

Cheryl Braganza

February 25, 1945 - December 16, 2016



Cheryl's Story

"Some people leave such a ripple on the wave of humanity, that it floats us all toward one another. This was my mother.

A musician with raw unbridled talent, Cheryl was offered a scholarship to Juilliard when she was sixteen. From a young age, she played the piano, the organ, the accordion, and the harmonica with equal versatility. She began to paint in her 20's and discovered that she was a gifted painter.

She was diagnosed with a bone-related cancer on her 60th birthday in 2005 and came a hairsbreadth from death four times, only to fight her way back to life each time. For the last decade, while fighting cancer, a handwritten quote from Goethe rested on top of her easel: "Rest not. Life is sweeping by; go and dare before you die. Something mighty and sublime, leave behind to conquer time." Little did we know how much she would take this quote to heart or put it into action.

Cheryl developed her painting talent with exponential speed. When asked why she was working so feverishly, she answered "I'm in a race against time. I have so much to say and so much more to bring into the world..." In her last five years of life, she produced more artwork and published more writing than she produced in the previous 20 years.

In 2008, she was named Montreal's Woman of the Year for using her art as a tool to fight for women's rights all over the world. She was featured in hundreds of media worldwide and was then elected President of the prestigious Women's Art Society of Montreal,

which she grew dramatically. Her effect on people became evident in the thousands of emails she received from people she inspired across the world.

She lived longer than anyone in recorded history with myeloma cancer in the brain, and refused painkillers because she didn't want her senses affected. Her only desire was to experience every moment in living color until her very last breath. Following her last remission, limping in pain, she decided to learn jazz from scratch, started her own jazz band and played to sold out crowds in Griffintown for two years.

Our mother believed that in order to enjoy true happiness, she should live each moment as if it were her last. Yesterday will never return. Tomorrow may never happen. While we may speak of the past, or of the future, the only reality we have is that of right now, the present instant.

Confronting the reality of death enabled her to blossom with unlimited creativity, courage and joy. The more broken her body became over the years, the more she painted soaring images of birds, and butterflies, and dancing women.

She was never alone, surrounded by an ever-increasing group of family and friends who grew to love her (and each other). When the cancer finally paralyzed her body, it was our turn to bring the joy to her; kidnapping her from the hospital for secret outings, regaling her with live music every day for nine months. And even then, we marvelled how she could still paint magical tapestries of colour and love with her face, her voice and her mind.

She died peacefully in her sleep after seeing her three children; her soul soaring to the beautiful places reflected in her art."

Miguel Da Costa Frias
miguel@foridic.com