

And now for something completely different:

HEEBONICS

Dancing her way through adversity

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Staff Reporter

Canadian reality TV viewers are basking in the glow of CTV's newest reality show, *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*.

Now just past the halfway point in its inaugural season, the show's field of dancers has been whittled down to eight competitors from the initial 20, one of whom is Israeli-Canadian Natalli Reznik.

It seems the viewing audience is smitten with this dancer from the Holy Land, as they keep voting her back week after week.

Reznik moved to Toronto with her parents at 14 after growing up in a suburb of Haifa.

A fluid dancer, she has successfully shaken and shimmed her way up the show's talent ladder and tonight is poised to move on to the top six and possibly become "Canada's First Favourite Dancer", as the show titles its pending champion.

If she wins, Reznik will receive \$100,000 and a Mercedes-Benz car.

Now 29, she admits to being a relatively late bloomer to the world of dancing, having only begun formal training at age 17.

In a phone interview with The CJN/Heebonics earlier this month from the set of the show, she noted how a difficult transition from Israel to Canada helped forge her determination to dance and succeed in life, despite all odds.

"It was a rough time in my life," she said of her adolescence. "I moved to Canada, my parents divorced and I moved out on my own at 18. I wasn't at home with a mom and dad who were always there. I was by myself and had to always push and work hard. And there were other things that I won't get into. But all I could think about was dancing. It was my whole world."

Reznik said that even before the move she used to dance and make up routines with friends and classmates after school in Israel for the sheer joy of it.

After working her way into small roles and bit parts in TV and movies over the last decade, Reznik eventually found herself dancing at age 25 for the Cirque du Soleil's *Love* show in Las Vegas. She called that her "big break." Her next gig was as a backup dancer for singer Nelly Furtado on her world tour in 2007.

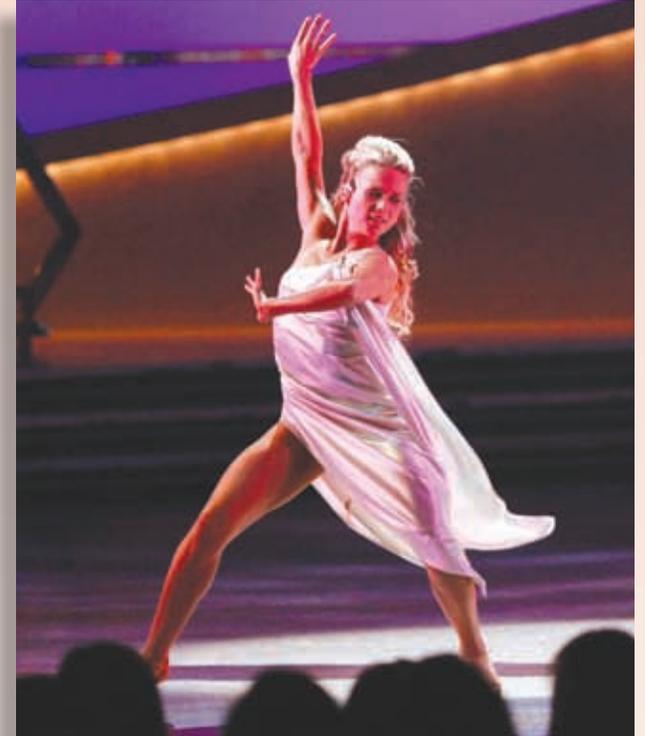
She said that while working with Cirque was a great experience, it wasn't what she wanted to do with her dance and that it was only when she got her job with Furtado that she started to "really enjoy" her professional life again.

"One of the [Cirque's] choreographers said he loved the energy, authenticity and honesty in my dance," Reznik recalled. "With Nelly, I got more into hip-hop and Latin styles, which, at this point in my life, suit me more. But I'm pretty open to different styles."

This summer, Reznik decided to take a chance



Natalli Reznik



[CTV photos]

and audition with thousands of others for *So You Think You Can Dance Canada* and was floored when she was chosen as one of the show's 20 contestants after two weeks of tryouts.

"I was shocked when I got in," she said. "It's a challenge."

While she's having a tremendous time showcasing her talent on live TV every week, when pressed, she admitted that she's not comfortable with the spotlight outside of the show's confines.

"I don't usually like to perform in front of family and friends," Reznik said shyly. "I'm getting great support, but whenever someone talks about me on the show, I say 'OK. Great. Can we talk about something else?'"

When asked if she intends to surprise the show's judges and the voting audience with any Israeli folk-dance moves, Reznik giggled and said, "No, I

don't think so."

Still, she calls Israel her "home" and continues to visit friends and family there each year.

Reznik said she's "always changing her style" and that the show's judges keep telling her they like her versatility and maturity.

Having said that, Reznik admits that her passion for dance evolved through the years.

"At 19, 20, 21... I lived and breathed dance. It was everything. I had to be a dancer, to prove to myself

I could do it," she said. "But it was tough because from 17 to 25 nothing was working out. But then I left the [formal] dance scene, stopped going to classes and started doing my own stuff and understanding what suits me, that's when things worked out for me."

Her success on *So You Think You Can Dance Canada* notwithstanding, Reznik said she's looking forward to moving on and trying her hand in feature film or theatre using her knowledge as a dancer.

"I've had some small roles in films where I dance, but I think it would be great to help a choreographer get into more visual [sequences] and be more of an art director," she said, adding, "But I'm not sure. I want to keep Toronto as my home base, but I'm also thinking of moving out to Los Angeles. I don't know. Things can change, and I don't usually think that far ahead."

Reznik said if she wins *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, "it would be crazy" and it would open "a lot of doors" for her. More importantly, she said she'd subsequently donate a lot of her prize money and time to worthy causes.

"When I was growing up, it was really tough for me in certain [academic] areas. Things didn't come easy for me," she said. "I'd love to go to different dance schools and tell kids that even though it's tough out there, you can make it and your time will come. And dance from your heart, be strong and don't give up. Because if I could make it, so can you."

"If I can help kids this way, my heart would be pleased and I'd feel more fulfilled. If someone could have given me this advice when I was younger, I would have appreciated it."

