

Nicole McClam

September 12, 2012

DANC 600

Paper #1: Write about one dance experience you had this summer in three different ways.

DANCER FLUBS PRE-PERFORMANCE RITUAL

Athletes and performers are known for having pre-performance rituals. Yoga and meditation, eating a favorite meal, listening to a special playlist or even wearing a pair of socks that haven't been washed since 1997 are all ways that the athlete or performer gets themselves into the "zone". But what happens when an athlete can't perform their special ritual, or worse, purposely does the exact opposite? We learn from a professional modern dancer about the consequences of disregarding a pre-performance ritual.



Nicole Y. McClam, founding member of B3W, a modern dance company based in Queens, NY, had an upcoming performance at the LaGuardia Performing Arts Center in Long Island City, NY. "I was pretty nervous about it," admits Ms. McClam, "the choreography was challenging and I had heard the stage had weird dimensions. I was worried about falling off the stage into someone's lap". In spite of her nerves, she accepted a massage that Emily Berry, Artistic Director of B3W, arranged for her as a belated birthday present. Ms. McClam had misgivings about receiving a massage the day before a performance. A few years ago, she had a massage the day before a performance and sustained a serious injury to her lower back. "I had to crawl off the stage, my back hurt so much," she states. So why agree to something you know could be injurious or at least distracting to you before a performance? "I knew it wasn't smart, but I didn't want to seem ungrateful. She wanted to do something nice for me and she told me that massages before a performance were helpful for her," Ms. McClam replies. It was known among other company members that Ms. Berry does get massages before performing, but we could not reach Ms. Berry for comment.

The spa where she received the massage, Graceful Services on the upper east side, regularly sends out Groupons for free massages in an effort to build their clientele. The facility we visited was clean. The staff was friendly and efficient, but, "The masseuse was not gentle," says Ms. McClam, "I hadn't had a massage in quite some time so my back and neck were loaded with knots". There are many signs in the spa asking patrons not to engage in conversation with the massage therapists and Ms. McClam took that to mean that she could not say anything to them at all. "I just tried to breathe and put myself into her hands," she says. When we talked with the masseuse, who goes by the name Christine, about Ms. McClam, she said that she did remember Ms. McClam. "Her body was full of knots. I did the best I could," Christine replied. When we asked her if she knew that Ms. McClam had a

performance the following day and would have preferred a gentler massage, Christine said that they never really spoke to one another during their session together.

“I was relaxed, but very sore afterwards,” said Ms. McClam, “Emily told me to drink a [expletive] ton of water to alleviate the soreness”. However, Ms. McClam felt more soreness the following day and opted to take a yoga class instead of the dance class she planned on taking. “We worked on shoulder loop which was great because that was where I was the most sore,” she says.

So how did the performance go? Ms. McClam laughed and said that it was not her best work, but adrenaline helped. “I felt unsettled, disconnected from my body, “ she said, “I don’t know how I got through the performance”. Ms. McClam said that she learned her lesson well. So what is your pre-performance ritual? “I like to do yoga, roll around on the floor, knit, listen to my iPod,” she said, “but I firmly believe that any tension in my body needs to stay there until *after* the performance”.

G. Hollingsworth, staff writer for the Daily Rejector

The butterflies were fluttering up a storm in the belly. The Methodist guilt, first cousin to Catholic guilt, accepted the gift while the brain tried valiantly to make the lips say no. That Methodist guilt overrode the painful memory of crawling off the stage because the legs couldn’t work, when the body could not resist the unending pull of gravity. The Methodist guilt said, “Don’t be ungrateful! Take this gift”. May the Methodist guilt be beaten up and shoved into a high school locker.

The sadist, cleverly disguised as a masseuse, went on a search-and-destroy mission for every knot. Every single knot. Some of them went screaming in terror, some died quickly, but many of them did not go quietly. The pummeled body oozed itself home while the brain furiously worked to find a solution to this present quandary. Yoga. Anusara Yoga. Guaranteed to create expansiveness!

It was a balm to the body that had been beaten and shoved into the same locker with the stupid Methodist guilt. The butterflies were fluttering up a storm in the belly. The brain bitch slapped the body and yelled, “Pull yourself together,” then sent another call out to the endocrine system to release the adrenaline. The body, feeling like a collection of random body parts loosely pinned together, struggled through the choreography, then caved in on itself during the train ride home.

I must have the courage to speak my mind

Eagerness oft supercedes common sense

Honesty does not have to be unkind

Gracious outside, inside mind says, "Why, why"

I knew, I knew the mistake I commenced

I must have the courage to speak my mind

Her hands search and destroy, wring and mine

Signs remind the golden sheen of silence

Honesty does not have to be unkind

Like an old woman whose gears grind and whine

Ruing current states and recent events

I must have the courage to speak my mind

Tenuous tendons join parts like frayed twine

Gloriously twirl, fly for a moment

Honesty does not have to be unkind

Like an old woman whose gears grind and whine

Yet glad to have passed this recent event

I must have the courage to speak my mind

Honesty does not have to be unkind