

Some of us guys like Bruce Lee, baseball and ballet



Your Turn

Donato (Danny) Pietrodangelo
Guest columnist

My wife is baffled by my love of ballet.

My first thought is: What's to understand about the beauty and harmony of a body in elegant motion?

But trying to explain that is hard, especially for a guy. I like guy things — Bruce Lee and Jet Li kicking butt; Navy SEALs dispatching terrorists with extreme prejudice; a little Major League Baseball and college football.

So what's the attraction to classical ballet? It's more than just the sweet memory of walking my daughter to ballet lessons decades ago.

I've thought a lot about this recently, especially after seeing an extraordinary

performance at FSU by the Susan Farrell Ballet.

First off, I couldn't tell you the difference between a sauté and jetés or a cabrioles and a fouette.

But I do understand the incredible grace and power of a body in expressive movement.

The delicate flow of creative expression as a dancer's arms move through space like a slow motion film sequence. The power in a leap. The power and focus it takes to execute a cascade of spins across the stage — *fouette*. I'm told — the intense, seamless twirling over and over again, precisely into the arms of another dancer.

The ebb and flow of the dancer's body, the fluidity as it moves through time and space — while contained by a stage — is mesmerizing, trance-like. Yeah, that sounds pretty ethereal and "girly" coming from a guy. But it's what I

see and feel watching a performance.

Then there's the sheer physicality of dance, too frequently overlooked.

The dances in Farrell's performance were 10 or more minutes of intense movement: spinning, leaping through the air, darting across the stage, dancing continually *on pointe* — on the tips of their toes — without so much as a heavy breath. Graceful artistry combined with athletic endurance.

The physicality of dance brings me to parallels between ballet and traditional Chinese martial arts like Gung Fu (Kung-fu, Wushu) and Tai Chi, referred to as soft styles. Like dance, the emphasis is on slow, fluid, circular movement, juxtaposed with dynamic, explosive power from the body's core.

Think of the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Thousands of Chinese martial artists moving in precise, slow motion synchronicity.

Like ballet.

Finally, one aspect of classical dance that some tend to miss are the stories told by the dance and dancer. The depth of choreographic expression sweeps over you as you start to realize these are stories in motion, narratives about the human condition — love, passion, sensuality, betrayal, jealousy, power, triumph and joy.

Dance uniquely speaks to beauty and harmony — hearts and spirit in motion. Things of which we can always use a little more.

The Tallahassee Ballet will perform "The Nutcracker" this weekend at Ruby Diamond Auditorium.

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