

Live, love, dance



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Every year each kindergarten student at Saint Roman's Catholic School present to their class and parents what they want to be when they grow up. As I sat at my desk and listened to each of my classmates' presentations, I noticed that they were all the same. Many of the boys wanted to be a fireman or a police man and many of the girls wanted to be a doctor or a vet. While I was looking around the room at all the other kids' costumes, I heard my teacher's voice. " Maria, you're up next! " I hesitated. What would the other kids think of me? I wasn't wearing what they were wearing.

I looked at parents for help. When I saw them smiling at me, it gave me courage to get up from my seat and skip to the front of the class. All eyes were on me when I turned around and faced my class. I looked at my teacher, Mrs. Fotee, who was sitting at her desk writing notes. When she finished writing and set down her pen, she looked up and laughed. " So, Miss Maria, what would you like to be when you grow up? " I smiled and giggled as I looked down at myself. I was wearing my ballet costume from my recital, complete with tights, ballet shoes, and hair done in all curls.

The costume was a yellow leotard with red sequins on the sides to look like a vest and a blue ribbon crossed in front like a corset. The sleeves were made of yellow tulle with one line of blue sequins sewn about an inch away from the edge of the sleeve and one line of red sequins sewn about one inch away from the blue sequins. The tutu was made of multiple layers of yellow tulle. The top layer of the tutu was made like the sleeves, one line of blue sequins sewn about an inch away from the edge of the tutu and one line of red sequins sewn about one inch away from the blue sequinis.

The costume also had a headband that was made up of white, yellow, red and blue flowers. “ I want to be a ballerina! ” She smiled and laughed again. “ I can see that! And why do you want to be a ballerina? ” “ Because I love dancing and I’m really good at it,” I replied immediately. “ Really? Can you show us some of your routine? ” She smiled and glanced toward my parents in the corner. “ I have a feeling you were in a show recently? ” “ Okay! ” In the center of the room, I showed everyone part of my routine.

I did a few turns and jumps and made my arm movements as graceful as a real ballerina. I curtsied to the class when I was finished and everyone applauded. My parents gave me a hug and high-five and told me that I had the best presentation. At that moment, I was one of the happiest girls in the world because I knew there was nothing else that I should be or wanted to be. However, as time went on, I learned other dance styles and immediately fell in love with each one: tap, jazz, pointe, and pom. I fell in love with tap quickly because I enjoyed making different sounds with my shoes while doing certain steps.

Tap is considered both a dance and a type of music. The shoes are leather, typically with a split-sole for flexibility, and two metal plates on the heel and toe. The plates are also divided into sections to identify the different sounds. My favorite part of tap is being able to make sounds quickly and in multiple patterns. Jazz also became a favorite because I was able to dance to upbeat songs that I love and the moves came in all different varieties. The dance moves can range anywhere from flexibility and coordination to technique and skill.

Different genres of dance are also classified under jazz like funk, or most people it hip-hop, and lyrical. Most dancers consider jazz to be upbeat and sassy, hip-hop to be a lot like street dancing and chest popping, and lyrical to be graceful and flowing. As for the types of shoes that you wear for each dance, jazz dancers wear shoes called dance booties, hip-hop dancers wear either tennis shoes or split soles, and lyrical dancers have the option to wear either dance booties, paws (which is like half a sock), or bare foot.

When I was in eighth grade, I finally qualified to sign up for pointe. Pointe is a style of ballet that is performed on the tips of the toes. A pointe shoe mainly looks like a ballet shoe except there is a hard enclosure that encases and supports the dancer's toes called the box. The box also forms a platform on which the dancer can balance. I admit; this style of dance is more physically painful than people may think it is. However, once you start to ignore the pain and learn how to take care of the injuries (and the multiple blisters), you grow to love it.

The hardest part about pointe was going through the multiple exercises to strengthen my feet and ankles, especially since I have considerably weak ankles. But all the hard work paid off because I am able to dance gracefully en pointe without much pain. Poms became another chapter of my dance experience when I entered high school. Pom is another type of jazz but pom-poms are used in the routine and much more arm work is used. Like most other girls, I started out on Junior Varsity my freshman year and progressed to make it onto Varsity.

Dance became my life at this point as I would practice every day after school (including the extra dance classes I was taking on the weekend). In poms I

was able to learn more styles of dances: pom, hip-hop, lyrical, and kick. In my junior year of high school, I was asked by my dance instructor, Miss Susan, to become an assistant dance instructor at my dance studio because her previous assistant had graduated from high school and was going away to college. Without any thought, I immediately said yes. (After I accepted, I realized that when Mrs.

Fotee said “ Miss Maria” during my kindergarten presentation, she was foreshadowing my life because all the little girls that I teach now call me “ Miss Maria. ”) From this experience I improved my choreography skills, became more sociable, and I gained a dance family. I also believe that this experience has motivated me to be who I am today and has made me a much happier person. With all my dance experience, I learned to love all genres of dance. What I wanted to be when I grew up changed from being a ballerina to just a dancer or a dance instructor.

My conflict, however, is getting into that particular field because of money and opportunities and I do not have the right appearance for your typical professional dancer. Weight is a major conflict for me to become a dance instructor. Not many people would allow their child to take dances classes from someone who looks overweight because they immediately assume that the instructor can't dance or is a terrible dancer. As I have said before, dance is my life and I can't imagine it without dance and I will do whatever it takes to resolve this conflict.

In the meantime, I have found an alternative. I enjoy the science field and have decided to attend the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and major in the field of criminal justice and forensics. To incorporate dance into my

college life, I plan to have a part time job as a dance instructor for Miss Susan's niece, Holly, in Platteville and participate on college dance team. After talking to the dance team coordinator, I have found that the team schedules their practices conveniently around the team members' classes. Everyone has something that they can't live without.