

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Writing Prompt: Pas de Deux

Charity Hume · Wednesday, May 21st, 2014

This week's writing prompt from Charity Hume – Pas de Deux.

The *Pas de Deux* is a dance for two. The great ballet duo, Rudolf Nuryev and Margot Fonteyn, danced to world acclaim for many years; you can still see their famed *Pas de Deux* from *Romeo and Juliet* on YouTube. The dance lasts a few minutes, but it forms the heart of the whole ballet. Everything in the story depends on the crucial moment showing the lovers' duet, an encounter that would shake their world and transform them forever. A dramatic *Pas de Deux* expresses the archetypal intimacy, between two people. Writers can give readers an exquisite pleasure when they ask us to guess the secrets beneath the surface when pairs come together. In the famous American play, *Our Town*, George and Emily go into an ice cream store. At the beginning of the scene, they're two teenagers talking about homework and high school. At the end of the scene, the audience knows that they have pledged themselves to one another for life.

Write a dialogue between two people that expresses a close relationship between them. Your people don't have to be lovers. Think of different archetypal pairs: parent-child, mother-daughter, father-son, etc. Pairs can be boys exchanging secrets in grade school, or two office workers realizing the boss embezzles funds. Once you have your two characters, write down what they say to one another in "real time" as you listen to the characters begin to interact, not with you, but with one another. Surrender as they begin to play verbal tennis. Watch and listen. You're the scribe.



Two Dancers Entering the Stage, (1878), by Edgar Degas, courtesy of Wikipaintings

And here is an extraordinary *pas de deux*: The Balcony Scene Act II of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, with Rudolf Nureyev as Romeo and Margot Fonteyn as Juliet. They are accompanied by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, John Lanchbery, conductor. (Filmed in 1966.)

[embedvideo id="HtBRN5BXt6o" website="youtube"]

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