

Journal Entry #19
May 28th, 2005

Getting Sick and Getting Healed

No one is surprised in Russia when you say, "I am sick today." Common responses are, "well, it's that kind of weather," "what did you eat?" and "I'm sick too." Nevertheless, my last bout of sickness was a *memorable* experience.

Food Poisoning

It was Monday night, and I had returned to the dorm after a long day of classes and rehearsals. The choreographers at *The Conservatory* are preparing for a June 4th exam, so it is an especially busy time for us. Before climbing into bed, I ate some bread and yogurt because I was already feeling a little queasy. This didn't help, but I was so tired that I fell asleep anyway. Then, at 12:30am, I woke up after tossing and turning. My stomach felt horrible, and I quickly got out of bed and ran towards the washroom located at the end of the hall. Well to make a rather disgusting story a little shorter, I will just say that I spent the next two hours "reproducing" the food I had taken in over the last 24 hours.

What sounds like it could have been a terrible situation was remedied by my roommate, Natia. Natia is a music theory student from Georgia, and she came to my rescue more than once that night. At one point, she even sat with me in the washroom for 45 minutes while I continued to "deliver" my food into the sick. Other dormitory residents were also extremely hospitable. A Turkish composer gave me pills for my stomach, and an Iranian musician made me a special tea. Eventually, I returned to my bed and slept until early morning.

The Administrators

It was clear to me that I would not be dancing the next day. This meant spending 45 minutes on my cell phone re-arranging rehearsals with my dancers and canceling classes with my teachers. I spent practically the entire day sleeping. I must have slept more that day than I had slept in the last ten days combined.

At one point, I was awakened by a knock at the door. I rolled out of bed and stumbled to the door. When I opened it, I was "greeted" by The Dormitory Administrator. "What happened to you?" she demanded.

"I'm sick," I answered.

"Why?"

"I ate something bad."

"What did you eat?"

"I ate yogurt and bread, like usual, but I also ate two blini (Russian-style pancakes) with cheese and ham. I think the meat was bad."

"You have to be careful, especially with meat, in Russia."

"Yes, I know."

"Did you take medicine?"

"Yes."

"Good girl. Okay, if you feel worse, we will send for the doctor. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Okay, good-bye."

This is a good example of how the Russians care about your well-being, but they have a "very Russian way" of showing their affection. Anyway, after this encounter, I again went back to sleep.

The Recovery

By Wednesday morning, I was feeling better, but it wasn't until Friday that I returned to my dance classes. I had lost strength, and going three days without ballet significantly disrupted my training schedule. Nonetheless, I am sure that my recover would have been even longer if it weren't for the kindness of my roommates, peers, and administrators.

Now, that I have recovered from this memorable bout of food poisoning, I have a cold. This is a good thing - the next time a Russian says, "I am sick today", I can answer, "I am sick too."

To Learn More About Rebecca Davis' studies and travel experiences, visit The Rebecca Davis Dance Company at www.rebeccadavidance.com or email davis@rebeccadavidance.com

To Read About Rebecca's dance experiences at The St. Petersburg Conservatory, join "The Journey in Russia" listserv. Sign up for the listserv at www.rebeccadavidance.com.