

Phoebe Clark

ADPA6003

2205530

At first, I felt quite apprehensive about Icons, not because of the choreographers, but because the themes felt repetitive, for example, what we had explored in first year. It felt like we weren't progressing creatively, which caused some tension across the co-hort. Even after voicing our concerns in a meeting, nothing really changed. Eventually, I realised I had to shift my mindset. Rather than focus on what wasn't working, I decided to make the most of our final performance. Before rehearsals even started, I saw Icons: Breaking Barriers as a chance to re-engage with the process, with Holly Corsi and Beth Salter, and with myself as an emerging artist. I used the experience to show my commitment, adaptability, and growth.

Leading up to show term, I had been out of practice for several weeks due to a back injury. Although I felt ready to return at the start of rehearsals, my condition worsened, and a physiotherapy consultation revealed a slipped disc and multiple muscle tears. With my final performance approaching, I was determined to continue. I took a proactive, measured approach to recovery incorporating dynamic stretching, gradually reducing my workload, and using sports taping techniques learned from online tutorials to relieve tension. These adjustments allowed me to manage the injury and take part in Icons.

YouTube tutorial :

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=How+to+tape+my+back+sport+s+tape&mid=2F7D298D91DD37A76B632F7D298D91DD37A76B63&mcid=152F9D3CC5634D1B97FF0D3FF1FF904B&FORM=VIRE>

I found myself searching for reassurance and understanding. In that process, I came across an article by Kathleen McGuire titled Listening to Your Body, which resonated deeply with me. One quote stood out:

“Dancers in their 20s may have new teachers or directors, new movement languages, and new physical demands. They may be living alone and taking sole responsibility for themselves for the first time, while learning how to achieve balance in their lives in a highly competitive environment. ‘This is the time of pushing and over-pushing and ignoring what your body is telling you,’ warns Richardson. She says dancers at this age often do what they’re told without paying attention to their individual needs.”

https://dancemagazine.com/listening_to_your_body/#gsc.tab=0

Reading this helped me realise that the exhaustion I was feeling wasn't weakness, but a common part of early professional dance life. It reinforced the importance of listening to my body and respecting my limits, even under pressure. The fear of falling behind brought frustration and self-doubt, but in that space, I found resilience. Recovery became as much about mindset as it was about healing learning to adapt, seek support, and make sustainable choices. In the end, performing in Icons felt like more than a physical achievement; it was a personal, emotional, and psychological milestone.

The rehearsal process began with challenges. A fragmented schedule and slow initial progress affected motivation and created some group frustration. However, by the end of the second week, the energy shifted, and rehearsals gained momentum. Within the cohort, varied abilities and learning speeds sometimes led to tension, especially when material had to be repeated. Noticing this, I took initiative to support peers outside of rehearsals, which strengthened both group cohesion and my own understanding. This experience reinforced the value of collaboration and peer support in creating a productive, respectful environment.

Selecting a character came naturally, which I saw as a positive indication of creative clarity. While I initially considered both Billie Eilish and Raye, my research consistently drew me back to Raye. Her narrative centred on heartbreak, abuse, and the pressures of fame offered emotional depth and authenticity I felt I could connect with. Her resilience and ability to transform personal pain into art provided a strong foundation for character development and movement interpretation.

After watching a video all about her heartbreak and fame, I really felt connected to portraying her in icons. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3FO_1u4Z3w&t=19s

"She has been open about earlier struggles with body dysmorphia, an eating disorder and anxiety. And she has also revealed how she had been sexually assaulted by a record producer earlier in her career." An article 'The rise of Raye: The story behind the UK's record breaking new star' <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/rise-raye-story-behind-uks-32263137>

Selecting sound scores felt intuitive, as I was drawn to songs sung or written by Raye. I proposed opening the show with Oscar Winning Tears, beginning with the line: "Hello, it's Raye. Please get nice and comfortable, the show is about to begin." I collaborated closely with both Holly and Beth to choreograph my sections, which was a rewarding and creatively fulfilling process.

As show week approached, we were finalising choreography and learning the final dance, and I occasionally worried we wouldn't have enough time. With limited rehearsal for cleaning and refining, much of the polishing happened on set. However, I came to see this as valuable preparation for professional practice, where adaptability and quick

learning are essential. Tech day at the Dance House reinforced this shift, it felt like working within a professional company and helped elevate our focus and performance mindset. During tech day, our dress run made it clear that my costume changes weren't realistic, I had the quickest turn around in the group and ended up late to every section. As stressful as it was, I'm glad it happened in rehearsal. It pushed me to stay calm, think on my feet, and make smart decisions about when to enter, which felt like a real step towards performing with a professional mindset.

Show day began with an early run-through, during which Holly adjusted some of my costume changes to improve timing, resulting in a smooth rehearsal. The first performance felt more like a full-dress rehearsal, with moments of shakiness, forgotten choreography, and nerves. Costume malfunctions added pressure. In the duet with Fin, mistakes led me to take control, but our strong connection allowed us to adapt. An unsuccessful lift added emotional depth, reflecting our narrative. Feedback noted strong individual performances but highlighted a lack of cohesion in group pieces, which Holly addressed in later notes.

We held one final rehearsal to clarify timing and spacing, especially for those adjusting to the larger stage. The last show felt bittersweet, both an ending and a new beginning. I approached it with the mindset to enjoy the moment, accepting mistakes and letting go of pressure, knowing it was our final performance together as a group.

The final run felt strong, with everyone focused on making it count. Afterward, I received positive feedback, many said my 'Raye' section gave them a clear sense of the character, and my duet with Finlay was praised for its intimacy and emotional connection. I was also recognized for standing out in group pieces, which was meaningful. I faced another quick-change challenge but applied what I'd learned, entering calmly and handling it professionally.

I'm grateful for the chance to connect with Holly and demonstrate my growth in a professional setting. Returning to dance after my injury felt like a meaningful end to three years of study. I'm proud to have portrayed my character with depth and kept the audience engaged. Watching my peers develop added richness to the process. Moving forward, I'll stay mindful of maintaining professionalism in rehearsal, especially by minimizing distractions. Overall, I leave this experience feeling accomplished and ready for what's next.

Bibliography

Bing.com. (2025). How to tape my back sports tape - Search Videos. [online] Available at:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=How+to+tape+my+back+sports+tape&mid=2F7D298D91DD37A76B632F7D298D91DD37A76B63&mcid=152F9D3CC5634D1B97FF0D3FF1FF904B&FORM=VIRE>

[Accessed 9th June. 2025].

McGuire, K. (2012) Listening to your body.

https://dancemagazine.com/listening_to_your_body/#gsc.tab=0.

(Accessed 15th May 2025)

Annett, J. (2024) 'The rise of Raye: The story behind the UK's record breaking new star,' Daily Mirror, 3 March. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/rise-raye-story-behind-uks-32263137>.

(Accessed 9th May 2025)

MTV UK (2020). RAYE Talks Heartbreak; 'Euphoric Sad Songs' Exclusive Documentary | MTV Music. [online] YouTube. Available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3FO_1u4Z3w

[Accessed 18 Jun. 2025].