

Sue interviewing Momo Miyaguchi in Duault

Momo:

...part of a co-operative, and so I regrouped all my activities under the name of Taïka, which means 'body song' in Japanese.... Cooperative called 'Avant-Première'. It's a co-operative where people can kind of create their business and learn how to market it, and then decide whether they want to stay in the cooperative, or become self-employed, etc.

Sue:

How long have you been part of this cooperative?

Momo:

For about four years – from September 2017.

Sue:

Is that when you first came to Brittany?

Momo:

No, I arrived in Brittany in 2014, and before that I've been living in France since 2002. So then I was living in Paris.

Sue:

And you're married to a Frenchman?

Momo:

Yes, I'm married to a Frenchman.

Sue:

And you have a French son?

Momo:

Yes, he's French and Australian, I guess.

Sue:

So your background is mainly Australian, is it?

Momo:

Well, my father is Japanese, was Japanese, my mother's American, from Boston. So I was born in Tokyo, and my mother was very happy living in Tokyo, but my dad wasn't happy living in Japan, so he wanted to leave, and so they left because he got a job in Tasmania, so we went from Tokyo to Tasmania in 1980, when I was five years old.

My father became a naturalised Australian, and because my mother was not Japanese, we lost our Japanese citizenship at the same time, because we were under age, and so I am technically American and Australian.

Sue:

And what brought you to France?

Momo:

Kinda curiosity, which almost killed the cat, but I still have a few lives left. I was living in Sydney between 2000 and 2002, and I started doing performance art in physical theatre, and I was interested in the circus arts as well, aerial circus arts. And I was learning trapeze and silks, and my trapeze teacher was French. He encouraged me to go and see a performance by a French flying trapeze troupe that was called Les Arts Sauts, in 2001, which was part of the Sydney Festival. There were other French companies as well – Theatre du Soleil, which is not Cirque du Soleil, Theatre du Soleil, anyway they were performing as well in the Sydney Festival that year. And because I was interested in performance art and circus, I kind of ran away with the circus. And it was just kind of a, just one more thing that said, ‘why don’t you come to France?’ So I packed up my bags and came to France. I did have a relationship with a flying trapeze artist, and that sort of motivates one to cross the planet, I guess. And then, yes it was pretty hard work trying to live in France afterwards. So I did some intensive Alliance Française courses, and also, to stay in France, I actually stayed on a student visa. I went to Musicologie at Université Paris 8 in St Denis, which is north of Paris, so that allowed me to stay on in France for the first few years, and it helped my French as well.

Sue:

What brought you to Brittany?

Momo:

My partner at the time, who is now my husband, we were kind of wanting to move out of Paris, to go a bit greener. And I was missing seeing the sky, because I grew up in Tasmania, and I’m used to seeing the sky changing a lot. So, basically I found sort of the Tasmanian equivalent of France in Brittany, because the weather’s very changeable, it’s a temperate climate, so yeah, we were looking to leave Paris it’s a good place to settle in. It was a bit of a life change, because I was working as an artist until we arrived. But I also had my son at that point, so I’m kind of ready for a change. So I didn’t really know what to expect when we came to live here. I sort of put an end to all of that, and just said, ‘Okay, new page, new chapter.’ I decided not to continue to work as an artist. I started giving yoga classes and singing classes to start with, just to kind of find my bearings. I could have continued my artistic career in Brittany, but it was just that moment in my life I was looking to create a family and have a bit of quiet, and coming back into my life because it’s very important.

Yeah, when I started teaching, I started looking to find a way to have the teaching and an artistickind of career all together. And that's what I found in my cooperative.

Sue:

How does that help you?

Momo:

I think if you work for an association, if you work as a self-employed person, often they want you to stay in a certain category, you can't mix it all up. They say okay, if you teach, you teach. If you perform, you perform. And if you teach and perform, then it's complicated, you know, in terms of how to define yourself. So in a cooperative, all the money that you make goes into the common bank account, and the accountant works out, you know, how much you make out of everything, and then it comes back to you as a salary. So that was probably the best situation for me.

Sue:

And where do you do your classes mainly?

Momo:

So I do my yoga classes in Duault and Callac, and I have an on-line class as well. I give singing classes as part of the music school in Callac, but also just privately as well, sometimes at home, sometimes I go to people's houses. I am very happy to kind of have the yoga and the singing kind of coming together. I am basically teaching vocal technique, tied to the body. My yoga background really helps with my, the voice teaching. And then I try and match my teaching with the needs of my students. My background was more in classical music, but I try to match my teaching to whatever musical world that people are in

Sue:

And what about the performance art?

Momo:

I have a couple of characters – I call them my *personnages*, in French – so I just did a couple of performances at the Ecocentre in Ecocentre-Tregor, which is in Pleumeur-Bodou. I have a creature called Sasula, who is kind of a green, fluffy creature that is born from a forgotten prehistoric egg, and she's born into this modern world, and she's just trying to kind of work out what's going on, discover humanity and her surroundings, and so she'll be touching people's hair and sniffing them and playing with the kids, and just looking around basically. So she was at the Ecocentre for a couple of sessions. I have another couple of stilt-walking characters – one's called Murasaki, which means purple in Japanese, and she's also named after Murasaki Shikibu, and I'll probably be performing her later in the year. Maybe in Vannes, in October.



Sue:

As part of a festival?

Momo:

A festival, yes. They're trying to make it a Japanese themed festival, so... Not a lot of performing, but it's there. When you share a space with people, then you share an experience. Be able to adapt as well as we can to any kind of situation, because I'm not sure what the future will hold, but I'm very happy to be living in central Brittany during this time, and also I think the networks of people living out here are very supportive. We have people that we can count on, so I feel pretty positive and optimistic about the future.

Sue:

Thank you very much, Momo

Momo:

You're very welcome, my pleasure.