

IF YOU HAPPEN TO SIT NEXT TO HAYLEY AT AN AIRPORT, SHE WILL BE TALKING TO YOU WITH PHENOMENAL EASE WHETHER SHE KNOWS YOU OR NOT... THIS IS NOT THE FREQUENT TRAVELLER SYNDROME, JUST HER OTHER SELF, AWAY FROM BOOKS AND QUIET TIME THAT SHE LOVES AS WELL.

Her disarming simplicity hides her inner landscape. She is a mine of wisdom, waiting to be tapped. This young choreographer and instructor can robustly take you through multiple tracks of her dance career, and all well travelled.

She started dancing the ballet when she was three. This dance form is close to her heart and she loves the discipline and rigour of it. 'You have to be steeped in it' she says. She taught children for some time when she was younger.

Her love of people kept her line dancing, for she refused to be pushed by her mother in her preteens. She would be playing pool in the next room at the Holiday Park, because she found dancing so 'not cool'. Typical daughter. It did not take very long for her to be pulled in, because her mother started teaching in 1995 and she was 'hooked' to it after one trial class in 1997. But of course 'I was never going to follow my mother's footsteps'. 'I'll never do that' she told her mother and soon she was convinced to accompany her to a teachers' training.

Seeking her place in the world, she travelled to the USA when she was 18, She worked backstage in a music studio and taught Line dance too. When she came back she had a full time job and she settled down into her marriage. Being busy with children, choreography was put on the back burner, though she carried on with her Line dance studio routine. She taught ballet and tap too, but Line dance was the staple.

She has her place on the table now, but she wonders if she had not taken a break from choreography, could she have met her work half way instead of going back to the springboard. Hayley knows that her children are happy when they see a happier, more fulfilled mother. The deep affinity between Hayley and her work is palpable as she talks about her family and her work. She hopes to leave a legacy of good dances for people to enjoy.

One of the advantages of the slowdown during this pandemic has been that she has signed up for Applied Linguistics and hopes to specialise in it. Teaching in different languages in the past has not been a smooth run. She hopes to gain proficiency in Spanish and French to be more articulate and to cohabit this workspace she shys away from at present.

The beautiful frame she is set in when she teaches online has a language of its own. Friendly pastels in her kitchen and her readiness to explain dance steps make it hard for me to believe that she could have been 'cocky' as an instructor in her younger days. She goes on to say that now she is more sensitive to how people are following her instructions. She has learnt to turn back more, to see if she is able to match their speed and, 'to see if they need another wall'. 'This has been my biggest learning curve over the years'. She has stopped worrying about looking good as a teacher. It is important to know if they are enjoying the dance. The cosiest, most homely space, with a kettle on 3' o'clock and an oven on 9'o o'clock, suddenly seems most professional.

The Local Council offered her mother the job of a dance instructor, but she suggested that they consider Hayley instead. The dance class was surprised to see young 16 year old talent, and they accepted her quite readily. Thus commenced her dance career in a Peninsula north of England just below Scotland. Her mother is English and her Father Scottish.

In a world where meritocracy is not guaranteed, she was invited to do workshops in different parts of England. 'Travelling to teach is my big achievement' says Hayley. At the CBA, her dream came true when she was asked to teach last year. She did not sleep or eat the night before. Robert Lindsay and she were to enter the stage together and she made him promise that he would lead the way and help her shield her nervousness. The announcement was made and Lindsay pushed her to the stage. She felt like she had been thrown into the deep with a thousand faces waiting to pass the verdict. She surfaced, waded and swam to the finishing line.

WORKPLACE IS AN EXPRESSION OF SELF, AND HER HUSBAND SAYS THAT SHE HAS A DIFFERENT VIBRANCY ON THE FLOOR WITH HER DANCE FRIENDS. AT THE CBA, HER NERVOUSNESS EVAPORATED ONCE SHE WAS ON THE FLOOR. 'I DIDN'T WANT TO GET OFF THE FLOOR', SHE TELLS ME.



I DIDN'T WANT TO GET OFF THE FLOOR'

'DON'T LOOK AT YOUR NEIGHBOUR, SET YOUR OWN STANDARDS IN DANCE AND THEN LIVE UP TO THEM'



HAYLEY WHEATLEY



'I DO GET SILLY IN CLASS'

'TECHNIQUE COMES FROM THE HEART SOMETIMES AND IT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR IT TO COME FROM LOVING THE MUSIC'

I have felt often that we are all in a certain shared structure when we see a tussle between technique and social. She is 'easy' with her students and 'quite laid back' in classes. 'Strictness' as used by other neighbourhood teachers does not appeal to her. And 'I want to bring so much joy to their life with dance'. If it becomes stressful for them, it is not worth it. She suggests they should take a break from their classes and come back later. 'Technique comes from the heart sometimes and it is most important for it to come from loving the music'. They have 'a few firsts in British championships' and she has students who wish to focus on championships and competitions alone.

'I do get silly in class' and tell them they can just fake some steps and have fun Line dance is the most important form of dance because it unites people uniquely. 'Dance with your heart and your feet will follow'. Hayley, I wish my feet could follow the way yours do. 'Don't look at your neighbour, set your own standards in dance and then live up to them'. She enjoys teaching intermediate level Line dances to students who have been with her for some time. Her beginners enjoy Country music and the simplicity of clear beats.

Hayley has travelled to fourteen different countries for her workshops. Multiple strands of diverse cultural interactions just make life's fabric more magical. Everyone has a distant place on your map. When you meet them, however, you see the person behind the choreographer you might have placed on a pedestal. She finds this interaction with her line dance family most endearing. Jo Thompson, 'is the shining light', and a kind person, inside out. She trained her for competitions when she was younger. Rachael, Darren Bailey, Fred Whitehouse, Maggie Gallagher, Rio Vos, and many others inspire her in different ways. She admires Rachael for having taken over the world and done tremendous service to Line dance. 'Friend Philip is upfront and keeps me real'. 'He shouts at me'. He talks to her children and guides them on subjects. She goes on to say, 'And in a way I call him my Guru, he calls a spade a spade', Oh I understand that Hayley, when he likes my smile more than my dance.



Hayley's pup spotted a dog out of the window as we chatted. She went quiet for a while, and then she said that it hurt when people said that they did not like her face on the poster or they thought she needed to shed a few pounds. The trials and criticism that instructors and choreographers go through sometimes pull them down. The LDF's amazing initiative has a one to one reach and pulls us out of roller coaster changes in our lives. She is fortunate to have Line dance friends who have encouraged her to feel that she is good and belongs here. She believes that these dull times instil confidence in us to give us good times.

'I BELIEVE THAT IF THINGS HAVE TO HAPPEN, WE WILL MAKE THEM HAPPEN'. WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT. JUST HOLD ON TO YOUR DREAMS AND DO NOT STOP BELIEVING. ONE NEEDS THE LIFELINE, LDF OFFERS, TO STAY AFLOAT. 'I AM MASSIVELY PROUD OF BETTY AND HELEN AND WILL LOVE TO HELP ALL I CAN', SHE REITERATES. 'THIS IS MY SECOND FAMILY'.

During the lockdown she has experienced a shift in priorities. Travel for work, learning from international instructors takes precedence over other things. Earlier it was important to look good on the floor. Now she wants to realise her dream of meeting different people from different countries and feel the magic of their dances and cultures.

'I love classical music, to calm down...shut my eyes and just listen to it'. She tells me shyly that she wanted to be an actress when she was younger. 'Writing would be wonderful for me too' she says. She also thought at one time that she would make a good midwife. She says she continues to love and practice Yoga, though she will never teach it. In spite of the bullet list of ideas and talent to back it, beat and rhythm seem to run in her family, and dance and her students, make her the proudest. Her brother is a musician and her sister is 'crafty'.



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Once upon a Time

THE KETTLE IN MY KITCHEN  
BY MONICA BHASIN

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