Inna Bayer
Director of Bayer Ballet Academy
2/13/25
Location: Bayer Ballet Staff Lounge

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;09;04

Okay.

00;00;09;06 - 00;00;23;16

First question. When did you realize you enjoyed teaching ballet? And when did this turn into a passion?

00;00;23;19 - 00;00;31;17

It's hard to say. No.

00;00;31;20 - 00;00;34;07

I think when I started to teach I didn't

00;00;34;07 - 00;00;45;28

really realize. I just worked hard, because I wasn't sure I can do it. Yeah. Then.

00;00;46;01 - 00;01;16;06

I started to enjoy it. When I saw that it’s work, and kids getting better, you know, and then also when I was much younger, I liked to choreograph. I did choreography, and I liked it . And it was all together, teaching and choreography. It was nice.

00;01;16;08 - 00;01;25;29

In what ways do you find teaching ballet rewarding? So it gets in what ways do you find teaching ballet rewarding?

00;01;26;01 - 00;01;42;26

Not sure I understand? Like, how does teaching ballet, like, make you happy or like, how does it, fulfill you?

00;01;42;28 - 00;01;46;24

I like.

00;01;46;26 - 00;02;11;23

I like to teach and I like myself to discover, to find something what, myself what helps to, to, to get students better, to get them understand.

00;02;11;25 - 00;02;34;12

Explanation and purpose and actually. Like goal, reach goal. You know. What we want to do from this. What I want to reach from those kids. And then I'm trying.

00;02;34;14 - 00;03;12;02

How to explain it. How to get to the mind and to the their body. And then I in this process, I found a new little things, new little tips, which helps to teach kids and kids to understand what I want say. And as longer you teaching, as more you understand. Deeper, understand. You discover every day, almost every day, something new.

00;03;12;04 - 00;03;27;17

What can help to your students and it's come with experience as more you experience as more you finding new things that you didn't know before. Almost every day. Yeah.

00;03;27;17 - 00;03;54;00

Okay. Yeah, yeah, because my English poor. But you understand what I mean. You can enrich it with your. Like words. Okay. Okay. I have a more abstract question. Why do you think ballet is beautiful? And what impact does it have on people and the world?

00;03;54;03 - 00;04;34;25

It's very hard to explain this question. Like, when I was young, I thought, everybody think that ballet is beautiful. I didn't understand it. Somebody could not love ballet? How impossible not to love such beauty. I think it's beautiful because it is beautiful. It's really beautiful. And it's a combination of. Music, passion, and movement. Express music is like visual music.

00;04;34;26 - 00;05;22;18

It’s the visualization of music. Ballet, Classical Ballet. And not classical ballet. Depends which music you visualize. Then it's like harmony. And of course in classical ballet it's beautiful

because it's a goal of classical ballet to be beautiful in each position and each element in each pose, then it's demands so much, but it's really if to work it correct and complex, it's become amazing.

00;05;22;18 - 00;05;35;21

Beauty. What else in this question was like, what impact in the world?

00;05;35;24 - 00;06;22;27

If to tell truth, I don't think it's a big impact. Now. On the world. I know that many people love ballet. Really fans of ballet, but I think that not so, but much impact on the world. But if but we would have more popularization. Popularization like, more in social media, more in production, more big production.

00;06;22;29 - 00;07;00;10

It would be more impact. Just in between us ballet is not something that people invest a lot of money. You know, it's not a sport. It's not a rock, you know, group. So then there are not so much money in because of this. It's not. So Fame. It’s popular between us, who love ballet, but entire world.

00;07;00;12 - 00;07;42;27

it's could give a bigger impact if it's just more advertising. more attract more people to attract to watch I think it's it's of course it's like every ideal art when people come in to the show and watching something real doesn't matter if it’s ballet or theatre acting or opera. Or whatever. It's make change in your mind.

00;07;43;00 - 00;08;25;27

It's like stress when you emotional. And saying you something like there are so beautiful things exist in the world. And how come that people can tell you some story? This way, this language get to your mind and it's always. Big. Very impressive. Then if more people could. Watch it. I can’t say that it stops wars. I'm not sure.

00;08;25;29 - 00;08;31;10

I'm not sure. There's just going to be more...

00;08;31;12 - 00;08;35;25

I think nice people.

00;08;35;28 - 00;08;56;00

I don't want to be not optimistic. Maybe I can say, something, you know, more optimistic. Unfortunately, I think Classical Ballet is dying. Mia, I'm telling you, it's not going to last long.

00;08;56;02 - 00;09;28;08

All these companies they don't have classical repertoire. Anymore. But we'll see, maybe something could change in the world. I want to say that it's beautiful. You know what we can say? That ballet is big impact for children. How to raise children, how to raise youth, how beautiful to grow with this beautiful ballet world.

00;09;28;11 - 00;09;55;15

When it's beautiful music. Happy, happy movement. Hard work to make yourself better. It's good for for raising children. This is why I think I'm doing something good. Because I'm raising children.

00;09;55;17 - 00;10;24;29

Okay. But we can add something optimistic. I'm just so tired today I'm telling truth. But for this maybe we need to tell more something. Okay. Ballet not dying now, because it's very educational you know see very popular through. You see families, people want to learn ballet. They want their kids to learn ballet. They have good discipline.

00;10;24;29 - 00;10;45;14

They have physical, you know, physical work. Beautiful. Music, good behavior. You know. Ballet now more like for kids.

00;10;45;17 - 00;11;14;06

But you can say something more. We can say that yes. But also. Yeah. When you learn ballet it doesn't matter what you're doing after this, you know, going to college and it's always going to be on your heart. And those people who learn ballet in childhood, like you, then we know that we are strong. We know, we can do many things and we can stand.

00;11;14;09 - 00;11;53;03

We can go over challenges. Yeah. And we love ballet and we love art and they appreciate it. And we understand not only ballet, we understand everything, we appreciate everything. Like movies, literature, art. Yeah. Because we grew like this. This is a great impact, I think, of ballet. do you think that social media has changed the ballet world?

00;11;53;05 - 00;12;21;03

Yeah, but only so pessimistic. Yeah. I think they change it. Now its much more important how you look on Instagram than how you really look. Yeah when it started I was joking about it. I thought it was just, it's a joke. Look I though “Instagram ballerina” I was saying just picture her feet or whatever, and there are many like this now.

00;12;21;03 - 00;12;26;14

And it's not a joke anymore.

00;12;26;16 - 00;13;01;24

Two sides, one side. Everybody can broadcast himself, you know. Not wait that. Some magazine posting, me or somebody make movie about you. You can make yourself. And people somehow looking in found you. From other side. Yeah. It's more important. How dancer look sometimes on. Online than how it's look on stage because on stage limited people come and watch.

00;13;01;24 - 00;13;30;09

And here. No no no borders. Everybody can come and watch. And sometimes who look very good on screen, dancing little, like this, little episode you know clip. Oh great. It's not big production and people not watching big production they have no patience.

00;13;30;11 - 00;14;08;12

I was thinking of you today. I was rehearsing Diana. She’s doing Satanella. And I was thinking how we did Satanella. We worked so detailed. And everywhere, Mia says, Mia Satanella. Mia Paquita. Remember Paquita? This one. Yeah, Mia. Okay, okay. I want to ask a bit more about the school.

00;14;08;14 - 00;14;16;11

So when was Bayer ballet founded?

00;14;16;14 - 00;14;29;22

Now, it's 20 years. Its mean 2005. My God, yeah, 20 years its here.

00;14;29;25 - 00;14;45;18

One thing I was curious about was, who else was involved in the creation of the school? Was it just you or, did you have somebody helping you? No.

00;14;45;20 - 00;15;25;17

I was alone, and then in few years came Christine. Christina and Christine. No, from the beginning it was only me. You can say I had to rent a gym at school. You know, I had no, no students, I had no money. I had just Gym. Hourly, I rented. Yeah, and then this was a few years. Ah, you came already here, yeah?

00;15;25;17 - 00;15;37;03

Yeah. Yeah. It was an adventure. It was not easy. Yeah. It it was an.

00;15;37;05 - 00;16;27;12

Gym in American school in, in Menlo Park. I rented. And then when I got like more students. I rented. Samovar. Keeteran Hall. And then I rented one small studio on El Camino and then in 2010, I rented here find place here. If it's interesting, there was nobody for help.

00;16;27;15 - 00;16;31;08

Okay.

00;16;31;11 - 00;16;38;14

When did you know you wanted to open a school.

00;16;38;17 - 00;17;06;29

I just think when I was teaching for another school, I understood I want to teach Vaganova and I want to make some model of schools in-I don't know if it's good to talk about Russia- No. Maybe I can say that. Then.

00;17;07;01 - 00;17;11;22

Me can say.

00;17;11;25 - 00;17;17;03

But it.

00;17;17;05 - 00;17;41;07

I, I understood that I want to build my school because I want to teach the way which I believe. Vaganova system. I was teaching for another school here in the Bay Area. And then I decided I'll do my own.

00;17;41;09 - 00;18;10;16

What are some challenges that came up when you first started the school, and what are some challenges that you face now running the school? It was difficult because at this time when I started in Bay Area, it was very like, there was many Ballet schools, but there was no programs. It was just offering classes. And when I started my school.

00;18;10;18 - 00;18;38;13

Everybody told me, you can’t do it. You should just offer classes. People have to choose when they going Monday, or Tuesday or Friday or Saturday. People told me you should open like jazz, Hip-Hop all this. This is how it was work. Yeah. And I said, no, I don't like this way, you can’t do classical ballet this way.

00;18;38;15 - 00;19;00;27

And challenge was convince people to come to classes. My program is offering three times a week. Then they should come three times a week. Two times, two times a week. Each depend to the group. This is was challenge.

00;19;01;00 - 00;19;10;01

Then I started, and there were many challenges. When you start.

00;19;10;03 - 00;19;48;17

It was hard to work when. People weren't used to that work. It was hard that people didn't take it serious. They thought it was just after school activity like little dancing. There was no so much interest at this time. This was 20 years ago. Nobody was so much interested to to really to doing really learn ballet serious, to be professional.

00;19;48;19 - 00;20;35;29

And now, opposite. Challenge that everybody wants to dance and do competitions. Too many. And it's hard because it's not enough time for this. Maybe better not to say about this because of our concurrence and the. Most challenge. Because the school big, there are many activity. We competing several times a year. We have workshops, we have productions, we have full length ballet.

00;20;36;02 - 00;21;23;09

Every year we have Snow Queen. This year we had four shows. And we have summer show, spring show, we participate in a lot of community events. We hosting guest teachers, and Fcompetition. Not one like three competitions a year plus finals. Plus our students compete in different locations and it's just nonstop. It's a lot of work.

00;21;23;12 - 00;21;55;17

Do you do you wish for your school to continue to grow? Like is that a goal still for it to continue to expand? No. My goal, and we already doing this, is to accept and select talented and dedicated students. And the goal now is not quantity, it's quality. And I don't think about more and more.

00;21;55;20 - 00;23;16;09

I have to text to my husband.

00;23;16;12 - 00;23;50;13

Thank you. Okay. What is it like for you as a teacher to see former students succeed in professional careers? What the question? What is it like for you to see your own students succeed in professional careers? I'm happy for them, very happy and always wish them success. I hope I can help them if I can, I always help.

00;23;50;16 - 00;23;55;24

I'm so sorry Miachka.

00;23;55;27 - 00;24;00;02

But it's okay.

00;24;00;04 - 00;24;07;00

It's okay.

00;24;07;02 - 00;24;09;29

For.

00;24;10;01 - 00;24;40;00

Okay. I have one thing I just wanted to ask. This is just something I was thinking about. Like, the question is, do you think that ballet's perfectionistic tendencies and sort of like, culture kind of

contribute to its, like, shrinking or dying? I think just because from my perspective, I think a lot of people don't do well with like that kind of pressure.

00;24;40;00 - 00;25;04;20

Right. Like perfectionism. And, and there's something really discouraging about, never being good enough. Almost. Right. Like, even like, like the people who you think are so amazing. And then when you go see them, maybe they're not as good as you thought they would be, right? Like, oh, I'm just thinking of, Prix de Lausanne in the gala, remember?

00;25;04;22 - 00;25;39;06

It was so disappointing because I thought, like, especially the, dancers from, Munich. Bavarian state ballet, the couple, the couple, they were like principal. So we were very excited, but they weren't good. Very good. And I wonder if, all those things are sort of related with, like, perfectionism, like, because if you're not perfect then you're not really good.

00;25;39;09 - 00;26;14;23

Yeah. Then what? The question. I'm sorry, the question is, do you think that, like, perfectionism in ballet, contributes to. It's like dying or it's shrinking? Dying and shrinking perfectionism. Yeah, I think. Yeah. You're right. This is what happen. More important. How popular are you, how many followers you have, and then how you really dance.

00;26;14;26 - 00;26;57;07

Did you know, sometimes people who are like you saying, professional and famous and and soloist and leads and. You know, Principle. They're not they're not good. And I don't think we can say it, but it’s real.

00;26;57;09 - 00;27;39;11

Perfectionism should be in classical ballet. But it's system. It’s system like this, Miachka, now. Because it's at schools, no good teacher. It's very hard to find good teacher then in company they have no time to raise new generation. Because when young kids, come into the company. They still need support, they need guidance, they need somebody to coach them and instead to raise, they’re losing, losing skills.

00;27;39;14 - 00;28;16;08

And then they never become who they could be. This is why I didn’t want you guys to go early. because from these big schools, this is what the happen. And then they not raising in those companies. And there are no time for this. No good coaching. But I’m happy for Valerie, she is in good hands because they coaching her.

00;28;16;11 - 00;28;45;00

No. Then then who is very very talented and then somehow. Getting to highest position. Just naturally. You, you recognize they are not very good, yeah? Yeah.

00;28;45;02 - 00;29;16;17

But what do you expect from me to say then? It's all negative. You know.
It’s okay. I'd rather, I want to hear the truth. And then, I can change things if you want to.
Yeah, but you also understand it yes?
Yes. Yes, I'm. I'm just curious about about your real thoughts.
Yeah. This is what I think. And also, this system when talented kids leaving very early for those big schools, it's not good.

00;29;16;19 - 00;29;39;14

This is why I was so much. Because it's not good, they not learning much there. that they could stay here longer and go there later and they would be better. It would be better for them, you know, because this is what happen now in each of those school there are coming new and they better than those who longtime there.

00;29;39;16 - 00;29;51;09

This is why I didn’t want you to go. Not because I don't like you. I want to keep with me. I just know it's not good.

00;29;51;11 - 00;30;17;00

Yeah. This is pessimistic because nobody wants to-why no good teachers? Because they don't need to do what I'm doing. I had to discover how to explain to kids you know how to make them better, but they don't want to discover. They want to get kids who already know everything. Then they do not become good teachers. Understand?

00;30;17;00 - 00;30;42;10

Because when you just trying trying to make better. And if you already got everything. Why do you think there are so few good teachers? Why are there so few good teachers? This is.

00;30;42;12 - 00;30;47;04

This is why. Also,

00;30;47;06 - 00;31;16;19

Circumstance. You have to teach so much. You have to teach so many, and nobody request quality. You know, people. Quality is there when it's needed. When it's okay, just bring some girl with long legs, you know, and then she'll get Grand Prix. That's it. For what you need to teach? You need just to get this girl.

00;31;20;00 - 00;31;26;16

You don't need. Because this is only what they want.

00;31;26;18 - 00;31;59;05

I hope we not recording? No. It's okay, I can take I can take out everything that you don't. I'll send you.
There are no good teachers because of this and because of there are no system. You know when the the director wants to inquire and ask. Now, you can't even ask. You see what teachers did? Osipova what she did. She ruin my school and she never wanted to do what I ask. for you.

00;31;59;08 - 00;32;30;28

To raise you good. The same way Ulitina, she was. You know, it's hard to request for me because school is like system, you know, you just everybody work the same pattern, you know, moving to the same direction. And director can ask and say, I want this, and I don't want that. But when every teacher makes scandal because of director, ask him something, then it's not work.

00;32;30;28 - 00;33;04;12

Now, I'm happy. With Maya, and Leana, and Oxana. Very good. what what qualities do you think are most important in a good teacher? I think that good teacher. Also, it's talent. It's something you can try very much and hard. and Want it, but you can't make it because there are some. This is what I think.

00;33;04;19 - 00;33;32;24

That it's some specific vision, you know, it's good eye. Should be very good eye. First of all, have to see mistake, you know, because what is it? We fixing mistake, we making correct. What does it mean correct? Good eye, like art, you know. When you can do some portrait. Then you can have good eye. To see this line.

00;33;32;24 - 00;34;02;27

You know, line good test, you know, and then you see mistake. And then as much you have experience as more experience, better you immediately understand how to fix it, not just see.

And it's curiosity. Test, knowledge. Knowledge, of course you need to learn. You can’t only have a talent for this.

00;34;02;27 - 00;34;29;06

You have to learn there are basic things that you should know that you should learn. Then you should have curiosity. You should try to understand. How come I can't make it? Oh, how beautiful this, how beautiful that. How to make my students to do this. You know. And you beginning to think about.

00;34;55;25 - 00;35;32;04

But first of all, they need to have own good school. Learn from childhood to know and then to develop it. And also it's important that teacher want it want to make student good. You know and sometime teachers too much ego ego you know. it's a not only teacher.

00;35;32;04 - 00;36;11;27

Now you can step on own ego and say yes I need to learn something. You know, instead to say, oh, it's wrong, don't correct me. Oh, I know better than you, you know, because it's good for teacher. Good to learn always to learn. Because if you stop to learn, then you getting empty.

00;36;11;29 - 00;36;54;04

Okay, I have a few questions that are geered more towards, like parents and people, parents of students. Because I feel like something that parents are, like, really interested in are like the positive environment. Is it, inclusive and, you know, accessible to everybody. So I just want to, start a little bit with how does, this school, sort of foster a positive environment, a positive learning environment.

00;36;54;06 - 00;37;17;10

We are very positive to every child. And those kids whose absolutely have no abilities, we not accepting. or accepting when they young.

00;37;17;12 - 00;37;59;17

But then we not moving them to higher levels. because it's not going to be positive environment for them then because it is, big. High requirement. This is called general education. Groups. This year we do for those who who not really want to dance much.

00;37;59;20 - 00;38;25;10

But those students who have at least some abilities and really wants to dance, we can teach them. Because it's not easy, but we know how to do this. We can make them look good, but they need to work hard. But positive environment. It's not when kids don't want to work hard but want to dance.

00;38;25;10 - 00;39;06;07

It doesn't work. They should work hard. Teacher work hard. All together they can dance and then it's positive environment I think. Yeah. What do you think about this? Inclusive. Well, I think, it's difficult to understand for people who are not in ballet because naturally ballet is very exclusive and it's very selective. And there are certain things that are like in genetics and like you have to be born with like long limbs.

00;39;06;07 - 00;39;40;10

Turn out. But I think it's difficult for some parents to understand, like why my child is not, in the higher class, you know? So it's hard to explain why it's necessary, but, Yeah. But we, you know, we selecting. some classes, selected, some not it's depend on age. You know, if we have so many this age we make selective group.

00;39;40;12 - 00;40;09;28

If we don't have that we don't make. you can say it's it's difficult to make this balance. But we trying and we giving all the same attention to everybody. But these kids should respect also and work hard then they have reward.

00;42;53;23 - 00;43;23;18

So. Okay. I have one one question I want to ask. Okay. When I talk to you last time, you mentioned that ballet.

00;43;51;11 - 00;43;56;08

00;44;22;23 - 00;44;51;07

I have I have one question that I was really interested in that you mentioned our at our last when I talked to you last time, you said that, ballet embodies certain elements of philosophy. I want to know more about how. Not philosophy. Maybe. it's like, not philosophy. It's more like sect. Sect?

00;44;51;09 - 00;45;26;03

I don't know how to say. It's maybe better not to say. Okay. It's, Yeah, it's, you know, what is it? Ballet is like, very close community. It's about body. Yeah. You you should be like, believe in it. You know, to maintain your body in good shape. You It's like procedure, you know, it's like a regimen.

00;45;26;10 - 00;45;50;00

You know, you have to eat. Correct. You have go sleep. You have to rest. You try to be warm, never to get cold. You know, you always stretching you. You know where you need more, where you need less. What help you? You so much. Concentrate on your body. Of course. Much more then everybody else.

00;45;50;00 - 00;46;14;18

You know you worried when you got little like runny nose. You think how my nose running. Then I going to be sick. I'll miss my rehearsal, somebody take my place then. Somebody dance instead me you know when you in company and in school too. Because here you like you have your position. in Russia you didn't come few times.

00;46;14;20 - 00;47;03;07

Somebody stand on your position. Even not few, one. somebody took your place. You're not there anymore. And you can't say why. Why? It's just You wasn't here then replacement. You know, in the in companies approximately, like this too. it's people very. Concentrate on their body. You know why. Yeah. It's like religion. Do you think that ballet has something sort of inherent inherently spiritual about it? spiritual? Spiritual, like it's kind of like religious but like. I think, I think, I think it's like.

00;47;03;10 - 00;47;36;24

And I think it's. Ballet dance is a straight. Expression of emotion. You know, direct, you know, like folk dance and all this, like, like people dance with drums around the fire, you know, and already. emotion. when people happy, they express it. Dance is...

00;47;36;24 - 00;48;06;23

It's. Yes. It's, it's a kind of straight line to the sky. Vertical. to the sky. I think it's in many religion ballet is sacred. dance, not ballet, dance.

00;48;06;25 - 00;48;33;08

But we don't want to idolize it. You know, there are so many negative things. Also. But you know, jealousy, corruption, you know, politics. Yeah. But if you love it, you somehow love it, you know, and you dance there.

00;48;33;11 - 00;48;50;25

Sect. Okay. But it's. I don't think it's good word to say. Maybe say religion, better. Okay. The kind God.

00;48;50;28 - 00;49;19;24

Because sect it's negative yeah? I don't want too much negative. Okay. But maybe we think. Where do you going to publish it at school? Yeah. I'll make a magazine at school. And then really, the audience is actually very small. It's just going to be at, an exhibition, but it's just parents. And if somebody sees it, they have to open up the book.

00;49;19;24 - 00;49;50;05

So it's, it's not online you know? It's not online. Yeah, but it's okay. It's okay. You can make maybe movie one day. You want to make movies? You can just movie. It's also so corrupt. it's a difficult industry. Hard to survive. But you may be can because we are strong. Yeah. But then you should.

00;49;50;07 - 00;50;20;22

That's it. Yeah. Okay. Can I ask one more question. What I this is sort of more back to what we were talking about, and we just one more. I'm sorry to keep you late, but, I wanted to ask, how do you keep students motivated? And inspired. I'm not doing anything specific for this. I'm just doing my job, teaching them, and somehow they become inspired.

00;50;20;24 - 00;50;57;26

You've been inspired? I didn't do anything special for this. I did only what? And make only what should be done for me is to teach kids professionalism. And that should be good classes and should be good stage experience performances. And this is motivation for kids. Kids wants to dance, but it's needed for school, for for education. You need to learn to be in class, in rehearsal, then stage performance.

00;50;57;28 - 00;51;23;04

And I did only not too many specifically. Somebody inspire something, motivate me. Just you know this we just rehearsed and we will prepare it for this show. And of course I choose some good repertoire. And maybe this is also inspire kids. But I didn't. Oh what inspire them? I just thought, oh good for them. Let's dance. It is beautiful.

00;51;23;06 - 00;52;06;09

You know, let's dance it. And then they learn from this production a lot it’s very good experience like this. I think you when you teaching when you have ballet school goal should be I want to make my students better. Yeah. And then everything else come with this. Yeah.

00;52;26;19 - 00;52;42;01

00;52;52;09 - 00;52;56;03

Okay I will stop recording.