

20 Questions With...Patricia Barker

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Patricia Barker

Principal Dancer

[Pacific Northwest Ballet](#) [links to pnb.org]

[BKWear](#) [link to BKWear.com]

Born in Richland, Washington, Patricia Barker started her dance training in Richland, continued her training on scholarship at Boston Ballet School and upon her return to the Northwest, continued her training on scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet School in Seattle. She became a Pacific Northwest Ballet apprentice in 1981 and by 1982 a full company member. She was promoted to soloist in 1984 and has been a principal dancer since 1986.

Ms. Barker has worked with many of the world's great choreographers, having established herself as one of the finest living interpreters of the works of George Balanchine. An audience favorite, Patricia Barker has danced to critical acclaim while on tour with PNB. Her guesting and gala appearances have brought her world recognition.

Ms Barker has consulted with Bloch, collaborated with Freed of London and is currently an advisor to Bunheads, Inc. She is the founder and designer of BKWear a fashion dancewear company.

Ms. Barker is married and lives in Seattle, Washington.

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

A. From the first moment I stepped into the ballet studio, I never wanted to leave. For me it was a place to escape into my imagination and be a "ballerina".

Q. When did you first know you had the right stuff?

A. It came in stages, first I discovered that my body type and arched feet were good for ballet, then I developed good working habits and a strong technique, then I realized that it's not good enough to be just a good dancer, I needed to be an artist too. So I guess I'm saying that I am always trying to overcome my limitations and continually looking and learning the "right stuff".

Q. What was your greatest moment as a dancer?

A. Receiving an apprentice contract and finally becoming a professional ballet dancer.

Q. What was your worst moment as a dancer?

A. That moment is always the same, an injury that prevents me from dancing.

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

A. I would have been a CEO and make a difference as a woman in business. As I now come to the end of my dance career and look to the future, my goal is to become an Artistic Director.

Q. Who most inspired you to become a dancer?

A. Moira Shearer, as a young girl I must have watched her in “The Red Shoes” a hundred times. I was enchanted with her beauty, grace and dancing.

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

A. I take a nap, then a few moments to visualize the performance.

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

A. I keep focused and I always remember that there is a new audience watching me every night.

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

A. The only ritual is what I have for lunch before a show, a tuna fish sandwich on dark rye with pickles and some potato chips.

Q. How do you unwind after a big performance?

A. I usually come home and watch my husband, Michael, make me a wonderful dinner with a glass of wine and some discussion about this and that. Then a hot shower and off to bed.

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

A. We need more effective leadership shaping our industry, innovating both artistically and commercially. In order to compete in a highly competitive marketplace ballet needs to uniquely position itself. From ballet boards to Artistic Directors to CEO’s to dancers, we all need to take ownership of the art form we love and shape the future of dance to make it flourish, vital and viable for generations to come.

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

A. It’s always hard to obtain your goals and fulfill your dreams but if you are willing to do what it takes and have commitment it will become easier.

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

A. Anna Pavlova, I would ask her “what inspired you to dance?”

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

A. It’s difficult to pick just one but I am going to have to pick Rudolf Nureyev,

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

A. Remember every moment and cherish every performance as it could be your last.

Q. You developed and hosted the video, *Patricia Barker On Pointe Shoes*. What motivated you to do this project?

A. During my career I have experimented and worked with pointe shoes to manipulate them into a shoe that would work best for me, I have listened and collect information from dancer around the world and I wanted to share these techniques with other dancers.

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

A. I like to harden the tips of my shoes with instant glue and I take the heel nail out and break the shank just under my arch.

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

A. 1. Very few people get to dance, so relish what you have and enjoy it. (Michael Auer)
2. Toes back, heels forward. (Marjorie Thompson)

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

A. The one thing would have to be my husband. He can cook, build fires, makes houses and is fun to have around.

Q. Other than dance, what really excites you?

A. Life, friends, vacations and the future.