



Enchanted by the Muses

By Anna McAlear

Every evening, all over the world, while many DFAIT employees head to the gym or to a restaurant, the department's many dancers, singers, actors and painters pursue their artistic passions.

What motivates these men and women to invest their time and energy in these creative pursuits? As artists, they just can't imagine doing things differently. They are compelled.

As her colleagues head home through a frosty Ottawa evening, Martine Charles, an analyst in the Information Management Improvement Program, makes her way to the Innovation School of Dance in Westboro. Charles' involvement with dance goes back a long way: at age 13, she learned the salsa from her Cuban father, later adding such styles as bachata and break dancing. She now spends her evenings teaching others how to dance. "Dance just makes me feel good," says Charles. "Sometimes I have positive feelings to express, and dance, for me, is the perfect outlet."

Jeneviève Clairmont finds the same expressive joy in her opera singing. This administrative clerk for the E-Communications, Communications Products and Services Division has been singing since childhood, but only recently discovered her penchant for opera. She auditioned for the Théâtre Lyrique de Hull—unaware that opera was their specialty—and was accepted. At her first practice, she discovered another side of her personality. Learning operatic style has been a challenge, but it has become a consuming joy: "Singing is everything—I couldn't imagine life without it."

Ginette Caza, a strategist with the Foreign Policy and Corporate Communications Division, has recently taken up abstract painting. "When I let my imagination and my painting soar, I become happy and calm, and my whole outlook on life improves," says the former fashion designer and radio broadcaster. Look at her acrylics and you will easily understand. They brim with colour, texture and light.

Michael Mancini, Editor-in-Chief of *CanadExport*, similarly enjoys the creativity of his acting career. Slated to play the lead role in Centrepointe Theatre's *Hamlet* this spring, Mancini describes acting as "a process that is creation at its rawest. On stage, I get a direct sense of the audience getting something, or perhaps not getting it." The possibility of disaster—of forgetting a line or losing focus—is always there, but he says that is precisely the source of the adrenaline and the intensity.



photo: Michel Pixel/DFAIT

Michael Mancini rehearsing his script



photo: Michel Pixel/DFAIT

Singing is a consuming joy for Jeneviève Clairmont.