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Interview

Derek Deane

freelance choreographer and teacher



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Author of the cover photograph is V. Skledar

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Could you please briefly introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Derek Deane. I first started life as a dancer. I trained at *The Royal Ballet School* in England and then I graduated into *The Royal Ballet Company*, where I progressed up the ranks of dancers to the principal dancer. I danced all the classical repertoires, every single ballet: “The Sleeping Beauty”, “Swan Lake”, “Cinderella”, “Giselle”, etc. I retired from dancing in 1990 and became a freelance choreographer. During that time, I also became a director of a ballet company *English National Ballet* in London. I was a director of *English National Ballet* for nine years, till 2001. Since 2001, I have been a freelance choreographer and teacher and I have been touring

the world putting my productions on for various companies.

You are cooperating with *Croatian National Theatre* for a long time now. How did the cooperation begin? Which ballets have you already choreographed in Zagreb? Are you going to continue the cooperation? How do you like Zagreb – inside and outside the theatre

My collaboration with the *Croatian National Theatre* started because of Irena Pasarić, the director of the Ballet Company in Croatia. When I became director of *English National Ballet* in London, Irena was one of the ballerinas in the company already. Then Irena left the company to come back to Croatia to continue her work here. She took the directorship of the company and asked

me if I would come and help her re-establish the company in a way different from other directors.

She very much liked the way I worked, she liked my professionalism, she liked my discipline and so we began our journey with the “The Sleeping Beauty”, which was the first ballet that I presented here. Our collaboration has gone on now for eight years and I produced numerous ballets here: “Cinderella”, “The Lady of the Camellias”, “Paquita”, “The Sleeping Beauty”, “Swan Lake”. I have a very good relationship with the theatre here and with the company. It was very difficult in the beginning because I am an extremely disciplined person when it comes to work. I am very passionate about my work. I am very intense



Photograph: Swan Lake, the Ballet Company; author: S. Novković



Photograph: Swan Lake, Anton Bogov and Edina Plićanić; author: V. Skledar



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić and the Ballet Company; author: S. Novković

about my work. I am very clear about what I want within my productions. Sometimes, in the very beginning, I appeared as overdemanding and maybe expected too much too soon, but over the years people have gotten used to me here. We work very well together and I have a very good relationship with the dancers in the company.

I hope to continue collaborating with the theatre. You know, theatres change all the time: directors come, directors go, the new intendant comes in, and the old one goes out, so things definitely change, but I think as things are at the moment, the relationship works very well between the theatre and myself. My productions have been very successful here. Because Irena has asked one classical choreographer to produce the classics for her, we have built a style and a line. It means that the company is moving in a strict classical line, not in a line of different musical and artistic styles. The company is moving along in one vane, which is very good for a dancer, because a dancer gets to work correctly and properly all the time. We've been able to build up this vision that we've wanted and we've been able to go forward with it. The life of the company has improved artistically and physically, it has gotten much stronger, much better, because we've been working for so many years now in this one line.

I love coming to Zagreb. I have a very nice time here. The people are very warm and very friendly. In the theatre there are so many problems: so many financial problems, salary problems, hours, amount of productions to get on, not enough time, there are always enormous difficulties in the theatre. That doesn't happen only in this theatre, but, I have to say, in many theatres I work in. Sometimes it's very difficult to achieve exactly what you want to achieve. But you have to keep fighting, you have to keep pushing, you have to keep demanding to get the level of excellence and quality that you want. I think that in a theatre like this a lot of changes could be made for the better. I think maybe a slight restructuring of certain things regarding the amount of productions every year and the amount of time you have to put productions on. One is always fighting against time, fighting against money, so maybe sometimes you just don't produce the absolute level of quality and excellence that you want. But it's like that, as I said, in many theatres, not just here.

I've been to Zagreb so many times, that it feels like a second home. I've been here in the winter, which I love, in the spring, in the summer. They're all very different, but as I said, I've never purposely wanted to leave Zagreb. I never thought: "I can't wait to get out of here!" I enjoy the people, I enjoy the

restaurants, I enjoy the life outside. I like going out into the country as well. For me, it has a very enjoyable ambience to it.

Almost five years ago, you created a new production of "Swan Lake" here and now you are reviving this ballet for the new season. First and foremost, what is the importance of "Swan Lake" in the world of ballet? What were your main ideas and basics for the choreography? How long did the preparations last? How was the collaboration with the management, dancers, corps de ballet, and orchestra? To what extent do you participate in the preparations of the costumes, scene decoration, light effects?

First and foremost, as everybody in the world knows, "Swan Lake" is the most popular ballet. It is more popular than "The Nutcracker", "Romeo and Juliet", "Cinderella". It has become synonymous with ballet, everybody says "Swan Lake", when you mention the word ballet. That is actually very strange, because when "Swan Lake" was originally performed in Russia, the audience hated it. They booed the performers and said that Čajkovski's music was terrible, so it got terribly bad reviews. But out of that, over many years, it has become the most popular of ballets. I don't know any classical ballet company in the world that doesn't do "Swan Lake". It's also a ballet that brings in the audiences and I think this is very important today, because in many cases audiences for ballet are falling. They are falling because works are being presented that an audience might not understand, that might frighten them. When they hear titles like "Eugene Onegin", some of the general public can become frightened of going to see the production, because they don't feel like they are going to understand it. Audiences feel terribly safe with "Swan Lake". It's universal, it's very easy to understand and I think that's why it has become the most popular ballet.

When I first created this production, I wanted it to be as authentic as I could possibly make it, in the style of the original creators. I watched a lot of

films and I also went back to my own heritage, to my time as a dancer with The Royal Ballet working with incredible people, like Dame Ninette de Valois, Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev and others. These are great artists, and of course I just ate everything I saw, everything I heard, just tried to digest as much as I could, which really helped me later in life when I started to create my own productions.

I think one of the most important things is that the audience is able to really understand the story. This is a big problem today, because everybody thinks they can do “Swan Lake”. Well, everybody CAN do “Swan Lake” but not everybody can do “Swan Lake” properly. Not everybody can do “Swan Lake” in a way that they convey the complete story to the audience, which is very important. I think that all the mime actions, all the gestures, all the reasons for going to certain places on the stage, have a part in this. For example, in “Swan Lake” you have the prince, you have his mother who is desperate for the prince to get married, the prince doesn’t want to get married, etc. and unless you really show this very clearly in the original mime sequences that were created, it doesn’t make sense to the audience.

I was passionate about putting back the story into “Swan Lake”, in a way that it would really become clear for audience to understand it, without

having to read the program. That comes from my background, from my 20 years with The Royal Ballet in London. The people teaching me were unbelievably disciplined in those things: how to tell the story correctly, how to move correctly, how to dance, how to

By the time we did “Swan Lake” here in Zagreb, I’d already created “The Sleeping Beauty”, so the dancers realized and understood what was needed from them to make the production successful. As we’ve already worked together they had a very good

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do everything so that the audience understood what was happening.

As far as preparations, I lent very heavily on what is left of the original choreography and then I inserted my own choreography within the piece: like the Waltz in Act I, the Polonaise, the character dances in Act III, the whole of Act IV is my own choreography. Preparation time for “Swan Lake” is not very long because it’s sort of under my skin and I know it so well. The most time I used was actually in the studio, making sure that dancers understood what I really wanted from the way I work, and not preparing it outside of the studio.

idea of my style, my musicality, all the things I wanted within my own production. It was easier than working on “The Sleeping Beauty”, when I was brand new to them. I think I frightened a lot of them, because I am very demanding, very precise and clear, and I do demand the highest of standards that I can produce, which means a lot of hard work. Some companies work in a way of: “Oh, that will do”, or “Oh, that will be all right”, and I don’t work like that. I’ll say: “That’s ok for the moment”, “Let’s move on”, “Let’s move up”, “Let’s get better”. Some people are surprised by those demands, that you want THAT level of excellence, it’s quite odd. Sometimes I’ve told the dancers: “Ok, we’ve done that well, let’s do it again.” They would look at me with a sort of shock and horror, saying: “What do you mean again?”. “Well, I mean again. If we do it again, you’ll get stronger. If we do it again it won’t be so tiring the next time.” These things were slightly alien to the company when I came here. But we’ve worked together so long now. They know what I expect, what I demand from them and our relationship is changed enormously. When I am here I get a hundred percent from them, when they are in the studio with me, they get ready, they prepare, they work, we work together, the collaboration is excellent. Obviously there are disagreements, I never lose my temper, but I have to be much more firm that I would like to be. Because of my long relationship



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Plićanić and Anton Bogov; author: V. Skledar



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić, Anton Bogov and the Ballet Company; author: V. Skledar

with the company now, it's a very good working relationship.

As to my participation in other parts of the production, the costumes, scene

against me and it doesn't enhance the production they are doing. I don't feel they concentrate enough musically on the production, for the dance and the music to really work together. For

“To be honest with you, I think there is an enormous passion for ballet here in Zagreb. The theatre is packed every time I come here for one of my productions.”

decoration, light effects, I am very full on and I think that's very important. If you're collaborating with other people it is very important all the time to be clear about what direction you are going in. I work terribly closely with my lighting designers, with my costume designers. I also, without taking over, make suggestions, my designers ask me for my suggestions, I ask them if they think that's a good idea, so our collaboration is unified. I get very much involved in every aspect of the production and work very closely with my collaborators.

How would you say that your “Swan Lake” choreography differs from all the others? What would you say is your personal contribution to this production?

I would say mine definitely differs in its musicality to some. For example the Russians, regardless to all the good they have done in the past for ballet, I feel that their method of musicality grates

me the most important thing is the musicality in the productions, so that the dancers are dancing exactly with the

music, inside the music. It's fifty-fifty: half of the performance is the dancing, but the other half is the music. I feel those two things really must jell.

My main efforts, choreographically, are to make sure that the music and the choreography work together and not move at different paces, in different directions. I would hope my personal contribution to this production is having been able to tell the story very clearly, to make people enjoy the production, without having to worry about whether they are going to understand it, or whether they are going to feel uncomfortable. I am a storyteller as a choreographer of classical ballets and what I try to do to my upmost ability, is to make sure the story is terribly clear in my productions. In a way that the audience can just sit back and leave their ordinary lives for three hours, get away from their normal life, get away from problems in the family, money problems, house problems, work problems, any other problems, just leave it outside and enjoy this wonderful journey through the story of ballet.

What is your opinion about the audience in Zagreb, their love and understanding of the ballet?

To be honest with you, I think there is an enormous passion for ballet here in Zagreb. The theatre is packed



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić, Anton Bogov and the Ballet Company; author: V. Skledar

every time I come here for one of my productions, whether it be “Cinderella”, or “Swan Lake”, or “The Sleeping Beauty” or “The Lady of the Camellias”, whatever it is, the theatre is packed, absolutely packed. The response from the audience at the end of the performances is overwhelming sometimes in their appreciation. A lot of people say: “Classical ballet is so old-fashioned now.” I think that it is not old-fashioned at all. If it’s presented in the beautiful way that it should be

“Eugene Onegin“. They are going to say “Swan Lake”, because it just has that universal popularity.

What does it mean to be a successful ballet choreographer as yourself? How much knowledge, experience, creativity, inspiration, ambition, energy is needed to accomplish and keep that level?

An enormous amount. My work is very tiring, and as I get older it gets more tiring. I get more tired now, my hips

through failure, to create better and it’s a process that takes many years. But you HAVE to be passionate about it, it HAS to be your life and it has been mine. Even when I was a dancer, I was passionate about choreographing, about making my own works. I always wanted to create my own ballets. I think that just comes from an unknown desire, unknown passion. It can drive people mad. I DO drive people mad. I get too much for people sometimes, because of my passion. I think I probably overwhelm people, but I can’t be any other way.

Can you tell us about your favourite choreographies or productions?

I love the classics, but I adore having a moment where I am doing something else. For example, here in Zagreb, I created a ballet called “The Lady of the Camellias”, which is still very classical in its structure, but it’s much meatier, deeper emotionally, more real, much more human. It’s not a fairy tale, like “The Sleeping Beauty” or “Swan Lake” or “Giselle”. It’s just much more humanly passionate. I very much enjoy choreographing outside the popular big ballets.

I think probably “Romeo and Juliet” is one of my favourite creations that I’ve done, because I took it out of the

“I never pull back and relax when I’m working. I’m always a hundred percent and I expect a hundred percent back.”

presented to an audience, an audience loves it more than anything else.

If you go to any opera house to see the big classics, you can’t get a seat. If you go to a more contemporary triple bill, little bit of this, little bit of that, you can buy seats any time. It’s proven everywhere that the audiences adore the classics, they love classical ballet. I can’t say why do they love the ballet, do they understand the ballet or they don’t. I just hope that they do, from what I try to do for them. I try to convey the story as much as I possibly can. I try to make it as clear, as magical, as ethereal and as breathtaking as I possibly can, so the audience is also moved in that way, not just by the storytelling.

“Swan Lake” is one of the most famous ballets in the world, and it never ceases to amaze the audience and fill the theatres. Why do you think that is?

To be really honest with you, I don’t know. As I’ve said earlier, “Swan Lake” is the most famous ballet ever. People want to go and see it. It’s a wonderful story, a love story and a tragedy. Over so many years “Swan Lake” has become so popular, and I think when people say: “Let’s go to see a ballet!”, the first thing they are going to say is “Swan Lake”, and not “The Lady of the Camellias” or

are hurting, my knees are hurting, my ankles are hurting and I can’t physically do what I used to be able to do, which is terribly frustrating for me. But I give every ounce of what I can give. I never pull back and relax when I’m working. I’m always a hundred percent and I expect a hundred percent back. I feel that if I am there to give all of my experience, all of the talent and all the passion that I have, I expect it in return. I feel it’s a two way street.

“But you HAVE to be passionate about it, it HAS to be your life and it has been mine. Even when I was a dancer, I was passionate about choreographing.”

I started choreographing when I was in the ballet school as a student. I always liked the idea of choreographing. I choreographed again when I got into *The Royal Ballet Company* and created ballets for them. It just went on, the passion grew. I made many dreadful ballets, awful stuff, which, thank God, never saw the light of day, but you have to go through that period,

romantic scenario that is attached to “Romeo and Juliet”. I created a ballet where Juliet was an emotional, passionate, young girl and Romeo wasn’t this floaty character, who just fell in love with people at every corner. In my production, I really gave them a different type of passion, desire and need. I would say “Romeo and Juliet” and “The Lady of the Camellias”.



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić, Anton Bogov and the Ballet Company; author: V. Skledar

But on the other hand, there is nothing more enjoyable than having sat through a performance of “Swan Lake” where the company has been on top form, the music has been exquisite to listen to and you get the support of the audience at the end. It’s a sort of mixed bag of what are my favourites. They are all my favourites, but for different reasons.

Who are your roll models?

I was brought up surrounded by choreographic greats: Sir Frederick Ashton, Sir Kenneth MacMillan, George Balanchine, Dame Ninette de Valois and many more. I was very fortunate to be in an epoch where I worked with and watched all these people creating. It was a magnificent time. To the left of me was Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, Natalia Makarova, Mikhail Baryshnikov, all these incredible artists I was working with, plus I was working in the same situation WITH these amazing choreographers. So obviously, Kenneth MacMillan was a very different choreographer to Sir Frederick Ashton. I danced a lot of ballets when I was a dancer and I was a muse of MacMillan. I was very influenced by his style and the way he worked, but also by Ashton. I think probably Ashton and MacMillan, having worked so closely with the two of them. I think they are my biggest role models.

But then, on top of that, I adore choreographers like Jiří Kylián, the most extraordinary choreographer, my

favourite contemporary choreographer alive today. I was very interested in Balanchine’s meticulousness. Balanchine’s ballets don’t really have any heart and soul, but there are meticulous: the lines, the shapes, the musicality, they are quite strict, so I was very impressed by his work.

You are known as a very renowned and also demanding choreographer. How do you prepare for a new choreography? What do you accentuate the most – technical performance, lyrics, emotion, drama...?

I think I’ve said all of that really. I used to choreograph outside of the studio and then take it in the studio and none of it worked. I’d spend hours and hours,

thinking: “Oh, I’m gonna make them do this, I’m gonna make them do that”. Then I went in, and gravity didn’t allow me to do those things: “I want her up there for 20 seconds, and round here and through there!” It doesn’t work like that in reality. You have to work on the dancers, in the studio. Now I do very little preparation outside the studio, and I love the collaboration between the artist and the choreographer.

I think my best choreography comes out of me whilst working with artists that inspire me. I work with so many who don’t. I work with so many dancers, who give you nothing back. They look at you as if to say: “That’s your job.” “Well, it isn’t my job! My job is to give you my impression, my feeling and your job is to work with me and that we create together!” That’s how I see choreographing. Some dancers are extraordinary to work with. I’ve had wonderful collaborations with two, or three, or four dancers, that I’ve worked with again and again, because they feed me, they give me inspiration to do what I do.

As for being demanding, I don’t mind that. People go: “Oh my God, Derek Deane is so difficult! Derek Deane is so hard to work for! The reputation! Apparently he is a monster!” Reputations just grow and grow out of nothing. But I have to agree with some people, in that I AM demanding. As I



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić, Svebor Sečak and the Ballet Company; author: V. Skledar

“In order to keep my art form established it is important to find ways of creating ballets that will bring in new audiences.”

said earlier, to create the best work for them and for them to give me the best work, we have to work to the end of our capabilities. Especially a dancer, because it's such a short life. You get your first professional job when you are nineteen and your career is on the way to being finished by your early thirties. When you are 28 or 29 years old you should already be thinking what you are going to do next.

The life is very short, don't waste it! I see so many dancers wasting the short time that they have. I find it very upsetting and annoying. I am not very good at all with lazy dancers, especially not with dancers who have wonderful facility and could be so much better than they are, but have a lazy mentality, or excuses like: "I can't really today, my leg hurts". I can not work with that type of dancer, because there are so many other dancers who are desperate and don't have the physical ability that some dancers have. As I said before, I want a hundred percent back. You have to give me as much as I give you and if that comes across as demanding then so be it.

I try to accentuate everything I can, everything that I feel is important: the drama, the emotion, the technical performance. I concentrate on the technical performance of the dancers, as much as I do on the emotional performance, but I don't want one without the other. I don't like watching a performance technically fabulous to look at, and there is nothing going on from the heart or the soul, or the passion on the face. Also, the other way around, there is no point in being the most passionate dancer on the stage when you can't do the steps. There has to be a balance between those two elements. I concentrate very much on all aspects of what it takes to get them to perform at their best.

You are an international artist. What does classical ballet mean in today's modern, accelerated and nervous world?

This is a very good question. I have always said that one must be finding ways of making ballet more popular: to bring in new audiences, new people, people with new interests in the art form, because otherwise it can get stale. We are now fighting against a techno age, where everything is computers, everything is games on computers. People are going less and less to the theatre now. People are going less and less to the cinema because it's all in their hands, it's all on the screen in front of them. In order to keep my art form established it is important to find ways of creating ballets that will bring in new audiences.

Now in London I create these enormous ballets, three to four times the size of my normal productions: instead of having sixteen swans, I have seventy. I do them in a very large theatre called *The Royal Albert Hall*. The Theatre holds 5.000 people and I am doing something different with "Swan Lake", presenting it in a much larger scale, almost like a film. The production is

so big, it's almost gladiatorial. There's great interest in that and people feel like they must go and see that. If it helps to make them come and see another ballet, then I will carry on creating ballets like that. The important thing is that, we put on these huge performances of "Swan Lake", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Romeo and Juliet" in *The Royal Albert Hall* and the theatre is absolutely packed. It holds 5.000 people and we do fourteen performances of "Swan Lake", or of another production I did called "Strictly Gershwin" on the music and lyrics of George and Ira Gershwin, and you can't get in. It's keeping it popular, it's keeping people interested in the art form. Today people usually just sit down and use electronic devices. It's very difficult and in 50 years time, I'll be dead, but I am not sure where ballet will be, in the big picture of entertainment. I think the world will change so much and so much will be lost.

Do Russian, French, Italian and English ballet schools and styles exist any more and if so, what are the main differences between them?

The styles do exist, but they don't exist as strongly as they used to. I was brought up with a very English, restrained style. It's a different quality and type of style to the Russian. The French and the Italian style are



Photograph: Swan Lake, Edina Pličanić; author: S. Novković

very much like the English style. The Russian style is very different. It's much more exaggerated, much more angular. It's a different physical shape altogether. I think that styles now have slightly melted all into one. Before,

take "Romeo and Juliet" for example, everybody knows that story, so it's much clearer to understand. If somebody doesn't know the story of "Swan Lake", I still think, if I have done my job well, an audience should just sit back, enjoy

The strictly classical ballet is the hardest dance form out of all dance forms: jazz, contemporary, modern, neoclassical dance. Classical ballet is the most difficult, because classical ballet is about line, about shape, about the length of your neck, the length of your arms, the shape of your feet, the shape of your legs, the proportions of your muscles, the proportions between the legs and the body. One is looking for the physical form in classical ballet. In contemporary ballet and jazz you don't need to have all those forms to be able to move, to be able to dance.

“I think a good ballet needs to let an audience drown and forget. When an audience comes into the theatre they are coming away from their own lives, coming to escape in a way.”

you used to look at a company and see what style they were dancing in, you could not help but recognise it. Now it is slightly different, everything is a bit of a mish-mash of styles. *The Royal Ballet* in London doesn't have its own style anymore. It used to be unique for its own English style, and so did The Paris Opera Ballet. Now, parts are taken from different ballet trainings, from the English, the French, the Russian, and are all sort of growing into one. The separation of styles that used to exist around the world doesn't exist any more.

Where lies the secret of ballet? What does ballet give to its audiences? How should the viewers prepare to better understand and enjoy all the elements and details of beautiful ballet performances?

Personally I don't think audiences do need to prepare to understand, because it's my job to make them understand. You can tell the story of "The Sleeping Beauty", "Swan Lake", "Cinderella", very clearly to an audience. It should be in front of them, it should be very obvious to an audience what the story is saying and how it is being told. If a choreographer is not doing his job properly an audience will be confused, they will not understand and they will get nervous. But if a classical storytelling choreographer tells the story clearly there shouldn't be any problem for an audience in understanding. Let's

it and understand it. I don't think it's anything more complicated than that.

There is a lot of bad ballet out there, bad costumes, bad sets, bad musicality, bad choreography. I think a good ballet needs to let an audience drown and forget. When an audience comes into the theatre they are coming away from their own lives, coming to escape in a way. That is what ballet gives to an audience: a moment of escape. They should get lost and you CAN get lost by watching a ballet. I think ballet is so physically and emotionally extraordinary. An audience can lose themselves. I hope that is what ballet does to an audience.

I agree that if you have a very strong ballet base it's much easier for you to move out of ballet into more contemporary dance and jazz dance. The classical ballet is the strongest base you could have, because it is the most difficult. It is the hardest and the most demanding. If you take that base you can move more easily into other idioms of dance. If you haven't got that base, it's much harder to work in other areas of dance, without that support.

Given your present art and life experience, what would be your advice to all the new choreographers and young dancers for their professional and personal development and success?

My feelings change all the time about how I feel about my art. On one hand,

“My advice to new choreographers is just to persevere, go for excellence, go to your limits, even though it's frustrating, even though it's sometimes impossible, you have to keep fighting for what you believe.”

We all know that most of today's modern dances (such as jazz-dance, contemporary dance, etc.) have a ballet base. How would you define the role of ballet for dancers and for the world of dance?

theatres do not have enough money, they do not have enough support to do enough new works, which is very frustrating and debilitating for a choreographer. I don't get to create

as many new works as I would like to create, because theatres can't afford it. Money is being cut all the time.

Although the ballet is highly supported financially by the intendant in this theatre there is never enough support, usually from the State, to always be producing productions of the highest quality. Luckily, as I said, the ballet is looked after very well so we can try to deliver our best work.

I get very frustrated in my own work that I am asked a lot to revive many ballets, ballets that are done already. To be very honest, I can not drum up the same stimulation and create the same energy that I do when I am doing something new. In many theatres today, and I am talking about the big theatres as well, subsidy for the arts is being cut. We are able to do less, we can not be more creative because we are not supported financially to do that. For me as a creative person, it is very depressing. It is very debilitating when you know that some parts of your life you have to survive of reviving the work you've already done.

My advice to new choreographers is just to persevere, go for excellence, go to your limits, even though it's frustrating, even though it's sometimes impossible, you have to keep fighting for what you believe. You have to push for everything that you believe in and everything that you want to do. There will be many pitfalls and many disappointments. However, if you have a clear vision of your work, a clear idea of what you want to produce and you are convinced that

is what you want to do, you just have to persevere.

I would say to young dancers: LISTEN, you really have to listen. You have to gather your knowledge for later, you have to eat everything that's given to you now, everything that's told. You must concentrate, you must be totally focused on what is being given to you. Basically, concentrate on your work. It's so hard: injuries, pain, depression, frustration, all of these things are fighting against us all the time in our work. You have to be patient. For a young dancer it is really important to be patient. Today dancers want three things: fast, fame and money. The preparation time is not there anymore, the waiting, learning, understanding and growing are not there anymore. Dancers want fame, money, fast, and that's very sad.

We live in a different world now to when I was brought up as a young dancer in a company. I was prepared for six months for a role in a ballet. Now if you get three weeks you are lucky, the balance is all gone. Dancers should be more patient, more willing to learn. I think if they do that, they will have a much better, a much fulfilled career. If they do learn, if they do listen and understand, it will create more opportunities for them to progress as dancers. Not only that, when they can't dance anymore, when that life is over, then they can teach, they can take all their luggage from the past and pass it on to the next generation. But you have to have the luggage, you have to have

learnt, understood, accepted and used all what you have learned to give to other people. People think that because they have been a dancer they can be a teacher and a choreographer, but that's not true. You have to learn and if you don't then you lose out.

I can not stress how hard the life is. It's a terribly hard life being a dancer, especially a classical ballet dancer, because of the need for perfection. If you are in a musical and if you move in a good way, got a great face and you can smile, you are on the stage. That doesn't happen in classical ballet, it's much more difficult, much more complicated. The disappointments are far greater than the pleasures. The pleasures are wonderful at the end of the day, when you have danced a wonderful performance and you just feel the euphoria, but are very rare compared to what you have to suffer to get to that point. There is a lot of people who think that you just get up and dance. That you do your warm up and your practice and then you go out in a lovely costume, but it's not like that at all. The pain is far greater.

I don't mean this in a bad way, but you have to have problems and troubles in your life. There have to be things in your life that aren't very good, to be able to use those emotions when you are creating something. I take from all the sadness and also from all the happiness that I've had in my life and try to put it in my work. I feel that you have to put a lot of your own emotions into your work to make an audience cry or laugh.

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