

Watching and Learning

March 8, 2011



The beautiful Brighton Pier on the sea.
Photo by Fana Tesfagiorgis

Brighton was quite a city. There was so much history around every corner. I had a chance to explore a lot of sights on our day off, including the Brighton Pier, the Sea Life Aquarium, the West Pier, and the Royal Pavilion. It fascinates me how much of an effect different parts of the world can have on people. You get a more tangible understanding of different cultures and their histories when you travel—it's an awakening experience in a way that I can't explain. How lucky we are to get to see the world AND do what we love to do!

At the Brighton Dome we performed *The External Knot*, *Splendid Isolation II*, *The Hunt*, and *Revelations*. While all twelve of us perform in every show, there are nights when a few dancers get a few pieces off because of casting. On those occasions, we get the opportunity to watch one another from the wings. On a TV show I saw recently, a surgeon said, "Look around you. The biggest influences in your life are sitting next to you right now." Watching my colleagues perform, I can see how true that is.

Our Associate Artistic Director Troy Powell choreographed *The External Knot*. The piece is about a young man who struggles to find his place, whether it be within or outside of the group. I love watching Renaldo in this role because he depicts that struggle so sincerely with every step, from the opening head roll to the closing pique. The couples alongside him compliment his movements, making a lot of beautiful yet hard partnering work look seamless. When watching them dance, I'm inspired by the different stories each person tells and I have a better understanding of how the story of the ballet builds.

I'm also inspired watching others perform the *Splendid Isolation II* solo. Sarah, Brittany, Jackie, and I each have such different interpretations of the work. Watching each of them perform reminds me of how important the individual dancer is to a piece. The choreographer creates the sketch or the outline of the picture, but the coloring and the quality of each brush stroke—that has to come from the individual dancer. I enjoy seeing all of our differences.

Without fail at every performance, all of the ladies rush backstage when our stage manager calls "places" for *The Hunt*, an all male piece by Robert Battle, the Artistic Director Designate of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Sure we all secretly hope that someday Ms. Waters will schedule all the women to rehearse this piece too, but it's the excitement of seeing our boys transform that keeps us running back. All six men bring so much energy to the piece and it's shocking to see their most aggressive sides come to the forefront. I love seeing how they push one another, figuratively and literally—one yells "come on!" another screams, someone hinges lower than humanly possible, all their crazy improvisation ideas—every night is a surprise.

After all of that, we come together for the reverent *Revelations*. This Ailey work is my all time favorite piece, and there's so much to say about it that I'll have to reserve it for a later post. I'll catch you all in Bournemouth.



Inside the Sea Life Aquarium. Photo by Fana Tesfagiorgis



The very Royal Pavilion (You should see the inside!) Photo by Fana Tesfagiorgis



The West Pier in the distance. Photo by Fana Tesfagiorgis



Ailey II men backstage before *The Hunt*.
Photo by Fana Tesfagiorgis