

DANCE FAMILY



for Dancers, **Instructors** and the **Parents** who put up with them

ISSUE 2

GLOBE HOPPING

American Dancer's Stories from:

Dominican Republic

Greece

Germany

Italy

South Korea

and more inspiring success stories
from dancers and studios

Dynamic Photography Section

Journals from Dancers

Musical Theater Advice





DANCE FAMILY MAGAZINE

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A World of Possibilities

The launch of issue #1 back in January was met with great pride and response from my local dance community. That response was expected along with the regional support from areas nationally that featured a studio or dancer. What I didn't expect was the trickling of downloads from international locations. Mexico, Italy, New Zealand, Australia, India and more in the European union all found readers for my little publication.

Knowing that my core contributing dance professionals all have traveled abroad in a dance capacity I wanted to make sure with issue # 2 that we bring some international flavor to the content. Specifically I wanted to get some perspective on how we view international dance which in many countries has more traditionally been woven into one's cultural history. I also wanted to know how receptive other countries are to American dance which has barely 100 years of cultural identity. And finally I wanted to know what my writers had brought back to incorporate as part of their routines or instruction.

I was also fortunate for the submission of articles illustrating what dance can offer- the possibilities for all to have an equal opportunity of expression. There should be no age restrictions or developmental challenges to prevent experiencing the joy of movement that has probably existed since our creation. More importantly, these articles are not just poignant and heart-warming but can serve as blue prints for others to expand and duplicate upon these successes.

Being competitive is important. Challenging yourself to be the best you can be is important. Taking international pride is important. Being gracious in victory and undeterred in defeat is important. This is all true in all forms of athletics and competitive endeavors. But you don't come out of the womb and need to throw a football. It is not inborn inside you to pitch a no-hitter. When you strip away the competition of dance you do understand that life has a rhythm and in some manner we sway to it or skip through it or express ourselves in movement that should not be restricted to anyone of any challenge because it is a life force inside us. Some will try to train it and control it better than others but it is a freedom for all to express on a whim in any capacity and should be restricted to no one. These are the people I want you to read about.

TOM MODY IS THE PUBLISHER AND DESIGNER OF DANCE FAMILY MAGAZINE. HE'S BEEN A SELF EMPLOYED ENTREPRENEUR FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

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www.modycompany.com



Listen to the Color of Your Dreams

by Jason Motell



Author submitted photos

Brianna Barnett of Binghamton New York was never just your average dancer with a dream. She has always been that one in a million individual who realized that with hard work, discipline, and commitment, dreams are essentially only future plans.

“I have loved dancing from the first time I stepped on a dance floor at age five” Bri said when asked to describe how she began her quest to carry out her goals. Recognizing her passion, Bri’s parents struggled to fund her dream, but did everything they could to expose their daughter to as many different styles as possible by enrolling Bri at the Dance Connection, a dance studio in Binghamton, New York. “Dancing can get extremely expensive and my parents never had much money growing up. I feel so blessed to have been able to dance at the studio that I did, with the people that taught me, danced with me, and were there for me through thick and thin.”

“Be grateful
and respect the art”



It was at the Dance Connection, under the tutelage of owner Ann Szymaniak and her wonderful staff, that Bri began to hone not only the technical skills necessary for her career as a dancer, but also the importance of extended family in making it through life’s difficulties. “Miss Ann was and still is like a second mother to me and has helped me get through some of the most difficult things that I have experienced so far in life. She allowed me to dance at discounted rates in order for me to be able to pursue what I love most. She has taught me how to be grateful for everything I am given, to respect the art of dance, and how to keep my spirits up when times are tough.”

Miss Ann’s lessons in staying positive were needed immediately after Bri graduated high school. Despite her raw talent, Brianna was passed over in her auditions for So You Think You Can Dance seasons Eight and Nine, and also in her audition for the legendary Rockettes.

(continued)



Every dancer has to go through a few missteps before landing on their feet however, and Brianna proved her perseverance this past summer at her audition for The Gotham City Cheerleaders (the Unofficial Dance Team of the New York Giants). “We went through an entire month of boot camp, training with bodyADDICTS in Central Park, in which numerous girls were cut from the team during the four weeks. After boot camp, we prepared for our final audition showcase with those of us who were left, performing at the Copacabana in Manhattan. At the end of the night I was told I not only made the squad, but had also been named the new 2012–2013 GCC Captain.”

Through the Gotham City Cheerleaders, Bri has been given many wonderful opportunities to gain further experience in the entertainment industry. “I have been presented with so many amazing, new prospects and experiences and have met some of the most phenomenal people! I was able to appear on MTV2’s What’s Good?! With Peter Rosenberg for the release of Madden NFL video game, as well as perform as a back-up dancer for the release of one of UBC Network’s upcoming new shows. The best part about it all is that I am only twenty and this is just the beginning of an amazing journey!”

As lofty as her successes have already been, Bri is able to stay grounded by teaching dance to girls and boys aged three to eighteen for the last four years at Step Up and Dance in Greene, New York. “I absolutely love everything about my job at Step Up and Dance– the kids, the parents, the community, and my boss, Ashley Motell. The studio has honestly become a part of who I am as a person.”

Bri is extremely dedicated to her students and hopes to instill the same values that her mentor imparted on her students. “I find an extreme amount of joy in watching my students grow as not only dancers, but as people too. Miss Ann always inspired me to be the best that I could possibly be in all aspects of my life, and I hope that that is what I do for these kids as well. I take pride in knowing that I’ve got students who look up to me and that is one of the biggest things that has kept me going.”

That sense of responsibility to her career, to her students, and to dancing as a discipline is what has enabled Bri to achieve what she has at such a young age despite some of the hardships she has faced. Those life lessons act as just another form of motivation for Bri and, indirectly, for each of her students. “I want to show everyone that no matter what you come from, or what you’re going through, there is always a way to find happiness and achieve your dreams.”



“I Love
everything
about
my job”

Gotham City Cheerleaders
“Captain” Brianna

Brianna currently teaches dance at
www.stepupanddance.com



Leaps & Bounds

No

by Tom Mody

Happiness is not a given. It does not turn on like a switch at birth and it does not regulate inside us like the consistency of a heartbeat. But as the human body always strives for a state of health when we feed it properly, so to does the mind elicit joy when we stimulate it properly. And that's why the mind of man created movement and music. As even in the most challenged of minds and bodies, this combination has proven to be a non-discriminating elixir. And what makes it so powerful is that both the giver and receiver experience the joy.

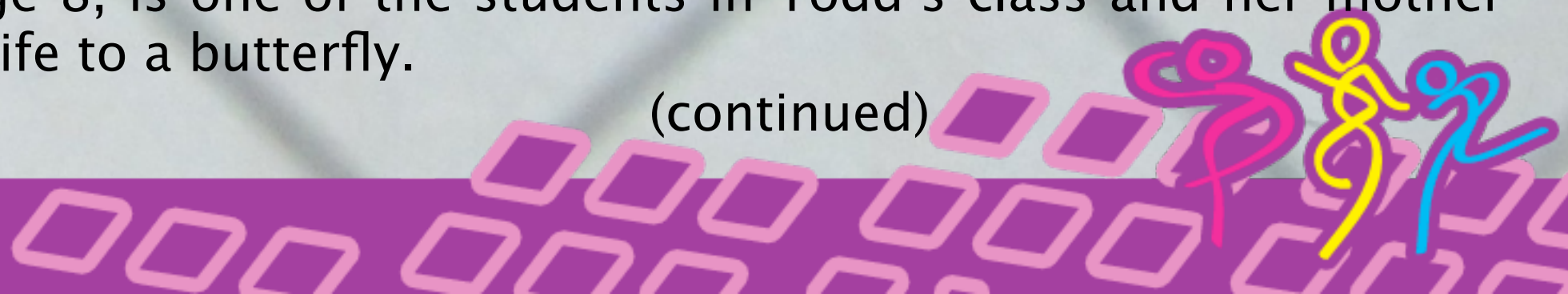


Photos courtesy of Wendy Maness

For three years, Todd Rosenlieb of TRDance in Norfolk, Virginia, has been the giver in a special dance class designed for children with Down Syndrome. For an accomplished instructor like Todd, it would seem that having to teach the basics of dance by rudimentary means of identifying left from right would be tedious. To teach dance to those who are challenged to even maintain balance would be an ordeal. But the mind is fed by happiness and happiness is in giving joy. Particularly to those who experience it in a special or different way.

TRDance's Adaptive Dance Classes are part of a collaboration with Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters (CHKD) and the Down Syndrome Association of Hampton Roads. The classes are modeled after a very successful program at the Boston Ballet. CHKD provides to each class a physical therapist, a percussionist provides live drum music and volunteer helpers come from the Governor's School and TRDance. Am'Briyah Smith, age 8, is one of the students in Todd's class and her mother Pam likens the results to a cocoon giving life to a butterfly.

(continued)



Am'Briyah's shyness would give way when music was playing and she would dance around the house so Pam was very excited to learn of this unique opportunity and of course, to go buy her daughter dance clothes as the classes still maintained a professional approach with required clothing and behaviors. Her first class however was a bit intimidating and Todd recalls her sitting in a corner on the mats while the rest of the classes started their circle time. This is a warm up exercise with the students holding hands as Todd explains- "due to hyper-mobility in the joints of our kids with Down syndrome, balance is an issue. By holding hands, they not only connect with their fellow dancers, but also find the stability to stand on one leg with their support. We then repeat the exercise standing independently to promote strength in the joints and a sense of balance and muscularity."



Pam liked to think the reaction of her child was more of a cheerleader. She knew Am'Briyah was interested because she made no attempt to want to leave and though she was reserved and hidden the first class, the next few classes saw her "cheering" on her classmates from a safe distance. The other parents and instructors were encouraging and sure to let me know that eventually she would join in. She was included in all the activities even if it was from a distance and this shyness continued through the entire first ten-week session.



Am'Briyah, Todd Rosenlieb and fellow dancer, Mary Claire Miller

But just as Todd predicted, when she started the second sessions she joined right in to the circle. Todd notes the environment of a dance studio is a very new experience for these children- the mirrors, the curtains, the people and music. Todd describes the change in Am'Briyah as being in "leaps and bounds" and not just by her participation but her self-esteem and ability to follow directions.

What was once intimidating to Am'Briyah is now a world of possibilities and the people she shied away from are now her friends. She helps drummer Greg with his beats and is sure to get a big hug from Todd before she leaves. For Pam, she feels the class has made a "big difference" in their lives and Todd believes she is even taking a sense of pride in her dance growth reinforcing his belief in the power of dance education for all.

ADC dancers participated in Carnival of Animals, a TRDance production at the TCC Roper Performing Arts Center February, 2012. This June will be their third stage time at the TRDance Academy Spring Show. Todd dances with the class at the DSAHR awareness walk at Mt. Trashmore each Fall. These events are a great opportunity for Todd's special students to now give happiness back to all in attendance.

learn more about Todd's programs at www.TRDance.org



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Being *Liam*

Article & photos submitted by Mom

Living 1,800 miles from home in another country? Sure. Performing under the direction of a living legend of dance? No sweat. Writing an article about his experiences? Now that is stressful. Or so says my son, Liam Saito, so I agreed to write this article from his mom's point of view.



A year ago at this time, we never imagined that we would have one less kid in our household, but Liam's journey really began last fall, when he launched his preparations for the Youth America Grand Prix Competition with Rose and Charles Flachs, his teachers at Massachusetts Academy of Ballet in Holyoke, MA. After a successful performance at the regional competition in Torrington, CT, Liam was invited to compete in the finals in New York, where he got to meet and rehearse with some of the best young male dancers from around the world. Following a scholarship class, Liam was tapped by the director of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School (Canada), who offered him a scholarship to participate in the school's summer intensive.

It's been a long road from my little boy- the one who couldn't stop moving. Liam loved to run, climb, and jump- playing outside and making homemade swords and bows & arrows. Things that might be considered more "boy" type activities. He called them his leisure-time activities, while ballet was more like his professional calling. He was also very responsive to music, which gave us the idea to enroll him in a Eurhythmy class at the local ballet studio. He loved the class and wanted to enroll for a second session, but the enrollment numbers were too low and the class had to be cancelled. The late Noble Barker, who was the director of that studio at the time, suggested that he try a pre-ballet class instead. He never looked back. He started talking about being a professional dancer shortly after that, at the age of five or six.

Since his first ballet teacher was a very inspiring male role model, Liam started off right away with a sense of ballet as an exciting and challenging pursuit for men. Once we were reading a children's picture book about ballet together. One section highlighted boys in ballet, and started with the question, "Have you ever heard anyone say, "Ballet is for girls?" In response, Liam answered, "No." No one ever had told him that- it had never occurred to him. As he grew, some kids did question the masculinity of his ballet practice. He never seemed to let it bother him. He is a strongly masculine kid and his inner confidence helped him deal with those type of comments. I think he educated some kids about what ballet really is and what it requires of a man's body. Recently when we visited him in Winnipeg, I commented on how gorgeous the girls in his program looked in their post-performance dress-up clothes. He lowered his voice and said to me, "One of the best-kept secrets of being a guy in ballet is that this is where the girls are."

Just after his 15th birthday, Liam returned for two weeks to Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet, a favorite summer destination of many students from Massachusetts Academy of Ballet, where he had participated in the 2011 summer intensive. There, he reconnected with John and Margaret White and other teachers. He felt he learned a lot, and was warmed-up and ready when I drove him from Narberth, PA to New York. From LaGuardia he flew to Winnipeg- his first solo trip and first time to visit that city.

(continued)





Liam spent four weeks at RWB School's summer intensive and greatly enjoyed the new experience of taking class with a large group of guys his age. Around the third week of the program, RWB School began calling parents whose children had been selected to enroll in the school's year-round Professional Division. I received one of those calls with a mixture of pride, excitement, and sadness at the idea of Liam being so far away. After many phone calls and e-mails negotiating financial aid and getting used to the idea, and with Liam's assurance that this was a good place for him to be, we made the commitment for him to continue at RWB School in the fall.

(continued)



Being Liam (cont.)



Young Liam as Cupid in Coppelia

One of the first things people noticed about Liam as a dancer when he was small was the joy with which he danced. As he grew older and became more aware of the stresses and pressures of growing up in the ballet world, that joy was less evident on his face. He went through a rough time while he was preparing for Youth America Grand Prix. He was aware that life was going on without him and that he was no longer able to participate in some of the things he had enjoyed in the past, like hanging out with his friends, going on family weekend getaways or being in plays that required a lot of rehearsal time. He had to dedicate all of his time, every single day, to preparing for the

competition. One night when he came home from class in tears from exhaustion and frustration, I asked him what he wanted to do— did he want to quit? He didn't miss a beat, he said he wanted to keep going. He was aware that the sacrifice he was making could lead him to the next level of ballet, and he felt it was worth it.

Liam was very happy to return to MAB and spend the last three weeks of the summer intensive studying with Rose and Charles and taking classes with the friends he has danced with since he was five years old. Liam's grandmother and I joined him on his trip to Winnipeg. We stayed for two days and helped him settle into his dorm room, registering him for his classes at the Collegiate (high school division) of the University of Winnipeg.

Shortly after he arrived, Liam was called to audition with Twyla Tharp, who was in town to produce her new ballet *The Princess and the Goblin*, co-commissioned by RWB and Atlanta Ballet (Atlanta premiered it in February). The cast featured company dancers, with guest star Paloma Herrera, principal dancer of American Ballet Theater. A cast of children included roles for two teenagers—one boy and one girl. After two weeks of auditions, Twyla finally selected Liam and one of his classmates (double-cast) for the role of the teenaged boy. Liam performed in four of the six shows when the ballet opened.

Even though it made for an extremely challenging and intense start to his experience in Winnipeg, Liam was grateful for the chance to work with Twyla Tharp and the RWB Company. He said, "Twyla's choreography is interesting and she is interesting to work with. She's demanding but also gentle and genuinely interested in dancers as individuals." In addition to the group choreography, Liam had a short solo and a pas de deux with a female classmate. He noted that Twyla customized the solos according to the dancers she was working with. For example, his solo was a little different than that of the other boy dancer in the same role. Liam says, "My role was pretty small, but it was great working with Twyla and a really awesome cast. The dancers at RWB are phenomenal. The U.S. companies I have seen have flashy superstars, but I'm impressed with the way RWB's company is so cohesive and works so well together."



Leaping Liam



Liam with the legendary Twyla Tharp

(continued)



After the show ended, Liam dove into “regular” life at RWB School. His classes at RWB include Men’s ballet, Men’s Coaching, Men’s Strength Training, Repertoire, Modern, Art, and Music. At the Collegiate, he takes Math, Science, and English classes (Liam and his three siblings are lifelong homeschoolers, so this is his first school experience; he is still getting used to the homework and tests!)

Liam feels he made a good decision in going to Winnipeg because of all the opportunities afforded to him as a young male dancer in the company of peers. He was recently invited to set technical, artistic, personal and class goals against which he will be able to measure himself later in the year. He misses his MAB friends and teachers and looks forward to seeing them when he is home on breaks, and he expresses his appreciation (as do we, his parents!) for all the care and training that Rose, Charles and the MAB teachers provide to their students every day.

In January, Liam’s dad and I got to visit Winnipeg for a weekend and watch RWB School classes and two performances of “First Steps,” the 23rd RWB School student choreography competition, an annual event that the students look forward to and prepare hard for every year, not only choreographing, but casting, rehearsing, and designing costumes, lighting and sound. We were dazzled by the level of dancing and the students’ professionalism, but happiest to see the joy in Liam’s dancing, and his comfort with his new friends.

It is a financial struggle to pay for dance training, not just for Liam, but for all of our children. Liam’s younger brother Evan (13), who also studied ballet for many years at Massachusetts Academy of Ballet, continues to take a jazz dance class at the studio while pursuing his passion for violin playing, singing, and acting. Liam’s two youngest siblings May (11) and Nolan (9) continue to study ballet at the studio, dreaming of perhaps someday joining their older brother in Winnipeg or elsewhere in the world of dance. Massachusetts Academy of Ballet and Royal Winnipeg Ballet School have been generous in their support for Liam. They understand that we are stretching our family’s budget as far as possible to pay for the excellent training that he has received, and they respond by helping us to close the gap. Our family has always, in return, tried to be available to give back in any way that we can, and Liam understands that he has to work hard and grow as a dancer as a way of expressing his appreciation.



DANCERS WANTED

ages 3
and under

by Tom Mody

Young parents love to speculate on what the future holds for their newly developing toddlers. If your son beats on the coffee table with cutlery or your daughter draws symmetrically formed lines on your newly painted walls you dream of the day when they are “old enough” that you can buy them that first drum set or advanced water color kit- like there’s some exact point in the future when they can learn the skill properly and structurally. And young mothers love to dream of their children in dance. Transposing that very first step they take as nothing short of ballet perfection. The shaking of their little bottoms to choreographed hip-hop stardom. But what young mothers really want are more opportunities to get out of the house. And that opportunity is provided at Emily Finch’s studio Dance 101 in Tempe, Arizona.

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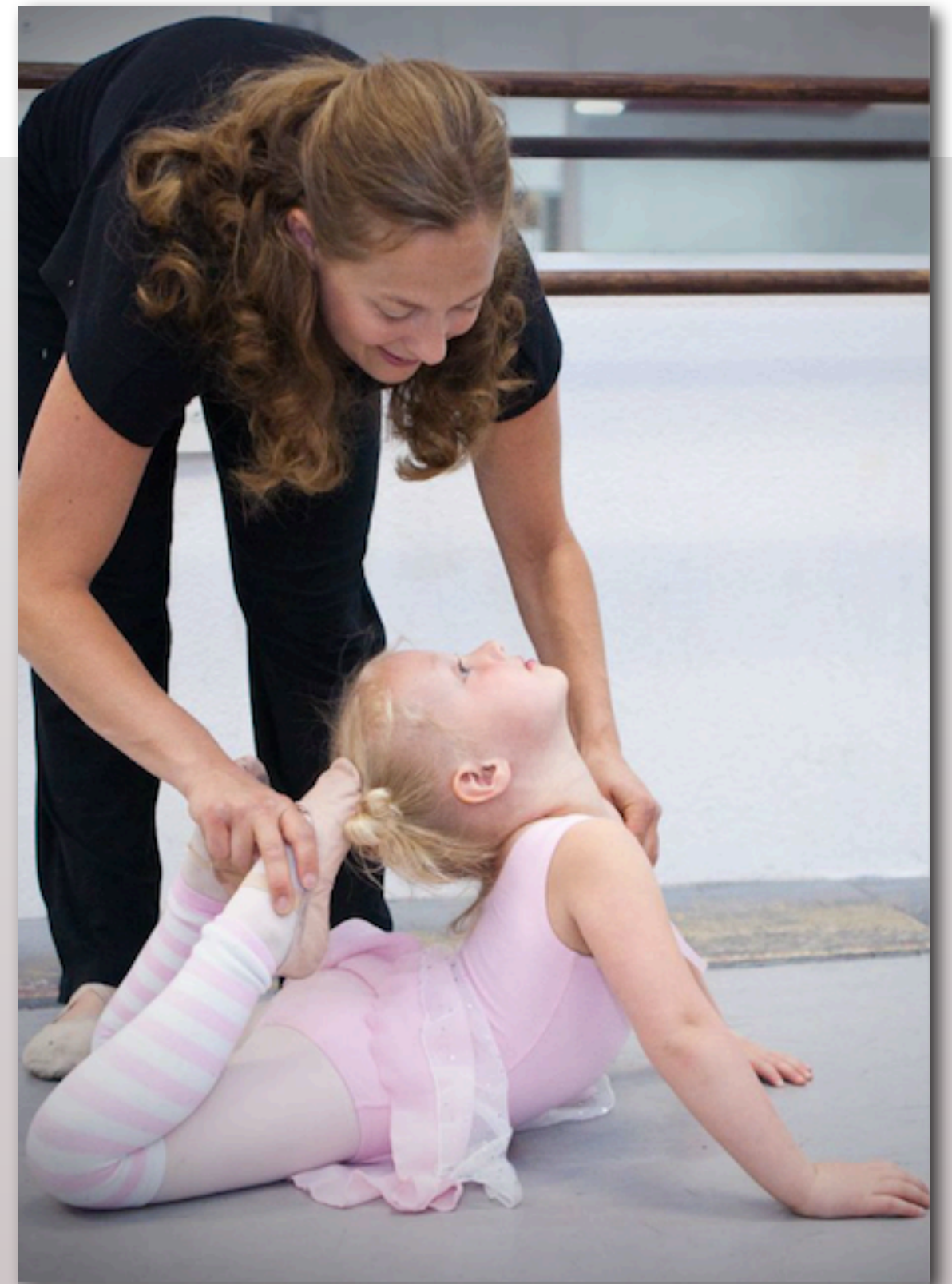


Finch's studio dispels the notion that there is a prerequisite age to formally start dance. She states, "for as long as I can remember, dance studios didn't accept children for classes until they were three. It was like something happened when the child turned three that allowed them to be able to dance." Finch should know as she started her dance training at age 3 and continued through higher education to earn her BFA in dance education where she was named the Outstanding Dance Education Student at Arizona State University. And for the first six years of her teaching, she just accepted the "age three rule" and regurgitated it to parents when they wanted to sign their children up for dance. And then something happened that opened her mind to a new way of thinking. She became a mom.

Finch describes the epiphany. "Ever since my oldest daughter could walk (at the young age of nine months) we had daily dance parties at home. She was doing some of the most amazing moves in our kitchen, living room, and anywhere that the music played. I have a video of her at about eleven months doing her own interpretive dance complete with pivot turns, dynamic movement, and some pretty creative arms. As she got older I began to teach her marches, jumps, skips, chasse, bourree, and grand jete. I was amazed at the transformation that was happening right before my own eyes. Friends would always comment on how physically advanced she was and I never really made the connection between that and how much dance training we were actually doing at home."

After becoming a mother for the second time two years later, she decided to begin the process of teaching on her own. A dance educators dream is to own a studio but it's also their money and their reputation to consider. Finch began the transition by renting other people's space and offering classes that did not directly compete with existing programs. But maybe a bigger obstacle was what the working mom was going to do with her fourteen month old daughter. However, that obstacle turned out to be the answer for a unique opportunity. Unlike most parents who can't take their children to the office or job sites, Finch could do one better and not just take her child to work but also make her an integral part of it. Putting her creative moment studies and parental observations to good use, she developed a parent child/class for children under 3 years old.

(continued)



Dancer's Wanted (cont.)

She describes her journey from that first class as “incredible.” The students who started with her when they were all under two years old are now turning four and have been training at Dance 101 for three seasons. The skills that they learned in the Parent/Child class has served them well through their dance training. It has also made strong bonds between the students and instructor. Finch notes, “It is so exciting to watch them grow up and expand their knowledge of dance. I feel privileged to have instilled a love of dance in them as they grow into amazing children.”

The studio's Star Program allows one adult to bring two children and her Galaxy class is for the whole family. As the students progress past the classes with “mommy” to be on their own with Finch, she still has some unique sets of rules for the “technically too young to be in dance training” students. A viewing room for the parents has been installed which is generally not something most studios with older students would allow. But it is still important for parents to not interact with their child during class. It is also very important that the young student knows how to convey to the teacher that they have to use the bathroom— not something most instructors would ever have to consider.

But one of the most steadfast rules of dance training is the best one to break at her studio. “The rule about needing to wait until you are three to take dance is not one that I follow at my studio” says Finch. “Dance can begin as soon as you can move. We foster this innate love for dance and start early to build a long lasting relationship with dance.” She notes the four year olds who have been dancing with her for three years and the amazing skills they have acquired along the journey that has turned them into life long lovers of dance. “They have built healthy and creative habits that will last them a lifetime.” At Finch's studio, that lifetime in dance has been extended a few years longer than at most anyplace else.



Photos courtesy of Audrey Butters Photography

For more Dance 101 info visit: www.mydance101.com

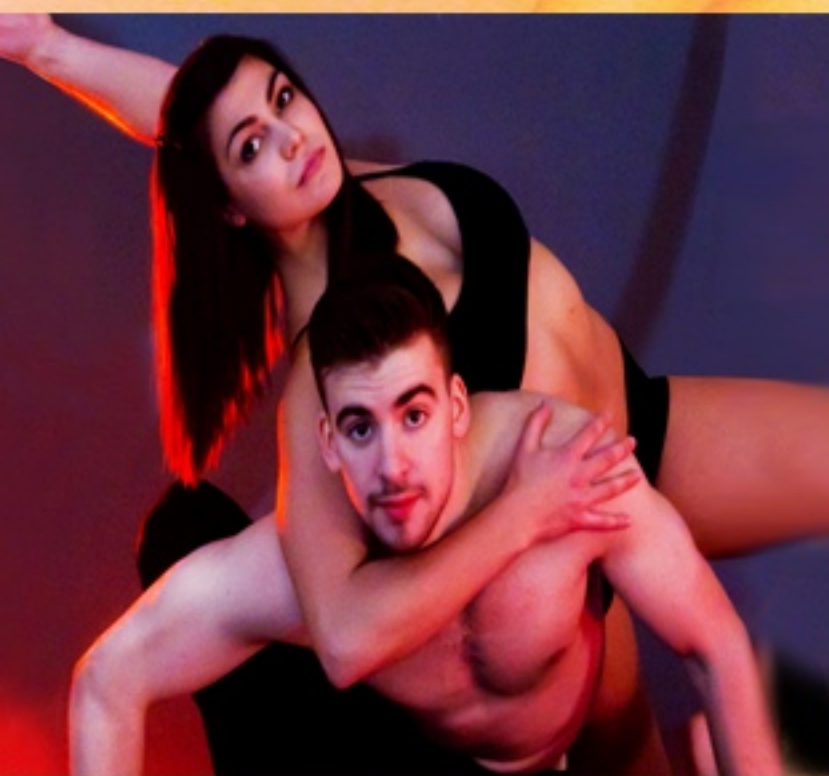


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DOMINICAN DREAM

by Christina Jensen

writer submitted photos

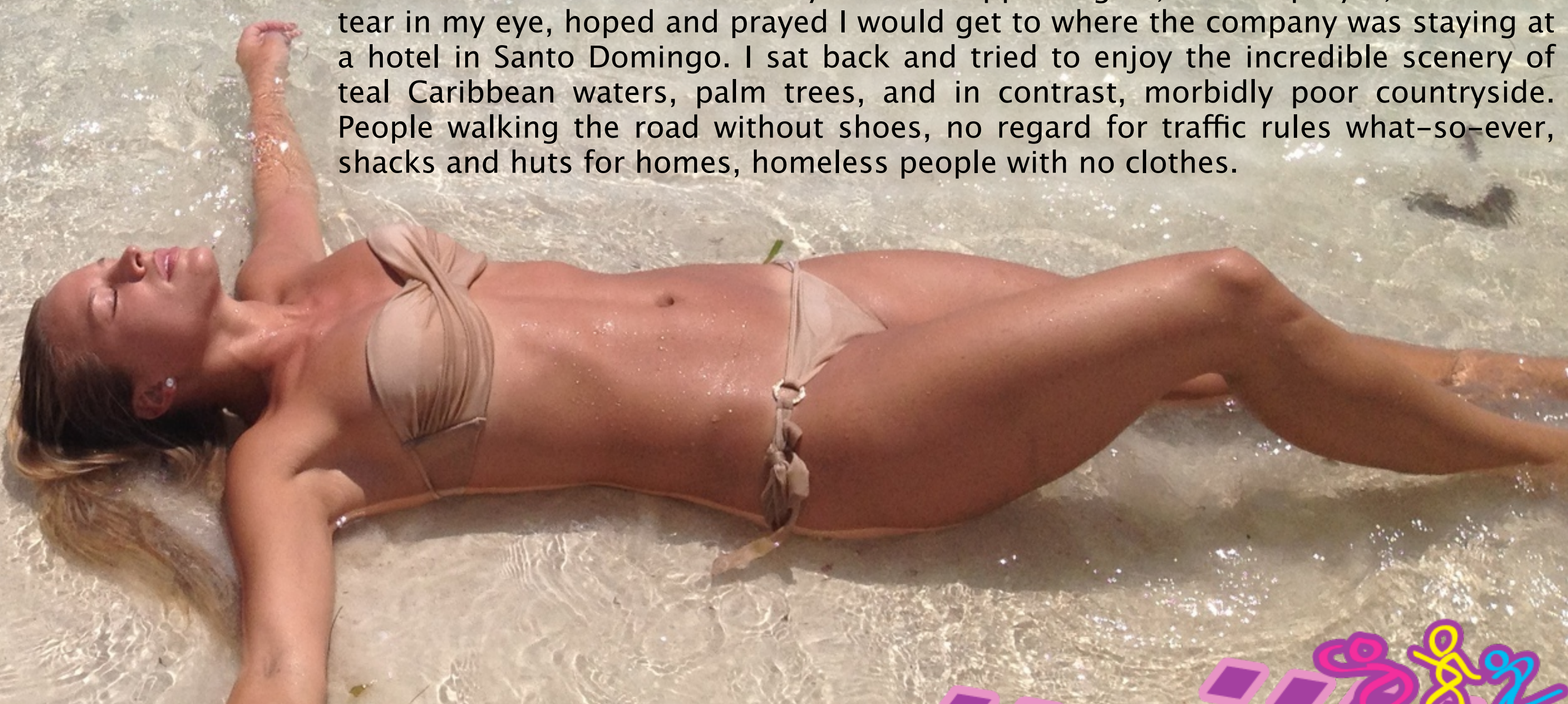
As an artist, it easy to say that there are so many moments or situations in life that influence me and my motivation behind my dancing. Being told I would never dance again after breaking my back was one. Living up to my potential from those who influenced me is another. But once in a great while you will be lucky enough to experience, not only influential moments in your art, but moments that change your life. Mine, most recently, was when Derrick Yanford, director of the company Bridge Dance Concepts, asked me to be apart of a show that took place in the Dominican Republic in September of 2012. Of course, going the Caribbean for a week and dancing with friends, old and new would be fun in the sun. Little did I know how much this experience would impact me.

But first impressions were not very promising. My directions were, I would arrive in the D.R., and someone holding a sign with my name on it would pick me up. Simple and easy right? What I wasn't prepared for was that no one speaks English and I had no idea what the man picking me up would look like. As I got off the international flight and arrived in the Dominican, a sense of fear came across me. Cell phones didn't work the same. I had no phone to rely on- just the information Derrick gave me before my flight. You hear all those horror stories about girls and women being stolen overseas in third world countries. These stories kept running through my mind. At this point, as a blonde American, I knew I was a target as soon as I got off that plane. I said a prayer asking for protection from God and St. Anthony, and followed the directions I was given. As I left the concourse and airport security, I saw the sign with my name on it. Okay here we go!

The man who picked me up, took me to a run down, blue truck with broken windows, and rust. He did not speak a lick of English so there was no conversation at all. He never looked me in the eye. I was scared out of my mind. How do I even know this man is not some crazy woman napper? Again, I said a prayer, and with a tear in my eye, hoped and prayed I would get to where the company was staying at a hotel in Santo Domingo. I sat back and tried to enjoy the incredible scenery of teal Caribbean waters, palm trees, and in contrast, morbidly poor countryside. People walking the road without shoes, no regard for traffic rules what-so-ever, shacks and huts for homes, homeless people with no clothes.



CHRISTINA JENSEN
A CHOREOGRAPHER
AND CURRICULUM
WRITER DANCES
PROFESSIONALLY
FOR THE
ROCKETTES AND
THE PHOENIX
PROJECT.



Dominican Dream (cont.)

Looking to my left were beaches and resorts, and looking to my right was the reality of how destitute and poor the D.R. really is. I had no idea how to feel about what I was experiencing. All I knew is that I could not wait to see my friend and dancer Travis, a familiar face to tell me I would be safe and okay. I began to think about all we take for granted growing up in such a wealthy, and relatively safe country comparatively. After about 40 minutes of a “scarred for my life” drive, we arrived at the hotel and as soon as I saw Travis I almost cried with excitement. I told him what I witnessed since getting to the D.R. and he agreed that it was scary. We had no idea how poor this country was. If this was the first impression, what would the next ten days bring? An experience of a lifetime!

Travis and myself, the Americans, would train and rehearse with two Canadian and two Dominican dancers and do a couple performances at a festival over our ten day stay. The choreography was created during the week as the director wanted to first see the type of chemistry the group created as a unit. It was difficult– not just from a language barrier but the conditions were less than ideal. No running water, no air conditioning and the electricity was rationed and would just cut out at certain intervals since the priority on utilities was given to the wealthy resorts. If you are wondering why I would put myself in such a situation, I wish I could say it was for the love of dance but being a professional means being paid and it was a job.



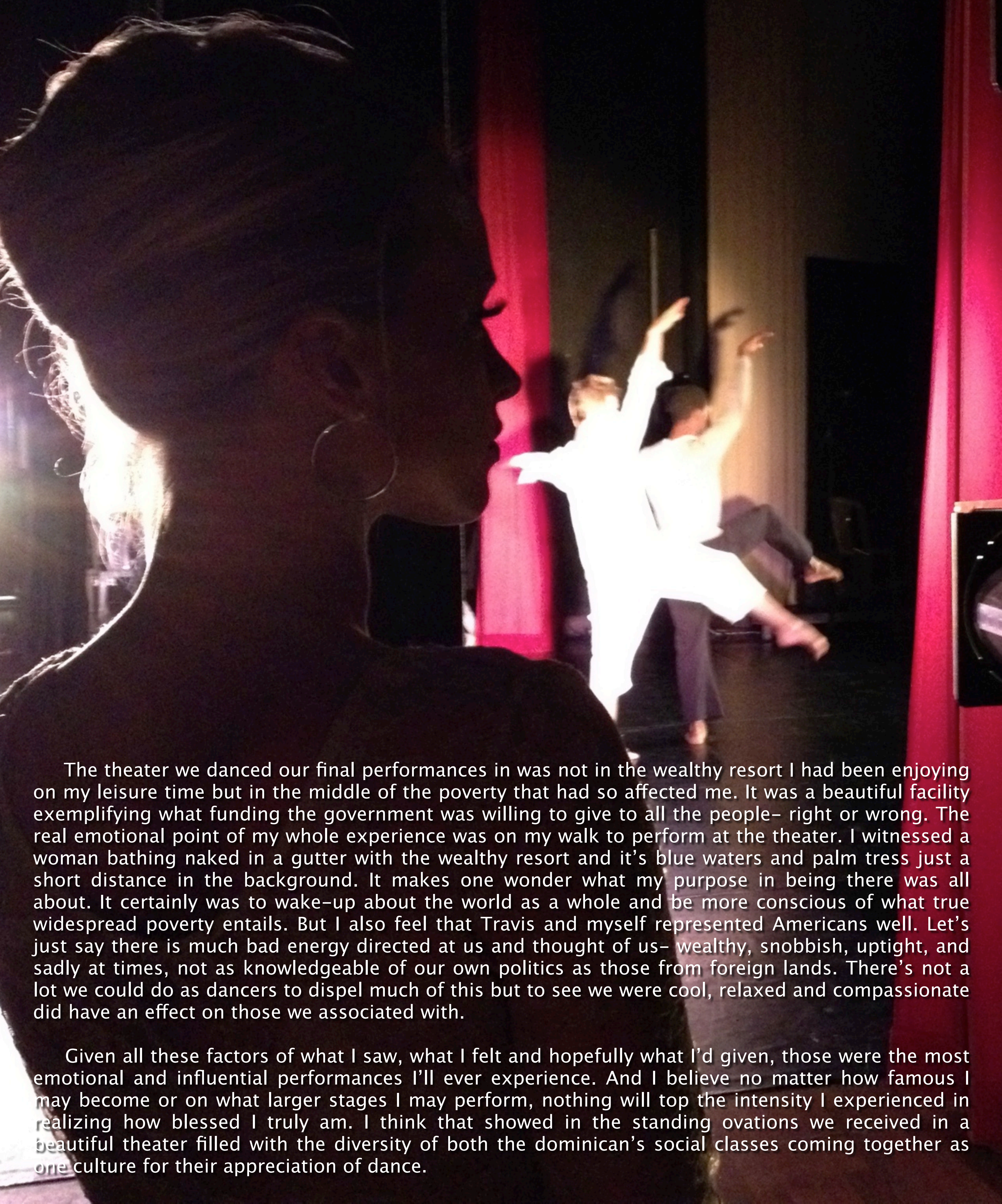
Christina posing with her international dance group

We Americans are willing to suffer for our art in our own way in pursuit of one day becoming professional, but when you compare to what I witnessed from the Dominican dancers, my plight paled in comparison. I met one girl who would walk three hours every day to rehearse for no pay. Their passion for dance is so culturally developed from birth that given the opportunity they live, eat and breathe for dance. The ones that make it in the arts have a good life in favor with their government so there certainly is a monetary motivation there but it is as much a cultural acceptance as it is professional that drives them.

At any point if there was a difficulty in translation you could always rely on the internationally universal language of ballet. No matter the techniques or styles that may differentiate our approach to dance training, I've learned that ballet training and its movements are essentially the thread that weaves all dancers together. But matching the passion of international dancers has always been the most surprising barrier in my travels. Dance as a whole is not an after-school activity abroad. It's not just training and rehearsing. It's a personal experience constantly celebrated in cultural events from the smallest of family gatherings to the full Caribbean festival I was to be taking part in. The government subsidizes these events not just for their wealthy resorts but for all the people. There is much to love about where dance is headed in America but it truly pales in comparison to the appreciation and passion it receives internationally as an event.

(continued)





The theater we danced our final performances in was not in the wealthy resort I had been enjoying on my leisure time but in the middle of the poverty that had so affected me. It was a beautiful facility exemplifying what funding the government was willing to give to all the people—right or wrong. The real emotional point of my whole experience was on my walk to perform at the theater. I witnessed a woman bathing naked in a gutter with the wealthy resort and its blue waters and palm trees just a short distance in the background. It makes one wonder what my purpose in being there was all about. It certainly was to wake-up about the world as a whole and be more conscious of what true widespread poverty entails. But I also feel that Travis and myself represented Americans well. Let's just say there is much bad energy directed at us and thought of us—wealthy, snobbish, uptight, and sadly at times, not as knowledgeable of our own politics as those from foreign lands. There's not a lot we could do as dancers to dispel much of this but to see we were cool, relaxed and compassionate did have an effect on those we associated with.

Given all these factors of what I saw, what I felt and hopefully what I'd given, those were the most emotional and influential performances I'll ever experience. And I believe no matter how famous I may become or on what larger stages I may perform, nothing will top the intensity I experienced in realizing how blessed I truly am. I think that showed in the standing ovations we received in a beautiful theater filled with the diversity of both the Dominican's social classes coming together as one culture for their appreciation of dance.



THE TRAVELS OF TRAVIS



by Travis St. Denny

writer submitted photos

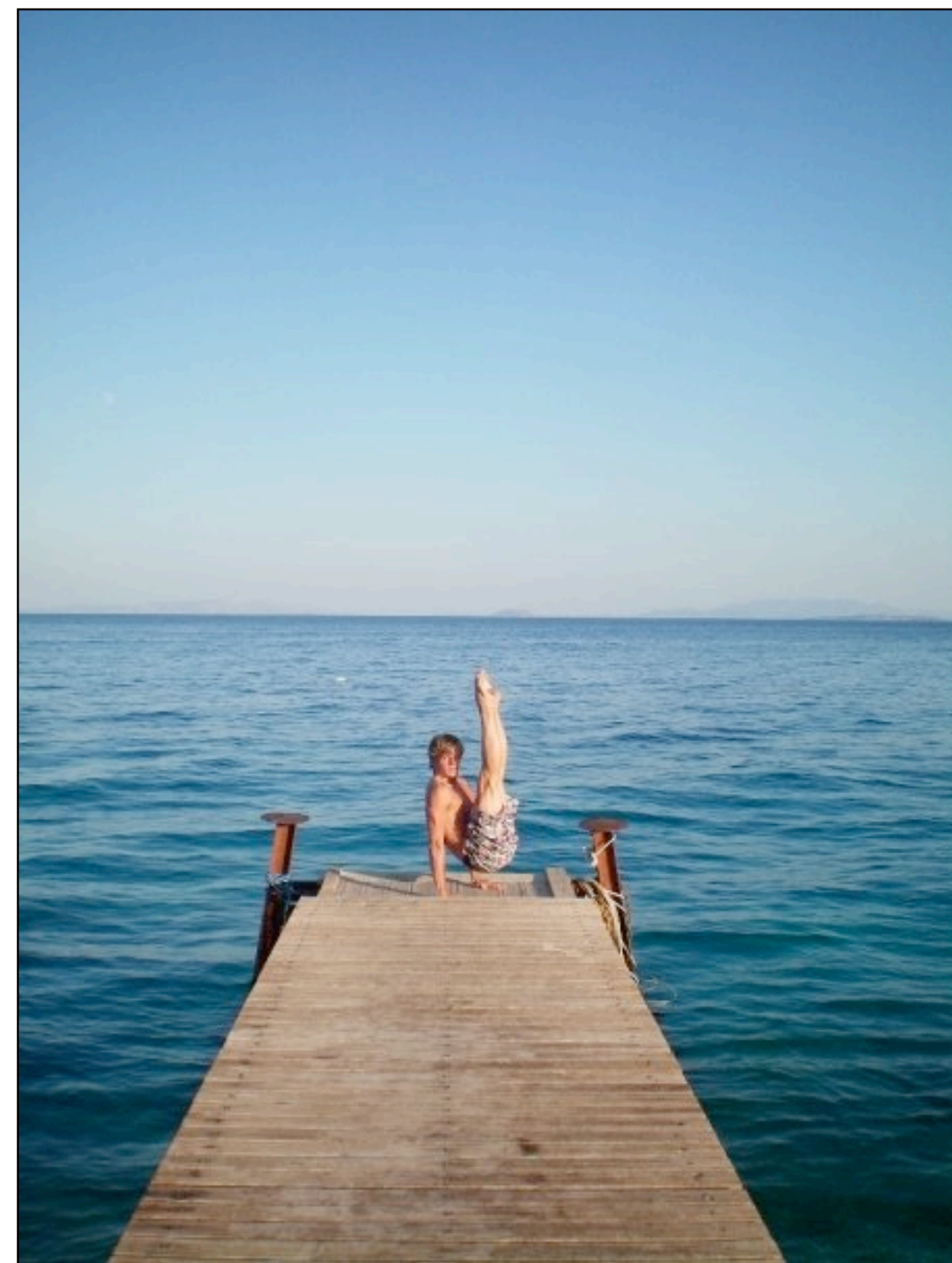
America is developing a rich tradition in modern dance from contemporaries like Martha Graham and Alvin Ailey to name a short few. It is shaping how we watch and how we learn dance from decades of growth. But in countries like Germany and Greece, two countries in which I have danced, the evolution of dance has progressed over centuries.

Dance is so engrained in the Mediterranean that someone of Greek descent would likely know it's routines and styles the way you'd know your national anthem. In a country like Germany you would not only be drawing from your rich history but the history and influence of an entire European continent. And just like the comparative youth of American dance, I was a very young 18 years old when I first traveled to Munich to dance in front of audiences of great diversity and train in a group of much more seasoned and veteran artists.

Seven of us from The Phoenix Project, my professional dance troupe, were among a number of American groups who traveled to Munich as part of an ADA tour connection where we watched, trained and performed over a weeks time. To have this experience as both a student learning and a performer promoting truly made me take in every angle of the experience.

As I watched the Munich State Ballet perform Swan Lake in the National Theatre of Munich, I was immediately struck by the incredible elaborate costumes insanely dripping with diamonds and color. Not that we in America do not know how to "bling" out our presentations but dance and the arts gets so much more funding in European countries. Their governments directly support the arts in not just costuming and production but with rich salaries for the most talented where in American most groups are privately funded or are sustained on grants, donations and performance revenue. And like their long dance traditions, the theaters they perform in are equally rich in historic architecture only adding to the experience.

I had only been taking ballet for 5 years so when I participated in the instructional classes not only was I the youngest but I was among students from all across Europe and Russia. It may have been intimidating at first and training had it's obstacles with the language barrier but dance does have it's universal language and my skills communicated equally with the others.



Travis posing on a Greek pier



The Travels of Travis (cont.)



Travis among the great Athens ruins

“Most memorable
was the 10 minute
standing ovation”



Performance at The Dora Stratou Theater in Greece

I did take away something very interesting from those classes and that was the physicality of European ballet. Dance is so culturally engrained in Europe that the stigma of ballet being petite and light and well... girly, might just be an “American thing.” The dancers were pushed so hard and trained with such strength that it took on a full athletic approach with the masculine physiques required to perform it. It certainly was the one cultural approach I incorporated from the training and have adapted to my own choreography and teaching. I learned the more you push a student to be physical it’s like feeding them and the more they want that in the training and performance.

But most memorable to me from the experience was the ten-minute standing ovation our Phoenix Project troupe received from the German audience. We performed a number of dances and I think our forte of partnering and intense lifting gave them a unique look how we present our art and their rich history of dance allows them great appreciation of seeing something new and unique.

My experiences in Athens, Greece, however, showed me a country that firmly sticks to its roots. In 2009 I won the CAN-DANCE National Male Senior title and received a trip to Athens to train and perform. The performances were a series of unique opportunities to dance on cruise ships, at resorts and one memorable performance in The Dora Stratou Dance Theatre with the sun setting in the background.

The way in which America is embracing modern dance now is probably very similar to how the Greeks developed a cultural style thousands of years ago. I’m not sure it will develop so richly through centuries for us but their style of dance was as natural as a language to them. The way we embrace say, the Electric Slide, at our cultural festivities they have a celebratory style that dates their existence.

Their core movements are very different. The way we have the pirouette as a core movement, they have something more to a squatting hand-holding limbo and it’s not just among the dancers but it’s cultural... societal. And though that experience didn’t yield any specific techniques to bring back for my teaching, there’s no doubt that when you instruct and when you create you do so from the vault full of your experiences. I probably learned more than anything that whether you are dancing as a training performer or for social celebration it comes from a burning desire to want to do it and that want is a common thread in every culture at every point in time.

Photos submitted by Travis



All The World's Stages

by Christina Ilisije
writer submitted photos



CHRISTINA ILISIJE
TOURS WITH
PARSONS DANCE,
HAS A B.F.A. IN
DANCE AND
TEACHES MASTER
CLASSES ALONG
WITH DEVELOPING
TEACHING
CURRICULUM.



America applauds independence which subtly lessens our connections with others and our value of in-person connections. Cultures that value in-person connections are more willing to see a performance of live in-person connections, aka dance.

Relaxing on stage in Milan.



Connections and in-person relationships with one another resonates subconsciously to our value of live art. Seeing people perform in front of us carries more intimacy and a realness nonexistent through a square screen of an iPad. A society that places predominance on community and spending quality face-time with one another fosters a people more readily interested in seeing and appreciating live performance. How we relate to one another is established primarily through our cultural structures of family and the workplace.

Here in the States we love our independence. Living on our own and providing for ourselves is a marker of true adulthood. Think of the unnecessary stigma associated to living with our parents in our young adult life. I'm reminded of my parents commenting to me after college, "Chrissy, you can always come back home while you get yourself a bit more stable." And my thoughts were a screaming, "Heck no!" I took pride in immediately living away from my family as a young and fully functioning (most of the time...) adult (most of the time...). The thought of moving back home after college made my skin crawl, but only because I was determined to be successful on my own.

This dire need for proved independence continues to ooze into the U.S. work culture. Our stereotypical work environment revolves around declaring solo ideas in cubicles without the help from the multitude of brainpower sitting directly to our right and left. We get to the workplace before everyone else and leave after everyone else to prove our independent worth and dedication to our company and hopefully reap recognition and monetary perks. In terms of seeing live performance, this translates into, "What am I going to get from this?" alongside a subtle hesitation to take the extra effort to see others perform. Workers spent from long work days want to head home and collapse into any activity with pea-sized brain power. A dance performance is subjective and unpredictable; you may or may not be amazed, and you may or may not like what you see - not exactly a quantifiable sporting event. However, our altering work culture incorporating group brainstorming and adding creativity to a sterile work environment are aiding in a shift towards the collective and hopefully will alter our view and attendance of the arts.

In Italy, the importance of family triumphs, and this ideal is so prevalent when we think of the country, it is what we envision - generations of one family sitting around a huge bowl of pasta Grandma made, yelling across the table at one another. Adult children often live with their families until they are married into one of their own, and meals are savored together. When in Italy, nearly every night we found ourselves dining late, meeting with restaurant owners, and wining with patrons of the company as if we were family. I almost forgot work existed there in the most beautiful of ways possible. I couldn't even get a panini at 2pm if I was hungry because everyone decided to go home to eat, relax, and take a nap.

I've never been as hungry in my life as when I was roaming the streets of Tempio Pausania in Sardegna, without a lick of food in my belly left over from the night before, when we landed there in the middle of the afternoon and got lost in the desolate streets for an hour and a half searching light-headily to any food oasis. I was convinced no one lived in the town and the show was going to have three people in the audience. I couldn't have been more wrong. Once siesta ended and night time ensued, the streets became alive and the house was full. They took time to eat together and then enjoyed the social company of each other at night.



Autographing posters for my performance.

All The World's Stages (cont.)

Additionally in reflection of Italians' work demeanor, it might have been easier to count the times when the stage was prepared for us at the appropriate time, and I don't believe we started a show on time even once. I'm reminded of Padova, one of my favorite Italian performances, held in an arena known to host music concerts and the like. The audience was having a grand old time eating, drinking, and socializing before the show. While we warmed up on stage behind the curtain, they were beautifully boisterous and we probably started at least a half hour late; I thought this is how going to the theatre should be in the States – an enjoyable unstuffy event. They were the most incredibly receptive and enthusiastic audience and it brought an energy I'll always remember. The relaxed and tight-knitted Italian culture makes for an environment where people place pride on showing up to social events, and enjoying art is an expected way of life rather than something weaseled into a busy schedule.

Similarly but with a completely different vibe, Koreans frown upon living alone and most people live with their families until they are married. One of our Korean presenters expressed she typically hides the fact she lives alone, away from her family – just a tad different than the American prideful independence we hold so near and dear. In terms of work, when rehearsing and performing in the theatre, it operated like clockwork; the stage crew was dutifully efficient, timely, and went above and beyond. One of the workers for the theatre would meet us in the lobby of our hotel to take us to the theatre a few blocks away even though we all knew where it was located. Our American reaction was, "What a waste of their time, we'll just get there on our own in time for call."

The main difference existent in Korean culture is not so much their willingness to work, but the idea of work as a group activity. Where as we think of accomplishing tasks solo in the workplace to get the notoriety we deserve, their idea of work revolves around the group as a whole. One day we were running late to a call time

due to a slight miscalculated trip home from one neighborhood in Seoul across to the business district where the LG Center was located. We notified our stage manager as soon as we all realized we were stuck and had no way of being there without the luxury of an additional twenty minutes. Being late is unacceptable, but this was an innocent mistake, we were all together, and our call time allotted this wiggle room.



Myself and Parsons dancer Elena d'Amario on the streets of South Korea the Korean HSers.



All The World's Stages (cont.)

We got a supreme scolding, had to mop our own stage before the show, and personally apologize to the crew...

...They were there on time to let us in and we were disrespectful. The Korean concept of work revolves around the dependance and productivity of the group. Presumptuous at it may be, group-think culture condones appreciation for attending group-think activities and watching group-think art.

Believe it or not, Parsons Dance and our lovely troupe of performers are a just a wee-notch below Peyton Manning and even Clister Ginger Spice on the belt of public notoriety. Shocking, I know. However, if you take us to Italy or South Korea, our celebrity status gets a lot hotter. Now why is it modern dance can have more mass popularity overseas while here in America, the average person may not even have a clear depiction of what modern dance encompasses? What is it about the people and their culture that makes screaming "bis!" (encore in Italian) and jumping to their feet after an already extensive company bow completely normal? These are some speculations on this reasoning- nothing is supported with scientific proof or even historic research just incase I fool you into thinking my credentials read, "dancer and anthropologist." For extensive research purposes (and to bring me back to my college years), I'm choosing Italy and South Korea in comparison against the States because the European and Asian lifestyles are so different from one another, yet when Parsons Dance travels to both, the beautiful response we receive from the people is nothing but warm, enthusiastic, and most significantly, bountiful and a plenty.

visit Christina's blog
www.living-dance.com

QUOTABLE DANCE

Photos by Dan Padavona
© dpstockphotos.com



*“Dancers are athletes
of God.”*

Albert Einstein

*“While I dance I can not
judge, I can not hate, I can
not separate myself from life.
I can only be joyful and
whole. This is why I dance.”*

Hans Bos



*"I do not try to dance better
than anyone else. I only try to
to dance better than myself."*

Mikhail Baryshnikov



“It takes an athlete to dance, but an artist to be a dancer.”

Shanna LaFleur



“DANCE IS FOR EVERYBODY.
I BELIEVE THAT THE DANCE
CAME FROM THE PEOPLE
AND THAT IT SHOULD
ALWAYS BE DELIVERED
BACK TO THE PEOPLE.”

Alvin Ailey

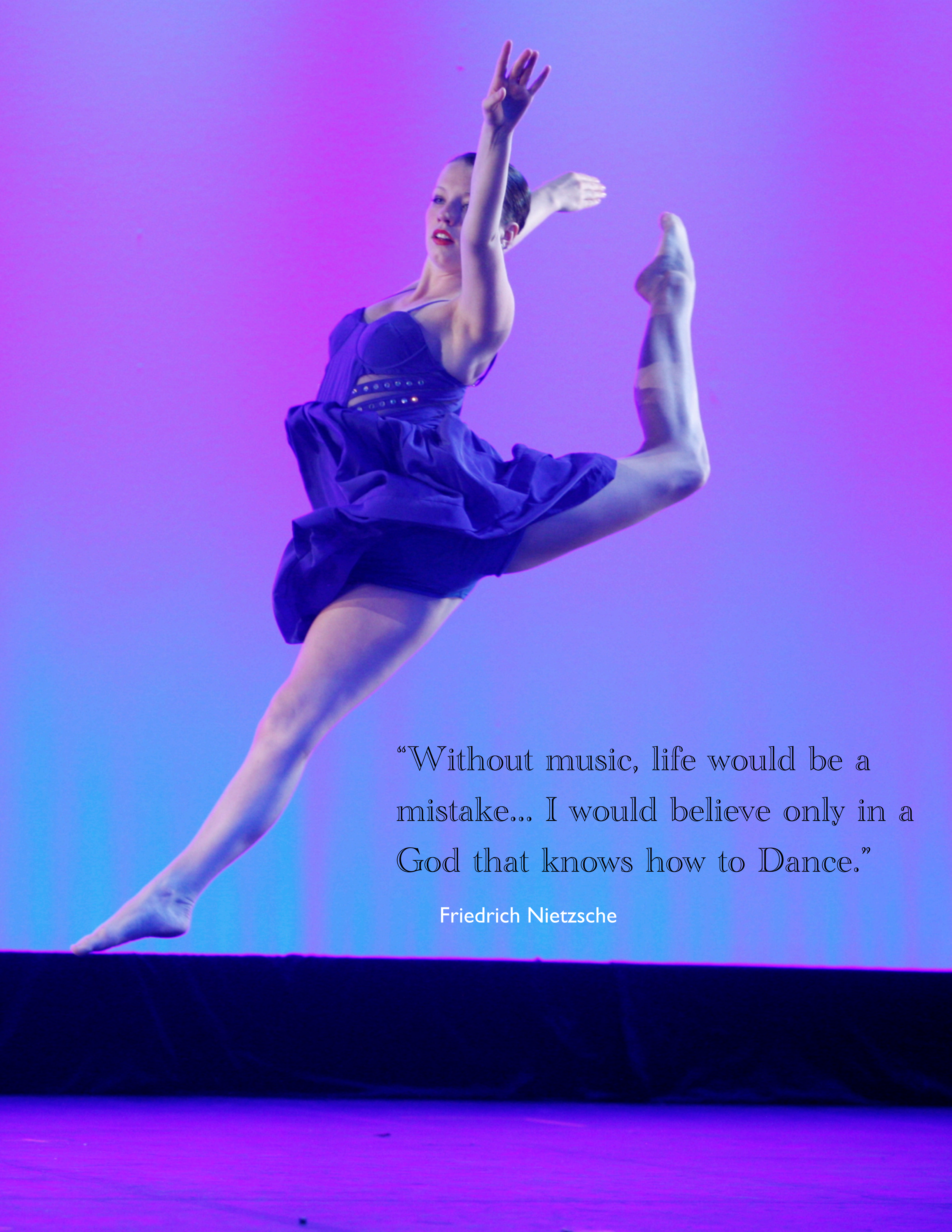


“Dance is bigger than the physical body.

When you extend your arm, it doesn't stop at the end of your fingers,
because you're dancing bigger than that; you're dancing spirit.”

Judith Jamison





“Without music, life would be a mistake... I would believe only in a God that knows how to Dance.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

**“Dance is the hidden
language of the soul.”**

Martha Graham



"There are short-cuts to happiness, and dancing is one of them."

Vicki Baum



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Join Us For Ballet BLAST

If dancing makes your heart sing, check out Living-Dance

Christina Ilisije, dancer with Parsons Dance, unleashes her thoughts on dance and shares her touring experiences through her blog and Facebook page.

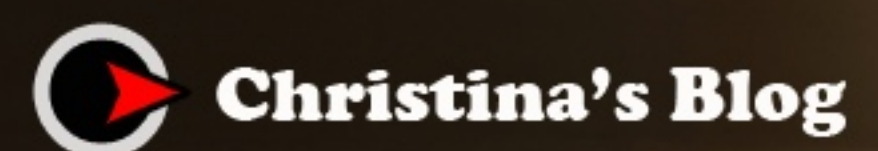
And put those invigorating thoughts of dance into action at Ballet Blast, a modern-inspired ballet class accompanied live by the talented Damien Bassman on drums. Hard-core fitness conditioning warms and tones for a lean physique, targets the stabilizing core, and initiates quick firing of muscles. We take this strength to the ballet barré and incorporate a freely moving torso while simultaneously coordinating and articulating our lower limbs with acute precision. Center work consists of expansive movements, melding a modern release swing of the limbs and extreme spiraling of the torso with balletic finesse and suppleness through series of sailing pirouettes and boundless jumps. We focus on uninhibited performance, fearless risk-taking, and full potential of movement. No grade, director, or audience. **It's for you!**

Living-Dance



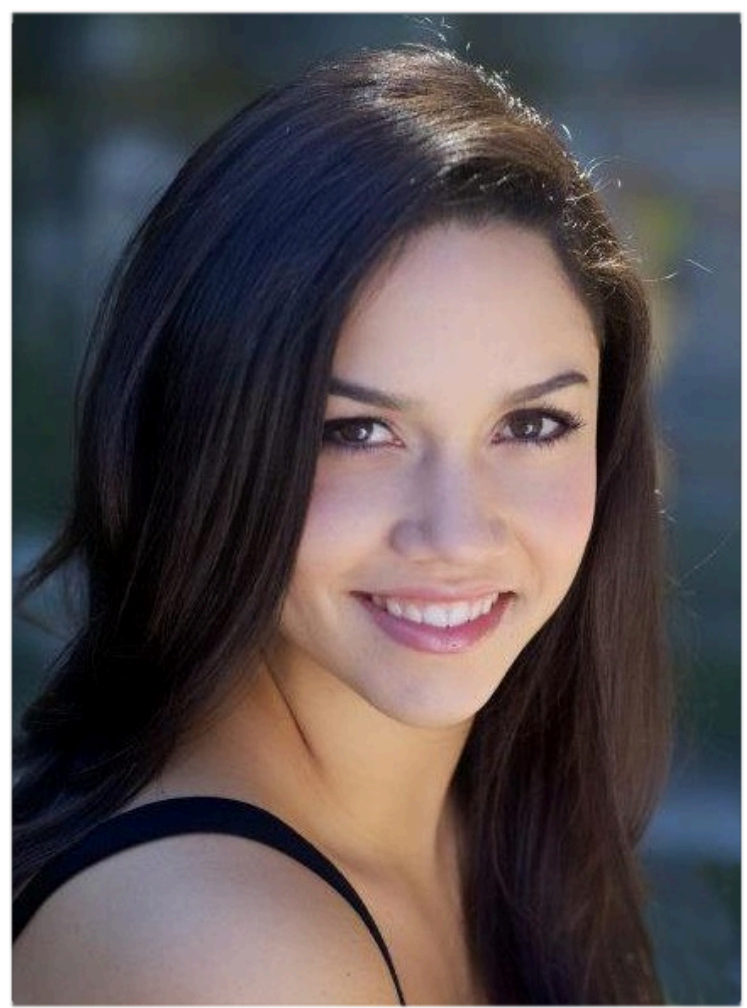
photo © Eduardo Patino

New York's
Hard-Core Ballet and Fitness Class
with LIVE MUSIC!



Katie's Journey

Part 2

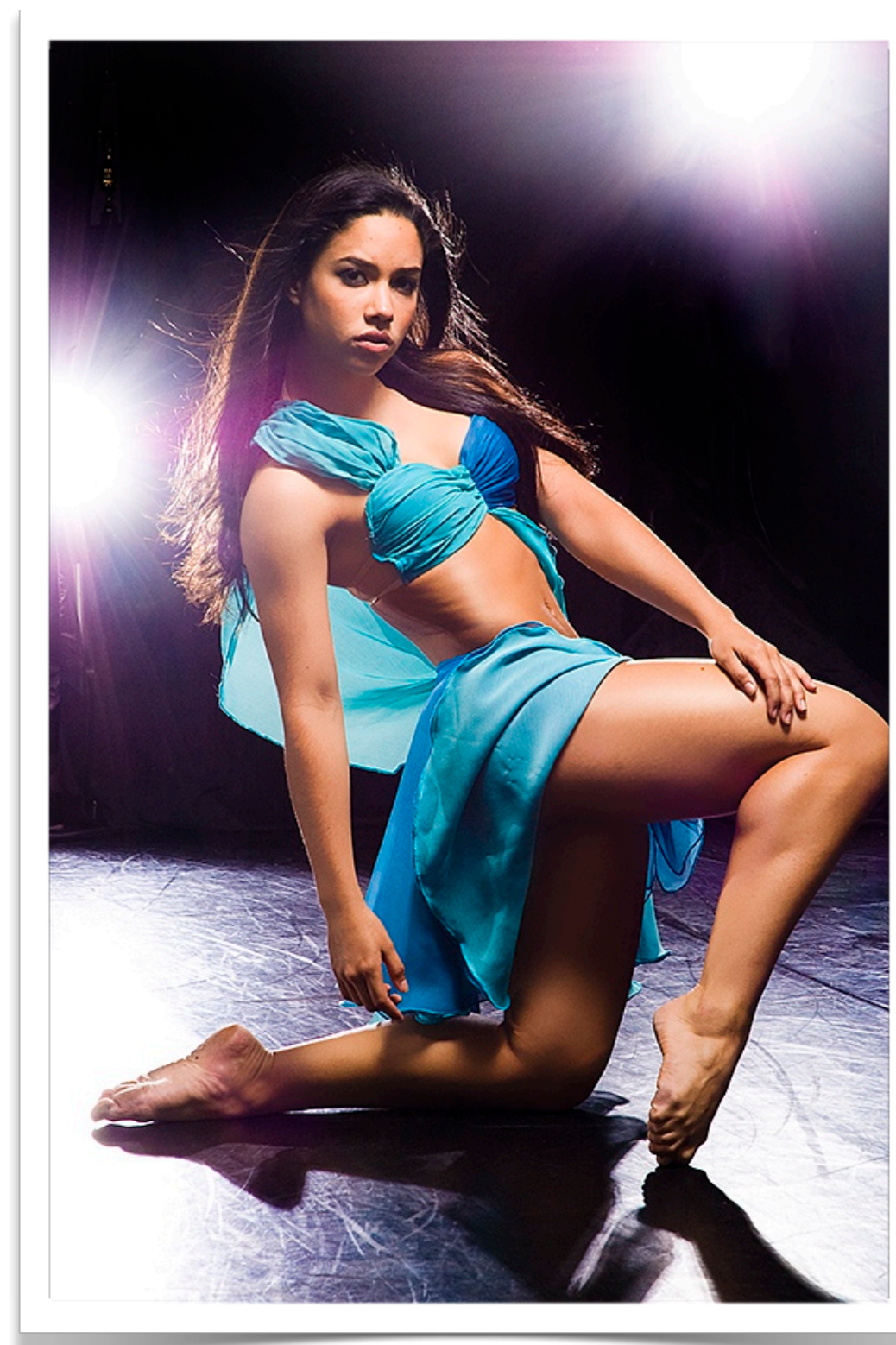


“Injuries are like speed bumps- They get in the way and slow you down”

Katie Ann Martinez is a 18 year old dancer who has traveled the tough road of personal sacrifice and the even tougher road of inner discovery. But her journey has actually just begun on the toughest road of all... committing herself to be a professional dancer. Into her final year of schooling, she will eventually leave behind the dance family that has shaped her into a multiple award winner. The decisions she will make are those faced by countless aspiring young dancers each year and her continuing journal will follow both the practical process and the emotional influences that lay the road before her. In this second installment she writes about the process of dealing with injuries and auditions for colleges of the arts .

About a month ago I landed wrong from a lift with one of my dance partners- oh, and it was during a performance. It must have been the most painful experience I've ever gone through; I'm still recovering. I remember the pop being so loud that I thought I broke through the wood floor. The moment went by so fast that the next thing I remember was being picked up and spun around. Lucas Lyons, my dance partner, asked me if I was ok and I started crying. There was no hesitation, I just broke down. I recall being so lost in the dance when he put me down, but somehow my body knew exactly what part we were in.

Unconsciously, I continued on with the dance while sobbing. I remember my foot being completely numb and waiting for that moment to get off stage. Throwing myself to the wing, no one knew what was going on. Mikey Perkins, my dance teacher, ran to my side of the stage and told me repeatedly not to go back on. I guess I decided to block him out, because in times like that, the thoughts running through your mind make no sense at all. I went back on stage anyway and finished what I started. I remember everyone working with me so that I could get through the dance. We made adjustments on stage during the performance and talked each other through it. Once the dance was over, everyone rushed to my side. At that moment, I knew I was in the right place. Each and every dancer helped me in every way they could. Even though I was overwhelmed with the pain, they made me smile.



Katie in stunning pose

(continued)



Katie's Journey (cont.)

Injuries are hard to handle, but the support given through it can make it easier. Frustration is probably the biggest struggle of an injury. I call them "break downs." Friends are definitely my source of staying calm. Every time I have a break down for several reasons I either call a close friend or get some sleep.

One of my break downs had to do with The Ailey School, in relation to Fordham University. I received an email that they were giving me an audition and I knew I would have some issues with the dates. It was about a week after the injury and that was the one email I was waiting for. I had to postpone it, but after sleeping on it I realized it was the best thing to do.

The real reason why this injury has taken such a toll on me is because the timing couldn't be any worse. I've postponed several college auditions because of it. In these situations it's better to recover correctly than to rush yourself into something that will cause you problems in the future



Katie with fellow dancers and her ADA Nationals Crown

Therapy is my number one suggestion to all athletes and artists who struggle with an injury. Allison O' Neill, a mother at the studio and also my therapist, has truly been my savior. I think I've been so calm about it lately because I know she's got it under control.

Finding myself with less time than I need is an issue, but I rather save myself so that I can have a longer dance career. Having more time to prepare for these college auditions and having a full recovery is more important at this time in my life. Having no regrets is what I aim for and pushing myself into something I'm not physically and mentally ready to do is setting me up for it.

As a dancer, you must make smart decisions about your body and what's best for your situation in order to be doing what you love for a long period of time. No one should force their injury to work before it's fully recovered, especially when you're engaged in physical activity most of the time.

For the first part of 2013 I have been on the road, traveling from New York to Florida, even Atlanta. College auditions are stressful, especially when you apply to five different schools for dance.

TIPS for College Auditions:

- Wear EXACTLY what the requirements say.
- Smile; even if no one else will, be different.
- Make eye contact with those watching you.
- Perform in your classes- don't over-do it.
- Interact with others- show them you're friendly but at the right times.

My first stop was NYU. Entering that audition, not sure of what to expect, I was positive and surprisingly calm. Amber Perkins and Christina Jensen, my teachers, came with me to this one. The combinations were difficult and taught fast, but right up my expertise which gave me a big energy boost. The classes were great, I made friends who maybe I'll see next year, and I felt pretty confident about my execution.

(continued)





Katie's Journey (cont.)

After classes, they split us up into groups and at this point I was dripping sweat. By the end of class you kind of already have an idea of who's staying and who's leaving. They eliminated on eof the groups. Fortunately, I was in the second group and we were split up into two so that we can do our solos. When I walked out of that room, on my way to the solo round, I held a 'thumbs up' to my instructor, Amber, and I will never forget her face, absolutely filled from ear to ear with a smile. It's nerve-wrecking enough to make it to the solo round, but having your peers watch you is pure cruelty. Some auditions let people watch, others prefer seeing you alone. Once I performed my solo, I waited for the interview. NYU was the least intimidating college audition experience because we interviewed with one staff member instead of the whole board. I felt relieved and good about myself once I came out.

TIP: Don't be nervous if you aren't sure where you want to go or if you feel you lack knowledge about the program you're auditioning for. The audition gives you a good enough clue about the program and really helps you realize where you want to be. But always let them know that whichever college you're auditioning for at that time is your first choice, whether it is or not. I learned for all the rest of my auditions to wait and see what classes I liked most, which ones I came out dripping sweat, and which ones taught new things in just those two hours.

After that, I went to the Marymount Manhattan audition. It was about the same routine, lasted a little bit longer and there were about eighty people in the room; NYU had about forty. Once they cut the first round, there were about forty people in the solo round. I was caught up with how crammed the room was during my classes, which was my mistake because I messed up in a couple combinations, but still felt strong after my solo.

TIP: A mistake is nothing to worry about; they want to see your energy, performance, technique, and how quick you can put those together.

Fordham/ Ailey was next. Ailey picks certain people to audition through their dance applications, so everyone in that room with me was stunning; there were about fifteen.

TIP: Don't let other people make you feel like you shouldn't be there or you don't deserve it. Most girls are going to look tall, skinny, and trained, like they've been working for this their whole lives, but you've done just the same and not looking like them gives you an advantage, because you're different. That's what college's want, diversity.

TIP: Through these auditions, don't look at anyone else, worry about yourself; stand straight and look professional on the side, but don't actually pay attention to the people dancing. You don't need that one girl or that one guy to make you feel nervous or unprepared when it's your turn.

(continued)

Then I had Point Park, which had the most beautiful facility I'd ever seen. The classes were great and the staff was welcoming.

TIP: Perform each combination given (don't over-do it), and perform you're solo; show no mistakes on your face; make them love you.

Next up, was University of the Arts. This audition was surprisingly different than all the others.

TIP: Always be prepared for the unexpected; you're always going to have that one audition that's incredibly unique whether you find it strange or inspirational, but just go with it. Every audition should be given the same effort as the one before (150%).

Last, I had Florida State University. My parents came with me to this one and by this time I was a pro at college auditioning.

TIP: Be prepared to see people you know or have seen before; the dance world is small. Whether you feel great or terrible about your chances, you make yourself look like the most prepared person in that room. Hair should be back and makeup should look nice. Make sure you're stretched before you enter class; even though a ballet barre warms you up, you want to look your best during warm up.

Throughout ALL these auditions I took in so much information not only on each University, but also tips on auditioning anywhere I'll be in the future. College auditions were probably the most draining experiences in my life, but they are the most life-changing and needed experiences in anyone's life.



All photos submitted by Katie Martinez



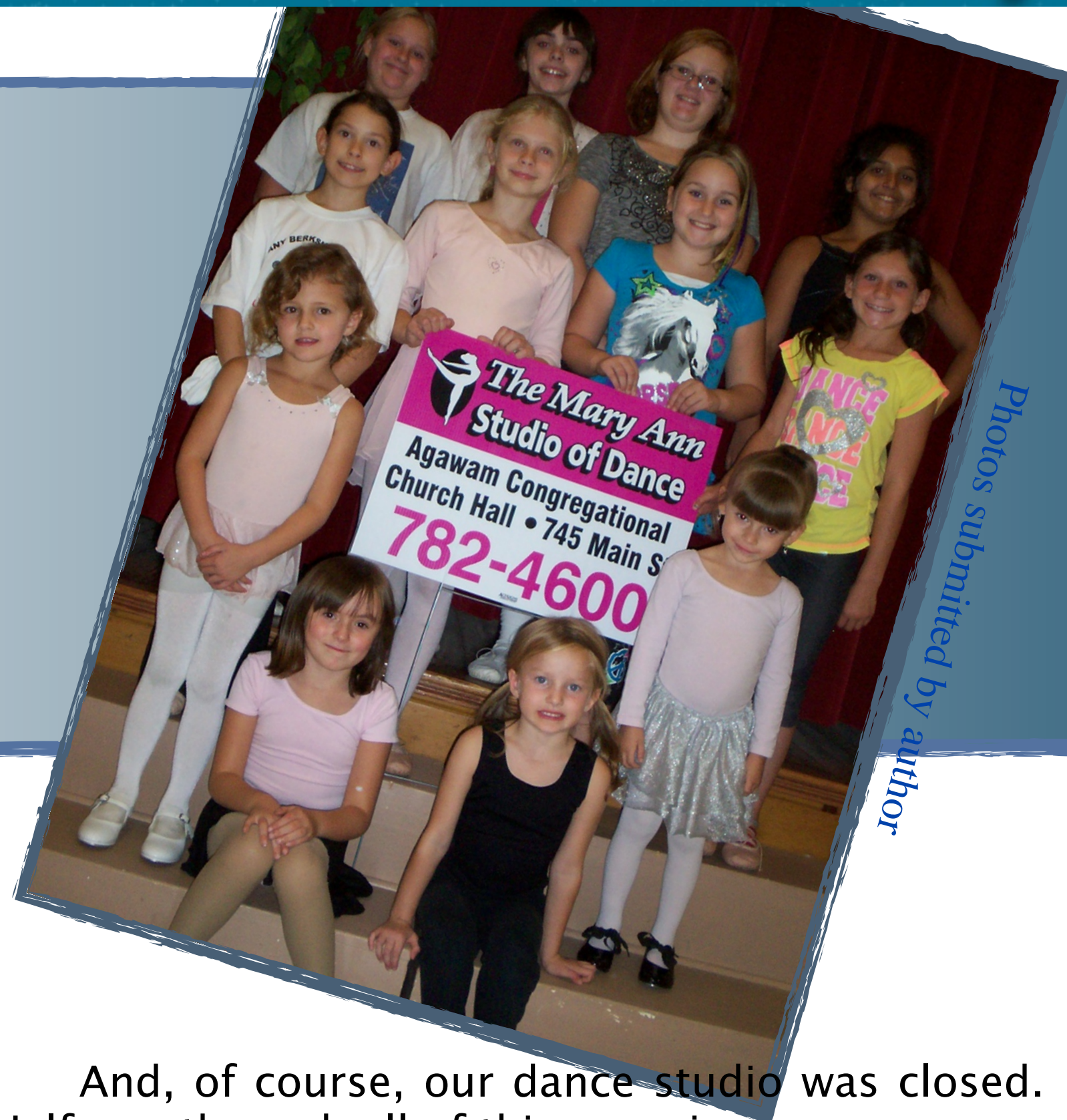
The Night Dance Warmed a Community

By Mary Ann Mosher

On October 30th 2011 a seasonally early winter storm dumped more than a foot of snow on Western Massachusetts leaving upwards of 700,000 people without power and scared. At zip code 01001, Agawam, Massachusetts is known for having the lowest postal number in the continental U.S. and this community couldn't have been feeling much lower being literally closed down. But one dance studio used its good fortunes to rally the spirits of it's dance family. Here's the rest of the story as told by April Mosher of Mary Ann Dance Studio.

'Oh the weather outside is frightful...' but that's a winter song, and here it was only October, and 'frightful', but not for the ghouls and goblins that should be knocking at your door looking for treats. No, this was October, 2011 in New England when it was hit by an early snow storm causing wide-spread power outages. Damage from fallen trees across roads and onto buildings made going places unsafe- if there really was any place to go to. In simple terms, it left the area a wreck.

Luckily it was warmer in October than if it had all happened in the dead of winter...but for many simply finding warm water to wash with was a challenge. You were lucky if you had a gas stove; you might actually be able to make a hot meal. Then, of course, you found yourself with a house full of family & friends to eat with you. But for most, it certainly was a learning experience to gain new respect as to how our pioneering forefathers lived. Grocery stores could only sell from their shelves, as their refrigerators & freezers could not keep those foods properly cool. Without power, schools were closed, the library was closed, and the movie theater was closed.



Photos submitted by author

And, of course, our dance studio was closed. Half way through all of this experience, power was restored to our Agawam studio location (but even so, 2 houses away were still powerless). While Mary Ann (the studio owner) told the Agawam studio it didn't have to open, the staff decided to open anyway. We did our best to contact all of the students from the Agawam studio. Phone calls and e-mails were sent and as many students as possible were contacted to say that the studio would open.

This was not a night to hold 'regular' lessons, especially since it was to be such a mix of different ages, but it was run as a dance party. The parachute came out for all ages, a limbo bar discovered how low can you go, and there were line dances to perform. A big giant coffee pot was brought in for hot water, so parents could grab a cup of coffee or tea and the dancers could have some hot cocoa. Our parents certainly appreciated a warm place to go, something warm to drink, and it gave something for our 'cabin fever' young dancers to do. In some cases power was out for a week. Most had power by the next day but in the best of times and the worst of times, sometimes all there is to do is dance.



Mary Ann's students are always in a giving spirit

www.maryannstudio.com





Now at 27 years old I have finally been presented with the opportunity to move from my small home town in Upstate NY, to the Big Apple. Ever since I was a little girl, I have always aspired to be a big time dancer actress making it big in NYC. But what most people don't know, is what it really takes to make it all happen.

Being from a small town upstate, I got very comfortable with my routine. I graduated from college and moved home to be with my "at the time" boyfriend and teach at my family's dance school. Life was amazing! I would travel to the city once in a while to do some jobs on TV or performance, and the rest of the time I spent home teaching my most passionate and favorite dance family at home.

Last summer, June 2012, I received an amazing opportunity to spend some time in the city working with an incredible fitness icon, Shaun Thompson. This was my first real long-term job which really required me to live in NYC. This became not only a crucial decision in my career, but the hardest decision I have ever made. Not only would I have to leave my comfort zone, my family, and all I knew, I would have to leave the most amazing job I have ever had- teaching dance. Within a few weeks I decided, as hard as it would be, to give the big-time NYC career a try.

Moving to the city required many sacrifices. I knew I needed to start saving my money and spend wiser. Every penny counts when you live in the City. I was blessed with the fact that I already had a great agent connection. So as I thought, the transition really couldn't have come easier or at a better time..

But there are so many things that I feel are incredibly important to let first time New York performers know. As I am going through this experience, I first-hand wanted to write an on-going article based on my experiences from month to month. All the things I am going through, good, bad, and very ugly.

As we all know that moving to the city is a hard task in itself, there are many factors you need to take into account. As I got here I was so excited to work with Shaun T, and be on TV doing a major new workout series. But what I wasn't prepared for were all the things I should be doing to prepare myself for what comes next. What do I do once a gig is over?

(continued)

CHRISTINA JENSEN
A CHOREOGRAPHER
AND CURRICULUM
WRITER DANCES
PROFESSIONALLY
FOR THE
ROCKETTES AND
THE PHOENIX
PROJECT.



A lot of times when you work on TV you do not get paid right away. I have just finished this amazing job on television– and I am broke. How is that possible? I have spent all my savings on paying rent, groceries, a gym membership, Metro cards, and yes even a car payment. So now what do I do? I still need head shots, and acting classes, and union initiation fees and dues! I feel like I could scream! Everything I need to be doing, costs money! I need to be available at a moment's notice for auditions and castings yet my agency is telling me my hair is too blonde and I need new head shots! I feel like the world is crumbling underneath me. Well, like every actor, I have succumbed to unemployment. In a desperate search for a job where I could make good money, and excel as a professional, I headed to the gym.

Right now I am working on becoming a personal trainer. In the meantime, I am trying to get all this financial stuff worked out like where I should invest my money first. Speaking with my agent, the first thing I should focus on is getting my hair to look “New York”, and getting some new classy head shots. Luckily, I have a great friend who is willing to work with me. Once I got my head shots I emailed them to my agent so they could pick the ones that they liked the most. Luckily, I had a few different options. Once they chose the right photo I ordered my new head shots from a printing company who could super impose my name on the front and resume on the back. Perfect– things are looking up!

After I got my new photos in order, I began auditioning. There are certain auditions an agent can get you into, but just because your agent books an audition for you it does not mean you are ready. What actually separates all those dancers and actors at auditions with all the best talent in the world is how you stick out. One thing I am learning is “voice lessons, voice lessons, voice lessons.”

I cannot stress this enough. In terms of technicality, voice is one of the most important factors in separating good from great! This is what I am really focusing on– it is what is giving me a stand in this forum. Besides the technicalities, this next factor is the most important into “making it!” Networking.

You have got to be able to be a professional networker. Go to auditions and make your face known, even if you have no desire to do the job. Take classes, go to shows, private lessons, events, get yourself out there. I have straight-up been at auditions where I heard dancers say to casting directors, “I need to get going, I have to teach tonight.” The casting directors said in return, “Don't worry, I'll make sure you get the job.” These instances happen all the time, everyday! What do they have that I don't? The connection.

I would have to say, learning the tricks of the trade here in the city are hard. All I keep hearing is be patient, you will get a job. This is part of what makes this business so hard. We dancers are not patient. It is hard to be patient when there are bills and rent to pay. I find myself wondering if I made the right decision going to college, or moving home. Did I waste time? Only time will tell. But I will tell you all this, I cannot wait to see what happens. I am making my mark here in NYC and I refuse to leave now until I achieve my dream. I know I have what it takes and more. There has never been a task that I started that I have not finished and being here and making it in NYC is no different. I always knew I was supposed to be here, and now I have to pay my dues. Watch out NYC, a new girl is in town and she won't stop until she gets what she wants! Stay tuned– can't wait to tell you what I'm learning!





SPOTLIGHT on SUCCESS



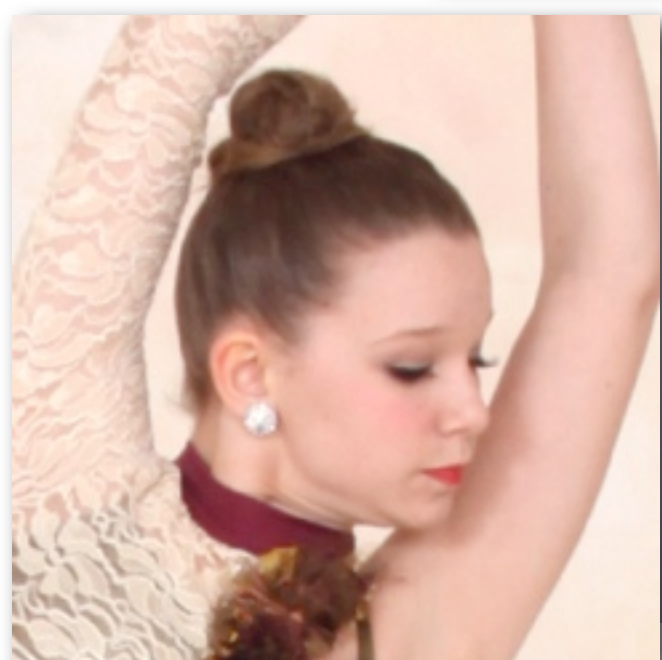
**Paloma Garcia-Lee :: PA School of the Performing Arts
Newton, PA**

PSPA alumna, Paloma Garcia-Lee, returns to Broadway in the Gershwin favorite, "Nice Work if You Can Get It." Paloma can be seen in this classic musical comedy sharing the stage of the Imperial Theater with industry legends Matthew Broderick, Kelli O'Hara, Blythe Danner, and Judy Kaye.



**Gerald Clarke :: Shaker Dance Academy
Cleveland, OH**

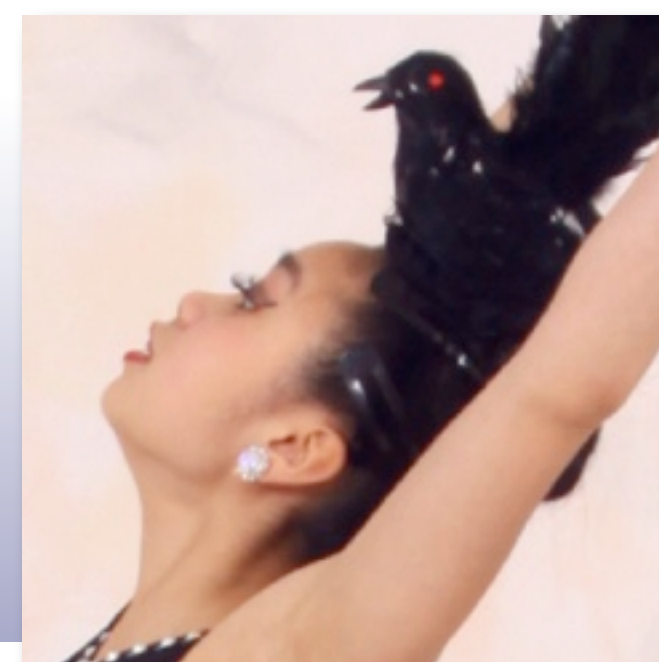
Gerald, a dancer & model in New York City, was a featured dancer/actor in "Step Up 3d, and recently performed with Nicki Minaj, Lil Kim's world tour



**Megan Laakso & Jade Cloud
New England Dance & Gymnastics :: Westfield, MA**

Megan 15, won Teen Miss Superstar at the Star Systems National Dance Competition in Worcester, MA.

Jade 13, was the Overall Winner for Elite Performance Challenge in Providence, RI with a perfect score of 300 and won the Elite Technician Award for the entire 3 day competition.



**Ellie O'Neill &
Olivia Terry
Perkins School of the Arts
Norwich, NY**



Ellie, 13 and Olivia, 12, auditioned in January 2013 for the Joffrey Ballet School summer intensive program in NYC. They were accepted in the jazz and ballet programs but both chose the ballet intensive. They are attending in July 2013.

Have YOU or has someone you know recently accomplished an outstanding achievement in dance or the performing arts as a performer, choreographer or instructor? We'd love to share it with our readers in our magazine and web avenues.

email your short write-up and photo to
tom@modycompany.com



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FRJED MUSIC

How to protect all that "i" stuff.

by Tom Mody



Boxes of records. Tubs of cassettes, Cases of CDs. Transporting the wealth of music needed for recitals use to be a two person job- in ancient times. The iPod changed all that in an instant and with the wealth of MP3 devices and abundance of storage on laptops the digital music landscaped ushered in a great convenience for the dance world. That is until all that time storing and organizing your music catalog and performance order vanishes with the slightest misplacement. It was quite impossible to just up and loose a collection of records in the blink of an eye.

Well, other than recite for you the prayer to St. Anthony who is noted for helping people find lost things there's not much I can do to help with misplacing an MP3 player. But I can help you prevent another little know hazard in protecting you music. I'll teach you how to not fry your digital audio devices and laptops.

All your MP3 players, phones, tablets and laptops have an audio source output. That little round hole you plug your headphones into sends sound to the headphones and also is often used to send audio to a mixing board for amplification over the theater speakers. Technically it sends sound to the left and right stereo spectrum at what is called "line level" signal.

When connecting your devices to a mixer it is general practice to use a cable that connects to your device output with "headphone style jack which is a 3.5mm connector. The other end of the cable plugs in to a chosen channel on the mixer preferably by microphone style XLR connector. This seemingly properly sends the device audio into your mixer for amplification. And it seemingly works great. But there's a hazed lurking in most quality mixers that can destroy your audio device.

Those mixer inputs are generally designed for microphones and some microphones actually require power to function. To facilitate this need your mixer may have a button called "phantom power" and when pressed it sends 48 volts through all the mic channels on the mixer. If your device or laptop happens to be plugged in to a mic channel while phantom power is activated your device will become toast.



To properly protect your music source you need a transformed interface like the pictured LTI BLOX (\$49.00). This device plugs into your music source and accepts a standard mic cable for input to your mixer. Items like the LTI BLOX absorb the phantom power and protect your music output device. It however does not prevent scratches and warping on other ancient music storage formats.





ACT to BACK



A double shot of Music Theatre



by Kasie
Gunther

How to Audition

for a school play

Many schools offer opportunities for their students to take part in school plays. However, since plays have very specific roles, most directors will ask you to audition before they assign roles. You can improve your chances of getting the role of your choice by preparing for your audition.

Check the School Play Audition Guidelines :

Some auditions require you to prepare a piece to present, while others will set you up with a cold reading--they will hand you a script on the day of the audition and ask you to read it. You may also need to schedule an audition slot.

Practice Speaking in Front of People:

Practice speaking in front of people. If you are preparing a piece, ask friends and family to listen to you act it out. If you will have a cold reading, practice reading unfamiliar material in front of your family or anyone you can recruit to listen.

AUDITION TIPS:

First of all, every single director will audition differently. Your absolute best way to be prepared is to do your homework! The following is a list of general suggestions to help you prepare for your audition. They are not black and white rules....we all know people who broke every rule and came out with lead roles. These suggestions are for basic community theatre auditions.

No Surprises... Prepare yourself.

Ask Questions... Find out everything you can about the audition.

(continued)

“Practice in
front of
People.”

“Recruit
anyone
to listen.”

Visit Kasie at
www.nystage.org



Consider what roles you are prepared to accept.

If you are only interested in playing the lead, you need to be upfront about that. There are always pros and cons of saying "lead only" ...some people say it even though they would accept another role because they think it will push them over the top into the part. But, you run a great risk of putting yourself totally out of the show. Of course, if you have lots of other offers or just wouldn't be content with another role, you should be upfront about it.

Arriving at The Audition...

Be "warmed up" both vocally and physically.

Read over your lines. Get into character. Focus on why you are there.

Even if everyone else is chattering away, try to find some space to "get your head together."

Don't get too stressed.

Spit out your gum. Don't ever chew gum at any auditions, rehearsals or shows.

When you are called in...

Take a deep breath, smile and look at the casting director.

Stay in character until you are completely finished. Wait a beat...then go back to being yourself, thank your casting committee, wait another beat to see if they have any questions.

Be prepared to be stopped before you are finished with a song.

Be "direct-able"... be able to accommodate whatever variation the director asks you to do.

Do not compare the length of your audition with others. Sometimes, a part is landed in the first minute and there is no need to have that person continue.

Be prepared to sing any and all of the character's songs.

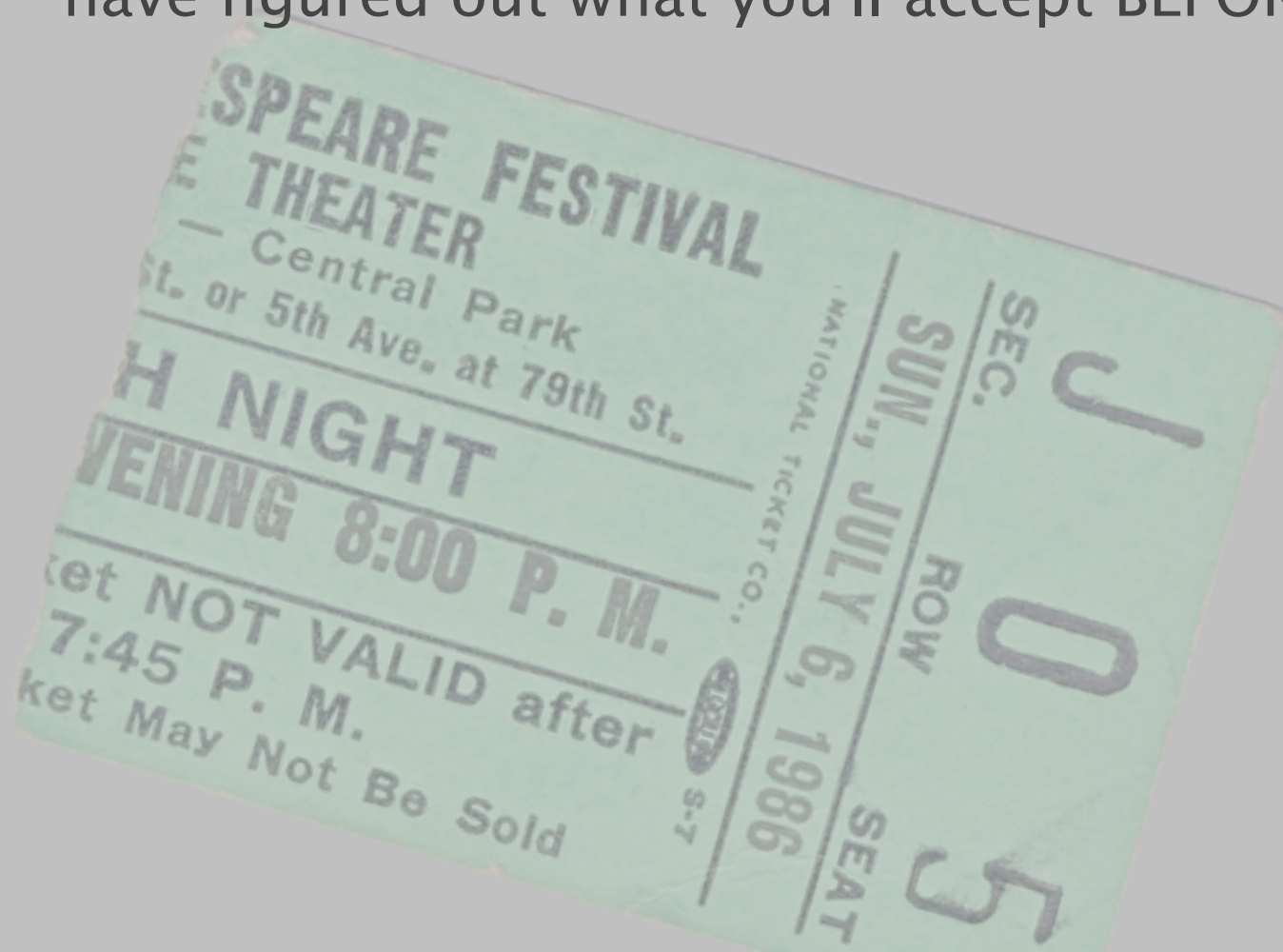
Afterwards...

Do not leave the audition site unless you have been told to leave.

Resist the human temptation to bad mouth the director who did not see you in the role that you had your heart set on. The director has his/her reasons for casting that may not make sense to you.

Realize that no matter how much you gripe about it, the director is not going to re-cast to make you feel better. There is absolutely nothing good that can come of your bad behavior.

If you are offered a role, you need to accept or decline that role as soon as possible. You need to have figured out what you'll accept BEFORE the audition.



“Resist the temptation to bad-mouth the director”



Accepting the Role...

If you accept the role, you need to start preparing immediately.

Do NOT underline your lines in your script unless the director tells you to.

Smart actors realize that they are basically "auditioning" every moment that they are in the director's presence...your attitude during your current show will have an impact on your NEXT show!**

Acting is a tough business. Every time you audition for a show, you're submitting yourself and your talent for judgment by a casting committee. Sometimes things will go perfectly and you'll land the gig. But more likely, you won't be cast, or you'll be offered a different part than the one for which you auditioned. Rejection, unfortunately, is a significant part of being an actor, and the sooner you develop a thick skin, the better off you'll be. Here are a few tips to help ease the pain.

Come to Terms With Your Audition...

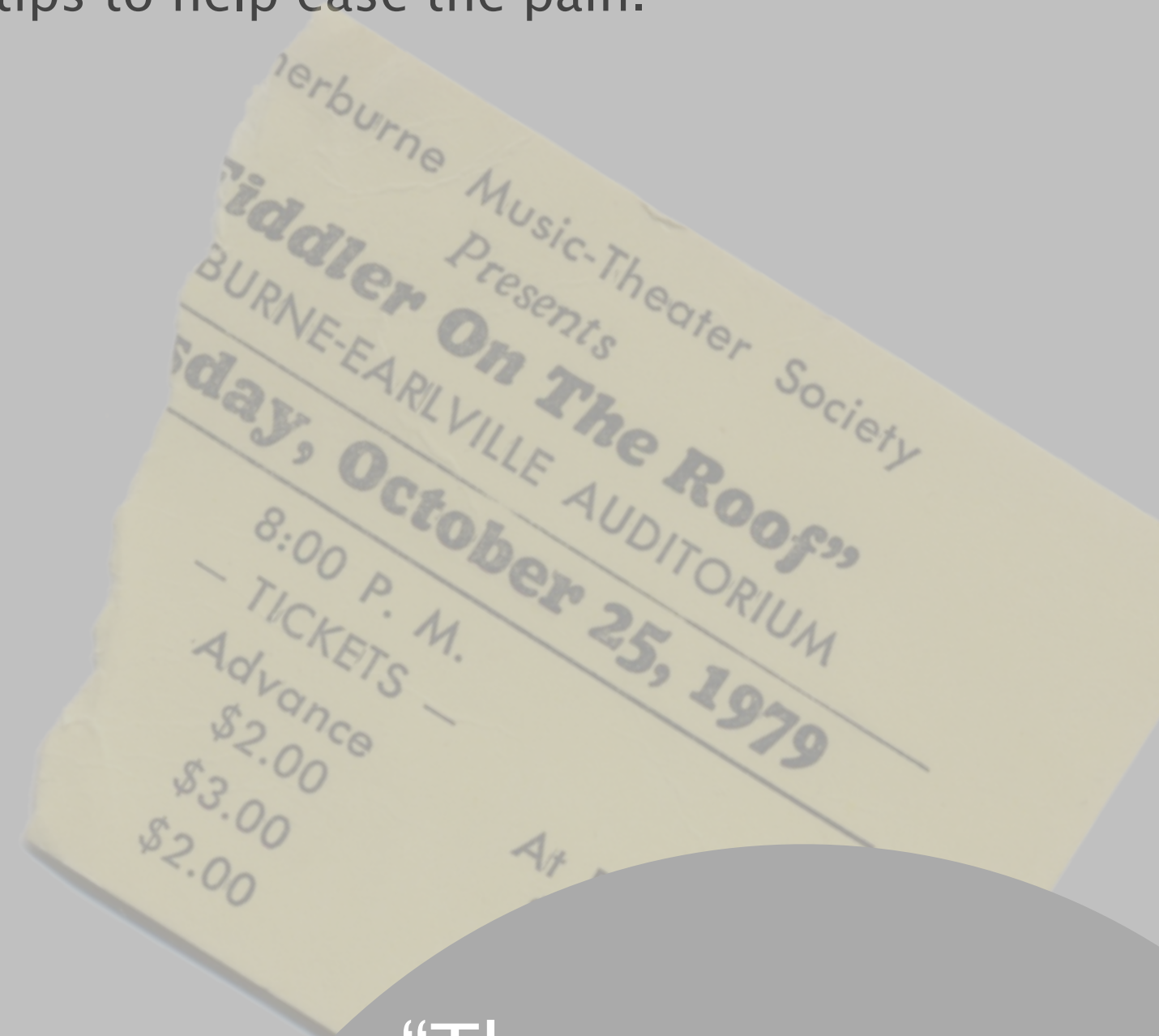
Put things into perspective. Casting a show is an extremely difficult process. Directors have to consider many aspects of auditioning actors besides talent, such as height, weight, the overall look and chemistry with other potential cast members. The most talented singer in the world could audition for the part of Johanna in "Sweeney Todd," but if the director thinks she's too old or too tall, or if she doesn't look right next to the person cast as Anthony, chances are someone else will get the role.

Ask for feedback, especially if you know the director personally. Many directors are happy to give constructive feedback.

Take a good hard look at your own audition. Did you do your absolute best?

Brush up on your auditioning skills. Have a variety of songs ready and several monologues, at least one dramatic and one comedic.

Go to that next audition! Rejection is a necessary evil in show business. The more you audition, the more comfortable you become and the better chances you have of eventually landing that dream role.



“The sooner you develop a thick skin...

... the better off you'll be”





THE NUTS and BOLTS of HEAD SHOTS

by Kasia Gunther

Why do I need a headshot?

Headshots and resumes are necessary. They say what you look like and what you've done. The headshot is a memory tool. You want those on the other side of the table to remember you, and remember your acting. The headshot acts as that connection. A poorly produced amateur headshot gives the impression you are not taking your career seriously.

The picture must look like...

You

What makes a good headshot?

Your headshot must be 8"x10".

The focus of the picture is on you, not your clothes, not the background, not the photographer's skills.

The picture must look like you. It's a beginner's mistake to wear too much makeup, or to change hairstyles such that the person in the picture doesn't even look like them anymore.

The picture must not only look like you, but represent you. If you're a comedic actor, why would you have a serious frown in your headshot?

Don't worry about precisely having the same "look" as other actors. The details have evolved over the years - color photos are more accepted now, as are three-quarter shots, as opposed to face-only.

How do I get a good photographer?

Choose a professional photographer who specializes in headshots. Do not use family or friends.

Make an appointment to see the photographer's portfolio. Do you like the pictures? Do you like the photographer's style? Do the people in the photos look like "real people"?

Are you comfortable with the photographer? Tension will show in the photos.

Don't shop on price. You can easily get a lousy photo from an expensive photographer, and a great photo from a less-expensive one.

Watch out for extra fees. You just want your picture taken. You only need 8"x10". No other size is necessary.



Shooting the photo:

Bring several clothing options for the shoot. A good photographer will help you choose what will show you at your best. Shoot at least two different "looks".

Most photographers will offer you the services of a professional makeup artist. This can be a very good idea, especially if you're not comfortable with putting on your own makeup. Be VERY FIRM that (unless you're a 'glamour type') you don't want to look like a model; you just want to look like yourself.

At some point after the session the photographer will give you what is known as a "contact sheet". This is a photo containing a composite of all the photos taken in the session. Do ask the photographer's advice for which shots are the best, but don't take this as the final choice. Seek advice from others, emphasizing that you want photos that look like you. Ask your mom, your best friend, your teacher(s), anyone who knows you well. If you have an agent then you definitely want their opinion too. But remember that the final decision should be yours.

Exercise:

Go to google and type 'headshot' into the search box. Click on 'Images' to see a wide variety of headshots. To make this a class exercise, choose 5-10 pictures and show them in class. Ask students what impression they get from the headshot. Is the picture warm (inviting) or cold (detracting)? Do they like the person in the photo? Why or why not? What type of part would the students cast this actor? Does the photo showcase the actor or the photographer?

Is an acting resume the same as a resume for a regular job?

It's important to remember that acting is a job. It's not show fun, it's show business. The resume goes hand in hand with the headshot to act as your business card. The resume shows what you've done, what special skills you might have, any union affiliations, your vital statistics (height, weight, eye colour, vocal range) and where you can be contacted. The contact information is extremely important: if you're wanted for a callback or a part, they'll get your contact info from the resume.

What if I don't have any credits?

Remember NO LYING on resume. DONT LIE about SPECIFIC SKILLS. DONT LIE ABOUT UNION STATUS. These are the kinds of lies that cause extreme problems and have shut down productions and cost incredible amounts of money to productions. Casting Directors do talk with one another and even have an association. And too, they may have worked as a CD or as an assistant on a casting for a commercial on which you say you've worked. Always tell the truth. If you don't it will catch up with you.

**Do ask the
photographer's
advice.**

**But don't take
this as the final
choice.**

What are 'special skills'?

These are unique things that you can do that enhance your hireability: juggling, ride a horse, drive a stick shift, speak another language. Often a director will hire an actor with a necessary skill already in place, rather than have to train someone. If a director is looking for an actor who can play the piano, they'll look in the special skills section of your resume.



Headshots (cont.)

Can I put my resume on color paper to make it stand out?:

No. White paper. Format and trim your resume so that it is 8 x 10 and attach it to the back of your photo. Staple, do not paper clip. And don't put the staple through your contact information!

Resumes are only one page long and should be in 12pt type. Do not use fancy fonts. Do not use more than one embellishment (if you're going to bold certain parts, don't use underline) Do not hand write changes on your resume. If you move, print a new resume. If you add a new credit, print a new credit. All these choices reflect on you and whether or not a director will want to see you.

The headshot and resume are necessary. Think of them as business cards. Make them simple and straightforward. No bells and whistles.

When to change your picture:

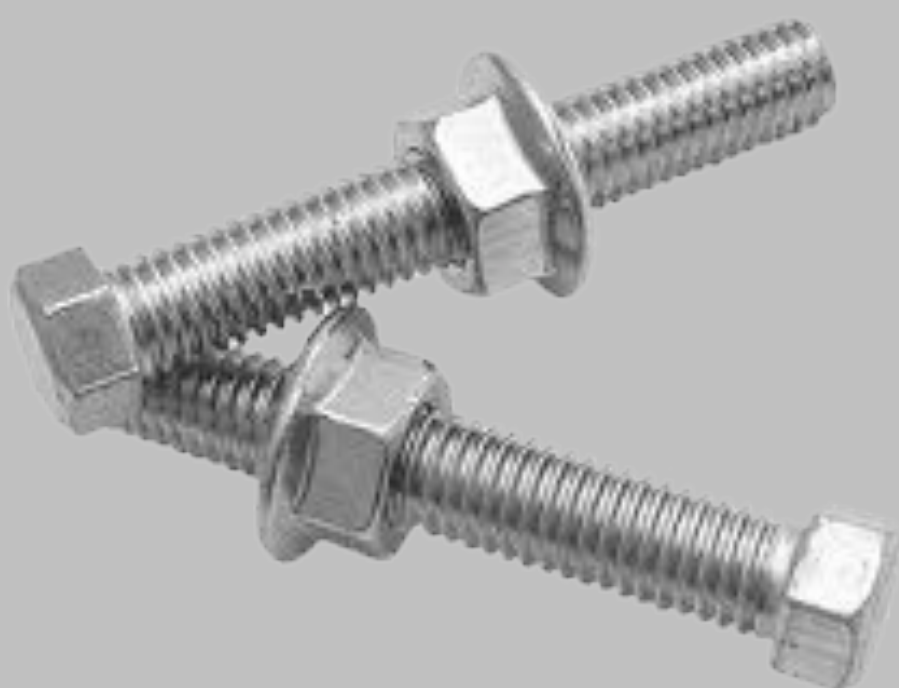
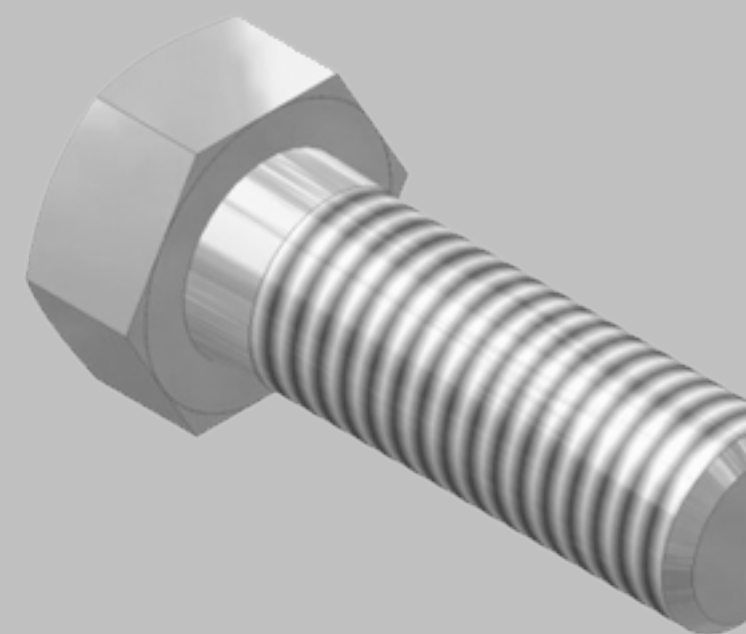
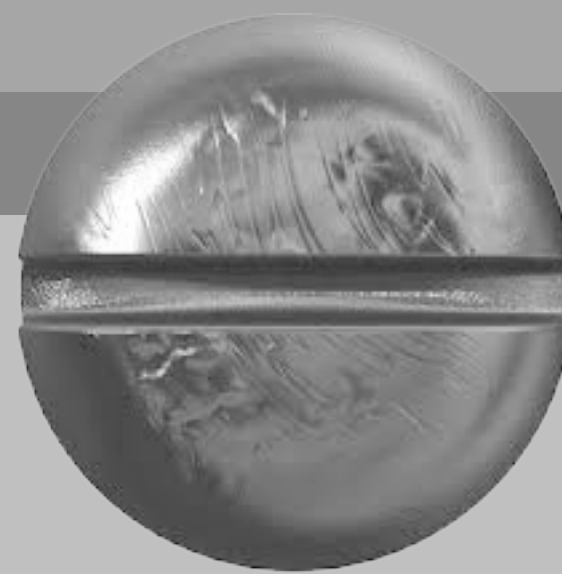
You must look like your picture. If you haven't changed hair, weight, wrinkles etc. you can keep the pictures. If you do have a change, be honest with yourself. Update your pictures.

Do not list commercial credits:

It may confuse the producers. Your car commercial may be 10 years ago but the producer sees it on your resume and thinks you have a conflict, doesn't hire you.

Commercial conflicts:

If the commercial is running, (including holds with holding fees) you cannot do another commercial with the same TYPE of product, i.e. Cant do Toshiba DVD Player and then a commercial for Panasonic DVD Player at same time.





Core Contributing Professionals

DANCE FAMILY MAGAZINE



Christina Jensen :: Senior Contributing Professional :: Trained to be a dancer since the age of two, she continuing her education in dance at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia where she graduated with a Bachelors in Fine Arts degree. She has traveled the world with the Phoenix Project Dance dancing in renown theaters and venues ranging locally to New York City and Munich, Germany. Jensen is also a teacher at the SUNY College at Oneonta where she teaches ballet, and modern dance. She has designed a course for the college called Learning Through Dance which teaches educators how to implement movement in the classroom. Tthe last few years, Christina has been a featured dancer in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. She can be seen in commercials for Chobani Yogurt and workout guru Shaun T.



Travis St. Denny :: Senior Contributing Professional :: Dancing since the age of five, Travis has received many overall awards and national titles at various dance competitions. Continuing his dance education, Travis then trained at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA and The Ailey School in Manhattan, NY. Before completing the program, Travis was offered a position with the Garth Fagan Dance Company as an immediate full time dancer. Travis has toured all over North America, Canada, Greece, Turkey and Germany and is now a principal dancer with the Phoenix Project Dance Company. He is now being sought after for his intense master classes which blend athleticism, strength, musicality and fluidity as well as for his innovative choreography. It is Travis' belief to never stop growing and reinventing himself!



Christina Ilisije :: Senior Contributing Professional :: Graduated summa cum laude with a B.F.A. in dance and a concentration on modern technique from Marymount Manhattan College. Upon graduation, she became a full company member with Buglisi Dance Theatre and also worked as a guest artist with Take Dance and participated in a structured improvisation, Behind Resonance, with Shen Wei Dance Arts. Currently, Christina can be seen dancing with Parsons Dance and tours domestically and internationally year-round. She has helped develop the educational teaching curriculum for the Parsons technique and actively teaches master classes on behalf of the company as well as her own class, Ballet Blast. She writes about her passions on her blog living-dance.com.



Kasie Gunther :: Theatre Professional :: Kasie brings 20 years of experience in teaching dance, acting, voice, music theory and piano. She is also a talent consultant for young performers. Her Professional credits include: The Forrestburge Playhouse, Disney's MGM Studios, Disney's EPCOT, Universal Studios and has appeared in various Television Commercials. Kasie has also worked with The Broadway Theatre Project, Is a faculty member at Marcia P. Hoffman Institute at Ruth Eckerd Hall, has instructed the Florida Citrus/Capitol One Bowl Cast Members, been a judge for the Star Walk Beauty Pageant Judge . She has also been a member of Member of The Professional Dance Teachers Association since 1992. Her mantra is to support and encourage all who love performing arts. www.nystage.org



Dan Padavona :: Core Photography :: Founded his first stock photography web site in January of 2011 to give shelter to stock artists looking for an opportunity to directly offer their images to designers, editors, and writers. As a dance photographer & videographer, and with a family history in music and dance, Dan's eye for capturing "that moment" in a performance is evident throughout his body of work. www.dpstockphotos.com



Tom Mody :: Publishing Editor :: He's been a self employed entrepreneur at Mody Company Creative LLC for over 20 years and is actively involved in music, design, publishing, online marketing and now of course, dance.... because that's what his wife and daughter are into. He is also the author of the satirical novel, The Dogs of Sherburne.



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