

DANCING THROUGH THE REAL ESTATE MARKET

By Omar Crespo | March 6, 2014

A FORMER STAR BALLET DANCER HAS FOUND A NEW CALLING IN SELLING RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

Heather Stein has found a most unusual niche: the native New Yorker is a professional ballerina turned real estate star. Stein, who recently won the Real Estate Board of New York's 2013 Deal of the Year award for a complicated apartment transaction, works for Brown Harris Stevens and has become a go-to agent for actors, dancers and celebs looking for housing. She lives on the Upper West Side, and talked to us last week about her transition from tutus to black suits.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST GET INTO DANCING?

My mother taught ballet, and I would follow her in the studio. She saw my interest and my talent and thought I should study under the best. I auditioned for the School of American Ballet and was accepted at age eight and stayed for ten years, from beginning to end. I juggled two schools at the same time in order to achieve my academic credits and graduate from high school. I could have never done any of this without the support of both my parents.

DID YOU HAVE A FAVORITE BALLET?

Well, I would say the Nutcracker was always fun. I received my first paycheck at the age of nine. I was dancing in the nutcracker at Lincoln Center for many years. I got to perform candy cane, and soldier roles and was carried away by big mice and I danced amongst legends. I was fortunate over the years to dance so many beautiful works.

I also had a wonderful experience in performing at Lincoln Center with Ray Charles. A few of us were selected to perform while he played the piano and sang and that was fun. I was privileged to be with George Balanchine, Lincoln Kirsten and Mayor Koch on stage at Lincoln Center.

DO YOU WATCH "DANCING WITH THE STARS"?

I love "Dancing with the Stars"! I actually just chatted with Apollo Ohno, the Olympic skater who has done "Dancing with the Stars" for two seasons. And he and I got to chat about how he had to train and use his body for the show. It was fun to converse about how hard it is to learn and remember choreography and how our bodies could be trained so differently for each medium.



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Heather Stein

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WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO REAL ESTATE?

When I finished my dancing career I started writing for Dance Magazine. I realized I had to reinvent myself and decide what I wanted to do with my next career. I knew that a job sitting at a desk was not for me. I needed to keep moving.

I fell into real estate and it just felt like another stage to me. Every space is a different set, with its own energy and movement, encompassing people's lives, interior design and architecture.

YOU WON LAST YEAR'S DEAL OF THE YEAR FOR A VERY COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT DEAL AFTER HURRICANE SANDY. WHAT MADE IT SO DIFFICULT?

It was five transactions in one. And it was basically a sale and a lease, a buy and a lease, and a lease. And it was one of my most rewarding deals. All the pieces and hurdles had to come together to make it work, like a deck of cards. If one piece didn't fall into place, everyone was in jeopardy. We made it work. I'm so proud!

The transactions started by me listing an apartment in lower Manhattan, the week right after Sandy, so we certainly had our hurdles, from selling a flooded lower Manhattan to meeting sellers' specific needs. Basically timing and luck and a lot of hard work really made it come together. It took a lot of time and patience but everybody is settled and thrilled. I am so honored to have been chosen for the Deal of the Year.

YOU'VE HANDLED THE CASTS OF SEVERAL BROADWAY SHOWS.

Coming from the entertainment business, I have an affinity and love for housing artists. I did the housing for Mamma Mia and Thoroughly Modern Millie and Annie Get Your Gun and many others. I relocated entire casts, set designers, producers, directors and others. For privacy's sake, and because I respect and honor the artists I work with, their names are something I cannot disclose. I appreciate all of their business and trust in me.

DO YOU PLAN TO DO REAL ESTATE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE? WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF GOING OR DOING IN THE FUTURE?

Oh my gosh, if I had a crystal ball to tell me of my life, I think we'd all be set. I would say, day by day, I'm not sure where life would take me. I never knew I would land here today or win deal of the year. I'm recently single and I'm looking forward to falling in love again and having a family and one day living out in the country with a garden and maybe sell homes down the road. I won't miss board packages!

ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE STATE OF NEW YORK REAL ESTATE?

We have so little supply in the city currently and with interest rates so low it's really kept our market flowing. I'm not sure of any bubble to come, as you know we are certainly an island that carries its own markets and needs. I mean you've got to love New York. That's what I think.

Currently, I'm working with a well-known NYCB ballet dancer, selling her fabulous two-bedroom condo steps from Lincoln Center. Working with artists that I know and being able to handle their properties is a joy. If anyone is out here and wants to work with me, let's move.

