



Lighting up her Life Beauty and Brains Illuminate a Vision

By Sue Mayfield Geiger
(*The Scene Magazine*, September 2012)

It's been an amazing year for Miral Kotb.

Since placing third on "America's Got Talent" last season, Kotb's dance troupe, iLuminate, has performed professionally in Europe, Egypt, South Africa, Singapore, Canada, and various Six Flag venues, which has put Kotb already in the black. "I'm using the money to put toward my own show which I'll be producing off-Broadway, opening in New York over Thanksgiving and running through New Year's," says Kotb who was in town recently for a quick visit with family and friends.

Born in Cairo, Kotb moved to the U.S. at the age of two and grew up in the Clear Lake area with one dream—to dance. She was in the drill team and took classes at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts before enrolling at Columbia University. While

getting her degree in computer science, she continued to study dance and choreography in New York. After graduation and landing a job as software engineer with Bloomberg, Kotb's goal was to get some work experience under her belt and then go into dancing fulltime. But a cancer diagnosis changed her life—and her direction. After beating the cancer, Kotb decided to switch gears.



"I was freelancing and working on an iPhone application development," says Kotb, "when I got the idea of wireless lights on dancers that could be controlled from the palm of my hand. I knew exactly what I wanted to do, but couldn't explain it to anyone because it's something you have to see, so is hard to explain. Even now when people see it live, they have that 'awe' moment." The technology is a secret, but it's basically wireless controlling of the costumes so that different

body parts can be manipulated to create illusions. A patent is pending. The prototype only took a couple of months to design, but it took a year before the product was robust and stable. The first person to use it properly was Chris Brown as part of his Michael Jackson tribute on the BET Awards. "That's when I knew, it was ready for showtime!" says Kotb.

“We have two shows at Six Flags right now which are 20 minutes long and about 5,000 people a day see the show,” she says, “but the show in New York will be produced exclusively by us and run 60 minutes.”



The New York production is their very own investment and will be on their terms.

“Often when you get involved with a producer, they can shift what you are doing, but we had a very clear vision of what we wanted,” says Kotb, “so, we are really excited about the Broadway show. We want to spread the word and have all seats sold out every night. With 200 seats and two performances, that’s 400 seats a night!” With each performance telling a story, Kotb says that the shows are truly an adventure. “The show at Six Flags is about a planet that gets invaded, with a princess captured and rescued,” she says. “We’re like any other performance that tells a story only we create our characters in the dark.”

A memorable recent performance for iLuminate was on The Ellen Show. “It was great,” says Kotb who did get to meet Ellen DeGeneres and even made a jacket for her with “Ellen” on the back, that lit up in lights, of course. Other highlights of Kotb’s recent success include speaking at Google, not once, but twice; last year speaking at Google Zeitgeist and also performing live. “I spoke alongside Sir Richard Branson, founder of Virgin, and it was a real honor. He’s an artist/entrepreneur who comes up with interesting ideas and brings them to life in his own artistic way, which has made him successful. The second performance was a Google Science Fair for teenagers where I was able to inspire them to use their genius and be the best at what they do. I did something similar at a robotics conference where I received an award along with a Nobel Prize winner in physics. It gave me an opportunity to show how art and technology can come to life and inspire young kids,” she says.

Kotb has other inventions in her head with new products coming out. “They are top secret but will definitely take us to a different level. It’s still performance art and wearable lighting, but with a different way of doing it. We invent everyday—internally—to make our product better, our costumes stronger, our set pieces, dances and illusions better. One new product will be out in a couple of months that will add to what we already do. It will showcase in our New York show.” Kotb handled the business end of iLuminate in the beginning, but now that she has a feel for where the company is headed, they’ve just signed with a manager and an agent, and hired a publicist.

Kotb’s biggest goal: “To stay innovative and fresh and inspired. I’d like the company to keep growing, expand globally, have shows around the world and also be innovators in technology and art. Not just with the light suits but other innovations as well.” What’s next after New York?: “We’re hoping to have a U.S. tour next spring, particularly a House of Blues tour, but we want to bring it to many cities due to our large fan base.”

In her free time Kotb unwinds with massages and she loves to cook, but even in her down time, she dances. Kotb is the daughter of Magdy and Sonia Kotb, owners of Mediterraneo Restaurant in Nassau Bay. The New York show will premiere Thanksgiving weekend at the Duke Theatre in Manhattan. For more information go to iluminate.com.

(Ed. Note: As we go to press the New York show now has a name: "The Artist of Light," iLuminate's very first ticketed show!)