

Just Say It

(*You Know More Than You Think You Do*)

© 2011, Updated 4/27 Katherine Krok Eastvold



The majority of the real talent in our dance community is in crisis. Professionals, champions, judges and advanced dancers of today and of the past (*when the All-Star Division didn't exist*) are doubting themselves. Though they have extensive knowledge, training, insight, control, centering, impeccable timing, posture, technique and individual footwork and stylings, they are, by and large, questioning themselves. Some are retiring, some are switching to other dances and some are quitting dancing altogether. It's nothing short of tragic. You have the power to stop it. I'm going to tell you how.

I have been to a number of national dance events across the nation over the past year. I noticed that an irritating pattern of the past is now a monster in the present. It happened at every single event. The results would be announced: fifth place (*murmurs*), fourth place (*more murmurs*), third place (*fidgety panic*), second place (*impending gloom and hope at the same time*) and then... First.

Boom. The whispers all around me erupt. "What happened to so & so?" "What did I miss?" "That's incredible." "Maybe it's because they danced early?" "Maybe the scores were wrong?" and the worst, "That's just wrong."

I've been dancing WCS for 20 years. I've been to competitions since my start. I've been at almost every awards presentation. And I have an awesome memory of every one. So I *know* when the sand is shifting. This is not the normal, "oh, I had fourth and fifth switched," or "I had first place in third," or "I didn't have them in there at all." No. This is different. This is where a dance was clearly executed with incredible craftsmanship, timing, teamwork and technique, as well as incredibly inspiring swing content, play and footwork, with no missed leads, no quivers in balance... just pure, inspiring, get-you-on-your-feet dancing... was left completely in the cold. No placing whatsoever. Many aren't even close. A few, for no reason I can imagine, were close to last.

And for the first time I'm seeing people place who are completely baffled as to why they placed. They know it was a train wreck. A *true* craftsman knows when they were awarded for something unworthy of praise. They look uncomfortable... a bit wary. (Not the Nissy, of course. They always deserve it, or higher, yes?)

Another new trend. Non-competitors are checking the scores. In droves. They are baffled, concerned, unclear or just in awe and they are looking for answers. Every Sunday night, as I sat and listened to them, I heard their conclusions. I am only going to list the conclusions I have heard from at least three different dancers each:

"The judges put in the people who are on their own event's staff."

"The judges put in whoever danced the closest to the way they did when they competed."

"The judges were all over the board."

"The judges were scared of not being hired again."

"The judges put in who the event directors asked them too."

"The judges put in who they thought *would* win, not *should* win."

Let me be clear. The point of this article is not the judging that's going on today. My point is that, when you love what a couple does out there... you are not the only one! When the scores don't make sense to you, chances are, there's a sea of people standing right next to you that feels the same way you do. You know more than you think you do.

But now I'm asking you to do more than trust yourself. I am asking you take a deep breath, take a chance, and tell the talented person you saw that you were inspired. You can do it by email, on facebook or in person. It can be brief. "I loved your Jack & Jill!" Or it can be detailed. "I loved that section with the (fill in the blank). It was truly inspiring. Thank you so much for putting that out there," and my favorite "You were robbed. That was the best dancing on the floor hands down." You'll always hear me say, "give credit where credit is due." When the judges don't, you can.

This applies to social dancing as well. If you see a dancer on the floor who is a true champion, a true artist that you just want to stare at because you learn so much by watching them, because they make you want to dance till your feet fall off... tell them.

There is power in this approach. It WILL make a difference. Early on in my dance career a number of people said they loved my anchor. Let me tell you, I've never stopped paying attention to my anchor since then. If you tell someone you love their footwork or their lead or their smile while they dance, you can bet they are going to remember that and keep it in their dancing. I've made it a habit since I was very young to compliment those things that gave me goosebumps, no matter who they were or what it was that they danced. I knew that if I wanted to see something like that again, direct praise was in order. Now it's your turn.

It's time to inspire our talent to stay with WCS. The days are far gone when a highly trained, talented and skilled dancer didn't need anyone telling them that to know it. In an era where timing and technique are no longer rewarded but attitude, falling and The Nissy are, the talented dancers are questioning their talent. They are questioning their place. In the dark and quiet, they are wondering if the world has gone mad. Please... give them the credit that they are due. Please... you know more than you think you do. Please... Just Say It.

