



Erendira Wallenda

Born Erendira Vasquez, she has DNA in the performing arts going back seven generations on both sides of her family. Her father is aerialist Vinicio Vasquez who was a master of the trapeze. Her mother, Golda (Ashton) who hails from Australia, is also a seventh generation performer who specialized in foot juggling. One of Erendira's many specialties is performing on the aerial hoop or lyra which allows her to express her creativity and artistry. The mother of three has known her husband, Nik, since childhood and has performed with him many times on the wire. And like the Wallendas, she performs with no net.



Sure, walking a wire that's only 2 inches thick over places like the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls or the Chicago skyline without a net is one thing – pretty spectacular and pretty nerve-racking. But there's also something to be said for the nerve-racking job of standing at water's or canyon's or high rises's edge and watching every step with your children at your side while your husband and the children's father perform what really is a death-defying act. I'll leave it to you to decide who has the tougher mental assignment, but Erendira not only experiences it, but has gotten good at it. Or has she? Does she still get nervous?

"Yes," she replies, "of course," in her soft, soothing voice. We're seated in the Wallenda home in eastern Sarasota that looks like any new home with a big yard except that off to the side there's a high wire, an acrobatic hoop (called a lyra) and a frightening apparatus that looks like it would pull your arms out of their sockets once you're in motion. But that's the difference: an observer sees fear, but a performer sees the potential for beauty while making it all look so darn easy.

Being a supportive wife to one of the world's gutsiest men as well as the mother of their three children is a job and a half, but do you know that Erendira is a veteran performer in her own right? Google her, and up pops "Acrobat Erendira Wallenda to hang from helicopter" at an event at the Charlotte Motor Speedway from last October.

Sure enough, there she is over a car on the track, gracefully draped and hanging from a ring. Oh and she hung from her toes during part of her 10-minute performance while hanging 150 feet above the racetrack from a helicopter. With just the smallest bit of bravado she points out that while she hung from her toes, male performers usually hang from one toe, and, she notes, her next goal is to support her body weight with one toe only. In one of the articles on the event Erendira is quoted as saying that she wanted her performance to avoid being "stunty" rather, have it be "pretty" which explains a lot about this stunningly beautiful woman who is in superb shape.

Born Erendira Vasquez, she has DNA in the performing arts going back seven generations on both sides of her family. Her father is aerialist Vinicio Vasquez who was a master of the trapeze. Erendira's uncle, Miguel, she notes, was the first to catch the quadruple somersault on the trapeze—a Guinness record that still stands. Her mother, Golda (Ashton) who hails from Australia, is also a seventh generation performer who specialized in foot juggling. Golda's mother (Erendira's grandmother) was a bareback rider who also danced ballet.

So no surprise Erendira was a performer herself at the tender age of five. And at an even earlier age, when most toddlers are learning to walk, Erendira's mother was stretching her and her sisters' little muscles to ready them for a career as performers as well.

Interestingly when Erendira showed a preference for working way up in the air her mother expressed some concern and asked, "Can't you do something on the ground?" "No," was her determined reply, "I want to be in the air."

Equally interesting, Erendira was not initially a wire walker like her famous in-laws. But

after marriage to Nik in 2000, he encouraged her to learn and, if you've been to a Circus Arts Conservatory performance in the past few years, you've seen her perform as part of the seven-man pyramid with them up on the wire.

Marriage to Nik—or Nikolas as she tends to call him—wasn't too far a leap, so to speak. The two had crossed paths many times since the Flying Vasquez would often perform with Nik's parents — aka The Flying Wallendas. In fact, their grandparents and great grandparents performed together and, no surprise, Nik is also a seventh generation performer. To make things even cozier, Erendira's mother is best friends with Sarasota aerialist and legend Dolly Jacobs. Are you still with me?

After their marriage in 2000, Nik and Erendira started a family that now includes Gianni, age 18, Amadaos (which means "loved by God"), 15, and Evita, 12. While all three children know how to walk the wire, none seems compelled to fill their parent's high-flying shoes. Erendira has some mixed feelings – she loves her profession, but admits it is hard work and yes, even a bit dangerous. But when asked how she coped with the danger, well, fear never enters the equation. You're born into this profession and you start – maybe at a few feet off the ground and go higher and higher from there, she explains. And, it seems, you just get used to it. And, like the Wallendas, she performs with no net.

Nik and Erendira were married in 2000 after Nik proposed on a wire 30 feet up during a performance in Montreal. Having just completed a seven-man pyramid act with his family, he stayed on the platform while the family descended, walked to the middle of the wire and then got down on one knee and proposed to Erendira in front of 30,000 people. A week later, they were married.

Fame of a more grounded nature came to Erendira from a summer appearance on the TV show on TLC called "Say Yes To The Dress" which dramatized their 15-year marriage renewal ceremony the couple had and celebrated at the Ringling Ca d'Zan back in January, 2015.

Many may not know that the couple frequently performs together. Locally, they walked the wire together at the 2015 Circus Sarasota. Due to Nik's solo derring-do, the work has become riskier, offered more visibility and, one would think, offered a much better payout for such dangerous work. It's a far cry from her youth, traveling with her parents, sometimes 10-11 months on the road with her two older sisters, as long as there was work. That's what aerialists, trapeze artists, foot jugglers and bareback riders and others do – they go where and when the work is. Thus Erendira was mainly home-schooled, but attended on occasion Tuttle Elementary, Brookside Middle and, eventually, Booker High.

She and Nik manage their careers and book private parties, corporate events, theatre shows, amusement parks and fairs. It only seems right if you're going to give audiences some of the best and most unique performances of their lives often on a wire that is merely the width of a nickel, that you get to have more say and be better compensated. But the question still remains...when will we see Erendira perform? 

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