

Studio A

Abby Buchanan

“This is my dance class.” Three-year-old Brynn looks up at me as we walk into Studio A. It is the studio where her “Toddler Time” class takes place; that is all she knows this studio as, her class.

If she only knew all that has happened in this particular room.

The room itself is nothing extraordinary: yellow walls, a brown desk next to a brown book shelf, a wall of mirrors, a few mats, a couple ballet bars, sometimes some chairs and an abundance of pictures and posters. If I look closer at those pictures I can see individual stories develop, starting with the picture in Studio A when the room was white. This was the first year the studio was open, twenty years ago. This picture shows the “advanced dancers” at the time, who were actually only in middle school, wearing silly costumes and goofing around.

Back in the hallway you see many pictures of the early recitals; it’s like a museum of past dancers. As I make my way around the room, I start to appear in the pictures; some from summer studies and some just hanging out at the studio. There is one in particular from when I was nine and I was with the older dancers when they went to Nashville for nationals. We are all holding our arms in a weird way; they called it the “squid pageant.” I didn’t understand the joke at the time but I was happy to be included. If I look to the other wall I see pictures from nationals last summer in Orlando, these pictures include me as part of the advanced dancer group that I looked up to for years.

As each group of advanced dancers grows up they leave their mark in Studio A. It is the only studio that every group has danced in, because it’s the only studio that has been around for all twenty years. One year when the studio was being repainted they took the mirrors down; every dancer had the chance to sign the wall before they put the mirrors back up. It is so cool to think that the next time the mirrors have to be changed, a new group of dancers can say, “Hey, I remember her!” or “She was the dancer with the really long legs.” Everything we do in the studio leaves an impression on someone else and all of these memories are displayed in different ways in Studio A.

If I asked every advanced dancer in my class I wouldn’t be able to find someone who had never fallen, never cried or never been frustrated in Studio A. At the same time each would have a million and one stories about “that one time when Nicole said that really random thing about her fish...” or “Remember that one class when Mel thought an aerial was a leg flick?” All the times we rolled on the floor laughing or hit great pirouettes will overrule any bad memories we have in Studio A.

Even though we tend to complain about it, the smell of rosin, sweat and air freshener is a welcoming scent as we enter the room ready for dance. We don’t care if one of the speakers goes out or the lights flicker, as long as we can dance in the place that feels like home. Studio A isn’t extraordinary; but it is a place where extraordinary things happen.

The oldest picture of me in the room, pushed toward the back of the bookshelf, shows me when I was about the same age as Brynn. I have a silver sparkly hat on, and I’m dancing around in Studio A.

Brynn doesn’t know it yet, but Studio A is going to become a second home for her; not just a place she goes for her “Toddler Time” class on Monday nights.