

Heather Myers Second Soloist Boston Ballet

Canadian Heather Myers received her dance training at The National Ballet School and The Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. After dancing with Alberta Ballet and the Banff Centre for the Arts and Le Festival des Arts de Saint Saveur, Ms. Myers joined the corps de ballet of Boston Ballet in 2002 and was promoted to second soloist in 2004.

At Boston Ballet her dances have included Marius Petipa's *The Sleeping Beauty*, Mikko Nissinen's *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* (pas de trios), John Cranko's *The Taming of the Shrew*, James Kudelka's *Cinderella*, and George Balanchine's *Ballo della Regina*, *Monumentum/Movements*, *Serenade*, and *Stars and Stripes*, among others.

Ms. Myers created *One Constant* for Boston Ballet's 2006 Choreography Workshop, and taught at Boston Ballet's Young Dancers Summer Workshop.

In Step recently caught up with the busy dancer to ask her 20 Questions:

1. When did you first know you wanted to dance?

My Mom will say it began when I first started to dance around the living room, but I think I knew I wanted to dance professionally when I went away to ballet school. It was there that I found myself feeling so intensely at home around the art form and its people.

2. When did you first know you had the *right stuff*?

When I was a young student, I was aware of my ability to understand and interpret. But it was when I realized that I was able to accept—and even enjoy—the constant challenge and work that a career in dance entails, that I knew I could do this professionally.

3. What was your greatest moment as a dancer?

Well, so far, it was performing Jiri Kylian's *Falling Angels* with Boston Ballet. The rare synergy of really dancing with my female colleagues, coupled with the deep expression of the ballet and its effect on the audience, made the experience so meaningful and rewarding.

4. What was your worst moment as a dancer?

That would have to be dealing with a torn labrum (hip cartilage), and the recovery period after having it surgically repaired.

5. If you hadn't chosen dance as your profession, what career would you have liked to attempt?

Probably something else in another creative art form. If not that, possibly something to do with foreign aid, or cultural studies of some kind.

6. Who most inspired you to become a dancer?

I can't say it was any one person. You see, I had a lot of teachers early on who were very

encouraging, and presented dance as being an enticingly positive experience. Obviously, I was positively enticed!

7. What do you do to mentally prepare before a performance?

I focus in and concentrate on the main impression or message I want the audience to get from the ballet, or my role in it. Also, I try to feel confident—even when I'm not.

8. What do you do to keep a performance fresh during a long run?

Usually I try to think of new ways of approaching the part. Or, I work on breaking some on-stage habits that I experience when I'm feeling nervous.

9. Do you have any rituals you perform, or superstitions you indulge, before going on stage?

I just do what I think a lot of us do: obsessively check my ribbons!

10. How do you unwind after a big performance?

I'm still working on that one, but hot baths help me a lot.

11. What are your thoughts on the future of ballet in America?

I know this sounds like fantasy, but I would love to see the day when ballet is as respected and understood in America as it is in Europe. It takes a lot of determination and vision from all levels and facets of the dance world just in making our art form accessible, appealing, and successful in a country where the Arts are not often given attention. It's comforting, though, to see young dancers represent themselves with intelligence and relevance to the world around them, and remain open to new ideas as our art continues to evolve.

12. Is it easier or harder to become a professional dancer today, or when you started?

It's probably about the same, in that it's always a challenge to get a job that is often dependant on factors beyond one's control. But, it's still nothing that determination can't overcome.

13. If you could have a moment with any dancer in history, who would you choose and what would you ask him/her?

It would have to be Nijinska. I would love to ask her what it was like to be such a gifted creator and innovator at a time when women's roles in society were often so restrictive. I'd also ask her what it was like to be part of the Diaghilev Company during that time, and where her choreographic inspiration came from.

14. In your opinion, who is the greatest dancer in your lifetime?

Baryshnikov is incredible. He has really done it all. He's been an innovator in the areas of classical ballet, contemporary dance, and directing. However, some of the most amazing dancers I've seen are those who have spent long, dedicated, positively-motivated careers in the corps de ballet, who are often not recognized for their steady and patient work.

15. What is the greatest piece of advice you received as a dancer?

It's those moments on stage where all the work pays off, where it's between you and the audience. It's your moment—so you might as well own it.

16. What do you do to help the development of the next generation of dancers?

I've done a little teaching, but find that the best thing I can do as a dancer is to set an example of a strong work ethic, and a respectful attitude.

17. What special tips do you use for breaking in shoes?

I usually close the shoe tips in a door to break them in just a tiny bit before super-gluing them in the areas that soften first.

18. What is the most important advice given to you (and by whom)?

“You become what you practice.” That wisdom came from my Dad.

19. If you were stranded on a desert island, what one thing would you want with you, and why?

A bottomless pina colada—for obvious reasons!

20. Other than dance, what really excites you?

Travel, nature, and people connecting with each other.