



# Firebird

*Cox*

Sarah Mills  
Russell and Kirsten Mills  
16 years of age  
July 6, 1993

## Firebird

Not only was it my very first ballet performed on pointe, or the fact that it was my first year performing with the advanced ballet class, but it was just the experience as a whole. For seven years prior to this piece, I watched the girls on pointe hoping that someday I would be able to do the same. Firebird is incredibly significant to me for just that reason. I had made it on pointe, and I was able to perform with the girls I had been watching for years. Besides the significance it holds for me personally, I also think that it is just one of the most beautiful ballet's I have seen put together at Debra Collier's School of Dance. It was this year, this class, and this piece that I hold more memories than any other year.

One of the reasons this piece stands out to be one my absolute favorite dances of all time is not only because of the choreography and dance itself but just because of the memorable occurrences throughout the year. Entering the class for the first time was pretty nerve wracking considering that they had been dancing on pointe longer than I had, and I was joining a whole new group of girls, but it certainly did not stay that way for long. Working on pointe and with these great dancers was constantly a struggle, but because of this I worked harder and achieved more than any other year. This was both a year of positive growth and a dose of reality. To me, this piece is not a symbol of having finally reached my ultimate goal or being satisfied, but my progression, in general, towards even higher aspirations.

As I re-watch the piece, I cannot help but attempt to modestly share that it was an absolutely beautiful ballet. The strength and fluidity presented in the piece was captivating, and I know firsthand that it was definitely hard work. When it was announced that we would be doing Firebird as our recital piece, we were informed of how much strength it was going to take to accomplish this piece and execute it well. Having powerful, yet extremely fluid arm movements

was a necessity in order to obtain the look of a “firebird.” Without these, I doubt the piece would have made its desired effect upon the audience. So with a year of pure arm torture and a weekly ballet class, thera-barre boot camp, by the time recital rolled around, we were ultimately able to achieve and present exactly what the piece needed. Aside from needing fluidity in the arms, I put a great deal of time into the ballet because the choreography itself was tough, but I truly enjoyed what a challenge it was. It was this beautiful and exigent choreography and the strength in which the piece needed in order to be carried out that gave me the sensation of actually getting to perform a real ballet, which I absolutely loved.

With this piece also came a number of firsts, which made it even more significant to me than anything. Up until this year, I had always just thought of what it would be like to dance on pointe, not even thinking about what would come as a result, or what other experiences I would gain from it. Firebird, to me, wraps up a year full of fun and interesting new things. It was during this year I got to feel for the first time what dancing for hours each week in those shiny satin shoes made of just layers of canvas and glue actually felt like. It was also this year that I slipped on satin and fell for the first time. As well as the first time I wore flip flops in freezing cold temperatures as an attempt to free my newly blistered feet from pain. In addition to learning about the painful side of pointe shoes, I was also able to experience some pretty cool things. I got to experience tying pointe shoe ribbons quickly for costume changes and learn how to use rosin and where to put it to not slip on stage. I also finally got to be one of the people on stage doing what several others were aspiring to do, just as I had one year earlier.

Firebird will forever be one of my all time favorite pieces. I hold so many different memories from it. Whether they were from that year’s events and occurrences or from my actual first performance on pointe on the Lakeview auditorium’s stage, each was extremely significant

to me. I had made it on pointe at last, and realized how much farther I could get with hard work and persistence. Firebird is not only my favorite or just significant but it really impacted my life, especially making me realize how much I truly love ballet.