

Tartan Press

Newsletter of The Manitoba Highland Dancers Association

May 2010

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Blast from the Past



Piper Mr. Will plays as Jo-Anne Fraser, a student of Irene Baird (3rd dancer from the left) and other dancers perform. This photo was taken in the late 60's or early 70's and was submitted to the Tartan Press by Jo-Anne's niece, Cara Callbeck. Do you recognize any of these dancers? Please contact Laureen Wreggitt at the Tartan Press if you do.

Do You Over Think Your Routine?

BY CRAIG LANNING

As a formal athlete, I always had trouble sleeping following a game. As I lay in bed struggling to find sleep, I would analyze my performance over and over in my mind. Fortunately for me, this was never a problem for me during the “performance”, but for many athletes or dancers, this is a problem.

It takes me to a time that I was backstage managing at a dance competition, and I heard a teacher say to their student who was about to perform, “Don’t over-analyze your movement, just trust your instincts.” The dancer did miss a few counts following a difficult floor section. She was over-analyzing and not trusting her instincts or what she learned in her training.

Your performance in dance follows the same rationale. Many dancers tend to over-think what they learn in training and over-analyze their performance in competition. For many dancers, the problem with thinking too much is that it feels right to them especially for more analytical persons or even perfectionists. How can you over-think your performance, you might ask? Isn’t being smart and coaching yourself good in dance? Being “smart” in dance is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Very intelligent dancers tend to over-think their performance. You’ll find many ways to over-think your game. Some ways include:

- * Thinking too much about “how to” perform instead of trusting your instincts or what you have learned through practice. This happens when you get too technical with your pirouette, for example. You focus on the proper technique to make a good turn and presto, you’re a beat behind where you should be.

- * Over-analyzing your last mistake or play. You break down the details on the last fouetté you missed and focus on how you can fix it right away. You get stuck in the details of your leg placement instead of reacting to the music. Worse yet, you focus on how you can AVOID the same mistake next time.

- * Focusing on everyone’s tips and strategies instead of what you need to do. You try to please your teammates, coach and parents all at the same time when performing. Your mind gets clogged with too many details about what others want you to think about or do.

- * Over-analyzing the outcome of the competition. You focus too much on the “what if’s” after the performance and the consequences of winning or losing the competition, which does not allow you to focus in the moment. By the way, this is one of the causes of tension or performance anxiety in sports.

- * Getting stuck between two plans of action. If this happens to you, you become indecisive when trying to select the right hairstyle or costume, for example. Your mind is trapped between two options, which does not allow you to commit to one plan of action, causing an unclear mind.

I’m sure you can identify other ways to over-think or over-analyze your performance.

What’s the end result of too much thinking or analyzing?

First, your performance will be tentative at best. You will not perform with freedom or perform instinctively. Second, you’ll fear mistakes. You become fearful of making the same mistakes in the competition, and thus tighten up and single a turn instead of doubling. Third, your mind is stuck in the past dwelling on what you did wrong and how to fix your mistake. You don’t have a clear mind to perform in the present moment. You are too occupied with unimportant details.

“I can’t be a robot and not think at all,” you might say. How much should you think when you perform? Obviously, you’re a thinking being. The point I’m making is that you can over-think anything including performance. In sports, for example, a batter must have a plan. The golfer must have a target in mind. And the soccer player must have awareness of her teammates. Many top athletes say they perform their best when on autopilot and don’t think at all. What they mean to say is that they perform well when reacting to the demands around them.

How do you know when you are thinking too much or over analyzing your game? You’ll find a fine line between thinking too much and thinking just enough. I believe at the minimum, in most performances, you must begin with a plan, be committed to the plan, and trust in your skills to execute the plan. The dancer, for example, must select an emotion for the routine, be committed to the emotion and trust that his emotion will show through – allowing him to react to the image in his mind.

If the dancer has six different themes (when competing) given by his instructor, he’s thinking too much. You might think this is an oversimplification of your performance, but it’s better for students to err on the side of simplicity instead of making their performance or execution too complex or harder than it needs to be.

Use your performance as a guidepost. One way to find out is use your past performance as a guidepost. For example, what were you thinking when you dances your best performance? How much were you thinking when not dancing well? You can compare and contrast these performances to help you get started.

Also, test the theory out during practice. A dancer might complete three or four successful fouetté’s by just focusing on the music. The same dancer might simulate thinking too much. He could focus on his form, foot position, release, trajectory, etc. all at the same time while trying his fouetté’s and see how many he makes. Yes, this is a simple test you can do in practice, but it’s a starting place.

Your mental tip for today – trust your instincts – they are usually right. Allow yourself to act based on what you already have learned or over learned through practice. “Just do it”.

Reprinted with permission from Footlights. Thanks to Linda Aronson for providing this article.



Birth Announcement



Congratulations to Leah from Ceilidh Surprise on the birth of her new baby:

Oriana Nicole Knowles
 Born Friday, March 26, 2010
 10:21 am
 6lbs 12oz

Out of Town Results

Shona McHarg School of Highland Dance		
Regina Open Competition - March 6th		
Intermediate		
Brandi Duke	1 st	Fling
	2 nd	Sword
	1 st	Seann Truibhas
	1 st	Strathspey and 1/2 Tulloch
	3 rd	Hornpipe
		Trophy Winner



For Sale

~ Blue Royal Menzies Kilt, Vest, & socks ~

To fit a slim 10 - 13 year old.
 Excellent condition, only worn 1 year.
 The kilt has 3 inches in the hem.
 \$250.

Contact: Tracy Douglass, 489-9898, tnphr@mts.net

~ Kilt/Vest/Socks (2 pair) ~

from MacIsaac Kiltmakers
 Dress Purple McKenzie
 Will fit age 5 - 10 yrs
 \$550

~ Black Vest ~

Will fit 8 - 11 yrs
 \$40

~ Child's Blouse ~

Size small
 \$20

~ Red Jig Dress with Apron ~

from Marg's Highland Dance Wear
 Size 10
 \$50

~ Red Jig Shoes ~

Size 2
 \$25

Contact Betty: 612-7167, kbharder@mts.net

Tartan Press Submissions

Items to be published in the Tartan Press will be accepted up to two weeks prior to every M.H.D.A. competition.
 Items may be sent by email to: Lauren Wreggitt lwreggitt@mts.net

