

Quest for Dancers

We just recently produced a beautiful holiday show which included about a third of seasonal songs and the rest Broadway, Classical and Rock and Roll music. It was a benefit for the community and for three charities.

My original plan included the Rhapsody In Rhythm tap dancers and a couple who would dance in the background during many of the songs and I was happy – life is good with lots of dancing.

A month before the show, Michael Matonti, the excellent dancer in previous Sunshine shows, called me with bad news. He had a biking accident and broke his ankle. I contacted Sam and Laura Bettencourt, a couple who danced in our shows in the past before Laura became seriously ill. I asked “Laura, are you up for some dancing?” Sam and Laura graciously agreed to be our dancers.

It was the Thursday before the holiday show and our last rehearsal and Sam and Laura were missing; I dialed Laura’s number, “Laura, where are you? I need you here.” But Laura had developed a serious upper respiratory infection. Sam showed up and said, “I’m sorry, but I’ve lost my dance partner.”

My daughter, Denise Lutey, was there; Denise solo dances three times a week and is a vibrant dancer. I looked over at Denise and smiled at Sam, “Sam, I have a partner for you.”

Sam and Denise began to try some steps; Sam discovered that Denise had no conception of dancing with a partner. He patiently explained some basic steps and Denise took to his teaching quickly. The next day, Sam called, “You know, the TGIF dance is at 4 pm tonight; if Denise comes we could work on some of our routines. So we went and watched as Sam worked with Denise to help her execute various elegant moves.

That evening I had two pieces of bad news. One of the main tappers, Irene Sellers, fell and broke her collar bone and another had a 103 fever. So I lost the tappers. Then Laura, Sam’s wife contacted me; she was very sad that she couldn’t be in the show and was unhappy that Sam was dancing

without her. So suddenly, I had no dancers. I explained to Laura that I'd lost all my dancers for the show, but I understood her sadness and commiserated with her. I told her that if necessary, Denise would dance with an imaginary partner and told her that David Hartman, my husband and emcee for the event suggested, "I could announce that Denise needs a partner and invite a volunteer from the audience to dance with her."

Sam and Laura decided that the show must go on. Sam and Denise graced the stage with many dances and ended with a grand finale in front of the stage.

I was very proud of my daughter and thankful to Sam and Laura.

Sam and Laura Bettencourt at a rehearsal several weeks before the show; Denise Lutey at the final rehearsal.

