

Transition tales

John-Mario Sevilla

Photo: Steven Speliotis

From the pen of John-Mario Sevilla, this former dancer with Pilobolus talks about his transition from dance to arts administration and returning to dance while developing a career in education.



When I received a Career Transition For Dancers grant a dozen years ago, I had recently left Pilobolus. I had been the Dance Captain, but had entered that stage when the one-night gigs and transportation hassles, the physical demands, and my own waning passion coalesced into an inevitable, however fraught, decision to move on.

A dancer from birth to earth, however, I was determined to stay in the field. I adored the wise, gracious teachers who had moved me in unexpected directions, so I ventured to become one of them. Career Transition For Dancers helped in my matriculation at Teachers College, Columbia University. While there, I landed a job at New York City Ballet designing curricular programs for thousands of the city's schoolchildren and their teachers. I eventually was promoted to direct the whole Education Department. But after years of wearing an arts administrator's hat, I began to rue my drift away from dancing. So I then initiated another career change to go back to the studio and stage.

I left NYCB for the MFA in Dance Performance program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I will graduate from this awesome low-residency program in August, and I'm dancing again as a result.

Fortunately, I had another opportunity to fulfill my educator's heart. I am now the director at the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) at the 92nd Street Y, Harkness Dance Center; a community-centered institution with a deep dance history, where I organize professional development courses to train teachers that will bring dance meaningfully into people's lives.

Through the many changes one thing has remained constant: the support I have received from Career Transition For Dancers and their career counselors. I know that if I ever feel the need to make another change, Career Transition For Dancers will be there to help me along the way. Amidst all of these many attempts to be an artist and educator, they helped me realize I will always be essentially a student, of life and of dance. I'm ever in training, constantly becoming, curiously seeking inspiration in my doings, taking risks, supremely grateful to discover grace in my unavoidable transformations, in the interstitial transitions of a dance life... in the sublime, evocative gestures between gestures.

Spotlight On

Randy Davis

Photo: Ron Rinaldi

Randy talks about his dance career and giving back to dancers and dance students alike.



As a boy in Oregon, Randy Davis experienced what could easily be called a "Billy Elliot moment." Upon registering as the only boy for his magnet school's unique dance course, Randy became the subject of his instructor's concentrated focus. With appreciation for this attention and finding both skill and joy in his early dance training, Randy continued to pursue his performance studies as a high school and university student before launching into a successful career as a Broadway and internationally touring dancer.

Rising through the ranks from ensemble member to dance captain in shows such as *Guys & Dolls*, *Cats*, and *Harlem Song*, Randy began to develop a keen commitment to the value of passing on dance and choreography.

Yet while nurturing a growing interest in teaching and preserving the art of dance, Randy simultaneously realized, "I wanted to find out what else I liked to do. I didn't even know what my favorite color was."

Indulging a long-held interest in real estate, Randy enrolled in a licensing course at New York University with the goal to develop cooperative housing for artists. He shortly thereafter inaugurated a dance training program at a private school in New York City.

When he became a Career Transition For Dancers client in 2006, Randy sought advice on combining his performance and post-performance work experience into one effective resume. After being referred by Board member Mercedes Ellington, Randy was invited by career counselor Lauren Gordon to speak on a Career Conversations panel, providing one more opportunity to share his experiences and knowledge with colleagues.

Randy currently works at the Global School and the Roy Arias Dance/Acting Studio, where he helps performers prepare for auditions and theater roles. Remembering his time as a dancer-client, Randy says that Career Transition For Dancers taught him "not to be scared. If you can step in front of 1,500 people, you can step into a new life."