

# Daring tales of

# Dreams and



ST CATHARINES, Ont (CUP)—Toronto-based burlesque performer, Virginia D’Vine (formerly Miss B Haven), knew at a young age that she was meant for the stage.

“I was 13 and I was watching the story of burlesque, and it was featuring Dixie Evans and Tempest Storm ... I was truly inspired. I can practically pinpoint the moment that it dawned on me.”

Coming from a conservative family, however, D’Vine is still waiting for the right time to explain the choice to her parents, and she had a hard time convincing her friends that becoming a burlesque performer didn’t mean becoming a stripper.

The 21-year-old former St Catharines, Ontario, resident began performing in October 2006 with the Toronto-based burlesque group founded by Miss Mitzy Cream, the Kitten Revue.

“We are strictly a traditional burlesque troupe, with nothing going beyond the ’50s. I think that it makes it really special that we keep that authenticity. I personally feel that [some forms of] modern burlesque are a bit too much like stripping and that’s not what we’re trying to do,” she says.

“We’ve never forgotten what burlesque really is about. We keep that element of mockery, theatre and most importantly that element of tease. Without it, it’s just girls taking their clothes off to music.”

Most people think that burlesque refers to nearly nude women grinding with poles to a backdrop of drunken men and over-priced pitchers of beer—nothing more than a synonym for stripping. This assumption, however, leaves out all of the rich history that the art of burlesque is based on, including its elements of satire, comedy, politics and female empowerment.

The modern resurgence of burlesque does put a spotlight on striptease, but the performance genre also includes comedy, skits and variety-style entertainment. The genre is aimed at an entirely different audience, offering a glimpse without baring it all. D’Vine will be the first to explain that burlesque theatre is nothing like your average strip club—and anyone who shrugs it off as such is speaking without experience.

“I don’t think a lot of people realize that it’s nothing like stripping. Although some people enjoy stripping, it just doesn’t have the same elements of theatre as burlesque. Burlesque is funny and silly and cute, and it also can be sexy and seductive and very serious,” D’Vine says.

“There is always costuming, always satire and never anyone grinding their crotch into someone’s lap for a dollar. That never happens,” she continues. “You can’t touch the gals and they always leave you wanting more rather than handing it all to you. Burlesque and stripping are on two very opposite sides of the spectrum.”

It’s said that burlesque has led two different lives