

#2 Potential to Contribute

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Personal Statement

I shiver as a drop of sweat rolls down my back, tickling the goose bumps on its way down. I trot in place to keep my feet and ankles warm. I flashback to the four year ballerina making her debut. Fourteen years have passed, hundreds of pairs of pointe shoes, dozens of costumes, and countless hours of lessons and rehearsals. My jaw clenches as I feel my raw blisters rub on the inside of my shoes, and I cringe when I relevé on my broken toe. I divert attention from the pain by running through my variation in my mind.

Suddenly the audience goes hush, and I hold my breath as my moment draws near. The music announces my cue. I soar through the air in a grand jeté, a leap not accomplished with my legs alone, but with my heart, mind and soul as well. I burst from the wings onto the stage and all doubt and pain vanish beneath me. After my sixth leap across the stage, the sound of applause is ringing in my ears and I abandon myself to the call of make believe, transporting the audience to a long ago time, in Don Quixote's Spain. For an instant, fear grips my throat as I prepare for the most difficult part of my solo. Then, with one glance into the audience, I feel a surge of unsurpassed energy, and the spark and confidence return. My heart gets bigger with each successful arabesque turn. On my last turn the roar of the clapping gives me an extra thrust pushing me around to complete a triple pirouette. I fly around the stage in my final manège with no recollection of the excruciating pain I had suffered only moments earlier. I glide to the center of the stage to take my curtsy, offering a coy smile but I'm arrested by the sight unfolding before my eyes. My heart jumps as I witness eight hundred people standing, the sound of their applause resounding off the walls of the theater. The sight and sound is forever etched in the album of my heart and mind. The curtain falls and the transient moment is gone.

As I hit the wings, I collapse with exhaustion and pain. My flushed cheeks quiver from smiling, my weary muscles ache from overexertion, and my calloused toes scream to be let out of their prison. Someone throws a sweatshirt over my wet shoulders. Overwhelmed and out-of-breath, I can do nothing but wait until the gasps pass. Finally my adrenaline plummets, and fatigue weighs heavily on my sagging shoulders. The six hours of rehearsal and two hours of performance today have taken their toll. I peel bloody tights from blistered and broken toes in order to pour alcohol onto the raw blisters. The pain is intense and unbearable, but the exhilaration and applause of the next performance is calling. Upon seeing my bruised and bloody feet, my father's baffled expression speaks for itself. "Why do you do it?" The answer is really quite simple. I'm addicted. Intoxicated by the pain and the pleasure, the exhaustion and the exhilaration. His response is a look of complete bewilderment. This is how my spirit sings. This is my passion—the omnipresent fire that burns deep within my soul.