



TURNING POINTE by CHLOE ANGYAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Ballet can be costly for parents both in terms of money for tuition, pointe shoes, and travel, and also in terms of time. What do you think can be done to lessen the barriers to entry and make ballet more equitable for families of all backgrounds and incomes?
2. Nick Cutri, an LA based physical therapist, says that for dancers to avoid injury and pain, he'd recommend "not just holding off on pointe until age fifteen but also not asking dancers to develop extreme flexibility" until the body is skeletally mature and growth plates are closed (p. 87). That would require a fundamental shift in an art where many dancers go professional in their teens. What do you think of that idea?
3. Ballet is extremely competitive, and the most elite dancers are expected to achieve perfection, or something close to it. But that takes a major toll on dancers' mental health and body image. What can parents, teachers, and professional dancers (who are role models to many students) do to encourage a more positive and holistic discipline?
4. In the chapter "The Unbearable Whiteness of Ballet," Angyal scrutinizes why white femininity is upheld as the ideal and why "the ballet world is a little more welcoming of Black boys and men than it is of Black girls and women" (p. 141). Over the last year, there has been a huge push toward diversity and inclusion in the wider world as well as the ballet world. Do you think it will be successful? What must be done to make sure ballet represents society?



5. Angyal says that “the urgent need to recruit and retain more boys in ballet can warp the culture of the ballet world into one in which boys become vastly more valuable than girls” (p. 167). Do you agree with that assessment?
6. Angyal asks, “What if boys and men who dance didn’t have to justify their choices with assurances about how traditionally masculine ballet is? What if they didn’t feel the need to shore up their masculinity?” (p. 164). What will it take to “expand the mainstream understanding of what boys and men are allowed to be so as to include some things we currently understand to be feminine”?
7. In 2019-2020, 62% of all ballet programs performed were exclusively choreographed by men and 6% were exclusively choreographed by women. Angyal discussed the many obstacles that hold women choreographers back: time, opportunity, and ballet culture. What can be done to support the creation of more works by women?
8. During the COVID-19 pandemic, classes were held virtually, and dancers had time to rest their bodies, take on new opportunities, and think about the future. So much has changed. Do you think those lessons will carry on into the future? How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed, or not changed, the culture of ballet?
9. Do you feel optimistic about the future of ballet?

