

Suzan has swung from ballet to jazz routine



BACK HOME: Suzan Furtado, 23, of 130 Highland St., a professional dancer who has performed with the Boston Ballet, and worked for three years as a professional dancer in Italy, has returned home to Taunton for a while.

By KAREN CUBIE
Gazette Staff Writer

When the *Gazette* carried its first article about Taunton native Suzan Furtado, 23, in December of 1980 she was an apprentice with the Boston Ballet and she was dancing with a partially dislocated hip.

"But she doesn't seem to worry about it, saying, 'It will heal soon,' the article reported.

The hip didn't heal as quickly as Miss Furtado, the daughter of Catherine Furtado of 130 Highland St., and the late James Furtado, hoped, and later that year she was forced to abandon ballet, her first love.

"I was out for a year," she said. "I couldn't do anything. It hurt to work, drive a car — winters were incredible. There was too much pain."

The inactivity finally became too much for her.

"I decided I had to do something," she said. "So I switched to jazz dancing."

Although Miss Furtado can't dance ballet anymore, her career is again on the upswing.

After taking lessons at Jeanette Neill's Dance Studio on Belvedere Street in Boston, she landed a position with the Saint Germain Follies, an American show performing Broadway-type shows in Italy and Europe.

"That [Jeanette Neill's Dance Studio] is where the scout found me for Europe," she said. "It happened the same way with one of my girlfriends. The same lady saw her dancing — I asked her to ask the lady to talk to me, and come see me take class."

"She did," Miss Furtado continued, "and she asked if I'd like to go to Europe. I said yes!"

She stayed with the American group for one year. Then she decided it was time to branch out on her own.

"I was getting bored after one year of the same stuff," she explained.

So she moved to Rome, where she lived for two years, dancing in different shows, and television and theater productions.

About six months ago, the Italian Dancers Union changed, and Miss Furtado found she and other Americans were not as well come as they used to be.

"Sometimes I'd go to an audition, and I'd be kicked out because I was American," she said. "I guess they had been hiring too many Americans."

"It's their right," she said. "It's their country, but they were a little rude."

The Dancers' Union change wasn't the only concern of Americans in Europe.

"All the terrorist things were starting," she said. "American dancers could get work, but it wouldn't pay as well as normal, and with all the terrorist problems, we couldn't go to the famous tourist spots."

"A McDonald's opened at the end of March," she added. "We wouldn't even go to McDonald's!"

During her three years as a resident of Europe, she had only been home two times for approximately two weeks each time.

For the first time, she became homesick, and about a month ago she returned home to Taunton.

"There aren't many Americans left over there now," she said.

"She misses Italy."

"Maybe it's culture shock," she said, "but I'm not used to America any more. Life's much faster here. It's much slower there."

"There are so many rules over here — fines for this, fines for that, a drinking age, you can't smoke in a restaurant, you can't do this, you can't do that. The first thing my mother said to me when she picked me up at the airport

was, 'Put on your seatbelt or I'll get fined \$25!'

"It's slower there," she added, pausing to take another drag on her cigarette. "They always want to have a good time."

While she was in Italy she missed very little about the U.S.

"Except my family," she said. "They were the only thing I missed."

When she first went to Italy, she couldn't speak a word of Italian.

"I speak and write Italian fluently now," she said. "I learned all that by talking to people. Few people speak English there. The only way to even buy a can of Coke is to speak Italian."

She left a lot of Italian friends behind her when she returned home.

"The attitude towards Americans is very good there," she said. "The Italians like us. They're very friendly. I'd like to go back — but I don't know if I'll go back to live or not."

She never wanted to go to college.

"That doesn't interest me," she said. "There's nothing I want to study."

Her dancing career has forced her to grow up fast, she said.

"The one and a half years spent as a corps dancer for the Boston Ballet was a head trip," she said. "It's crazy there. You grow up in that place. It's very demanding and very difficult."

She learned a lot about life when she lived in Europe.

"You grow up faster as a girl living by yourself in a foreign country," she said. "You're on your own, you have to take care of yourself. It's a different language, different money, and there are different ways of thinking. Europe was mostly a rewarding experience. It was also an education."

During her first year touring with the American show, Miss Furtado spent three months in Egypt.

"It's a dirty, big, overpopulated mess," she said. "but it was fun. Our group of seven had a lot of fun together. The pyramids were gorgeous."

"We went horseback riding in the Sahara desert at least twice each week," she recalled, "and we waltzed down the Nile. That was fun."

Since her return she has worked as a temporary receptionist for Burroughs Computer Co. in Easton.

"I auditioned Saturday for the Theater by the Sea in Matunuck, R.I.," she said, pointing out her Italian pronunciation of "Matunuck." "It's for doing Broadway shows. I should find out today or tomorrow."

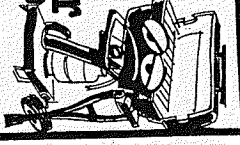
The Matunuck position would be full-time from June through mid-September.

"I teach a lot," she said. "If I get [the Matunuck position] and finish in September, I will probably teach in Brockton."

She spends her life living from show to show.

"I'm used to it," she said. "Sometimes I wish I could have a more steady job, but I'd only want to dance. Teaching is the only way I could have that."

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LIVING

Pageant finalists meet this weekend

Janet Lynn Peterson of Taunton will be with 12 others who will meet this weekend at the Buttonwood Community Center in New Bedford.

The 13 are the finalists in the 1986 state who will compete in the Miss Massachusetts Scholarship Pageant.

The title will be on the line June 13 at the Zeiterion Theater in New Bedford.



Contestants will also meet with Lisa Kleypas, Miss Massachusetts of 1985, who will discuss her activities during the past year, including her experiences at the national competition.

In last year's competition, Miss Kleypas, a vocalist and guitarist, won a talent award.

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