

JENNIFER RAE

A rare pair of cancan boots inspires dancer

Scientist by day, vaudeville dancer by night, Jennifer Rae expresses herself through movement. Her inspiration comes from her beautiful pet corn snake, Lily, and a beautiful pair of cancan boots.

By Jenn Sharp

Q: Describe your ride:

A: They came from the States and I had a hard time finding these. To find a nice looking pair of cancan boots for character dance or more theatrical dance is really difficult. I wanted to get them in black but tan was the only thing they had because I got them online. They're also difficult to find because they're discontinued. I like that. Capezio is a very common brand for dance shoes and this boot was an unusual creation for them. It was discontinued rather quickly. Believe or not, the whiteness of this whole outfit was built around these boots because I love them so much. They're a very good dance shoe and it's tough to find that — to do dance and find a very good fitting shoe that matches with the dance you're trying to do. I built up a whole dance around the flirtiness and coquettishness of the beautiful vaudeville, cancan feeling of them.

Q: Tell me about your routine and how it involves Lily, your snake, and these boots?

A: I own corn snakes and dance as a hobby. I'm a scientist by trade and I use dance as an art expression and exercise. I had snakes and danced belly dance at venues such as busking at the Fringe Festival. I noticed that a lot of people had questions about them. I wanted to create dances where I can incorporate my pets and bring them out into the public in an appropriate way. I wanted to play on the mythology of snakes. Some negative opinions come from the story of Adam and Eve, and Eve being tempted by the serpent. I wanted to create a play on the story and have Eve interact with the snake. It's turning the story on its ear and being flirtatious and playing with that.

Q: Why the vaudeville cancan style?

A: There are fashions or styles within the trends of dance and one of them now is vaudeville or cancan style. Trying to bring back the idea of vaudeville is really amazing because it's a family friendly, tongue-in-cheek way of entertainment. For live venues or when the audience is quite close, it's a very fun, energetic way of interacting with them.

Q: What kinds of places have you performed wearing these boots?

A: Very different places. I've performed this at a metal show as one of the acts with the New Jacobin Club which is a great local band. I've also performed it as an independent dancer in the Rosebud Burlesque show, as well as other offshoots of Free Flow Dance. Jackie Latendresse (the owner of Free Flow) really enjoyed the dance and helped me to refine it.



Jennifer Rae, a burlesque cancan dancer, shows off her boots and snake, Lily. BRIDGES PHOTO BY ANDREW SPEARIN