

international luminary Malou Fenaroli Leclerc sleeps only four hours a night – the rest of her time is spent in service of her first love

BEVERLY BROMMERT

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**A** glance at Malou Fenaroli Leclerc's CV leaves no doubt of her intense commitment to dance, first as a performer of note and later as an artistic director, choreographer and teacher mentoring young dancers all over the world.

And this is not to mention adjudicator of ballet competitions in Europe which include such prestigious events as the Prix Carpaux in Paris.

She has briefly left the Cinevox Junior Company, which she founded, and now directs in Zurich, to visit Cape Town to help train local dancers in Dance for All – a project dear to her heart.

While here, she is also serving on the panel of examiners for the Cape Academy of Performing Arts and, at the time of our interview, Fenaroli (the professional name by which she prefers to be known) had just emerged from a two-hour session of teaching, having examined throughout the previous day. No one would have guessed it from the freshness of her appearance.

"I seldom get more than three or four hours of sleep, as I work from early in the morning till late at night; but I'm not tired because I don't have the time.

"Work stimulates me, especially here in Cape Town, where everyone is so friendly. I arrived four days ago, and it feels as if I'd been here a year. Never have I seen light such as that in your city: it's a radiant place."

That's quite a statement from one whose professional commitments have taken her all over Europe, the United States, Latin America and the Far East.

Fenaroli became aware of Phyllis



**AJUDICATOR:** Malou Fenaroli Leclerc is serving on the panel of examiners for the Cape Academy of Performing Arts

Boyd and Phyllis Spira and their Dance For All project 10 years ago, when the South African couple

accompanied the parents of a dancer in Fenaroli's company to Zurich; the bond was established

when they met the Dalai Lama on that occasion.

"I was deeply touched by their

philosophy of 'uplifting the disadvantaged through dance, and we engaged spiritually'" she remembers.

"They were doing what I did after retiring from the stage – helping young people to dance.

"When I heard of Phyllis's death, I vowed to find the time to come to Cape Town and do whatever is needed to support Phyllis's project, and here I am. Unfortunately it's only for a couple of weeks."

Her involvement with Dance For All is not confined to assistance in training its members on this visit: two Dance For All dancers successfully auditioned a couple of years ago for places in Cinevox, of which Fenaroli explains there are only 25.

"Hundreds of dancers come from all over the world to compete for admission, and both Philip's young people were accepted. The boy, Nseba, is still with us – he's remarkable and making good progress; the girl, Noluanda, finished and returned to South Africa earlier this year.

"Dancers may only stay for two years maximum at Cinevox while we coach them to enter the professional field. That's what makes us different from other ballet schools – the dancers have plenty of stage experience instead of just training in a studio; they are exposed to working with a variety of choreographers and taught how to present themselves professionally, how to prepare a CV and manage a budget.

"On average they are between 18 and 23 years old, and we mould them into a company of young artists characterised by freshness as well as sound technique; we put on many productions, and they're always sold out.

"When I'm done here, I return to Zurich to rehearse the company for *Romeo and Juliet*."

Fenaroli's stamina is impressive