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opening extract from

The World of Ballet

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Beatrice Masini

Sara Not

The World of Ballet



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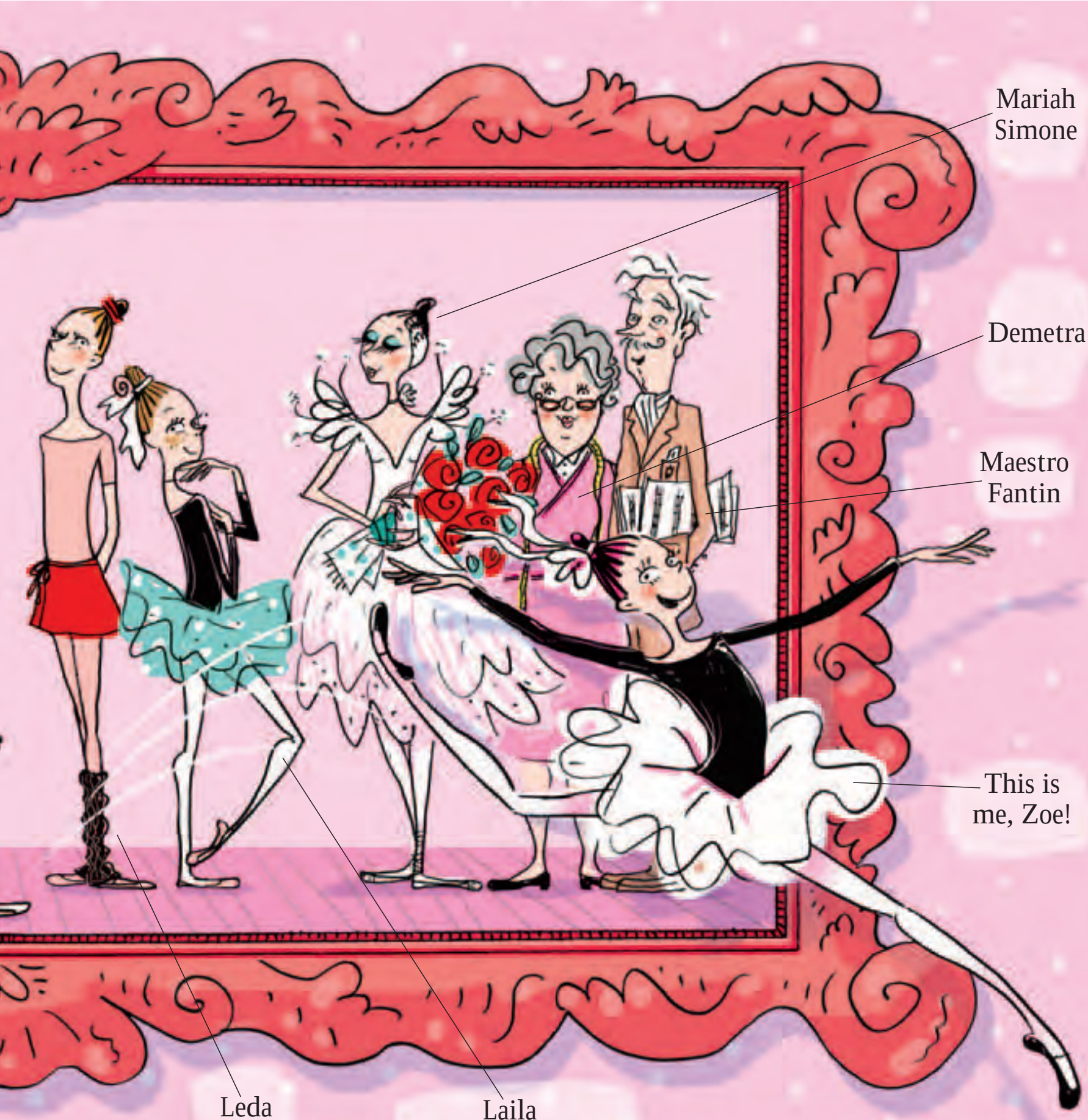


I'm not sure what I want to be when I grow up . . .

Right now, I'm twelve, and I'm studying classical dance at The Academy. Sometimes it can be hard work, but usually it's great fun! Sometimes I don't have the slightest doubt and I know for sure that I'm going to be a ballerina when I'm older. But there's more to being a ballerina than just wanting to be one. It all depends on how talented you are and it's still too soon for me to tell. There are times when I think I'd rather be a writer, but I still have loads of time to make up my mind. Anyway, I thought it would be a great idea to combine the two and write about the world of dance and how I see it. Because there's so much to talk about, I've asked some of my friends to help. Some of them are my age and some of them are grown-ups. Some are already working in the world of dance, while others are still dreaming about it. But all of them know a lot about particular parts of this world. And if you put all of those different parts together, you complete the picture. Dance isn't like a normal picture, though – it's a living picture, always moving, always different. And I'm really happy that I'm part of that picture.

Zoe


Kai Zwerger
Madame Olenska
Gimenez
Alissa
Roberto
Lucas


Mariah Simone
Demetra
Maestro Fantin
This is me, Zoe!
Leda
Laila

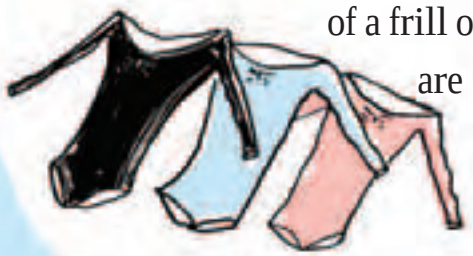
WHAT TO WEAR



Every aspiring ballerina wants to wear a tutu. But they have to wait a long time!



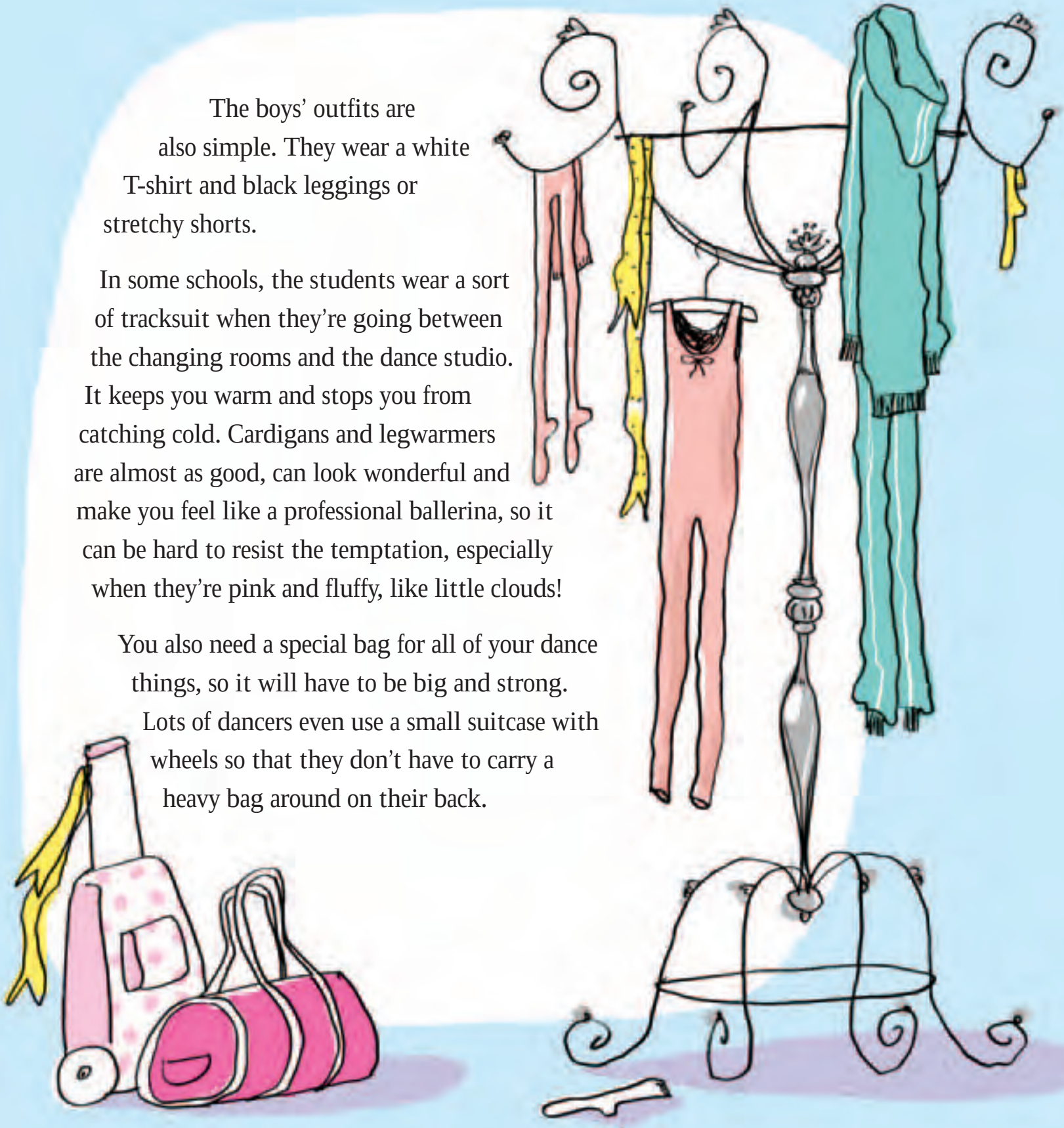
As Madame Olenska always says, dance isn't all about satin and sequins; it's about practice and hard work. And when you're training, the best thing to wear is a simple leotard in stretch cotton – it hugs your body and adapts to your movements. You can have one with short sleeves or three-quarter-length sleeves, maybe with just the tiniest hint of a frill or even a little wraparound skirt. The colours are very simple too: black, blue or pink.



The boys' outfits are also simple. They wear a white T-shirt and black leggings or stretchy shorts.

In some schools, the students wear a sort of tracksuit when they're going between the changing rooms and the dance studio. It keeps you warm and stops you from catching cold. Cardigans and legwarmers are almost as good, can look wonderful and make you feel like a professional ballerina, so it can be hard to resist the temptation, especially when they're pink and fluffy, like little clouds!

You also need a special bag for all of your dance things, so it will have to be big and strong. Lots of dancers even use a small suitcase with wheels so that they don't have to carry a heavy bag around on their back.



BALLET SHOES



You do your first ballet lessons in bare feet, or close enough!

All you need at the very start is a pair of socks or soft ballet slippers. When you first start dancing, you need to learn how to use your body, and your feet are a very important part of that. Going close to barefoot teaches your feet that they have to work really hard.

When you get to a certain stage, you may start wearing demi-pointe shoes. These are made from very soft leather or cloth and are held on with a strip of elastic or cotton laces. They're usually pink. They have a very supple sole, compared with normal shoes, and a soft block in the toe section to prepare you for proper pointe shoes. Boys have white or black shoes with a strip of elastic to hold them on. You wear these demi-pointe shoes for folk dances, or sometimes a different design with small heels or a strap.



If a floor is very slippery, you can dust the soles of your shoes with rosin powder so that you don't slip.



It takes a few years of practice before young ballerinas are ready to move on to pointe shoes. The tip of pointe shoes is a kind of box made of layers of fabric and glue, and it works as a small platform to support the weight of the body. The outer part of the shoe is made of satin, including the ribbons. The shoes are quite delicate and the satin sometimes gets damaged when it brushes the floor. It can be hard to get used to wearing pointe shoes at first. They can really hurt your feet.

Some ballerinas wear out one pair of shoes – or even more! – for every show they dance in. Every ballerina takes great pride in looking after her shoes and has her own little tricks for making them as comfortable as possible.

With pointe shoes, you wear thick powder-coloured or flesh-coloured tights, which are made specially for ballerinas.

You have to buy all of these items of clothing from specialist dance shops. The socks and tights that you buy in ordinary shops are no good for dancing. Besides, dance shops are wonderful places to visit – you can go along and have a peep at all the lovely things that you might get to wear one day!

