



High School Scholarship Recipient 2023 - Magnolia Butler

Prompt: Tell us about your plans for after high school, and how Irish dance fits into those plans

I balance my notebook on my leg as I move my homework to make way for my friends' makeup and other feis day items. I glance at the time and notice I have thirty more minutes until I absolutely have to start getting myself ready to dance. I'd been in the brightly lit back room of the Proventials stage since 8:00 that morning, migrating to the much darker auditorium each time my sister was dancing and doing homework whenever I could. I desperately try to focus on my calculus as I answer various questions that circle the room: "Where's your sister's dance bag?" "Do you have sock glue?" "Have you seen my left soft shoe?" As I finish my homework and prepare for my competition, I realize that, despite the numerous distractions, there is no place I would rather be at this moment. I adore the chaos of a feis juxtaposing my formulaic, equation-based homework: the perfect symbol of my extracurricular and academic lives.

Six months later, junior year has ended, and the prospect of applying to college is no longer looming ominously in the future but is rapidly approaching. When discussing colleges, my college counselor asked me two questions in one breath, as if they were inseparable, "How important is dance to you? Do you want it to define where you go to college?" However these questions are so different to me, and the answer to one does not determine the answer to the other. Dance is incredibly important to me but it does not have to define where I go to college. I am entirely confident that whether my college has an Irish dance organization, a dance school nearby, or a studio I can practice in, I will always make time for Irish dance. I am certain that I will crave the emotional, mental and physical balance I gain from school and dance when I am in college. It is such an integral part of my life that I cannot imagine the next few years without dance.

While I am unsure what Irish dance will look like for me in college, I know that after I pursue my education, I will come back to New York City, back to Aherne Sheehan. I value my relationship with my dance teachers, whom I've known for eleven years, and this will not cease after high school because I cannot imagine dancing for anyone else. Words cannot describe

how grateful I am to all my teachers throughout the years, from my earliest beginner class to the class right before the World Championship; they have been incredibly supportive and outstanding teachers. I will keep in touch when I dance in college and visit Aherne Sheehan when I come home during breaks. As often as possible, I will come to competitions to watch my sister dance and maybe even compete myself. Although I do not know the future of my Irish dance career, I am sure it will extend long beyond high school.