

Rhoda Lai  
Laidance

15 YEARS LINE DANCE INSTRUCTOR

10 YEARS CHOREOGRAPHER

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Once  
upon  
a  
Time

ENERGISER BUNNY  
by MONICA BHASIN

'Energiser bunny' 'Crazy', 'Hyper', that is Rhoda Lai for you. Her students call her these names, not me. Watch, I think the Rhoda Smacky is coming my way.

Let your upper torso turn into the wide corner, on the axis..... Ouch, 'Turn around like you are looking at him in the far corner, kick him out of the door and come right back through the door, watch your balance'. Does this sound familiar? Rhoda treats you to 'ice cream scoops' as she explains section 3, count 7,8, of her dance, Starving, and plays 'peek a boo' in 'Bring Me the Night' while she conducts an online teach. Can you pack so much fun into your step sheets, and this is why learning from a choreographer like Rhoda is an exceptional experience. The tricks and tips are there to relish.

When asked by friends of her parents, if she could teach line dance, because they knew she danced the Ballroom and Latin dances, her answer was, 'Oh, I can do it'. She read up to see what line dance was about and soon she was teaching friends and family at the senior centre where she often drove her parents to, for their health issues.

Her 15 year old Laidance started its journey with the self study approach as everything else in her life does. She narrates an incident when the store manager of a hardware store looked thunderstruck, when this petite DIY woman asked for methods to instal gadgets for her new condominium. Small frame, but tall personality has potential, he should have known. Her husband pitches in where she gives up and they carry it out together. 'I am a hands on person, I usually do not giveup', in her words.

Some years later her moment of pride that touched her to tears was when 'Twinkle', her first choreography, hit the charts in a competition in Malaysia. It won the Horizon, and lit up Doug and Miranda's Dance Explosion at Vegas with its popularity. The moment was 'Dramatic' and she was "privileged" to be a winner, she recalls.

Competition dancers must experience a sense of accomplishment when they find a chance to compete, she opines. In her words, 'though I don't think I am in a position to comment on competitive dancin',. it is important to ask yourself, however, if the stress and injuries that went into the run up, were worth the effort.

'I am a fun person definitely', no walk, walk, for me, my friends laugh and dance with me'. They leave their concerns at home and she is happy letting them leave technique on the side, drawing on it to explain beats and timing when necessary. Layman terms are her best friends and so they befriend her line dancers. Technique is important for their safety, but as long as her students can fake it to keep close to the original, they can enjoy all they want. Fake it till you make it, would you say?

This 'cool' instructor uses methods to ease people into stepping up with her, and I understand that it attenuates dread of technique and terminology. Laughter is a free emotion and it is generously available in Laidance.

We laugh as she narrates her 'Shoe' stress. Did you know shoes rank high in her memorable moments. Fancy them fancy shoes. Swollen feet before a dance in Chicago, she says casually, and I suspect she must've been embarrassed and nervous, were soothed by Debbie Rushton, Lorenzo and friends jerking her feet out of her shoes. 'It was like giving birth to a child', she says. In another incident, imagine her consternation when her lovely new Latino shoes got soaked in an open air event in China. The red carpet was a water soaked trampoline. Did it wet her spirits? I doubt it.

She has no plans about the final destination in this journey. Her whole-souled wish would be to polish up her Hip Hop under Guyton Mundy's tutelage. This will help her pursue her second love.

I am past that stage of planning' says Rhoda. Invitations to teach in countries like Sweden, Japan, Norway, Malaysia, China, Hongkong, Belgium have consumed her time and this sometimes becomes challenging.

If you see a despondent Rhoda, it is because she wrote a dance, infused magic into it, and people did not dance it with the same zest. Other things she considers to be minor interruptions. She lost her voice in a class while she was teaching and she mimed it out while her sister understood, as all sisters do, and explained to the dancers. No big deal.

"As a new Ambassador for LDF representing Canada", she would reach out to any of your family members and be there for you. 'Our slogan says, it is okay not to be okay'. It is important to raise the awareness of mental health issues especially during this pandemic. 'On Saturday 26th September, I look forward to dancing with you for the LDF Reach Out Unite in Dance Challenge! I will open a Zoom dance party at 14.00 (GMT) on Saturday 26th Sept to dance "Red Hot Salsa" with you. Look out for my posting in "Virtual Line Dancing" Facebook Group for further details. Let's dance and be united'.

Did you know she is a brilliant Chef too? Migratory paths of talent, fun, care and service cross and Rho...da , Rho...da, meets us here with a smile.

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