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Brillante
EVENTS

7th *Brillante*

INTERNATIONAL DANCESPORT CHAMPIONSHIP

7th Edition

11 APRIL 2026

MARINA BAY SANDS SINGAPORE



THE DANCESPORT ACADEMY BY MELVIN & SHARON



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Renowned coach, writer and lecturer contributing his take on fundamentals



Gwen Chin

Our resident dancer-writer, interviewing our guest stars for this rendition of Brillante

7th Brillante

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An insightful conversation with the dynamic professional dance duo on their artistry and partnership

FROM *THE* ORGANISERS

BIGGER. BETTER. BOLDER. ALWAYS.

It is with immense pride and excitement that we welcome you to the **7th Brillante International DanceSport Championship**.

Brillante International continues to stand as a symbol of excellence—where quality, fairness, and a truly unique competitive experience come together. This year, inspired by the overwhelming success and unwavering support from our community, we raise the bar once again. To our dancers, audience, coaches, dance schools, sponsors, and friends—this Championship exists because of you.

This event would not be possible without the invaluable support of our partners and sponsors. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to **Bespoke Habitat, Brillante Events, Creme Maison Bakery, Dance Passion, DeRocks, Greenbay Marine, and IDS**, alongside all who have stood with us on this journey.

Because of your belief, your passion, and your commitment, we are driven to go further, dream bigger, and deliver an experience that surpasses all expectations.

From the very first moment to the final applause, witness the ballroom come alive with extraordinary talent from across the globe. As the evening unfolds, prepare to be captivated by world-class performances and intense competition, where champions rise and unforgettable moments are created.

We are also honoured to present our distinguished guest artistes, **Austin Joson & Liza Lakovitsky**, whose artistry, elegance, and brilliance will elevate this Championship to even greater heights.

To our competitors—dance with passion, pride, and purpose. May this Championship inspire you and create memories that last a lifetime.

To our audience—thank you for your energy, your presence, your love for DanceSport and your support of us. Get ready to be inspired, thrilled, and mesmerised.

Welcome to the 7th Brillante International DanceSport Championship—where we don't just meet expectations...

We make it **BIGGER. BETTER. BOLDER.**

Melvin and Sharon



introducing

OUR ADJUDICATORS



Dirk Bastert
Germany



Allan Tornsberg
Norway



Paul Green
Australia



Diego Arias
Spain



Uapan Snidvongs
Thailand



Luka Fanni
Italy



Sven Ninnemann
Switzerland



Vincent Wang
China



Lawrence Chan
Hong Kong



Dwi Baktiawan
Indonesia



Erwan Phanjaya
Indonesia



Vincenzo Petrillo
Italy



Hideyuki Miyajima
Japan



Takahito Suetomi
Japan



Kim Lachivan
Kazakhstan



Albert Kim
South Korea



Chō Jae Hoon
South Korea



Kelvin Choo
Malaysia



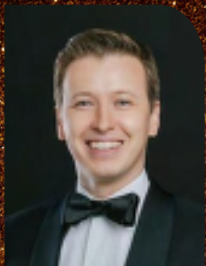
Khoo Seow Siong
Malaysia



Michael Yong
Malaysia

introducing

OUR ADJUDICATORS



Arkady Bakenov
New Zealand



Denise Bunayog
Philippines



Troy Tesaluna
Philippines



Marcin Wojtkowiak
Poland



Andrey Gorbunov
Russia



Anthony Price
United Kingdom



Andre de Silva
Singapore



Jonathan Gan
Singapore



Louis Ng
Singapore



Steven Han
Singapore



Terrence Low
Singapore



Joanna Leunis
Belgium



Karla Gerbes
Australia



Hristina Semova
Bulgaria



Feather Zhang
China



Zou Ci Ci
China



Una Cheung
Hong Kong



Hidemi Yamamoto
Japan



Mlo Kusakabe
Japan



Nami Shoji
Japan

introducing

OUR ADJUDICATORS



Jung Yuseon
South Korea



Lo Weng Che
Malaysia



Jenevieve
Philippines



Janet Hsiao
Taiwan



Poonyapa Dhanwilai
Thailand



Agnes Ang
Singapore



Alice Teo
Singapore



Aurelia Hong
Singapore



Oleysa Eremeeva
Singapore



Joy Lau
Singapore



Lorencia Kan
Singapore

Day PROGRAMME

| | |
|--------------|--|
| 06:30 | DOORS OPEN |
| 07:15 | ADJUDICATOR'S BRIEFING / LINE UP OF COMPETITORS |
| 07:30 | SEGMENT 1 - STANDARD SOLO EVENTS |
| 08:20 | SEGMENT 2 - LATIN SOLO EVENTS |
| 10:50 | SEGMENT 3 - STANDARD COUPLE EVENTS |
| 13:25 | BREAK |
| 13:40 | SEGMENT 4 - LATIN PARTNER EVENTS |
| 17:00 | END OF DAY PROGRAMME |

Please refer to **live** programme on the DanceSport Championship app for accurate timings of the respective competitive events and Prize Presentations.

Night PROGRAMME

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
| 18:00 | START OF NIGHT PROGRAMME ARRIVAL OF GUESTS | |
| 18:30 | Quarter-Final Latin Professional Open | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 18:50 | Final Standard Amateur Open | W, T, VW, SF, Q |
| 19:00 | Semi-Final Latin Professional Asia Pacific | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 19:10 | Semi-Final Latin Amateur Open | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 19:20 | Semi-Final Standard Professional Asia Pacific | W, T, VW, SF, Q |
| 19:30 | WELCOME SPEECH | |
| 19:35 | DINNER IS SERVED | |
| 19:40 | INTRODUCTION OF ADJUDICATORS & SCRUTINEERS | |
| 20:05 | SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCE | |
| 20:10 | Semi-Final Standard Professional Open | W, T, VW, SF, Q |
| 20:20 | Semi-Final Latin Professional Open | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 20:40 | GUEST ARTISTE PERFORMANCE | |
| 20:45 | GENERAL DANCING | |
| 21:00 | GUEST ARTISTE PERFORMANCE | |
| 21:05 | Final Standard Professional Asia Pacific | W, T, VW, SF, Q |
| 21:15 | Final Latin Professional Asia Pacific | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 21:25 | GENERAL DANCING | |
| 21:30 | GUEST ARTISTE PERFORMANCE | |
| 21:35 | Final Latin Solo Open Elite | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 21:50 | Final Latin Amateur Open | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 22:05 | GUEST ARTISTE PERFORMANCE | |
| 22:10 | Final Standard Professional Open | W, T, VW, SF, Q |
| 22:25 | Final Latin Professional Open | C, S, R, PD, J |
| 22:40 | GUEST ARTISTE PERFORMANCE | |
| 22:45 | PRIZE PRESENTATION | |
| 22:55 | HONOUR DANCE PERFORMANCE (PROFESSIONAL OPEN) | |
| 23:00 | TILL WE MEET AGAIN | |

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DANCESPORT CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Over the years, we have continued to bring together the DanceSport athletes of Tertiary Institutions, giving them a platform to challenge one another in friendly competition, regardless of their association.

We believe that there should be independent competitions that are open to any participant. This opens the opportunity to compete with a large pool of dancers in Singapore, which is important to create an environment that allows the identification of top talent, as well as an opportunity for the beginners to better themselves.

To make this vision a reality, the **TDA DanceSport Championships, featuring the Singapore Inter-Tertiary DanceSport Championships**, was created. Now in its 15th series, the TDA DanceSport Championships have grown into the largest Inter-Tertiary DanceSport competition in Singapore, with competitors from more than 15 local and international Tertiary Institutions vying for the top spot.



The inaugural TDA DanceSport Championship was launched in July 2010 at the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Convention Centre, with participation from five Institutions. The event consisted of Tertiary Closed Events that provided young dance students from the various schools in Singapore to compete and vie for the title of "Tertiary Champion".

This Championship series was co-organised by Ang Mo Kio Community Centre Women's Executive Committee, and has been graced by illustrious Guests of Honor, such as Dr Amy Khor, Mr Seng Han Thong and Mr Yam Ah Mee.

Since then, the TDA Championship series has evolved into an established national DanceSport competition with more than 300 local competitors.

Now approaching its 14th iteration, the TDA Championship has been steadily growing over the years with additions of new events to cater to a larger base of competitors. From the Tertiary Closed to Open Amateur and Junior events, the TDA Championship series has events for those who are new to the sport as well as the more experienced dancers.



To further our vision of developing the DanceSport scene in Singapore, TDA supported Jalan Kayu Community of Arts & Culture Club and Jalan Kayu Community Sports Club in the inaugural 1st PassionArts DanceSport Championships 2013. We aimed to bring the beauty of DanceSport to the grassroots and were honoured to have Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Grassroots Advisers to Ang Mo Kio GROs Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar, Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, Dr Lam Pin Min, and People's Association Chief Executive Director Mr Ang Hak Seng, BBM as our guests-of-honour. This Championship was met with great response and was so successful that we brought it back to the grassroots in the following years.



As pioneers in organising Inter-Tertiary Championships, we are pleased to note that our efforts have created huge interest amongst the youth. It is without doubt that we will continue to collaborate with more tertiaries to continue our successes. None of this would be possible without the support of the DanceSport Instructors and Administrators and their respective DanceSport Clubs.

Both series, TDA and PassionArts, aimed at developing youth DanceSport Athletes through competition exposure, will continue to elevate the sport through competitions at an Inter-Varsity level and ultimately hone the next generation of DanceSport Athletes in Singapore.



15th tda DanceSport Championship

featuring

INTER-TERTIARY DANCESPORT
CHAMPIONSHIP 2026



*Mark Your
Calendar!*

**MORE DETAILS
TO FOLLOW!**

SEPTEMBER 2026

WHATSAPP CONTACT



8933 1519



tda@thedancesportacademy.com

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IT'S YOUR

IT'S YOUR

TALENT, VIBE

by Ralf Lepehne



**World Latin Show
Dance Champion**

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European Professional
Latin Grand Finalist**

**9 Times German
Professional Latin
Champion**

**World renowned Coach,
Lecturer and Adjudicator**

In Ballroom and Latin American dancing, we spend countless hours perfecting technique. We work on posture, timing, footwork, balance, and precision. Technique builds the dancer – but it is not what people remember most.

What stays in the audience's mind is how a dancer makes them feel.

That feeling comes from the **unique combination of talent and vibe.**

Talent is the natural ability to understand movement and music. In Latin dancing, talent often reveals itself through rhythm, dynamic expression, and the freedom to interact playfully with the music. In Standard dancing, talent appears in flow, elegance, and the ability to move harmoniously across the floor with a partner.

But talent alone is not enough.

Two couples may dance the same choreography with equal technical quality – yet only one truly captures attention. **The difference is vibe.**

Vibe is personality in motion.

It is energy, authenticity, and emotional presence. It cannot be copied or rehearsed mechanically. **It comes from confidence, musical understanding, and genuine connection between partners.**

In Latin, vibe may feel vibrant, passionate, or playful.

In Standard, it may express calmness, romance, or timeless elegance.

The most inspiring dancers understand one important truth: **Technique should support individuality – not replace it.**

IT'S YOUR

IT'S YOUR

PALENT, VIBE

Great dancing begins when dancers stop trying to look like someone else and start discovering what makes their movement special.

Because ultimately, **audiences do not fall in love with perfect steps. They fall in love with personality.**

A Celebration of Dance

Every couple entering today's competition brings their own journey, personality, and artistic voice.

**Technique prepares the dancer.
Talent shapes the ability.
Vibe reveals the artist.**

As the music begins and the floor comes alive, one truth remains:

**It's your talent.
It's your vibe.
And that is what makes dance unforgettable.**



Technique
prepares the dancer

Talent
shapes the ability

Vibe
reveals the artist

Where Celebration Becomes Art

Exquisite cakes for the discerning palate.

Founded in 2014, Crème Maison Bakery was born from a deep passion for crafting joy-filled moments and a desire to make every celebration beautifully memorable through mindful indulgence. Guided by the principles of artistry, balance, and intention, we offer a thoughtfully curated range of refined gourmet and custom cakes that speak to both taste and elegance.

Dedicated to creating healthier, low-sugar alternatives without compromising on flavour or aesthetics, our cakes are handcrafted using only the finest ingredients—each one a testament to our unwavering commitment to quality and design.

Celebrated as one of Singapore's finest destinations for bespoke birthday and wedding cakes, Crème Maison Bakery delivers — we create & elevate experiences that linger long after the last bite.

Impeccable taste. Timeless artistry. Indulgence, redefined.

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Celebrations



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Cakes



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| 5 | Patented Zinc Oxide technology boosts antioxidant activity by as much as 200% |
| 6 | Sustainably produced squalane provides natural moisturisation and anti-ageing benefits while contributing to IDS's eco-conscious efforts |
| 7 | Sweat-proof: 40-minute water resistance |
| 8 | Paraben-free, fragrance-free, and cruelty-free |



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The patented Zinc Oxide formula used in IDS Skincare's sunscreens utilises a silicon coating that prevents the generation of ROS in skin, and, thus, more effectively reduces the formation of free radicals. "Formulas that use standard Zinc Oxide provide UV protection but zero benefit in stopping free radical propagation. In contrast, the proprietary Zinc Oxide formula used in IDS' tinted and non-tinted sunscreens have been shown to provide a seven-fold reduction in the effect of pollutants," says Dr SK Tan, founder of IDS.

DID YOU KNOW?

Both S2 and S3 are approved by the Skin Cancer Foundation. This seal ensures that the products are safe and effective in preventing skin damage that could lead to skin cancer.



IDS Skincare is available at IDS Outlets in International Building and Novena Specialist Center, and on <https://jyx.shop>.

AUSTIN

By Gwen Chin

BE MOVED BY THE
WISDOM AND ARTISTRY
OF OUR DANCE ICONS

AUSTIN JOSON & LIZA
LAKOVITSKY

PART I



LIZA

INTERVIEW WITH AUSTIN & LIZA (I)

Throughout your professional dancing journey and your careers, how has your artistic identity evolved into the dancers you are today?

Liza: That's a really great question. In terms of our journey together, as some may know, we danced together as kids. And when we went our separate ways and then we met up 15 years later, there was a lot of pressure - from my side, from Austin's side, from the industry, from everything - to be great immediately.

There was a lot of pressure not to do the "search" - not to do the "Let's look for what we really want, and let's look for how we would like to feel." It was a lot of "Just go, get out there, and basically -

Austin: Do what works.

Liza: Yeah. Do what works, you know? And that was great, and it was fine, and it's a learning experience. But when we were sitting down, you know, like I said, having these late night couch conversations, we're thinking, "Is this what I want to remember when I'm retired?" Are these the stories I want to tell my future students, or my future grandchildren? Because this is our life, it's not just our career; what we do every day, it means the most to us.

So we decided together through a couple conversations, that there's no more time to waste, so to speak, on doing anything except that which we want to do, and I'm speaking artistically.



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

Because Dancesport is not just art, there's so many aspects to it. There's so many things that we constantly have to balance and juggle as dancers. And one thing that we decided that we cannot sacrifice or cannot compromise on, is that which lights our soul on fire. That's what makes us wake up every day and go to the studio and work. With everything in our lives leading up to this, all the experiences we've had separately, we don't have time anymore to not be true to that.

And once we made that click, the answer came to us without us making any sort of big plan. It changes how you view and appreciate your time, how you appreciate each other; and that that was the journey. We're still on that journey - that transition into professionals, was why we went the way we went.



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

As a dancer, a spectator and a fan, I empathise with that sentiment and I can see how much you've both grown on that journey as you made the step from Amateurs to Professionals. Which brings me on to my next question, how has your relationship with each other and with competition changed over time?

Austin: Well. When we were kids, we were both very new into dancing. Dancing itself was a new thing to me, I started when I was around 8, 9 years old, and Liza when she was 6. We started dancing together at 10 years old. And so when we danced together, it was a decision based on obviously our parents agreeing on certain things. I was teeny tiny then - in feet and inches, I was maybe 4'8", 4'10", and Liza was about a head taller than me.

We did both Latin and Ballroom and in both styles, the height was quite a big difference to have. But despite the fact that we came from different states and had such a big height difference, I think that showed how much we wanted to dance with another person.

We had a few successful years as kids together, but of course, we weren't really aware of what was going on. And I bring this up because when we got back together as adults, there was still a mutual agreement between us about not putting a premium on certain things because our love for dance is the root of our partnership.

I think that's also why we wanted to start dancing together as adults. Because, at least I can speak from my perspective, even though I knew her (Liza) as a kid and then we weren't close for 15 years, we were still around each other. We still competed against each other, we still worked with the same teacher. So I knew, or I had a feeling, that we could possibly have the same values. That was a very big reason as to why I wanted to continue to dance with Liza as adults.

Our relationship evolving, I would say, has more to do with learning how to share, enhance and develop from those values. And funny you ask about competition, because I think that has a lot to do with our relationship evolving in dance as well. To learn how to do what we love together at a high level competitively is a very niche task. Is that correct?

Liza: Mm-hmm, that's very good - that's a great sentence, I'm going to remember that

Austin: *laughs* It's a very niche path. What I enjoy the most about our partnership, is how, of course, like she mentioned earlier, those couch conversations that we have and the practices that we have. And of course, the dancing together itself I enjoy very much. But doing this in the competitive world that we're in, and going on that journey together, is a great challenge. It's something that I really love to work towards every single day with Liza.

Our relationship with competition goes hand-in-hand. As mentioned, there was a lot of pressure in the beginning. And when we started dancing together as adults, the dance world was starting to shift and change with the new federations. With so much happening in the world, and within our dance sphere, our world was getting even more and more 'skinny'.

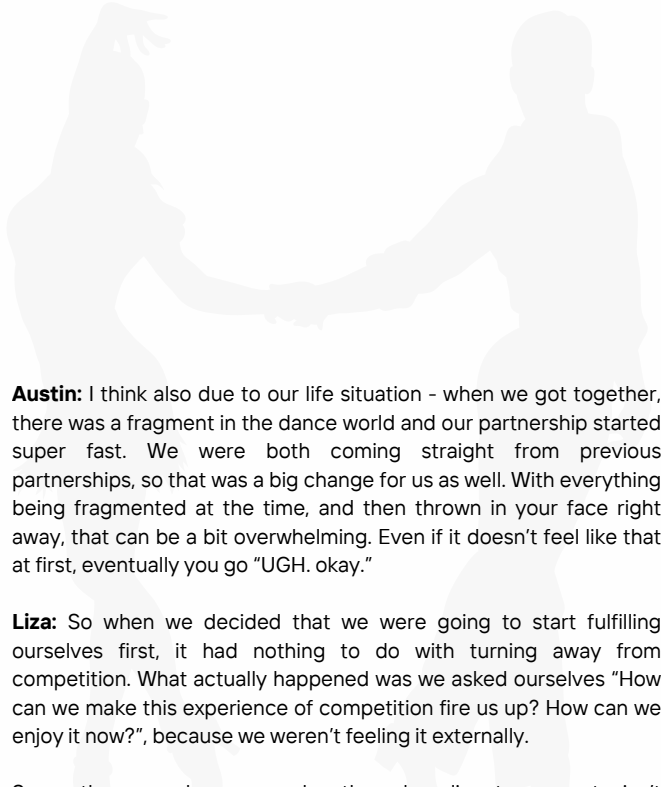
So that willingness to compete - you have to really love it if you're going to continue to do it, you know? When we turned professional, we really made that conscious decision to do what we truly love - to spend the time remaining in our careers geared towards that. And so that relationship with competing gets better too.

When we turned professional, we really made that conscious decision to do what we truly love - to spend the time remaining in our careers geared towards that. And so that relationship with competing gets better too.

Liza: I'm just going to add a little bit here. As Austin mentioned, our dance world is getting slimmer and more spread out. From that comes a sense of loss of this wonderment that you experience as a child, like "Oh one day I'll get to go to this competition and dance against all these couples." Don't get me wrong, we still have many fantastic extremely high-level couples out there, but they are all spread out in all corners of the world.

There's not really any competition where we all meet each other anymore. You grieve for the loss of this dream you had as a child; the dream to compete against the best of the best. And as you get closer, at least in age, then you feel "Well, actually, I'm only gonna experience a portion of this now."

And like Austin said, it's not for a lack of motivation, but it's a little hard to feel the real, skin-burning competitive feeling because you know that it's not full. You're not getting the full experience. When we were feeling that as amateurs, it was taking a bit of a toll on us - mentally, psychologically.



Austin: I think also due to our life situation - when we got together, there was a fragment in the dance world and our partnership started super fast. We were both coming straight from previous partnerships, so that was a big change for us as well. With everything being fragmented at the time, and then thrown in your face right away, that can be a bit overwhelming. Even if it doesn't feel like that at first, eventually you go "UGH. okay."

Liza: So when we decided that we were going to start fulfilling ourselves first, it had nothing to do with turning away from competition. What actually happened was we asked ourselves "How can we make this experience of competition fire us up? How can we enjoy it now?", because we weren't feeling it externally.

So as the years have gone by, the adrenaline to compete isn't coming from the outside. It's really coming from how are WE together putting our dancing on a competitive stage? How can we do what we've been doing for the last month or two at the practice studio, on the competitive stage. And we're finding this drive through that.

To wrap it all up in a bow, of course we want to fulfill our artistic dreams and maintain our artistic integrity, but we don't need competition to do that. I'll be much more comfortable not doing competitions. It would be so much more artistically fulfilling to just do it at home in the studio.

But it's not really about that. It's about how we can put what we really love about dancing on a competition floor and succeed, because like Austin said, it's a niche task for us. We want to do something that other people are not doing.



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

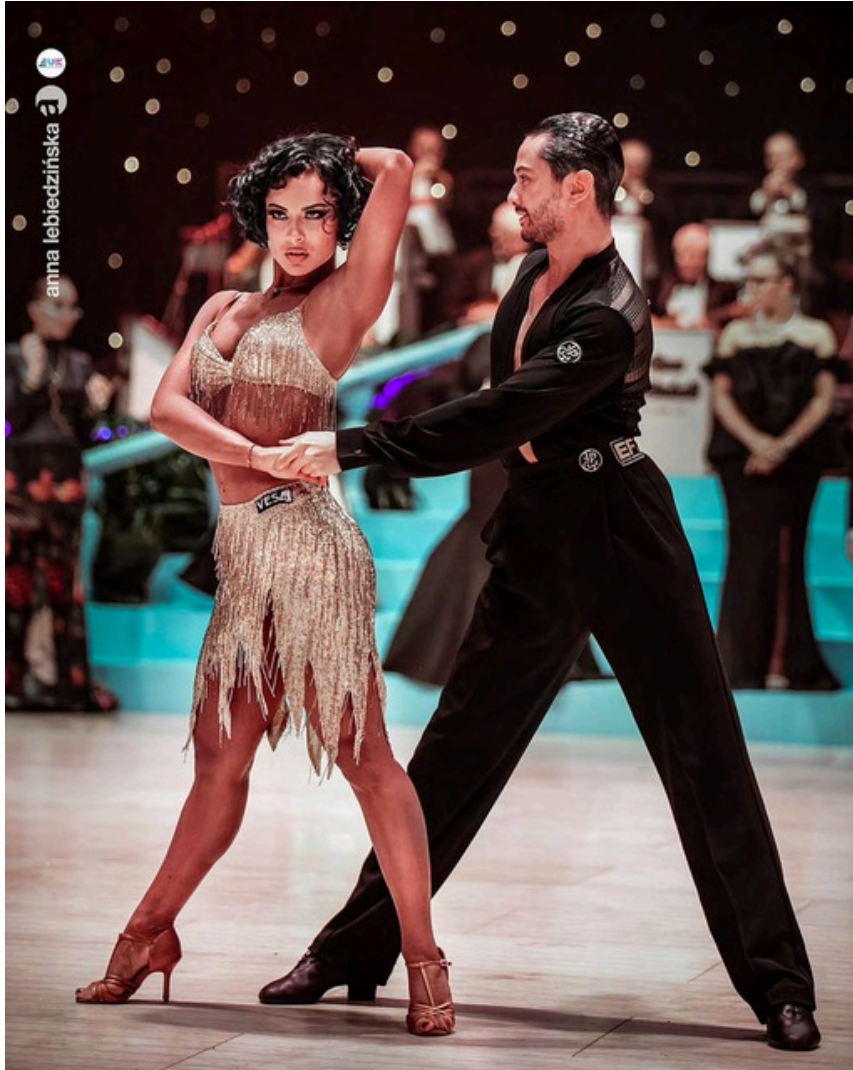
Austin: Yeah. Well, it has to do with being in charge of only what you can control. Whatever is happening externally, whether it's inspirational or not, or whether it's motivational or not, has really nothing to do with our decision to be professional dancers.

If we made that decision to be competitive professional dancers, then we signed a contract with ourselves. We have to do everything in our power to go out there and to deliver a great performance that is competitive enough to hopefully succeed. And whatever it takes to get there, has to come from within us.

Whether the world around us is fragmented or not, or whether there's five people in the audience - it's our job, our duty to do that. That's what it is at the end of the day.

Liza: Well I think the dynamics of any relationship really come down to the two people. I don't think you can or should compare any couple to another couple's relationship or dynamic because it really comes down to those two people finding their own way.

There is such a deep, deep love for dance that when two good friends share it, people might mistake that they are in love with each other. Well, they are in a way, but not romantically. It's just that you are so, so in love with the same thing. Over time, you find the same aspects and facets of that thing that inspires and excites you, and it brings you even closer.



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

I totally empathise with that. There is that inflection point where you realise that as long as you do your job to the best of your ability, that's enough. Which is a wonderful segue actually, to my next question. What do you think people might misunderstand or mistake about professional dance partnerships?

Liza: Hmm. Good question.

Austin: That's a great question.

Austin: Also, the experiences of learning are a huge bond and connector in a partnership. I think that's really special and missing a little today. What I find bonding about partnerships is the commitment that you have to each other. When you experience something new, whether it be discovering new information for the first time together, then you work on that together, practicing that new thing together, executing it together, that really bonds a couple. And obviously that's not possible if -

Liza: Well, you can be experiencing something new if you keep splitting also...



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

Austin: No, but it's different. Because in experiencing something new, it might not necessarily be something good. It's the experience in itself. Any experience has a high and a low, and to go through that with someone, creates a bond.

Liza: Yeah. As you navigate partnerships with age, you deal with things like what happens when you miss a flight together? What happened when you get to the hotel late at night and there's no rooms available? How do you then support each other through that?

So through all these things, you learn to be resilient together, you learn how to care for another person. Well, not romantically, but you have to care, you know? Because they're the other half of your business'. And I think from the outside, that can appear more than platonic, which in some cases it's not.

In other cases where couples do end up romantically together, we can't judge that. It's totally understandable why - not only because you spend so much time together, but also just because you have to constantly work together.

Whether you are suitable or compatible or not, with enough work, people figure it out. If you can figure out how to dance together, you can certainly figure out how to live together. So I think that's why it ends up going in that direction most of the time.

But it's not to be misunderstood. When we're in the studio working, we're not husband and wife. At that moment in time we're dance partners. That doesn't mean that now we're allowed to argue and be mean to each other just because now we're dance partners, no. That love for dance, and the desire to do what we came here to do, it overtakes "What are we going to have for dinner?" We focus and zero in on the task and work together on it, we're not just hanging out.

Austin: Yeah. I mean, we don't have children. If you speak from the lens of being in a relationship or being married, and then also having to have a professional career together -

Liza: It's kind of like having a child *laughs*

Austin: What else can you compare it to? There is nothing in comparison to that. If I was building something, a table for example, and I asked Liza to help me, we're both working on that project together. We're not necessarily coming at it from the same perspective because she's assisting me in that, and vice versa.

But in dancing, we both are coming from a perspective where this is our life. It was our lives, individually, before we met each other. We both love this thing, so we're working at it together 150%. It's very, very particular. So as she said, if you can learn the dynamics and how to successfully manage that, it'll be okay.

Continued in Part II

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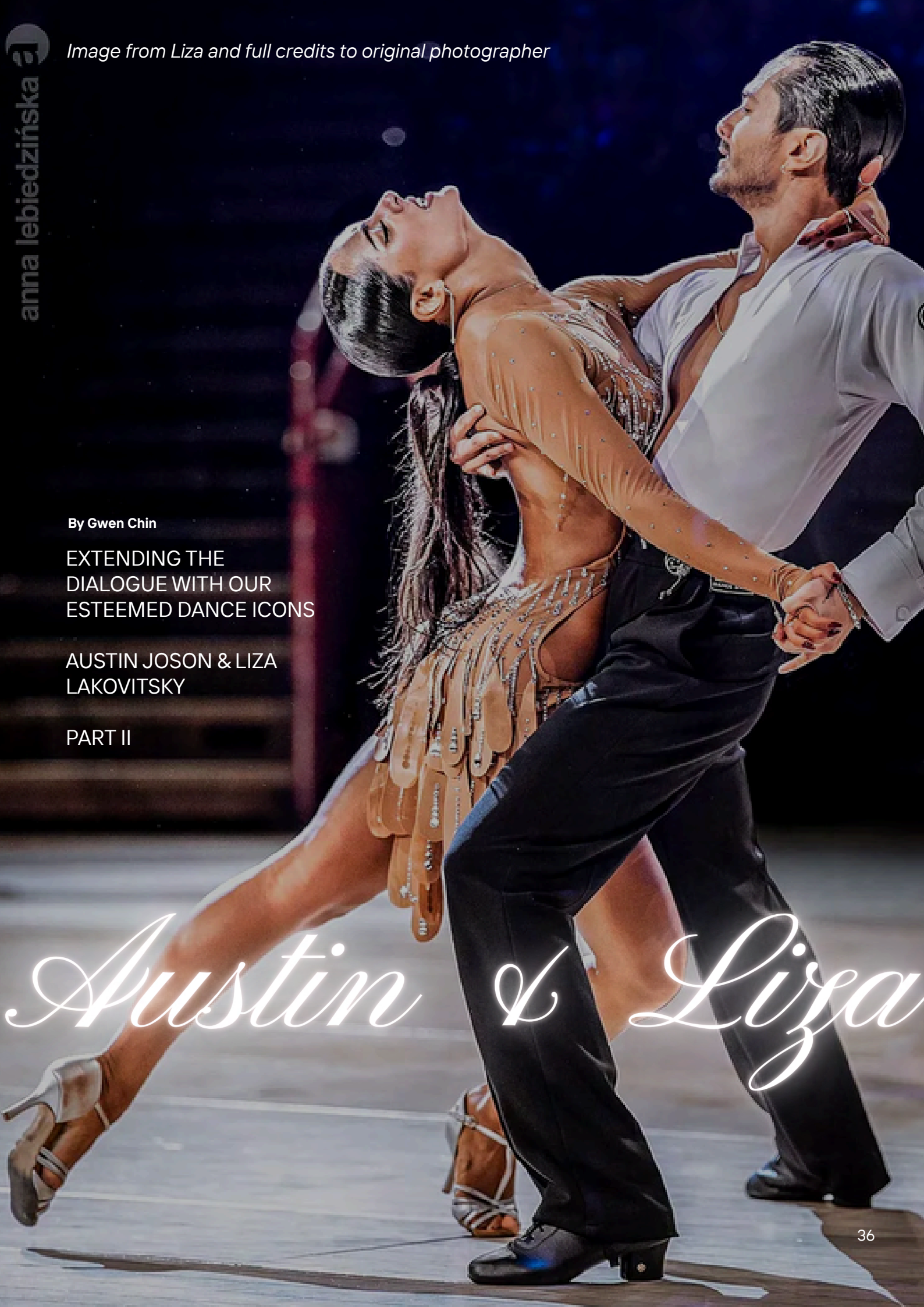


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Dabine Lo

Image from Liza and full credits to original photographer



By Gwen Chin

EXTENDING THE
DIALOGUE WITH OUR
ESTEEMED DANCE ICONS

AUSTIN JOSON & LIZA
LAKOVITSKY

PART II

Austin & Liza

INTERVIEW WITH AUSTIN & LIZA (II)

Is there a different approach you take when you perform versus when you're competing?

Austin: Well, when you perform, your relationship with the audience is different than when you compete. When you perform, your connection with the audience is constant. Of course, we're doing our thing, we're connected and related to each other as performers. But our constant target, is the audience. We're performing and delivering this product to entertain them, to touch and hopefully connect with them.

When you compete, it's not like the audience doesn't exist, and I'm just focused on competing. You still have that relationship with the audience, but it's not the number one thing. It's because you're not the only couple on the floor so not all eyes are on you all the time, and you're focused on a particular task. There's a priority, and it's not necessarily just the audience all the time.



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer

Liza: I think it's also more than that. When you have a show, you are in control of a lot more things.

You're in control of the music, the lighting, changing costumes; you're putting on a fuller production. You've chosen more things, so you have a different relationship over your dancing as well in that moment. I know things are going to go where I need them to go, and I know we're gonna do this and that on a particular part of the music. So you have a lot more.

When you go to compete, at least in our case, there is a lot more chance for things to be slightly off-script. And some people fear that, while some find excitement and opportunity in that.

I feel like we're one of those couples that don't fear the unknown. But there is still that small part of us that wonders "Which cha-cha am I gonna get in the first round? How will I dance to that cha-cha? Which cha-cha do you think I'm gonna get later?"

And so there's this open-endedness that you allow yourself to explore. Of course, you listen to the music regardless, whether it's your show music that you've danced to 150 times, or whether it's a Cha-Cha at a competition. You listen to it with the same ears. They're still my ears and they're still his ears. But it's, it's about choice and how many things you're in charge of-

Austin: Yeah. There's a generality to it. The comparison I can make, is like Madison Square Garden. Madison Square Garden is an arena of 18,000 plus, and on a day-to-day basis it changes from basketball court, or to a stage for a performer etc. So it, it constantly changes what they do with the arena and who's performing.

If they prepare Madison Square Garden for Bruno Mars to perform, everything in that room is geared towards the performance, and particular nuances of that performance.

If they set up the arena for a basketball game for the New York Knicks game, there are things that are set up that are constant. The floor, the lights, the two hoops. We know there will be a basketball game. But we don't know exactly what's gonna happen.

That's such a relatable comparison, I love it.

Austin: Thank you, thank you. I just thought of it now. *laughs*



I'm not really sure if you have seen or know our theme for Brillante this year, because every year we have a different one. This year, it's 007! So here's a fun one for you - Who out of the two of you do you think that would make a really good spy?

Austin: A good spy? Oh, man. I think we both have different qualities that would make a good spy.

Liza: We would make a great spy together!

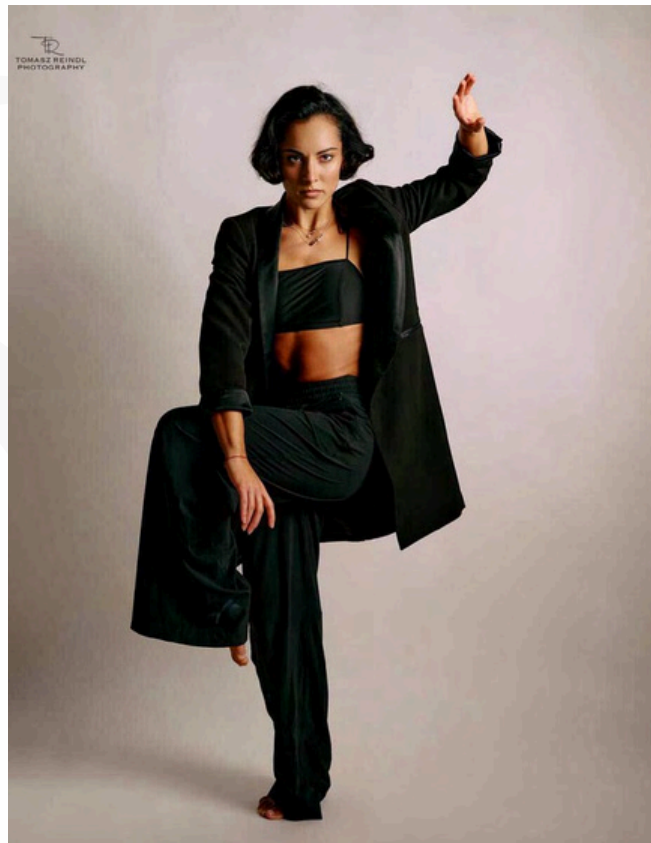
Austin: So, Liza can't lie. She'd blow her cover immediately.

Liza: I would be good at maybe planning and scoping. But the actual face-to-face is really hard. I would giggle too much at it. But Austin is more Mr. Cool. You would be much more James Bond.

Austin: Okay I'll say me. That was easy.



Source: Image from Liza and full credits to original photographer



Source: Image from Liza and full credits to original photographer

That's awesome. Alright lets do a little pivot here. You're both going to be doing a masterclass the day after the Brillante competition, and I am so excited to be a part of that. So when you teach lessons, and run workshops and masterclasses, what is your mindset going into it? What do you hope attendees should take away at least?

Austin: I think that what's important for us is that we're able to share something that is of immense fundamental value. Not just to us, but for everyone. I realise that the same thing is not going to be helpful in the same way for everyone, but when we do a class like this where it's just a one-off and we're not getting to know people, it's not going to be as personal. Hopefully we're able to share something that is, and can help people at all different levels and ages.

Liza: Yep, I'm with him.

Austin: I know sometimes when it comes to lectures or group classes, people say "We just wanna dance". The teacher gives a piece of choreography that everyone can do solo, and we just dance. Everybody does it, we get hot and sweaty; we perform it, make a video and then that's it.

I understand the value of that as well, because it's an experience in which we can dance together with you, and you dance together with us. Perhaps that could be inspiring. But we were raised very much from the perspective of really valuing education and dance; we find education to be inspiring.

And so the things that drove us throughout our career - to improve, develop and teach - we want to share those things with our students. I have no problem shaking my booty, with everybody and have a good time. But in the case of a one-off thing, I think it's important to leave something of substantial value.



Source: Images from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer



Liza: Not everybody's going to take the same thing away, and not everybody's going to take away whatever we were trying to share. Having been part of workshops and lectures throughout our lives from the student side, you have so many experiences where somebody comes and they put sparkles in front of your eyes for 30 minutes, and you're like, "Wow." And then you leave, and you're like, "What did I get from that? What do I do now? How does that help my dancing?" So we want to make sure that, um, hopefully you, you get something that we think is great about dancing too.

I know you both were recently at the NYDF (New York Dance Festival), and there were plenty of lectures, workshops and lessons that were being taught by our industry greats. Is there a particular teacher or coach that you've come across together that you think, "I know I wanna bring those same values to the students that I teach"?

Liza: There's so many!

Austin: There are so many. There are of course the teachers who we have been deeply involved with. We were both raised by the same woman, Vibeke Toft. Who not only taught us what to think, but how to think. So our dream as educators now and for the future is to give students the same tools that she gave us. Not just with information, but the overall thought process.

Liza: When we were teenagers, she said once that her goal with her students is the same as a parent has with their child. You want them to become independent and find success independently.

So as a coach and teacher, her goal was not to make you reliant on her for your career or to come to her for the answers. It was to give you as many tools as possible to find your own answers. So she raised us, and let us go. Of course, if there is something we're stuck on, we might call her. But in general, we've managed our dance career as adults together without too big of an influence from anybody else.

Funny you should mention NYDF, this year was different from last year. We had smaller 30 minute lectures so we got to experience more teachers. When it's a workshop style lecture with all sorts of dance levels, many teachers who may have been the most fabulous dancers, but they find it hard to bring something that can apply to everybody.

But this year, I'm speaking for myself here, it was one of the most brilliant dance camps I have ever attended in my life, where nearly every single lecture touched me. Whether through the teacher's aura, or their essence when they themselves danced in the lectures; it spoke to the core of me. This year's NYDF was just incredible. I cried nearly every day from joy, I'm not kidding, I really did.

Austin: Remember, I said she can't lie. *laugh*

Austin: What makes it the most touching is to see all these great minds deep in their element. Everyone is talking about dance, about certain subjects within that subject.

But those subjects within the subject from their own personal experience and with their own personal essence. It just becomes art because you really see how these great minds think about something that we all think about and what that means to them. It's gorgeous to watch and feel.

On the note of great teachers, I wanted to mention Franco Formica. Like Vibeke, he's someone who has had a very, very significant impact on my journey as a dancer, especially as an adult dancer. We've gotten close to him as well as a couple, because he is a very deep person and artist, and he also has a brilliant, structured mind.

Franco has such depth and artistry that lives inside of him. His ability not just as a performer, but as a teacher and mentor to construct thoughts about artistry in a way that can be useful from a student's perspective, I think is difficult to find. He also conveys and delivers artistry to a students without having an emotional attachment to it; he just lets it be yours. I think that's why I love him so deeply as a teacher.

Vibeke raised us from when we were kids, and she really gave us the tools to think about dancing for ourselves, while Franco continues to challenge our notions more entrenched in what we're doing. You need both. You need the skills and the tools, because without that there is no process.

Last question, I promise! There will be plenty of dancers of all levels who are going to be either competing at the Brillante competition. Is there anything you'd like to leave them with?

Austin: Oof. Let me think for a second. Okay. I'll say this, but I am in no way, shape or form saying this from a pedestal. But here it goes: Work tirelessly and relentlessly to find the spark that ignites the fire within you.

Wow. That's deep, on a level that I did not expect. I will take that advice with me. Thank you both so much for your time this morning and indulging me with your answers to some very deep questions. I can't wait to meet you both and dance with you very soon!

Austin & Liza: Thank you, we'll see you soon!



Source: Image from Liza's instagram and full credits to original photographer



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We extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has been part of this remarkable journey — our captivating guest artistes, distinguished adjudicators, and driven competitors.

To our dedicated team, both behind the scenes and on the ground, thank you for your resilience, commitment, and tireless efforts in navigating the many demands of an event of this scale. Brillante's success is a true reflection of your passion and unwavering support.

Our sincere thanks also go to our valued sponsors, whose continued faith and partnership have empowered us to elevate Brillante year after year. We are deeply grateful for your steadfast support.

To our cherished audience, we offer our warmest thanks. Your energy, enthusiasm, and presence have brought life and vibrancy to the Brillante experience.

It has been our great honour to present yet another edition of Brillante — ever more dynamic, refined, and inspiring. We look forward to welcoming you again at the 8th Brillante International.

Melvin and Sharon

The background features a dynamic, swirling pattern of red smoke or fire-like wisps against a solid black background. The wisps are concentrated around the central text, creating a sense of movement and intensity.

7th *Brillante*

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