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Application of the Four-Way Test in My Life

When I learned about Rotary's Four-Way Test, I was surprised and happy to realize that it has applied to what I've learned through my dance community at the Rocky Mountain School of the Arts.

My ballet teacher has been my mentor and role model. What we practice isn't just discipline, determination, and technique, but collaboration, support, and compassion. Through her I've also learned the art of teaching. I teach ballet and tap to elementary students, and it's incredibly satisfying to see them change and grow. But I am most grateful for the relationships I've cultivated with other dancers. Conflict is inevitable when you spend hours together under intense pressure, but I've found more support in my dance friends (even those I seemingly have little in common with) than anyone else. These girls have supported me at my lowest points and at my highest: when I've performed a solo flawlessly or landed a triple pirouette. The four aspects of The Four-Way Test perfectly apply to what I've learned at RMSA.

Is it the truth? Dance, like most arts, depends on honesty and truth. Examples of kinds of truth in dance include: truth of self-expression; truth of your skill level and particular gifts; truth of creating beauty through hard work. When we dance and take corrections and work on choreography, we ask: is this a true expression of artistry and self? Is it the best we can do? Furthermore, when someone is in trouble, and needs the support of our dance community, we try to talk about issues truthfully with each other. If someone needs help, we can offer help as a group, but only if we are working from honesty and truth.

Is it fair to all concerned? Our studio, under the leadership of our teacher and director, puts effort, collaboration, dedication, and attitude ahead of skill level or personal qualities: that is the fair way to do it. Fairness means sometimes you don't get a role you think you "deserve." Fairness means no one is left out or demeaned. Fairness means if you work hard, you have a better chance of participating. Fairness means even if your family or friends don't support you, your dancemates will be there for you.

Will it build goodwill and better friendships? The entire premise of our studio is about relationships. We can't make art unless we have goodwill and friendship. Trust inside the studio means real friendships between people who otherwise might not see eye to eye.

Will it be beneficial to all concerned? Those who benefit from our individual efforts at RMSA include: the group as a whole, us individually as we develop our skills, the younger dancers we inspire and teach, our teacher whose work we perform giving it our all, and the audiences we hope to entertain, inspire, and delight. Finally, through the truth, fairness, and friendship of the studio, when life outside of dance is hard or when you are in some kind of trouble, you will find support within your dance community.

I see how the Four-Way Test has already helped me grow as a dancer, a student, and a person, and I understand how it can apply to any situation. I believe I could use the values encompassed by the Four-Way Test as I move forward on any college or career path.