

Destination ... Lerato delights opening-night audience

 By [Debbie Hathway](#)

11 Feb 2013

The fifth intake of Jazzart Dance Theatre trainees gave their first performance in Destination ... Lerato at the Artscape Theatre last weekend.

One of the main themes of this piece was around language and its potential to alienate people. Interestingly, the disregard of several audience members for theatre etiquette, particularly in relation to cellphone usage and lengthy vocal responses to the action on stage, certainly affected the delivery of the dialogue. Jazzart often incorporates commentary in the vernacular, which may well be understood by over half its audience and can be fairly well grasped by the balance, but distractions of that level need to be curbed.





On the whole, the speeches by Ntombizandile Nonyati and Bongani Bonase were eloquently delivered (Nonyati's words near the end were barely discernible, but they were largely drowned out by the sound on stage) and the vocals by Thumeka Mzayiya were consistently beautiful.

Sexual appeal and social status

Destination ...Lerato also looks at how one's appearance influences one's sexual appeal and social status, and reminds us that "any struggle is the process of controlling fear". In addition, it develops around another theme of limitation - of ourselves and others - and how we can be challenged to achieve greatness. Jazzart's Training Programme does exactly that by providing full-time dance and theatre training to young adults from local townships across South Africa.

After three years, they will be equipped for a career in theatre, whether it's in performance, production, choreography, teaching, directing or stagecraft. This group, comprising: Katlego Moncho; Lewellyn Afrika; Lee-Joel Bosman; Lusanda Dayimani; Lusindiso Dibela; Nichelle Linnert; Nkemiseng Khenani; Nkosinathi Mngomezulu; Nomfundo Hlongwa; Tamsyn Spannenberg; Thamsanqa Masoka; Thembekile Komani; Ntombizandile Nonyati; Vuyolwethu Stuurman; and Yaseen Manuel, shares a passion, enthusiasm and work ethic equal to their natural rhythm, agility and talent.



Predictable at first

At first, the choreography by artistic director Jacqueline Manyapelo, production director Ina Wichterich Mogane, Mzokuthula Gasa and the trainees seemed predictable. Jazzart has a particular dance vocabulary and supporters are eager to see them doing something new. It gradually improved though, giving way to some impressive individual performances and better group combinations by the women. The men need to work a little more on refining their timing. It is obvious how much they relish those moments on stage and the sheer exuberance and confidence with which they conduct themselves is enough to put a smile on any audience member's face.

It's gratifying to see students so young who are able to perform that well in such a short space of time (they've been working at Jazzart since July 2012), which means that they're getting very good training at school level. It bodes well for the future of dance in this country. They received a standing ovation on opening night and that says enough.

The finishing touches in costume and set design were provided by Linda Mandela.

Overall, Destination ... Lerato has set a high standard and we look forward to even better things to come.

Photography by Jazzart Dance Theatre

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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