

Evaluation Report

By Astrid Grarup Elbo

Last Tuesday I came home from five wonderful weeks in Seattle, very tired after a long flight and very happy after a lovely summer intensive at the Pacific Northwest Ballet School, with lots of good advises and lots of sweet, new friends.

Preparation/expectations

Our artistic director Nikolaj Hübbe recommended the program and chose who should go there.

I had heard many good things about PNB, school and company, and before leaving Denmark I was really excited about going on my first summer school and seeing a new part of the States – this was only my second time there.

I was looking forward to dance a lot. I expected to improve my technique in general, to learn more about the famous Balanchine style, learn how to move very fast – a thing that's hard when you're as tall as I am. And then I was looking forward to dancing with good ballet students from all over the world.

Training/Classes/Program

My expectations were fulfilled with this program - completely and more than that! This program suited me really well; the technical level was very high and a good challenge for me. We had eleven different ballet teachers and six different teachers in other styles and dance forms. All the teachers challenged me in different ways, and gained me a good insight in their own personal way of dancing and an insight in the way the schools in the states work. It was a good opportunity to work on a mental level with new teachers, all the time I had to deal with a new way of saying things. Very healthy I think!

What I really liked was the way I was presented to so many different sorts of dance, and ballet teachers and I enjoyed the atmosphere on the summer intensive. It was amazing to spend my summer with so many people with the same interest as me - all working hard and having fun.

It was fantastic to have the opportunity to dance a lot. What I liked the least was the too long breaks between the classes. Sometimes we had to wait for two hours. Then there comes a point where you can't do more sit-ups!

Housing

I stayed in an apartment with my three Danish friends, so I kindly declined the dorm room that I was offered. It took a lot of research to find an apartment and it would have been nice if there were a list with good ideas or a helpful person, who would help anybody who would like to stay outside the dorms

during the summer.

We found a really nice place ten minutes away from the school, with the Space Needle almost right outside our window, through the apartment rent company Aboda.

Cultural aspects

Seattle reminded me of Europe in many ways. All the cars and young people driving them is probably one of the biggest differences from Denmark.

Then it was possible to go grocery shopping in the middle of the night; that we can't do in Denmark!

I find that American students have different relationship to their teachers than we have. First of all you address them very politely, using Mr. and Mrs., and second of all, all students flock around the teachers after every class to curtsy and say Thank you.

What I really liked in the States is the variety of things to do and see, and the variety of people with many different backgrounds.

At the same time that might be one of the things to like the least, in the sense that that there's an enormous difference between rich and poor.

Exchanges/ScanDesign Fellowship administration

There was held an amazing little reception for us with some of the Danes in Seattle. It was nice for me to meet the people, speak some Danish and actually one of them offered to drive us to Mount Rainier the next Sunday – very beautiful!

Program/Student type

I think this exchange program is very good for ballet students in my age. It's hard to be so far away from home for almost six weeks; therefore you really have to be dedicated, hard working and ready for challenges. A good advice is to be in a good shape when the program starts and to take notes every day.

Overall experience

I had a fantastic summer. I can actually not think of anything that could have suited me more perfectly than this summer intensive, and I can only say that I totally understand the American students, who were on this summer course for the third or fourth time.