

Dancer of the Year **Lia Pizzicato**

I was only two years old when I started dancing. I was very young, but that didn't stop me from knowing my dances! At my first recital, I was three years old, and I've been told that I was one of the few little girls that knew her dance. In fact, I felt it necessary to move the other girls around on stage to where they should be located!! I was a perfectionist, and I did not want the dance to look bad. As anyone that knows me can say, I still am that way!

Thinking back to the end of August this year, I could not wait to get my schedule for dance. There is a two-week break between summer lessons and the start of fall lessons, and for me that was too long to be without dance. I remember when we all finally got our schedules, we all called each other just to make sure that we were in the same classes. Although I think we all suspected that we would be in the same classes, it was more for us to talk to each other and talk about dance.

I haven't always danced at Marilyn's, but I remember the day that I walked into my first class. It was the rehearsal for Disney back in 2003. It seems like so long ago now. I had no idea at the time that dancing for Marilyn would change me not only as a dancer, but also change my life.

Dancing at Marilyn's has taught me much more than choreography or dance steps. It has taught me to express my love for dance while on stage and perform --- giving all that I've got, not just enough to get by. I have learned about commitment- to the dancers at the studio, to the other company members, and to my teachers. In addition, I have also learned how to have so much fun. Some of my most fabulous memories are related to dance - and all of them are all filled with much laughter, love, and life.

One thing I love about performing on stage is that I get to be anybody I want. I can be a sassy jazz dancer or an emotional lyrical dancer. For example, when I am on stage doing a ballet number, most people would probably never guess that an hour prior to going on stage, I stubbed my toe on a piece of furniture or somehow managed to almost take my arm off while walking through a doorway. Being a ballerina on stage makes me feel and look quite graceful, and, let me tell you something, I am not graceful!

Dancing at Marilyn Schneider School of Dance has taken me to so many places. Initially, I got to dance at Disney, went on a trip to New York City, and have done hours of community service by dancing at nursing homes. I would have never had the opportunity to do any of these things if I didn't dance.

In 2004, I was given the chance to join company as an apprentice. Every Tuesday and Saturday night I would go to class and dance with amazing dancers. I was very scared being in the same class as people who were a hundred times better than me, but it motivated me to work one thousand times

harder. I wanted to be as talented as them someday. My hard work eventually paid off. The next year, I was put into three of the company dances!

Being in company has given me so many additional opportunities. This will be my fifth year as a Company Dancer. With the Company Dancers, I have competed at Tremaine, NYCDA, DMA, and Star Systems. We have traveled across the country from Rochester and Buffalo, to Cleveland and Orlando, and even all the way to Las Vegas. I have taken classes from so many well-known dancers and have met so many wonderful people along the way. It's a truly amazing experience that I have been so lucky to be a part of.

Currently I am taking tap, jazz, ballet, lyrical, hip-hop, musical theater, contemporary, and pointe. When I first started dancing at Marilyn Schneider School of Dance, I danced one day a week for three hours. Six years later I dance four days a week and don't really know for how many hours - there are way too many to count! People tell me that dancing that much is crazy. They do not realize that when I get up on stage all the hard work is worth it. It is an unexplainable feeling that only a performer knows. Sure, there are days I'd rather do other things besides going to dance class, but those three minutes on stage are moments that I look forward to.

And, when I go to dance class, it is so much fun. I look forward to it because I get to be surrounded by people that make me happy; people who are enjoyable to be around, and people that are just as dedicated as I am. The people I have met at Marilyn Schneider School of Dance are my family. I have made so many friends through dance that I love so much.

Last year, Marilyn asked me to assist on Saturday mornings with the younger girls. I absolutely love watching them grow as dancers. Being an assistant has taught me a lot about responsibility. There is a substantial amount of obligation involved. Every Saturday, I spend half the day helping to share my love of dance with the younger girls and be a part of their journey to become their own amazing dancers.

Being the 2009 Dancer of the Year would be a tremendous honor. Dancing is what makes me ME. I dance from my heart and I enjoy showing people the fun of dance. Whenever I hear music, I want to whip out a pirouette or a développ . (I try to control myself though, so people don't think I'm crazy...) I love to light up the stage and perform for audience after audience. Even if I do not pursue dancing as a career, I will always know myself as a dancer and remember how much fun and happiness it has given me. No matter where I am, I will always be dancing in my heart.