



An Interview with Julia Bridger

Swan Lake will be the last ballet that I will perform as a professional dancer. It was also one of the first that I performed, as an Aspirant, a decade ago when I was apprenticing with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet (RWB). Performing Swan Lake with Ballet Victoria will be a homecoming of sorts, a reminder of where my journey began and how far I have come. Dancing Swan Lake with the RWB was a dream come true for a young dancer like myself. The grandeur of the company, the exquisite costumes, the live orchestra, and the world-class stage production felt surreal.

I was stepping into the shoes of ballerinas who had graced the stage before me, feeling the weight of tradition and excellence on my shoulders. Dancing with the RWB, my experience in the corps de ballet of Swan Lake truly elevated my dancing to new heights; it was a transformative experience. It demanded unparalleled attention to detail, requiring every movement, from the positioning of my arms to the arch of my fingers, to be executed with precision and grace. Learning choreography from recordings added an extra layer of excitement to the process, knowing that I was dancing steps passed down by seasoned dancers. Rehearsals were often divided among different parts of the ballet, with principals, soloists, and corps de ballet rehearsing separately before coming together closer to performance dates. We danced not as individuals but as a synchronized entity, each of us contributing to the ethereal beauty of the swan ensemble. This time, at Ballet Victoria, there is an added layer of wisdom and maturity that infuses my movements, a recognition that my journey as a dancer is not defined by the size of the stage or the company, but by the passion and dedication I bring to my craft. What sets the current experience apart is the opportunity to be part of the choreographic process itself.

At Ballet Victoria, where the artistic staff is smaller, dancers like myself have a voice in shaping the movements and expressing our own artistic interpretations. It's a collaborative effort where each dancer's input is valued, leading to a more authentic and deeply personal performance. The intimacy of Ballet Victoria's smaller size means that we often share the studio space, allowing for a more inclusive and immersive rehearsal environment. Whether actively participating in a dance or observing from the sidelines, there's always an opportunity to learn and grow. It's a culture of openness and encouragement fostered by Ballet Victoria's artistic director, who envisions every corps de ballet dancer dancing at a soloist or principal level. As I take my final bow in Swan Lake, I do so not as a young dancer chasing dreams, but as a seasoned artist embracing the beauty of the present moment and looking forward to the endless possibilities that lie ahead.

Note: Photo by Dan Takahashi. During my years with Ballet Victoria, I was able to collect many pictures taken by the special team of volunteer photographers that provide the dancers the possibility to gather fun memories of their rehearsals and performances.

