

Art Seen: Michelle Spina – Dancer, Teacher, Spiritualist



“Selecting a dance instructor is a little bit like finding your own magic fairy”

Being a dad is a real adventure with a learning curve that surpasses much else that I’ve done in life. I’m suspicious of anyone who says otherwise. When my little boy told me he wanted to dance, I mobilized my energy and started asking around and visiting and interviewing different studios; there are lots of dance studio-school-classes around, and I’m sure many are really good and serious about what they do. I’m a tough sell and my son is even more so for a then 6-year-old.

After visits to 12 different places, I chose several studios and tried them out for a period of time; I listened and watched and watched and listened until the selection narrowed, some of the reasons were scheduling, offerings, style of teaching, the environment and finally — the most important — the individual *teacher*.

When I was young, anyone who was *cool* or thought they were, was good on a dance floor. I was no stranger to dancing; I danced in dance competitions and did well. Later I entered the world of art and found myself often using and collaborating with dancers as preferred subject matter in painting and photography. I loved dancers and all that they did. As a professor in art, I had classes in photography meet with dance classes and have creative photo shoots resulting in magic. I was hoping for something that inspiring for my son, and I found it in Michelle Spina, owner-teacher-dancer and near angel, and my choice to lift my son into the wonderful world of dance at Extensions School of Dance in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Selecting a dance instructor is a little bit like finding your own magic fairy. They must be enchanting and always look better than you feel and give off plenty of positive energy like a star. Their philosophy on life should be the makings of the best of civilization, and a pure sense of dedication and love for what they do should be present in every word and smile. Okay, I’ll admit that from the very first conversations with Madam Spina, I was delighted. She was open, lively, humorous and warm with that delightful magic that dancers always seem to possess when they speak, smile and move. She was the

person I was looking for to take my little boy and expose him to his earliest dance experience.

Michelle Spina, artistic director, owns, operates and teaches at Extensions School of Dance on 490 Metacom Ave in Bristol, RI. She has been dancing for 43 years, and studied with Helen O'Neill, Lorna Deane Rozon and Herci Marsden, and took master classes with Steven Boyd, Frank Hatchett, Linda Giancaspro, and a host of others. Her Aunt Lorna owned Position 1 in Portsmouth and her sister owns All Star in Middletown. At 45 years old she has been married 23 years to Jay Spina has four children. She says of dance:

"There is a feeling ... a feeling of freedom ... of leaving the earth's grasp for just a bit ... The feeling in your gut, the excitement as your legs stretch long and slice through the air. Limbs escape their confines and the teacher is driven to share this feeling."

My son greatly enjoys his teacher, her attitude and her positivity.

"One thing that I have learned about people from teaching is that if you can find that one little thing to genuinely compliment about a person, that person will go out of their way to prove you right."

Michelle Spina loves sharing her ideas, and of choreography Michelle believes,

"Everyone can put steps together and make a dance, but to truly be a dancer is a much more complicated mixture. Technique, discipline, athleticism and a willingness to express emotion deeply are a few things that take dancers years to etch into themselves."

As a hands-on dad, I press my eager face against the one-way studio glass to monitor all that my little boy experiences and learns, from his work-outs to his routines. I'm delighted by the results and all that I see there.

For more information contact call or visit: Michelle Spina, Extensions School of Dance on 490 Metacom Ave in Bristol, RI 02809, 401.253.5902, Extensions-RI.com