



Morning class (the routine that Mikhail Baryshnikov once described as, “boring, awfully boring!”) is the steady metronome of a classical dancer’s existence. Every class has variations—the music played, the way enchainments (sequences of steps) are put together by the teacher, the focus on different aspects of technique, but at its heart it’s the same all over the world: work at the barre to warm up the body, particularly the feet and ankles and hips; a move to the floor for adage (slow work to perfect balance); and then the fireworks—leaps and turns that give stamina and brio. In modern companies it’s supplemented by Pilates and gym work, but morning class remains the core of the ballet world. Virtually unchanged since the 19th century, using French terms the world round, class is such a lingua franca that dancers can walk into a foreign company and know at once what to do.

For the ballet lover, watching dancers in the studio is a pleasure at least as great as watching them on stage. As if in reaction to

the studied elegance of their stage looks, dancers in class or rehearsal adopt a slouchy, dishevelled, tattered aesthetic (in which, incidentally, they look no less elegant). One leg warmer to coddle a sore muscle, torn and layered T-shirts, tracksuit pants, oversize fleece all-in-ones reminiscent of a Teletubby—it only serves to emphasise their grace. To watch them as they work together to master a tricky lift, or stand alone before the mirror to try a pirouette, and then try it again, and again, and again, is to see the grind behind that grace, and to understand a little of what it takes to transcend earthly limits.

THE IMPERMANENT PICTURES

Text & photography by Caspar Newbolt

The transience of memories living within people are precious for they can never truly be immortalized.

At the end of the 1982 science fiction film *Blade Runner*, the replicant Roy Batty delivers a profound and lasting statement. He talks of the loss of experiences, memories and moments that occurs when someone dies. After all you certainly don’t just lose the person, you lose a completely unique perspective both on your life and the lives of countless others. An irreplaceable recording of details seemingly too obscure or trivial to write down or photograph.

Quite how trivial is all relative of course. What of the tears no one saw quietly forming at the corner of the eyes that looked through the camera that photographed you being born? What of the rip in the dress on the person holding that camera, or the fight nine months before that caused that rip? The big scene. The making up. The kiss. The sex. Trivial to some, but probably not to you.

My father’s parents **are** in their late 80s. They have led long and varied lives. They lived through and took part in the last world war. They have lost a son to drugs. They took in the children of their lost boy and had to raise them themselves. My grandmother was one of the women who helped decode the German invented Enigma machines at

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Bletchly Park in England, during the second world war. She kept this secret for so long that she still refuses to talk about it. My grandfather, I have always known as a book binder with vast collections of leather bound books in his attic. It was only recently, after his accident, that I discovered it is to him that I owe the talent I have for graphic design. He ran a design studio in Covent Garden similar to mine.

They live now in Norfolk, England. These photographs I took last December, when my father, brother and I took a day trip up to see them to exchange Christmas gifts. They live in the same house we have visited them in throughout my whole life. A house that of course seems smaller, colder and damper now than it ever did then. The village around the house is full of echoes of us as children, kicking a football around endlessly, and taking long walks to the cold, pebbly beach across the marshes.

My grandfather fell down the stairs a while back and broke his neck. He survived. My grandmother looks after him now for the most part. She can't drive. There is a bus once a week that takes her from the village to the town. She remains, aside from my

father, the only person in my family who I still receive handwritten letters from. To my great detriment I do not always write back, and often think that if they had email it would be easier.

The science fiction novel *Dune* tells of a future where we have found a drug that allows us to awaken the memories of our elders within our own minds. Pacing up and down my studio whilst thinking about how to end this piece of writing, I realized that sitting down to write a hand-written letter to my grandparents and booking a flight to see them was in fact the best way to end it. Writing an email was science fiction to those who wrote *Blade Runner* and *Dune*, yet the larger focus of their work was always on understanding and coping with loss.

We must strive to remember that it is human loss that is profound and that art and technology are simply the vessels required to remind us of this. I hope these photographs are testament to that.