



Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims in Mauro Bigonzetti's *Festa Barocca*

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While learning a duet in Ohad Naharin's *Minus 16*, most members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater confer with their partner—figuring out tricky lifts and transitions. But on one side of the studio, Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims work together silently. They seem to communicate through their bodies and gaze rather than through words. A strong physical connection may not be surprising for a pair that just celebrated their 11th wedding anniversary. But the way the Sims use it to elevate their artistry is.

Veterans at the Ailey company, both dancers are stars in their own right. But the chemistry between them when they share the stage magnifies their respective gifts. “When I dance with him, I can feel what he’s feeling,” says Linda. “It’s like a metronome or a heartbeat; our rhythms are the same. We know each other’s breaths.”

Sparks flew the first time they danced together—in a very different setting. The couple met in 1997, on Glenn’s first day of work (Linda had already been in the company for a year). He was smitten,

but she initially saw him as just a friend. As Glenn puts it, “I wasn’t her Patrick Swayze.” Things changed one evening on tour in Zurich, when they went out to a nightclub. “That was my secret weapon—she didn’t know I knew how to salsa dance,” he says. They began dating but kept it under wraps for six months because they didn’t want the relationship to interfere with their careers. Three years later, after a proposal that was both over-the-top (rose petals, bubble bath, champagne, strawberries) and down-to-earth (Linda’s hair was in rollers), they were married in January 2001.

It’s clear how much they inspire each other creatively. “He moves with such elegance and finesse that I think of an Egyptian king,” Linda says of her husband. Glenn describes her dancing in equally evocative terms: “She has so many different facets to her. She’s like a butterfly at moments but can be fierce as a lioness.” In fact, one of the challenges of their shared careers is not getting to perform together as often as they’d like. Some choreographers avoid casting couples, the Sims say, out of fear that they’ll argue. That’s one reason why it’s so special when they do get to be paired together onstage—especially in *Festa Barocca*, in a duet created on them by

Mauro Bigonzetti.

Although their professional and love lives are closely intertwined, the Sims strive to keep those worlds separate. “When we’re at work, we’re in work mode,” Glenn says, adding that they don’t bring personal issues into the studio. And they make their home a place for relaxation and romance, not rehearsing. They joke about having regular dates at “Bar 543” (their street address)—code for sipping cocktails in their condo.

They’ve also grown to respect each other’s particular needs. For Linda, that’s a good listener. “Especially in this environment where you’re like a lemon—you have to squeeze yourself and give yourself all the time—sometimes you just want to vent,” she says. Glenn handles stress differently, but under her influence he’s beginning to open up more. “I was not a communicator at first,” he says. “She brought that out in me.” Linda in turn has learned to give her husband space after a long day of rehearsal.

There is one significant downside to their arrangement, though, as Linda points out with a laugh. “When you want to go home and get a foot massage...I’m like, ‘Honey, rub my feet.’ And he’s like, ‘No you rub my feet!’”

—Elaine Stuart