

I am very touched to see so many people,
Some of you, whom I know since I first came to San Francisco,
Some of you, whom I have just started developing a relationship with,
Some of you, whom I love,
Some of you that inspire me, my fellow dancers and artist-friends,
Some, whom I admire,
For all of you that I respect and thank for being here today, I will share a few thoughts.

I receive this medal of *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* with humility because it is a sign of recognition for my career in dance, which I would dare to define with these words: joy, awareness, share, as well as determination, courage, and perseverance.

I also receive this distinction with a great sense of honor because the medal of *Chevalier* is a symbol of something I relish, which is the prevalence of what is specific over what is general: in this instance, it is the specificity of dancing, of the art of ballet, of artistic sensibility, of individuality.

Most of all, I receive this medal with much humbleness because it means entering an institution that places my work in context of others' and in context of a greater culture, which most fittingly values immaterial richness: intelligence, artistry, evocative power, power to generate feelings in others, power to transcend.

Dancing and performing have always given me a sense of being fully alive. Through my career I danced the roles of fairies, gods and demi-gods, ethereal creatures, surreal beings, caricatures and other satirical characters. These roles were inspiring, and they helped me sustain my effort to continue to refine my craftsmanship. They also engaged my imagination in the fascinating artistic and physical investigation of other ways of existing.

I also danced physically demanding pieces of choreography. They challenged my sense of balance, of coordination, of velocity, flexibility and strength. They gave me great insights into the confines of our physical limitations.

My last stage appearance, a little more than a month ago was in a piece of choreography called "Steady Articulation of Perseverance" by local choreographer Alonzo King. Working on it brought me back to my own sense of time and space, and allowed me to explore the most hidden parts of my own existence.

Dance has proven to be an empowering tool in my life as a woman and as a creative participant in the world. I am grateful to France for having given me an exceptional education and to the San Francisco Ballet under the leadership of Helgi Tomasson for having given me a distinctive professional identity. Dance came to my life at a very early age, and has continued to shape my own reality in an unimaginable, fulfilling and productive way. I know of France's interest in the universal and the immaterial. Through my dancing, I have tried to achieve both.

I am grateful, humbled and honored to be recognized for this gift of dance in such a manner.