***“Say that again”***

When I enter a studio or event, my senses immediately pick up the music. I have always felt dancing comes from the beat of the music stirring the heart and communicating through the body in motion.

Going beyond our natural responses and pleasure of music, listening is an important discipline. We need to understand what our instructor or coach is telling us. A beginner may have the dreamy or aloof attitude of “okay, whatever you say”. It can be the tendency of a professional or experienced dancer to nod and say “yes” to the coach to more quickly move forward through the lesson or instruction. Or sometimes we tell our instructor “ok, got it” sincerely feeling we know what is going on or what they expect. Then we get in the car, on the bus or subway only to arrive home and suddenly we are fumbling to remember everything the instructor said.

I have learned that you may be in the same studio or with an instructor of the identical training background, but each instructor has their own personality and thought process. They know where they’ve been and are trying to teach or train you where to go. The steps or syllabus can be similar, but the process of getting there may be different. The instructor is fashioning the lesson to accommodate you and your background, to include your level and style of learning.

It is a healthy objective to remember “Train the brain to listen and retain”. My instructor sometimes catches me in some illusions of footwork fantasy. I may be looking straight at him, but my hearing is not in gear. He very firmly tells me to get back to the lesson and stay focused. His kind but clear suggestion, “Martha, will you join me please,” draws me back on the path and to the task at hand. His time is valuable, and I am paying for the lesson. I should value both for the benefit of improving my learning process and ultimately my dancing.

Do you hear the timing of the music? When your instructor counts the beats for you, are you allowing yourself a moment of leisure or truly listening and connecting the dots? When a new step or pattern is introduced, are you paying attention to the instructor’s detail and explanation? As I prepare for my next series of lessons, I’m reviewing our instructional videos from several years back. It is alarming to me how often the same material is repeated. It has become a challenge to me to activate the full scope of my listening skills to advance my dancing opportunities and talent.