

Isaac Jung

Dance Major Reflection

When I joined the dance major, I felt like I had nothing to loose. My freshman year was terrible, I was so depressed and it felt like everything was against me. It did not help that I was half a country away from my friends and family. The only time I enjoyed my freshman year was when I was in Jazz 2 with Mari Jo and the spring informance. I spent the summer building up the courage to tell my parents that I do not want to go back to school. They were shocked when I told them, but they were really supportive and understanding. My dad said "I'll make a deal with you. If you go back for one semester and still hate it, you can drop out." I thought it was a good deal, it was the best I was going to get anyway, so I said yes. After the first syllabus day, I thought this is going to be the same thing just a different year. Then I went to Mari Jo's class and I thought to myself, "Why don't I become a dance major, I was thinking about it last year? I'm already miserable, might as well have fun during my last semester." That's when I emailed Sandra about becoming a major.

Joining the major my confidence was at an all time low. All I had done for the longest time was musical theatre jazz. My first major class was ballet and it was combined 4 and 5, I wanted to cry afterwards. I thought that everyone was so much better than me, and I didn't belong there. I thought just going to classes everyday I was magically going to catch up with everyone else. During *Somewhere*, I overheard the other ensemble members were complaining about how I was always on stage and I was given all of the tasks to do onstage. The movement director was also listening, he said to the rest of the ensemble if they would put more effort in the rehearsal process, and in their movement abilities, they would earn more stage time. In response to him the ensemble just complained about him and never tried any harder. I did not want to be

like that in the dance major. Whenever I had free time was looking up ballet youtube videos in my dorm room and trying to teach myself. If we did something new in class I would go and look it up and practice in my dorm room after class. Contretemps was a real struggle for me, because I thought it was crunchy croutons, and I could not find a crunchy crouton tutorial.

I am definitely a more confident dancer now, and I want to focus more on how I can bring my artistry while staying true to the choreography. I used to think that choreography was where all the emotion and energy come from, but now I think that it all comes from what the dancer can bring to the choreography, and make it different. I still have a long way to go, but I am so proud of myself I have improved so much. Sometimes I still do feel like the boy who was flopping around 409 those first weeks of the semester, but I am learning how to adapt and still turn it out when I am having a bad day.

The Wednesday class with Julie Nakagawa was eye opening for me, during barre I remember she said, “Stop looking at other people for the combination, you know it. Dance for yourself.” After the next combination of me not looking at anyone else but messing up she said, “Ok, look at people for the combination, you will get it eventually. But still dance for yourself” those words hit me like a truck. Why was I dancing? Why was I there? Then for the first time in months I remembered that I wanted to drop out of college.

I have learned that there is always more work that can be done, but also that it is ok forgive yourself after a bad performance or class. There is no use in dwelling on the past it won't change. It is better to take 5 seconds to think about why it was bad learn from it, then let it go. Joining this program was a risk for me, after my knee injury I thought that I was destined to be an actor who moves. Same with taking a pointe class, I think throwing myself into new things makes me grow faster. I feel that I have been vulnerable the whole time, I think you cannot grow

unless you are vulnerable. My dance vocabulary has improved so much, and the ability to pick up choreography quickly has also changed immensely. I can always work on my petit allegro, jumping higher in grande allegro, pointe work, getting my heels down when jumping, and not making faces when I mess up, are just a few examples of what I can work on improving. My goal overall, is to become a better dancer, with many talents to make me a more hireable. I am always trying to learn new things (right now it is juggling). I plan on taking dance classes back home and trying to find a studio I can go to when I'm back home in Maryland, I would like to work on pointe as well so I can go through a whole class in pointe shoes. I'm unsure of the support that I'll need, I will know when I need it though. This program has been so helpful to me, it is the reason why I am still in college. It is hard to see how much I have grown, since I see myself dance in a mirror everyday, collecting, and rewatching all of these videos has made my progress so apparent to me.