



ANDREW OCTOBER

Standing ovation: Yusuf Williams made an inspired comeback in the city he left four decades ago when he performed to a sell-out crowd at the Luxurama theatre in Wynberg at the weekend.

Dream come true for Cape's Caruso

Exile's first SA performance in 42 years

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AFTER realising his life's dream of performing in front of a hometown crowd, the Caruso of Cape Town is set to return to Germany, his adopted country, today.

Bo-Kaap tenor and former exile Yusuf Williams sang his heart out at a packed Luxurama Theatre in Wynberg at the weekend. It was his first performance on South African soil in 42 years.

Williams, 67, whose stage name is Joe Curtis, sprang to fame locally as a troop member of the Rag Time Millionaires minstrels in the early 1950s.

On Sunday night Williams delivered a stirring rendition of local Spanish favourite Granada, and the popular Only You by The Platters and was rewarded with a standing ovation. It has been his longstanding ambition to sing for the Cape community he was torn from during apartheid.

When Taliep Petersen, the acclaimed director of the musical

Although very few of Williams's peers were still around to experience his impassioned performance, the youth were given a rare glimpse of the Bo-Kaap romance of yesteryear.

"He had them rocking," said Petersen.

Williams's superb voice and astounding tenacity has sustained him through his long odyssey from South Africa to England, Ireland, Sweden and Germany.

"Music is my first love and it will be my last," he said.

In 1959 he left his wife Fatima and two young children, Lattief and Faldiela, to tour with the Golden City Dixies, a group from Johannesburg.

"I wanted to come back with the money after a few months, but instead it took 40 years," he said. They arrived in Sweden after a successful run in London. There Pik Botha, the South African consul-general, cancelled their illegal passports.

Williams said he and four others in the group were banned from returning home "because we

Sweden and he was refused re-entry into South Africa.

"I could not return home, I lost my family and my country."

Eventually he found work as a singer in a Swedish restaurant.

Four years later his indefinite exile cost him his marriage. His first wife Fatima asked for a divorce.

In 1969 Williams joined German show band Ambros Seelos, moved to Germany and stayed with them until four years ago when he went solo.

He met his second wife Elke in Germany in 1974 and they have a daughter Yasmin, aged 15, who plays the piano. "Singing helped the pain," he said.

His reunion with his children in Cape Town this week has been nothing short of miraculous.

Four years ago on his first visit back to Cape Town, he met his daughter Faldiela, 43, for the first time. When he left she was a baby.

Overcome with the emotion of meeting her father and his other family she wept and was consoled by her new stepmother. At the