

Where Is the Love?



Competitive dancing breeds strange bedfellows. When I first began dancing at a very early age I was blessed enough to have a caring teacher and be part of a family like studio atmosphere. We were disciplined but we were also nurtured and felt as if we belonged to a group. We could trust and count on each other if need be. That is a very secure feeling for a child to experience growing up. We sometimes competed against each other in solo performances or worked in a team style presentation. But no matter what the venue we were family and we were one.

As I entered the competitive ballroom scene in the late seventies I was not intimidated by the competition venue itself per say since I had competed since the age of nine in the performing arts. But I was more disturbed and unnerved by the lack of camaraderie

Where Is the Love?

and deceit on both sides of the table. And I suppose for the first time having to depend on just one person for the whole performance instead of myself and the issue of ego one collects along the way well that creates a head-trip in itself. Yes this happens in all walks of life but I am specifically addressing the Ballroom Dance scene.

I remember one of my first comps in the American Style at the Copley Plaza. At that time the dances were Foxtrot, Swing, Bolero and Mambo. As my partner and I were about to compete another couple that were not in our category approached me to try to how should I say “physc me out before I took the floor.” I thought, “Where is the love”? Where is the love that I used to feel every day from myself because all I wanted to do was dance. I couldn’t wait to get to practice. And the support I used to feel from my little Dolly Dinkle Dance studio in Boston? Where is the love of my partner to stand up for me if he hears these people speak to me this way? Not in the vicinity. And how much do my fellow competitors NOT love themselves to waste the precious air around us with negative energy and ill intent? Well the news is we placed third. Not bad for first time out. However after this I recall endless negative experiences in the ballroom world leading me towards a dwindling spiral of pain self-loathing and despair. All I wanted to do was feel the joy and the love of dance I had known my whole life. I came up for air briefly as a member of the American Ballroom Theater where at least I felt I belonged somewhere. But did not always feel in a safe place. On stage was the safest space I knew. At least for the duration of the show we were all willing to die for each other. AND IT FELT GREAT! Off stage well buy the book.

Any way I am sure other dancers or couples have experienced this and even if you have flawless technique and the most secure (if there is such a thing) political institution behind you again I say “Where is the love”? Since returning to this dimension of Ballroom Dance and after almost two years of judging and coaching on a very different scene then what I left I can assure you I still see and feel the pain of those on the competition dance floor. You can paste a smile on your face, freeze your frame, grind away at me, tan your brain and hump your partner but as many of you know most times it is not real, enjoyable, heart felt or organic. I am not talking about acting. I am talking about feeling. I am talking about remembering. Remembering why you wanted to dance in the first place. Even if you win it’s good for a while and then back to the pain. I feel most of this is due to not being able to create what you want in the moment. That is what drove me crazy all those years. Not having enough data to produce what I wanted when I wanted. I remember asking the late great Bob Medeiros why he walked away while still on top. He didn’t miss a beat and replied, “I wasn’t having fun any more”. I did not understand what he meant of course until it happened to me. And I am sure has or will some day happen to some of you. I hope not.

Maybe because I have come out the other side and quite frankly after touring as Countess in Grand Hotel I came away feeling that I had acquired theater family that would never leave my heart. And even after twelve years we are to this day in touch with each other and have a heart felt connection always. Now THERE IS THE LOVE!! Created by an experience we all shared in common.

Where Is the Love?

I guess what I am trying to say is even after reading all the comments and criticisms on something like the Education Department WDC face book page (I use this example because it seems to be the culmination point of most of the dance community today) and Bravo by the way to Prof. Dr. Ruud Vermey for originating it. All the Masters and contributors I feel yes they speak from a point of truth, knowledge and dedication. But for my soul the heart connection is not fully there yet. This to me is what is missing on today's planet never mind the final at Black Pool. I think to change the energy of the planet; this should be the goal to start to ease the pain and despair of our great mother Earth. She is seething from the inside out. Look at all the bizarre weather lately. She is purging. If she is purging we are purging. The little spec of dust known as the "Ballroom Dance Community" would behoove its self to remember that WE ARE ALL ONE! Maybe instead of criticizing a dancer give up control for consciousness. Praise one another with positive correction and awareness and really feel happy when the other person wins. What ever that means? Don't eat that animal! Each human being must take responsibility for their thoughts and actions. If we concentrate on that positive group state of mind can you imagine what a ripple effect that would set off in the atmosphere of our planet? The love of dance has a powerful effect. It is how we perceive it that is important. Maybe we could have stopped the earthquakes in Japan. The earth is speaking to us listen to her. Your heart is speaking to you. Listen to it. I am trying to awaken in us the biggest picture of all. The Dancing Universe. Experience the dancing light around us. We are all hooked up to it whether you are aware of it or not. Dancing as an artist or dance sport competitor should not be the issue. Or what has been lost in the translation. Every generation has an affinity to their period of dance. That is human nature. We are all blessed to be respected artists on this planet. WE ARE ONE!

Ballroom Dancers we are citizens of the world. Ballroom Dance is now on everyone's mind. I am not talking about who made the final or who was cut from DWTS's last show. It is in the atmosphere! We are empowered! I am talking about being aware of the collective consciousness of the entire brilliant Ballroom Dance Community worldwide. Lets come together and harbor a strong heart felt connection for yourself and every other living organism on the planet. Do your next Waltz or Cha-cha with that in mind. It's that simple a thought! These actions have to be practiced just like your dance steps. Sadly with the situations going on in the world today I think at this point we have no choice. Let us turn the venue of Ballroom Dance into heart felt thoughts and positive actions we all know exist deep down inside and use that energy the way the dancing Gods intended it to be. Experience the sheer Joy and LOVE of Dance. Now in answer to my own first question "Where is the Love"? I think you all know the answer. You just have to remember. It is here in me and you!

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