FUNctional Anatomy for Dancers
Level 2

Move Your Body!

The second in a series of teaching guides written for dance teachers, by dance teachers. The lessons and exercises have been used and fine-tuned in dance classes across the country. There are four levels. Each level is designed to stand alone. The curriculum series layers the levels to follow a natural progression of building knowledge from basic to more specific and challenging lessons. The series is designed for dancers over the age of 10.

Level 2: Move your Body! focuses on introducing the muscles that create the movement from your feet through your head. A natural progression from the structure of the joints taught in **Level 1: Meet Your Body!**, this guide continues to increase the dance students' awareness of their bodies through simple, but effective movement exercises.

There are 30 anatomy lessons that take no more than 10 minutes of class time and are interactive and hands on. The best way to learn anatomy is in a practical and experiential manner. The activities blend easily into a dance class format while imparting important anatomical information briefly and clearly. Activity sheets for the students to fill out in class and bring home are also included for all 30 lessons.

Lesson 6 – Plantar Flexion

Prime Mover	Gastrocnemius
Function	It is a two joint muscle and the primary plantar flexor of the ankle.
Attachments	The condyles of the femur and the calcaneus. (For more information on the calcaneus and femur see *Meet Your Body* lessons 4 and 5).
Translation to Dance	The gastrocnemius is used when pointing the foot and ankle, relevé, and jumping. Tightness in the gastrocnemius shifts the weight forward into the ball of the feet. This can shift the weight off the heel and slightly flex the knee.
Movement Exploration	Have the students observe you from the back as you relevé. If you are wearing pants, please roll them up above the knee. Instruct the students to look for the rounded W shape at the mid point of the calf. The muscle joins to the Achilles tendon at that area.

Prime Mover	Soleus
Function	It is a single joint muscle and a plantar flexor of the ankle.
Attachments	It attaches at the top and upper third of the fibula and tibia and joins with the gastrocnemius into the Achilles tendon which attaches at the calcaneus.
Translation to Dance	Being a one joint muscle it acts only on the ankle, where the gastrocnemius acts on both the ankle and the knee. The soleus helps to define the depth of the demi plié. It is the primary muscle used in a forced arch relevé. Additionally it helps control the descent in landing jumps.
Movement Exploration	Stand with both hands on the barre. Keep the legs parallel and sits bones width apart. Demi plié and then lift the heels off the ground 2 inches, lower the heels back to the floor. Repeat this movement 4 times. Straighten the legs and lift the heels 3 or 4 inches into a relevé, lower the heels back to the floor. Repeat this movement 4 times. Have the students compare what they felt in their calves during the above two movements. When the knees are straight and heels lifted, the primary concentric contraction will be felt in the gastrocnemius. If the knees are bent and heels lifted, the effort will be felt in the soleus, (closer to the ankle).
Activity Sheet	Label the gastrocnemius and soleus.

Lesson 6—*Plantar Flexion*

Movement Exercise

Stand with both hands on a sturdy object for balance. Keep the legs parallel and sits bones width apart.

Demi plié and then lift the heels off the ground 2 inches, lower the heels back to the floor. Repeat this movement 4 times. Straighten the legs and lift the heels 3 or 4 inches into a relevé, lower the heels back to the floor. Repeat this movement 4 times. When the knees are bent and heels lifted, the effort will be felt in the soleus, (closer to the ankle).

Straighten the legs and lift the heels 3 or 4 inches into a relevé, lower the heels back to the floor. Repeat this movement 4 times. When the knees are straight and heels lifted, the primary concentric contraction will be felt in the gastrocnemius.

Anatomy of the Calf

Label the muscle in each picture below. Choose from:
Gastrocnemius
Soleus