



Jazz singer Athalie Crawford will perform with Vukani at an open air concert at the Community Arts Project on January 2.

## Different directions

AS a young student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Athalie Crawford began strumming a guitar and singing folk songs in coffee bars to earn pocket money.

Her musical career has now taken a completely different direction as a jazz and Xhosa singer with Vukani.

From a musical family — her father plays jazz piano and her mother is a classical pianist — she and her sister would sometimes sing as their father played.

"I grew up in a house with plenty of music around and singing is always a great pleasure to me," said Athalie.

When she attended a musical workshop in 1977 at the Community Arts Project, she developed her jazz singing but it is very much a part-time career as she's a branch secretary at the Food and Canning Workers Union.

"That's where I learnt Xhosa, through speaking to the workers," said Athalie. "My Xhosa isn't very

grammatical but I get by."

Although she doesn't often perform with Vukani, they've played at the Hard Rock, community concerts, a benefit concert for the Hout Bay squatters and in the townships when she's had the opportunity. She wishes she had more time to sing at live concerts.

"The problem is my job is too demanding and I'm not prepared to give up one for the other," said Athalie. "I'm very lucky to have access to both these very different worlds — trade unions and music — which make my life interesting, but I think I would find it hard to make a choice."

As a branch secretary she organizes workers, sits in on a lot of meetings and helps to negotiate wages.

Athalie sings jazz songs from the 20s to the 50s, a lot of the standard numbers and also Mbaqanga traditional songs that the group arranges and interprets.

ANNE BARON