



In Their Words: Testimonies on Summer Intensive & Teacher Training

In Riga, Latvia I attended a summer intensive with Open World Dance Foundation. Immediately, I fell in love with this school, its teaching methods, and its combined mission to provide the highest quality ballet training, and opportunities for underprivileged children to be exposed to the world of ballet.

Training with the directors, Ekaterina Shchelkanova and Anton Boytsov, has been wonderfully enriching and wonderfully challenging at the same time. Prior to working with Ekaterina and Anton, I had a vision for myself and my ballet career, but I didn't truly realize how much more I needed to learn. In our Vaganova method classes, I am now learning to recognize every element of a ballet dancer's technique from the angle of our cheekbones, to the anatomy of a pointe shoe. As a result, I am pushing myself harder than ever before. And I now see fundamental changes in my technique, and in my understanding of ballet culture, that I believe will help me get closer to my ballet goals.

I am also so grateful to be a part of an organization that was created to give back and provide opportunities for children who would not otherwise have such brilliant experiences in the world of performing. Through this outreach, and through our very comprehensive training, every day we are continuing to see the true purpose of what we do, and the joy that ballet can bring to people. Simply put, there is something magical about this Foundation that makes you want to be a part of it. When you dance with OWDF, you know that you are working toward not only a ballet career but even more so, a transformation of the way your soul interprets music and translates it to the stage. That is why I have committed to learning and performing with Open World Dance Foundation, no matter where it goes.

Remie Suvanto, NYC

I was first introduced to Open World Dance Foundation (OWDF) two summers ago, when I attended the summer intensive program in NYC; since then, I have yet to find another program that matches the level of training and opportunities that OWDF provides its students. Now, having attended three separate OWDF programs – each one better than the last – there are several distinct aspects that set OWDF above all other ballet intensive programs. Firstly, OWDF's comprehensive curriculum not only strengthened my classical ballet technique, but also improved my understanding of other disciplines of the art form that are crucial to developing a well-rounded and refined dancer, such as character dance, acting, stage makeup and hair, and ballet history. In addition, OWDF gave me the rare opportunity to study with a staff of world-renowned professors and artists, to include, Irina Kolpakova, Cyril Atanasoff and many others. The invaluable knowledge and experience that these acclaimed ballet masters shared with me left lasting impressions on my technique and growth as a dancer and continues to shape my understanding of ballet. The chance to work with such masters was an unparalleled experience that I will cherish forever.

As if that were not enough, OWDF also provided me the opportunity to continue my professional training and perform at the famous Hobby Center in Houston, TX in its very own production of Cinderella. The insight I gained from dancing in such a prominent theater and being a part of such

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an elaborate production in immeasurable. Needless to say, OWDF has had a significant influence on my development as a dancer in ways that no other program could ever provide. It is because of these reasons that I continue to attend OWDF intensive programs and encourage all serious students to do so as well!

Warmest regards, Sara P, Student

Two years ago I walked into a studio for the first day of the Open World Dance Foundation's summer intensive in New York City. I spent most of that day learning from the legendary Irina Kolpakova, watching her eyes light up as she showed the port-de-bra for a Paquita variation or soar across the studio with the lightest of steps as she demonstrated how a ballerina is supposed to travel across the stage. I went home that night with tired feet and sore muscles but with a feeling of fulfillment and deep yearning for more. That day I was introduced to the Open World Dance Foundation and that day was the beginning of my journey with this beautiful foundation that changed my life.

I have attended the past three summer intensives with the Open World Dance Foundation as well as taken part in their Winter Workshops and Elite Training Program. Through every experience, I have learned an invaluable amount as the foundation has the knowledge that I have yearned for and what they work so hard to pass on and continue is such a treasure. The directors of the foundation, Ekaterina Shchelkanova and Anton Boytsov, as well as all the incredible teachers I have met through the Summer Intensives, have provided me with great inspiration and helped to instill in me the power to trust and continue pursuing and working towards the beauty that I believe in within this art form.

Russia was always an unattainable dream for me. But with the work I received through the Elite Training and Summer Intensives with the Open World Dance Foundation, my unattainable dream finally became within reach. I am now dancing professionally in St. Petersburg, Russia, performing in the many beautiful theatres of the city and as well as traveling the world with the company. It has been a dream that I would never have gotten to without the training, guidance, support, and inspiration of the foundation and the programs they provide. Through all I received during the Elite Training and Summer Intensives, I was able to build a foundation in the Vaganova technique with which am able to continue to work and grow from and have grown a deeper understanding of the true beauty of this classical art form and the importance of its perseverance.

I could not be more thankful for the work and inspiration I was given through the the Elite Training and Summer Intensives of the Open World Dance Foundation. From the beautiful mission, to all the incredible teachers and people involved, I stand behind this foundation with all my heart and hope others will be able to experience all I have through the continuation of the invaluable programs they provide.

Sincerely,

Katia Raj

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Dear Ekaterina and Anton,

Thank you so much for the incredible opportunity you made possible, passing on your knowledge and passion of the Vaganova technique. It was so wonderful having the chance to study with you and the incredible teachers you included in this program...

I think it's so important and I have so much appreciation for what you are doing. I'm so glad to have found you just as I've started teaching... I would love to attend anything you do in the future! I've learned so much in the past two weeks and definitely want to learn more!

Sincerely, Curran T., Teacher's Training

Thank you so much for your kind words and all of the time and effort that went into the intensive ... Molly enjoyed the experience tremendously and learned much throughout the three weeks. The performance was very, very special to see and I thought it was extremely well put together and performed.

I honestly wondered how Molly would come away from the intensive – more excited than ever about ballet or feeling perhaps ballet wasn't really as much a passion as she thought. Either way would have been okay but the fact is, she is more devoted than ever to continuing to learn and improve in ballet and continue to embrace the passion and discipline that ballet truly is.

All the best, Molly's Mom - Colorado

There is something very special about you all, and we are very thankful you took us. Luna feels at home, this is almost family, and by the same time I feel she is learning, even if she has a long, long, uncertain way to go. It would be terrific to see you again. Maybe there is another summer intensive... But in any case, just a heartfelt thank you.

Luna's Father - New York

Going to St. Petersburg has been the most impacting experience of our lives and made memories we will treasure forever. Studying under amazing teachers that have trained some of the greatest dancers in history, even if only for 2 weeks, will change the way you work and think about ballet. Each staff member taught their own, unique lessons and inspired students in different ways. The opportunity to interact with a variety of students from around the world was exciting and the city itself exhilarating. Finally, we will always remember seeing ballets at the Mikhailovsky, Mariinsky, and Mariinsky II Theatres. The memory of these professionals will forever be a goal to aspire to.

Ben and Julie, Pennsylvania

Attending the Open World Dance Foundation summer intensive in St. Petersburg, Russia, was the most phenomenal experience ever. The teachers, the girls, everyone were just warm and welcoming going to a program where I knew no one. By the end of the 2 weeks, I had such a tight bond with new friends from all over the world such as the United States, Russia, South Africa, Norway and Latvia! I didn't want to leave.

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Being taught by Madam Safronava, who was trained by Agrippina Vaganova herself, was very inspirational and she taught an amazing ballet class. Lazaro Carreño's classes with all of combinations with the quick fast tempo keeps you on your toes. Irina Kolpakova with all her artistic and precise head placements really helped me "dance". Elena Sherstneva taught character class everyday, which has helped me improve, and respect character dance a whole lot more. I never realized the importance of character dancing until now. I've learned a tremendous amount from all of these great teachers and I am appreciative that I am able to take their information with me everyday in life...

I could not thank Ekaterina at Open World Dance Foundation enough for such a fabulous program!

-Mikhaila W. St. James, NY

Going to St. Petersburg in 2013 for the Open World Dance Foundation Summer Intensive was, by far, the greatest experience of my life so far. I was excited to go beforehand but it turned out to be so much more amazing than I expected. I've always been intrigued by Russia's history and I was so glad to see so many historical places like the Summer Palace and Theatre Street. The greatest part was definitely the amazing dance teachers ... I have seen Madam Safronova speak in the documentary "Ballerina" and it was so amazing to meet her and learn from her because she's created and taught so many amazing dancers. Irina Kolpakova taught me a lot about artistry and arms and I absolutely loved learning the variations from Sleeping Beauty from her. Elena Sherstneva helped me learn to appreciate and enjoy character dancing and going to her class was very exciting...

I also loved making new friends: I got particularly close with two girls who were from Latvia and South Africa and we still talk on Facebook. I absolutely would not have gotten to experience any of these things or grow from them if I hadn't gone. I grew so much as a person. I cannot wait to go to Riga, Latvia this year.

Helena O. Houston, TX

There are so many things about last year's Summer Intensive that I will never forget! Firstly it was always my dream to go to St Petersburg Russia ever since I started dancing, so it was a dream come true to be able to attend Open World Dance Foundation Summer Intensive! I was and am so lucky! Secondly, the training that we received was amazing! Teachers that are literally the best in the world! The training that I received in just 2 weeks improved my dancing forever! I use the exercises and techniques everyday in my professional career! I have become a better dancer in every aspect of my dancing! Thirdly, I got to see live performances of famous, super star dancers that I only thought I would ever witness on you tube such as Ivan Vasiliev and Alina Somova! Fourthly, I made the most amazing friends from all over the world that I will always cherish!

Thank you Open World Dance Foundation for changing my life forever! The things I learned during those amazing weeks, I will never forget! I am forever grateful!

Jessica O. South Africa