

From an e-essay at <http://theballetstore.com/content/view/251/32/> by Dianne Burton

“Zen and the Art of Dancing For Artistic Fulfillment”

For the non-professionals, dance is also a soul expression, a creative outlet, resulting in the daily life becoming more artful. Most of the dancers I hear from are recreational dancers or adult dancers or adult beginners who are just getting started. The professional students have most of their problems solved by their environment. For the non-professionals, dance is also a soul expression, a creative outlet, resulting in the daily life becoming more artful. For what dancer does not do something everyday relating to their dance experience?

Zen and the art of living! The mindfulness practiced in meditation, flower arranging, a tea ceremony, a ballet class, performing kata, is a commitment. It is a commitment to be there at the exclusion of all else.

There only is where you are, when you are, doing what you're doing. There is nothing else. Any reflection on something else, somewhere else, some-when else is all in your mind!

And you might say that dance is all in your mind too! Dance certainly starts in the mind, and maybe I don't want to take that topic any further.

In a ballet class, maybe you do not have quite the ideal ballet body. Maybe you are totally on the wrong side of the ballet body barrier. What every dancer, regardless of body type, has in her/his favor, is the ability to concentrate.

Concentration is zen-like. It excludes everything except what is being done in the moment. I am not a zen master or any kind of meditation guru, but I can say with certainty that this definitely works for ballet. I have seen four year olds concentrate on their demi plies, battments tendus from first position, and slow rises in parallel position with utterly non-distracted attention. It continues to astound me.

Learning ballet benefits the most from this type of concentration. I think the value is in the doing, not the results. The results in ballet are largely dictated by the body type. The doing remains unmarred by conventional values. Ballet technique, strength and flexibility can all be gained by focused practice. And whichever side of the ballet body barrier you are on, the soul expression, the rewards of the creative outlet can be equally fulfilling.

So, especially if you are on the difficult physical side of progressing in ballet, don't let yourself get distracted by the ideal form of the body that you do not have. Or if you're an adult beginner, or adult re-starter, enjoy and relish the focus you get in class from the long slow climb to intermediate and advance levels of ballet.

Imagine applying the concentration you give to a demi and grand plie exercise, where you set your tone and level of involvement for the entire ballet class, to clearing the dinner table, doing your homework, or preparing a business proposal. It's all life.

If you have this approach, you cannot be worrying, comparing yourself to the next dancer, to your favorite ballerina, or any other nervous thought. You have brought all of you to the plies, the tendus and the rest of the dance routines.

The interesting thing is it is this kind of focus that draws attention to a dancer. The one you cannot take your eyes off. It's the zen, the soul expression of really being there that captivates the audience. You can be that any time, all the time.

Last update : Sunday, 26 April 2009