

# From finance to flamenco

**Karen Ruimy swapped a well-paid job in finance for life as a dancer. When it comes to living life well, she has one piece of advice – follow your passion**

**When Karen Ruimy left a successful career in finance to follow her passion for flamenco, her life changed forever.**

Karen, who was born in Morocco, credits long spells as a child spent in Andalucia for igniting her passion for the traditional Spanish dance. But it was only later on in life, after gaining an MBA at the prestigious ESSEC college in France and climbing the career ladder for eight years as a financial broker, that she decided to follow her dream of becoming a professional dancer.

Feeling unfulfilled by her job, she experienced what she describes as a “spiritual calling” to understand more about life, psychology and spirituality. Her learnings inspired her to write a book – *The Angel’s Metamorphosis* – which explores the often challenging spiritual journey we must undertake to achieve true happiness. It argues that in an attempt to fill the void left by a lack of spiritual awareness, humans strive for material possessions to satisfy the ego, which sets in motion a cycle of want and need. The book aims to teach the reader how to rediscover his or her lost

innocence and divine essence.

“It’s about the spiritual journey that one might have in the midst of one’s life, and it happened to me, so it’s really an intimate work,” says Karen, who lives with her husband and three children in Belgravia and works in a dance studio near to her home. “I was earning good money in my job but it felt like I wasn’t doing what my deep self wanted. Often when you’re young and you get a good education, you move straight into a good job because of that. Then one day you wake up and say, ‘Hello, what am I doing here?’”

After taking time out to understand what she really wanted, Karen realised that she couldn’t suppress her passion for dance any longer. “I knew it was a big risk to leave a good job, but when you have a passion like that, you are a bit crazy. It’s like having a force in your back that pushes you.”

Since following her dream, Karen has gone on to perform, direct and produce flamenco in some of the most prestigious venues in London and Paris. In 2008 she presented *Flamen’ka Nueva* for two sell-out seasons at the Casino de Paris and the Folies Bergère. Then came a show at the Lyric Theatre last year, directed by *Strictly Come Dancing* judge Craig Revel Horwood – and she is now working on another show that begins in Paris this Autumn. “What I love about flamenco is that it mixes femininity with the strong attitude of the feet,” she says. “It’s very empowering. Sometimes I feel mellow and not strong in

my life – but when I dance, it’s a good way to get back into my own body.”

As well as being a dancer, Karen is a trustee of the FAS Awards Foundation charity, which she co-founded with Mariella Frostrup. It aims to reward those who have significantly improved the lives of women in African countries and raise funds to establish women’s training centres and award educational fellowships.

“I always wanted to help women in the world. I was born in Morocco, a country that I love, but where the condition of women is not so free. I am from those cultures where women suffer, but I always lived in France and London, so I have a Western mind. Freedom for women is a passion for me.”

Following her passion is important to Karen. “I don’t stifle it. Passion is an expression of the soul. When you see an opportunity that’s wild and really attractive, you have to really feel and think about the possibility of doing it. You have to find your joy, otherwise why do you live? We have to take some risks, because it’s not worth being safe and unhappy.”

People who don’t follow their passion, she says, could come to regret it. “At certain moments in your life a door opens and you have to dare and find the courage to go through it. I know it’s very difficult, and I’m not judging when people don’t do it – I understand. I’m just trying to push people, because I know it’s such a reward when you have done it.”



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