

CECCHETTI BALLET AUSTRALIA^{INC.}

A Member of Cecchetti International – Classical Ballet

OUR HISTORY

The Founder

ENRICO CECCHETTI was born in a theatre dressing room in Rome in 1850 and later became famous as a dancer, mime, and one of the greatest teachers in ballet history. Both his parents were dancers and he started his training in classical ballet technique with his father. In 1864 he studied in Florence with Giovanni Lepri who, like Cecchetti's father, was a pupil of the famous Carol Blasis.



Enrico Cecchetti as Diabolino in *Catarina, ou La Fille du Bandit*, Marinski Theatre, St Petersburg, 1888.



Enrico Cecchetti, St. Petersburg, 1899.

Cecchetti made his debut at La Scala Milan in 1870, then toured Europe as premier danseur. In 1887 he danced at St Petersburg for the first time. The Russians were so amazed by his brilliant technique that his arrival can be compared to the more recent impact of Rudolf Nureyev on the western world. In 1889 he was appointed premier danseur and instructor at the famous Marinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg where he remained until 1902. The roles of Blue Bird and Carabosse in *The Sleeping Beauty* were created by Cecchetti in Russia. Among his pupils at the time were Anna Pavlova, Olga Preobajenska, Tamara Karsavina, Mathilde Kschessinska, and Vaslav Nijinsky.

After three years as ballet master in Warsaw he returned to St. Petersburg to devote himself to developing the technique of Pavlova and other sound promising dancers. From 1909 Cecchetti was the ballet master with Diaghilev's Ballet Russe. Alicia Markov has told the story of a Russian teacher being engaged to give classes to the Diaghilev Company for twelve months. It was soon discovered that the purity of the Cecchetti training was by far superior for a company that was not only staging classical ballets, but also very contemporary ballets. Serge Lifar and Vincenzo Celli (who taught in New York for many years) were the last two pupils to have private lessons from Cecchetti while they were dancing with the Diaghilev Company and The La Scala Ballet in Milan.

During his time with the Ballet Russe, Cecchetti also created the mime roles of Pantalón in *Le Carnaval*, the Showman in *Petrouchka* and the Chief Eunuch in *Scheherazade*.

At his London Ballet School, opened in 1918, he taught nearly every famous dancer of the time. Before his return to Italy in 1923, he gave his personal teaching certificate to five English girls: Margaret Craske, Mary Skeaping, Derra de Moroda Ninette de Valois and Lucie Saronova. It was Madam Saronova who, instead of joining the Diaghilev Company, came to Australia with her new husband just after the first world war and founded the Cecchetti Society in Australia, in Melbourne.

In 1925, Cecchetti accepted the directorship of the Ballet School at La Scala Milan and it was here that he died while giving a ballet class in 1928. In London in 1922 Cyril Beaumont initiated the formation of the Cecchetti Society. He also published "A Manual of the Theory and Practises of Classical and Theatrical Dancing-Cecchetti Method" in collaboration with Stanislas Idzikowsky, a former pupil of Cecchetti and principal dancer of the Diaghilev Company.



Enrico Cecchetti as Kastchei in *L'Oiseau de feu* (Firebird) with the Ballets Russes, at the Paris Opera, 1910.

The Cecchetti Method of teaching classical ballet includes a very full vocabulary of movement, including exercises composed by Cecchetti himself for the development of strength, balance, poise and elevation. The port de bras, or exercises to develop grace and coordination of the arms are generally admitted to be unsurpassed. One of the foremost features of the Cecchetti Method is the very sound basis of anatomical detail, as set down by Carlo Blasis and proven through the ages. Combined with a close association with the professional dance world, this enables the Cecchetti dancer to adapt easily to modern works.

Although Cecchetti insisted on following a strict programme, he also advocated that each lesson should be concluded by studying unseen steps to develop quick thinking in students. Expressiveness is the keynote of every art, and can only be applied to dancing after careful study of a sequence of movements. Cecchetti's series of adages are designed to make the body into a sensitive instrument and to encourage expressiveness through the whole body.



Anna Pavlova and Enrico Cecchetti at the Lyric Theatre in Milan, 1927

Anna Pavlova, Cecchetti's most famous pupil, paid this tribute to her teacher: "The feeling of great gratitude I have for what you have taught me, is blended with love and respect for your personality. When you have finished your brilliant career as the first dancer of your day, you devoted your life to the difficult art of teaching others: with what proud satisfaction you can now look round, for in every part of the world nearly all who have made a name for themselves in choreography at the present time have passed through your hands. If our Goddess, Terpsichore is still in our midst you, by right, are her favoured High Priest".

And we in Australia, in our turn, would like to pay our loving tribute to our own Madam Saronova, herself a pupil of Cecchetti and favoured with his personal certificate. To her we owe the existence of the Cecchetti Society, and the Cecchetti method in Australia and the continuity of a great tradition of dance which is now being carried forward by an ever-increasing number of qualified Australian teachers.

Cecchetti Ballet Australia: History

The Cecchetti method is an internationally recognised and respected method of teaching Classical ballet, established by Maestro Enrico Cecchetti, and codified in 1922 by Cyril Beaumont and Stanislas Idzikowsky in The Cecchetti Manual entitled A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing. The Cecchetti Society was established by Cyril Beaumont in London in 1922, with Maestro Enrico Cecchetti as its first president. and was independent until it joined the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing in 1924.

The first Cecchetti examinations were held in Australia in 1934 when the Cecchetti Society was established by Madam Lucie Saronova. The Society continued to grow, administered for 51 years by the Council of Management in Victoria, under the auspices of The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing in London. In 1987 The Cecchetti Society of Australia Inc. was incorporated becoming an autonomous Australian Society administered by an elected National Council of members from its state branches. Its head office is in Melbourne.

In 1997 Australia became a founding member of a new International Society- Cecchetti International-Classical Ballet. Other founding members are Canada, Italy, South Africa, United Kingdom and U.S.A. This International Society is committed to the promotion and expansion of the Cecchetti method of Classical Ballet and to its continued progress in techniques and training into the future throughout the world.

Cecchetti dancers have always achieved places in ballet and dance companies all over the world. Currently there are Cecchetti students at The Australian Ballet School, Victorian College for the Arts, and Queensland School of Excellence. Cecchetti male dancers are as frequent as the female dancers in the ranks of successful professionals in Australia and throughout the world. A well trained Cecchetti dancer has a purity of line and simplicity of style which enables them to take their places in dance companies of other genres as well as classical ballet.