Bonisile lands dream role in The Lion King

Nokuthula Ntuli

AFTER 16 years of auditioning without success, Durban’s Bonisile Ndlovu, 32, finally landed her dream role of Rafiki in the world famous musical The Lion King.

On Saturday Ndlovu was on cloud nine when she left for Adventureland at Hong Kong Disneyland to join the cast of one of the most famous Disney franchises.

Adapted from the 1994 film of the same name, the musical tells the story of Simba’s rise to the throne, from an outcast cub to becoming king of the pride.

Popular among young and old, The Lion King has multiple productions touring the world simultaneously.

Rafiki, the baboon, is one of the first characters the audience meets. He is the adviser to the Lion King.

Coming from a musical family and a singing background, Ndlovu joined a gospel music group, the Spiritual Healers, at the age of 11.

She started auditioning for roles in The Lion King when she was 16 after having heard about the production on radio.

“They were in Durban to hold auditions for the show,” said the University of KwaZulu-Natal student.

“Admittedly, I had not watched The Lion King, neither had I ever been involved in a production of this calibre. My English wasn’t anything to boast about, but something in me just wanted to audition to see how far I could go.”

After continuing to audition unsuccessfully for a decade and a half, she was finally offered a role in the production this year and credited God for her breakthrough.

“My family and friends are still in a state of shock. I have had many disappointments over the years, but today a new chapter has opened in the story of my life,” she said.

Ndlovu hoped to receive a warm response from the audience.

“This is an exciting opportunity and I want to spend as much time as possible in Hong Kong and many parts of the world, growing and honing my skills as a musician,” she said.

Bonisile Ndlovu, right, has scooped the role of Rafiki in The Lion King musical for Adventureland at Hong Kong Disneyland.