



Ballet beauty on point in residential market

By BILL CRESENZO

Like a lot of brokers, Frances Katzen has days when she wonders why she is in the real estate business at all.

"Can you imagine doing something just for the love of it and then doing something that is the antithesis of it?" she recently mused.

That "something" is ballet dancing, and the "antithesis" of such an art form is brokering. But Katzen doesn't regret her decision to go from a prima ballerina to a prima donna on the New York real estate scene.

"Unlike ballet dancing, when all we have to show for it is ugly feet, I have the opportunity to forge relationships with other people. And it actually comes with a payment at the end."

Katzen is head of the Katzen Group at Prudential Douglas Elliman and was recently promoted to senior vice president. In 2007, she had more than \$200 million in gross sales. In 2006, the Real Estate Board of New

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— YUVAL GREENBLATT, PDE

York recognized Katzen for having the second highest grossing sales among all first-year agents in New York City by nominating her for Rookie of the Year.

Not bad for a broker with only three years of experience.

There are many brokers who got into real estate as a second career, and many of them take the lessons they learned from their first career and apply them to real estate. Katzen is no exception. The ballet world can be brutal — long hours and exhausting work that is rewarded with the thrill of performing well.

Sound familiar?

"Frances Katzen, in just a couple of years, has become one of our most successful brokers," said Yuval Greenblatt, manager of the Prudential Douglas Elliman office on Madison Avenue. "She combines drive, intelligence, marketing know-how with negotiating savvy to provide quality service for her clients. I believe she has

Frances Katzen dipped her toe in real estate and discovered a new career

risen to senior vice president faster than anyone ever has at the firm."

Born in South Africa and raised in Australia, Katzen, 33, came to the United States at the age of 15 and joined the New York City Ballet School on scholarship. She lived in an apartment with other ballerinas and a "house mother." Years later, when an injury forced her to retire and become a fulltime broker, she would be excited to be a "working woman of the world." But her experience in the apartment with other ballerinas exposed her to a very adult reality — eating disorders.

She said that fortunately, she never suffered from one. But she did suffer from several injuries that kept her from dancing. But when she recovered, she would come back better than ever. She said she reached the pinnacle of her career in 2004 when she was a soloist in 'Don Quixote' at the Kennedy Center in Washington. "You're a conduit for the music," she said. "Your body is a Stradivarius violin for the music."

She was asked to come back as a featured dancer, but in the meantime, she was guesting with the Miami City Ballet and injured her foot.

She didn't realize how serious the injury was until a doctor told her that in order for her to dance again, she needed a metal plate in her foot.

She decided that she had reached the pinnacle of her career as a soloist and declined. At the time, her marriage was also on the rocks, so she decided it was a good time to forge a new life and a new career.

She already had her broker's license — "I thought it would be a nice thing to have in my back pocket."

"When I realized I was faced with a career-ending injury, I knew I wanted to become a businesswoman again," Katzen said. "I wanted to rejuvenate my life."

So she started working at The Corcoran Group and soon jumped to Prudential Douglas Elliman after only three months.

There, the desire, dedication and drive need to succeed in the ballet world translated well to the brokering world. Katzen said she works from 7 a.m. until 1 a.m.

Most of her listings are downtown but lately she is also selling apartments on the Upper West Side and Upper East Side.

"Being a perfectionist is the key difference," she said. "I am very cognizant of the fact that follow-through and being very diligent are the keys to building a business. I do whatever it takes to get the deal. People tell me I don't have to work so hard. But I get stuff done."



Katzen performs at the Sydney Opera House.