

Abbey oral history interview (2023-11-10 09_03 GMT-7)

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00:01 David Allison

All right. So Abbey, I just want to start by having you share your name and just a little bit about yourself.

:00:10 Abbey Sterling

Okay. So I'm Abbey Sterling. I'm a 11th grader, or Junior, at Holy Family High School. I also go to Colorado Conservatory of Dance, which is like a nonprofit organization in Broomfield, and I've been dancing for about 13 years now.

00:26 David Allison

So what drew you to dance, as a thing that you have been doing now for most of your life?

00:35 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, so my mom, she was a dancer. And so when I was really young, she just put me into it. And, I've heard a lot of stories that like people will quit when they I reach a certain age, but I just enjoyed it so I just kept doing it. I've been doing it for a while.

00:48 David Allison

Nice. Nice. Do you have any particular types of dance or styles, anything like that, that you . . .

00:52 Abbey Sterling

So I do everything from ballet, modern, contemporary, jazz, tap, pas de deux. I do all of it, but I really like ballet and pas de deux. Those are like my top two.

01:05 David Allison

Nice. Tell me a little bit more about pas de deux. I have no idea what that is.

01:08 Abbey Sterling

That's basically where like the girl and the boy dance together. So like a lot of lifts, like a lot of turns, just like, things like that.

01:15 David Allison

Okay. Cool

01:17 Abbey Sterling

Yeah..

01:18 David Allison

So tell me, maybe just a little bit more about your family, and you know, maybe why your family's in Broomfield, if you know, that sort of thing.

01:28 Abbey Sterling

So yeah, we, we used to have a house in Thornton actually, but then we moved to Broomfield because, we actually live right by The Orchard, and they really found a really nice property and so we moved there. And so my parents, my dad, he owns a muffler shop, and then my mom she owns two booth things that she likes to do. And I have two older brothers. My brother Andrew, he's an electrician.

01:48 David Allison

Okay.

01:50 Abbey Sterling

And my brother, Nick, went to Creighton University, he graduated last year; he moved to Texas actually, and he does a job out there. I mean, we just really like Broomfield 'cuz Holy Family's in Broomfield. My dance studio's in Broomfield. So we just really like it here.

02:07 David Allison

Awesome. That's super cool. Tell me a little bit more about your experience at Holy Family. What's that been like up there?

02:14 Abbey Sterling

It's really nice. I love it there. I don't join a lot of extracurriculars there since I dance so many hours, but they have really good academics. We have really good sports teams, and it's just really nice at Holy Family. It's a really good community.

02:33 David Allison

Very cool. Very cool. Can you tell me like, I have some teenage daughters, and they always think about like, at least to me, it seems like they talk a lot about "all my friends are here, and I want to spend time with them." But then I have these friends that are from this other youth group and this other thing that they're doing. What does that feel like, kind of balancing friendships with the responsibilities you have dancing and all those things?

02:57 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, so I have like, I would say two different friend groups, one that goes to my school and one that goes to my dance studio. And since I feel like I hang out with my dance friends more because I'm always at my dance studio.

03:09 David Allison

Okay.

03:10 Abbey Sterling

But I mean like going to Friday night football games, I feel like I hang out with my friends more. And also like things like Homecoming, Prom, I'm with like Holy Family friends. And I would say I just spend a lot more time with my dance friends, since like we have all these shows together. I spend the entire weekend with them and like from four to nine every night. So, yeah.

03:31 David Allison

And where, where are those things, are, do they kind of happen in different places? Or is it mostly here in the area or what?

03:36 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, so for like, in terms of performances, I do anti-bullying performances at my dance studio. So we'll either go to schools and perform there; it's usually just Broomfield schools. And then, we'll go to the Broomfield Auditorium, and they'll like come in, 'cuz I think we're actually doing that this year.

03:53 David Allison

Nice.

03:54 Abbey Sterling

In February or something. And then, we do the Nutcracker every year, and that's at Pinnacle.

04:02 David Allison

Tell me a little bit more about the kind of anti-bullying, like what does that look like? And how does that kind of play out?

04:10 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, so we do, it's usually a ballet, it's either one that we've done in previous years or we'll create a new one. And basically it's like, the entire purpose of it is to make sure that like kids aren't bullying, so we teach them how to not bully. So we'll like show a scenario and then show like, if you're like a bystander, how to stand up, or like, if you're the person being bullied, how to defend yourself. And so it's usually an hour-long ballet I want to say, and then afterwards, the kids can come talk to us and ask us questions. And we'll go around and say, oh I'm Abbey, and like I'm, yeah.... just things like that.

04:45 David Allison

Nice. So what are some of the things that you think are, outcomes for that, or you know, I guess I'm just thinking, you know, I remember in school, kind of being on both sides of it, like occasionally playing the role of the bully or whatever, but then also being bullied. Right? And so, how do you see that happening? Or maybe what experience have you had with that, that makes that something that works for you?

05:10 Abbey Sterling

Well I just think like through that, like shows, I can like tell a lot of kids learn a lot about it. And afterwards, a lot of kids will come ask me questions like, oh, this has been going on, this kid has been bullying me, how do I prevent it, and I'll like, give them tips. And then they like, I can just see like, oh, they understand it now,, what it is and how to defend themselves. So I think that helps them a lot. And I think they finally understand, oh, I can actually stand up for myself. So that's really helpful.

05:35 David Allison

That's super cool. I also love that idea that I feel like kids that are in elementary school, junior high, totally look up to high schoolers kind of thing. And so that's a super fun thing as well.

05:50 David Allison

So tell me about, you're involved in the Cultural Council.

05:53 Abbey Sterling

Yes.

05:55 David Allison

Arts and Cultural Council. Why did you get involved with that? How did you get involved with that?

06:00 Abbey Sterling

So actually, I got an email from Holy Family and they asked me. They were like, oh, we know like you're involved in the arts and whatever, and there's this council, and I would like you to like sign up for it and be a part of it. And I was like, okay. So I signed up. And then I like got into it. And then we met for dinner - that was a while ago. And we just meet once a month. And it's really exciting, 'cuz I learn more about Broomfield through that.

06:22 David Allison

Nice.

06:23 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm.

06:23 David Allison

What are some of the things that you learned or that you think is interesting maybe, from some of those conversations?

06:30 Abbey Sterling

Well, we did a lot about the grants and the grants were really cool 'cuz I didn't know like half of these organizations existed until I read through their grants. And that was really interesting to me to learn about that, because like, I only know about CCD, and Boulder Ballet, and that's about it. But then it was really cool to learn about them.

06:47 David Allison

Nice. Yeah, there's so many, so many cool organizations doing neat stuff.

06:50 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm. Yeah.

06:54 David Allison

I was thinking about the future generally. And the future could mean a lot of different things. Like, it could mean, what am I doing next week? And it could mean, what am I doing next year, my senior year for you, right? It's exciting. And then beyond that, what do you think about when you think about the future?

07:17 Abbey Sterling

Well, so I'll graduate next year, and I want to go to college.

07:23 Abbey Sterling

So my top school is University of Oklahoma right now, and I want to minor in dance and then major in either some type of psychology or go into like, pre med. So yeah, and then after that, I'll probably get some degree. And then I don't know, I'll probably move back here and find a job here, 'cuz I love Colorado.

07:43 David Allison

Yeah, yeah. Nice. That sounds amazing.

07:48 David Allison

What are some of the things at Holy Family, I was thinking specifically like classes, teachers, and those sorts of things that get you kind of excited or interested these days?

08:02 Abbey Sterling

Well, so yeah, I'm taking three AP's right now that I really like. I'm taking AP research with my teacher, Dr. Fabian. He's written many books, he's a very smart man. He went to Notre Dame, and graduated from there. And that class, you basically choose a topic and you research it for an entire year. And then you just write a paper on it, like the minimum is 20 pages. So that's gonna be (inaudible) and then you present it to the College Board. So I'm excited for that. And then I'm taking AP Psychology, which is a really interesting class, 'cuz like, I've always wanted to learn more about things like the brain and how like everything works. And so, I really like that class. And then I'm just taking AP Lang, 'cuz I like to write, and like that's one of my favorite things to do. So . . .

08:44 David Allison

Awesome.

08:45 Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

:08:46 David Allison

What types of things do you like to write? I also love to write and I'm just curious.

08:51 Abbey Sterling

Yeah. So, well the topic that I chose is Body Dysmorphic Disorder, because like that comes up in dance studios all the time. And so I knew about it, and I know a lot of dancers experience it. So I like to write about that, 'cuz I just know about it.

09:06 Abbey Sterling

I don't know, I like to write about basically anything, a lot of like medical things I want to say, 'cuz like I like learning about diseases and like how that affects the body and brain. It's really interesting.

:09:15 David Allison

Nice, nice.

09:16 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm.

09:18 David Allison

When you talk about body dysmorphia, that sort of thing, is that something that plays into, I don't know if it does or not, but like the bullying kind of component too is there . . .

09:28 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm.

09:30 David Allison

It feels like there's some connection, but I don't know if that's true.

09:33 Abbey Sterling

Yes, there is, especially like in dance studios 'cuz I go to like Colorado Ballet all the time, and they'll come here, and like I went to Ballet Austin over the summer and I spent three weeks there. I feel like, if you're not like the ballet bodies, what they call it, where you're like slim, and you just like, you don't have like, so called like, you're not like skinny, then dancers will make fun of you for that. And so that's really hard for a lot of dancers. And so, like I've grown past that 'cuz I mean, it's gonna happen everywhere, doesn't matter where you are, and it happens to everyone. And then if you're too skinny, and you get made fun of for that, and so like, it's just so hard to be like the perfect body.

10:10 David Allison

Yeah, society is tough with that.

10:13 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm.

10:14 David Allison

And individuals are tough with that, too; just because what you perceive as normal is not to, you know, somebody else and that's..... . .

10:22 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, and then that causes like eating disorders and it's just, it's a lot.

10:26 David Allson

Yeah, for sure.

10:32 David Allson

What do you like about Colorado? You said you wanted to come back to Colorado after you graduate. Yeah, one of my daughters is like, I never want to come back. Wow, that's rough. I don't know about that. But why are you interested in coming back?

10:45 Abbey Sterling

Well, I mean, I have all my family here, a lot of family. I have a little bit of family in California, but most of my family's here. I just, I know the area really well since I've been here my entire life.

10:57 Abbey Sterling

I don't know, I just like the organizations here. I like, although it snows a lot. I'm fine with that. I also don't like a lot, like really sunny places, so Colorado is good for me. I just, I like it here.

11:12 David Allson

Anything in particular stand out to you? I'm just thinking about the University of Oklahoma; why was that something, do they have a good program there you're looking at?

11:21 Abbey Sterling

Yes. They have a very good dance program. And my old artistic director from CCD, she went there. And like a lot of my old friends who went from CCD, they all went there. And like, they just have a really good dance program. But I have to get in first, so . . .(Laughter) .

11:36 David Allson

I think you're probably on track. That's awesome. Anything else? Anything you're looking forward to, or you didn't get a chance to talk about?

11:47 Abbey Sterling

We're doing The Nutcracker.

11:48 David Allson

Nice.

11:49 Abbey Sterling

That's coming up in like four weeks. It's in the very first of December. So, we're rehearsing for that a lot and I'm excited for that.

11:58 Abbey Sterling

Just like, I have a lot of shows coming up, which I'm excited for.

12:02 Abbey Sterling

A lot of schoolwork, which is rough, but yeah.

12:07 David Allson

Anything about, so when you think about The Nutcracker?.... I love The Nutcracker - the music, the dance, the whole thing.

12:14 Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

12:14 David Allson

It's also the kind of like stereotypical; like if you know about anything about dance, you've probably seen The Nutcracker . . .

12:18 Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

12:19 David Allson

Like that's the one thing you've seen. But what do you like about The Nutcracker?

12:25 Abbey Sterling

Well so, I don't know. It's just like this entire process, like starting, we have auditions in August, and then you get results in September, and then you rehearse every Saturday from 2 to 7, and like, plus rehearsals on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and then you also do like a lot of costume fittings. And then the costumes we have are like, gorgeous, they're stunning. And also like I'm snow queen this year, so I get to do pas de deux with this guest star, Antonio, so I've been working with him, which is really exciting. Like also, we do like a lot of traditions like Secret Santa; we just do it with our entire studio. And also, like once we get to stage, it's like we spend every day there, every night, and it's just like a lot of rehearsing and then the shows, we fill up every show. And so there's like hundreds of people. And then afterwards, like we get to do autographs, and so we get to meet everyone, which is really exciting. And then we all get like flowers, so it's really fun.

13:19 David Allson

That's awesome.

13:19 Abbey Sterling

Mmm-hmm.

13:19 David Allson

The Snow Queen role, so you have the pas de deux, but what else?

13:26 Abbey Sterling

So, basically I'm the lead within the core, so I have eight core members. And so like, they kind of dance behind me, and then me and him are in front. Yeah, that's basically it. And then there's Clara Dew Drop and I was Dew Drop last year. And so like we all change roles, basically.

13:43 David Allson

How do you get through the like fear of performance, or stage fright? I mean, that's maybe a thing, maybe not. I don't know, but what does that look like for you?

13:54 Abbey Sterling

Well, I mean, since I have been performing, 'cuz I've done Nutcracker every year since I was seven. And so like I mean for the first few years, I was terrified. And then I've kind of gotten used to it but like, even like the very first show, I'll just be like so scared.

14:06 David Allson

Yeah.

14:07 Abbey Sterling

But then, I think, once you get on stage, you just like, you just like dancing, so it's fine. And then like you can't, like all the lights are dim in the house, so you can't see anyone. So that's a lot better. And you're just like, all your friends are around you, so it's just much better.

14:19 David Allson

Nice, nice. Yeah, those people you're spending lots and lots of time with, it's nice to kind of see it all culminate.

14:25 Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

14:25 David Allson

So that's fun.

14:26

You don't have to see the audience until afterwards.

14:28 Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

14:30 David Allson

That's a good time to see them.

14:31: Abbey Sterling

Yeah.

14:32 David Allson

Nice. Awesome, well thank you so much.

14:34 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, of course.

14:35 David Allson

I really appreciate your time today, Abbey. It's been a pleasure talking to you.

14:38 Abbey Sterling

Yeah, it's been fun talking to you.

14:41 David Allson

Thank you.

End of interview. (14:44)