

**AN INVESTIGATION OF PROFESSIONAL BALLET
DANCERS' PRE-PERFORMANCE ROUTINES AND
SUPERSTITIOUS BEHAVIOURS**

By

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Abstract

This study investigated manifestations and effects of pre-performance behaviours with which professional ballet dancers engage prior to performance. It focused on the relationship and distinction between pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours to aid the achievement of optimal performance. A unique opportunity arose to carry out a single case study in one of the UKs' leading ballet companies, to which the author had privileged access. The study employed a mixed method approach where both questionnaires and interviews were utilised as methods of data collection. Questionnaires designed to investigate the use of pre-performance behaviours were completed by 90% of the company's dancers. The results were then used to select the six dancers who engaged with the highest number of routines and rituals for in-depth interviews in order to explore the phenomena of pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours. Professional ballet dancers were found to regularly engage with both types of behaviours prior to performance although it is often difficult to draw a definitive distinction between the two. These findings are consistent with sports based research literature, that although limited, has established that both pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours are widely used and can have a positive effect on the outcome of a performance.

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1. Introduction

The present study investigated manifestations and effects of pre-performance behaviours with which professional ballet dancers engage before a performance. It focused on the relationship and distinction between pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours used by professional dancers, who utilise either or both types of behaviours to attempt to achieve optimal performance (Wulff, 1998). It examined the different habits or routines with which a professional dancer may engage, in order to maintain optimal levels of concentration and focus, and to be able to deliver consistently high quality performances. Further, it aimed to increase understanding of the phenomenon of superstitious behaviours, by exploring the different ways in which dancers prepare for, and sustain their highly pressured performing careers. The present insider research intends to provide the academic and professional communities with rich, unique and potentially valuable insider data to add to the corpus of academic research in this area. This type of data is often difficult to obtain, especially from the closed environment in which dance is set, and is therefore potentially useful to specialised professionals working both as performers and as teachers/coaches who strive to enhance their understanding in the further development of preparation techniques.

As a professional ballet dancer with twelve years experience, I have become increasingly aware of the presence of both rational and irrational pre-performance behaviours used by fellow dancers as a means to achieve optimal physical and mental states prior to the delivery of a performance. Dancers are exposed to considerable psychological and physical demands

(Tajet-Foxell and Rose, 1995) and in order to deliver consistently high levels of performance dancers may use various behavioural routines and patterns which help them to improve concentration, overcome negative thoughts, select appropriate motor schema and prevent excessive attention to the mechanics of an automated skills (Boutcher, 1992; Foster et al., 2006; Cotteril, 2010; Damisch et al., 2010).

In fact, the personal adoption of rational and irrational behaviours to aid meeting the heavy demands of early ballet training and academic studies has been part of my life since the age of thirteen, when I began intensive dance training: precise time management and a disciplined schedule of daily commitments were imperative and it was only through creating rigid routines that I was able to meet both the strenuous physical and psychological demands of ballet training.

These experiences and career long observations have developed an appreciation of the overlap between pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours, which are defined and discussed in the literature review below. Pre-performance routines are legitimized behaviours encouraged in dance and sport arenas by professional psychologists (Jones and Hardy, 1990; Cotterill, 2010). However Moran (2012) stated that ‘pre-performance routines may lead to superstitious rituals on the part of some performers’ (p. 126). Superstitious behaviours are often trivialised and dismissed as non-scientific and idiosyncratic (Neil et al., 1981; Damisch, et al., 2010). Nonetheless, superstitious behaviours have been recognised as an enduring and pervasive presence in performing arts and competitions (Albas and Albas, 1989; Womack, 1992) and would therefore be of value to study within a dance-specific setting. These are derived from elite performers’ socially constructed realities and have a persistent presence in

the culture and in the consciousness of performers (Damisch et al., 2010; Moran, 2012). Further, the use of these personal rituals is believed to function subjectively as coping strategies to help, or even to be essential to the delivery of high performance in both sport and dance (Vyse, 1997).

Indeed, professional dancers and athletes share commonalities in the demands of training and performance/competition pressures (ibid), with the presence of superstitious and pre-performance routines evident in both arenas (Wulff, 1998; Damisch et al., 2010; Moran, 2012). Consequently, the underpinning review of literature draws on relevant research derived from sport psychology to investigate both pre-performance routines and superstitious rituals used by classical ballet dancers.

However, whilst there are similarities between sport and classical ballet, important differences remain. Competition/performance seasons vary with dancers being required to hit peak performance throughout the year while athletes build towards specific competitions. While the requirement to achieve peak performance at up to twice daily intervals to satisfy the expectations of artistic directors, critics and general audiences can be a positive reinforcement, it can also be highly stressful and differs from the frequencies at which competition stress is generated with athletes. This is illustrated by the performance schedule of the professional ballet company under study: 150 shows per season are performed with dancers expected to deliver up to 9 performances a week during performance periods. Gerstner (2010) interviewed a collegiate gymnast, Ryan McCarthy who highlighted the similarly demanding performing schedules during his time working as a performer at Cirque de Soleil:

The biggest difference is, you know how to get up for the NCAAs and Big Tens, but Cirque is different because you have to be at a peak performance 10 shows per week, 300 shows per year. You can't have an off night, because that may be the only night somebody comes to see the show. It requires a different type of sports psychology.

Furthermore, measurable versus artistic aesthetic outcome indicators of success/failure are also important differences for athletes and ballet dancers (Wulff, 1998); both are engaged in skill reproduction and technical perfection (Nordin and Cumming, 2005) but artistic judgements are required for the dancer. It is vital, therefore, to exercise caution in applying and comparing sport-based research to classical ballet without acknowledgement and understanding of the differences, as well as the similarities in the two spheres of human endeavour (Nordin and Cumming, 2005; Hays, 2012).

This study aims to contribute to knowledge of coping behaviours in the ballet world in order to inform dance-specific interventions. Further, this study gives a unique opportunity to give insight into and provide valuable data from the closed world of professional ballet to the wider research community. Moreover, research in this area may be useful in aiding sports psychologists and dance teachers to develop appropriate preparation techniques to help dancers achieve optimal cognitive states for performance.

2. Literature Review

The literature review underpinned the ensuing research by examining definitions, explanations and outcomes of pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours.

Previous research in the field of sport and dance was critically reviewed in order to establish any anomalies, or gaps in understanding the uses and functions of pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours utilised by ballet dancers. The review contributed to the formulation of the research questions, which were addressed in this study.

2.1 Pre-performance routines

The development and application of pre-performance routines in sport, have been of specific interest to sport psychologists over the past thirty years (Cotterill, 2010). There have been a number of attempts to clarify the term (Boutcher and Rotella, 1987; Cohn, 1990; Foster et al., 2006), however Cotterill (2010) suggests Moran's (1996) definition of pre-performance routines as the most widely accepted by researchers; Moran (1996) defined it as "*a sequence of task-relevant thoughts and actions which an athlete engages in systematically prior to his/her performance of a specific sport skill*" (p.177).

It is important at this point to clarify differences in terminology; authors have referred to either pre-performance routines (Cotteril, 2008; Moran, 1996; Singer, 2002) or pre-shot routines (Cohn, 1990; Crews and Boutcher, 1986). Pre-shot routines refer to studies where performance is described in terms of a shot (golf, free throw in basketball, penalty shot in

football). Therefore pre-shot routines can be categorized as a sport/activity specific description of a pre-performance routine (Cotteril, 2010). Whilst the use of pre-performance routines has been mostly researched and implemented in self-paced sports, they have also been examined in other sports and dance to a much lesser extent (ibid). This presents a limitation when using this type of literature to inform a dance-focused research and emphasises the importance of expanding research in this arena.

Research examining the relationship between pre-performance preparation and performance in sport has received greatest attention (Cotteril, 2010). These routines are designed to aid the performer in dealing with stress, anxiety and concentration for crucial moments prior to and during performance (Cohn, 1990). There have been numerous experimental studies consisting of testing a control group's performance against that of an experimental group, who utilised a taught pre-performance routine (Hall and Erffmeyer, 1983; Crews and Boutcher, 1986; Lobmeyer and Wasserman, 1986; Douglas and Fox, 2002).

While research has shown that the implementation of a pre-performance routine had a positive effect on performance (Boutcher and Crews, 1987; Cohn, 1990), the actual function that routines fulfil in enhancing performance is less clear (Hardy et al., 1996; Cotterill, 2010). However Boutcher (1992) proposed five main benefits from pre-performance routines for golfers: improving concentration, avoiding negative thoughts, selection of appropriate motor schema, preventing 'warm-up' decrements and allowing golfers to perform their skill through automated mechanisms. Although golf and dance are different in nature, it seems reasonable to suggest that the five functions suggested by Boutcher (1992) may be of relevance to professional ballet dancers' performance. Further Cotterill (2010) summarized a number of

hypotheses that have been developed to explain the roles that pre-performance routines fulfil; attentional focus (Boutcher, 1992); reducing the impact of distractions (Boutcher and Crews, 1987); acting as a trigger for well learnt movement patterns (Moran 1996); diverting attention from irrelevant thoughts to task relevant thoughts (Maynard, 1998); improving concentration (Foster et al., 2006); enhancing the recall of physiological and psychological states (Marlow et al., 1998); helping performers to achieve consistency (Wrisberg and Penn, 1992); improving performance under pressure (Mesagno et al., 2008); and allowing performers to evaluate conditions and regulate their responses (Schack, 1997). However Cotterill (2010) stated that there is not sufficient depth of research that explicitly tests the functions that pre-performance routines fulfil. In a broader context Singer (2002) suggested that the general purpose of a pre-performance routine is to *“put oneself in an optimal emotional, high self-expectant, confident, and focused state immediately prior to execution, and to remain that way during the act”* (p. 367). This study seeks to explore how professional ballet dancers achieve this optimal state.

Pre-performance routines are known to include a number of different strategies; relaxation, visualization, cognitive restructuring, self-talk, and decision-making processes (Cohn 1990). Furthermore, routines or techniques are usually designed around the performer's needs, which vary from individual to individual (Cohn 1990) and depend on the personality and coping resources of each performer (Cotterill et al. 2010).

Unfortunately, unlike in sports, there is a paucity of empirical dance-specific research of pre-performance routines. However, Vergeer and Hanrahan (1998) undertook qualitative research examining the pre-performance routines of eleven modern dancers. They found dancers' pre-

performance preparation aimed to achieve four objectives: create adequate conditions, prepare to dance, prepare to perform and prepare to communicate (ibid). Specific strategies pertaining to ‘creating adequate conditions’ started as early as a couple of days prior to performance and aimed to manage time and energy; these included arriving at the theatre at a precise time, eating timely and properly and allowing sufficient time for a good physical and mental warm-up (ibid). These strategies, if implemented successfully, contributed to feelings of being in control and focused on the task (ibid).

Techniques aimed at establishing a mind-body connection were fundamental to the ‘preparing for dance’ category (ibid). These comprised ‘letting go’ techniques, which consisted mainly of mental imagery combined with breathing and physical exercises (ibid); ‘giving instructions to the body’, which consisted of repeating the same series of hidden verbal instructions until the dancer experienced a sense of release and lengthening (ibid); ‘focusing on kinaesthetically feeling the body’ by doing sit-ups, jumping to one foot while dropping the head or walking across the stage (ibid); ‘various imagery techniques’ and ‘chanting’ or repeating the same phrase over and over again to achieve feelings of centeredness (ibid).

Techniques intended to disconnect from everyday life such as ‘seeking social support’ by talking with colleagues and sharing negative feelings; ‘dissociating from self’ by assuming the character that the dancer needs to represent; ‘establishing a transition routine’ by taking time to get used to the idea of performing; ‘ritual engagement’ such as specific hair and make-up routines and precise placing of objects; and cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that included self talk and were directed at regulating nervousness, were inherent to ‘preparing to perform’ (ibid). Finally, rehearsal techniques and strategies, which included mental and

physical practice of steps, movements and sequences aimed to connect with the intent of the choreography, were used in order to ‘prepare to communicate’ (ibid).

Vergeer and Hanrahan (1998) observed dancers’ content of pre-performance routines was highly individual; each dancer employed a unique selection of routines to obtain optimal preparation (ibid). Also, they found sometimes a technique was employed to achieve multiple objectives and other times a combination of techniques was aimed at a single objective.

Vergeer and Hanrahan (1998) concluded that components and objectives of pre-performance routines of professional modern dancers contained elements that were similar to those found in professional athletes. For example the dancers’ mind-body connection component is similar to that found in athletes, and dancer’s preparation to communicate appear to be task-specific preparation similar to the tactical/technical components in athletes’ preparation (ibid). The authors suggested that learning from dancers’ preparation techniques might point to interesting applications for sport psychology researchers and practitioners (ibid).

This study found a complex and dynamic relationship between routines and objectives, therefore making it almost impossible to determine whether a single routine is helpful in itself or if it is the individual and idiosyncratic pattern and combination of techniques that make dancers’ preparation effective. Dancers reported their pre-performance routines provided them with a sense of stability, confidence and focus (ibid). However there has not been additional research of this kind to contrast the results and further investigate pre-performance routines in classical ballet dancers as opposed to modern dancers. Other studies only looked at the use of imagery (Fish et al., 2004; Nordin and Cumming, 2005) and not any other

techniques or routines and therefore it is not possible to gain a broad picture into the pre-performance routines of professional ballet dancers.

Interestingly Calmels et al. (2003) found similar complex relationship between strategies and functions used by gymnasts, to those found by Vergeer and Hanrahan (1998) in modern dancers. Mostly, these results suggest that some elite athletes may adopt and develop positive mental skills over the years of experience and social influences, without any external intervention or involvement in an educational psychological skills training program (Calmels et al., 2003). It would be therefore be interesting to determine whether this is also the case for ballet dancers.

In summary, Hardy et al. (1996) stated that few sport psychologists would contest the claim that pre-performance routines are an important part of a successful performance. In fact, pre-performance preparation is a key element in dealing with issues such as stress, anxiety, self-confidence, reassurance, concentration and coping with the adversities and exigencies to which the individual is exposed in competition or performance (Boutcher and Crews, 1987; Cohn, 1990; Van Raalte et al., 1991; Boutcher, 1992; Hardy et al., 1996; Vergeer and Hanrahan, 1998; Singer, 2002; Cotteril, 2010).

2.2 Superstitious behaviours and rituals

The implementation of pre-performance routines, and consequent adoption of repetitive behaviours and patterns, may lead to some performers engaging in superstitious practices (Moran, 2012). Indeed, research of pre-performance routines does not consider the existence

of certain aspects, which may be irrational in nature. In order to establish the position that superstitious behaviours may have in pre-performance routines, relevant literature is reviewed as it is this relationship that this study addresses in detail.

Superstitions in sport have been defined as “*actions, which are repetitive, formal, sequential, distinct from technical performance and which the athletes believe to be powerful in controlling luck or other external factors*” (Bleak and Frederick, 1998 p.2). The repetitive nature of these actions permits the term ‘ritual’ to be used to describe superstitious behaviours (ibid).

Study of the origins of superstitious beliefs and behaviours can be traced back to the work of George Frazer (1890/1959) who presented the concept of homeopathic magic to identify ritual practices believed to be effective in achieving success and assuming, therefore, a cause and effect relationship. Individuals confronted by dangerous or stressful situations often resort to rituals, particularly where chance, luck or uncertainty may be involved (Vyse, 1997; Burger and Lynn, 2005; Wright and Erdal, 2008).

Previously, it was believed that superstitious behaviours were prevalent mainly among primitive tribes (Frazer 1890/1959; Malinowski, 1954,) or children (Freud, 1919/1955) but later research has shown that they are also prevalent among educated, intelligent and mentally stable adults in western culture (Cottrell et al., 1996; Vyse 1997). Albas and Albas (1989) and Womack (1992) agree that superstitious beliefs are particularly prevalent in groups whose members regularly engage in performance tasks such as athletes and students (Damisch et al.,

2010). It would seem reasonable to include professional ballet dancers among those prevalent groups.

Furthermore, Womack (1992) argues that use of superstitious behaviours in sport is a widely accepted practice by athletes from all sports and across cultures. Anecdotal evidence from successful athletes supports this. For example, tennis player Serena Williams stated that she wore the same pair of socks throughout a tournament (Damisch et al., 2010). Similarly, Andre Agassi revealed that he could not let anybody touch his bag before a match (Agassi, 2009) and Michael Jordan wore his old blue shorts from his university days underneath his National Basketball Association outfit throughout his entire career (Damisch et al., 2010). These examples shed light into an intrinsic and sometimes hidden inner world; the fact that superstitions are often very personal practices does not facilitate their study since often individuals are not comfortable discussing their behaviours (Neil et al., 1981).

Since evidence of the utility and establishment of superstitious behaviours in sport, has been demonstrated in numerous studies (Neil et al., 1981; Buhrmann and Zaugg, 1981), some researchers agree that superstitious behaviours are prevalent because they can have a direct positive effect on the outcome of a performance and therefore are justified (Schippers and Van Lange, 2006; Wright and Erdal, 2008; Damisch et al., 2010; Brevers et al., 2011). Van Raalte et al., (1991) proposed that:

Superstitious behaviours are prevalent because they actually enhance performance by acting as “pre-performance rituals” that allow the athlete to relax, focus attention on the task, and perform the task via an automatized motor-behavioural sequence (p.43).

Further, researchers have speculated that positive superstitious behaviours may serve a number of functions; regulate psychological tension (Schippers and Van Lange, 2006); create feelings of control in uncontrollable situations (Becker, 1975; Matute, 1994); reduce anxiety (Becker, 1975; Neil, 1980; Buhrmann et al., 1982; Womack, 1992; Bleak and Frederick, 1998); help to build or restore confidence (Becker, 1975; Neil, 1980); help to cope with uncertainty (Neil, 1980; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006); help to maintain emotional stability (Womack, 1992); and provide heightened feelings of self-efficacy (Damisch et al., 2010). Further Neil (1980) suggested that superstitious behaviours might function as psychological placebos.

Additionally, several theories have attempted to explain the prevalence of superstitious behaviours; the first, considers superstitious behaviours as the result of perceiving a causal relationship between two elements associated in a fortuitous way; concomitant behaviours or thoughts and reinforcement (Skinner, 1953; Vyse, 1997; Brevers et al., 2011). This has derived from the classic work of Skinner (1948, 1953) who discovered that superstitious behaviour can arise through conditioning.

Alternatively Langer (1975) and Rudski (2001, 2004) explain the prevalence of superstitious behaviours in terms of illusion of control. This concept is defined as the tendency for individuals to believe they can control, or at least influence, outcomes over which they have no influence. The illusion of control is thought to be more pronounced in situations characterized by uncertainty (Brevers et al., 2011).

A further explanation may be provided by Lerner's (1965) theoretical 'Just World Hypothesis', according to which, people need to believe in a fair environment (ibid). Maintaining their faith, people may believe that if they work hard they will achieve what they deserve. From this perspective, the athlete/dancer would engage with superstitious behaviours because he/she would feel that everything is being done to achieve the best possible performance.

Interestingly, Schippers and Van Lange (2006) conducted a study to examine the psychological benefits of superstitious behaviours among top sportspersons. They recruited 197 athletes from top-ranking Dutch football, volleyball and hockey club. Results showed that 80.3% of participants mentioned that they performed one or more superstitious rituals before a game, with an average of 2.6 rituals per person. These superstitious behaviours varied considerably from wearing the same shoes for every game or eating four pancakes before a match, to putting a piece of chewing gum somewhere in the football pitch or wearing shin guards all the way from home to the stadium (ibid). Athletes mentioned that they completed the preparation before a game in a fixed order and warm-up rituals were also abundant (ibid).

Schippers and Van Lange (2006) established that superstitious behaviours are more pronounced when; uncertainty is high; importance of succeeding is high; and a person perceives success to be out of his/her control. Further Schippers and Van Lange's (2006, p.2549) findings indicate that ritual engagement can play a role in reducing psychological tension and that, therefore, "*the tension-regulating function of superstitious rituals may help more often than harm a team member to perform well and contribute to team performance*".

The practical implications may be for trainers to recognise the potential benefits of superstitious behaviours and consequently not discourage ritual engagement (ibid).

Furthermore, Damisch et al. (2010) also suggested that the practice of a good-luck ritual prior to performance could lead to heightened feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997), that is a person's belief in his/her capabilities to achieve in a particular situation, which in turn leads to better performance. Firstly they provided empirical evidence for a causal link between superstition and performance. Secondly they focused on the psychological mechanism that underlies this link by demonstrating that heightened self-efficacy contributes to the beneficial influence of superstitions on performance (Damisch et al., 2010). Finally, they demonstrated that increased task persistence is one means by which superstition-boosted self-efficacy enhances subsequent performance (ibid).

Furthermore, Foster et al. (2006) studied the effects of removing a superstitious behaviour before a free-throw performance in basketball and implementing a pre-performance routine instead with the aim to further improve performance. Results were contrary to the authors' hypothesis: performances conducted following superstitious practice were slightly higher than performances that followed a pre-performance routine (ibid). In addition, performance worsened when neither one was used (ibid). As a result, Foster et al. (2006) stated that *"superstitious behaviour clearly has potential benefits to the performer"* (p. 170), concluding that removing a superstitious practice is likely to increase unsettling feelings of stress and anxiety and a loss of perceived control (ibid).

However the empirical study of superstitious behaviours has proven to be problematic.

Buhrmann et al. (1982, p183) emphasized that: *“Superstitious behaviours are often well camouflaged and even the holder may not know why she/he adheres to them or even that she/he is holding them”*. Furthermore Buhrmann et al. (1982) and Buhrmann and Zaugg (1981, 1983) highlighted the methodological limitations in trying to identify and isolate superstitious behaviours. They argued that often it is very difficult to differentiate between habitual, religious or superstitious practices since some overlap of behaviours does inevitably occur (ibid).

In summary, it appears that superstitious behaviours are importantly used to aid the performer to cope with stress, anxiety and insecurity, maintain concentration at an optimum level and give feelings of control over an uncertain situation (Becker, 1975; Foster et al., 2006; Moran, 2012). Superstitious behaviours continue to be widespread among professional athletes prior to competition and research suggests that it is possible to gain positive reinforcement from these practices (Van Raalte et al., 1991, Vyse, 1997; Foster et al., 2006; Wright and Erdal, 2008; Damisch et al., 2010). Further investigation in a dance context is needed to establish if dancers may benefit from the utilisation of superstitious behaviours in the same way as athletes (Foster et al., 2006; Damisch et al., 2010).

2.3 Biographical Dance specific Material

In addition to scientific research, it is also valuable to examine the socio-cultural evidence of the existence of pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours within the ballet

world. This section reviewed any such evidence identified in biographies of acclaimed dancers. A review of such material can make an important contribution to our understanding of the extent of use of routines and rituals.

A dancer's biographical account often includes detailed descriptions of strict routines starting from an early age and continuing throughout professional careers (Fonteyn, 1975; Newman, 1986; Kirkland, 1986, 1990; Bussell, 1998; Bull, 1998, 2011; Daneman, 2004). The importance of these routines and their peculiarities has been observed in several ethnographical studies (Gordon, 1983; Wulff, 1998).

Bussell (1998), a former principal dancer with the Royal Ballet, described methodical self-imposed routines that were adapted to the demands of her schedule. She explained in detail the differences in routines and habits she adopted during rehearsal or performance days. Similarly, Bull (1998) described the challenges of maintaining her routines while on foreign tours where everything that she was used to was different.

However, a performance success not only depends on a well-prepared dancer and therefore its outcome is always uncertain. As Wulff (1998) states: "*Every performance is unpredictable*" (p 121) with numerous elements potentially influencing the outcome of a performance; sets, lights, music, costumes, and floor surfaces are all contributing factors and many people are involved to make a performance run smoothly. For instance, during a full-length classical ballet, there are over two hundred people working both front and back stage; these include dancers, musicians, technical staff, lighting crew and wardrobe department. In order to cope

with the risks and uncertainty in performance, many dancers rely on certain routines prior to, or even during performances, that may be superstitious in nature (ibid).

Indeed, Wulff (1998) observed obvious superstitious behaviours minutes before a performance as stage fright reaches its peak. Knocking three times on the floor, or on the scenery, or touching a special spot backstage are some of the behaviours she was able to observe during her ethnographic research across five major companies.

Further, when Bull (2011) described her routines on a performance day, she admitted that when she arrived at the theatre, she was usually presented with some photographs and/or programs to sign but she refused to do so before the show because she was afraid that it would bring bad luck to the performance. Furthermore, she explained that Sir Anthony Dowell (former principal dancer and artistic director of the Royal Ballet) introduced her to this superstition and, since she thought that this behaviour had a positive outcome for him, she adopted it. This instance illustrates how superstitious behaviours can be learned (Wulff, 1998). Indeed, Wulff (1998) describes witnessing some dancers of Frankfurt Ballet reaching to touch a red box that covered electrical appliances while the overture music had already started. However, although these behaviours are mainly learned from older members in the company new habits are picked up from new foreign dancers joining from a different background (ibid).

Wulff (1998) also reported having seen dancers from various religious backgrounds or dancers who declared that they had nothing to do with religion, making the sign of the cross in the wings before going on stage. Dancers may also choose certain warm-up clothing in a

superstitious manner especially on a performance day (ibid) and shoe rituals are ever present (Fonteyn, 1975; Newman, 1986; Kirkland, 1990; Bussell, 1998; Wulff 1998; Bull, 1998, 2011).

These behaviours may be explained by the fact that coincidence and association of concomitant random events (for example, wearing a certain leg warmer before a performance and doing a good performance) are very influential on the development of superstitious beliefs and behaviours (Skinner, 1953; Vyse, 1997). At the same time Wulff (1998) observed that what she called 'theatre behaviour' and defined it as the ensemble of preparation practices that occur backstage prior to performance, might function as concentration cues to help dancers achieve and maintain focus. As the stage fright reaches its peak instants before a performance it is not unusual to observe random behaviour backstage.

2.4 Conclusions

The literature review confirmed the contention that pre-performance routines in dance contexts are under researched and that empirical investigation of the role of superstitions behaviours and their efficacy in aiding the achievement and maintenance of peak performance in dance is non-existent. Notwithstanding the dearth of scientific, empirical research into these phenomena, there is sufficient interpretive and narrative material in secondary sources such as autographical accounts and ethnographic studies of dance culture (Fonteyn, 1975; Vaughan, 1977; Gordon, 1983; Newman, 1986; Kirkland, 1990; Bussell, 1998; Wulff 1998; Bull, 1998, 2011).

However these sources have been largely ignored by research literature, which derives from socio-psychological studies rather than on subjective and introspective narratives drawn from memories of lived experience, which interpretivist researchers would claim is the only way to understand an individual's social reality (Guba, 1990).

Although pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours are analytically different (Burke et al., 2006), in practice it is often not easy to draw a perfect distinctive line between a rational, logical and understandable pre-performance routine and an irrational, illogical and not always understood superstitious ritual (Vyse, 1997; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006; Foster et al., 2006; Wright and Erdal, 2008; Brevers et al., 2011; Moran, 2012). As such, it is possible in reality they may co-exist to a certain extent. This study looked closely at this possibility examining preparation techniques and routines of professional ballet dancers.

Furthermore, superstitious behaviours and rituals have been found in analysis of pre-performance routines of modern dancers (Vergeer and Hanrahan, 1998) and some individuals (Fonteyn, 1975; Vaughan, 1977; Newman, 1986; Kirkland, 1990; Bussell, 1998; Wulff 1998; Bull, 1998, 2011) have described their use of superstition and ritual in preparation for performance and yet the literature has not explored the prevalence of these practices. References to this phenomenon are merely anecdotal without examination of their importance to the individual.

Hence the subsequent study proposed to identify and examine what pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours are used by professional ballet dancers, the relationship of the phenomena of superstitious behaviour and pre-performance routines in the lives of

professional ballet dancers and how dancers develop these superstitious behaviours employed. This study utilised a qualitative insider perspective into professional ballet dancers' preparation for performance exploring the singularities, which is only possible through full privileged access to one of the leading classical ballet companies in the UK. Emergent research questions from this review of the literature include:

- What pre-performance routines do dancers utilise?
- Do ballet dancers actually and regularly engage in superstitious behaviours in preparation for performance and if so, what form do these behaviours take?
- Why do dancers employ these behaviours?
- How effective do dancers perceive their routines to be?

3. Methodology

3.1 Philosophical approach

This study is underpinned by a pragmatic philosophical approach, where the research design stems from the research questions being explored (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism is a philosophical position, with origins in the work of Peirce, James and Dewey, who introduced the idea of ‘truth as what works’ (Robson, 2002). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) promulgate the view that pragmatism aims to find a middle ground between the contrasting philosophical positions of positivism and interpretivism, in order to arrive at a workable solution. Indeed, the quantitative-qualitative debate has been increasingly viewed as unproductive (Robson, 2002). Pragmatism rejects traditional dualism and generally prefers a common-sense philosophical position based on how well it solves problems (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.2 Mixed methods strategy

As a consequence of a pragmatic philosophical approach this study utilised a mixed methods strategy. Pragmatism is presented, as being able to lend itself to mixed method research, as quantitative and qualitative methods can be used in conjunction with one another to better answer research questions. Further Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) believe that mixed methods research is the third research paradigm in educational research, and while its goal is

not to replace either approach, it can act to draw upon the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in mixed method studies (ibid).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) enumerated some of the advantages of a mixed methods approach. Firstly they highlighted the idea that mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research. They argued that quantitative research is weak in understanding people's points of view and it fails to listen to participants' voices. Furthermore quantitative researchers are in the background and their personal interpretation is seldom discussed. Qualitative research counter-balances these weaknesses (ibid). However, qualitative research is seen as deficient because of excessive personal involvement on the researcher's part and the difficulty in generalising findings because of the limited number of participants studied. It is argued that quantitative research offsets these weaknesses, thus the combination of strengths of one approach counter-act the weaknesses of the other approach (ibid).

Secondly, more evidence can be obtained utilising a mixed methods approach rather than qualitative or quantitative methods alone (ibid). Mixed methods research is able to utilise all the tools of data collection available rather than being restricted to quantitative or qualitative types of instruments. Furthermore, mixed methods research may help to answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative methods alone (ibid).

However the application of mixed methods research poses some challenges and further disadvantages: firstly, researchers must be acquainted with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analytical techniques (ibid). Researchers must understand

fundamental issues of rigour in quantitative research comprising reliability, validity and generalizability and it is also equally necessary for the researcher to understand essential issues inherent in qualitative research such as credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness (ibid).

A further downside to be considered when embarking on a mixed methods research project is its feasibility given time and resources. Often the amount of data that can emerge from a mixed methods strategy may require extensive time, resources and effort on the part of the researchers (ibid). Furthermore Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) emphasised that since mixed methods research is relatively new in terms of methodologies available to researchers, its value may not be accepted yet or even understood by others.

Additionally, the advocates of traditional dualism have sustained their differences throughout the debate (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Purists believe that the two research paradigms, and associated methods, belong to two distinct and incompatible universes of discourse and therefore they cannot and should not be mixed. This is made clear in the following statement by Guba (1990): *“Accommodation between paradigms is impossible... we are led to vastly diverse, disparate, and totally antithetical ends”* (p.81).

Nonetheless, Howe (1992, 1998) claims that although many research methods have been linked to specific paradigms, this linkage is neither sacrosanct nor necessary. Indeed, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that:

Today's research world is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, complex, and dynamic; therefore, many researchers need to complement one method with another, and all researchers need a solid understanding of multiple methods used by other scholars to facilitate communication, to promote collaboration, and to provide superior research. Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions (p15).

It could be argued that the metaphysical, epistemological and methodological differences between quantitative and qualitative purists are not resolved and mixed methods research is currently not in a position to provide perfect solutions (ibid). However mixed methods research utilises a philosophy and methods that intend to combine the insights of qualitative and quantitative research into a workable solution (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, regardless of the epistemological position of scholars and their opinions and preferences towards particular research methodologies, they do agree that the research questions should be the driving force in selecting an appropriate methodology (Janesick, 2000). It is appropriate therefore, as both a consequence of the underpinning pragmatic approach and research questions, to utilise a mixed method research design, where quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted in order to fully explore the proposed research questions.

3.3 Research design

As an active member of one of UK's leading ballet companies, a unique opportunity arose to conduct a study on pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours prior to

performance in professional ballet dancers employing a case study design. While honest and truthful data is often difficult to obtain for ‘outsider’ researchers in the culturally closed environment of a ballet company (Wulff, 1998), it is hoped that this study could provide a real insider perspective in studying the phenomena of pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours of dancers working in one classical ballet company.

The case study approach is appropriate for individual researchers as it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in-depth (Bell, 2005; Bryman, 2008). Grix (2004, p52) elucidates this claim by noting that “*one in depth case study of a relatively under-researched area can be embedded in, and compared with, the existing body of literature, to gain useful insights*”, or to discover similarities with better researched areas. Case study designs have been widely used in psychology, sociology, anthropology and other fields to contribute to the body of knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena (Yin, 2009).

Indeed, pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours have been shown to be influenced by organizational and social factors, and further adapted and absorbed by the individual (Wulff, 1998), thus making them an appropriate subject for case study designs. Further, case studies are useful in revealing the answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions about current issues (Yin, 2009), appropriate to the study’s research questions on how and why pre-performance routines and superstitious behaviours are used, and for what reasons.

Additionally, case studies may use quantitative and/or qualitative methods of data collection to gain better understanding of complex social phenomena (ibid).

Further, and as a consequence of a mixed method approach, the research followed a sequential exploratory strategy design (Creswell, 2009), where the weight of the design centred on qualitative as opposed to quantitative analysis. In the first stage of data collection, a questionnaire, which was predominantly quantitative with some space for qualitative expansion of answers, was distributed to all dancers in the company. This allowed identification and sampling of the six participants who used the greatest number of routines and rituals. These dancers were then asked to participate in qualitative interviews where these phenomena could be explored in greater depth (Bryman, 2006). Interviews with participants identified through the questionnaires examined the place of superstitious behaviours within general pre-performance routines, whilst exploring ‘how’ and ‘why’ such rituals were used (following Yin, 2009).

Similar criteria to that employed by the positivist tradition can be drawn upon to assess the methodological rigour of case studies, that is internal, construct and external validity and reliability (Yin, 2003; 2009; Gibbert et al., 2008). However, there are concerns over the lack of rigor of case study design with the possibility or danger of biased views influencing results and analysis (Yin, 2009). Further, external validity may be compromised since small samples cannot be generalized to the wider population (Bryman, 2008; Yin, 2009). However Yin (2009) argues that very rarely can generalisations be made from one single study independently of the design utilised. Although embarking on multiple-case studies may allow wider generalisations to be drawn, this is not feasible for a single student research project. Focusing on one ballet company in the instance of this research was more realistic within the relatively short time scale available, contributing to improving the quality of the research.

3.3 Methods of data collection

Table 1 below illustrates the relationship between the research questions and methods of data collection. As previously stated this study utilised questionnaires and interviews as methods of data collection to fully explore the proposed research questions.

Table 1. Relationship of research questions to methods / data sources.

Relationship of research questions to methods / data sources	
1. What pre-performance routines do dancers utilise?	Interview and qualitative questionnaire sections
2. Do ballet dancers actually and regularly engage in superstitious behaviours in preparation for performance and if so, what form do these behaviours take?	Qualitative and quantitative questionnaire sections and interviews
3. Why do dancers employ these behaviours?	Interview and qualitative questionnaire sections
4. How effective do dancers perceive their routines to be?	Qualitative and quantitative questionnaire sections and interviews

3.3.1 Questionnaires

Self-completion, structured, questionnaires are one of the most widely used social research techniques (Blaxter et al., 2006) and are a valid strategy for finding answers to issues of particular interest. Additionally, questionnaires can be used as a screening device to obtain a relevant sample to further investigate a case (Bryman, 2008).

Questionnaires can be designed to include open-ended questions, providing both quantitative and qualitative responses that lead to a more in-depth study of individual cases (Blaxter et al., 2006). This may be useful for providing the participant with the opportunity to record responses, which are not solicited in the closed questionnaire and/or elucidate earlier responses. Assuming response rates are satisfactory, questionnaires are an efficient way of gathering homogeneous information, since individuals answer the same set of questions, whilst allowing participants to respond in their own time (Bryman, 2008).

However, self-completion questionnaires can also have certain disadvantages; for example, if the researcher is not present at the time of completion, there is no possibility for participants to receive clarification of questions (ibid). Therefore, in order to minimise the risk of misinterpretation, it is valuable for the researcher to be present at the time of completion. Further, questionnaires do not offer the possibility of gaining an insight into participants' physical reaction to the questions such as facial expressions, body language, voice tone or silences between sentences (ibid).

In fact, questionnaires are most useful when utilised in conjunction with other methods, such as interviews (Grix, 2004). Indeed, as part of the proposed sequential exploratory strategy design (Creswell 2009), the questionnaire identified ballet dancers who regularly engage with most numbers of routines and rituals during their preparation for performance. These individuals were then asked to take part in the second stage of qualitative data collection, via interviews, to seek better understanding of how superstitious behaviours are used within pre-performance routines.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews provide valuable insights not accessible through questionnaires (Rose and Grosvenor, 2001) and contribute to a multi-method approach, by enabling validation, clarification and illustration of the meaning of previous research findings (King, 1994; Robson, 2002). Indeed, Blaxter et al. (2006) emphasised that semi-structured interviews are an appropriate method to gain an insider's perspective and even though they should not be used to generalise about a topic, they can provide the researcher with valid, real, rich and deep data: this method is therefore appropriate to gain better understanding about under-researched phenomena. Indeed, interviews can further explore behaviours, which were identified within the quantitative questionnaire phase (Bryman, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews have predetermined questions, but order and content can be modified, based upon the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate for the participant (Robson, 2002; Grix, 2004). This allows individuals to expand on responses to questions, enabling the researcher to gain a better understanding of an insider's view.

Indeed, Bell (2005) says that the major advantage of the interview is its adaptability; a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which a questionnaire can never achieve (ibid). The salience of issues for respondents can also be of interest and the body language throughout the process of the interview can give the researcher powerful, sensitive and meaningful information (ibid).

It may be that inexperienced student researchers, through lacking the skills necessary to encourage participants to talk freely, fail to maximise returns in potentially rich data that interviews may provide. Every effort has been made in this case, to prepare before conducting the interviews (Bell, 2005).

3.4 Sampling strategy

The study was undertaken on one of Britain's leading professional ballet companies, of which the researcher is a member. For ethical reasons the company and participants remained anonymous throughout the study.

At the time of research, the company under study employed fifty-six dancers, of which twenty-seven were male and twenty-nine, female. Dancers represented various nationalities and backgrounds, and ranged from eighteen to thirty-eight years old. Questionnaires, along with participation information and consent forms, were distributed to all members of the company, in order to help investigate their approach and preparation to performance. This method allowed dancers to describe their regular preparation routines and rate their

effectiveness. Fifty dancers, twenty-five males and twenty-five females completed and returned the questionnaire, achieving a 90% response rate.

3.5 Design and implementation of methods of data collection

3.5.1 'The Behavioural Routine Questionnaire'

The study used the modified 'Superstitious Ritual Questionnaire' (Bleak and Frederick, 1998), based on Buhmann et al.'s (1982) original. Bleak and Frederick (1998) studied superstitious behaviours of athletes of various sports. The original structure of the questionnaire (Buhmann et al., 1982) was preserved whilst modifying items to be specific to the activity under study. Similarly for the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was modified by adapting items to the dance environment.

Due to the methodological problems that emerged from the implementation of the original questionnaire, the present study utilized the questionnaire with a different purpose from that of Buhmann et al. (1982) and Bleack and Frederick (1998). Buhmann et al. (1981; 1982; 1983) highlighted the difficulties in collecting and interpreting data when measuring superstitious behaviours, noting that problems were encountered when trying to differentiate between habitual, religious and superstitious practices to the point that the authors stated that *"a clear delineation is impossible to obtain"* (Buhmann and Zaugg, 1981 p. 172). To avoid this problem Buhmann et al. (1982) labelled all superstitious, religious or habitual practices as ritualistic whilst recognising that this term suffers from being too general (ibid). Furthermore Buhmann et al. (1982 p.184) stated that *"since some overlap (of beliefs and behaviours)*

inevitably occur, we may never find out whether a certain belief or action is purely superstitious". As a result, the construct validity of the original 'Superstitious Ritual Questionnaire' was questioned by the authors, who concluded that its implementation did not allow them to fully determine whether a practice is superstitious in nature or a rational routine (Buhmann et al., 1981; 1982). Consequently, for the purpose of this study, it was decided to use a modified version as a diagnostic tool to identify participants who engage with greater number of routines and rituals, referring to them as 'behaviours' to avoid further connotation, prior to performance. However, where appropriate questionnaire data was also utilised to cross reference, substantiate and strengthen emergent patterns of consensus or contradiction with interview material.

As a result, and in order not to influence participants, the title was modified from 'Superstitious Ritual Questionnaire' to 'Behavioural Routine Questionnaire' (see appendix 2). Items were simplified, so that they did not specify the rationale behind the use of each behaviour and adapted to an adequate dance setting; for example, in Bleack and Frederick's (1998) questionnaire an item read: 'Wear socks inside out for luck'. Since socks are not part of a ballet dancer's clothing, this item was substituted with, 'wearing same tights', as tights are the equivalent regularly worn piece of ballet clothing; 'dressing well to feel better prepared' was simplified to 'dressing well' to avoid giving a rationale for the routine. Another example of slight modification is adjusting, 'hair cut on game day' to 'wearing same hair equipment every show'. Since professional ballet dancers often perform several times a week it would seem very unlikely that someone would cut their hair before every show, but it might be possible that people may develop routines or rituals around their hair equipment (hair elastics, pins and flat pins, hair products etc.). The item reading 'face painting' was modified

to 'specific make-up routine' since applying make-up is an intrinsic part of dancers' performance preparation. Wherever possible items were left unmodified; for example 'check appearance in mirror', 'music during warm-up', 'snacks and energisers', 'need silence/seclusion before game/performance' or 'warm-up using same routine' did not need to be altered since they were relevant also in a dance context. Thus, the researcher's professional experience was heavily utilised in this process, in order to ascertain the most appropriate dance related behaviour for each item.

The questionnaire consists of 42 items separated into seven categories: clothing and appearance, fetish, pre-performance, performance, team rituals, prayer and management. The total behavioural routine score was then established by calculating the sum of the numbers of items used by the participant (following Bleak and Frederick, 1998). Further, the degree of effectiveness of each behaviour, as subjectively rated by each participant, was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from not at all effective (1) to very effective (5) (following Bleak and Frederick, 1998).

This method of using the questionnaire allowed for the identification of both superstitious behaviours, as well as rational behaviours which are often border line in the justification of their use (Buhmann et al., 1981, 1982; Neil et al., 1981; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006; Wright and Erdal, 2008; Brevers et al., 2011). It was the subsequent qualitative interviews that allowed deeper probing, for example of whether behaviours were rationally founded or otherwise. Such an approach is supported by Buhmann et al. (1982 p.183) who suggested that a combination of data collection techniques "*may provide more acceptable ways for measuring superstitious behaviours*".

To complete the questionnaire, two open-ended supplementary questions requiring qualitative answers were added seeking to cover any omissions or additional information the dancers wanted to share. The answers could be included at the discretion of the participant. These questions read as follows; ‘Please add below any other type of routine or habit not listed above that you might use during or in preparation to your performance’ and ‘Please write any comments you would like to add in relation to your personal routines’ (see appendix 2).

3.5.2 Semi structured interviews design

Interview questions were developed mainly based on Vergeer and Hanrahn, (1998) study on modern dancers’ preparation to address the research questions promulgated above. Although the original study in a dance setting concentrated on pre-performance routines in modern dancers, it found that participants used superstitious behaviours intrinsic to their preparation (ibid). In addition, studies in superstitious behaviours in sports (Neil et al., 1981; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006) and a qualitative based study in pre-performance routines (Cotterill et al., 2010) helped contributed to the completion of the interview schedule (see appendix 3).

Following Vergeer and Hanrahn, (1998) there was one main question broadly worded, to permit a wide range of possible answers. The question asked was; ‘What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?’ This question sought a deeper understanding of their pre-performance routines. It was necessary to avoid using the term ‘pre-performance routines’ when wording the question in the current study, since the majority of dancers have had no psychological training and therefore are not familiar with the term. Further, by asking

participants to describe their own routines and behaviours prior to performance the study aimed to expose the fine line between cognitive and physical strategies of pre-performance routines and rigid superstitious behaviours. Since, explanations of routines took participants a while to formulate, prompts were used depending on responses; these included mentioning behavioural routines, physical routines, specific order of things, space, timing, and objects. Probes included ‘Do you have any specific timing in your preparation routines?’ ‘Do you have a hair and make-up routine?’ ‘Do you keep your warm-up routine consistent?’ ‘Do you go through the steps?’ and ‘Do you change your routines with different roles?’ as appropriate (following Vergeer and Hanrahn, 1998).

The second and third questions (following Cotterill et al., 2010) asked: ‘Are these routines set and always the same?’ and ‘Why do you follow these routines?’ The aim of these questions was to understand the consistency and importance of dancers’ routines. This was to examine the rationale for the behaviours, and to establish whether they were classed as rational pre-performance routines, or superstitious behaviours. This question also examined the participant’s subjective view of the effectiveness of the behaviour in helping the participant to achieve optimal levels of performance.

The fourth question asked; How would you feel if your routines could not take place or were disrupted? (Following Neil et al., 1981 and Schippers and Van Lange, 2006). The answers to this question were important when trying to determine if a behaviour was of a superstitious nature. Buhmann and Zaugg (1981) established that if an individual believed that the omission of a certain ritual would cause an emotionally upsetting response, it is likely that

superstitious beliefs were in place. Further Neil et al., (1981) considered an act to be superstitious when the individuals were 'bothered' by their absence.

Six interviews took place, lasting approximately fifteen minutes each, during a performance period in the home theatre or on tour. This allowed for dancers to be set in a performance ambiance and therefore be more precise when reflecting on their preparation practices. As the backstage theatre is a busy place, finding a quiet and intimate space suitable for a recorded interview was not always easy; nevertheless it was achieved thanks to participant co-operation (see appendix 6-11).

3.6. Ethical consideration

A self-assessment form was completed prior to undertaking the research in order to satisfy the University of Birmingham Ethical Research Committee. Ethical approval was required to minimise any risk to participants. Since participants were adult volunteers the research was considered to be low risk.

Dancers were given a self-completion questionnaire together with a participation and consent form (appendix 1), as part of the ethics procedure. They were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and were assured that the data provided were strictly confidential. Questionnaires were coded and participants taking part in the interview were given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. All data have been stored in a secure locked cabinet and will be retained for ten years, as specified by the University, after which it will be permanently deleted.

3.7 Insider research

It is relevant to emphasise that the researchers' own experience as a professional ballet dancer played an important part in this study due to the insider knowledge of the environment gained from observations. Although it was not intended to use observation as a formal method to explore the nature of the research questions, previous knowledge of participants could not be ignored. However, whilst insider status was privileged in terms of access to subjects and insider knowledge, it was essential that the researcher remained objective and sensitive to the danger of imposing personal meanings, interpretation and definitions of the situation on the subject being investigated. With this in mind the author could be considered as a participant as observer (Bryman, 2008) using informed observations to flesh out questionnaire and interview responses. Themed anecdotal material supplemented by appropriate biographical material drawn from secondary sources was used to elucidate questionnaire and interview responses in order to increase the depth of the narrative.

3.8. Analysis

Data analysis in mixed methods research is directly related to the research strategy chosen (Creswell, 2009). As a consequence of a sequential exploratory strategy the analysis in this study took place in two stages (following Creswell, 2009). First descriptive analysis was used to analyse quantitative data emerging from the Behavioural Routine Questionnaire. Rudestam and Newton (1992) highlighted the importance of descriptive analysis and subsequent frequency tables as a first step in presenting the data. Since questionnaires were mainly used

as a screening device to select an interview sample to gain in depth knowledge, more complex forms of statistical analysis were not necessary or relevant.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data emerging from the narrative part of the Behavioural Routine Questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is a form of content analysis that is commonly used in the analysis of qualitative data and it is not heavily dependent on the use of a particular theory, making it especially useful to the novice researcher (Howitt and Cramer, 2007). Thematic analysis has been described as a combination of both inductive and deductive analytical procedures (Rigan, 1994) where interplay between ideas is necessary (Grix, 2004).

The open-ended nature of the questions allowed the interviewees some licence in their responses, which often anticipated later questions, or included reflection on earlier responses. Whilst this freedom was necessary to obtain authentic responses it meant that answers were often conflated, making it difficult to maintain a distinction between ideas, which were analytically distinct but inextricably interconnected in the subjects' consciousness. To facilitate this process authorial intervention from an insider perspective engaged with selected transcribed material, aiming to interpolate and intercalate quantitative and qualitative data and published research including biographical material from secondary sources.

Transcribing the interviews was time consuming but it allowed the researcher to familiarise with the text prior to formal analysis. Once the transcripts were carefully read and compared, emergent themes of consensus were identified, and used to organise and present results. Identification codes were created so that abstracted quotations could be located in the

presentation of results and easily traced to origins in the transcripts. These codes consisted of the pseudonym of the participant interviewed and display of the specific line from which the quotation was derived; for example '(Bert, L10-12)'. Interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 6-11 and questionnaire open-ended responses are available in Appendix 12.

Results are presented under the four research questions headings and emergent themes form sub-headings within sections, for example, '**Pre-performance routines**' (RQ1) include: *routine variability with performing demands: ballet class routine; additional training and conditioning routines; connecting body and mind routines; routines inherent in preparing to perform and mental rehearsal routines.* '**Superstitious behaviours**' (RQ2) include: *shoe rituals; make-up and hair rituals; steps and choreography rituals and premonitions.* '**Reasons for engaging with behaviours**' (RQ3) include: *keeping calm and maintaining confidence; coping with pressure; embodied learning and performance, uncertainty and stress;* and '**Perception of effectiveness**' (RQ4) include: *analysis of perception of effectiveness and evolving routines.*

4. Presentation, analysis and discussion of results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter combines presentation, analysis and discussion of results of collected questionnaires and semi-structured interviews focusing on answering the proposed research questions:

- What pre-performance routines do dancers utilise?
- Do ballet dancers actually and regularly engage in superstitious behaviours in preparation for performance and if so, what form do these behaviours take?
- Why do dancers employ these behaviours?
- How effective do dancers perceive their routines to be?

Quantitative and qualitative data, derived from questionnaire and interview results, are intercalated and contextualised with reference to published anecdotal and research work on pre-performance behaviours.

Interviewed participants were selected based on questionnaire results. Table 2 presents the questionnaire responses of the six dancers who reported the most frequent use of behavioural routines prior to performance and who were subsequently invited to take part in the following semi-structured interviews. The individual scores are compared with the mean score of the whole population.

Table 2. The six highest scores on the Behavioural Routine Questionnaire compared with the mean scores of the population

Respondents ID No. and Pseudonyms	Questionnaire Categories							Total Score (n=42)
	Appearance (n=13)	Fetish (n=6)	Pre- performance (n=9)	Performance (n=5)	Team Ritual (n=3)	Pray (n=3)	Management (n=3)	
ID No 13 Bert	8	2	6	5	3	0	0	24
ID No 25 Thomas	11	0	4	4	3	1	1	24
ID No 28 Tania	10	1	6	4	2	0	1	24
ID No 26 Jane	8	0	7	4	3	0	1	23
ID No 39 Luna	9	0	6	3	1	0	2	21
ID No 17 Carl	10	1	5	1	1	1	2	21
Group Mean	4.72	0.4	3.58	2.36	1.22	0.26	0.66	13.2

n denotes the number of items included in each category

The total population engaged with an average of 13 behaviours listed in the Behavioural Routine Questionnaire compared with the six highest scoring respondents who reported considerably greater use of between 20 and 24 behaviours. A complete comparison of the responses of the six dancers selected for interview with those of the total population is presented in Appendix 4.

Interview participants are referred to by pseudonyms whilst narrative responses in the questionnaire are identified through a simple participant number coding system. Three male and three female dancers of various ranks were selected for interview using the questionnaire as a screening device. Bert is a male corps de ballet dancer, Thomas is an up and coming

soloist and Carl is a well-established Principal. Jane and Tania are soloists and Luna is a long-term artist.

Although the stratified sample in terms of the company's demographic structure was completely unintentional, it enabled comparisons and contrasts between different company ranks. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that whilst any differences may be of interest in leading the researcher to possible directions in further research investigation they are not intended to be generalizable: in this sense they will remain a curiosity, though hopefully of intrinsic interest.

The presentation, analysis and discussion of results, is structured systematically by the four research questions and themes that emerged from data analysis within each section. Although predominantly weighted to the qualitative data, as explained in the method section, interview and questionnaire data are interwoven as appropriate (see Table 1 p.28) To enrich the discussion of results, published ethnography and autobiographical accounts of pre-performance preparation and rituals reported by celebrated ballet dancers are also used where applicable.

4.2 Research Question 1: What pre-performance routines do dancers utilise?

This research question sought to establish the most common pre-performance routines used by ballet dancers by listening to the voices of experienced professional dancers reflecting on their preparation for performance. In addressing this question, the study utilised interview material and qualitative questionnaire responses supported with published biographical and

ethnographical material. Distinctive themes emerged from data analysis, which helped to structure the section. When questioned and allowed to reflect on their pre-performance preparation, common themes that emerged were: *routine variability with performing demands: ballet class routine; additional training and conditioning routines; connecting body and mind routines; routines inherent in preparing to perform and mental rehearsal routines.*

4.2.1 Routine variability with performing demands

Evident across the data was the dancers' variable usage of routines and behaviours according to performance demands. In response to a direct question: 'What preparation routines do you use' Carl (L6), a long established Principal, was explicit: "*every day my routines are very similar*" and so was Jane (L66-67): "*In general my routines do stay the same with me, like how I get ready and everything*", whereas Tania (L6), a soloist who performs a wide variety of roles and has a more inconsistent workload, adjusted preparation to the demands of the role: "*I prepare differently depending on the intensity of the performance*".

Echoing this response Darcey Bussell (1998), one of the most acclaimed British ballerinas of her time (Mackrell, 2007) writes in her autobiography about the differences in her routines on a performance day depending on the demands of the performance ahead:

On the morning of a first night I try hard to kid myself that it's just a normal day so that I don't exhaust myself by getting nervous, but I don't always succeed. I take morning class as usual and then, if I am only going to be dancing a one-act ballet, I may carry on rehearsing other productions until about 4.30 when I start getting ready

for the show. If I am performing a full-length work then I'll take the day more leisurely (p.63).

Similarly, respondent ID No 14 writes in the narrative questionnaire (see appendix 12) that his strict routines apply only to 'stressful' shows and that he might develop different set of routines for different roles:

Most of these routines are only used for particular stressful shows and will be done the same way each time I do that role but not necessarily get done in exactly the same way for a different, stressful role- a different routine might be developed.

Although there are some variations in responses it would seem reasonable to accept that a dancer's routine may vary depending on the demands of the day or performance ahead. Perhaps a challenging task requires detailed preparation and stronger concentration from the part of the performer.

4.2.2 Class routine

Ballet class is an essential part of ballet training and most dancers appreciate its importance making every effort to attend. Participant 19 volunteered that "*he would always do class*" and respondent 43 said that she was obsessive: "*I always have to do class before a performance*" (Appendix 12). Wulff (1998) stated that some dancers referred to class in terms of a 'cleansing' and others simply enjoy the secure routine of morning class. Whilst there may be times when class may feel like an onerous chore, if one is tired, injured or simply not feeling

up to it; attendance at class is assumed in the ballet world and in every dancers' routine.

Tania attaches the same importance to the demands of the performance in adjusting her approach to the early morning class:

If I have an easier show then I would really work in class, but if there is a heavy performance I would start thinking more about warm-up and making sure that I am 'on my leg', getting the right muscles working rather than doing a strong full out class
(Tania, L16-19).

The importance of the routine of ballet class has been long recognised and it is clearly stated in an old saying highlighted by Wulff (1998 p.68), Kirkland (1990 p.9) and Bull (1998 p.78):

When a ballerina misses a day of class, nobody notices; when she misses two days of class, she notices; when she misses three days, everybody notices.

However Bull (1998) is critical of the idea that class should be compulsory and absolutely necessary every day of a dancer's professional life saying that;

...it becomes a good excuse to not give dancers time off. In reality, of course, we can survive for a couple of days without ballet class, and sometimes it's a jolly good idea to do so (p.79).

Unfortunately there is a lack of empirical research to either justify the absolute necessity of

daily ballet class or to establish what the optimal weekly class quota should be. In the meantime dancers grow up attending to ballet class daily and very few may challenge the idea that it may not be entirely vital to their fitness (Bull, 1998).

4.2.3 Additional training and conditioning routines

Such is dancers' professional commitment and self-discipline that some perform routines even earlier in the day. Carl (L7-8) says that he must do a series of systematic stretches to start every day or otherwise he would not attend to class. He later described his routine in detail:

I have a very specific order. For example the first thing I do is I probably roll my back and do a side split (shows gestures indicating positions). It is always the left leg first, and then I do the cross stretch, I do the cross knee thing and I do my back-stretch and my psoas stretch. Then I go on to warm-up my feet and calves, thigh, hamstrings, calves again and underneath my foot in specific order. I do not switch (Carl, L23-28).

Vergeer and Hanrahan (1998) and Schippers and Van Lange (2006) found very similar responses to warm-up routines of modern dancers and elite athletes respectively. Furthermore, Schippers and Van Lange (2006) also observed abundant rituals where participants often emphasised the importance of a fixed order of completion.

There are other exercising techniques that are used by ballet dancers as a support to their fitness and physical well-being such as 'body conditioning' programs or Pilates exercises.

Jane is familiar with this exercise routine before a show: “*I usually do some ‘body conditioning’ during the day*” (Jane, L39), when she has to perform in the evening. Similarly, Bert emphasises his regular commitment to this type of exercise before a performance:

I start by doing some Pilates, like abdominal work and then I come up and I always, always do feet exercises with my both feet together first, to try to ‘plant them’ so that I feel quite grounded (Bert L8-10).

The importance of complementary training programs is evident in the ballet companies with resources who employ a specialised team to aid in this matter. Often, physiotherapists work together with personal trainers and body conditioning instructors to design fitness programs to suit individual dancers.

4.2.4 Connecting body and mind routines

Furthermore, it was found that dancers might engage with certain physical routines to achieve not only an optimal physical condition but also a desired mental state. Here, Tania (L10-12) emphasises the psychological benefits of her routines: “*In the morning I start with some ‘body conditioning’ (...) and I think that it does give a certain focus as well, to start with*”. Tania actually enhances her concentration by engaging in physical exercise every morning even before class. It seems that for some dancers what appears to be purely physical preparation or warm-up is actually acting as a concentration cue that favours optimum mental state (Wulff, 1998). This is precisely one of the key benefits of a pre-performance routine (Bleack and Frederick, 1998).

On a similar note, Carl emphasises the psychological importance of his previously mentioned stretching routine, which resembles techniques utilised by modern dancers aiming to establish a ‘mind and body connection’ (Vergeer and Hanrahan, 1998):

For me it is not only to warm-up the body but really just to get concentrated, knowing that; ok, I am about to work. That happens every day; it is almost like meditation. You start concentrating in stretching and, your muscles and your body feel good and you are sort of getting concentrated (Carl, L8-11).

Carl goes on to explain that he has a combination of ballet exercises that he uses before every performance or rehearsal even if he is already physically warm. This routine helps him to be in the ‘right state of mind’:

I have to do a warm-up before every show and every rehearsal. There is a routine of a combination of ‘tendus’ and ‘rond de jambes’ and little turns and jumps I do before anything. Even if I’ve just finished class and I have rehearsal in fifteen minutes, I would still do that routine just to bring myself back into a centre, sort to speak. And I don’t know if it really... sometimes may not really help that big deal but it is more mental; so that I feel ok, I am ready. I calm myself down (Carl, L29-34).

This study’s findings are consistently with Vergeer and Hanrahans’ (1998) and additionally they show a greater deeper personal insight into the dancers’ preparation. It appears that dancers use their a priori physical routines and warm-up activities as a psychological means to achieve their desired state of mind.

4.2.5 Routines inherent in preparing to perform

Tania achieves that ‘focus’ through other practices like getting ready for the show: *“I think part of the routine of putting on make-up and all those kind of things, it is part of getting that ‘focus’. You are sitting down in front of that table and doing everything”* (Tania, L20-21).

Carl echoes this when reflecting on his make-up routine: *“While putting make-up on, it helps me concentrating for the next show since it is a precise and controlled routine...”* (Carl, L17-18).

On a different note, Thomas who has recently joined the company mentions the differences in warming-up routines from his previous company. Some ballet companies have a compulsory attendance policy on a taught warm-up before every performance. This is not the case for the company where the research took place, where dancers have freedom to warm-up in their own time:

In my previous company we did a set warm-up all together at the half hour call with piano music but here, it is nice that I can do my own thing and listen to my music while I am warming-up (Thomas, L18-20).

It is interesting to note that a dancer’s routines may vary depending on the environment in which he/she is working. Different ballet companies work in various ways (Wulff, 1998) in terms of schedule, repertory, number of performances, working practices, social relations etc. For example, if performance schedules of different companies are compared, it is noticeable that some companies organise performances around blocks in which they perform between

seven to nine shows during a performance week and they do not perform at all during a rehearsal period whereas other companies, perform regularly almost every week of the season but rarely more than three shows a week. It seems reasonable to suggest that significant differences in performance schedule may have an effect on the demands on a dancer and therefore routines may vary to adapt to the dancer's needs.

Bussell (1998) concurs when she described in detail how she prepared for a performance. She reveals that after applying her own make-up and getting her hair done she goes on to warm-up on stage by herself as a means to gain optimum mental state:

Then I'll do class on stage for half an hour during which I like to work by myself. Though some dancers prefer warming-up together, I use the time to get mentally prepared for the show (p.64).

A dancer's preparation for a show, usually about two hours before the show starts, is an intimate and very personal time when a whole range of different emotions may surface (Bull, 2011). Excitement, nerves, worry, anticipation, eagerness or even a combination may occupy the dancers' private space (Wulff, 1998). This is the time when one must do his/her make-up, do hair up, organize shoes, put on costumes, arrange any items for a quick-change during the show, keep any needed props in situ, make sure to stay properly warm, perhaps meeting with a dancing partner on stage before the curtain goes up to revise any details, go over the choreography, practice some steps and so on. Thomas summarises his list of 'things to do' before a show very clearly; *"I would always do this; power nap, shower, little bit of food, make-up, warm-up and then go through the steps"* (Thomas, L27-29). Luna insists that

together with her routines, for her, timing is the most important thing:

...performance wise, you do your little routines. I do things on a certain order; I always do my hair first, always do my make-up second and then, even in terms of warming-up I follow the same (...) order for things (...) But I would say that for me timing is the main thing (Luna, L10-17).

Tania is also quite explicit about the timing of her preparation from the end of class to the start of the show:

(After class) I would leave twenty minutes to sort things out and then I get ready so that I have an hour. Generally I get ready in half an hour (make-up and hair) so that I have another half an hour. I put costume on and get out there (stage) so that I have twenty minutes on stage before the performance. I look at the stage... to make sure your placing is right and certainly I try a few things (steps) (Tania, L56-61).

Wulff (1998) is aware of this private place, acknowledging that what she calls 'theatre behaviour' acts as a kind of concentration cue. This last observation together with the statements from the participant sample is consistent with research in the sport field where Boutcher (1990) proposed that attentional control is likely to be a positive outcome of well-utilised pre-performance routines in elite athletes.

4.2.6 Mental rehearsal routines

Furthermore, dancers often find themselves learning a vast repertoire. The company performs an average of eight programs a year, making a total of sixteen ballets per season. Most dancers will be required to learn two or three different parts in each ballet making an average of thirty or forty roles every season. Therefore, it is not surprising that going over step combinations is a very common practice as seen from the questionnaire results. Thomas (L24-26) is very honest about this: *“I will go through the whole ballet; everything I need to do. I go over the steps even though I know them.”* Luna (L38-40) also shares this practice during the first few performances of a new ballet. Similarly, Bert also talks about going over choreography and visualization: *“I just go through everything I do, all the steps I do. I go through it, picture it in my mind how I would like to do it”* (Bert, L37-38).

Hardy et al. (1996) have written about the importance of visualization or mental rehearsal techniques to achieve peak performance in sports and dance psychology has followed a similar direction. Fish et al. (2004) concluded that the use of visualisation or imagery techniques as part of a well-structured pre-performance routine by elite dancers can have a significant positive effect on both self- confidence and performance anxiety and therefore improve performance.

The results of the current section show that many routines are underpinned by a logical explanation that legitimises their rational use, although Vyse (1997) emphasised that to ‘draw a line’ between superstitious and useful preparation is often very difficult. Some of the practices mentioned by participants and supported by the literature include the attendance to

daily class, additional exercising techniques and stretching, private warm-up, mental rehearsal methods, listening to music and timing, make-up and hair routines. Schippers and Van Lange (2006) stated that “*most superstitions are difficult to distinguish from preparing for performance*” (p2533). Therefore the next section aims to further interrogate these behaviours in order to explore more deeply professional ballet dancers’ repertoire of superstitious behaviours and pre-performance routines of which are embedded in ballet culture.

4.3 Research Question 2: Do ballet dancers actually and regularly engage in superstitious behaviours in preparation for rehearsals and performance and if so, what form do these behaviours take?

Answers to the previous question were obtained by asking the participants in an interview to describe freely their preparation routines. In contrast, identifying superstitious behaviours within their preparation was not explicitly asked and therefore the answers had to emerge in conversation within intervention on topics such as preparation before performances, individual customs, habits and ideal procedures. While some of the answers were sufficiently explicit to categorize certain behaviours as superstitious others remain poised between what is and is not rational and remain a matter of interpretation and judgment. Alongside interviews, quantitative and qualitative questionnaire material was also utilised to strengthen the findings. This section is structured by four key emergent themes: *shoe rituals; make-up and hair rituals; steps and choreography rituals and premonitions.*

4.3.1 Shoe rituals

Shoes are a focus of attention for many dancers since they are not just an indispensable part of a dancer's outfit but also a ballet culture icon. It is not only a matter of appearance, shoes must be perfect for the dancer to perform technically to the best of his/her ability (Bull, 1998; Bussell, 1998). Therefore it is not surprising that shoe related practices were mentioned frequently in the interviews and narrative data from the questionnaire. Luna is explicit about the way she puts on her shoes which she considers to be a ritual:

In terms of shoes I am obsessive about the ribbons, I must re-tie them about five times and (go to the) resin box. It has to be resined. I think for me it is like a safety thing I have to do, and it is a ritual (Luna, L31-33).

Bull (1998) made a very similar remark: *"I am obsessive about my shoes. I have platoons of them, all neatly arranged in serried ranks"* (p18). Tania volunteered on the narrative part of the questionnaire a very similar remark on ribbons and resin to Luna's: *"I check my ribbons all the time before every single entrance. I resin in shoes and hairspray my ribbons"* (appendix 12). Bull (2011) described the atmosphere back stage where dancers are preoccupied with their shoes and ribbons: *"It is twenty-five minutes past seven and shoes ribbons are untied and retied, more securely this time"* (p.160). She goes on: *"conductor enters the pit (...) and ribbons are adjusted just one more time"* (p.161). Luna (L13-16) expressed her concern about having her shoes ready in time for performances and how she keeps more than one pair 'just in case': *"I always like to check shoes way in advance because there is nothing worse than... So that I know they are ready and I don't need to worry about*

that. And of course I must have a back-up pair obviously.” Bull (1998) stated that she lines up all her shoes in the dressing room ready to be used and she threatens: *“Woe betide anyone who moves them”* (p18). Bussell (1998) observed that some principal dancers like to prepare up to eight pairs of shoes before a performance. She insists that a shoe can ‘make or break’ a performance and therefore she deliberately chose to rehearse in a bad pair *“just in case I end up wearing terrible shoes in a show- at least I am prepared for the worst.”* (p.57). Bull (1998) accentuates the unpredictability of a pair of point shoes. In her own words:

Not two pairs feel the same, and very rarely do they feel absolutely right. The really bizarre thing about point shoes is that they can seem just perfect the night before a show, and bloody awful once the overture starts (p.18).

Shoe ritual is not exclusive to women but men are also pre-occupied with ‘getting it right’ (Bleak and Frederick, 1998; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006). Further, Bert sounds whimsical almost comical when talking about how he checks on his shoes regularly during the show:

I always check my shoes and keep on pulling up the heel just because I never want them to fall off. I have nightmares about the heels coming off and dancing with flippers, like half a shoe hanging up... (giggles) (Bert, L129-131).

Thomas (L71-73) shares this feeling about his shoes saying that they just need to feel ‘right’:
“I am very picky with my shoes, I want to make sure they look good and it is also the feeling of... they need to feel right.” When Bert talks about his routine of getting ready for the show, he explains the order in which he does things and some peculiarities during the process:

I get part of my costume first, then make-up and wigs. I will put the tights on, I will get the shoes on or boots so that my feet can warm-up to them and I always (giggles) have to blow warm air into the shoes before putting them on (Bert L26-29).

In addition, this study's findings are consistent with Bleak and Frederick (1998) and Schippers and Van Lange (2006) who reported numerous shoe rituals among sportspersons. However this study deepens understanding of dancers' distinctive daily rituals by providing insight into dancers' lived experience of performance.

4.3.2 Make-up and hair rituals

On a different note, make-up routines have been shown to be quite rigid and inflexible with no gender difference. Behavioural Routine Questionnaire item number nine read 'specific make-up routine' and it was used by 66% of participants (see appendix 5). Jane (L7) is explicit about her routine: *"I always do my make-up before my hair, always no matter what!"* Similarly but describing a different order participant 49 volunteered that: *"I have to do my hair before my make-up. If I do it the other way around it doesn't feel right"* and participant 50 follows a similar procedure: *"I get ready always one hour before (the show) and I do the same routine every time; first hair, then make-up, then warm-up and get dressed"* (appendix 12). Jane is also particular about her hair elastic: *"I wear the same hair elastic"* (Jane, L10). Jane is not alone in this behaviour as the quantitative data generated by the Behavioural Routine Questionnaire showed that item number ten; 'wear same hair equipment' was also recognised by 24% of the population (see appendix 5).

Bull (2011) exercises her anthropological imagination when she compares the pre-performance make-up routines to a tribal ritual where people used make-up as a symbol to gain protection from the Gods. This metaphor illustrates and dramatizes the thorough procedures by which a dancer prepares to face the stage and invokes theoretical accounts of the mystical origin of dance in religion and quasi-religious ritual expression:

There is something satisfyingly ritualistic about the application of make-up, an age old symbol of the preparation for an occasion of import. I thought back to my many hours spent applying make-up when I saw those pictures of one of the remaining uncontacted tribes in the Amazon. (...) The first dots of foundation on my forehead, cheeks and chin have something of this feel about them: a first preparation and protection for an encounter with the unknown (Bull, 2011; p.145-146).

Most anthropological studies on theatre and dance performance have identified with the importance of ritual (Wulff, 1998) and in turn, performing rituals have been used as a metaphor to describe the existential themes of life in our society (Goffman, 1974; Wulff, 1998) demonstrating reciprocity between ‘art and life’.

Bert (L29) agrees with Tania (L105) in that they both put on make-up the same way every time, whilst Tania (L106-107) adds: “*After so many years it becomes a routine and that is what you do*”. These peculiarities are consistent with research in the sports field where it has been observed that elite athletes often mentioned that they completed their preparation before the game in a fixed order (Schippers and Van Lange, 2006).

4.3.3 Steps and choreography rituals

The Behavioural Routine Questionnaire observed that ‘going over step combinations’ was practiced by 84% of respondents (see appendix 5). However a dancer might do so in an obsessive or even compulsive manner. This is an example of how a logical practice may become excessively rigid (Schippers and Van Lange, 2006).

Bert expressed his worries over forgetting the steps on stage, although he may have performed the role various times and therefore he knows the choreography very well indeed, and he adds that he does not want to feel too confident because he is afraid that something could go wrong if he is over confident:

I do sometimes worry that if I don't go through it, even if I have done it loads (...) that will be the day I blank or something happens. I don't want to feel too complacent about knowing it, even though I know it, I don't want to feel too over confident about it and then blank because I would kick myself! I would say to myself; you could have just gone through it! (Bert, L39-43).

Kirkland (1986) talked openly about her fear of forgetting the steps during a performance and how this was manifested as anxiety dreams. She mentions the presence of demons as an euphemism for unwanted thoughts: “*Stricken with stage fright and tormented by demons, I had a recurrent nightmare in which I forgot the steps during a performance*” (p29). And Dame Antunette Siblely cited by Newman (1986) has also written that in her early years as a professional she had a hard time remembering steps while she danced in the corps de ballet

due to her nervous state. She sometimes needed to be cued and reminded of the step combinations by her own colleagues who were dancing with her on stage. On this occasion she was performing one of the swans in Swan Lake:

And the trouble with me with nerves is that I forget the steps. (...) This was frightening, knowing I was the second swan on and in such a visible position. But Shirley stood behind me (...) she told me when to move (...) and I made it through with her help (Newman (1986; p.57)).

Participant 49 also worries if she does not go over the step combinations repeatedly before going on stage: “ *I know the steps before going on stage very well but I still go over and over what I have to do until the very last second before I go on. I worry while I am on stage if I don't*” (appendix 12).

Going over steps is a practice that is often accompanied by or followed by practicing some crucial or particularly challenging technical combination of steps. Doing repetitions a set number of times may enhance a dancer's confidence as a result of an increase in perceived level of self-efficacy (Damisch et al., 2010). Jane likes to practice a difficult step twice and she explains why:

If I have a really hard step (...), I practice it two times because then the third time 'lucky' will be on stage! But if I have done it two times and it is really bad, I will do it a third time and then I will have to do it another two times so that the third time 'lucky' is on stage (Jane, L13-17).

Bert (L119-122) also talks about the importance of practicing steps three times while participant 49 agrees with his/her colleagues: *“if there is a difficult step I like to try it at least three times before the performance”*. In contrast Thomas (L63-65) dislikes practicing steps ‘too much’ afraid that it would cause him distress before the show if practice went wrong and although Jane does engage with a ‘third time lucky’ practice, she also agrees with Thomas: *“I don’t really like to practice before the show too much just in case anything goes wrong”* (Jane, L30-31). This is also the case for Bull (2011) who is unhappy if her practices go wrong before the show but neither is she content if they go well: *“I always worried that if my steps went badly moments before curtain-up I’d be unsettled. If they went well, I’d have wasted my quota of good luck for the evening...”* (159).

Tania (L62) likes to practice her turns before the show because: *“they are the most fifty-fifty chance steps.”* She explains that when she find herself on stage she is able to put things aside and ‘make it work’ but in the process of articulating so, she hesitates and exposes her fear of overconfidence:

But quite often when you are on stage... (doubtful) well... I don’t want to say this... I do have this tendency that I say something that may get back to me afterwards! But generally somehow, when you are on stage there is that other level of focus, particularly if there are difficult steps, you sort of get over it (Tania, L45-49).

It is interesting that Vergeer and Hanrahan’s (1998) study on modern dancers found significant differences in rehearsal techniques compared to the dancers in this study. They found that their participants did not like thinking about choreography before a performance.

Instead they preferred to focus on their body and mind connection (ibid). These variances may be due to the inherent differences between modern dance and classical ballet.

4.3.4 Premonitions

It is often the reoccurring anxiety that ‘if I don’t do my ritual something will go wrong’ that allows classification of repeated pre-performance routines as a superstitious behaviour (Neil et al., 1981; Schippers and Van Lange, 2006). Bert is embarrassed to admit that his worries also affect his routines and he observes that if something went wrong, after the show he would not attribute the cause to an external factor, but the threat is in his mind all the way while he prepares for the performance:

As soon as I finish the performance I kind of forget about everything (...) but beforehand sometimes I do, I worry about things like tights being right, or if the heel isn’t over my heel, if it is a bit up or down... and I feel that it is not right; it is just not right!! That really agitates me, getting my shoes exactly right and fitting properly it is very important for me (Bert, L52-58).

As it has already been mentioned, timing is the most important aspect in Luna’s preparation and she describes her unsettling feelings when she was asked to imagine how she would feel if she could not control her pre-performance timetable: “*thinking about it I would imagine that it would make me very stressed and panic*” (Luna, L47). Similarly, Jane does not hesitate and she is very frank when reflecting on some of her superstitious rituals. She recognises that this practice is illogical but she still engages with it: “*This is one of those stupid things; if I*

have done a show and I felt that it went quite well, I will wear those same tights, (on my next show)” (Jane, L8-9). Furthermore Jane (L71) reflects on how she would feel if her superstitious ritual was not performed: “the thought of it, I’m like... uhh, God!!! This is going to be shit!” She is able to rationalize her thoughts but she admits that this anxiety would haunt her before a performance:

Before (the performance) it does make me think about it a bit... like uhhh... maybe this won’t be that good!! But (laughing) just because you don’t have the same hair elastic or the same tights on somehow it can really make a difference...! (Jane, L72-74).

Bert (L77-78) likes to stand daily on the same place both at barre and centre: *“I always go back to the same spot at barre and I always go to the same spot in centre”* He is also aware that standing in a different place would not affect him physically but the thought of not being able to be in ‘his’ place would make him uncomfortable:

It would probably not make any difference and I am not sure it would directly affect my dancing but I just... it wouldn’t be what I do every day and it is weird but I don’t know... I think I would feel a little uneasy about it. I just wouldn’t feel the same simply because it isn’t (Bert, L80-83).

This section aimed to further interrogate dancers’ pre-performance preparation to reveal superstitions behaviours embedded in them. It can be seen that some dancers are aware that they engage with various superstitious behaviours prior to performance and therefore the next section will aim to explore a dancer’s need for these rituals in order to gain better

understanding of their ‘meaning’ and function.

It is curious how dancers appear to be aware of the unrelated link between some of their rituals and the positive outcome of their performance. Yet they feel uneasy if challenged with the thought of their rituals not being able to take place the way they wish for.

The findings in this section concur with those of Neil et al. (1981) and Buhrmann and Zaugg (1981) and furthermore, this study has provided insight into dancers’ practices and rituals prior to performance. Although putting on shoes properly, doing hair and make-up adequately, going over complicated choreography and even practicing some steps before a performance are all desirable rational practices, when they are performed in an obsessive, repetitive, even compulsory manner and they are followed by unsettling thoughts of disaster if not performed in a certain rigid manner, it is most likely that superstitious behaviours are in place.

4.4 Research Question 3: Why do dancers employ these behaviours?

The previous sections have shown how dancers engage in different routines, including superstitious practices, prior to performance and the importance of those routines to the dancers. Schippers and Van Lange (2006) suggested that some superstitious practices prevail because they actually ‘work’ and they could essentially have a positive outcome similarly to that of a pre-performance routine. This section utilised interview material and qualitative questionnaire responses supported with published biographical and ethnographical material aimed to gain better understanding of why these behaviours are needed and how they aid the

dancer. Common emergent themes that arose were: *keeping calm and maintaining confidence; coping with pressure; embodied learning and performance uncertainty and stress.*

4.4.1 Keeping calm and maintaining confidence

Undoubtedly maintaining a calm state during a potentially stressful situation is always desirable. Here Thomas explained that he has learned to keep relaxed and calm interacting with people before performance to enhance this state:

I learnt through experience to do things to calm me down. (...) not to be thinking about going on stage all the time and have a conversation with friends and have a laugh helps me too (Thomas, L36-39).

For him, interacting with colleagues, almost paradoxically serves as a diversionary activity. Carl (L57) also emphasises the calming effect of his routines, which is the reason for his practice: *“it helps me by doing those things (routines), it actually calms me down. That is why I do them”*.

Luna’s main routines are concerned with controlling her pre-performance self-imposed timetable and she emphasises: *“For me timing is the main thing to be honest, because I hate feeling pressured by that on top of everything else”* (Luna, L17-18). She believes that following a strictly timed routine enables her to keep calm. When she was asked directly how she thought her routines helped her she responded thoughtfully: *“just in terms of relaxing*

more I think, and just having the time to think about what you are doing” (Luna, L22-23).

Bert explained that his warm-up routine includes the practice of pirouettes before a show.

Although he may not need to execute any turns in that particular performance he emphasises that the aim of this practice is to enhance his confidence: *“if I can do some good pirouettes before the show, if I can get it right, that is something that makes me mentally feel a lot better about myself, confidence wise” (Bert, L19-21).*

As might be expected there were individual differences in anticipated outcomes from routines and in the means used to pursue them. For example Thomas (L16;23-24) used music to feel both inspired and to remain calm before a performance whereas in contrast Bert (L15-16) uses music for his warm-up but quite differently for a different purpose: *“I listen to music, I have a few songs, normally quite up beat, sometimes quite fast too, just to sort of get me going.”*

It seems reasonable to conclude that dancers engage with their routines, superstitious or otherwise, to intuitively control their minds to confront a stressful situation or perhaps, as Neil (1980) said, as a psychological placebo to gain confidence, as an illusion of control and to cope with anxiety. In other words, repetitive routines may be a means through which a dancer can obtain feelings of security and gain confidence in a stressful situation such as a live performance (Wulff, 1998). Bert is aware of that effect on him and he is explicit in his questionnaire narrative: *“with many of the rituals the effects are purely psychological. I do not actually gain any physical benefits from doing them. In a way they just put my mind at ease” (appendix 12).*

Dancers in a competitive environment strive to perform in the best possible physical and mental state. This is emphasised by Carl (L58-60), who believes that: “(...) *if I do everything I can then I am mentally prepared and I am going there (stage) and feel I’m ok; I’m ready. (...) it just keeps me in the zone*”. Tania voices similar sentiments although in a different way: “*I think with everything that I do (referring to her rituals), I want to make sure that I give the best possible chance for the best performance I can give*” (Tania, L14-15). Both Carl and Tania are referring not only to the hard working demand aspects of the profession but they are expanding their commitment referring to the practices of their repetitive behaviour. They will follow their routines always in the same manner because only then they believe they will be doing ‘everything they can’ and therefore they will ‘deserve’ a positive outcome in their performances. Schippers and Van Lange (2006) proposed Lerner’s (1965) ‘*just world hypothesis*’ as an explanation to the prevalence of superstitious behaviour. This is people’s sub-conception that the world is a fair place where people ‘get what they deserve’. By believing this illusion, people’s perception of chance has no place and there is only a direct relationship between behaviour and outcome (Schippers and Van Lange, 2006).

4.4.2 Coping with pressure

There is a consensus across the qualitative data and current literature that the professional dance world is a highly competitive environment. In this instance, Tania thinks retrospectively about when she was younger and she took part in several competitions. A ballet competition atmosphere is quite different from that of a performance in a professional ballet company. Usually ballet competitions are popular within students and they are arranged in categories according to age. They offer an opportunity for students and their teachers to

know where their students stand compared to other participants. It is perhaps, at this young age, one of the most crucial moments of a dancer's career. When a dancer is finishing school and applying for a job, a good result in a competition provides an opportunity to be introduced to the professional world, and to be exposed to a wide critical audience, including artistic directors from most international companies. Tania believes that she developed superstitious rituals to help her cope with the pressures of highly competitive situations:

Particularly when sometimes you only get one or two goes and you know that performance could make a difference in your career, (...) that is the pressure you feel
(Tania, L69-72).

She went on to elaborate on the competitive nature of the environment and the pressure that it generates as you struggle to survive:

It is that pressure that you put on yourself because it has to be good. (...) it is a competitive area and if you don't get it right somebody else will. They will take your place and, you know? They might do it better so you have that pressure. So if you get given an opportunity you want to make sure that is done to the best of your ability
(Tania, L74-78).

Conversely Carl volunteers in the questionnaire that he tries to maintain a different perspective by focusing on communication with the audience rather than on himself and reflecting that it is the complete experience of an art form, which is more than just the sum of the technical aspects, which is paramount:

It helps me to tell myself I don't dance for myself. My job is to give a good show for the people that come to watch. So I don't just think of one step, but try give a whole show and it often becomes a better show (appendix 12).

Participants were asked directly why they thought they needed their routines and Bert was prompt in stating that he believes that repetitive patterns help him to create secure feelings and avoid unnecessary stress:

I think it is just that people are comfortable with repetition and what they know so that if it is different it can sometimes throw you. (...) Having everything where you want it for each performance and keeping it the same is like a constant you can rely on (Bert, L64-65; 70-72).

Interestingly he continues to emphasise that it applies to even small details:

Even if it is not something major, even if it is just like wearing the same hair band to keep your hair back as you are doing your make-up. It is just, if I didn't have it I would be like; ooohh.... Where is it? And what do I do? How am I going to keep my hair back? Or stuff like that. It is like keeping your costume always in the same place, because you can't find it or you are in a rush... it is the last thing you want to be worried about. (Bert, L65-70)

This statement provides an insight into the extent of the importance that routines and rituals have for a dancer. From a rational point of view, it would not matter what one may use to

keep the hair back while applying make-up, but in an already stressful and demanding situation where concentration is a key element to succeed Bert admits it would add stress if he does not have something trivial such as his particular hair band. As an observer, Wulff (1998) emphasizes that these ‘theatre behaviours’ (p.122) act as concentration cues maintaining dancers in the right focus.

4.4.3 Embodied learning

There is consensus across the data that routines are implemented from the very early stages of ballet training and very few challenge the idea that this should not be the case. Tania and Carl agree that they follow routines simply because they have been formed through experience. Carl (L83) recognises the importance of trial and error saying simply: *“I know it because I have done it.”* Tania considers that certain patterns of behaviours were initiated and then established and internalised during her early training:

Maybe some of it is ingrained somehow, during all those years. You know? Even from school they tell you, you have to do things a certain way (...) we grow up on a strict routine. (...) And also it is trial and error, you have seen that it has worked for you. (...) It is something that has been learnt from school and you have carried it on
(Tania, L111-119).

Previously it was mentioned that some dancers like to try a step a certain number of times before a show and here Bert reflected on this superstitious and found a reason for its prevalence and origins. He believes his superstition came from a teacher at school. Now he

does it before every show:

Everyone will say that three is the lucky number! I don't know why it is! I think it is because I had a teacher at school that used to say that if you could get it right three times in a row then you were fine (Bert, L119-121).

This last statement provides an example of teaching influencing the establishment of a superstitious behaviour. The evidence suggests that early socialization patterns formulated in childhood specialist training environments are inculcated and become deeply embodied into the individual resulting in the adoption of expected behaviours and routines of professional ballet dancers.

4.4.4 Performance, uncertainty and stress

Performing can be stressful, almost by definition, since so many things, over which a dancer has no real control can go wrong. Dancers rehearse and practice in the studio, although not always as much as they would wish, but no matter how thorough the rehearsals are, live performance is haunted by uncertainty and the unexpected, which is both exhilarating and daunting. Bull (1998) calls it “*a sense of inevitability about a performance. Short of divine intervention, it will happen...*” (p. 1). Perhaps this is why some dancers like to reassure themselves with the comfort of the familiar to approach a performance at their best conditions. Bull (2011) believes that keeping routines consistent is a desirable practice to achieve a good performance: “*The sensible dancer will stick to familiar and safe routines*” (p.151). Carl concurs with the idea of keeping routines consistent in order to keep calm. He

explains how he prepares for uncertainty by ensuring that he is focused and in control:

I used to rehearse until I would hear the music and be sick of it, and then I knew; ok, I am ready. Because I am absolutely calm. And I think now the routines gives me that feeling (Carl, L90-92).

This statement is consistent with Damish, et al. (2010) who claimed that repetitive routines may enhance perception of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) boosting dancers' confidence and in turn improving performance. Van Raalte et al. (1991) defended the idea that superstitious behaviours are prevalent because they may favour performance by acting as what they called "pre-performance rituals" that allow the dancer to relax and focus on their task, and perform their task by an automatized pattern.

4.5 Research Question 4: How effective do dancers perceive their routines to be?

As it was shown in the literature review dancers, unlike athletes, do not often benefit from professional psychological coaching and support and therefore it is left to the dancers themselves to unveil the best way to achieve and maintain optimal performance and pre-performance strategies. Since dancer's pre-performance routines are mainly self-developed or learned from other colleagues and have not gone under the scrutiny of academic research, it is necessary to ask if they are indeed effective or at least if dancers perceive them as such.

Interview and quantitative and qualitative questionnaire data were utilised to address the present research question. The findings were grouped into two sub-sections; the first, analyses

the most popular behaviours and their perceived effectiveness and the second and final section investigates how routines and rituals might evolve throughout a dancer's career.

4.5.1 Popular behaviours and perceived effectiveness

Questionnaire results support the idea that dancers perceive their preparation routines as effective. This is illustrated in Table 3 where the top ten most used behaviours were also rated in terms of effectiveness.

The items are presented in rank order in terms of frequency of use. Although gender differences were not part of this study's research questions it seems appropriate in this instance to present male and female data separately since there are a few interesting differences in behavioural engagement that should not be ignored. For example, although male and female responses were very similar, it is found that woman's second most used behaviour is 'checking shoes regularly' with 92% of the female population engaging in this behaviour whereas men only report 36% of engagement (see appendix 5) and therefore it is not part of the men's top ten most used behaviours. Both males and females most frequently reported engagement with behaviours relating to 'clothing and appearance', 'pre-performance' and 'performance' categories and they nominated only one practice involving 'team rituals'.

Table 3. Top ten most used behaviours by men and woman and averages of perception of effectiveness

	Number of participant s engaging in behaviour	% of participants engaging in behaviour	Mean perception of effectiveness of behaviour
Males (n=25)			Range 1-5
1.Check appearance in the mirror	24	96%	4.00
2.Going over step routines	20	80%	4.10
3.Snacks/Energizers	18	72%	4.17
4.Specific eating habits	16	64%	4.12
5.Specific make up routine	15	60%	3.33
6.Wear warm up cloths the same way	13	52%	3.84
7.Checking hair or hair dress is ok regularly	12	48%	3.08
8.Talk with colleagues	12	48%	3.58
9.Checking costume is ok regularly	11	44%	3.72
10.Seek silence/seclusion	10	40%	4.30
Females (n=25)			
1.Check appearance in the mirror	24	96%	3.54
2.Check shoes are ok regularly	23	92%	3.91
3. Going over step routines	22	88%	4.13
4.Warm up using same routine	20	80%	4.15
5. Specific make up routine	17	68%	3.88
6. Checking costume is ok regularly	16	64%	3.43
7. Checking hair or hair dress is ok regularly	16	64%	3.56
8. Specific eating habits	15	60%	4.20
9.Going over routines with dancing partner	15	60%	4.00
10. Snacks/Energizers	14	56%	4.26

As might be expected, there was a fairly close association between frequency of use and belief in the effectiveness of the behaviours. In the case of males, the percentage use of behaviours presented in rank order in the table was almost congruent with efficacy, with the exception of ‘seeking silence and seclusion’, which although it is the last item in the table, it

was believed to be most effective by the men who nominated it. In contrast the females produced an almost inverse set of relationships with the lowest frequency items scoring highly in effectiveness. The two most frequently used items; ‘check appearance in the mirror’ and ‘shoe-check’ were among the lowest efficacy scores.

When reflecting on their questionnaire responses, dancers had mixed opinions regarding the effectiveness of their practices. Here Bert and Luna differ on what they label as effective; Bert believes his behaviour has no direct effect and therefore classifies it as ineffective although he still chooses to engage with it:

*I responded that having a good luck item of clothing is not effective but... I do it!
I mean, it is not effective directly but I think that if I have something that I like and
looks nice then, I feel better about it (Bert, L107-109).*

In other words Bert considers his behaviour to be ineffective, since it is not going to affect directly his ability as a dancer, but he still engages with it because it allows him to feel comfortable and confident. In contrast, Luna believes her behaviour is effective although she believes the effects are only psychological:

*(doing) my hair and make-up is a routine for sure! I think it is effective because it is
what I always do. If I did it in a different order, I'm sure it would not matter but I
would not want to. And it is psychological because it does not matter if you do your
hair and make-up first but it sets you in the right order. (Luna, L 77-80).*

It could be argued that both of those behaviours (‘wearing a lucky item of clothing’ and ‘set hair and make-up routine’) have no direct effect on the ability to dance and perform; yet Bert considers the behaviour to be ineffective whereas Luna considers it to be effective. These examples illustrate the diverse opinions and the extent of the individuality of the perceived efficacy of pre-performance behaviours. It is highly subjective since only the individual can rate what he/she believes to be effective and that is both physically and psychologically, directly or indirectly.

4.5.2 Evolving routines

Wulff (1998) observed that those ‘theatre behaviours’ were common to one place and new practices were introduced through foreign dancers joining the company or during guest appearances supporting the concept that dancers learn, adapt and adopt new routines from other colleagues.

Tania (L34-36) admitted that she used to be superstitious in the past: “*when I was younger I was quite a lot superstitious*”, she engaged in religious rituals prior to a performance: “*I used to make the sign of the cross beforehand*” and she was afraid to eat certain foods on the days previous to a show because she believed that her behaviour could have a negative effect on her performance:

I wouldn't eat things that I thought they were bad for you like chocolate. A couple of days before I would make sure that my diet would be very good because (...) I would think that it would get back on me because I had been naughty (Tania, L36-41).

Similarly participant 16 recognised that he no longer engages with the amount of routines that he used to in the past:

I used to do a lot of the mentioned routines (listed in the questionnaire). But (I) stopped doing them because they kind of drove me crazy; believing certain clothes I would wear during the day would help me in the show... (appendix 12).

It may be that some dancers rely less on superstitious rituals as they become more experienced on stage or perhaps there is a process of selection and adaptability where only superstitions that are perceived to work are kept. Participant 20 commented on the change in his religious practices: *“I used to say a prayer and sign the cross before every show when I was younger but that has worn off as I have become older.”* Similarly participant 1 volunteered in the questionnaire how his routines have evolved throughout his career:

Through different stages of my career I’ve had different nerve busting routines. (...) I used to have a favourite pair of tights I’d wear in class before a show... yet I don’t do this now. (...) The more comfortable I’ve become on stage, the less pre-show habits or rituals I’ve relied on (appendix 12).

However, dancers are inclined to retain their routines and superstitions if they perceive them to be effective. Carl is categorical in responding when asked if there were any aspects of his routines he would like to change or improve:

No, you know. I think those routines are perfect for me now. I haven't changed my routines for years simply because they are working for me. I have nothing else that I feel I need to improve (Carl, L77-79).

Although this research did not take into account age of participants or years of experience, it is interesting to note that superstitions and rituals may change and adapt throughout different stages of a professional career depending on the dancer's needs and concerns. These findings suggest that perhaps age, years of experience, levels of involvement and perception of effectiveness may be important contributing factors in the use of superstitious behaviours among dancers. Therefore this would be an area of interest for future innovative research.

This chapter has shed light onto a backstage environment of an otherwise difficult research site to access for any outsider. It has exposed that routines and superstitious behaviours are part of the lives of professional elite ballet dancers of one of UK's leading ballet companies. It has been shown that, consistent with existing sport literature, routines are a fundamental part of ballet dancers' training and superstitious behaviours often emerge in the form of a coping mechanism. They emerge as a result of the demands of the profession to provide the artist with enhanced feelings of control, confidence and reassurance.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Key emerging ideas

This study has focused on the ubiquitous and pervasive presence of anecdotal accounts of pre-performance superstitious behaviours in the memoirs of athletes and ballet dancers and in socio-cultural and psychological studies of pre-performance routines in sport and the performing arts. The starting point of this work was the author's personal experience as a professional ballet dancer, her subjective and introspective interrogation of her own pre-performance behaviour and her backstage observation of colleagues prior to performance, which, together with evidence from published research, as well as biographical accounts by professional dancers, suggested that backstage superstition is endemic in both the consciousness of professional ballet dancers and ballet culture. The dearth of literature on this topic in the ballet world reflects its complexity. The originality of insights into dancers' lives and use of behaviours and rituals to enhance dancers' performances has been possible because of the researcher's insider position. While it is recognised that such a position can be challenging, in this case it has enriched and enhanced understanding of the fluidity, extent and importance of such behaviours to successful performances of elite ballet dancers.

In reviewing an explanation of these omnipresent backstage superstitious rituals and behaviours in the ballet culture there appear to be two main sources. Firstly, ballet dancers are trained from the beginning and throughout their careers to follow prescribed and distinctive physical routines. These enduring traditional patterns have a long history and are

fundamental, inviolable means through which dancers acquire the technical and expressive skills demanded by the professional aesthetic. These routines are employed, indeed inculcated, stringently and consistently throughout a dancer's career and are believed to be sine qua non to the achievement of optimum performance in the profession. Unfortunately training too often focuses solely on the technical and physical aspect, neglecting cognitive development so that dancers are forced to develop their own strategies and coping mechanisms to deal with the multifarious demands of the career.

Secondly, this study reflects and re-enforces the results of cognate studies of backstage superstitious behaviour which have shown both the incidence of rituals and the dancers' realistic insights into, and appraisals of, their perceived purpose and effects. Whilst at one level dancers appear to be sceptical over the outcomes, emotionally they recognise that rituals do perform as important tension management function. This is perceived, or defined, as real, and it is real in its consequences and adaptive, conveying heightened feelings of control and self-confidence in confronting uncertainty.

These findings are consistent with the results of sport research which contend that superstitious behaviours endure because they do actually work by helping the performer to relax, focus and relieve tension (Foster et al., 2006; Damisch et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is found that superstitious practices prior to performance appear to have a performance-enhancing effect by increasing perceived levels of self-efficacy (ibid). In other words, a dancer performs better if he/she believes in his/her ability to do so.

After years of hard, long and intense training in the intimate and secluded atmosphere of a dance studio, dancers who achieve a refined level of skill are asked to expose and prove their abilities on stage under persistent performing pressure. Each performance is unique in a sense that it is at that very moment where it needs to be right suggesting that an outstanding performance is a well-balanced combination of talent, hard work and a little good-luck at the moment of delivery.

5.2 Strengths and weaknesses

Whilst the researcher is aware of the dangers of subjectivity in personal narrative, observation and interpretive, qualitative methods, this fieldwork resonates with the differences and agreement found in published research creating confidence in its integrity and authenticity. The unique insider perspective with backstage access to a 'world' typically viewed from out front or interpreted by 'unreliable narrators' who are denied unrestricted entry to the mostly closed and exclusive ballet community and culture. Hopefully the 'authentic' material produced by this study will be, potentially, of high value to future students and researchers, teachers and dancers seeking to develop further their understanding of pre-performance behaviour in order to make it more 'scientific', rational and effective.

It is regrettable that this study was limited to one dance company in which pre-performance behaviours may be learned, idiosyncratic and perpetuated in-house, making it impossible to generalise. This weakness could be addressed by further comparative research into other classical ballet companies.

Finally it can be claimed that this corpus of thoughtful and reflective personal narratives of pre-performance superstitions and rituals can be used to inform the development of systematic scientifically based training in customised and effective pre-performance preparation in classical ballet.

5.3 Recommendations

Many authorities have drawn attention to the paucity of dance focused social-psychological research and the almost complete absence of cognitive training in ballet. These crucial research and training lacunae demand attention as there are areas within dance training which should be considerably improved. Currently dancers seek medical and psychological services only when they are already confronted by problems (injury, eating disorders, motivation issues). In addition to providing preventative professional input a case can be made to formulate a research-based, theoretically informed and systematic training strategy designed to train dancers in the use of customised, though flexible pre-performance routines to optimise their mental, emotional and physical state of readiness to deliver peak performance through a long and arduous season. It could be speculated given the present state of knowledge, that if dancers could be trained to manage the achievement of optimum psychological, emotional and physical readiness to perform they would not have to invoke superstition. Nevertheless if it works for you....!

Although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with engaging superstitions practices which are perceived to work there is the inherent danger that they can become compulsive, obsessive

and maladaptive. As in any profession dancers should be encouraged if not trained to be rational, objective and critical in the pursuit of professional goals.

5.4 Ideas for further research

It would be interesting and informative to conduct a longitudinal study of the evolution of superstitious behaviours and pre-performance routines through the career cycle. The present study did not investigate the influence of age, years of experience or ethnicity but it was observed incidentally that the use of superstitions changes during the dancers performing life.

It would be interesting to investigate changing insecurities, pressures and coping strategies through the dancers' career cycle including any changes in associated superstitious behaviours and rituals, abandoning them altogether or perhaps even increasing in frequency. Ballet school based research could elucidate the actual learning processes through which pre-performance behaviours are acquired and possible intervention strategies to improve their effectiveness.

Finally cross-cultural research into the pre-performance behaviour of different national and ethnic dancers could reveal the association between forms of superstitious rituals and the cultural backgrounds in which they are embedded.

19997 words

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Participation Information Sheet

Participation Information Sheet

My name is Arancha Baselga and I am conducting research for a Masters degree in Dance at the University of Birmingham.

The primary aim of this study is to investigate behavioural routines that dancers engage in prior to performance. More specifically, the aim is to gain an understanding of what these routines consist of, why dancers perform them, and how effective they are.

Participation in the study is open to all members of Birmingham Royal Ballet and involves the completion of a questionnaire and possible involvement in an interview. The questionnaire should take approximately ten minutes to complete and the interview is expected to last between twenty and forty minutes. Study participants and the data they provide will remain confidential throughout the study as well as afterwards and any information disclosed during data collection will not be discussed with anyone (including the participant) following the completion of data collection. Involvement in the study is completely voluntary and therefore participants are free to withdraw from the study at anytime without giving a reason. If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me or my tutor Dr Ian Boardley at the University of Birmingham using the contact details detailed below.

Arancha Baselga
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Email: aranbaselga@hotmail.com

Dr Ian Boardley
Phone: 0121 415 8399
Email: i.d.boardley@bham.ac.uk

Participant Consent

I _____ give consent to participate in this study which aims to identify behavioural routines that dancers engage in prior to performance. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at anytime and that my personal details and data will be kept confidential throughout and not discussed with me or anyone else following data collection. I have read the participant information sheet and any questions that I had have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signed _____ Date _____

Witnessed by _____ Date _____

Appendix 2.

Behavioural Ritual Questionnaire

Behavioural Ritual Questionnaire

Listed below are a number of rituals dancers may use before performances and/or rehearsals. For each ritual you use place an 'x' in the space given. For each ritual you perform please then rate how effective you find it to be in helping you to prepare.

Ritual	Do you do this?	How effective is this ritual?				
		Not Effective		Neutral		Very Effective
Check appearance in mirror		1	2	3	4	5
Wear good luck shoes		1	2	3	4	5
Dress well		1	2	3	4	5
Wear warm up clothes the same way		1	2	3	4	5
Dress sloppily		1	2	3	4	5
Wear particular tights		1	2	3	4	5
Particular hair style		1	2	3	4	5
Take ice bath		1	2	3	4	5
specific make up routine		1	2	3	4	5
Wear same hair equipment		1	2	3	4	5
Specific Eating Habit/s		1	2	3	4	5
Putting shoes on same way		1	2	3	4	5
Wear same underwear		1	2	3	4	5

Ritual	Do you do this?	How effective is this ritual?				
		Not Effective		Neutral		Very Effective
Have lucky item of clothing		1	2	3	4	5
Wearing lucky charm		1	2	3	4	5
Drinking from a particular bottle		1	2	3	4	5
Place warm up equipment in specific place		1	2	3	4	5
Discarding lucky charms		1	2	3	4	5
Kiss/touch lucky charm		1	2	3	4	5
Tape body		1	2	3	4	5
Music during warm-up		1	2	3	4	5
Snacks/energizers		1	2	3	4	5
Seek silence/seclusion		1	2	3	4	5
Same person helps you get ready		1	2	3	4	5
Warm-up using same routine		1	2	3	4	5
Singing and joking		1	2	3	4	5
Going over step routines		1	2	3	4	5
Trying steps set number of times		1	2	3	4	5

Ritual	Do you do this?	How effective is this ritual?				
		Not Effective		Neutral		Very Effective
Checking your costume is ok regularly		1	2	3	4	5
Checking hair or hair dress is ok regularly		1	2	3	4	5
Checking shoes are ok regularly		1	2	3	4	5
Drinking at same moments during show		1	2	3	4	5
Gum/mint chewing		1	2	3	4	5
Going over routines with dancing partner		1	2	3	4	5
Group cheer		1	2	3	4	5
Talk with colleges		1	2	3	4	5
Pray for success before each performance		1	2	3	4	5
Afraid luck will run out if no prayer		1	2	3	4	5
Making sing of cross		1	2	3	4	5
I like to talk to management before show		1	2	3	4	5
I like to talk to management after show		1	2	3	4	5
Checking tempos or introduction gestures with conductor		1	2	3	4	5

Please add below any other type of routine or habit not listed above that you might use during or in preparation to your performance

Please write any comments you would like to add in relation to your personal routines. (e.g. things you might hate, or perhaps things you can not do without or simply anecdotes of how your routines take place etc.)

Appendix 3.

Interview schedule

Interview schedule

- What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?
- Are these routines set and always the same?
- Why do you follow these routines?
- How would you feel if your routines could not take place or were disrupted?

Appendix 4.

Behavioural Routine Questionnaire Results

Behavioural Routine Questionnaire Results

Respondents ID Numbers	Questionnaire Categories						Total Score (n=42)	
	Appearance (n=13)	Fetish (n=6)	Pre- performance (n=9)	Performance (n=5)	Team Ritual (n=3)	Pray (n=3)		Management (n=3)
1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
2	4	0	1	2	1	0	1	9
3	5	1	6	4	1	0	0	17
4	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	4
5	3	1	3	3	2	0	2	14
6	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	6
7	7	1	4	3	1	0	2	18
8	4	1	4	0	0	0	0	9
9	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	6
10	3	0	2	0	1	0	1	7
11	5	0	3	3	2	0	1	14
12	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
13	8	2	6	5	3	0	0	24
14	4	1	2	3	2	0	0	12
15	6	1	6	2	1	0	2	18
16	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	4
17	10	1	5	1	1	1	2	21
18	3	0	3	0	0	1	0	7
19	1	0	3	0	1	2	0	7
20	7	0	3	3	3	1	0	17
21	2	0	3	3	2	1	0	11
22	3	0	6	1	2	0	1	13
23	4	1	5	2	2	3	2	19
24	5	1	2	1	0	0	0	9
25	11	0	4	4	3	1	1	24
26	8	0	7	4	3	0	1	23

Respondents ID Numbers	Questionnaire Categories							Total Score (n=42)
	Appearance (n=13)	Fetish (n=6)	Pre- performance (n=9)	Performance (n=5)	Team Ritual (n=3)	Pray (n=3)	Management (n=3)	
27	4	1	4	5	1	0	0	15
28	10	1	6	4	2	0	1	24
29	5	0	4	2	2	0	1	14
30	6	0	2	4	1	0	1	14
31	9	2	6	4	2	0	1	24
32	3	0	1	2	0	0	1	7
33	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	3
34	2	0	7	4	1	0	2	16
35	5	1	3	1	1	0	1	12
36	4	0	2	1	0	0	2	9
37	5	1	6	3	0	0	0	15
38	5	0	4	3	1	0	0	13
39	9	0	6	3	1	0	2	21
40	7	0	3	4	3	0	1	18
41	6	0	5	3	1	0	0	15
42	6	0	7	4	2	0	1	20
43	5	0	3	2	0	0	0	10
44	4	0	2	1	1	0	0	8
45	4	0	4	2	1	0	1	12
46	1	0	2	3	1	0	0	7
47	6	1	5	4	1	0	0	17
48	4	0	2	1	2	1	1	11
49	6	0	3	3	2	1	0	15
50	5	2	7	4	3	0	0	21

Appendix 5.

Percentage of participants who engage with questionnaire routines

Percentage of participants who engage with questionnaire routines

Item	Males	Females	Total
1. Check appearance in mirror	96%	96%	96%
2. Wear good luck shoes	20%	12%	16%
3. Dress well	40%	40%	40%
4. Wear warm up clothes the same way	52%	52%	52%
5. Dress sloppily	4%	12%	8%
6. Wear particular tights	20%	28%	24%
7. Particular hair style	8%	24%	16%
8. Take ice bath	32%	28%	30%
9. Specific make up routine	60%	68%	64%
10. Wear same hair equipment	8%	40%	24%
11. Specific Eating Habit/s	64%	60%	62%
12. Putting shoes on same way	20%	52%	36%
13. Wear same underwear	4%	8%	6%
14. Have lucky item of clothing	20%	4%	12%
15. Wearing lucky charm	0%	4%	2%

Item	Males	Females	Total
16. Drinking from a particular bottle	0%	4%	2%
17. Place warm up equipment in specific place	20%	16%	18%
18. Discarding lucky charms	0%	0%	0%
19. Kiss/touch lucky charm	8%	8%	8%
20. Tape body	4%	16%	10%
21. Music during warm-up	20%	36%	28%
22. Snacks/energizers	72%	56%	64%
23. Seek silence/seclusion	40%	44%	42%
24. Same person helps you get ready	0%	4%	2%
25. Warm-up using same routine	36%	80%	58%
26. Singing and joking	40%	36%	38%
27. Going over step routines	80%	88%	84%
28. Trying steps set number of times	24%	40%	32%
29. Checking your costume is ok regularly	44%	64%	54%
30. Checking hair or hair dress is ok regularly	48%	64%	56%
31. Checking shoes are ok regularly	36%	92%	64%

Item	Males	Females	Total
	28%	20%	22%
32. Drinking at same moments during show			
	24%	48%	36%
33. Gum/mint chewing			
	52%	60%	56%
34. Going over routines with dancing partner			
	16%	16%	16%
35. Group cheer			
	48%	52%	50%
36. Talk with colleges			
	24%	8%	16%
37. Pray for success before each performance			
	4%	0%	2%
38. Afraid luck will run out if no prayer			
	16%	0%	8%
39. Making sing of cross			
	0%	4%	2%
40. I like to talk to management before show			
	32%	16%	24%
41. I like to talk to management after show			
	28%	40%	34%
42. Checking tempos or introduction gestures with conductor			

Appendix 6.

Interview ID No 17- CARL

1 **Interview ID No 17- CARL**

2

3 • **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?**

4 **(Behavior, specific order, space, timing....)**

5

6 I think everyday my routines are very similar. It is kind of a type to stretch to start the
7 day, and I have to do that before I go for class. If I don't do that I probably don't do
8 class. It is for me not only warm up the body but really just to get concentrated;
9 knowing that 'ok, I am gonna have to work'. That happens everyday, it is almost like
10 meditation. You start concentrating on stretching, your muscles and your body feels
11 good and you are sort of getting concentrated.

12 Before shows it is pretty much the same thing. If I have time, but if it is an evening
13 show I would do the same thing but a quicker version. And, you know, I take a shower
14 and after I take a shower I am warm and then do my make-up basically. And even
15 between shows I would take my make-up off and put my make-up on again, even if it is
16 only for a good wash. It helps me sort of finishing last show and start new one again.
17 Also, while putting make-up on, it helps me concentrating for the next show since it is a
18 precise and control routine; having to draw the lines in your face and all of that...

19

20 • **Are this routines set and always the same? Or do they depend on other**
21 **factors?**

22

23 For my stretches I have a very specific order. For example the first thing I do is I
24 provably roll my back and do a side split and I do my (gestures showing the

25 movement). It is always the left leg first, always left leg first and then I do the cross
26 stretch (more gestures), I do the cross kneed thing and I do my back-stretch and my
27 psoas stretch. Then I go on to warm up my feet and calves, thigh, hamstring, calves
28 again and underneath my foot in specific order. I do not switch. I might skip certain
29 things when I don't need them. And also I have to do a warm up before every show and
30 every rehearsal. There is a routine of a combination of 'tondues' and 'ron de jams' and a
31 little turns and jumps I do before anything. Even if I just finish class and I have
32 rehearsal in fifteen minutes, I would still do those routines just to bring myself back into
33 a center sort to speak. And I don't know if it really, sometimes it may not really help
34 that big deal but it is more mental; so that I feel ok, I am ready. I calm myself down, I
35 feel warm.

36

37 • **Why do you follow these routines?**

38

39 To start I think it is because I had lots of knee injuries when I was young because I
40 didn't know how to warm up and gradually you learn. If your hips and very tight then it
41 pulls on your knee and then you start doing that and you feel good about it, you know?
42 You feel really comfortable.

43

44 • **Do you feel as though you need these routines?**

45

46 Yes, definitely. Because one think I hate to do it is... I don't like dancing in pain, I
47 don't enjoy dancing that way. And by doing them it will make my body feel fresher. I
48 provably could do class and rehearsal without them but I will not feel as enjoyable

49 because I would be aware of; ‘oh, that is tight or that is not quite right in shape’. So for
50 me, you know, I provably need to do them but I don’t actually need to do them. I can
51 stay one or two days without really damaging my body but if I don’t do them, in the
52 long term, it will start affecting my ability as a dancer. And that is why I keep doing
53 them.

54

55 • **Do you think the routine helps you? And if so, how?**

56

57 It helps me by doing those things, it actually calms me down, that is why I do them. I
58 believe that if I do everything I can then I am mentally prepared. And I am going there
59 (stage) and I feel ‘I am ok, I am ready’. Everything is switch on. And not only when I
60 do a big premiere but also when I do a smaller part, it just keeps me on the zone.

61

62

63

64

65 • **How did you establish these patterns?**

66

67 I think a lot of things are very common like calf stretches but a lot of things I have made
68 them up. You know? When I had injuries there is not much help from physios, at the
69 time we didn’t have a good physio. Your know, treatment is very limited. So it is either
70 you dance in pain or you figure out something, maybe one thing that you do today in
71 this area and makes your knee feel better and the next day I will know, you develop
72 your own sort of knowledge about your body as well.

73

74 • **Would you like to improve your routines as part of your preparation in any**
75 **way? And if so, how?**

76

77 No, you know. I think those routines are perfect for me now. I haven't change my
78 routines for years simply because they are working for me. I have nothing else that I
79 feel I need to improve. I have different versions of it. The full version will provably take
80 one hour and a half complete but I could do a quick version. For me, if I do those things
81 I feel improved technically and I feel improved in my ability to dance better and if I
82 don't do those things I know that...you know!

83 I feel really fresh, I know it because I have done it. Because I have done it; I have come
84 in too late for class and it really feels bad!

85

86 • **And for you shows do you wear some stuff that makes you comfortable? You**
87 **wear a cross, is that right?**

88

89 I wear a little cross that makes me feel comfortable but really the thing that makes me
90 comfortable with the show is when I do more rehearsals. I remember I used to rehears
91 until I would hear the music and be sick of it, and then I knew; ok, I am ready! Because
92 I am absolutely calm. And I think now the routines give me that feeling. Even now, I
93 know I don't have the time but I would still do them to try to achieve a goal. And I feel
94 almost that I am sick of that. And then, when I go on stage it is the perfect mood
95 because I am calm, because on stage you actually have to perform. So that is ideal and it
96 used to happen but now I just don't have the time. But that is the mental state I like to

97 be in. it is almost like I got sick of it a little bit; to get sick of it in rehearsal so that you
98 are ready to go on stage.
99

Appendix 7.

Interview ID No 13- BERT

Interview ID No 13- BERT

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- **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?**

(Behavior, specific order, space, timing...)

I normally start, no make up first, comfortable trackys, t-shirt and get on stage. I just lie down for a little bit and shut my eyes and then look up into the sealing of the stage where all the light rails hang. I try to get on before the curtain is down and then I start to do some Pilates like abdominal work and then I come up and I always, always do feet exercises with both feet together first, to try to plant them so that I feel quite grounded. After that I just sort of stand and feel my feet again facing out into the auditorium. Then I'll do a little bare. Provably continuously without stopping; I just go 'plies', 'toudous', 'jetes', 'fondues'. I usually do the same simple combination 'on croix'; 'toudues', 'jetes', 'frapes', 'fondues', and a little 'grand battman'. I don't do adage. And then I normally listen to music, I have a few songs, normally quite up bit, sometimes quite fast too, just to sort of get me going and then I come into the center and do a 'tondu' exercise with a pirouette, a little 'jete' and then I just do something from the corner like an 'arabesque shase through retire on dedant pirouette' and then pirouettes. And then I find that if I can do some good pirouettes before the show, if I can sort of find my balance and get it right, if I can do some good pirouettes before the show, that is something that makes me mentally feel a lot better about myself, confidence wise, if I can do it strongly and finishing well I go; ok, right, I know I am warm enough and I am ready. I find that is something I check of my list. Then I do a little warm up jump, not

24 too much, and then if there is something in the show, I would do something I'm not too
25 sure of.

26 Then make up, I normally get part of my costume first then make up and wigs or
27 whatever. I will put the tights on, I will get the shoes on or boots so that my feet can
28 warm up to them and I always (giggle) have to blow warm air into the shoes before
29 putting them on. So I do that, I do my make up the same way every time unless of
30 course the show requires some especial make up.

31 If it's like a big or important show I try and get to the stage fifteen minutes before so
32 that I can try some more stuff.

33

34 • **Do you go over step routines?**

35

36 Yes, definitely. Even before dancing small things. I would mark it through even if it is
37 only on my own, like at the five-minute call I just go through everything I do, all the
38 steps I do. I go through it, picture it in my mind how I would like to do it, like doing it
39 perfectly. I do sometimes worry that if I don't go through it, even if I have done it loads,
40 if I don't go through it, that will be the day that I blank or something happens. I don't
41 want to feel to complacent about know in it, even though I know it I don't want to feel
42 too over confident about it and then blank because I would kick myself! I would say to
43 myself; 'you could have just gone through it!'. So I like to go over it so I reassure
44 myself and I don't need to worry about watching, what other people are doing or
45 copying on stage or anything like that. But obviously sometimes you do get on stage
46 and don't really know... I have blanked on stage and it is not nice... (giggle)

47

48

49

50 • **Do you have any lucky stuff?**

51

52 I have things like good shoes that I feel comfortable with before the show but as soon as

53 I finish the performance I kind of forget about anything. If it was a good show I think,

54 yes! That was a good show because my body was ready and my mind was ready, I don't

55 think about the objects but before hand sometimes I do, I worry about things like tights

56 being right, or if the heel isn't over my heel, if it is a bit up or down... and I feel that it

57 is not right, it is just not right!! That really agitates me, getting my shoes exactly right

58 and fitting properly it is very important for me.

59 But I find sometimes if stuff goes wrong I never blame it on the objects, I normally just

60 think; that was bad and that was you!

61

62 • **Why do you think you need these routines?**

63

64 I think it is just that people are comfortable with repetition and what they know so that

65 if it is different it can sometimes through you so even if it is not something major, even

66 if it is just like wearing the same hair band to keep your hair back as you are doing your

67 make up. It is just, if I didn't have it I would be like; oh!!! Where is it? And what di I

68 do? How am I going to keep my hair back? Or stuff like that. Or you know, it is like

69 keeping my costume always in the same place, because if you can't find it or you are in

70 a rush, it can be a bit... it is the last thing you want to be worried about. Having

71 everything where you want it for each performance and keeping it the same is like a
72 constant you can rely on.

73

74

75 • **How would you feel if your routines could not take place?**

76

77 For example I tend to use the same spot at bare everyday. I always go back to the same
78 spot at bare and I always go to the same spot in center, I am always on stage left.

79 (giggle) Always, yes always actually. And I would provably feel a bit uncomfortable to
80 change spot. Even though it would provably not make any difference and I am not sure
81 it would directly affect my dancing, but I just... it wouldn't be what I do every day and
82 it is weird but I don't know, I think I would feel a little bit uneasy about it. I just
83 wouldn't feel the same because it isn't.

84

85 • **Would you like to improve your routines as part of your preparation in any
86 way? And if so, how?**

87

88 I could provably warm up better. And possibly I think I could think more about my
89 breathing before hand. Just perhaps learn to take really deep breaths to get my lungs
90 fully working to their full extend. I think sometimes I forget to do that, I think
91 sometimes that cuts off when I get a bit nervous. I just hold it instead of easing my
92 breath to help me. To help me calm down and also keep the oxygen levels up. I think I
93 could definitely improve that.

94

95 • **Would you mind commenting on some of your answers in the questionnaire?**

96

97 Having a good pair of tights is very important for me. If they look nice you can feel
98 better on them and I think that can sometimes affect me. Especially the material if the
99 shoes kind of slip of and you have to keep putting resin on your tights... I find that
100 annoying.

101

102 I always try not to eat right before. I do try to eat fairly healthy before , I wouldn't go
103 for fish and chips before a show. I always have dried fruit as snacks, like dried mango,
104 pineapple or apricots. Yes, I always have that. It is provably not amazing for you
105 because it can be quite sugary but yeah, I always have it.

106

107 I responded that having a good luck item of clothing is not effective but I do it! I mean,
108 it is not effective directly but I think, I find that if I have something that I like and looks
109 nice then I feel better about it. Like in the morning, before the show, before a good
110 show I would hate to wear anything that I didn't like or I didn't think I looked nice in.
111 Because I feel better about it when I have my comfy things on and I think it would look
112 good. It makes me feel better.

113

114 In between shows if they are big shows and I am feeling tired, I will find somewhere
115 quiet and sit with my feet up and listen to music, maybe watch some TV or something
116 and that will make me feel so much better even if it is only for ten or fifteen minutes of
117 just closing my eyes, even if I don't sleep I can feel so much better after just that.

118

119 If I try a step three times and I get it right, everyone will say three is the lucky number! I
120 don't know why it is!! I think it is because I had a teacher at school that used to say that
121 if you could get it right three times in a row then you were fine. You could do it a fourth
122 time easily.

123

124 I always have to check that the poppers on my costume are done up just before, literally
125 just before going on stage. Just before I touch at the front and at the back with my hand
126 all over it very quickly (he shows me the pattern with his hands). I check the back; yes,
127 that's fine and I always check the neck ones because they can come undone.

128

129 And I always check my shoes and keep on pulling up the heel just because I never want
130 them to fall off. I have nightmares about the heels coming off and dancing with flippers
131 like half the shoe hanging up...(giggles)

132

133 I find a group cheer is very good. When you know that everyone else is together it does
134 make you feel better when every body pulls together and it is like; yes, we can do it, we
135 can do it!

136

137 It is nice when you get feed back from the management after the show. I always
138 appreciate it when they come and say something. Even if it is only, you need to do this
139 or you are doing it wrong or this needs to be better. For guidance. It is almost, I kind of
140 prefer it when they say that was good but I think this could have been better or that... I
141 always really like to get feed back after a show because it can be different than in the

142 studio. There can be things where they could go up or down or being different, they just
143 could see it differently so it can affect what it needs to change.

144

145 If I haven't used the bathroom before a performance then... well, if I have used it I feel
146 psychologically a bit lighter (giggles). Actually, if I don't use it I kind of worry about it
147 a little bit, and sometimes it can affect how well I can really hold my muscles... I know
148 it is a bit gros but that is actually one thing I do worry about.

149

Appendix 8.

Interview ID No 25- THOMAS

1 **Interview ID No 25- THOMAS**

2

3

4 • **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?**

5 **(Behavior, specific order, space, timing...)**

6

7 Normally if it is a principal role I will definitely have a power nap, so that my body
8 feels quite good. Not all the time works because sometimes if I have over slept... So I
9 really need to be strict so 20 minutes and no more, because if I over pass those 20
10 minutes my body shuts down. So yes, I kind of do power nap first and then have a
11 shower and warm up and then listen to the music like. I kind of don't want to be too
12 energetic also, because you don't want to use all your energy before the show. So yes, I
13 follow that routine. Have a little rest, and some energy food like bananas, I don't want
14 to eat too much, something light, but I make sure I eat of course and also it depends
15 what sort of role, if it is very jumpy I can't have a full stomach but I need the energy.
16 Also music really helps me, it really inspires me. From classical music to pop music, it
17 just depends on my mood. Especially when I am warming up doing my own bare I like
18 listening to my own music. In my previous company we did a set warm up all together
19 at the half hour call with piano music but here at BRB, it is nice that I can do my own
20 thing and listen to the music I like while I am warming up so I can feel inspired and
21 ready to go, so in a way it is kind of good because your mind is not thinking so much of
22 what you are doing tonight just yet, like I am just focusing on myself first, so that you
23 are not nervous about it, about the role you are going to do, so that helps me to calm
24 down and just warm up first and get my body ready until it feels right, and then I will go

25 through the whole ballet, everything I need to do. I go over the steps even though I
26 know them. If I have to put make up on though, I will do that first and then warm up.
27 Yes, make up will definitely be first before warm up. Yes, so I would always do that;
28 power nap, shower, little bit of food, make up and warm up and then go through the
29 steps for the show.

30

31 • **Why do you do these routines?**

32

33 I figure this patron works for me through experience by trying different things over the
34 years. But when I don't do a principal role I can do things differently and not so strict so
35 I don't need so much preparation. It is hard to say but sometimes even in a soloist role I
36 used to burst out my energy before going on so I learn through experience to do things
37 to calm me down. Also, singing a lot also helps me to relax and then also not to be
38 thinking about going on stage all the time and to have a conversation with friends and
39 have a laugh helps me too. Also sometimes I talk a lot but some other times when I
40 have to do something really serious I just feel like I have to concentrate, no talking even
41 if the dressing room was loud I just shut off. Almost like 'don't talk to me', I need to be
42 in the zone.

43

44 • **How would you feel if your routines could not take place?**

45

46 I will definitely always have my earphones with me so that if somebody comes chatting
47 I will act like 'oh great!' But I will put them on straight away so that people get the
48 message and most of the time they do get the message that you just want to be focus.

49 Also, I remember when I recently did a principal role, people in the dressing room were
50 playing some music and stuff and it was quite loud and they asked; ‘are you ok with
51 that?’ And I just said; ‘yes, no problem!’ and I just put my earphones back on. I don’t
52 really care what is happening, I know it really bothers other people. Somebody from a
53 higher rank even offered me their dressing room because it was empty and just in case I
54 wanted to be alone but it doesn’t bother me as long as I can just switch off with my
55 earphones. It doesn’t matter I just sit and stare at myself and that is ok.

56

57 • **How do you think it helps you?**

58

59 Well, before the show I will have to really warm up specially the feet and some
60 abdominal work. Also some balances and feel what I need when I am doing bare and if
61 the steps are hard then I will go through them and make sure I am warm for it even
62 though I have rehears so much so I don’t need practice anymore. I know I am ready. But
63 I don’t want to get to tired before the show so... I just practice them ones or twice and
64 that is because also sometimes you don’t want to freak yourself out, especially just
65 before the curtain goes up you may go like; Oh God! Why is it not working? And
66 thoughts like that, so it can freak you out so that is not good. You know you can do it;
67 you have done it so it is fine.

68

69 • **Would you like to comment on any of your answers in the questionnaire?**

70

71 I am very picky with my shoes, you know, it is like point shoes. I want to make sure
72 they look good and it is also the feeling of, you know? (gestures with hands and feet)
73 not too new, comfortable and yeah, they need to feel right.

74

75 With my clothes I go through what I look good in. I have a few things that are really
76 comfortable and they keep me warm, the warmest definitely comes first because I want
77 to make sure I am warm but also I don't want to wear anything baggy or ... you know?
78 So that I can feel my body and be comfortable.

79

80 I also do sometimes the sign of cross before going on stage but I am not religious
81 (giggles). It is just that people do it so, I mean, it is not a joke or anything but like that
82 but it is more like, you know? People do it so you just, almost like just in case (giggles)
83 so that nothing goes wrong, I hope that works just like that.

84

85 When I look myself in the mirror before going on stage I have to know I look good so
86 that I feel good and my make up is good, that is why I do my make up before I warm
87 up. I want to make sure that everything looks right so that I don't worry about it.

88

89 My track suite has to be quite loose and comfortable that is quite good.

90

91 I always use my own hair spray and hair gel and it has to be a good brand!

Appendix 9.

Interview ID No 26- JANE

1 **Interview ID No 26- JANE**

2

3

- 4 • **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance? (Behavior,**
5 **specific order, space, timing...)**

6

7 Oh yeah, what do I do? I always do my make-up before my hair, always no matter
8 what! Uhm I always do, if, this is one of those stupid things, if I've done a show and I
9 felt that it went quite well, I will wear those same tights, I'll wash them but I'll wear the
10 same tights. And also my hair elastic, I wear the same hair elastic. And then I usually
11 would have a sleep during the day before a big show. I don't like to really do any thing
12 much. Usually I would sleep for like an hour, no more than an hour. I would just have
13 my iPod during the day, have a bit of a sleep and then get ready. If I have a really hard
14 step that I'm having trouble with, or I don't really like, I practice it two times because
15 then the third time lucky will be on stage. But then if I've done it two times and it is
16 really bad, I'll do it a third time and then I'll have to do it another two times so that the
17 third time lucky is on stage. And that is pretty much it really, otherwise I don't have
18 anything else.

19 I eat before the show, I don't have anything that I can't eat before the show or anything
20 like that. So yeah, I do make-up before hair, I wear same hair elastic and same tights,
21 and the thing where I try the step three times.

22

23

24

25

26 • **Do you follow any specific timing?**

27

28 I don't like to be ready too early, I don't like having to wait around, warm up and that. I
29 usually just like to be ready just before, and I don't really, if it is a big show, I don't like
30 to go on stage before like at the five or fifteen minutes call. I don't really like to go and
31 do anything. And I don't really like to practice before the show too much just in case
32 that anything goes wrong.

33

34 • **Do you go on stage earlier on the day?**

35

36 Yes, I much rather do that than do it right before the show.

37

38 • **Do you keep your warm up routine consistent?**

39

40 I usually do, actually I do some body conditioning during the day, if I haven't got the
41 show during the day. If it is something like Nutcracker, I tend to do pretty much a
42 whole bare during sort of half way through first act into the interval, I usually get ready
43 as the show is starting and then do, once I'm ready, I do a bare. Because you have to
44 wait for ages for that but usually if you are on in the first act I warm up quite quickly
45 and it is usually fine, it would be just like a short bare or something like that but I don't
46 do a full on...

47

48 • **Do you go through the steps?**

49

50 It depends, sometimes I do. Like for example, in Juliet I used to, during second act, I
51 used to sit there and had the music in my iPod, and I used to play the third act music
52 and just go through it. I did that every show. Because I felt that it got me a bit more in
53 the role instead of just sitting there and reading a magazine.

54

55 • **Do you change your routines with different roles?**

56

57 The general routine is pretty much the same but yes, I guess there are certain things that,
58 well, with the Juliet thing it was different; I sat there and listened to the music and went
59 through it but with Nutcracker there is not a lot that mentally (emotionally) you can
60 prepare for, you just go on and do it. Swan Lake is a little bit different, I mean, because
61 you have to prepare yourself well for second act and you have to warm up well before
62 that but then into third act you don't have much time to do anything because you have a
63 quick change, you have to change your make-up, your hair piece and costume so by the
64 time you do all that you literally run at the back and you are on, and then it is another
65 quick change into fourth act. So yeah, in Swan Lake there isn't really anything you can
66 do in between acts. You just, once you are on you are pretty much on the whole way.
67 But generally my routines do stay the same with me, like how I get ready and
68 everything like that.

69

70 • **How would you feel if your routines could not take place?**

71

72 The thought of it I'm like; uhh!! God, this is going to be shit! But one I'm on there it is
73 like it doesn't matter or anything. But before it does make me think about it a bit, like,
74 uhh, maybe this won't be that good! But (laughing) just because you don't have the same
75 hair elastic or the same tights on somehow it can really make a difference!!
76 I guess I don't really think about it after that, but it does cross my mind though. It makes
77 me a bit uncomfortable. But I don't think about it one I'm on there.

78

79 • **Would you like to improve your routines as part of your preparation in any**
80 **way? And if so, how?**

81

82 I definitely think that seeing a sports psychologist helped me. I mean everybody is
83 different but it did help me, especially when I was coming back from an injury. Because
84 you are quite negative anyway, and you are sort of concerned what people are thinking
85 of you coming back from an injury because you think that they are going to be thinking
86 oh, is she strong, is she this, is she that and so, seeing her did help a lot. Just getting
87 through it. It is a confidence thing but everybody is different. I think if you were not
88 injured, she (sports/dance psychologist) would approach the whole thing differently as
89 well. I think it would, it could help but then some people like it and some people don't.
90 I think it is just personal, I could, the way she explained things, I could relate to it. A lot
91 of it was visualization and I can visualize quite well whereas another colleague of mine
92 didn't like it because she can't visualize, she said she doesn't have a good imagination,
93 because I think most of her stuff is visualization work. But then other specialists you go
94 to, they may just talk and talk and for me, I have been to someone like that, and I just

95 sat there and I was like 'I don't really understand this'. It wasn't really working for me.
96 So I think it is whatever works for anyone really.
97 I saw this sport and dance psychologist when I first went off and I didn't find that as
98 beneficial as when I started coming back dancing again and I remember before, I saw
99 her before I started point work again and she asked me to visualize going into point and
100 I couldn't do it! And before that I hadn't even thought about it, you know, picturing
101 yourself rising into point on one foot and when I thought about it, in my mind I couldn't
102 do it. I could kind of get there but then I wouldn't go all the way up, which was really
103 weird. I was just scared of doing it, I was worried that it was going to go again, which it
104 wasn't. but I didn't know until she asked me to visualize it that I couldn't do it. Because
105 I would have just assumed that I would be fine. She said that I would be able to do it but
106 in my mind I would be really hesitant and scared and wouldn't want to start raising into
107 point. So she made me start visualizing going into point slowly and then the more I did
108 it, the more I got confident and then when I came back and did a bit of point work it
109 was so much easier, so yes, it was really weird. It was stuff like that I found very
110 helpful. And also for coming back for shows, back on stage. And I think if you probably
111 saw her regularly I think she would be really good.

112

113 • **Are you scared of getting injured again?**

114

115 It did used to worry me. Two years after my operation I did used to still think oh God! I
116 don't know if I can do this because my foot might 'go' and it is not that strong and
117 everything but now, sometimes it gets a bit sore and I think straight away oh my God, it
118 is really bad! I think that is just like straight away panic for me but it is fine now, I

119 rarely think about it now. Unless it is really tight or something and then I panic and
120 think 'that's it, it's come back, it's broken' sort of thing. Which it is not, it is just... I
121 just get really paranoid about it.

122

123

Appendix 10.

Interview Schedule ID No 39- LUNA

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Interview Schedule ID No 39- LUNA

- **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance?**
(Behavior, specific order, space, timing...)

For me the worst thing is feeling rushed and not having enough time to prepare so definitely allowing that I have provably more than enough time, being in the theater way in advance for example, even before class. Things like, even in the morning just getting up early because I hate rushing. Because I just think that adds an extra stress on top. So yes, definitely that and then performance wise, a little bit like everyone, you do your little routines... I do things in a certain order; I always do my hair first, always do my make-up second and then, even in terms of warming up, I follow the same, pretty much the same order of things sort of speak. I always like to check shoes way in advance, because there is nothing worse than, actually no, I actually choose shoes first, even before I start getting ready so that I know they are ready and I don't need to worry about that. And of course I must have a back up pair obviously. But yes, I would say that for me timing is the main thing to be honest, because I hate feeling pressured by that on top of everything else.

- **How do you think it helps you?**

Just in terms of relaxing more I think and just having the time to think about what you are doing. Obviously at the same time as having time to chat with everyone, having your own time as well. I don't listen to music or anything like that, I just prefer to have

25 the chat around me, you know? Normal conversation. It helps me to get in the zone
26 more than if I stick my head right in, definitely.

27

28 • **Do you have any good luck stuff?**

29

30 Not really anymore... I used to always have a good luck teddy thing but I don't know
31 when that wore off. In terms of shoes I'm obsessive about the ribbons, I must re-tight
32 them about five times and resin box. It has to be resined. I think to me that is the thing
33 that is like a safety thing I have to do and it is a ritual but in terms of an object I don't
34 have that anymore.

35

36 • **Do you over the steps?**

37

38 If there is something that is really new to us, I will actually run through the whole thing
39 in my mind, even if it is not run through it on stage, I would just do it in my head even
40 if it is in the dressing room just to make sure that I can remember it. I wouldn't say that
41 I do that every single time but definitely during the first new shows of a new ballet. And
42 also I try to always think back to the last note session for any correction we may have
43 had.

44

45 • **How would you feel if your timing routines could not take place?**

46

47 Thinking about it I would imagine that it would make me very stress and panic but in
48 reality I think, to be honest, it would probably be fine because I think a lot of it is

49 psychological and I think I need that much time, and I am used to having that much
50 time, whereas I think if I was forced to have less time... you would make it anyway,
51 you would force yourself, you know what I mean? And in some ways it may end up
52 being a better result!! You know what I mean? (giggles) Because it is something
53 different! Thinking about it, it would stress me out but in reality I think it would be fine.

54

55 • **Do you think an expert on the field (sports/dance psychologist) could improve**
56 **your routines?**

57

58 I'm not sure it would be necessary because everyone is so individual, you literally have
59 the extremes; some people would prefer to turn up five minutes before and just get on
60 and do it whereas some people would rather have an hour and a half. I don't know I think
61 perhaps when you are a student and you are learning by observing what other people do.
62 But I'm not sure if actually being guidance would help in that area, I don't know how
63 beneficial it would be because it is so individual and they know what they need to
64 perform well and deal with the stress.

65 I still find interesting watching other people and thinking 'oh, maybe that would
66 work for me' in terms of dealing with things or whatever but I'm not sure that actual
67 guidance would ... I don't know, maybe it would be! To try new things, but people are
68 so set on their ways!!

69 I think if I was on a state of feeling the pressure and I was not dealing with things well
70 then I would, you know... there is people that would offer great help.

71

72

73

74 • **Would you like to comment in any of your answers of the questionnaires?**

75

76 I have certain shoes for each role, which I guess they are good luck shoes!

77 My hair and make-up is a routine for sure, I guess I think it is effective because it is

78 what I always do. If I did it in a different order, I'm sure it wouldn't matter but I

79 wouldn't want to. And it is also psychological because it doesn't matter if you do your

80 hair and make up first but it sets you in the right order.

81 I don't like to eat anything too heavy and also a certain amount of time before hand. And

82 if I have something really demanding I would have something like pasta the day before.

83 I use the same warm up routine and I do it without music, which I think is quite rare

84 because most people would prefer to have their headphones on.

85 I don't like silence either, I like the background noise, I like the normality that

86 everything is still going on you know, so that you are not too focus, I mean, I guess if

87 you were doing something really demanding with a lot of pressure you won't want

88 people to try and talk to you all the time but definitely a bit of interaction for sure.

89 I check my ribbons all the time, and again, I'm sure that if I wouldn't do it, it wouldn't

90 have a negative effect but because I always do it... it's a habit again.

91 I find a good group cheer very effective because you know how it is in the dressing

92 room when one person's mood is down it has a tendency to bring everyone down so it

93 definitely helps, for sure. Especially when you are doing corps de ballet numbers

94 obviously. Because if there is any tension in the room... then it can translate onto the

95 stage or rehearsals at least. I think we are lucky though, that we have nice group of

96 people working together. And I think also we all know how to respect each other. You

97 can see when someone is in the zone and just wants some time, you just leave them to

98 it.

99

Appendix 11.

Interview ID No 28- TANIA

1 **Interview ID No 28- TANIA**

2

- 3 • **What routines do you follow in preparation for a performance? (Behavior,**
4 **specific order, space, timing...)**

5

6 I think I prepare differently depending on the intensity of the performance, and I think
7 that helps as well. If I need to do something important I don't have always those strong
8 strong strong routines and things I have to do, because if I needed to do that every
9 performance I couldn't cope.

10 Generally, in the morning I start with some body conditioning because after a few years
11 I realized that there are certain things and muscles that I need to engage. And I think
12 that it does give a certain focus as well to start with. Then class; it is very rare that I
13 miss class because I think for me, class prepares me for the performance and also it
14 gives it the best chance. I think with everything that I do, I want to make sure that I give
15 the best possible chance for the best performance I can give and certainly class gives
16 that basics and warm up. Within class, if there is an easier show then I would really
17 work in class, but if there is a heavy performance I would start thinking more about
18 warm up and making sure that I am 'on my leg', getting the right muscles working
19 rather than doing a strong full out class.

20 Then I think, part of putting on make up and all those kind of things, it is all part of
21 getting that focus. You are sitting down in front of that table and doing everything. I
22 like to take time, about half and hour for my hair and make-up. And then it depends, if
23 the performance is in the evening and I haven't done anything all day, then I would do
24 like a barre. You know, there is something that is funny... (giggles) If I do a barre

25 before an evening show I wouldn't put my shoes on I would put socks on instead or
26 comfy booties, and I don't know if it is the fact that the theaters are often cold but even
27 if I am in Birmingham and the studios are warm I still wear them. It is one of those
28 funny things and I don't know why I do it but I do! Even though don't do that during
29 normal class in the mornings, there I always have my shoes on as soon as barre starts
30 but there is something about warming up before a show, I don't know what it is...
31 Sometimes I think that shoes can be quite tight so maybe you want to make sure that
32 you don't get swollen feet before the show, but yeah, that is a funny thing.
33 I think these days, it is more to do with focus and trying to give the best possible
34 preparation that I can give for performance whereas before, when I was younger I was
35 quite a lot superstitious (giggles). You know, when I was sixteen and I was doing
36 competitions I used to make the sign of the cross before hand and things like, I wouldn't
37 eat things that I thought they were bad for you like chocolate or things like that. A
38 couple of days before I would make sure that my diet would be very good and although
39 I would do the same thing now, today is more about having the right food and the right
40 things for the performance, whereas before I would think that it would get back on me
41 because I have been naughty (giggles) you know, those kind of things!!
42 I do like to practice some of the turns quiet often, that sort of thing that it is fifty-fifty
43 chance... if I feel on top of it and they work, then I would do it a couple of times. If
44 they don't work I would try maybe four or five times and if it doesn't work then I leave
45 it and see what happens. But quiet often well, I don't want to say these, you see! I do
46 have this tendency that I say something or feel something that it may get back to me
47 afterwards! I do have that tendency!! But generally somehow, when you are on stage

48 there is that other level of focus, particularly if there are difficult steps, you sort of get
49 over it.

50

51

52 • **Do you have any specific timing in your preparation routines?**

53

54 Generally class finishes an hour and a half before the show and I would leave a little bit
55 of time, depending if a normal make-up is required or something out of the ordinary,
56 but in general I would leave twenty minutes to sort things out and then I get ready so
57 that I have an hour. Generally I get ready in half an hour (make-up and hair) and so that
58 I have another half an hour. I put costume on and get out there (stage) so that I get
59 twenty minutes on stage before the performance. I look at the stage and since we
60 perform in different stages, different sizes, you need to make sure that your placing is
61 right and certainly trying a few things as well. Generally pirouettes because they are the
62 most fifty-fifty chance steps!!

63 But yeah, mainly focus. When I was younger I used to get really, really nervous before
64 hand and it came to a point where there was one performance that I will never forget
65 and it completely ruined the whole thing and I thought I cannot let that happen ever
66 again. So maybe that is where the switch kind of became more into focus on the
67 preparation. You give the best possible chance for the performance rather than on
68 superstitious believes.

69 Particularly when sometimes you only get one go or two, and you know that
70 performance could make a difference in your career, or at least you think and feel that at
71 the time. Whether it does or it doesn't that is another thing but that is the pressure you

72 feel. And I wonder if maybe when I was younger and I did competitions you had that
73 just one performance and that was it. And you had to shine and you had to do well, and
74 you know, we all have good days and bad days. But yeah, it is that pressure that you put
75 on yourself because it has to be good. It is just because it is a competitive area and if
76 you don't get it right somebody else will. They will take your place and you know they
77 might do it better so you have that pressure. So if you get given an opportunity you
78 want to make sure that it is done right to the best of your ability. I think as well even the
79 day before I would make sure that I eat well and I have the right energy, you know,
80 things like pasta or rice and all of that. I would have my tubby-grips for compression to
81 make sure that again, I am making sure that the legs feel strong and they have the best
82 recovery from the day before because generally I have danced something the day before
83 and that is always a little bit of a worry. You think; 'ok, will I be able to have the energy
84 for the show?'

85 And then icing before and after. Lots of recovery, and yes, sometimes I can sort of freak
86 out a little bit if there is no ice around or if I have left my tubby-grip somewhere and
87 quite often I can really freak out if I don't have my tubby-grips because I think of my
88 muscles and how am I going to cope and all those kind of things. And you know, a few
89 years ago we didn't have all of that and I didn't do all those things and it was fine! But I
90 think, as well, getting older you do think that you recovery is very important.

91

92 • **How do you find doing roles over again?**

93

94 I think you start relaxing a little bit and you do get a little bit more confidence. For
95 example, when I did my third show of Coppelia, I don't know whether it was the fact

96 that we hadn't had any rehearsals or anything but it was almost a little bit surreal that it
97 was happening! I don't know, you do relax more once you have done it; you have done
98 it before and maybe that pressure to prove yourself and the management that you have
99 done it. I think the preparation in itself, physical preparation, I think it is the same. I
100 think it is easier as well to keep everything the same because that is what you know and
101 you know it works; it has worked before so you do the same. Maybe mentally it is not
102 so much.... And you can relax a little bit more.

103 • **Do you have a hair and make up routine?**

104

105 Yes, I always put my make-up and do my hair in the same order. I think it is more than
106 a routine that I do, more than anything else. I think after so many years it just becomes a
107 routine and that is what you do.

108

109 • **How do you think your routines help you?**

110

111 I think it is mainly physical preparation. But I don't know maybe some of it is
112 engrained somehow, during all those years. You know, even from school, they tell you,
113 you have to do things a certain way. With things like class, we always do 'plies', and
114 the 'tondus' and so on and maybe it follows on from that. We have grown up on a strict
115 routine.

116 And also it is trial and error. You have seen that it has work for you. Cause and effect. It
117 is funny that although I am talking about giving the best possible way I am not sure I
118 have thought about it that much.

119 I think it is something that it has been learnt from school and you have carried it on.
120 And you know that other people use it and it has worked for them and I have used it and
121 it has worked for me. But I think as well, the fact that I am getting older, you do feel
122 that for example I don't do class or I don't do my body conditioning my body will react
123 to it. And if I need to do what I need to do... I need those things.

124

125

126

127

128 • **How would you feel if your routines could not take place?**

129

130 Yeah, I had that the other day actually! It was before my only rehearsal of Coppelia.
131 That day I thought class was at whatever time but in reality it was earlier so I missed it.
132 And suddenly I completely panic, I had to do the whole ballet with just a barre to warm
133 up. And yes, I panicked! 'Oh my God!! What is going to happen?' and also Sir Peter
134 Write was attending the rehearsal!
135 So I guess your mind has to go ok, what is the most important thing I need to do and that
136 was a barre and... it was fine in the end (giggles), it was fine but... Who knows, maybe
137 I could do that all the time but I think if it happens once it is ok but... And that was just
138 a rehearsal! If it was a show; Oh my God!! (big giggles) But I think as well, at the same
139 time, once it actually comes to it, once you finish your make up and you are all ready
140 and you are stepping onto the stage, those twenty or fifteen minutes before, I think there
141 is a switch of focus and I would have to make sure that happens and I don't let all those
142 feelings and emotions affect me and take over. Once you are on stage then, this is what

143 you need to do, this is what is in front of you and what happened before stays behind.
144 And I think that is something I had to learn the hard way because before it would really
145 affect me but now I just don't let myself think about it. Once you are on stage, this is
146 what you are doing and everything else that is happened before it doesn't matter.

147

148 • **You seem to have improved your preparation along your career...**

149

150 I think for me it was that particular incident, I think it needed that horrible show. It is
151 like if you go down all the way and there is this point of rock bottom I guess and I think
152 it almost as if I exploded and I thought; 'you cannot let that happen again'. I mean, I
153 guess after that particular show, for a while I didn't have so many important shows. I
154 am not quiet sure how I really did it. But I think maybe it is the memory of that incident
155 which it is so clear in my mind that is keeping me away from that. I had to. Maybe
156 when you have to you just do it.

157

158 I remember there has being a few general sessions with a sport psychologist who was
159 doing some work in dance, with power points and stuff talking about performance and I
160 always thought I got quite a lot out of it. I mean, I think everybody is different and
161 people may need different things but like I said; I did get a lot out of the session that we
162 had and although they were group ones, even just to recognize some of your thinking
163 and some of your behavior and rationalize, well maybe it is not rationalizing but saying
164 to yourself well, actually this is not helping, you know... if you focus on the positive. I
165 mean it has help and I am sure that it is something that it has being feeding in
166 unconsciously rather than necessarily thinking about it. Yeah, because I have learnt it

167 my way but I guess it is working for me and in some ways I wouldn't want it any other
168 way. Because sometimes you just have to learn for yourself.

Appendix 12.

Questionnaire open-ended answers

Questionnaire open-ended answers

Participant ID Number 1

I carry around in my make-up a good luck statuette (of John Travolta posing 'Saturday night fever' style). My wife gave it to me for my first 'Romeo' show eight years ago. I like having it around for memories.

Through different stages of my career I've had different nerve busting routines. I remember when I first started doing solos, I did the solo (or part of it) full out before I went on. However over the years those changed. I used to have a favorite pair of tights I'd wear in class before a show...yet I don't do this now. So what I'm saying is that the more comfortable I've become on stage, the less pre-show habits or rituals I've relied on.

Participant ID N. 2

Check costume at half hour call (or sometimes a little later). Check props etc. I never like to feel late or rushed – I always leave enough/ extra time. Always like to be on the stage promptly at beginners call even if not on stage till later.

Participant ID N. 3

Smoke – I know it sounds stupid but it does help!

Participant ID N. 4

I sometimes eat beans on toast for lunch before a particular taxing performance. Gives me both energy and comfort! With grated cheese even better.

Participant ID N. 7

I like having a hot shower after my warm up but before make up and costume. I like feeling clean and fresh before a show.

Participant ID N. 10

I always get ready no less than an hour before the show- otherwise I get stressed and feel rushed. I don't like people playing loud music before a show. I like to have space when doing my make up. (Another reason why I get ready earlier).

Participant ID N. 12

Touching wood, the floor before I go on stage.

A few deep breathes.

I don't generally have a specific routine, however, I like not being too early. Having just enough time to complete make up, warm up etc. allows me to keep focused and without time to worry about irrational things.

I also find pre- performance routine / preparation depends on what I am performing. Bigger role might need some more time to get in the right zone and feel ready and comfortable.

Participant ID N. 13 - BERT

With many of the rituals I 'x' the effects they leave are purely psychological. I do not actually gain any physical benefits from doing them. In a way, they just put my mind at ease.

Participant ID N. 14

Get a kiss of loved one before the show starts. Most of these routines are only used for particular stressful shows and will be done the same way each time I do that role but do not necessarily get done in exactly the same way for a different, stressful role- a different routine might be developed.

Participant ID N. 16

I used to do a lot of the mentioned routines. But stopped doing them, because they kind of drove me crazy, believing certain cloths I would wear during the day would help me in the show.

Participant ID N. 17 - CARL

It helps me to tell myself I don't dance for myself. My job is to give a good show for the people whom come to watch. So I don't just think of one step, but try give a whole show and it often becomes a better show.

Participant ID N. 19

Kiss hand and touch floor (important performances).
Always do class.
Hate having a shave every other day for performances.

Participant ID N. 20

Taking a warm shower before a 'big' role
Coffee and cigs
Soloist role – cig before the half
Corps role – cig even at the 5!
I used to say a prayer and sign the cross before every show when I was young but that has worn off as I have become older.

Participant ID N. 22

Just before going on stage (first entrance) I also take very deep breaths and lastly make sure that I fully exhale before going on.

Participant ID N. 26 - JANE

I always have my lip balm in the wings with me.

Participant ID N. 27

I have to wear a good pair of shoes

Participant ID N. 28 - TANIA

I check my ribbons all the time before every single entrance. I rosin in shoes and hairspray ribbons.

I stretch my mouth before going on to avoid shaky sheets.

I used to pray and do sign of cross when I was younger, but I realized that it didn't do anything so grew up and stopped it. I was a lot more superstitious then; would not do or wear anything that might somehow get back at me in the show; like not chocolate or naughty food the day before. Thank God I grew out of that! It was given me more unnecessary stress than anything.

For some reason, I never wear ballet shoes when I warm up before a show. I don't know why (maybe to save my feet?) I only wear socks.

Participant ID N. 30

I don't like to talk to management before a show.

Participant ID N. 33

I hair spray ribbons for security that they do not come out or get loose.

A more important role needs more warm up/stretching rather than a less important role where less dancing is required.

Participant ID N. 34

I perfume regularly to feel better presented.

I love to hate (or hate to love!) how pedantic I am about checking my ribbons, elastics and heels of point shoes constantly.

Participant ID N. 35

I go to the loo (for a pi)

I check my point in the mirror (not at all effective/but I like to check)

I would say that most routines I have I believe have logic behind them ie. Eating before the show will give me energy, checking pigs tails are not out so that I don't spoil the look.

However I do feel that I take a particularly long time over my make up as it helps to mentally get me 'in the zoon' for a show (although I'm getting quicker)

Also (singing)/ joking helps me not to get too uptight.

Participant ID N. 37

I will have a cigarette 30 minutes before the show and it is very effective for me, it calms me down.

Participant ID N. 42

I take a power nap before the show and listen to music in the dressing room.

Participant ID N. 43

I talk to a family member. I arrive at theater/start to get ready at the same time each day. I have to do class before a performance.

Participant ID N. 46

I like to have a cigarette at the 15 minutes call, just helps me relax and get out of the dressing room at the busiest times.

Participant ID N. 47

I have to go to the toilet before every time I go on. I can not perform without having eating some food

Participant ID N. 49

I have to do my hair before my make up. If I do it the other way around it doesn't feel right. When I'm getting ready – listening to music calms me. I know the steps before I go on stage very well but I still go over and over what I have to do until the very last second before I go on. I worry while I am on stage if I don't. Also if there is a difficult step I like to try it at least three times before the performance. If it works it's fine but if all three time it goes bad I have to just stop- leave it and hope it goes ok on stage. I don't like that so much. I also have to try on my shoes during the day before a performance.

Participant ID N. 50

I always get ready quite early before the performance starts to have plenty of time before the show. Always one hour before and I do the same routine every time; first hair, then make up, then warm up and get dress. Before I go on stage I much rather be alone than being with people. I don't feel ready if I have being joking/talking just before I go on stage for the first time in the performance. Once the first entrance to the stage is over then I'm more relaxed.

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