

## The Audition

My tired eyes slowly opened to the sun's rays pouring in through the edges of the hotel curtains. My stomach tensed at the sound of the alarm clock. I opened the package of my new pink mesh tights and carefully put them on, straightening the seam down the backs of my legs. As I gazed at the reflection in the mirror, I sprayed the disobedient hairs pinned back into my French twist, and mulled over which black leotard looked best. My stomach rumbled with hunger, but the nerves and thoughts of the impending hours suppressed any sort of breakfast appetite.

I had dreamed of attending the prestigious School of American Ballet in New York City since I could *plie*, and while I completed the audition registration, the thought seemed almost tangible. All the girls looked the same-tall, thin, and perfect. I examined the other ballerinas tying their pointe shoes and stretching their feet, as I scoped the competition. "She looks good," I thought to myself, chills progressively rushing up and down my spine. The empty, cold room was filled with fifty girls, placed in numerical order on the *barre* adjacent to one large mirrored wall. When the combination began, my legs quivered with tension and it felt as though the instructor could detect my hammering heart, beating out of my chest. I caught a glimpse of his amiable smile from across the room. It was the legendary Jock Soto.

In the presence of such a prominent figure of the ballet world, I realized I had to perform at my finest, for I would never encounter such an opportunity again. After a brief series of exercises at the *barre*, my firm grip eased. "Rise *demi-pointe* and double *frappe en croie* finish with *petite battement* on *releve*," instructed Jock. Once I began dancing, my confidence emerged and my mind focused on perfection and skill. The other girls faded from the room and suddenly I felt the rewards of the long, tedious hours at the studios, all my efforts and dedication I had put into my passion for nearly 15 years.

Two weeks later, I opened the mailbox to find a letter from The School of American Ballet addressed to me. I sat still as death, staring at the unopened letter. When I obtained the courage, I broke the seal with my clammy palms, my mom across the table anxiously observing my reaction. "Congratulations!" was the sweetest word to my ears.

At this point I began to question whether I was capable of waiting a lengthy four months before making the voyage to The City. After the initial thrill of the letter subsided, it dawned on me that the work had merely begun. Like anything in life, there is always something more to learn, a skill to improve, a journey waiting to be embarked on. I've proved to myself through my dancing that I can rise above challenge or adversity. I hope this accomplishment is only one of many I will achieve in my lifetime. Although my days of auditioning for School of American Ballet may now be behind me, I look forward to the world ahead of me and the many other "auditions" I will have: in college, Graduate School, and my career.