

Applause—when to clap

When to clap or for-how-long-to-clap is often confusing to the first time theatre goer. When it comes to dance, feel free to clap when you see something you like, something is particularly well done or you are moved and of course, at the end of a performance.

Where it gets tricky is during sets of dances we call a pas de deux (two people), pas de trois (three people), pas de quatre (four people), etc. Each set is made up of a series of dances; the first one is done by all the dancers and then each dancer does a short one alone generally followed by a final dance (called a coda) where they again dance together. It is appropriate to applaud after each section of dance if so moved. This is where the dancers, by tradition, show off their technique so even shouts of "bravo" for the man or "brava" for the woman are not out of line.

At the end of this type of dance series, the dancers will acknowledge the audience with a bow to them. They will then bow to each other with the male dancer acknowledging the ballerina. She will then often gesture to the musician or orchestra to acknowledge their role in the performance. At the end of a full length ballet she will often welcome the conductor on stage to join the dancers in a final bow. It is appropriate to continue clapping throughout this period of time. If the performance is particularly enjoyable or well done, feel free to yell "bravo" and even stand up if you wish. This lets the performers know that you really did like the performance.

