



TAPS MASTER CLASS RESOURCE PACK: Basics for Balinese Dance and Puppetry
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Introduction

Balance is an integral part of Balinese performing arts. This can be physical, as in:

- The weight must be on the rear leg for balance,
- That all movements must be done on the right and the left sides
- That the entire stage space must be used
- The curves in the body must be balanced properly (see below)

You want your centre of gravity to be as close to the ground as possible, you get energy from the earth.

The agem

- For the right agem
- Agem is the basic position
- The right leg is in back
- Left foot is 45 degrees pointed to the left
- In front of the right ankle with one fist length between the two feet
- Legs are bent and turned out. Toes are turned up on none weight bearing foot
- Torso is shifted (not tilted) to the right
- Arms are bent at elbows with right elbow parallel to right shoulder and left elbow at breast level
- Wrists are lower (“ski slope”) with fingers pointing to the sky, thumb tucked in front
- Head tilts to the right, eyes straight ahead

For male style

- The feet are at least two feet length away from each other
- The shoulders come up to the ears
- All fingers spread out

For both, energy comes from your center/core. Bring your shoulder blades together so your chest is lifted. Stomach is in and lifted.

The walk (Female)

- Feet parallel, toes up, knees bent
- Bring your right foot up in front of your left knee. When you put it down, your hip should swing to the right
- Do the same with your left foot. Stay low to the ground
- The head tilts with the foot that is coming down (right foot down, tilt head to the right)

- The tilt should feel like you have a pencil through your nose

The walk (Male)

- Legs in a diamond shape
- With weight on right foot, pivot the heel of the left foot to the front, lift it (with toes and ankle flexed) to be in front of the right knee
- Place it down to the left side and do the same with the right foot
- Don't sway your hips, keep your torso completely still

Keras

- Is strong or coarse. Characters who are "evil" tend to be Keras, movements are much bigger; the voice is lower

Alus

- Is refined or smooth. Characters who are "good" are refined. Movements are smaller and the vocalizations are higher

Topeng mask work

- The darker the mask, the "stronger" the character: Red and brown are usually prime ministers, white are royalty. Clowns are all colors!

Prime ministers and royalty

- Generally do not speak and are full sized masks. The half masks are worn by clowns and servants who translate or speak for the other characters

Topeng characters

- Tend to move forward then to downstage right, back to center, then downstage left, center, upstage right, center and upstage left

Clowns

- Walk in circles, denoting travelling

Wayang Kulit shadow puppetry

The screen is the world, the banana tree trunk Ibu Pertiwi/Mother Earth, the oil lamp the sun, the puppets all of God's creatures and the puppeteer or dalang is God.

Puppets in a box must be awakened. Offerings given first and prayers are made. One puppeteer with two assistants on each “arm”. Four gender wayang players provide musical accompaniment. “Good guys” come in from stage right, demons and bad guys from stage left. Stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata mainly.

Puppets with almond eyes and downward glance are refined. Those with round eyes, fangs and arrogant straight ahead staring are coarse and undesirable.

Language of refined puppets is kawi or Old Javanese. Clowns translate into colloquial Balinese. There are two sets of clowns: Twalen and his son Merdah (good side) and Delem and younger brother Sanggut. They serve their respective masters.

Begin with the kayon/tree of life. Comes from word meaning “wood” (kayu) and “thought” (kayun).
