

Hall of Fame Dance Foundation

There are many things and people in my life who have been strong influences and helped make me the person I am today. Of course my exceptionally supportive and encouraging family, my dance teachers who have pushed me to reach my technical and creative potential, and my friends who constantly inspire me to explore and strive for the best. One person however, surpasses all the previously stated people. This person can say that he is solely responsible for introducing me to, what now full encompasses my life, dance.

To be honest, I don't know his name. I don't know where he lives, how old he is, or where he goes to school; if he even goes to school, for that matter. Though I know essentially nothing about him, and he nothing about me, he is why I began my long journey as dancer. I was in kindergarten the first and only time I saw him. My school, Hiteon Elementary, was holding a big assembly. Like most elementary school kids, I was thrilled to gather and see what was being presented to us that day. I remember being especially excited though, because my big brother, whom I admired even more than the red Power Ranger, was doing a gymnastic performance with his team. Anxiously, I waited to see my brother's flip filled performance, and brag to all my friends that not only did I know him, but I ate dinner with him on a nightly basis. The gymnasts performed, I bragged, and then the second half of the performance began. It was a dance studio that performed next.

That's when I saw him. The group was doing an upbeat tap piece when one boy leapt onto a big wooden box, right smack on center stage, to do a solo. I recognized his times steps, toe rolls, and wings from a tap dancing episode of Sesame Street, but this blew Big Bird out of the water. All eyes were on this one boy. I broke my "criss cross applesauce" seating position and bolted to my knees absolutely mesmerized. At that moment I knew what I was going to do with my life. At five years old, I was more prepared for my future than a lot of college freshman.

Watching that boy perform on stage lighted a fire within me that showed no signs of ever sizzling out. When I came home from school, I went straight up to my father and asked if I could take tap dance classes. He was very ill at the time and seeing how excited and devoted I was, he gave me his word I could take dance class. My mom somehow found time to search studios for a dance class I could take, but everywhere she looked required kids to be at least six years of age to take class. Sadly, within the next few months my dad lost his courageous battle with cancer, but armed with his promise and memory, I persisted in my quest to take tap lessons.

Finally after months of my nonstop nagging, my mom found a place for me to tap at five years old. There was a catch; however, I couldn't just take tap; I had to take jazz and acrobatics along with it. This did not faze me. I welcomed any opportunity to dance with an open mind and willing feet. Years passed and I improved quickly. Soon I began to add more and more styles to my repertory and gradually took my dance more and more seriously. I began to tackle the addiction that is ballet and find innovation in movement. When I wanted to bring myself to the next level, I left the studio and began dancing in a more conservatory type setting at Jefferson High School.

There have been times when I thought about quitting. There were times when I wanted to play football and hangout after school like all the other kids. But if I spent even a week away from dance, I suffered from extreme withdrawal. I will never get enough of the innovation, strict technique, and athleticism dance offers. Dance became a major part of my life, but really it was always a part of me. Unfortunately unable to see the idea's fruition, I give my father much credit and thanks for giving me the opportunity to pursue dance. I know I am meant to dance, and I

owe so much of it to one boy who first showed me a glimpse into my own future. I just wish I knew his name so I could thank him.