

# LEE FRYD'S SOCIAL LIFE

In a penthouse atop one of Manhattan's highest glass and steel peaks, Robin Cofer's yoga students were finishing one of her private Kundalini classes. Eyes closed, thoughts emptied, floating, blessed and blissed, a beautiful voice resonated pure and true. Among the group, I wondered, where could I buy that CD? Then, I realized, that was Robin chanting.

So, it seemed inevitable that Robin finally recorded—with artist/healer Marianna Fox—"Sipping Breath," a CD of seven sacred sanscrit mantras they set to their own original music ([www.sippingbreath.com](http://www.sippingbreath.com)). These yogis wear gowns, not yoga pants, in their music video, and their CD release party was picked up in the social columns. A natural beauty and classically trained dancer, Cofer chairs many of New York's philanthropic evenings. An ordained Swami, she teaches her brand of yoga one-on-one to New York's most rarified social strata, often giving group classes to accommodate fellow dancers and friends.

"Sound is physically healing," Cofer says. "Mantra addresses all levels of being. Whatever can be healed the quickest will be."

Cofer began studying classical ballet when she was five, performing professionally by 12 in her home town with the Ithaca Ballet Guild and Dance Circle, founded and directed by Naomi Richardson Strichartz, from the Ballet Russe.

Cofer says she first experienced Samadhi—what Goswami Kriyananda calls "the super-conscious trance of Enlightenment"—when she was 12, walking around her lakeside family estate on a sun drenched day.

"I was walking and walking," she remembers. "Slowly, I went into some kind of altered state, deeper and deeper, entranced by the gorgeous lushness of the trees. I sat down under one of them, and had a moment where I 'merged' with the beauty of nature.

The meaning of life—all is interconnected, everything is in total equanimity—became clear. Coming out of it, I was tortured, knowing I would forget that feeling state of being interconnected with the universe.

"After that, I saw things differently." She became attracted to deeper, more serious pursuits. But, her artistic soul continued to flourish. She wrote poetry, acted, listened to opera and classical music.

And she loved to play dress-up. "I put on fashion shows and created these fantastical costumes," she says. "My dad built me a playhouse to keep them in." Still known for her signature style, she has a grown-up playhouse now: a room devoted to her collection of hats.

In her late twenties, her dance career sidelined by injury, a friend brought her to a Kundalini yoga class. "The opening mantra exploded my heart chakra," she remembers. "I felt connected again to the divine. I realized how I had been spiritually disconnected."

Robin began taking two Kundalini classes a day. Within six months, she was certified to teach by Master of Kundalini Yogi Bhajan. Next, she went to study with Kriyananda at the seminary program of The Temple of Kriya Yoga in Chicago. "I had another one of those moments where every cell in my being knew that was my path," she explains. In 2007, she graduated the five year program and was ordained as Swami Pranavananda.

Chanting circles have always been a part of Robin's teaching practice. The CD is the logical next progression.

"For my seminary thesis, I compared Sanscrit, Gurmuki and Hebrew sacred mantras and concluded they all have the same effect," Robin says. "Now, I think I could have thrown Latin in there." Because, she knows, all is one.



Bonnie Comley & Paola Roman



Robin Cofer



Lee Friedlander, Marianna Fox



Robin Cofer and Domenick D'Alleva