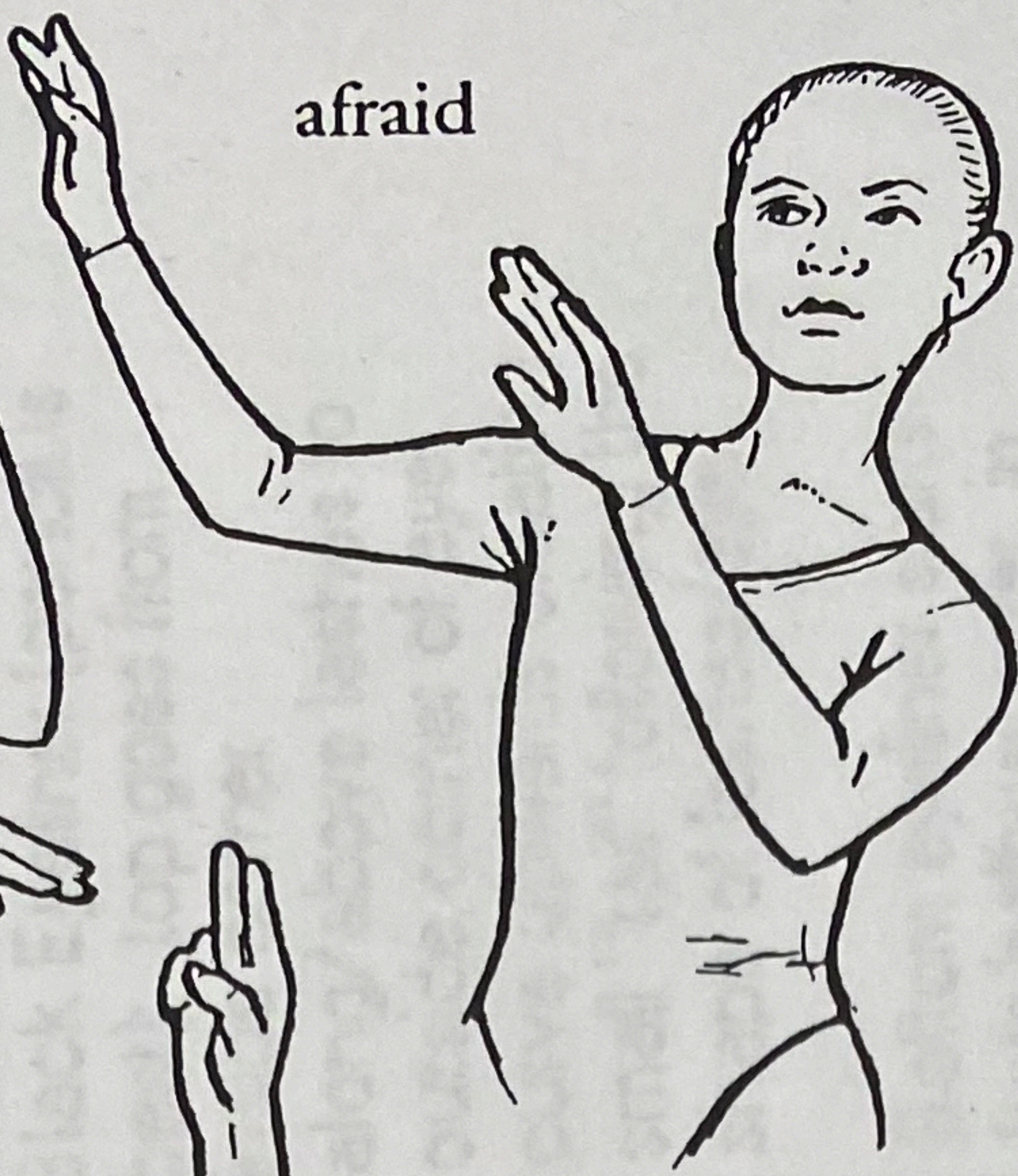
Courtly manners

Dancing was as much a part of courtly life as riding and good manners, and dancers in early ballets were therefore not professionals. Women were allowed to dance at court, in solos, and in groups, but were not allowed to perform on stage until *Le Triomphe de l'amour* was produced in 1681.

sleep (female)



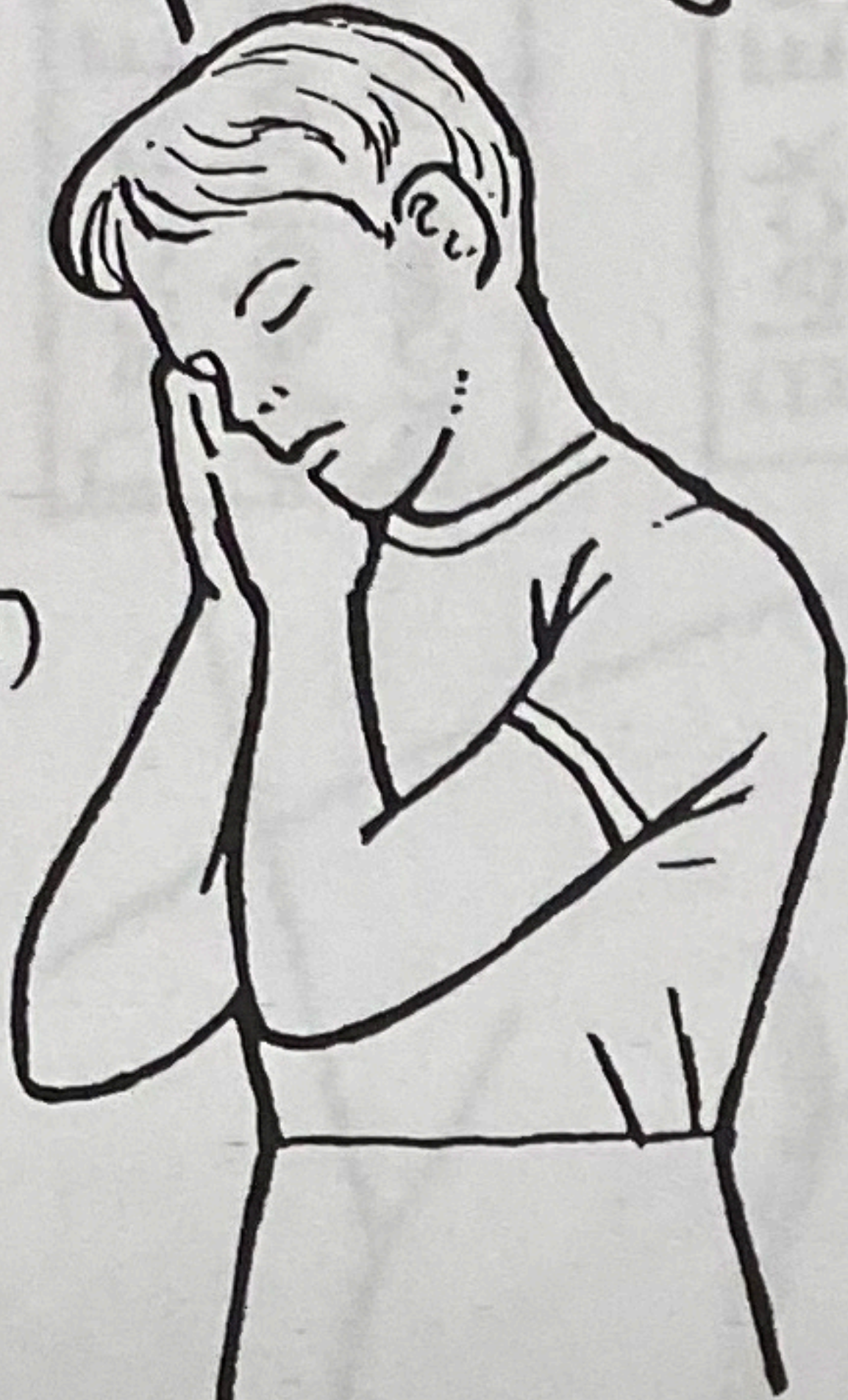
afraid



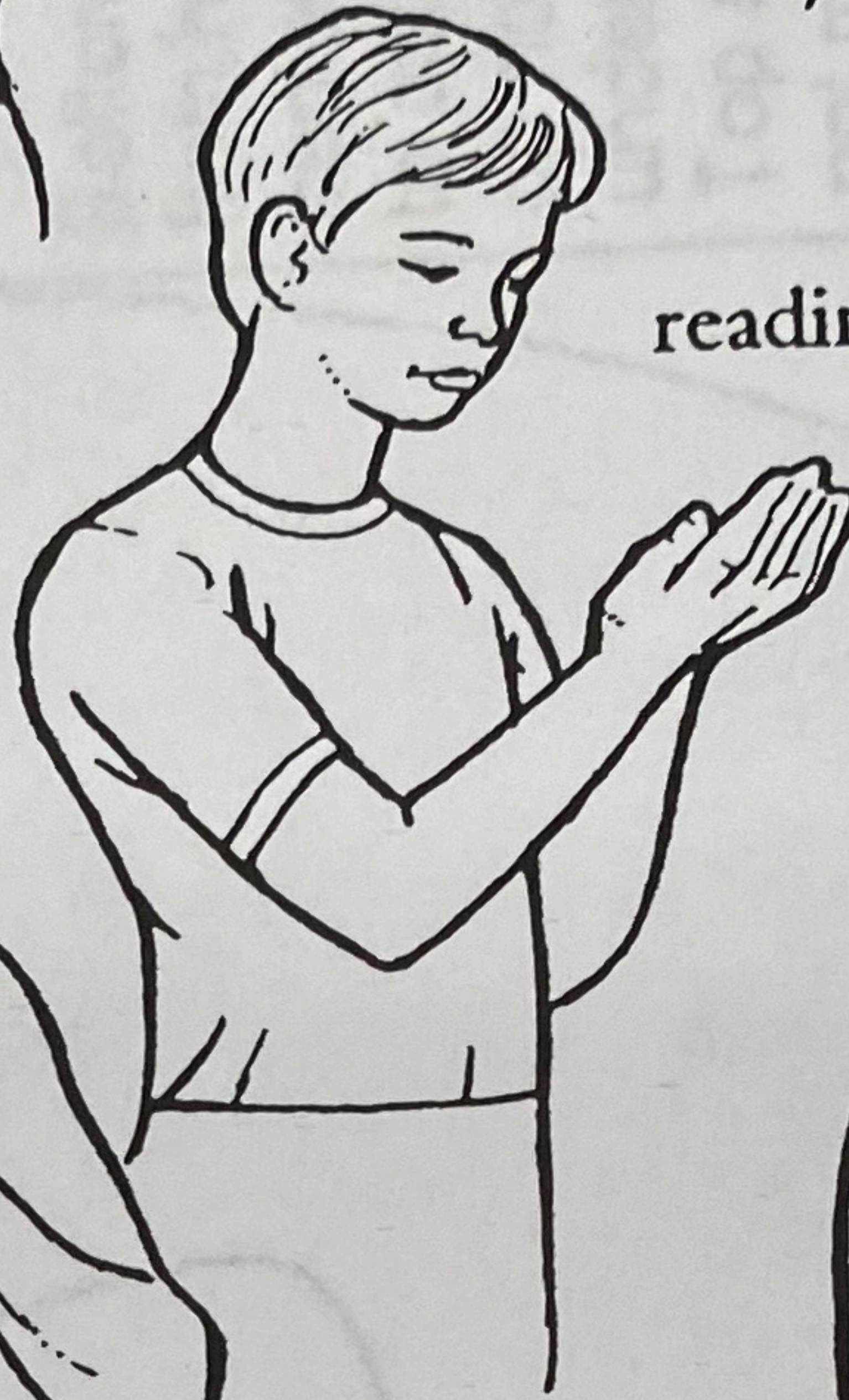
begging



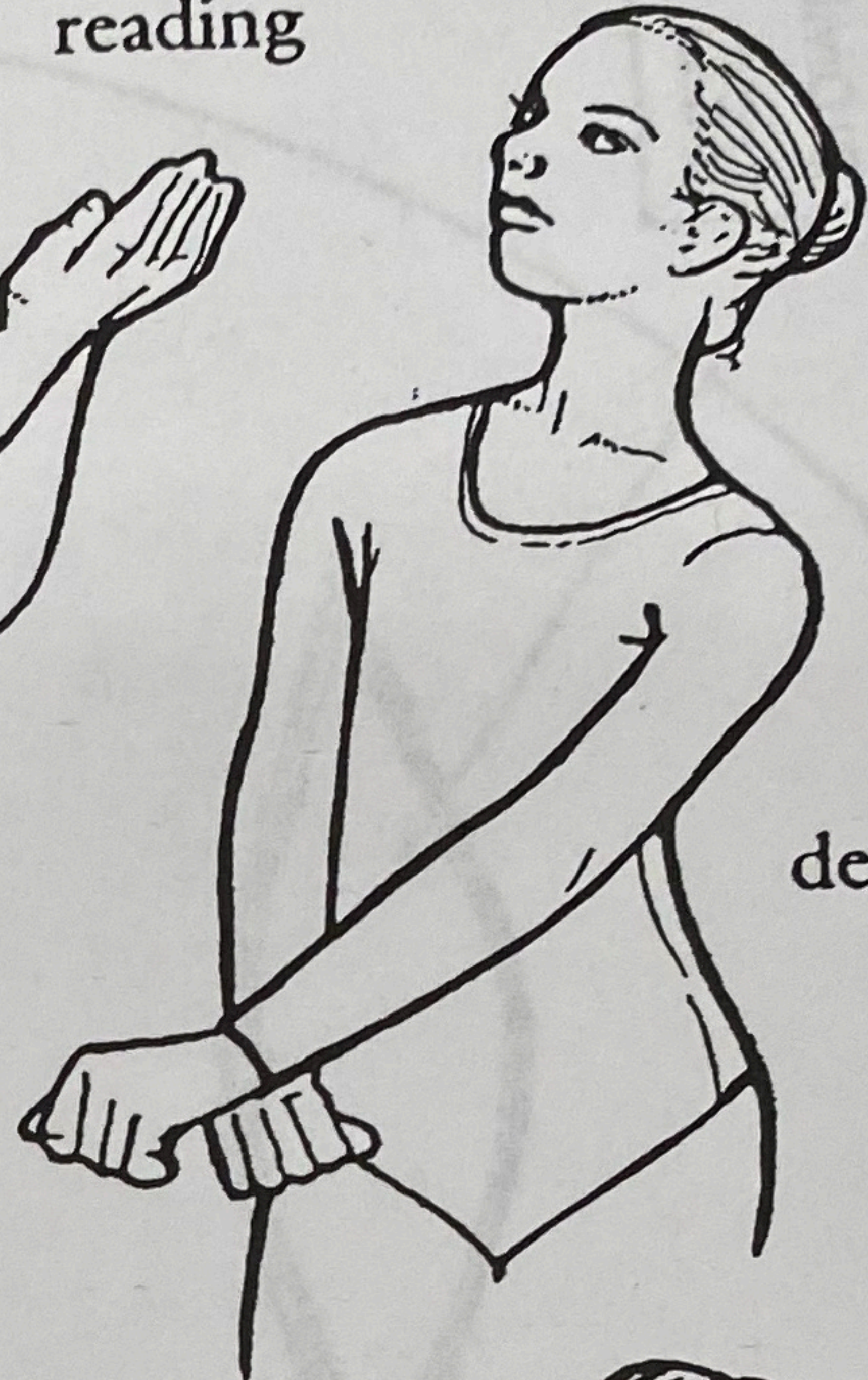
sleep (male)



reading



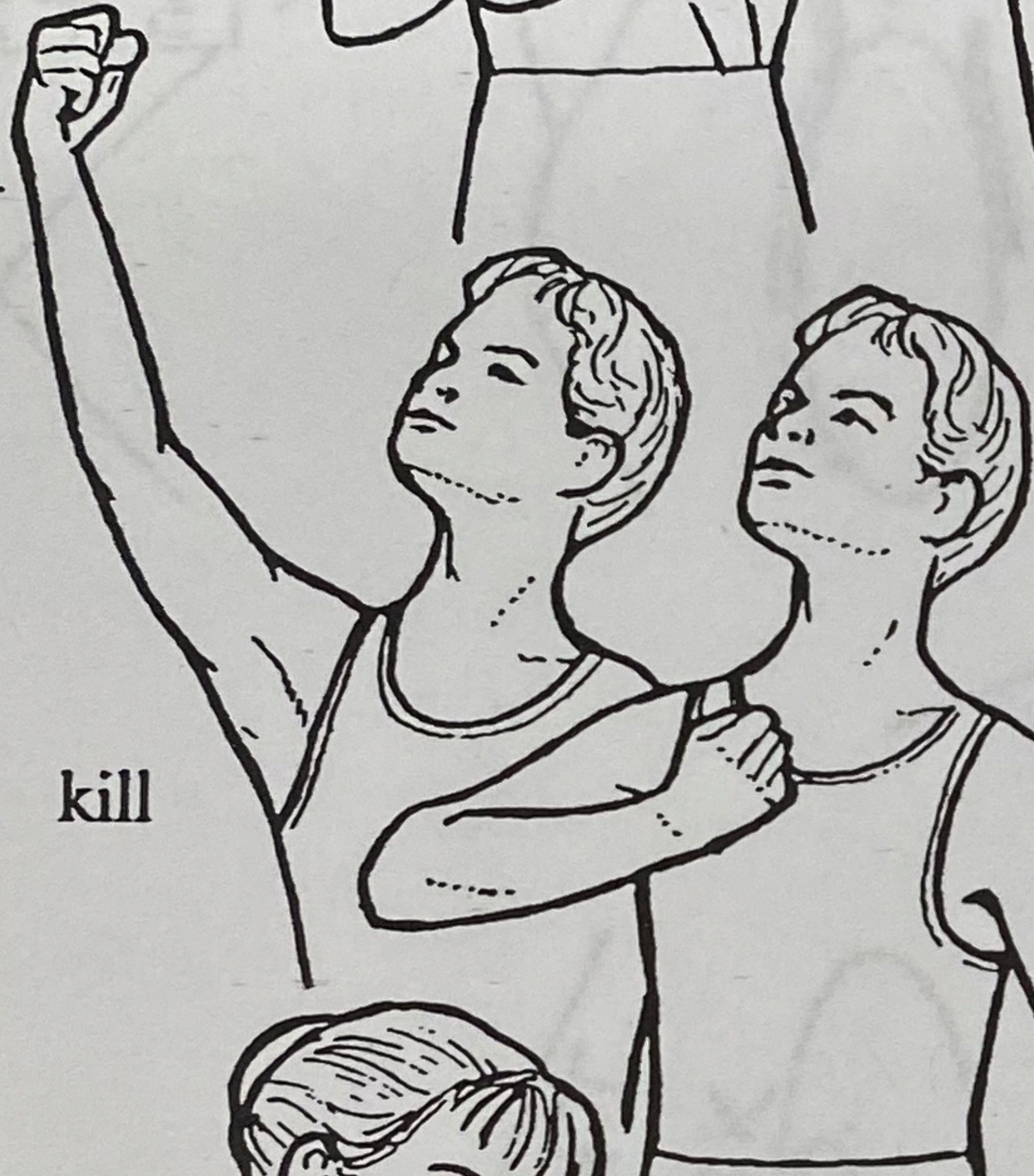
death



I promise



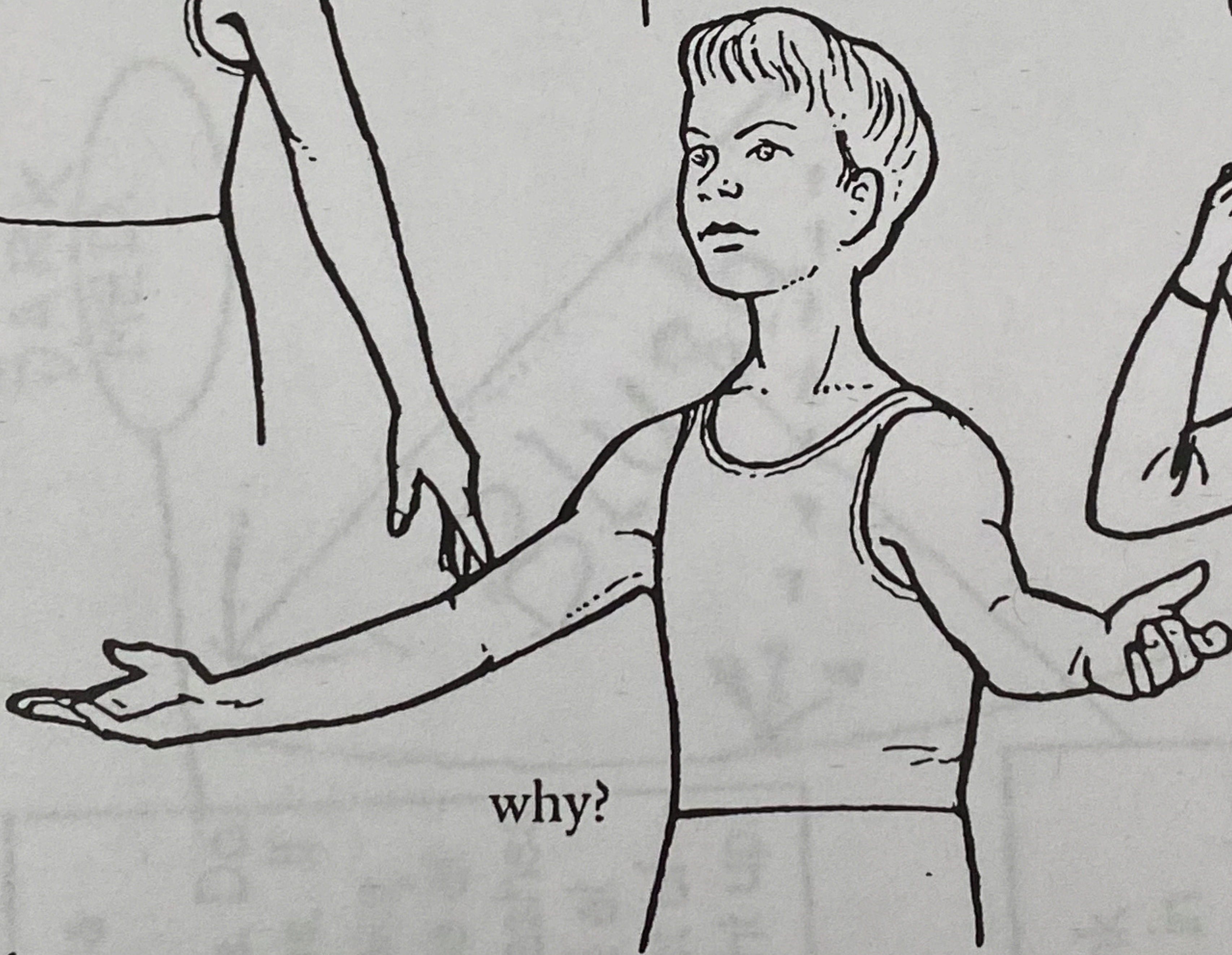
kill



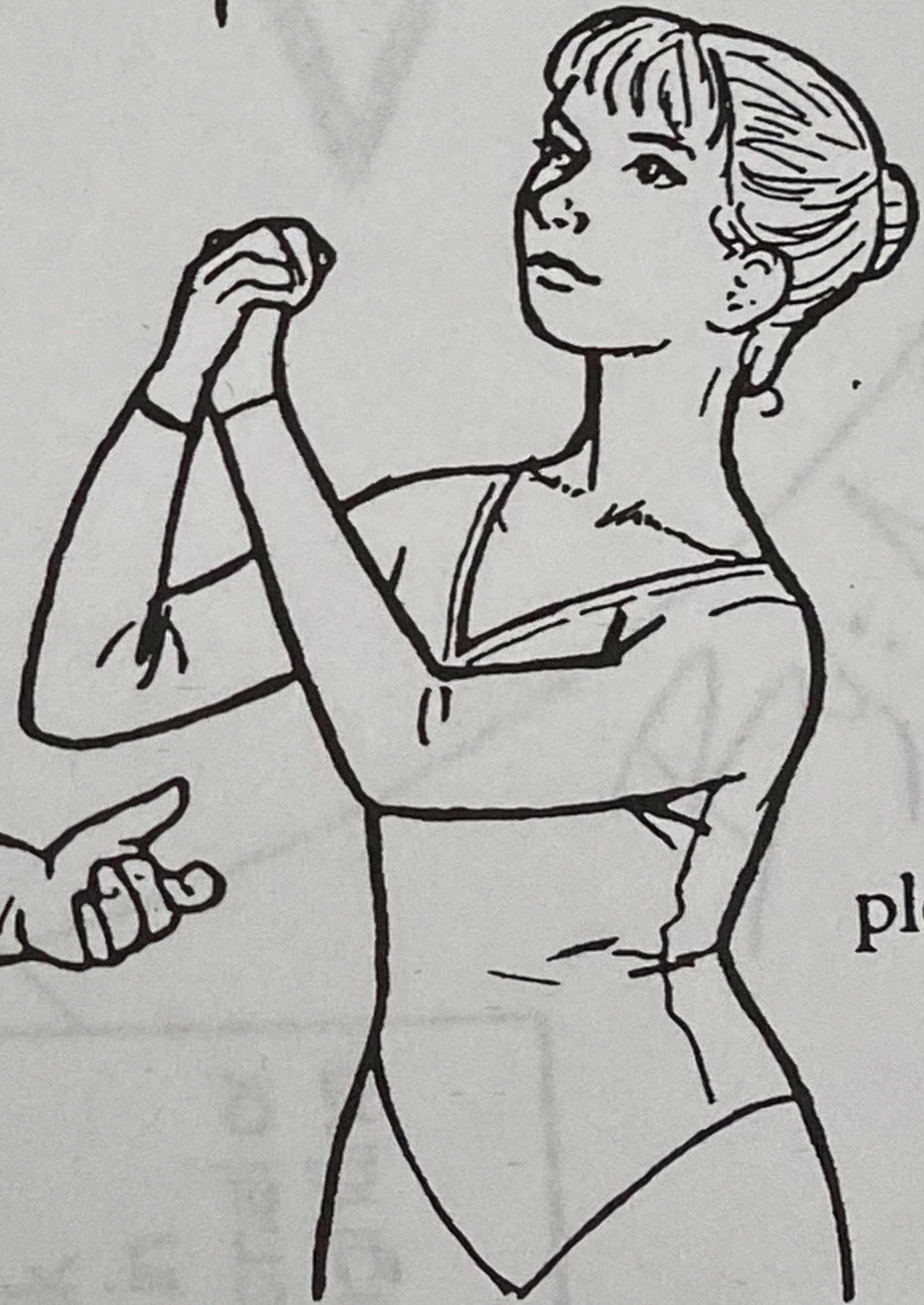
mother and baby



why?



please

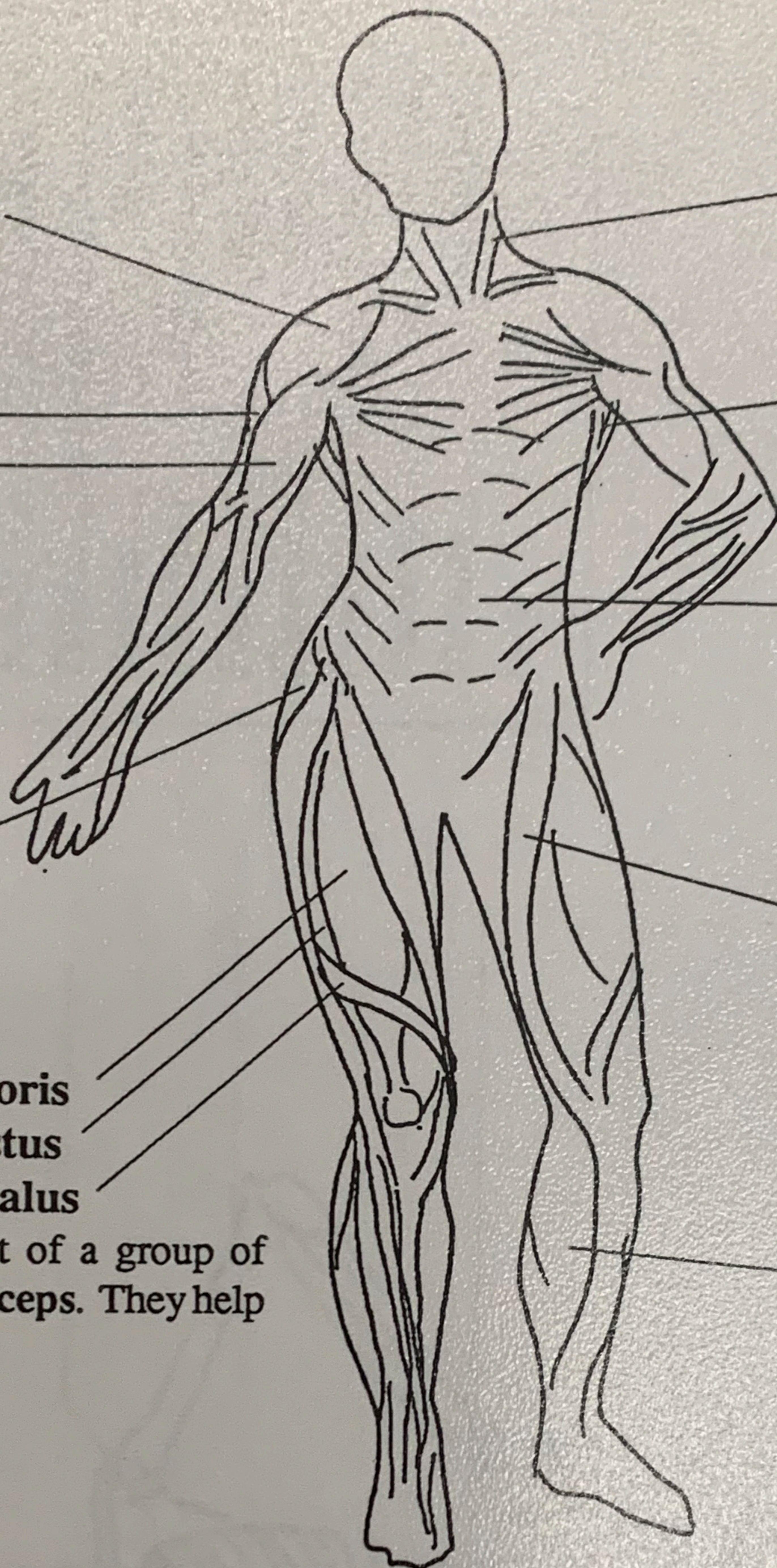


MIME (SHORT FOR PANTOMIME)

Mime, like ballet, speaks without words. It uses a combination of natural body movements and special gestures to express thoughts, feelings, ideas, and actions. It is an ancient art form, but in the early nineteenth century a form of mime was created just for use in classical ballet to help in telling the ballet's story. Mime scenes are a part of many ballets. There is an excellent example of classical ballet mime in act 2 of the Nutcracker. When the Prince

introduces Clara in The Land of the Sweets, he retells in mime the entire story of his fierce battle and wonderful triumph over the Mouse King and his dreadful troops. The young dancers shown here demonstrate a few of the mime gestures used in classical ballet. Notice how many different things a dancer can "say" using face, head, hands, arms, and torso.

My name is _____



Deltoid
Raises the upper portion of your arms.

Sternocleidomastoid
Holds your head upright.

Triceps
Biceps

Laissimus Dorsi
Helps move your arms.

Two muscles that help raise and lower your arms. The biceps is on the top when you "make a muscle" – the triceps is the muscle underneath.

Rectus Abdominus
Connects your rib cage to your pelvis. Helps you keep your lower back straight.

Gluteus Maximus
The big muscle in your "backside." One of your strongest muscles. Helps you straighten your hip joint.

Sartorius
The longest muscle in your body. One of the muscles you use when you développ . Helps stabilize the hip and knee.

Rectus Femoris
Lateral Vastus
Vastus Medialis

These 3 muscles are part of a group of muscles called the quadriceps. They help you straighten your knee.

Gastrocnemius
Helps you flex and extend your foot, and raise yourself on the balls of your feet.

Do You Know Your Muscles?

Look over the figure above and read about the muscles that are shown. Then try to answer the questions below.

1. Name four muscles that help you with port de bras.

2. Name a muscle that helps you with développ .

3. What muscle helps you relev ?

4. Name a muscle that helps you control your hips.

5. Name three muscles that help you straighten your knee in arabesque.

6. Name a muscle that helps you hold your head correctly when you dance?

7. Name a muscle that helps you maintain a straight back when dancing.

How ballet began

People have always danced. The first dances were probably part of religious ceremonies, but by the time of the Ancient Greeks and Romans, dancing had also become a form of entertainment. In the Middle Ages, the Church in Europe claimed that dancing was sinful, but when the Renaissance arrived around 1450, dancing became popular again. However, it is to the European courts of the 16th and 17th centuries that the beginnings of ballet belong.

Music for early ballet was played on viols, like this one, and horns.



For early ballets, people wore shoes like their ordinary ones, above.

The splendid courts of Europe

In the 16th and 17th centuries, European royalty, especially in Italy and France, made their courts as splendid as possible. They tried to better each other by employing poets, musicians, artists and also dancing masters. Courtiers were trained how to move and behave, and had lessons in fencing and dancing. The style of today's ballet posture follows that of 17th century courtiers. Their spines were held elegantly upright, with turned-out legs to show off shapely calves. Their arms were rounded, with delicately held fingers. Heads were lifted to support heavy wigs and headgear.

Courtiers regularly took part in court entertainments. These spectacles were staged on important occasions, such as royal marriages. They were often based on the myths of Ancient Greece and Rome and included processions, poetic speeches, music and dancing. The dances, which were elegant versions of those performed by country peasants, developed into the first ballets. The whole event, called a *ballet de cour* (court ballet), would be decorated with elaborate scenery and beautiful costumes.

Le Ballet Comique de la Reine is the first known ballet. It was performed in 1581 at the marriage of the Queen of France's sister.



The Sun King

Louis XIV of France, who ruled between 1643 and 1715, took his dancing very seriously. He took part in his first ballet, *Cassandre*, at the age of 12 and trained daily with his dancing master Beauchamp. One of his famous roles was the Rising Sun and this led him to become known as the Sun King. His other famous role was Apollo, the Roman god.

Louis stopped dancing in his thirties and his courtiers lost interest in ballet. However, he had already set up the Académie Royale de Danse, which taught properly defined steps. The five positions of the feet (see page 37), which are thought to have been defined by Beauchamp, were now set down by the Académie as the technical basis for ballet style.



Louis XIV in his costume as the Rising Sun in *Le Ballet de la Nuit*, a *ballet de cour*.

Dancing in operas

Ballet was first seen in the theatre as part of opera, in which dance was included. In 1669, Louis gave permission for an opera house to open in Paris and its first opera *Pomone* included dances by Beauchamp. Although women danced in court ballets, they were not allowed to dance in the theatre until 1681. When they did appear, their long, heavy skirts made their technique more limited than the men's.

By this time professional dancers, instead of courtiers, were dancing in operas. They realized that there was a greater demand for their skills, so they worked harder. As theatrical dancing became popular, it developed more than dancing at social occasions. By 1700, dancers were performing complex and athletic steps.

The first ballet companies

Other European cities soon opened opera houses too. Ballet companies were set up to train people to dance in operas – the first was based at the Paris Opéra in 1713. New steps, such as beaten jumps and *pirouettes* continued to be created in Paris. Female dancers, such as Marie Camargo, began to rival the men and dominate the stage. Marie was a great technician, who became the first woman to perform complex jumps. She is most famous for wearing a short skirt, exposing her ankles, to show off her quick footwork.

Ballet comes into its own

By the mid 18th century, ballet had broken away from opera. It became more expressive as mime and gesture developed to replace words and song. One of the first ballets to do this was *The Loves of Mars and Venus* choreographed by John Weaver in London in 1717.

One of the important choreographers of the time was Jean George Noverre. He insisted on a dramatic plot, rather than many *divertissements* danced to any music. Later choreographers began to make roles based on ordinary people as well as on myths. Ballets were now created to make the audience feel happy or sad, as well as to show them good technique. Ballet was beginning to develop into the Romantic style.



The Belgian dancer Marie Camargo is seen here showing her feet and ankles.



A costume designed by Louis-René Boquet around 1770 for the dancer Gaétan Vestris.

Early choreographers

Jean George Noverre (1727-1810) wrote famously about choreography.

Jean Dauberval (1746-1806) made many comic roles. His best work was an early version of *La Fille Mal Gardée*.

Charles Ludvig Didelot (1767-1836) was the first to “fly” dancers on wires.

Early dancers

Marie Salle (1707-1756) was a moving and expressive performer.

Marie Camargo (1710-1770) was a great technician.

Gaétan Vestris (1729-1808) and his son **Auguste** (1760-1842) were great male dancers. They were both given the title “The God of Dance”.

Dance History

STUDENT ACTIVITY:

Discuss with the children how ballet began. Have students color The First Ballet coloring page, while you tell them how ballet started to develop.

TEACHER'S NOTES:

The very first ballets, which were created almost 500 years ago, did not look anything at all like the ballets we see performed by ballet companies today.

The word ballet comes from the Italian word *ballare*, which means to dance. The first ballets were court dances (called *balletti* in Italian), which were danced by the men and women of the Italian Court. These ballets were not performed in theatres, but usually in the palaces of the rich and famous people of that time.

The steps in these ballets were very simple because the costumes were made with very heavy fabrics and ornaments. Some costumes weighed as much as 150 pounds. But still, the movements were very graceful, emphasizing the head, arms and upper body, while the dancers created very elaborate floor patterns.

The first court ballet that we know about was choreographed in 1489, in honor of the Duke of Milan's marriage to Isabel of Aragon.

Copies of The First Ballet

(4/5 Art 1.2)

Crayons or markers