

GUILLAUME RICHARD

GUILLAUME’ IN FRENCH, WITH ITS ORIGINS IN THE GERMAN. LANGUAGE, AND WILLIAM IN ENGLISH, THE NAME ITSELF BRINGS UP THE CONCEPT OF BEING MEANINGFUL IN EVERY CONTEXT, OF UNDERSTANDING PLURALITY. HIS IS A MIND THAT WILL NOT BE ROBBED OF THE EXPERIENCE AND OF DIVERSITY AND ONENESS ALL AT ONCE.

LIFE IS
A DANCE

Just in case anyone is interested, Guillaume and I discussed the possibility of embarking on a dream project. We are contemplating a partnership in a library with a cafe. The library will have a ‘chill hour’ like a ‘happy hour’ and that’s when we dance. Please send in your expression of interest.

‘We could be cousins’, says Guillaume. His grandmother was born in Madagascar, grew up in the islands nearby, where she met his grandfather. His grandfather was from India, and so we could be family. We are a big fat Line Dance family, undeniably, and we enjoy being related to each other.

“MY LIFE IS LIKE DANCING” You rise, you fall, it is beautiful sometimes, sad at others, perfectly synchronised and out of tune too. One moves forward and back, from side to side. *“SOMETIMES YOU LEAD AND SOMETIMES YOU FOLLOW”* You dance the life given to you. The poet in Guillaume, sketches the allegory we live in.

‘I have made my name on my own’. ‘I had support, but no big name behind me’. He always knew he would be a dancer, he did choreographies for his family events. He is ‘here’ because he worked hard, and it ‘took a lot’ to reach where he is. He never said to himself or anyone that he wanted to be like Rachael or Paul or Simon Ward. He worked and he participated in events and competitions. **‘These people are very special to me’.** Legends like Rob Fowler and Jo Thompson opened the road for devotees like him, and prepared a stage for them to arrive. **‘I have worked often with Rob Fowler, I listen to him like I would listen to a dad’.** This is the repertoire of talent available around the world, and I quote Guillaume here, **‘We have a lot of choreographers around the world but in France we do not’.** **‘Nobody pushed me, my dream was only to be dancing’.**

‘I cried when I met Rachael Mcenaney the first time. It was like a little boy watching his idol. She is very special to me’. She is a complete package, a beautiful dancer and a beautiful person. For Guillaume, she was a star and is, and will always be one. Jo Thompson is just the queen, in his opinion. ***‘She got that name for a reason. She gives me good advice’.*** He can talk to Rob for hours. Roy and Rob inspire him and he learns from listening to them talk.

‘You don’t have to be a big name to be my inspiration, Monica’. You might say it is easy for Guillaume to be grandiose, in saying that he is inspired by a seventy eight year old student in my class who attempted and managed to dance Simon, Fred and Danielle’s ‘Hurts’ ‘Like a Cha Cha Cha’, because Guillaume has already reached where most line dancers aspire to be. But he meant it. People like her are an inspiration to him.

Failure and success are terms used by our elders and have a place in the dictionary too. They take away the lessons from being in the moment. Guillaume’s dad wanted him to play a sport, a masculine sport, like football for instance. Might one say, that the biggest force behind him was, that he did not get enough encouragement. An aunt suggested, and his mother escorted him to his first dance class. When he started line dancing back then, it was Country dancing mostly and the idea was to be dressed as cowboys or ‘cowgirls’, he smiles. The mood and the character had to be in the theme for the dance evening. When his teacher suggested dances like Chill Factor and Hold Your Horses, he was impressed because it was a mix of Country and pop for him.

He himself would not have imagined dance would bring him enviable recognition and success. The definition of the above terms morphs into joy and pride from following his passion. Line dance allows one the freedom to choose all genres of music from everywhere. Guillaume finds freedom in this form though he admires the discipline that Ballet affords. He is happiest dancing modern because it allows him to dance freely. The **‘fightish-ness’** of competitions is replaced by a relaxed, happy, in the moment, joy. He wants his students around him, for the burst of energy that teaching line dance gives him. Somethings in life are priceless, and the thrill of stepping up on a real floor with real smiles is one of them.

“FAILURE AND SUCCESS are terms”
They take away the lessons
from being in the moment

Once
upon
a
Time

LIFE IS A DANCE

by MONICA BHASIN

LD F

LINE DANCE FOUNDATION
WWW.LINEDANCEFOUNDATION.COM

Merry feet
Line Dance

WWW.MERRYFEET.CLUB



Being invited to teach in Chicago, at one of the esteemed dance events was a nail biting experience. **‘I had to teach in English’**. He was so excited and proud that he forgot his English. At Stoke he had to teach ‘Leave a Light On’. I will call it the ‘fist fiasco’ to save Guillaume the embarrassment. Even today when he details it, he looks flushed from the awkwardness of describing it. The audience was shocked at the expression he used, as his face went red from trying to understand what he had said. It is ok Guillaume. Speaking in a language, not your own, is pushing boundaries where you are expected to tumble into words that befog you more and more, and you tread tricky ground. We understand, though Rob did not, and scolded him for using words that scandalised him into shock. Another big faux pas, says Guillaume, with a sheepish smile.

Teaching his dance, Queen, at the CBA, has been his proud moment and it **‘opened doors for me’**. Teaching the French version was a moment of honour for his country. Being with legends, bringing the dance to a big audience felt like being on **‘top of the world, just brilliant’**. **‘What am I doing here, is that my name on the board’** were his thoughts as his heart fluttered. He cried, he laughed, and once again **‘my English failed me’**, he smiled.

Be that as it may, having been at the pinnacle of success in every competition, he quit that world sometime in 2018 to make room for his interest in teaching. After one of his lengthy tours with a hop, skip and jump across continents, from Vegas to Malaysia to Australia he felt burnt out. He could not lift his spirits or his body to meet up the challenge of more travel and rigour for a UCWDC contest. Wearing one’s fingers to the bones can bring about serious re-evaluation of where one wants to be in their journey. At one such time, when he had the potential and the reach, he decided to call it a day. The superstardom stays in the aura, Guillaume, and we see it. You were meant to wear the gilded helmet.

‘The two sides of my brain’ respond differently and he puts his hand up to the forehead to show the partitioning. He felt comfortable and prepared for competitions after years of hard work, for he had not been trained for it initially. He was never at ease. Stress had become a part of his daily mental make up. **‘I could watch great technique and feel no emotion’**. The heart responds to the fun and social side of dancing with everyone. To a class of students, he gives his special Guillaume touch of style, to make them feel and look graceful. He emphasizes on the ‘feeling’ of it all. Whatever music he hears, country, waltz, night club or other, the lyrics have to touch his soul. In one of conversations with Kelly, he speaks about letting the body and mind open up to the lyrics. The rest flows.

He has enjoyed his travels immensely. It has given him a high to be in places people can only dream of, and, at such a young age. The world saw glamour and beauty in his being among the best at every event, in his travel to exotic islands, and the media that covered the glitzy side of his life. He enjoyed being lauded and celebrated. The struggle and the disappointment, the toil and the trouble, however, was his, to bear alone. His separation with his partner and his decision not to adopt a child as a result, was a challenging phase to go through.

He had wished to train with Roy Verdonk, and could not. He could have competed for titles and been in the highest of mega-star positions. He however wishes to be on the other side to achieve accreditation as a judge. He looks forward to being certified by the different dance organisations to pursue his goal. Many students wish to train with him. France has talent. He hopes to fulfil his responsibility in taking it forward because of the privileged position he is in. Guillaume feels if a job has to be done well, he must have the bandwidth to fulfil it. Traveling to train them, and be with his prodigies at competitions, is time consuming. He is not sure if he has the luxury of time.

Once upon a Time

LIFE IS A DANCE
by MONICA BHASIN



LINE DANCE FOUNDATION
WWW.LINEDANCEFOUNDATION.COM

Merry feet
Line Dance

WWW.MERRYFEET.CLUB

He is thirty four years old now. He points to his wrinkles, and all I can think of is the ease with which he graces the dance floor. He started teaching seventeen years back. Dance remains his first love. His being a nurse was a natural outcome of his serving and caring nature. Post lockdown he had seriously considered returning to nursing. The job being offered required him to be committed for longer than he could sign up for. Regretfully he turned it down. He knows that the joy he feels in teaching and sharing the floor draws him to his lifelong passion and he will be associated with it one way or the other.

He pulled out a sketch of interior design that he was working on, for a client. Till he can go back to dancing full time, he enjoys dabbling in interior design. It keeps his creativity alive. We shared that our book reading routine before bedtime, works better than sleeping pills. We both enjoy reading. It is a great way to settle the mind away from the day's activity.

He shows the tattoo on his wrist, ‘Life is a dance’. ‘We make dreams for people’ and we could be going through our worst nightmares. Post lockdown, music bands, artists and dancers have suffered from uncertainty and financial instability. The LDF is the umbrella that sheltered him. ***‘I am really, really, really grateful’.*** He connected others to the foundation and they got relief. One should not be ashamed to reach out. Time is like a rose, it has thorns and it is fragrant too. Guillaume is a proud representative of the foundation. He gives to this ‘angelic charity’ and promotes it. ***‘This is my community’*** and it is imperative to work towards saving ***‘our own’*** from the severe blow that the pandemic has dealt.

The aberration in 2020 has made us fervently hope for this year to bring better health to everyone. Guillaume wishes to travel to Africa and South America where he feels social dancing could be encouraged. He did not know that his dances were popular with the French settlement in Mauritius. Ira Weisburd had mentioned it in our chat. Guillaume was pleasantly surprised to hear it. It must be the Madagascar connection, he says. He hopes that the Olympics would revive and reintroduce line dance as an official sport. ‘Did you know, Monica’, that one is escorted by a doctor and an official team representing the country at the Olympics. Shane McKeever, the only champion with the world title, was instrumental in gaining that status for this sport. Guillaume himself won the silver twice, and the bronze once. The year he got the gold, it was not the olympic year.

He fell out of favour with the French federation that is the decision making body, and this, he would like to amend. He needs the energy to move forward. He has a voice, and is a celebrated awardee with maximum titles. He would like to influence the way dance should be promoted in his country, to make it ‘bigger and better’. His scope was limited when he was pushed out because **‘he did not present the perfect picture’**. He would like to put that behind him and help with decision making to make this sport part of the national curriculum.

To think in French and to translate in the head, then speak in class to match his instructions, is a challenge he has been trying to meet and will continue to work on. It was a horror to put his dances on a stepsheet. I relate to that, hence I say it in a nursery rhyme form, so that it stays in my head. Maybe you should try that Guillaume. I am certain there is a paradigm instruction method in your classes. The saving grace, backup sentences, are good to fall back on, when in dialect distress. You were loud and clear and very expressive in our chat. I look forward to being in your workshops on a real floor.



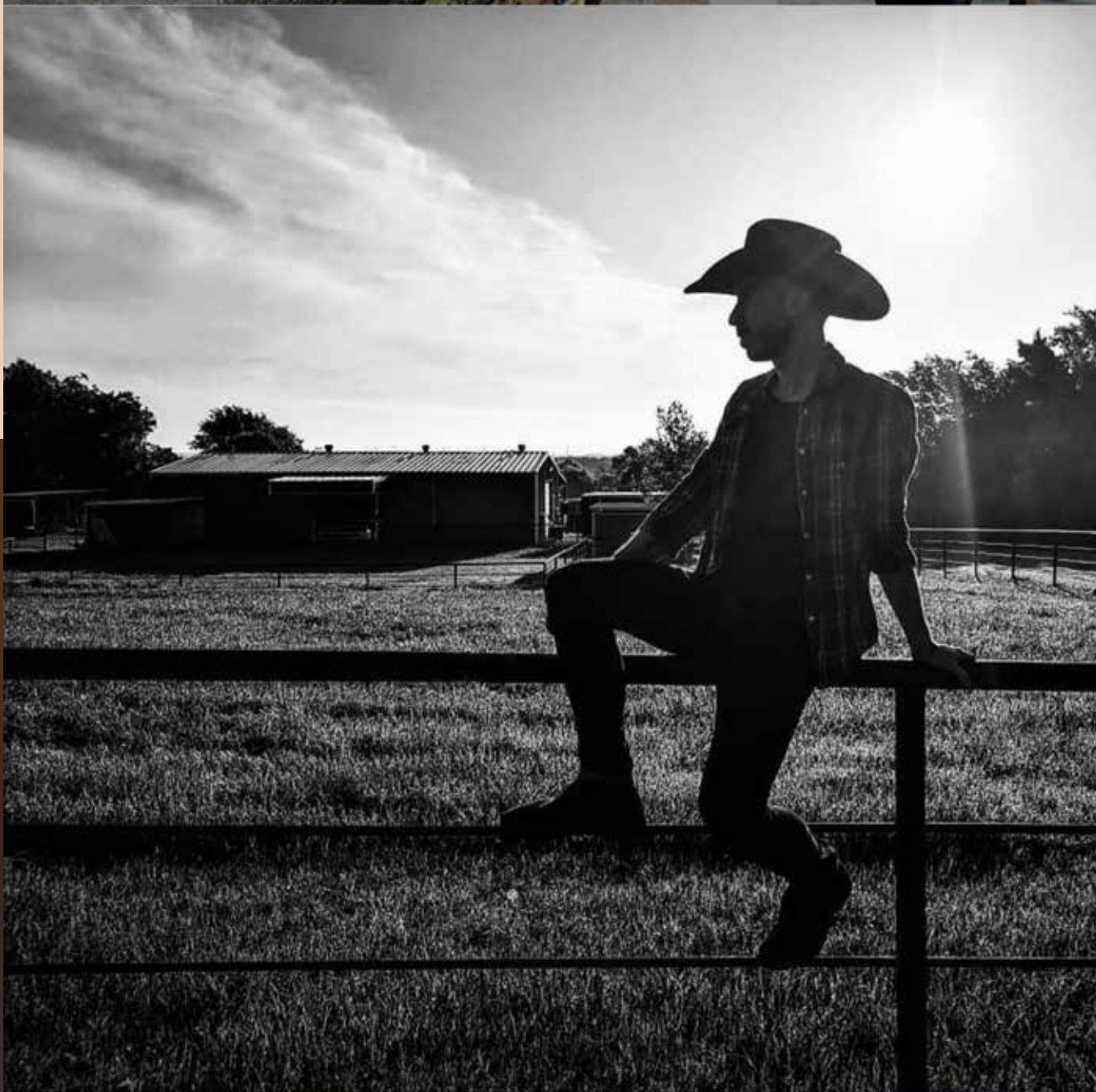
LARGER THAN LIFE GUILLAUME HAS HIS STUFFED TOY, STITCH, BY HIS SIDE TO ESCAPE INTO THE FANTASYLAND, DISNEYWORLD. MY QUESTIONS HAD PROBABLY EVOKED A TALE, THAT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON, FOR HE IS EXTRAORDINARY IN HIS SENSIBILITY. HE FELT THAT HE WAS STEPPING OUT OF THE HYPNOSIS, A RESULT OF ONE'S SELF CREATED NARRATIVE, ONE GETS ACCUSTOMED TO. HE SAID THAT CHATTING WITH ME WAS LIKE PUTTING HIS ‘FEET ON THE GROUND’. THANK YOU, GUILLAUME.

Once upon a Time

LIFE IS A DANCE
by MONICA BHASIN

LDF
LINE DANCE FOUNDATION
WWW.LINEDANCEFOUNDATION.COM

Merry feet
Line Dance
WWW.MERRYFEET.CLUB



Once upon a Time

LIFE IS A DANCE

by MONICA BHASIN

LDF

LINE DANCE FOUNDATION
WWW.LINEDANCEFOUNDATION.COM

Merry feet
Line Dance

WWW.MERRYFEET.CLUB

