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NIKITA SASHA PETTIGREW
in an interview with
Mark Ulyseas

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY BLACK DEVIL



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

Live Encounters Magazine (2010), Live Encounters Poetry & Writing (2016), Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers (2019) and now, Live Encounters Books (August 2020).

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

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Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



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Born in Bali, Indonesia to an Indonesian mother and an Irish father, Nikita Sasha Pettigrew, studied in The Green School in Bali and is now in her third year at The American College (BFA in Performing Arts/Musical Theatre).



NIKITA SASHA PETTIGREW

A blythe spirit born of two cultures *in an interview with Mark Ulyseas*

*"Let your life lightly dance on the edges of
Time like dew on the tip of a leaf."*

— Rabindranath Tagore

Blythe spirits, children of mixed parentage, are each given a gift, a special gift to help them navigate the rough terrain of daily life battered by the recklessness of parochialism of colour, caste, religion and political agendas. From birth the child begins to realize that there are two worlds, both beautiful and perplexing. Two worlds filigreed by rich cultural heritages that appear to be at odds with each other in colour, form and word. But this is not so for each world has its own way of *living* and in truth are not much different from each other. Many among us cannot see this through the haze of our own subjective upbringing. Only the blythe spirits can see over the horizon because they are born into two cultures.

Nikita is one of these blythe spirits. A young soul, who from birth, has slowly learnt to flutter like a butterfly from one place of beauty to another gathering the nectar of life to the sound of the Gamelan and western classical music. There is a yearning within her to break free of the 'ordinariness' of life in search of the sublime. In the words of Freddie Mercury, "I want to break free", best describes her passion for dance and theatre.

This interview started out with a list of questions, which I later found to be tiresome. So, to preserve the lyricism of Nikita's replies I have compiled her answers into a form of narration.

Nikita Sasha Pettigrew

“These past 21 years have been an experience like eating a Nasi Campur, Indonesian dish served with a variety of meats, vegetables, peanuts and fried-shrimp krupuk – delicious comfort food and the staple of many an Indonesian.

My mother, Anindra Novitasari, is from Surabaya, the port city on the island of Java. She worked for a number of years in 5-star luxury hotels and after marrying my father, John Pettigrew, joined college and studied fashion design. Now she designs and produces exclusive evening gowns and wedding dresses. My vocal talent comes from my mother’s side. Two of my mother’s siblings are professional singers while my mother is an accomplished vocalist.

My dad, John Keeble Pettigrew was born and lived his formative year in the Republic of Ireland. He was educated at St. Columba’s college up in the foothills above Dublin. After finishing school, he attended Gurteen Agricultural/Horticultural College in County Tipperary, followed by The Horticultural Institute, Malahide and finally The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin where he graduated in 1980. He has been designing Gardens for nearly four decades in Asia, Europe and the USA. His landscape architect company, *Design In Nature*, is based in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia, where he lives with his family. John’s landscape designs are inspired by nature and his love of water and other natural elements. He has won a number of international awards.

I like to believe my interest in the arts comes from my dad’s side as my grandfather Stanley Pettigrew was a known Irish painter and my grandmother Vera Pettigrew was a known Irish Author.

As a young blythe spirit in Bali, I possessed an energy that often defied gravity and so to keep my feet on the ground my mother enrolled me in ballet classes at the age of 4. This progressed to The Royal Academy of Dance at the young age of seven. This lasted for nine years.

However, ballet was a bit regimented for me and I needed to break free from this. I experimented with other dance forms such as hip hop and contemporary and gymnastics!

The process was hard and uncompromising and at times I felt I would not be good enough to excel but there was something within me that kept pushing me on.”



From L to R: Nikita, Anindra (mom), John (dad) and my sister Ashley. Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha pettigrew.



Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha Pettigrew.



At The Royal Academy of Dance

“Indonesia is one of the leading biodiverse countries in the world. It is said to host 17% of the world’s wildlife. Not to mention that we have 270 languages.

With this rich diversity comes the whole plethora of arts, crafts, music, dance etc. And I was embraced by this rich culture, always mesmerised by the over 3000 original dance forms.

Each genre of traditional music is usually accompanied by its own dance and theatre. The contemporary music scene has its roots in influences from India, Korea, Japan, Britain and the USA.

Ireland on the other hand was a world away from the Gamelan. It’s captivating folk tales, dances and music was, for me, a kind of elixir that intoxicated my senses.

Initially I was a Bali child living the dream until I began visiting Ireland. Over time a synergy of sorts took place between my mother and father’s worlds. I began living and excelling in a world of my own – dance.

My schooling at *The Green School*, Bali, was an enriching experience and it was this that prepared me for the world of dance, not just in Bali but in Ireland. The international ‘atmosphere’ gave me a perspective to future professional possibilities. Though it was a hard road to tread, I think it was my blythe spirit that nurtured the passion to carry on.

Now studying in Ireland I see how all my past experiences both culturally and with education have prepared me to study and hopefully work in a truly international arena.

Here in Dublin, I have enrolled in the *American College* (4 year Bachelor of Fine Arts in Performing Arts/Musical Theatre). The course covers the three modules: dance, acting and music.

The college building with its Georgian architecture is the restored childhood home of the Oscar Wilde.”



1-3 year musical theatre showcase 2022. Centre: Nikita. Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha Pettigrew.

“The college building with its Georgian architecture is the restored childhood home of Oscar Wilde. I am sure Oscar would be very happy to see his home converted to a college for the arts! As he once wrote:

*“It is sweet to dance to violins
When love and life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!”*
— Oscar Wilde

My course also has two other locations: *Liffey Trust Studios* (which is the dance studio that the *Dancing with the Stars* do their rehearsals, and the *ACD Mount street*.

This 4-year degree includes dance, acting, music theory, music ensemble, phonetics (how to do accents), music and theatre history, one on one vocal technique, one on one vocal repertoire, production class which we work on our end of year showcase pieces, acting through song which we have to perform a musical theatre song to the class that fits the topic of the week, and also the end of year musical rehearsals on top of college work. As I am in third year now, I have four performances coming up in April and May, the first one being my one person show which is presented to lectures, the second, the play we are putting on that we are rehearsing for during acting class, the third being the 1-3 year showcase and the fourth, the *Anything Goes* musical my college is putting on this year which I am playing the character Chastity.

I hope to achieve great training, making connections and friendships with people in the industry by learning from the wonderful lectures about the ins and outs of the musical theatre and performing arts industry.

These past years in college have taught me so much from how to prepare myself for an audition to different acting and singing techniques used for different types of pieces and style of theatre. Even though I am still in college, every week I find myself learning more and more about what works for me and what I am good at and things I still need to improve on.”



Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha Pettigrew.



1-3 year musical theatre showcase 2022. Bottom left: Nikita. Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha Pettigrew.



After graduation I see myself staying in Europe for a little while as I will have many more opportunities when it comes to performing compared to what I would get back in Bali. Last year myself and a couple friends decided to audition for the *Disneyland Paris* face character and parade dancer and I passed all the rounds and got offered a contract to work there for five months, but I didn't end up taking it as it interfered with college. Even though I didn't end up going, I took the fact that I was offered a position to work there as a confidence boost to push myself even more and take it as a sign that I'm on the right track.

Often when the day has been hard on my body and soul I remember the words of Oscar Wilde,

"Beauty is a form of Genius--is higher, indeed, than Genius, as it needs no explanation. It is one of the great facts of the world, like sunlight, or springtime, or the reflection in the dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. It cannot be questioned. It has divine right of sovereignty. It makes princes of those who have it."

Yes, I seek beauty in my art. And this makes me very happy.

At The American College, Dublin, once the childhood home of Oscar Wilde.
Photograph courtesy Nikita Sasha Pettigrew.

Tina Claffey is an award-winning Irish nature photographer and author of 'Tapestry of Light-Ireland's bogs & wetlands as never seen before' in 2017, and 'Portal-Otherworldly Wonders of Ireland's Bogs, Wetlands and Eskers' in 2022. Her observations and unique perspective through her macro lens of the flora and fauna of the raised bogs and wet woodlands of the Irish midlands are celebrated in her work. She has exhibited in group shows in the US, Botswana, Zambia and has had solo exhibitions throughout Ireland. Her work is part of many art collections, permanent exhibitions, including the permanent collection at Áras an Uachtaráin, home of the Irish President. She has presented her work on many worldwide online platforms including the Wildlife Habitat Council Online Conference in the US and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to promote the importance of the Irish bog wilderness. Find out more about Tina's work and order her new book 'Portal' here: <https://www.tinaclaffey.com>



TINA CLAFFEY

SPRING AWAKENINGS

Photo Feature

I love to get 'lost' in the bogs, eskers and wetlands of Ireland with my macro lens throughout the seasons.

Spring is a wonderful season, as the bogs and their wet woodlands reveal beautiful little indicators that they are awakening from their Winter slumber.

Wondrous Scarlet Elfcup fungi emerge deep in the wet woodland, and moss sporangium raise their inquisitive heads to the sky.

Caddisfly larvae weave magical houses to encase their aquatic bodies and orbs of frogspawn life appear in the bog pools. The sphagnum mosses relish in the Spring rains, revealing their beautiful colourful bouquets. Raft spiders take advantage of the brief sunny spells to bask on the bog boarwalks.

Our ancient Blackthorn and wonderful Willows reveal their flowers and catkins before their leaves making them visible to entice emerging insects to pollinate them. Caterpillars emerge, including the Angle Shades moth, feasting of flowering Hare's Tail cottongrass.

These little signs only become apparent when we slow down to the pace of nature, it is only then that we can truly 'see'.

Tina Claffey



Scarlet Elfcup Fungi



Bouquet of Sphagnum



Caddisfly cases



Willow Female Catkins



Blackthorn



Frogspawn



Raft Spider



Moss Sporangiums

Angle Shades Caterpillar on Hares Tail Cottongrass



Jill Gocher is the author of more than ten books and countless magazine articles. she writes on culture, lifestyle, food and travel and has been known to do a spa review now and then. her greatest love is to photograph authentic people and this is the topic of her new book. it should be coming out soon. She has been living in Asia for more than forty years.



JILL GOCHER

MAGICAL MOMENTS

Photo Feature

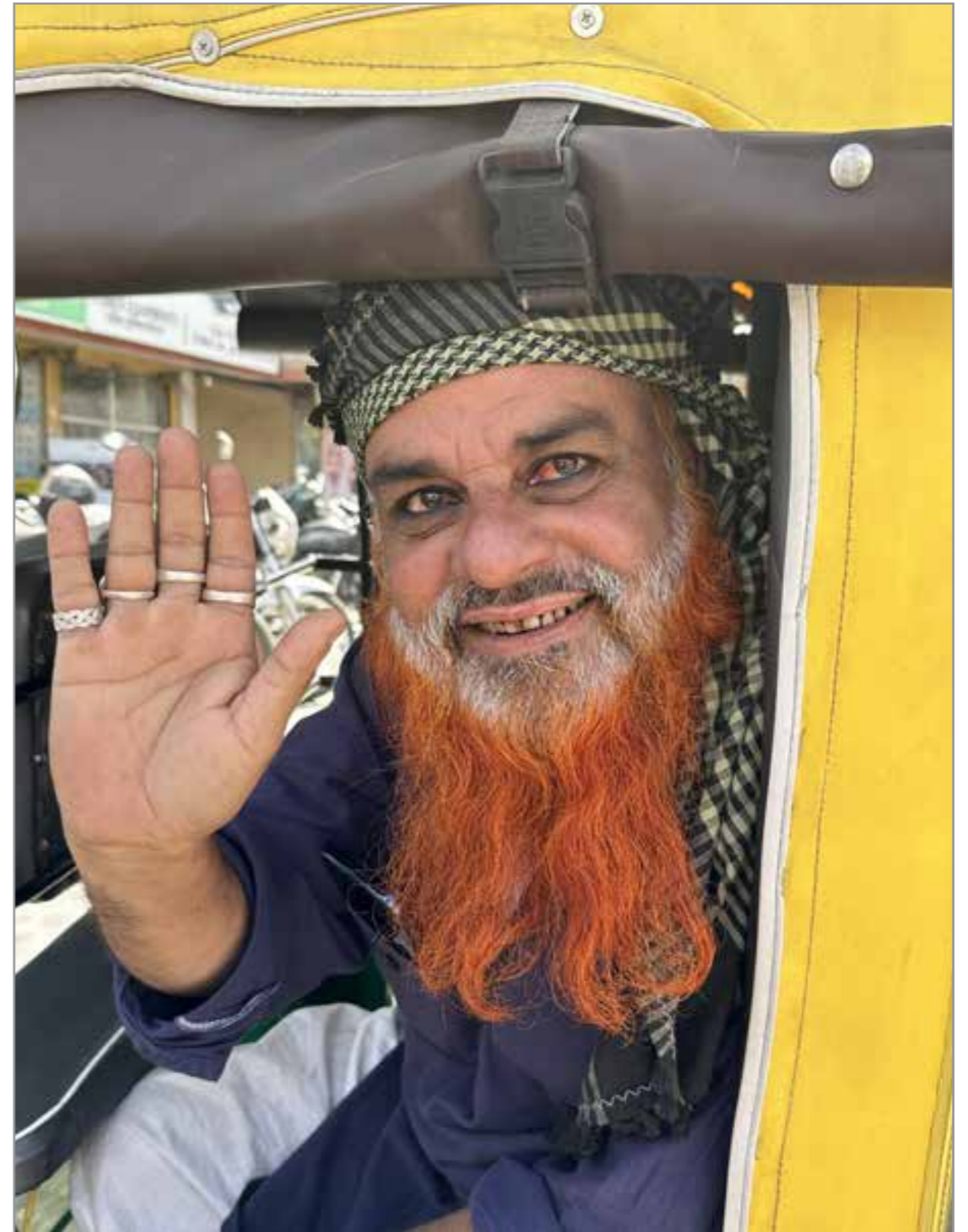
What I love about travel is the kaleidoscope of images and impressions that assail you. Absorb it all I say and later with time for reflection, see which impression rise to the forefront. These are the important moments that enrich our lives.

And then when you become accustomed to this reflection. You may find recollections come frequently, like photographs - images passing through your mind - that can be enjoyed again and again.

During my recent trip to India, I discovered that some places, some events stand out as clearly as stars in the night. Here I have tried to portray just some of those magical moments and places.



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12.

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted still-lives in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the -elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea - Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang's motto - aesthetic = ethic - points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.



WOLFGANG WIDMOSER
AUSTRIAN SURREALIST PAINTER
TALSIA - ARTWORKS

Talsia is the Venusian Queen travelling through time and space - her name is Talsia - a 5thdimensional entity researching the 3rd Dimension and those strange entities called Humans - eventually shapeshifting into a blue scout of the King - they are mirrors mirroring everything around them

Wolfgang Widmoser



Talsia lost hope in the ocean of ice - oil on canvas - 150 x 93 cm.



Venusian Queen contemplating the three ages - oil on canvas - 150 x 93 cm



The promise - oil on canvas - 150 x 93 cm



The King in Antarctica - oil on canvas - 160 x 100 cm



Talsia witnesses a difficult decision - oil on canvas - 150 x 93 cm



The blue scout - oil on canvas - 180 x 150 cm

Tang A Pau is a professional photographer living in Saigon. He has 15 years of experience. He is a volunteer photographer with ICF Asia (International Crane Foundation) and of some National Parks in Vietnam. Tang's stories are usually about the natural beauty of places, and species at risk, and encourage environmental awareness. He hopes through his experience and photographs he can highlight all the great benefits that Nature has to offer in Vietnam. Publications: 2021 - Co-author, *Birds of Vietnam*. Co-author, *Atlas of Cattien National Park*.

Special thanks to Nguyen Thuy Hoa.



TANG A PAU

BIRDWATCHING IN VIETNAM

Photo Feature

Vietnam never ceases to amaze every visitor that seeks to experience its wild flora and fauna.

The exotic plumage on display at its amazing 34 national parks captivates the senses of all nature lovers.

Come, experience wild Vietnam with Tang.

Tang A Pau



Indo-Chinese Magpie



Banded Kingfisher (male)



Banded Kingfisher (female)



Siberian Robin



Silver breasted Broadbill



Indo-Chinese Blue Flycatcher

Katie Costello was born and raised in Hubbard, Ohio, USA. Her greatest passion in life has always been to help animals. She is lucky enough to be a licensed veterinary technician and owner of The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center and The Canine Campus Bed and Biscuit Inn, where she helps animals through behavior work, does training of all types including aggression, fear, and service dog work. A vegetarian since she was 6 years old and a vegan for the last 16 years, she currently has 8 dogs, 7 cats, 7 chickens, 3 roosters, 1 very special turkey and 2 farm pigs that are amongst her dearest friends. She is founder of 2 non-profit organizations, K-9's for Compassion (Co-founded with her father), a therapy animal group and The Together Journey, a service dog organization. She has been on the board of many animal organizations throughout her life, including Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary and C.H.A.I.N. (Community Helping Animals In Need) and SVBT (Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians) She enjoys freelance writing about (mostly) animals for different magazines, with her favorite being Live Encounters!
<https://thecaninecampustraining.com/>



KATIE COSTELLO

OREGON'S NATURAL BEAUTY

Photo Feature

Oregon is my favorite state in The United States. It never ceases to disappoint. The rugged environment and the amazing wildlife combine to make it unforgettable. It is like stepping back in time in Bandon, a nice quaint town of only 3.29 thousand people. This beach side location brings lots of drama and many beautiful moments in which to capture.

Katie Costello



Rock squirrel poses for the cameras



A Steen Mountain mustang living wild and free.



Common murre onward looking



Surf Scoter riding the waves



Beach patrol



Silly Seal



Reflections



Perfect flight



An oystercatchers delight



An Ode To Jack Keraouc's *On The Road*



Bandon Beach's many yesterday



An Oregon Sunset

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