

**SIT WHILE DANCING**  
By Cole Dzubak

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## CHARACTERS

SALLY	A dance teacher, full of spirit and passion. Acts as the narrator, and takes part in the action. Amazingly friendly. 40s to 60s.
LAURA	A dance mom means well. 40s to 60s
SUSAN	A dance mom means well. 40s to 60s
RACHEL	A student teacher looks up to Sally. Teens to 20s.
STUDENTS	A group of 3-6 students, Rachel be a part of this group for the 1990 and 1993 scenes. Should act as new students each time. Any age.

## SETTING

Inside Sally Semmes Dance Studio

## TIME

Between 1990 and 1995

**\*NOTE:** The students can be a combination of age, race, and gender.

This show was created in partnership with the Live Forever Project, whose mission is to preserve the life of our community members through art.

A dance studio, 1990. Stage left should be a bar, and where the students dance. Stage right is where the teacher will teach.

Spotlight on SALLY.

SALLY

Dance is my life. I can't remember a time when dance wasn't important. I started when I was 4 years old. I know, right. After I took my first class, I knew I was at home while dancing. It made me feel free, like I could be myself. Dancing was where I could show everyone how I was feeling at the time. I danced for 12 years in a studio before I finally moved off to Phillips and opened my own studio. For a while I taught English and speech in a high school somewhere, but after I quit that and moved to Manitowoc, I opened Sally Semmes Dance Studio. It was some of the best 13 years of my life. I loved teaching there. I had 350 students there, and they were such amazing kids, and they had the absolute best parents. Everybody there had a love for dance and a respect for the art. My students all had the best confidence because unlike many places, I didn't have mirrors in my studio, I didn't want them to compare themselves to other students. Dance was everything. But everything changed in 1990.

Lights up. A class of 3-6 students fill in stage left. SALLY enters the scene in 1990.

SALLY

Ok class let's run this step a few more times and then we will be done for the day. I know it's new, and we'll review this step next time as well, but it's important to practice. Know who can tell me the steps in a Pas de Bourrée?

A few of the students raise their hands, and SALLY calls on one of them.

STUDENT 1

It's back, side... I forgot the last part. Back, side, something.

SALLY

Can someone help them please? Back, side...

A couple students raise their hands this time. SALLY motions to one.

STUDENT 2

Back, side, front.

SALLY

Correct! Good job, both of you. Pad de Bourrée is back, side, front, then repeat. Where do your arms go when you are doing your Pas de Bourrées?

A student jumps into position and shouts.

STUDENT 3

Right arm forward, left arm to the side.

SALLY

Correct, when you step front with your left leg, and what about when you step front with your right leg?

Students raise their hand, and SALLY calls on one in the back,

STUDENT 4

You switch and have your left arm forward and right arm out to the side.

SALLY

Very good, everyone. Now let's practice the step together, shall we?

Everyone gets into starting position and follow SALLY's lead.

SALLY

And, back, side, step, back side, step...

Everyone does some variation of the step-in time. SALLY and two students do it effortlessly with arms. Three of the students do it with their arms on their hips. One student doesn't have any idea what is happening.

SALLY

Ok great, how was that for everyone?

STUDENT 5

Yeah, that feels good.

STUDENT 6

Um... I'm sorry... but I have no idea what just happened, I was having trouble following along.

SALLY

That's perfectly ok, we are here to learn aren't we. Let's practice the step without the arms, and just worry about the feet. Ok?

STUDENT 6

Ok, yeah.

SALLY

Lets try it then. Back...

SALLY leads the students through the step slowly.

SALLY

Side...

As SALLY makes this step, she stops and winces in pain.

SALLY

AGH!

STUDENT 5

Are you ok Miss Sally?

STUDENT 4

Is everything ok?

SALLY sits and massages her ankle.

SALLY

Yes, I'll be ok everyone, I just stepped on my foot wrong.

STUDENT 3

Do you need any help?

SALLY

No, I'll be ok, thank you though. Well, that is our time for today everyone, let's go ahead and end class today, and I will see you all next week, yes?

STUDENT 2

Thank you, Miss Sally!

STUDENT 1

Have a good week!

SALLY

You all too!

The students exit, as SALLY looks at her ankle in pain. Lights dim.

Lights come up on SALLY on the phone. She is in her dance outfit or a variation of it.

SALLY

Hello doctor, how is everything... That's good, I'm fine... you have the test results... how are they... wait, no that can't be possible... arthritis? But aren't I too young? Yes, the pain was in my ankles and knees... sometimes my hips... was the swelling really arthritis? Is there anything I can do? I'm a dance teacher, I can't just give that up? Taking it easy is not an option, no. If there's medication to stop it then I'll take it... Thanks for everything, doctor...

Spotlight on SALLY.

SALLY

That was the phone call that changed my life. It destroyed me to hear those words. "Take it easy." Have you ever tried to teach a group of kids how to Pas de Bourrée without showing them the step? Exactly my point. So I kept at it, and tried to limit my amount of movement I did. I was able to teach the class and still help the kids for a while. But 1993 proved to be a lot for me. I wouldn't show it to the kids, but I was in so much pain. I sent a letter to the parents that I was thinking about retiring soon.

Lights up. The students are back but in a different formation. SALLY joins the class.

SALLY

Ok class, let me see your Pas de Bourrées before I send you off for the day.

The students show off their Pas de Bourrées, but two have trouble.

STUDENT 1

Ms. Sally, I'm getting confused on the side step to the front step.

STUDENT 2

Me too, it feels awkward.

SALLY

Ok, well lets see if I can show you here.

SALLY does the step facing away from the students. Her face shows that she is in great pain, but won't allow her students to see. By mistake, she lets out a quiet "ow."

STUDENT 3

Are you ok, Ms. Sally?

SALLY

Yes, of course I am, did that make sense to everyone?

The students ad lib "yes" and "thank you"

SALLY

Ok, good, let me see them again and then you can go

The group all nail their Pas de Bourrées.

STUDENT 4

How was that?

SALLY

Great work everyone! That is our time for today, so please go home and rest!

STUDENT 5

Thank you, Ms. Sally!

STUDENT 6

Have a good week!

SALLY

You too!

The students disperse. Two mothers, SUSAN and LAURA, enter.

SALLY

Susan, Laura, how are you doing?

SUSAN

Just fine, thanks for asking!

LAURA

We wanted to talk to you regarding the letter you sent home last week, about your retirement?

SALLY

Of course, what about it?

SUSAN

Well, I know this is a strange request... but you can't retire...

LAURA

Our girls have never been happier in dance than they have with you, you are so good with the kids...

SALLY

I'm glad you both think so, I try my best, but I just don't know how much more time my bones have in them.

LAURA

Well, we've been thinking about that too.

SUSAN

What if you sit and teach?

SALLY

Sit to teach dance?

LAURA

You already have student teachers, they could do the steps, and you instruct and correct!

SALLY

I don't know ladies...

SUSAN

Again, we know this is odd of us to ask, and we don't want to come off as too strong or anything... but you are so great for the kids

LAURA

And we know you love this too... we just want to make sure we all get as much out of you as we can



SALLY

Well thank you for talking to me about this, I'll think about it.

SUSAN

That's about all we can ask for, isn't it?

LAURA

You have a good night, Sally.

SALLY

You both as well.

LAURA and SUSAN exit.  
Lights dim. Spotlight on SALLY.

SALLY

Again, I felt my soul leave my body. To have two moms, both of which were lovely, come in and tell me I can't retire for the sake of their children just hit me like a truck. My body was telling me no, but my heart and my students were telling me to keep going, to keep trying. So... naturally, if you could've guessed... I did. I got a nice, comfy chair and I sat in class, and had one of my 9 student teachers do the demonstrations. I did this until 1995, but teaching Pas de Bourrée is a difficult step...

Lights up. The students are back  
In a new formation. SALLY takes  
a seat to the side, and RACHEL is  
in front of the class. RACHEL  
should be one of the students from  
before, showing she has graduated  
to teacher.

RACHEL

Alright everyone, I think we are almost done, is there anything else we should do today, Ms. Sally?

SALLY

Let's see your Pas de Bourrées everyone.

One student can't do it.

STUDENT 1

Ms. Rachel, could you show me how to do it again?

RACHEL

Of course I can.

RACHEL does the step.

Make sense? RACHEL

You do it differently than Ms. Sally? STUDENT 2

I do? RACHEL

Yeah, it looked different? STUDENT 3

Ms. Sally, can you show us? STUDENT 4

Let me see it one more time, follow Rachel. SALLY

They follow RACHEL, but get lost.

Sorry, one more time? STUDENT 5

Ok, wait, let me show you. SALLY

SALLY gets up to do the step.

Follow everyone. SALLY

SALLY goes to do it, but when she steps back she crumbles in pain.

Ms. Sally! Are you ok? STUDENT 6

Yes, I'm fine. SALLY

Do you need help? RACHEL

SALLY

No, I got it.

SALLY tries to get up, but falls.

RACHEL

Here, I got you.

SALLY

Thank you. That's class everyone. Have a good week.

The students ad lib goodbye.

RACHEL

That was pretty nasty, Ms. Sally. Are you sure you're ok?

SALLY

I'll be fine... I think it may be time for me to call it quits.

RACHEL

Wow.. are you sure?

SALLY

You just saw me dear... I can't just sit and teach, it doesn't work. And I'm not as young as I once was. Not in the same condition I use to be.

RACHEL

Well... whatever decision you make, I'll support you no matter what.

SALLY

Thank you, Rachel.

They hug. RACHEL exits.  
Lights dim, spotlight on SALLY.

SALLY

And that was it. In 1995 I quit. I couldn't do it anymore. I tried and tried to keep at it as long as I can but my body just couldn't anymore. As much as I didn't want to quit, it felt good to relax and not ache all the time. But my soul is missing something. Dance filled in a hole in my heart that is now just lying empty. Dance was who I was. Without it, it's hard to stay positive. It's hard some days without it. But I have these memories of these kids. And that's what keeps me going.

Blackout.