



# Swinging from the Stars

Teresa Kochis

Mastering aerial arts requires a combination of technical precision, strength, flexibility and grace.

Teresa Kochis makes it look effortless.

Kochis, a New Bedford-based aerial artist, performs her high-flying acrobatic feats on 19-ft.-long silks that dangle from the ceiling of her home at The Ropeworks loft space for artists. She climbs, twists, spins, drops and contorts herself with the poise of a dancer.

“When I perform, I am very focused on executing the skills well and safely. After that, I let the spirit of the piece take over, whether that means deep diving into serious emotion, moving with abandon, or allowing my inner clown to take to the stage,” she says.

Kochis is owner of Overhead Arts, which provides circus arts training right in the heart of New Bedford. She first started offering a few classes for adults in January 2010, and soon extended lessons to youth.

In addition to classes at her loft, Kochis brings aerial arts to area youth through New Bedford Cultural Council-sponsored programs at the Boys and Girls Club of New Bedford and AHA! (Art • History • Architecture).

Over the years, she has watched her students reach new heights (both literally and figuratively) in confidence and ability.

“I have adult students who have gone on to acquire teacher-training certificates and now teach at Overhead Arts. I have advanced youth students who are seeking out educational and performance opportunities in circus arts. I have students that come back year after year to take part in Overhead Arts’ outreach programs. I’m so proud of all of them,” Kochis says.

In 2016, Kochis opened an additional space at 88 Hatch Street, not far from The Ropeworks. “The building is a great fit for Overhead Arts since it’s intended for artists, has industrial beams perfect for rigging aerial equipment, and lots of open floor space for classes.”

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As a child, Kochis immersed herself in drawing and painting. At age 17, she encountered aerial arts when her sister began training at the Circus Arts Institute in Atlanta.

“I remember seeing her perform and knowing I wanted to do be able to do that, too,” says Kochis, who went on to receive training and education from the Arts Institute, the New England Center for Circus Arts and New York University’s Gallatin School for Individualized Study. She also served as a coach coordinator and social circus instructor for the outreach program of Cirque du Soleil.

Kochis and her partner, Andy Anello, eventually moved from New York City to New Bedford with a little guidance from the Internet.

“I googled, ‘Massachusetts loft,’ and our building The Ropeworks Artist Condominium came up in my search. It just happened to be the week before New Bedford Open Studios, so it was easy to come down and take a look at the space. The rest is history,” she says.

Kochis credits her success with the supportive atmosphere of New Bedford, which offers affordable living and studio spaces, an array of arts organizations, proximity to larger cities like Boston and Providence, and a rich culture and history.

“I love the feeling of possibility that exists in New Bedford. Whether it’s a small business opening up or a nonprofit launching or a historic mill building being re-envisioned, New Bedford is a place where new ideas and projects are being tested,” she says.

In the meantime, Kochis hopes to grow the student base by attracting more talented and passionate coaches and launching out-of-school camps, and potentially, a scholarship program.

“Every time I teach a student to juggle scarves, I’m reminded of the intrinsic value of circus arts. It has the power to bring joy, self-confidence, drive, and perpetual wonder to an individual in a short instant, which can truly last a lifetime,” she says. 🦋