

## Class Will Tell



An interesting thing happens when people learn to Ballroom Dance. Whether they want to or not they are exposed to correct social behavior. And I might add it is a lovely process to observe and it is usually fool proof. Not all people may comply at all times. I always remember my Mom whispering in my ear when somebody behaved badly in public or private including myself no matter what their station in life she would just say “Class will tell”. As a young girl I knew what she meant but didn’t really appreciate the value until much later in life. Of course your parents are usually always right in the end but sadly sometimes they are gone too soon before you can let them know this. I do know for sure that my Mom to this day is still very proud of me in heaven. My goal of this article is to try to relate some of these lessons to the world of Ballroom Dance. Having good or even great technique is just a small piece of the puzzle.

Lets take for example a couple on Dancing With The Stars, Kelly Osbourne and Louis Van Amstel. Miss Osbourne obviously of Rock Royalty and its lifestyle transformed into a soft spoken young lady after her run on that show. To Louie’s credit I might add. That to me was worth the price of admission. And when I see her in other venues her whole demeanor has changed to her benefit. So even though some people may have a negative reaction to this show for what ever their reasons the real deal is watching the Celebrities transform from “Star Status” to learning how to partner and work with some one on the dance floor to produce a joint product together. Probably for the first time in a long time they realize it is not about them! And they will all admit it is a very humbling experience. Which brings me back to my aged old adage everyone loves to be held and embraced if it is done the right way. Everyone wants to feel good, love themselves be loved and have other’s love them. Once you have felt this through a

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dance or a dance position there is no turning back. Again I refer to Miss Osbourne's transformation.

Working with children of all ages and backgrounds here in New York City it can be a rough experience for both sides involved. But I tell you after ten weeks of Ballroom Dance class everyone single one of those kids from trust fund baby to project child wants to be a better person. And they become one. I have not seen any other dance form produce this big an effect on such a large scale. Kudos' to Pierre Dulaine and what he started.

And just to have a little fun with this topic I thought I would share some "couple" categories that I have experienced from my forty plus years of teaching. I am sure some of you will relate. Please enjoy...

The first type of dancer is what I call "The Rocker" They have a heavy social schedule possibly a philanthropist of some type and after their tipsy presentation of thousands of dollars to their latest cause they lead their equally tipsy partner on to the dance floor and "Rock" the night away. This also includes slinging and flinging each other mercilessly around the floor usually at an arms length staying in their own cocoon while casually bumping and knocking down numerous people around them. After the dance is finished they make their way back to their table where they congratulate each other on a job well done. They may take a dance lesson or two but assure you all the while they know how to dance they just need a "brush up." This couple may never feel the need to learn any different type of behavior social or otherwise. Some times you just have to smile and take their money.

Lets move on to the "social dancer." Possibly signing contract after contract at a local studio becoming a "bronze" dancer and after thousand of dollars spent and numerous dance lessons can still only dance with their own pro or their amateur partner with their set routine. They only attend their organizations sponsored events that assure them they are the best in their category so to them they are in the know. And I might add happy to stay there. I find this couple deep down knows there might be something better out there but fear and a waste of thousands of dollars hovers in the back ground. They are not immune to how uncomfortable the "embrace" is or that there is no joy in what they do. But denial is a powerful thing. I was there for many years.

In this same category is the adorable wedding couple. They show up at your door madly passionately in love with "their song" in hand. They present it to you still gazing into each other's eyes and then inform you that the wedding is two weeks away. So what is the problem? Have you ever noticed how fast their body language changes after a quick five-hour Crash Wedding course? Love quickly turns to annoyance or even hatred because the instructor feels sooooo good to dance with what is wrong with her groom? Or vice-versa. And I will add on a personal note only once was I ever going to do an intervention to a wedding couple to try to convince them not to do "IT". So much was revealed in the first hour about their relationship that I suggested only a few lessons. They bought ten more. I thought are you nuts? I am never wrong. Low and

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behold on the third hour the groom to be showed up alone and informed me of their demise. Thank God I thought. I tried to refund him but he was determined to finish it out. Nice kid not my type.

And lastly lets address the medalist dancer. This category of dancer has an opportunity to experience a technical system from pre-bronze to gold level with the possibility to produce some semblance of style and technique either through pro-am or amateur competition. This may also include the collegiate circuit. And as always including the professional dancers and teachers who make their way up the ladder as well. In these above stated categories all is revealed.

I must say the more one dances with some one who and what they are can never be hidden. If you have an ugly soul it will show. If you are surrounded by white light it shall prevail. If you blame each other on or off the floor (been there, done that and have the tee-shirt) even if you win you loose. It comes down to honoring each other at all times as well as the craft. Even if you win a competition it does not mean you are a "winner". Watching dancers accepting a placement with disgust is just demeaning to themselves. Setting an example in life for all to strive to be better human beings using Ballroom Dance, as the venue is the best goal any dancer on any level can have. And even if you do win something some one else lost. I have always thought this to be odd phenomena.

When I work with all people especially the children I am frequently asked why I teach the etiquette the way I do. My only answer to that is if I get to one of them he or she might be the one that changes the world. I have to try.

So to bring it back home especially with Mom's voice still in my ear whether it is DWTS's, a local dance social, an elementary school or a world championship I can best describe what I think a great goal would be in the couples world of Ballroom Dance. I will quote the famous Abigail Van Buren better known as "Dear Abby". When asked to give the definition of class she stated. "Class is how comfortable you make the other person feel". My Mom did that her whole life. I only hope I can do half as well as her. That to me says it all. Class WILL tell.

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