



**Cynthia Harvey is considered one of American Ballet Theatre's (ABT's) greatest Ballerinas. At the young age of 16, she began her life as a professional dancer and went on to have an illustrious international career. Cynthia was the first American to be named Principal Artist at The Royal Ballet in London, England. A true Ballerina, working at the height of excellence for so many years, she shares her personal opinions and a story of determination that drove her from and early age.**

For me as a school director, one thing that really makes me look twice is a musical dancer. Having an understanding of the quality of the music is paramount to me. I want to see an allegro that looks like an allegro and does not have the same quality as an adagio. Flavour your work. Another thing I appreciate is when a dancer does as the teacher says. If the teacher or choreographer asks you to put your arm behind your head and scratch it during the barre, do what you're asked to do. We want to know that you are capable of learning what you're asked. Later, when you are in a company, or a soloist, then you can make suggestions or demonstrate an alternate, more kinetic way for you...If asked.

## **A life changing story...**

I was a child or age eleven. My mother had to work and could not always contribute to the ballet guild. The ballet guild at my school made costumes and volunteered to do lighting or edit music, whatever was helpful to the school. My mom did sew my own costume when needed, but she did not have the time to work extra for the school.

I got to dance a solo in a ballet called Christopher Caterpillar. I was given the role of the lead firefly. The other kids and their parents did not find this to be fair since my mother did not work in the guild. Regardless, I worked very hard.

When the performance came along, we all were in the dressing room getting ready. My little wings, which I wore on an elastic around my chest, were there. I had my tights on. My little pointy hat, with the battery to light the torch inside, was there on the bench. My ballet shoes were there with the hat, and now on my feet. What was not there was my pink leotard with the holes for the wings. The others made their way to the stage. I heard the music over the speakers. I still searched everywhere for the leotard. I could not find it! It was not in the bathrooms, not in my bag-nowhere! I heard the lead up to my music and ran to the stage panicking. I was only wearing tights, my wings, my hat and shoes-no leotard. I approached my spot on the stage and started my solo- sobbing. About half way through, I could see my teacher in the wings telling me to get off, and soon the music stopped. I could no longer contain myself. I was in floods of tears. She went upstairs with me and eventually, after some searching, found the leotard thrown way up high and behind some bags. There was no way I could have seen it back there. I knew which students were the most vindictive and most likely to have done it as they laughed so much later, and had always been unkind to me.

To go onstage as an eleven year-old, not fully dressed, could have been traumatic. My teacher at that time took me aside and told me the following: "Your best revenge is to become as good a ballerina as you can and show them that you have no fear."

Well, those words were what I needed to hear. I did my best, and I have a feeling that those mean girls did not really live a life as wonderful as mine.

Do not let disappointment and fear hold you back from your dreams.