



Goodbye London and hello Nottingham!

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In the UK, Company members C. Stamatiou, B. Reed, M. Jakel, R. McLaren, and K. Douglass. Photo courtesy of Constance Stamatiou.

We have officially one city down on our UK tour. Let me say, London, you were on fire and thank you, because the beginning of a tour is always harder than the rest. Your applause motivated me through tough times, and I loved that, at every performance, before the final curtain came up, the crowd would roar with enthusiasm. Such a great feeling!

This time in London, I didn't really do the touristy thing. I did that last time I was there, so I wanted to feel more like a local. I went to Portobello Road near Notting Hill Gate and went to all kinds of little clothing boutiques and popular shoe stores. I was also overdue for a haircut so I went to Unruly hair salon, which a local told me was the best place to go for curly hair. Loved it! All the stylists were men and I had the best shampoo ever.

A few of the dancers went to Stonehenge on Monday, which I must do on my next visit. Some even took day trips to Paris. Since it's my first time being away overseas from my husband, I spent a lot of time ichatting during my time off. How amazing is technology these days? Even though I can't touch him, I can at

least see him while we talk. He's having to learn how to adjust with me gone, but I am also beginning to feel homesick. :- (See what happens when you have too much time on your hands? LOL. But rest was very much needed, so I can't complain.)

During the last week, I was able to see some friendly familiar faces as well. Asha Thomas, who used to dance for the company, came to visit and even took class with us, which was a treat since she is so inspiring to watch. A friend of mine from The Ailey School who just moved to London was also able to take class with us.

even got to hang out with a young student named Jordan Olpherts from the Rambert School. He came to a few performances and was just amazed. I introduced him to members of the Company and told him what it's like being an Ailey dancer. I told him about The Ailey School and he hopes to audition for the summer program. I even got permission for him to take Company class. :-) I think he was on cloud nine. I love to see young dancers so hungry for dance and eager to see what our lives are like. (He did very well by the way. If I was in his shoes, I probably would have gotten so nervous and froze, seriously! Mind you, Robert Battle, the Artistic Director Designate, was teaching that day.)

A few of us wanted to end our last night in London with a celebration. So Jordan went absolutely above and beyond for us. He took us to this great place called Mahiki, which is well known for celebrity appearances and fashion parties. There was actually a Paul Smith party happening that night, but by the time we got there we were told he'd just left. But we definitely felt like celebs ourselves. We had a table reserved for us with food and beverages. They even brought over this huge treasure chest filled with ice fruit and orchids.

Mahiki has this island feel to it, like you're in a tiki hut. The servers and bartenders were all dressed in island print shirts or dresses and served a variety of island-flavored drinks. Plus we had a really great DJ. We danced the night away and thanked the owner for a great time. He wants us to attend his venue's grand opening in NYC in December.

Speaking of December, that's when our season starts at New York City Center. Here's a shout out to all of my family at Ailey on the third and fourth floors working hard to prepare and promote our season.

Well, we are here in Nottingham for only three days. I've already been to Nottingham Castle and the Tales of Robin Hood. I wish I could go to the actual Sherwood Forest, but there's not enough time. It's nice to travel as part of our job, but sometimes we don't get to explore the surrounding area due to our theater call times, rehearsals, or mini-performances. But I'd like to think with my next career after dance that I will get to visit these amazing places again. Till next time. Stay blessed & dance. :-)

Constance Stamatiou