



Cirque graduate's school of the air

Imagine if the world was your classroom. writes **Blanche Clark**

MASHA Terentieva's dad was a "super funny" clown and for three years she went to school in a trailer behind the big tent, while her father performed in Cirque du Soleil's *Alegria*.

"I attended a lot of schools as I was growing up," says Terentieva, who is in Melbourne performing in Cirque de Soleil's *Dralion*.

First it was primary school in St Petersburg, Russia, then two junior high schools in Canada and then, from the ages of 13 to 16, she toured the world.

There were 15 students, guided by three teachers, sharing the trailer and they studied in the morning and worked on their circus skills in the afternoon.

"Kids who grow up circus

have a wide variety of knowledge and well-developed social skills, because of all that exposure to travelling and adapting to new places," Terentieva says.

"We had internet access and people were reading all the time backstage between shows."

As with the other students, Terentieva spoke several languages, in her case Russian, French and English.

At 16, she attended a "normal" high school in Toronto.

"At first it was a bit weird, the transition. I felt a bit special," she says.

"But I think circus kids adapt quickly to new conditions."

Her favourite subjects at school were literature, languages, arts, music, dance and visual arts.

But Terentieva missed the touring and performing and she

decided to go to the National Circus School in Montreal rather than university.

"My dad was against me going into the circus at first," she says.

"That made me want to do it even more."

With her incredible flexibility and agility, she developed her aerial hoop act and landed a starring role as a fire element in *Dralion*.

She advises students who wants to run away with the circus to develop their skills in dance, gymnastics, sport or acting.

"It doesn't just come out of nowhere," she says.

Dralion, Grand Chapiteau, Docklands Drive, Docklands.
Ph: 1300 130 300



Bending the rules: Masha Terentieva is an aerialist circus performer with Cirque du Soleil.

Picture: PAUL TREZISE