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DN- 252: Jazz
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Final Self-Assessment Assignment

This semester I have learned a lot in my dance technique classes, ballet and jazz. Both have pushed me to do things I would have never done/tried before, therefore strengthening my technique and improving my overall ability. Jazz especially proved to be a challenge for me. In many classes, especially before the midterm, we went back to the basics (which I found very necessary and helpful for not only myself but many others in the class as well). This allowed us to break down the steps of basic things, reminding me of everything important in each position or step. For example, with inside turns, by breaking them down, doing them slow, and really thinking hard about every single detail, I was reminded to not “wind up”, to keep my shoulders down, to pretend I was holding a beach ball in my arms, and to focus when I spot. I did not necessarily have all of these problems before, but being reminded of the checklist was helpful in not only the inside turns, but also all turns. Also by breaking down everything, I learned to stay grounded to the floor whenever I am dancing. It helps with overall control and balance. One of my weaknesses coming into this class was being too heavy on my feet. So, I learned how to stay grounded, without looking/sounding like it. I learned that you can be grounded while dancing, but also be pulled up in the upper body with your chin up and looking out towards the audience. My leaps and jumps don't land so loudly and more, but I can still feel the floor and control myself.

In class every Monday and Wednesday we did the same difficult warm up. It tested my flexibility, worked out my abs and legs, assessed the control in my flexible

muscles, and challenged me to work harder on my arm and upper body strength. I really enjoyed doing this warm up, for it touched upon every aspect of the body we needed to work before dancing. Huge weaknesses I had in dance before I came to this class were being able to control and hold my flexibility and loosening my very tight hamstrings. This warm up allowed me to greatly improve on both of these things. We had to keep our legs in control when working them out. We also had to stretch our legs to the front multiple times. Although I still cannot straighten either leg all the way to the front when I have my foot in my hand, the flexibility there has greatly improved. My hamstrings are loosening up a bit and allowing my front extensions to slowly, but surely develop higher and higher.

In the second half of the semester, we've really been working on performing with our number "Step In Time". As I mentioned in my previous self-assessment, my on-stage performance is great. I don't know what it is, maybe the lights, the adrenaline, or the audience, that gets me going and really allows me to put on a show. But I still am struggling with being able to perform this well in the studio. Obviously there is a difference between studio and stage performance for everyone, but for some reason the gap between the two for me is much larger, and I am trying and working hard to lessen that. I have improved some. The "Step In Time" dance has brought out something in me that I never thought I had before. I've never done a musical theatre type number, so I was very shy to the idea of it all at first. But maybe because it feels so silly to dance the way we are, I can just loosen up and have fun with it, instead of worrying about so much technique and such. Yes, obviously our feet have to be pointed and stuff, but the dance allows me to be more free and to let loose more. I believe that this in turn, allows me to

perform more, even in the studio. I know I still have much room for improvement, but it is a start. This dance and this entire jazz class has allowed me to come out of my shell a bit, especially in this last semester. I have been able to start showing what I really am capable of, even on just a daily, class basis. When I do this dance, I imagine being on stage. I pretend to have tons of people watching and that everything I do and every step I take is the only chance I will get. I have stopped watching myself so closely in the mirror, for that only embarrasses me. I have stopped looking for mistakes and expecting things to go wrong. I have focused more on feeling how I do when I perform and going along with my gut feeling. Doing all of these things have helped tremendously. Like I said, I still have a lot of work to do on this, but I have begun to fix this issue.

My left ankle still bothers me. As I mentioned in my previous assessment, it is much weaker than my right one due to multiple injuries. It becomes tired more easily and does not stretch as well. I do not feel as though I have strengthened it any more. I will continue to work on this, for I really want it to be stronger one day.

This class has been very helpful to me in my dance studies. I really enjoyed going back to the basics on my things. I enjoyed the warm up every week. My abs and core are much, much stronger than they were before. I still have weak arms, but they too are stronger than before. My control and hamstring flexibility is also much better. Though I enjoyed all of those things, my favorite part of this class was learning a musical theatre style number. It introduced me to a dance style that was new to me, and allowed me to loosen up and perform a bit more enjoyably and freely. Obviously I still have a lot of work to do. I am by no means anywhere close to perfect. But I feel that this class has

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helped me become a much better, stronger, more talented, and more confident dancer all around. I really did enjoy all of it.