



THE ARCHER SHOWCASE
Featuring work from members of local writing-groups

Fulfil your dream

Daphne Chamberlain introduces Joyce Koimur
Joyce is a nursing sister in Hackney. For a long time she nursed cancer patients while almost sure that she herself had the illness. When she finally consulted a doctor, her fear was confirmed.



Joyce Koimur photo by Daphne Chamberlain

The support she was given motivated her to write a note in a hospice newsletter. That was so well received that she attempted to expand it into a magazine article, but found there was too much she needed to say. It was when she joined the East Finchley Writers Group last January that she was persuaded to start writing a book instead, covering a wide range of issues. This is giving her enormous creative satisfaction. Now she takes her notebook everywhere, ready to jot down thoughts as they occur.

Joyce admires the work of the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, whose work is published over here, but she is not drawn towards writing fiction herself. (Though she adds, "Never say never!") On the contrary, her typically positive motto is "Anyone can fulfil a dream if they really choose".

Life's Short

Joyce Koimur

On 13 October 1986, I boarded a Kenya Airways flight to London. I had said goodbye to village life and hello to western civilization. I had been accepted for a Degree course in Nursing at the university of Ulster. It was an opportunity that was to change the direction of my life forever.

I was born and brought up in a remote village in Kenya. Like most African children my life was dominated by hunger. Food was scarce and although we had three meals a day the portions were not large enough to keep hunger totally at bay.

School was held under a tree and we were blessed with fine, sunny weather. Life was hard because we had to do chores at home in the morning, like milking cows and fetching water from the river, before going to school.

Breakfast consisted of porridge and we would run bare-foot to the nearest school, about five miles away. We ran home for lunch, then ran back, and if you were late it was corporal punishment. It is small wonder that most Kenyan long distance runners - like Kip Keino, Billy Konchella, Mike Boit, Daniel Komen and Paul Turgat - all come from my tribe.

This bittersweet childhood motivated me to work hard at

school because that was the only gateway to high school and hopefully proceeding to work in the city. Coming to England was beyond my wildest dreams.

That lifestyle is a complete contrast to my daughter's upbringing here in London. She goes to school by car, eats any food she wants and enjoys all the luxuries of an international city. Coming from a society with very limited resources there was a time when I over-compensated and pushed her too far. I booked her for all the after

school activities under the sun - ballet, swimming, music, drama, tennis, kumon maths and kumon English. Sometimes I would pick her up from one activity and drive her directly to another. After all, this was England, a land of opportunities. She was becoming the typical 'over scheduled' child. After a year we gave up on most of the activities and concentrated only on the ones she enjoyed. Life's too short.

My own life in England has taught me that with infinite choice one can decide on one's own way and Olivia has that privilege, even in her childhood.

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Discover the beast in you

By Femke van Iperen

Performers want to entertain people and Nili's mission has been not only to catch people by surprise but also to inspire them. Find Nili early evening somewhere on the Southbank, dancing away in her attempts to "awaken the human, soft, joyful side of people." She has performed all around Europe, in cities like Copenhagen, Prague, and Berlin.

So is she just another eccentric from our area? Maybe, but something else is going on; Nili is dressed as a sheep - and she does catch you when you least expect it.

Nili Blumberg, an Israeli artist and professional jazz singer, calls her creation "Luf-tanza Surprise", from German *Luft, air and tanz*, to dance.

In November 1998 on the corner of High Holborn and Southampton Row she made her first sheep steps. "It was November, very cold and grey



Nili - photo by Femke van Iperen

and the only work I could find was handing out leaflets. I got bored so I started doing little performances, just little gestures and jumping around to warm and cheer [people] up. And then with a stroke of inspiration it came to me: I would be a dancing sheep".

Nili has been in the limelight on numerous occasions: in 1999 she performed in London's nightclub Heaven, in July 2001 she appeared in European's Art Channel Arte, and in February 2000 in a German woman's magazine Allegar, to name but a few.

So does her invigorating dance performance awaken our true

busy-London selves? According to Nili: "Sheep represent our vulnerable soft side. I had wanted to create a performance that would touch people all over the world of different cultures and nationalities. Most people find the sheep loveable. People come and tell me she brightens their day. But others are offended by the very fact that anyone takes the liberty to be that joyful. The women all seem to be tempted to join me. As for the men; most treat Luftanza with great respect; some buy her flowers and gifts, and she gets far more cards and phone numbers than I do!"

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