

Dance

(photo: The Vancouver Sun)

"Dear Susana, you are so amazing! Thank you for going above and beyond on our event. Your talent and efforts made our evening magical!" - Pamela and Jim Cordano, California

Susan Biali waited more than two decades to finally begin, and finally fulfill, her dream of becoming a professional dancer. The year that she finished her medical education, she fell in love with salsa, during a solo trip to Cuba. Within two years, she became a professional salsa dance performer and instructor, and then she discovered the love of her life: Spanish Flamenco. Today, "Susana" has performed for a variety of high profile audiences and clients in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, including Hollywood celebrities and the owners of the Dallas Cowboys, Los Angeles Lakers and Mary Kay Cosmetics. She and her husband Armando also taught singer/songwriter Pink how to salsa dance!

From 2006-2009, Susana had her own flamenco dance company, "Alma Flamenca", in Los Cabos, Mexico. Currently based in Vancouver, Canada, she continues to perform in events across North America, and has had the opportunity to share the stage with respected flamenco artists such as MariaJose Franco, Juan Moneo, Cristo Cortes, Guitarras de Luna and Jose Vega, as well as Kasandra La China, Paco de Leon, Juan de Marias, and Alonso Aguirre. She flies to Andalucia, Spain, for flamenco courses, and has had the privilege of studying with Maria Jose Franco, Alicia Marquez, Ana Maria Lopez, Timo Lozano, Maria Carmen Guerrero, Maria "Cha Cha" Bermudez, and Vancouver's Kasandra La China and Oscar Nieto.

She has performed with the exceptional guitarists Raul and Ricardo de Luna of Guitarras de Luna at Rosewood's exclusive Las Ventanas al Paraiso, as well as for exclusive events at One & Only Palmilla and other prestigious venues, as well as performing in a "More Applause" flamenco event in conjunction with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. She and Armando continue to perform and teach Salsa dancing to delighted couples and groups in private events.

"We have had many performers at our corporate parties but Dr. Susan Biali was the most amazing and entertaining of them all! Her performance was beautiful and captivating, she commanded the attention of our guests and the planning team received many compliments afterwards. I would recommend Susan Biali to anyone who is looking to entertain their guests for their event. Muchas gracias Susana!" - Heman Mehta, Product Manager and Event Coordinator, Faronics

"Susan, thanks so much to you and Armando for teaching me how to salsa. I'm so excited to keep it going - your wonderful words have inspired me to continue to do it!" - Tamera Mowry, Actor, Strong Medicine and Sister Sister

****See Susan and Armando teach their salsa workshop at a Cabo wedding in this MySpace video clip****

For more on Dr. Biali's journey toward her dance dreams, read the following story...
Fate & Flamenco: A Story of Persistence & Passion

By Susan Biali

Dancing is the one thing I've done all my life, since I could walk. Though I yearned for dance classes growing up, I never got to have them. Instead, I studied photos of ballet in encyclopedias and other books, copying the ballerinas' poses. From about the age of five, I began the habit of "rehearsing" in the basement every night, watching my reflection in the sliding glass doors. I did this until I hit high school, when I finally saved enough babysitting money to take jazz classes, at the age of 16. Thanks to all those years of "practice", I got placed in the highest level class in the dance school, and even got chosen to compete in a regional dance competition. I wasn't even really that passionate about jazz dance, but at least, finally, I was dancing for someone other than my reflection.

During university and med school, I became too busy to continue with classes. Also, I'd always thought dancing was for little girls and teenagers, so I assumed my dancing days were over.

Almost ten years later, I spontaneously decided to escape to Cuba, alone, during a stress leave from my Emergency Medicine residency program. There, I fell in love with salsa music and dancing. And, I suddenly remembered who I really was. Back home in Vancouver, I resigned from my residency, got my general medical license, and was performing and teaching as a salsa dancer within a couple of years. I still occasionally perform and give salsa workshops with my husband, Armando.

My studies for a Spanish-themed salsa competition number led me to flamenco, a dance that I'd only seen once before in my life. After a few private lessons, I knew I'd finally found my place in the world, and have never looked back.

I worked hard with my wonderful teachers, Kasandra La China and Oscar Nieto of Al Mozaico Flamenco Dance Academy (<http://www.mozaicoflamenco.com/>; read my story "How Flamenco Saved This Doctor's Life", on Kasandra's Blog), and began dancing regularly on Saturday nights at Vancouver's Kino Flamenco Café. But, when I decided to take an extended sabbatical in Mexico, I found myself without studios, teachers, or a legal ability to perform. I went to Spain every year to study, and in the meantime practiced with DVD's and danced wherever I could. At one point, all I had was a hot laundry room, in the middle of a scorching desert, to practice in, and no performing opportunities in sight.

As the 12 Step motto goes: "Don't Give Up Before the Miracle".

Just three months later, on Christmas Eve, I was performing flamenco for Hollywood celebrities, with a pair of internationally recognized guitarists in one of the most prestigious resort hotels on the planet, Las Ventanas al Paraiso. Since then, I've performed my own solo show for private events in a long list of exclusive resorts and private villas

all over Los Cabos. People ask me, all the time, how I dance with so much passion and fire. Believe me, when you've sweated and waited for over thirty years for an opportunity, you take it for all it's worth, when it finally comes. I'm not the world's greatest dancer - not even close - but I love flamenco with all my heart and give it all that I've got.

The biggest miracle of all? When I was practicing in that laundry room, I danced to a beloved flamenco mix CD that I had made. My brilliant new guitarist friends from Las Ventanas, Guitarras de Luna (www.guitarrasdeluna.com) turned out to be the artists featured on that very CD. Without knowing it, I'd been "practicing" with them for years.