July 2020

Jason Beaman and Brent Olifent hosted “Off the Floor” interview sessions by Australia’s OutsideChange Dance Network. <https://www.outsidechange.com/> They were professionally conducted with questions of significant content. The interaction with those being interviewed was historical, candid, educational, and with deep passion for the profession of dance. Below are the highlights of what I took away from those interviews:

1. Professionals make significant sacrifices in lifestyle and finances. Consistent comment through all interviews: If choice between dancing and eating, dancing was the primary.
2. Most had to juggle between their passion of dance, family, and secondary employment (to pay for dance training).
3. Student respect for instructors, and likewise instructor respect for students.
4. Students need to have clear objectives for lessons.
5. Daily communication between professional partners is important.
6. Competitive edge is good, but long-term rivalries are destructive.
7. Practice every day of the week; even teaching hours are long but loved being on the dance floor.
8. Training excellence was sought after. Coaches and mentors were highly valued for their emotional support and mature guidance in life experiences.
9. Clear balance required through multiple trainers: artistic vs technique.
10. “Enjoying the moment” on competition floor seemed to bring better movement and results in scoring.
11. Emotions: “Pull it in or go home.” We are human, but there needs to be an element of control and discipline.
12. Current teaching/studio focus varies. Private lessons are most challenging but also most rewarding.
13. Maturity and focus results from age and where they are on timeline of their career.
14. Judging: greater respect and quality realizing you are responsible for someone’s career and livelihood.
15. Eager to see crowds grow in number at events.
16. Concern for industry with effects of pandemic. Could be opportunity to lower cost for students and audiences.
17. The love of being on the dance floor and pleasure of watching in person is beyond measure compared to alternative of viewing on Internet, YouTube, video, or television.
18. My greatest joy from these sessions was seeing the interaction between the people after the interview. I take with me the laughter and excitement of connected hearts following happy feet!

Special thanks to the Australian dancers’ network for encouragement and challenge at an exceedingly difficult time in the worldwide pandemic. *Martha A. Harper*

*Printed by permission of Jason Beaman and Brent Olifent, OutsideChange.*