

# Figure Of 8 Dance Collective's *Wag (Waiting)* is all about soul



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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Alfred Hinkel has one rule. Well, he has several but one of the main ones pertains to this review. He only works with people he has trained. They share a dance language and understanding of movement that makes it easier to work with each other - to improvise and to perform as seen at the opening night of *Wag (Waiting)* at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town this week.



Produced by Figure of 8 Dance Collective with choreography by founders Grant van Ster and Shaun Oelf as well as Dustin Jannetjies and Gabriela Dirkse – who appear courtesy of Garage Dance Ensemble and Jazzart Dance Theatre respectively – there's no denying their ability to absorb and deliver on that dance vocabulary. Van Ster and Oelf are products of another era when Hinkel and John Linden were at the helm of Jazzart Dance Theatre, Jannetjies is a more recent *protégé* since their establishment of Garage Dance Ensemble in Okiep in the Northern Cape and Dirkse is proof of a legacy that continues even when they're not there. Why? Because Sifiso Kweyama is now artistic director of Jazzart and he's another of their former students, who involves former Jazzart Dance Theatre company members and teachers who have worked with Hinkel and Linden to train new recruits.



Hinkel and Linden were recipients of the Western Cape Government's Cultural Affairs Lifetime Achievement – Dance Award this year and Linden took the stage for final bows with the cast for a standing ovation that lasted and lasted. Hinkel had remained in Okiep to continue teaching and training the Garage group. Neither will lay any claim to the successful opening of *Wag (Waiting)*, even if Linden did share some last-minute notes with the cast in the few days before curtain up, but a mark of the dancers who have passed through their hands is that they remain ever humble and always acknowledge the impact on their lives. Most importantly, many of them are able to go on to pursue the careers they were trained for and reap the benefits.

## **Absolute pleasure to watch**

Over the years, Van Ster and Oelf have proved time and again how they are able to create and deliver a level of theatricality and evocative storytelling, underpinned by beautifully executed choreography, whether performing together, individually or choreographing for other productions.



*Wag (Waiting)* is about going nowhere slowly – as one audience member put it: Waiting for Godot – people trapped in tedium, the mundane realities of life, the humour and frustration that marks those moments and the futility of time wasted. Waiting. Be warned – you might forget to breathe, so engrossed will you be in the action as it unfolds. Van Ster and Oelf continue to be an absolute pleasure to watch and this performance – incorporating Jannetjies and Dirkse – is truly special. They gel as though they were a company who has been working together far longer than they actually have. The younger dancers certainly rose to the occasion and the audience was delighted.



Kudos to the technical team comprising set designer Carin Bester, lighting designer Benever Arendse, photographers Oscar O’Ryan, Ruth Smith and Lindsey Appolis and sound operator Leroy Reid. Oelf created the masterfully mixed soundscape interspersed on occasion by complete silence, chatter and even laughter among the cast members. It inspires an emotive reaction. You’ll laugh, you’ll cry, you’ll gasp. It depends on your mood on the day.



The production was dedicated to the memory of actor, dancer, choreographer and performance artist Owen Manamela-Mogane, who passed away recently after a short illness. Internationally acclaimed artist Gregory Maqoma remembers him as 'a spiritual man who left an impression on everyone he met.' A fitting tribute, indeed.



*Wag (Waiting)* is on at the Baxter Theatre until 13 July 2019. Book via [Webtickets](https://www.webtickets.co.za/).

Photography by Lindsey Appolis

## ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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