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PROSENJIT GUY KUNDU – MR STREET DANCE INDIA, TALKS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY

Posted by Vivek on April 14, 2013 | No Comments

The decision to leave New York City and a good commercial career, at the age of 30, and pursue what you believe is a path of inner satisfaction, is felt by many, but done by a few. But the France born and US based Prosenjit decided that he had been wandering all along, so why not now. What has now become a movement in India, the Street Dance growth, can be attributed to that one decision of Prosenjit to teach for free, nearly 8 years ago as he was finding his own bearings in Mumbai. Today, recognized as the pre eminent dancer/choreographer and teacher of these styles, we talk to Kundu, who will, in his latest avatar convince you to buy a Windows 8. Over to Kundu:



When was the decision made, growing up, that it was Dance, that would be your career?

Actually, it was not that I grew up wanting to be a dancer. I was introduced to dance in 1989-90, at the age of 15 by a couple of friends of mine. This was during the time of MC Hammer, Heavy D, Big Daddy Kane etc. So that's when I started dancing and actually came to love it. However, when it was time to go to college, I was not sure what I wanted to do with my life. I liked the fact that along with my interest in Hip Hop, House and Break dancing, I could actually study dance. So I took a few classes in dance and I realized that I was really enjoying these, even contemporary (modern), ballet and I wasn't really going to my academic classes. After getting my degree in Dance, I showed up in New York (it was either NY or LA) and I went for my first audition for a dance company and I made it and then went for a second one, for a music video, and made it there to and I was like, "I must be good at this!" So the decision actually came to me, and it was quite easy and gigs started to come my way, so rather than me having to think, "this is what I wanted," it was more of, "it came to me and dance did not seem like work, so I'll do it."

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How did the AR Rahman world tour come your way?

Actually I was in Mumbai then and a friend of mine told me about the tour and that they were doing auditions. She had auditioned in LA and messaged me to get in touch with these people. So I got in touch with them, sent them my showreel /youtube videos and they got back, had a meeting on the phone and informed me that I was on for the Tour. So actually no audition, just looked at my YouTube stuff and flew me to LA and the rehearsals started. It was actually one of the easier assignments to get in.

Wow, so auditions going your way, clearly your talent is coming through, what about those instances where the auditions did not go your way?

For sure those instances have also been there and you take it in your stride and sometimes you respect the other factors that might have come into play, such as the height, the look may not be what they want, so not something I ever took to heart. Also that is more for the entertainment aspect and I am not just involved in the entertainment aspect of dance.

**How did the journey to India begin for this NRI?**

Actually mixed NRI. I was born in France, am half French and have lived in Canada, before making it to the US. I came to India with the idea of spending some time here, at the age of 30. I was living in NYC, even though I was doing well, I was not totally satisfied. India was always something that kind of drew me and I wanted to make, in my own way, some social changes, with my dance. This was about 8 years ago. Initially there were some hardships, it's a whole other world here. Thoughts like, did I make the right decision, did come up. I would say to myself, "let's stay another month," and this went on. Initially there were no friends, my family is from Kolkatta, but my career was dependent on Mumbai. I settled down, started going out, meeting people, started dancing at the clubs and started to get a lot of media attention. That made things a lot more smoother and here I am, a Mumbai ite, 8 years later.

How has Hip Hop changed in India, from the time you arrived, to now?

I'll respond on the larger concept of Street Dance, of which Hip Hop is a part. When I arrived here, there was not too much of Street dancing happening. Once I got the media attention, people started to contact me asking to be taught. And a lot of the people who wanted to learn were people who did not have the means or the money to do so. So I rented a hall called Tommy's in this area of Bandra called Pali Naka and basically taught free for nearly a year, asking only if the students could contribute towards the rent of the hall. This is where the seeds were planted and it took off from here. There were a few guys amongst these and I encouraged them to form a "Crew" and back then the concept of the Crew did not exist. They were the first B-boy crew in India (Freak N Stylz) and are still very active in the community spreading the culture. Fast forward to now, and it has become huge. Now the kids are all at an international level and all this in the last 7 to 7.5 years. I still continue to teach at times for free and mentor people with potential, and also travel to various parts of India including more remote towns and cities.

Talking television?

I did this show with Channel V, of the Star Networks, where I was the judge. This show was called Footlose. It was the first Street Dance show of India. That show helped popularize the Street Dance phenomena in India. It was quite a big deal to be asked to judge, since my knowledge of Hindi was limited; and to bring something called Street dance out there to the masses.

Choreographer, dancer or teacher?

I do all of the above as the need arises. However, I enjoy teaching a lot and it comes naturally to me. In fact the AR tour was one of the last, where I danced to somebody else's tunes, since then have mostly done my own choreography. Teaching I enjoy because everyone is different, from a student perspective and overcoming their fears and making people with two left feet believe that they can dance, is a great high.

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Bollywood calls?

The last project i choreographed and danced was a Yash Raj music video. I used my students that I have been training over the years.

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