

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

What about Yvonne Tousek and Andrea Ziegler?

After we interviewed Cirque du Soleil performer Michael Cameron while he was taking a break at his family home in Heidelberg (page 154), we started thinking about past features about other local Cirque performers. What are they up to?

Grand editor Kathy Storrington caught up with Yvonne Tousek and Andrea Ziegler by email. The interviews were edited for publication. Here are the complete exchanges.

YVONNE TOUSEK

FLASHBACK: We featured Yvonne Tousek, a former Olympic gymnast from Cambridge, in July 2012. At the time of the interview, she was touring as part of *Corteo*. She had recently married Yohann Renne, a Cirque high-bar artist from France.

TODAY: Tousek and Renne are expecting their first child, a girl, in early June. Tousek is already on maternity leave and is touring North America with Renne, who is head coach on Cirque du Soleil's newest touring show, *Amaluna*.

Q: In regular jobs, the maternity leave starts about the time the baby is born, but regular working women don't do what you do! How does the Cirque maternity leave unfold and how long is it?

A: Our maternity leave is similar to the typical Canadian maternity leave, however we take the majority of it before the birth since we stop performing fairly early in the pregnancy.

We are left with some time after the birth, but because of the type of work we do, the majority of it happens before.

Q: How are you staying in shape during your pregnancy?

A: I still work out most mornings to keep myself busy, healthy and feeling good. There are some limitations with being pregnant, but I'm still left with a lot that I can do and I always feel great afterwards.

Q: How do you arrange prenatal care



Yvonne Tousek clowns with husband Yohann Renne.

while you are touring?

A: I researched and contacted practitioners in the cities we will be touring in throughout my pregnancy.

Luckily we have the tour schedule and which cities we will be visiting at least one year in advance. Most of the practitioners have been very understanding and accommodating.

Q: You are used to a hectic working life. How do you pass your days during your husband's tour? Does this mean you get to do a lot more sightseeing?

A: I usually keep busy by working out, exploring the city we are touring in, and working on some online courses. We just finished two months in San Francisco and that was a great city for sightseeing.

Andr EA ZEigler

FLASHBACK: Dancer Andrea Ziegler, originally from New Hamburg, was featured

in *Grand* in January 2010. At the time, she was dance master for a Las Vegas production called *Viva Elvis: a Tribute to the Life and Times of Elvis Presley*.

TODAY: Ziegler finished a contract last November and is taking a break.

Q: So what are you up to these days?

A: I am not currently working on a project with Cirque du Soleil, but I know it will not be long before we will connect again.

These days, I am enjoying the down time between contracts to focus on myself. I am passionate about getting back into performance shape with lots of yoga, dance classes and time at the gym. I love hiking outdoors with my dog Rex, who loves to be active too. I also spend as much time as I can with friends and family.

Q: Figuring out when to make a career change is always tricky. Are there particular factors that have changed your path?

A: The environment of my career has not changed, just my role within it — from a full-time performer to dance master to acrobatic choreographer.

I still love the theatre and the performance world. Factors that changed my path from performing on stage to creating off-stage were opportunities that were presented to me. When I was asked if I'd like to be on the creative team as a choreographer for a new Cirque du Soleil show, I didn't have to think twice. It was a full on YES!

Obviously, as a performer, keeping a 10-shows-per-week schedule becomes a little more difficult as one matures, but I still feel good so I'm not hanging up my performing hat yet! However, I do love being on the creative staff for a production, so I'll go wherever the work leads me.

Q: How has your leave impacted your personal life — i.e. do you know how to slow down?

A: My motto for my whole professional life has been, work hard when I'm working,



Andrea Ziegler

and thoroughly enjoy the down time when I'm not. So far, so good!

Q: We wrote about you in January 2010. Can you give us a brief bio of what shows you worked on between then and the time you left?

A: I took a six-week hiatus in May 2012 from *Viva Elvis* to perform on tour with Cirque's show *Quidam*. It was a character/dance role I had performed 11 years previously when on tour in Europe. It was so fun to go back!

I finished up my contract as the dance master with *Viva Elvis* in August of 2012. A month later, in September, I moved to Montreal for five months to work at the Cirque du Soleil headquarters. There, I began the creation for their latest show *Michael Jackson One* as an acrobatic choreographer. We continued the creation back in Las Vegas in February 2013 until we debuted at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in June 2013.

I took the summer off, then in November 2013, I enjoyed choreographing a segment for Cirque's show *Zarkana* on the Latin Grammy Awards. I returned back to Canada for the holidays with my family and I am now back in Las Vegas, recharging and ready for whatever wonderful opportunity comes along next! 🍀