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Attention teachers and dance professionals.

Dear parents,

The time has come to stand up to the bullies in the dance world. Those teachers whose own ego is the motivating force behind decisions that affect your child's physical & mental wellbeing. To these "role models" your child is viewed simply as a vehicle to fuel their wealth and "greatness". They have been warned before to change their ways, they have chosen to ignore.

I am privy to the antics of one supposedly "**R**eally **G**ood" Dance Studio in Sydney where students are merely pawns in the Directors grand plan to spread the good word about themselves. Unfortunately their brainwashing techniques work for a while as students and parents submit themselves to emotional and physical abuse which is deemed "necessary" by these Directors in order for their students to become "winners", to be worthy of their attention. Strong words??? Consider the following:

Fact

- A student last year was physically forced to stretch painfully against her wishes. And by physically, I mean physically... one of the directors held down the 12 year old girl's leg while the other director forced her leg over her head past her little body's ability. Snap! One hamstring torn off the bone...

Fact

- After a session at the Australian Dance Challenge the directors had this (paraphrased but close) to say to the students - "Your dance performance was so poor we had to walk around the block to cool down, we were so embarrassed..." They proceeded to tell the kids (10yrs and under) that they all danced like "shit" and all their solos would be taken off them. Needless to say all the kids, who had tried their hardest, were devastated and in tears... Directly after this tirade they were expected to go back on stage for another performance.

Fact

- The male director told two 14yr old female students that he had a dream where they were having a threesome in bed. Understandably their parents were livid and immediately withdrew their children from the studio.

Fact

- Recently at an eisteddfod in Queensland the male director ran his hand down a 13yr old female's front to "check" her costume, not missing her breasts on the way down. All the girls present saw... This man's flagrant disregard for young girls personal space, using his position of power to take advantage of their vulnerability for his own personal pleasure, is abhorrent.

Fact

- It may come as no surprise that the police have, on more than one occasion, had cause to pay the male director a visit, seize computers, the usual stuff...

Fact

- At least two students who had their solo dance supposedly choreographed by the directors were shocked to find their exact routine being danced by other students in the USA on YouTube. The directors had stolen the routine and claimed it as their own.

Fact

- It is common place for the directors to directly embarrass and humiliate healthy weight children into thinking they are fat. This mockery all happens in front of the child's peers... Body image and self esteem are often shattered in the face of such ridicule with diseases like bulimia and anorexia having shocking statistics in our youth. The thought that these young children being made to feel worthless in this light and not "enough", deeply hurts and angers me... Like an addiction, every so often the students get rewarded which see them push on through the abuse, hoping for the next little reward to make them feel okay about themselves...

Fact

- Students have been mocked and coerced into doing exercises against doctors and Physio's advice, not believing when students are injured. This practice is always to the emotional detriment of the child and often to the physical detriment. I understand they now have a physio in once per week, I guess you can only injure so many children before you need to take action...

Fact

- The directors show no regard for school work, belittling students who are academically focused, stating on more than one occurrence "Who needs an education?" It is shocking the irresponsible comments that frequent classes. Many students have had to miss an eisteddfod dance due to a compulsory school activity, the director's response? Ignore those students for months and banish them to the back...

Fact

- Most of us would agree that family life is an important factor in our modern society, especially for children. Unfortunately this does not appear to be the view of the directors who regularly condemn anything that dares to impact, at any level, on the student's dance regime. Long planned family holidays, significant birthdays and major family events have all been attacked by the directors as irrelevant to the life of a committed dancer. Not an easy thing for a 12year old to comprehend when she misses a rehearsal due to an highly important family event only to find herself banished to the back of the routine; or when a young student goes on holidays for a week only to be taken out of the troop dance. (She knew the routine) Punishment for not complying to the "higher" purpose...

Fact

- The male director has been labeled a "brainwasher" by other appalled parents and at the time of writing this, the director wears this badge with pride. (Self proclaimed on facebook - "Resident Brainwasher". To totally dismiss the serious concerns of parents and then blatantly flaunt his contempt for these families publically, while horrendous, is not uncommon for this man. The directors often, after receiving negative feedback from parents, take to social networking sites in order to condemn their words and seek self-serving flattery to maintain their egos.

Fact

- Most incoming correspondence to the directors, which is perceived as negative, is never replied to. Recently a young child hurt themselves in class, the child told the directors they felt they had badly hurt themselves. The directors proceeded to make the child continue with the exercise while in pain. The child's parent sort out medical advice afterwards resulting in the injury having to be strapped up, it seems it was quite severely injured as a consequence of the director's actions. When the parent sent the directors a text message along with photos of the child in bandages, the message went unanswered.

Fact

- In the event that the directors do reply to criticism, their tactic is generally to belittle the concerns of the parents and students concerned. Quite often this belittling is done in public.

Fact

- After a parent withdrew her child from the studio recently one of the directors referred publically to her as a "Retard". Student and parent ridicule to provoke obedience is a tactic often employed by the directors. Laughing at students, mocking students, belittling students and the verbal abuse of students are all part of the directors arsenal to ensure that compliance with their wishes is met.

Fact

- Students are bullied. Tears after class from being verbally abused is a common occurrence. Why do parents and students continue to go there? Well, while droves are making their not-too-soon departure others are still captives of what many would view as a cult environment.

Fact

- Last year's dancer of the year at Showcase in Queensland won a trip to Disney Land to dance, for this 11yr old girl it was like a dream come true. The young girl and her family decided to leave the "Really Good" Dance Studio for reasons that should be quite apparent by now. The male director of the Studio subsequently contacted the organizers demanding that she be disqualified from the competition and she have her Disney Land prize withdrawn. The girl is distraught...

Fact

- With a great number of students now leaving after recognizing the inappropriateness and unethical nature of the director's business practices, the Directors have now, in order to enforce compliance, issued solo students with a 2 year contract guaranteeing they stay with the studio and if they don't they are bound, by contract, to pay out the full two years of fees. It seems rather than change their ways and have students actually want to stay and look forward to classes, the directors are trying to force loyalty. If your child suddenly decides they'd like to try football instead of dance, or they have increased school work or family life becomes a priority or your financial position changes for the worse or even if the family needs to leave the State due to a work opportunity in the family; if the Directors have their way students (as young as 6) will be legally bound to payout the two years.

Fact

- The above is the smallest tip of the iceberg in regards to this issue, the stories are virtually never ending.

What scares me immensely is the male director is trying to establish himself as a sort of dance 'guru'. The Anthony Robbins of the dance world. Unfortunately some ill-advised dance studios and institutions are starting to believe his self proclamations of greatness and are enlisting him to speak. With their history of mental illness, police checks and a steadily accumulating body of unethical practices, the idea of them being role models for anyone is a truly disturbing thought. Behind the masks of "Dance Prophets" are unwell, dangerous people. Just ask any of their numerous (over 30) soloists who have fled their clutches this year...

The bullying, manipulative tactics employed by the directors in order to gain obedience is horrific. When our children are used primarily as a vehicle to boost the egos and wealth of those in "Power" at the expense of all else we MUST stand up, challenge and educate the parents and students who are still enlisted in this practice and end it once and for all.

In conclusion, if you are part of this culture most of the above is not a surprise to you. I am here to tell you that you do not have to continue to put up with this behavior; it is unethical and greatly harmful to your child. There are many, many wonderful dance studios in Sydney that genuinely care for the health and wellbeing of **ALL** their students in regard to all areas of their life. I sincerely wish the directors all the best, but not at the expense of our children and the wider dance community. This "**R**eally **G**ood" Dance Studio must end.