



**Y**ou might as well say it all started when I was 6 months old with my grandmother Sue Nasser David who came to visit us in Philadelphia (where we were stationed since my Father was in the Navy) for the first time to see me. She used to sing to me the old classic Lebanese songs in Arabic and said I would dance in my baby swing. Shortly after we moved to Guam, a little island in the South Pacific. It was there when I was two that my Mother put me in dance class. I continued to studied ballet, tap and baton when we moved to San Diego, CA in 1964 until I was 8 and then before we moved to Norfolk, VA I put my foot down and told my Mother I did not want to dance anymore. I think she was heartbroken for two reasons, one because she just spent a small fortune on all new equipment for me including new toe shoes, and two, she really wanted to see me on stage as a prima ballerina. I did love to be on stage and entertain but I had to practice at least 2 hours every day after school while my friends were out playing, it was no longer fun for me. We moved to Norfolk in 1969 until 1971 and then moved back to San Diego, CA. Keep in mind I was still entertaining by writing, directing commercials and little skits that I would have my friends perform then record on my little tape player.

Country Club in Harvey, LA. I loved directing so much that I put on 2 plays at the local mall and had my high school friends perform in the plays. Then I started performing at a Greek and Lebanese restaurant, parties and weddings until we moved in 1979 to Memphis, TN. I had danced for another 2 years and quit. See I really wanted to be on Broadway in the chorus line but when I was ready to leave for NY at 18 years old my Dad had told me that Broadway was too competitive and that I really should think about going to college instead. I really admired and respected him; I followed his advice. He later told me I was that good to be on Broadway but he did not want his little 18-year-old daughter to pack up and move to NY City by herself and he knew that I would do just that to follow my dreams.

It wasn't until 2007 that I got back into dance. My 30th reunion was in May of 2008 and being out of shape I thought of one thing I knew would get me back into shape quickly and that was belly dance. I began looking in the local recreation newsletter in Lakewood, OH and phone-book to see if I could find a class and as luck would have it, I did, it was an 8-week course. At one point one of the instructors asked me if I had taken a course before and I told her I had but I was a little rusty. I enjoyed it so much that I continued to study under their company. Then I got into Latin Aerobics and Kick Boxing at Gunning Recreation Center in Cleveland. I noticed the instructor was trying to do a few belly dance moves so I approached her and asked if she would teach me Latin Dance styles and that I would teach her belly dance in return and she agreed. So, every Saturday I took Latin Aerobics at 10 am, Latin Dance at 11 am and taught Belly Dance at 12pm. Pretty soon people started coming up and asking if they could take my classes.

By 2010 I had made so many friends on this new social media website called Facebook that a friend had introduced me to in 2007 that is when and where I met so many dancers, musicians and artists literally around the world. I met 28 people around the globe that had started learning Orientale in 1973. We became the 73 club and I knew one day I would make it my mission to meet all of these artists. I had this brilliant idea and in Feb 2011 I met Andre Cato a fellow artist and as I call him my "Berry Gordy" to discuss my ideas with him, he loved it but rather than just local I told him this show Raqs for Joy needs to be international. See I really wanted to produce this show because I wanted to meet all of my friends from the 73 club. This was one way to financially do it. Later that year I met Kasey King through Andre and we formed Raqs for Joy TV Show under the company Lions of the Desert Productions. We promoted the TV show Be in the Toa Festival in 2011 & 2012, we filmed an interview and promo piece for their first year in 2012 as The Global Village Festival of Greater Akron, we also had a fashion show and belly dance show for the festival. I taught a mini class for the audience as well. In January 2013 we had a show called Dancing with Qismah, Raqs for Joy brought a belly dancer from Columbus Elianae Stone to perform for The Avenue Radio Show's opening party in Sept 2013. In 2014 we kicked off the Belly World Tour starting at O'Tooles in Dec with 4 belly dancers Dahmia & Jameela who I met at the ICC-WIN Annual Christmas Party, Priya of Phoenix from Habebba's of Columbus, Mariah of Canton and followed by a new show The Round Table with Priya, Dahmia, and Mazahar (me), a table discussion of the belly dance industry from the past to the present and everything in between. In 2015 Lions of the Desert Productions hosted two shows Flowers of the Desert in Hillard at Kitamura Coffee with 12 belly dancers from all over Ohio and then our new series Vintage Hollywood Glamour of the Desert with 9 belly dancers. Moe the owner who was from Madagascar was so surprised how we packed the house with more than 75 people in his quaint and artsy café. He said he had never imagined how big and beautiful this show would be and he absolutely loved it so did the Indian community because Priya did



Shortly after we arrived in San Diego, I asked my Mother if I could enroll in dance class again only this time, I wanted to study Modern Jazz. My ultimate goal was to become a dancer in the chorus line on Broadway. I loved to act and dance. Every week my Mother would drive me to Pacific Beach for my lessons, I did not mind practicing every day, I loved it and then one night when my Mother was waiting for me in the lobby, a group of belly dancers poured out of a class. My Mother was in awe and was biten by the dance bug. She wanted to take the class but was a little shy and asked if I would take the class with her. I told her no I want to study Modern Jazz so I could make it on Broadway, well she said I could do both and that is what I did. Belly Dance or "Orientale" came very easy to me because I understood the music, after all I had been listening to that music since I was a baby and at our family Hufles and wedding celebrations, we would always have live music and dance. It was in that class that I found my stage name Mazahar of all places from my Grandmother's cousin Helen Corey's cookbook "The Art of Syrian Cookery". The word Mazahar means orange blossom in Arabic and the orange blossom water is used in baking sweets. Since my first costume was an orange color, the name just fit plus no one else had that name, it was original.

In 1975 my Father got his orders for New Orleans, LA although I found theater there that I could continue to study, I could not find Orientale dance so in 1976 I decided to rent space from my swim coach who had a studio and I began teaching class there, 3 per week 1 Jazzercise and 2 belly dance classes. My Dad helped me out by ordering belly dance books from a Lebanese bakery of all places. I literally continued my studies of the art through books written from Turkish, Lebanese and Greek Dancers overseas and her in the states and passed on that knowledge to my students. I loved it and so did the community. Every July 4th celebration my students and I would perform at The Woodmere



**又**過了一個生日,更讓我覺得人的快樂幸福就是吃好睡好,有朋友有子女陪伴,無病無災就是活在天堂。  
今年我的生日多了一位新的朋友 Jenny,因為她要上課,不能來與我和美國媽媽一起午餐,她特意送來包裝精緻的禮物,一件我喜歡的衣服,可惜我沒有那么好身材。

美國媽媽是我每年生日都請我吃飯,並讓我帶一個朋友一起祝賀,10月13日,我們在風景秀麗的 Chagrin Falls 的一家叫 17 River Grille restaurant 午餐。這是我第一次知道我的美國媽媽,她的媽媽還有她的外婆和她一起來美國的妹妹都自殺,我美國媽媽 16 歲和她的妹妹 14 歲到美國,她的叔叔早期到美國,在 Nashville 開了家餐廳,她與妹妹都在叔叔餐廳打工,妹妹和一位醫生結婚後,後有一個男孩,孩子很小的時候,妹妹抑鬱自殺的。我沒有想到疫情會傳染,自殺也會。

10月10日我在 Chagrin Falls 看到紀錄片電影節,那天播放二戰時期的片子,電影節的負責人 Christian Taylor 告訴我:當日將放映 The director of The Girl Who Wore Freedom,我請他倆合照的就是參加二戰的 82nd Airborne Soldier Bob DeVinney,他從底特律 Lansing Michigan 來的。

我把那個電影介紹給美國媽媽,第二次世界大戰,美國媽媽 8 歲,在德國,在她的記憶里希特勒早期繁榮工業和交通,給人民帶來許多福利,時過 70 多年的現在,從疫情開始,口戰沒有停過...每天看到聽到都是恐慌的消息,人不是要與疫情共存。

10月13日中午美國媽媽請我午餐。下午,我又收到女兒在英國電話訂購送到家的玫瑰花,晚上多年的朋友 Kitty, Irene, Gina 還有兒子在寶龍為我點了蠟燭還有寶龍飯店送的長壽點心,我感受溫暖。

10月14日,生日過了一天,我好像明白更多道理。今天午餐與著名的 Kent 大學退休

### 在美國改造自己



教授 Dr. Terry Miller 夫婦和 Dr.Fan 夫婦一起在 FunBuffet 午餐,Dr.Miller 是著名的音樂教育家,他說了一段讓人沉思的話:Akron 大學 100 多位教授和工作人員失去工作,有的是終身教授,這個世界哪有終身不變的事情,要學會無常。  
自 1975 年起,Dr.Miller 開始在 Kent 大學教書,他告訴我們:原來美國政府支持大學教育資金是 75%,現在是 25%,他表示美國已經不是過去的美國。他也提到中國,現在在中國沒有農民,沒有人種地,除了物質的豐富,找不到其他東西,到中國就是談生意,許多村莊只有老人與小孩,世界在改變,和平好像是我們的夢想。



### 又到一年生日時

a very famous Bollywood song and number called "Choli KePeeche. In 2015 Lions also presented Dahmia and Sister's of the Island at the Asian Festival and One world Day to 2019. In 2015, 2016, 2017 Lions also performed in One World Day on the main stage and in the Lebanese and British Gardens. Lions of the Desert Productions provided the belly dancers Safiya Nawaar of Lexington, KY and Shakira Fanninah of Columbus, OH to preform for Lebanon Day at City Hall. In 2016 we decided to produce and film the first season of Raqs for Joy TV Show so that we had film to pitch the show to get picked up by a network her or overseas and that's what we did in Sept 2016, we started to filming season 1 in 3 cities. In 2016 we also did Vintage Glamour of the Desert Part II in Cleveland, 2018 Part III in Columbus, 2020 Part IV in Cleveland and our pride and joy was an amazing play in Columbus 2019 called "One Arabian Night" a beautiful love story set in the Middle East 1300's to modern day Columbus. The entire story was told by music and dance with very little narration. Dance is the language every culture can understand.

We have not given up on finding a buyer for Raqs for Joy TV Show because it is such a wonderful show and format about health, wealth and the art of belly dance around the world. We are a company that loves to entertain no matter how big or small and promote the continued vitality art and community. Kasey, Dahmia and I love this company we have developed over the years and plan to continue our journey of celebration. So come, follow me.....it's going to be an adventure of a lifetime.....

疫情讓所有人都靜悄悄地待在家里,工作學習在網上,還有總統川普 10月2日確診,10天已經痊癒在激情演講了,現在實在不知道哪個新聞是真的,這幾天又說疫情又嚴重了,除了給人帶來恐懼就沒有其它了,還有在醫院曝出來都是死于疫情,我相信有人死于疫情,有人還有其他病也在里面,我想說的是恐懼會給人帶來另外一種疾病。

10月10日我和朋友 Jenny 一起去參加了 Lions Art Inc. 在 Kan Zaman 中東餐廳舉辦的捐款活動,參加活動的人不到 15 人,這是我來美國這麼多年第一次看到這麼沒有人氣的活動,感到整個帶有濃濃的中東傳統文化的餐廳,舞臺音響顯得這麼的冷清,我與 Jenny 剛坐下就聽到主持人 Cindy David 開始講話,她的笑容和聲音彷彿有一股滿滿的能量穿過我的全身。她表示,由於疫情許多族裔的表演者都沒有來參加,不過她還是高興地說:公司成立 20 年了,遇到過許多困難,但她們還是挺過來了。她的話音剛結束,迎來了一位來自辛辛那提的舞者,這位快 70 歲的舞者,那美的舞姿和好聽的音樂,讓我情不自禁也想踏入舞池...我和 Jenny 一下興奮起來,Jenny 為我點了紅酒和甜點,我突然感到人氣是來自我的內在喜悅,那一刻,我擁有快



### 浦瑛開講



### 捐款活動有新意

樂。  
當晚在舞臺上表演的人都基本 60-70 歲,鮮艷的衣服搭配,說電影段子,我的越南朋友 Ryan 打扮成好萊塢明星,主辦者的熱情讓 Jenny 也暫時忘掉了不愉快的心情,當日一早 6:00 Jenny 開車到底特律,送走了和她一起工作幾年的 Anthony,Anthony 認真負責,勤奮好學,伊利華報也請他來講過健康養生課,Anthony 與 Jenny 全家人都十分熟悉,Jenny 的女兒把 Anthony 當哥哥,人在一起自然有情結,  
當日 Jenny 參加完活動在微信里與我分享:

人為什么活着? 小的時候總想這個深奧的問題。可是人越活越膚淺,越來越不想這個無解的命題,想的是如何健康愉悅地過好每一天。過世的 Anthony Bourdain 是我的偶像,痴迷他的起家節目 "A Cook's Tour"。作為在紐約的知名大廚,他出遊各國異鄉,尋吃最具民族特色的人間美食。他的節目拍得很隨機即興,看着他的節目總有種中動,想買張機票,去他去過的餐廳或路邊,坐過的桌子,大吃一頓!

我的朋友 Lily 姐介紹我認識了《伊利華報》的浦瑛社長。我們很投緣,能玩到一起。她善良,大膽,細膩,獨立,堅強。對我總是像妹妹一樣的關愛,鼓勵,引領。所以我尊稱她為浦瑛姐。Anthony Wang 是我在美萍水相逢的前世之緣。他在我的 Gingie Spa 工作兩年四個月。因為疫情的原因,他在我家住了半年。我的客人們都非常喜歡他的文雅而雅,彬彬有禮。我們一家人都喜愛他的烹飪。也許 "Anthony" 是美食基因的解碼。叫 "Anthony" 的都廚藝非凡。十月九日,他的簽證到期,不得不回中國。當日清晨送他去底特律機場。浦瑛姐不愧是做姐的,知道我的心情惆悵,打電話叫我去籌款晚會去散散心。浦瑛姐有 "Anthony Bourdain" 的即興節奏,總是隨機品嚐每日生活的 "新鮮感"。

我們一起到了一家在克利夫蘭 downtown 的中東餐廳 - Kan Zaman。一進門,中東特有的音樂,氣息,裝飾的色彩就迷幻了我。餐廳中間是舞池,四壁是以中東各國的小國旗和民族服裝作為裝飾,屋頂用各式阿拉伯風格

的油燈作為點綴。餐廳老闆 Wael 介紹說他是 1997 年從 Jordan 到美國。這家餐廳的招牌菜是 Shish Tawook 和 Shish Kafta Beef, 類似我們新疆的烤雞串, 烤牛串。在 downtown 工作的客人下班後到這里吸水煙 (Argelah) 放鬆一下, \$15 一位。浦瑛姐和我品嚐這家餐廳的甜點 Hariss 和 Baklava。老闆好人,用的是品質高的食料,可謂價廉物美。這晚的活動是 Lion Arts 組織的籌款活動。Cindy David 是 Lion 的創始人,以舞蹈為紐



帶,幫助世界各國的受性侵的人們找到自尊。我問受幫助的都是女性嗎。她的回答令我我驚訝,男性受性侵的而尋求幫助的比女性多。因為疫情,當晚來的人並不多。但是,Cindy 和她的女伴們的 Belly Casandra 舞,在浪漫音樂下,將氣氛挑得很濃烈。我自問阿拉伯國家那么保守的國家,卻盛行這麼撩人的舞蹈呢,讓人異想非非,欲罷不能。又想了想,其實在美國有自由,而在古老的國家和文化中,才有生活,好好玩好樂!浦瑛姐不禁下舞池學舞了。

在聚會中,浦瑛姐介紹我認識了 Giahoo Ryan。她曾是越南小姐,雖已過七旬,丰采依然。現在她代表亞裔社區,為克利夫蘭市長 Jackson 工作。歡舞,美食,善友!快樂的一晚!謝謝浦瑛姐的邀請!在臨出餐廳的時候,浦瑛姐指給我窗前的三只駱駝,這是阿拉伯的吉祥物!駱駝在阿拉伯文化中,有美麗聖潔的傳說。這三只駱駝,製作得栩栩如生,跟因柔光。也許 Anthony Bourdain 來過 Kan Zaman,我這晚就坐過他坐過的桌子。一起生活幾年的朋友回中國,心里總有點挂念,自己在自娛自樂度過美好的時光。

Jenny 和我相識相知,她是北大金融高材生,而她選擇自己愛的職業,她好學能幹,知道自己要什麼,與她相遇是緣分,我們就是善良如初,天真依舊的那種情誼。

