

# Serendipitous collaboration

 By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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Cape Town City Ballet presents Ballet Beautiful at the Artscape Theatre from 4 July, 2014. Debbie Hathway chats to Yarisha Singh about her new commission.

A two-year break from dancing and the birth of her first child has made dancer/choreographer Yarisha Singh braver, freed her from creative inhibitions and helped clarify her career focus. One of the outcomes is one of her biggest commissions to date - a new work for Cape Town City Ballet's July season entitled Ballet Beautiful.

"You're scared of very little after having a child; you have fear, but it's a different kind of fear. You don't let other people knock you down," says Singh.



The commission came on the back of the work that she and Kirsten Isenberg were asked to create for the South African International Ballet Competition soloists in Cape Town earlier this year. They were taking a break in between rehearsals when they were approached by CTCB's artistic executive, Keith MacIntosh, about choreographing new pieces for the forthcoming season.

"It was serendipitous, hence the title of the work - Serendipity," says Singh.

A UCT graduate with a B.Mus. in Dance in 2001, Singh majored in choreography (with distinction). "It's my other half," she says, "I've been doing it since I was a kid."

## Full circle

Her experience with the ballet school has come full circle, with her cast including dancers who were juniors in the company when she was studying and some who she taught when they were about 10 years old. "I'm so proud of those students - and my cast has blown me away. I can't emphasise enough how amazing it's been to work with them; they've been so open to the process and to new ways of moving. Robin (van Wyk - CTCB artistic director) has been incredible in assisting me with music and rehearsals."

She says that the soundtrack was the inspiration for the movement and it helped having "a fun, relaxed atmosphere". Serendipity is a blend of contemporary and neo-classical dance, with influences of all the forms of dance she's familiar with. "I was given two notes: no rolling on the floor and no barefoot dancers," says Singh. "It's helped me create a new

vocabulary, because they're not throwing their bodies around as much as a contemporary company would. It was important to make them look good and feel comfortable, but I had a very specific vision for the piece and I wondered if it could be conveyed onto the bodies. They've superseded my expectations."

Serendipity is about three kinds of love, so it has fun, jovial moments as well as dark, haunting episodes. "It was lovely for me as a choreographer to go through it all. As colleague Michelle Reid says: 'If you love your work, then your job is done.'"

## A highlight



Singh says that making *Serendipity* is a highlight of her choreographic career. "Let's hope the piece reads as well as that," she adds.

She is based in Johannesburg, where she runs a yoga and wellness business in between choreographies and performances, but will return to Cape Town to stage the work. She began her professional performance career with Adele Blank's Free Flight Dance Company and has choreographed for the Cape Academy of Performing Arts, Cape Junior Ballet, Mzansi Productions and Joburg Ballet, among others.

After she returned from two years' travelling in Asia with her husband, Singh was able to perform in the Adele Blank Tribute Show, *Blank Page*, last year. "It was great to work with her after not having danced for so long. The yoga kept me strong and flexible and I learned

the show in two weeks."

Singh feels she benefited from the break. "Dance is such a self-indulgent career - you get lost in it. Now I do the opposite, giving of my energy to others to make them feel good. Yoga is based on breaking down egos. I've learned that in time."

*\* The programme includes Kirsten Isenberg's Of Gods and Men, Robin van Wyk's The Fragile Balance, the classical Paquita to the music of Ludwig Minkus, and a curtain raiser by Zama Dance School choreographed by Adele Blank. Book through [Computicket](#) on 0861 915 8000 or Artscape Dial-a-Seat on +27 (0)21 421 7695. Tickets range from R150 to R175. Ballet Beautiful is scheduled for Friday, 4 July at 7.30pm, Saturday, 5 at 2pm and 7.30pm, Sunday, 6 July at 3pm and 7.30pm; Friday, 11 July at 7.30pm and Saturday, 12 July at 2.30pm and 7.30pm.*

## ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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