

DANCE[®]

magazine



Chava Lansky For Pointe

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How Taking Class With 300 Dancers in Front of the "Good Morning America" Studios Reminded Me Why I Love Ballet

Many of this morning's students outside the "GMA" studios with the five teachers in the front row. Chava Lansky.

At 6:30 this morning, I exited the subway in Times Square and walked towards the group of dancers gathered outside the "Good Morning America" studios. The moment I entered the fray, any lingering early morning grogginess disappeared; the energy in the crowd was palpable. By 7 am, the time that "GMA" goes live to millions nationwide, over 300 dancers of all stripes had gathered, and class began.

Last Thursday, the dance world exploded in response to "GMA" host Lara Spencer's [flippant on-air remarks](#) about 6-year-old Prince George's love of ballet class. The ballet community objected not only to the continued stigmatization against male dancers, but to a public figure bullying a child for doing what he loves. As the news spread, dancers took to social media to share their anger, their personal stories of being victims of bullying, the benefits of training dance for boys and to call for a response from Spencer.

Confidence

Ballet forces even the shyest among us to put ourselves on display. Today, everyone, no matter their level of training, had an equal chance to present themselves. After class I approached 11-year-old School of American Ballet student Alex Stahl, one of the many young boys in attendance. He cautiously answered my questions before his mother, Heather Stahl, jumped in. "As you can see he's kind of a quiet kid, but he comes alive when he's in class and when he's dancing," she said. "That is why he had to be here and be a part of all of this."

Collaboration

The five teachers came up with combinations together, excitedly building on each other's ideas. This sense of collaboration reminded me of a central tenet of ballet: Before a dancer can become a star, they have to learn to be a part of the group. This idea extended to every aspect of this morning's class: When the back few rows of dancers couldn't hear what was being said, participants closer to the front would turn around and translate, shouting the steps or demonstrating with their hands. When the sounds of the pianist were drowned out by drilling from a nearby construction site, everyone jumped in, clapping and singing in rhythm to allow the final groups to finish their turn across the "floor" (sidewalk). As 12-year-old Julian Correa, a student at Ballet Hispánico, told me, "This brought male dancers together and made us even stronger, believing even more in each other and in ourselves."