

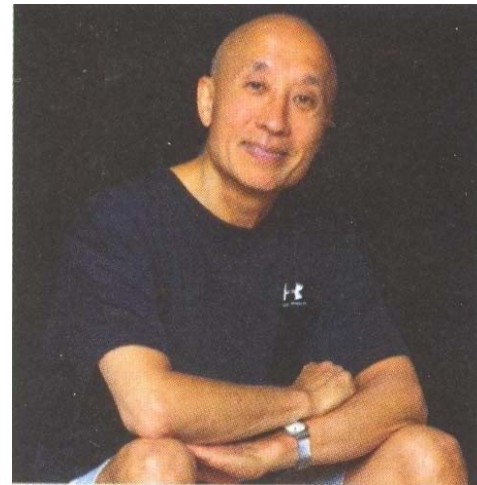
**BALLET**spotlight

On-point  
By Lauren Kay  
**Pirouettes**  
CHECK OUT THREE VERSIONS!

Whenever I watch a ballet, I'm mesmerized when a dancer whips out perfect pirouettes. The magic of successful turns mystifies me not only because they're lovely to watch, but also because I've had trouble mastering the step myself! After seeing an exceptional pirouette performance by American Ballet Theatre's Michele Wiles in *Etudes* last fall, I realized I had pouted enough and decided to take the turn by the toes.

On my quest to discover the secret to mastering the step, I was surprised to find that there are many valid approaches to pirouettes. Your instructor is probably teaching you one of them now! Learning her version is essential to building a strong base. But in the professional world, there are lots of ways to turn: Perhaps you'll be dancing a Balanchine piece one day—and you'll need the turn to go with it! So while you stick to your teacher's approach in class, enjoy exploring other versions on your own time. Read on to learn about three different techniques for an en dehors turn, starting in croisé.

**Learn these techniques straight from the pros!** Finis Jhung teaches at Broadway Dance Center and The Ailey Extension, and Wilhelm Burmann teaches at Steps on Broadway, all in NYC. For more about Claudio Muñoz visit [houstonballet.org](http://houstonballet.org).



## FINIS JHUNG

Master teacher Finis Jhung (a former Broadway performer and soloist with the San Francisco Ballet and The Joffrey Ballet) is known for his unique approach to classical technique, which relies on physics and anatomy. To help uncover the tools of the greatest turners, Jhung studied



videos of turning wizards like Mikhail Baryshnikov in slow motion! He discovered an intermediary position (a second position plié with the weight on the front foot between the preparation and the retiré pose) that he terms "The End of the Plié."



## THE PREPARATION:

Begin in a medium-sized fourth position, with the back/right leg straight and the front/left foot in a medium-sized plié. Your arms should be in fourth position allongé, with the left arm extended diagonally to the side, slightly behind your left shoulder, and your right arm stretched in front of you at eye level. Your head should be facing your front, right arm.

**Tips:** 1. Grip the floor with your supporting foot, and stretch up through your torso to better control the plié.

2. Twist your spine to the left and send energy and weight out through your supporting shoulder to prepare for your turn to the right. “Work correctly in the preparation so that you can rest in the turn,” Jhung says.

## GO TO “THE END OF THE PLIÉ”

From your medium fourth, keep your head front. Widen your plié slightly and start rotating to the right—but stay in plié with your weight on your

front foot. Continue to grip the floor with your front foot. This will take you to the “End of the Plié” with your body now in a diagonal, in a turned-out second position. Both your arms should be stretched in second position with palms down.

Jhung suggests thinking about this order of movement—toes, eyes, then arms—when completing the plié: When you are at the “End of the Plié,” the toes of your back foot push off, you spot your eyes in the mirror and *then* close your arms into position.

## THE POSITION

Once you’ve reached the “End of the Plié,” use all ten toes to push into the position, with your retiré toe right below the knobby part of your knee, and both hips level. Your arms should move smoothly into first position.

## THE LANDING

Land in croisé in the same position in which you began.

