Maura Puro

What would she think? How would Ms. Sandy feel if I quit? Again.

I listened to these scrambling thoughts as I contemplated leaving my dance studio, for the second time, at the beginning of last year. Stopping dance and pursuing a school sport instead because I couldn't deal with all the changes since she left.

I didn't feel confident enough in myself without her support to follow the ever-tightening dress code. I never completely felt like I belonged in my group, always feeling less than the dancers around me.

That was one of Sandy's best qualities. Her support and ability to give you the confidence you need in yourself to be confident in your dancing.

I've always remembered myself as one of her favorite students. Although this may not be true, it's a special talent to make someone feel that way, like they've earned your respect and you know how hard they work and see their talent. That you like and approve of them.

Learning from someone straight off Broadway is a privilege, and I took it for granted in the past. The other day I said, "You know they're good, you know the information and what you're learning is correct. You know that it's going to make you better because that's what they do and they did [on Broadway]. The achievement kind of confirms that they're doing something right and that you're going to learn a lot from them."

I didn't understand how lucky I was to be learning from such an amazing performer and woman until I thought about giving it up.

So, while sitting on my couch crying, trying to decide what the right move was, I suddenly found my answer: I couldn't leave. There's no way I could abandon the studio Sandy built, her legacy, her heart and soul left not only out on the dance floor, but in the hearts of all of her students. And I stayed.

Looking back I see all of the opportunities and relationships I would have missed out on. Being a very non-spiritual person, I feel like Sandy has been looking down on me, looking out for me through all the hardships that have come along with performing.

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