



■ Portia Tewana has made the Zip Zap circus a home for herself.



■ Ms Kewana practises her trapeze act along with Zip Zap circus jugglers.

PICTURES: CARL COLLISON

Flying high on a dare to dream

CARL COLLISON

The massive, white dome behind the Artscape Theatre that currently houses the Zip Zap Circus is, as one might expect, a hive of activity: children and young adults studiously practise their skills at juggling or trapeze or “simply” executing vertiginous trampoline-launched somersaults.

It is in this heady, seemingly tran-

sient world that Portia Kewana has decided to root herself.

“I was 11 years old when I first saw a circus show,” she says.

“Zip Zap had a tent in the Company’s Garden and my siblings and I went to see a show.

“I fell in love with it immediately.”

Her introduction to the circus world was largely facilitated by her mother, Nonkosi Mbula, who worked at the time, as she still does, as a domestic

worker for Hout Bay residents Brent van Rensburg and Laurence Esteve, the husband-and-wife team who founded the circus.

“In 1994, when we changed from its original name, Dare to Dream, to Zip Zap, we had three groups of kids: one from Langa, one from a street children’s shelter and one made up of white, middle-class kids.

“We had a crazy idea to go to the Grahamstown Festival, simply pitch a tent and put on some performances.”

The response the motley crew of performers received?

“Absolutely amazing. We got a truly amazing response,” Mr Van Rensburg recalls proudly.

More than two decades later and the “crazy idea” seems to have paid off, with the circus running programmes, including the Ibhongoletu outreach programme (which is done in conjunction with Cirque du Soleil and Médecins Sans Frontières, and sees children living with HIV and receiving ARV treatment in Khayelitsha being trained in circus arts) and the Second Chance programme, which focuses on working with children who have been abused and/or abandoned.

The circus also provides support for its youth and young adults in need in the form of food and accommodation, medical support, as well as school subsidies.

“When I started here, I couldn’t speak any English.

“I could understand some, but couldn’t speak it,” says the Khayelitsha resident, in a manner that makes her statement very hard to believe.

“In fact,” Ms Kewana laughs, “I would sometimes pretend I couldn’t understand just so that I wouldn’t have to respond.”

Ms Kewana’s physical dexterity was soon matched by linguistic adaptability.

“I now co-ordinate the main performance group of about 50 performers and also do the costume designs, which also involves keeping it all in order,” she says.

So what was her first foray like into the heady world of trapeze artistry?

“It was very scary, because I was afraid of heights,” she says.

“In fact, I still am,” she laughs.

Getting over this fear to pursue something she loves is, she says matter-of-factly, “all about practise, really.”

Little surprise then that she follows this up with: “Everything I know, I learnt here at Zip Zap: the stages of growing up; the values one should have in life. All of this I learned here.”

After a slight introspective pause, Ms Kewana offers philosophically: “In the circus, nothing is easy. “Nothing you really want comes easily.

“But, really, that’s life, isn’t it?”

● A fundraising lunch in aid of the Zip Zap circus will be held at Bizerca Bistro, Heritage Square, 98 Shortmarket Street, on Saturday October 26, at 1pm.

The three-course lunch will include auctioneer Ariella Kuper auctioning items such as two rare Crouchon Blanc magnums with labels designed by renowned artists Paul du Toit and Alistair Gibson respectively.

Tickets, which cost R1 000 each, can be booked by emailing natasha@zip-zap.co.za or calling 021 421 8622.

All benefits from the ticket sales and funds raised by the auction will go towards growing Zip Zap’s programmes.



HAVE YOUR SAY! INTEGRATED COASTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY

The City of Cape Town is in the process of finalising its Integrated Coastal Management Policy.

In terms of Section 17 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act the public and interested parties or groups are given the opportunity to submit comments, recommendations or input on the draft Integrated Coastal Management Policy from 15 October 2013 to 15 November 2013 via:

- Fax: 021 424 9897
- E-mail: mercia.liddle@capetown.gov.za
- Written submission: Mercia Liddle, Environmental Resource Management Department, 7th Floor, 44 Wale Street, Cape Town 8001 or PO Box 16548, Vlaeberg 8018

Special assistance will be given to people who cannot read or write, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups who are unable to submit written comments, to have their inputs or comments recorded and submitted to the municipality. Please contact the City of Cape Town’s Public Participation Unit:

For general public participation:
Ruché Daniels on 021 400 1766 or e-mail at ruche.daniels@capetown.gov.za

or

For disadvantaged groups:
Anele Viti on 021 400 1766 or e-mail at anele.viti@capetown.gov.za

This draft policy will be available on the City of Cape Town website: www.capetown.gov.za/haveyoursay and at subcouncil offices and libraries.

Enquiries relating to the draft Integrated Coastal Management Policy may be directed to Gregg Oelofse at 021 487 2239 or e-mail to gregg.oelofse@capetown.gov.za or Darryl Colenbrander at 021 487 2355 or e-mail to darryl.colenbrander@capetown.gov.za.



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What's On

Concert

The Walk Tall concert, which will be held at the Cape Town City Hall on Saturday November 2, at 8pm, is being held to raise funds for a Rewalk Suit, or Ekso Bionic Suit. Andrew Merryweather, who has been wheelchair-bound for seven years, has been to England to try out the suit, which will be available for hire at the Vincent Pallotti Rehabilitation Centre. The suit will be expensive to import; funds from the gala event will

go towards covering the cost. Maestros Angelo Gobbato and Kamal Khan will direct a programme of varied entertainment, including UCT opera students, popular singer Selim Kagee, pianist Victor Tichart, comedian Alan Committie and the Cape Town City Ballet. Contact Pat at 021 531 8261 or 084 300 6388 or e-mail pattypan@iafrica.com for information about ticket prices and bookings.