

Fifth Position

Awesome Twosome

Ballet San Jose's Raymond Rodriguez and Karen Gabay are a great match onstage and in real life.

By Jocelyn Anderson

How did you two first meet?

Raymond Rodriguez: We met at Cleveland Ballet in 1981.

Karen Gabay: We actually did the USA International Ballet Competition in Jackson, MS, in 1982. That was the first time that we really danced together. It worked out great, and then we just got paired together all the time.

What would most people be surprised to know about you?

RR: People don't realize I was a tap dancer before I started ballet.

KG: I think most people would be surprised to know that I'm actually quite goofy. I keep a serious disposition, especially at work, but I can be a bit of a clown.

What's the best compliment you ever received?

KG: This past December, when the company went back to Cleveland to perform *The Nutcracker*, I danced the role of Maria, the little girl. And there was a little girl in the audience who I met after the show who actually thought that she was older than me. She was 12!

What is your favorite ballet to perform together? Why?

RR: *Romeo and Juliet*, because Dennis Nahat choreographed it on us and it's always wonderful when you work from the ground up on a new creation.

KG: And there's the dramatic side of it. I like a lot of drama with dance.

Why did you start your own company?

RR: A ballet season isn't 52 weeks, so those other weeks when we aren't with the company, we keep ourselves busy, like starting our own company in Cleveland, called Pointe of Departure.

KG: We've tried to keep dance alive in the summer in Cleveland.

If you weren't a dancer, what would you be?

KG: I would have liked to have been a doctor. I think the human body is fascinating.

What's your favorite TV show?

RR: "24"

KG: I really like "The Apprentice," but I also like "Nip/Tuck." That's my doctor side coming out.

When you aren't dancing, what is your favorite thing to do together?

RR: Going to the movies and other shows. I love seeing musical theater.

Are you a morning person or a night owl?

RR: Neither. I don't really like to get up early, and I don't really like to stay up super late.

KG: I think I'm both. As long as I'm inspired, it doesn't matter to me. ■

Karen Gabay and Raymond Rodriguez in *Giselle* in 1994



Robert Shriver