

Saluting the Steadfast Tin Soldier

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#) 19 Dec 2013

Starting off with a moment of respect for the late former president of South Africa, the opening night of the Tin Soldier by Cape Town City Ballet was bound to be a wonderful experience. And that it was.

I have always been an unashamed fan of fairy-tales, and Hans Christian Andersen's The Steadfast Tin Soldier was by far one of my faves as a little one. I am also unashamed that the thought of seeing perfect pliés, pirouettes and grand jetés makes me more excited than buying a new pair of shoes, a handbag and getting a massage, so when the opportunity arose to go see this production last week on the evening of its world premier, I was ecstatic.

Before I even begin talking about the dancing, the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra truly deserves another round of applause. Wow. What would a ballet show be without you?



Laura Bosenberg (Paper Ballerina) and Thomas Thorne (Tin Soldier). Back Kirstel Jensen, Angela Hansford and Rosamund Ford. Photo by Pat Bromilow Dow

Then, the choreography... Snaps to Robin van Wyk who not only choreographed an excellent ballet, but also adapted the storyline in such a great way to give the story a happy ending, leaving the audience with happy hearts in line with the festive season.

What was especially great about this production, was the kids who were given a chance to show Cape Town what they are made of. They brought a whole other dynamic to the performance, making it light hearted and you couldn't help but be immensely proud of them for spending their time doing something that they love, something that is beautiful, and something that might open doors to their future. 23 young dancers between the ages of 9 and 15 were chosen to dance the parts of Pillows, Lambs and Little Boys in the fantasy-fillec ballet.

The storyline

Act one starts out on Christmas eve where the Governess goes to the Toy-maker for a present for her wa

She purchases a Paper Ballerina (played by Laura Bosenberg) and a Tin Soldier (played by Thomas Thorne) without seeing that the Tin Soldier has a broken leg.

In the Little Boy's room, he is super excited about his new toys and refuses to go to sleep. Eventually at midnight the toys come to life, but mean Jack in the Box is not impressed with the two new arrivals. He constantly tries to separate the Paper Ballerina from the Tin Soldier and sends the Tin Soldier outside to stand guard by the window. As a strong gust of wind sends the Tin Soldier into the street, three boys playing there pick him up and put him in their paper boat - off he goes down the gutter to the witty and quirky Kitty Barlaqua (played by Mami Fuji) and her gang of male cats in the dark garden.



Mami Fuji (Kitty Balaqua) and Jesse Milligan (O'Malley). Photo by Jacques Conradie

After this encounter, the Tin Soldier goes off again in his paper boat and lands up in the river with the Water Babies and he gets swallowed by a fish.

Act two starts out with the Flirty Cook at the dockside buying fish from the sailors, and, as it happens, the Tin Soldier is in the fish's mouth. She then takes the Tin Soldier to the Toy-maker to get his leg fixed. The Little Boy's friends take him to the Toy-maker and after he is given the mended Tin Soldier they are taken into a magical place within the Toy-shop where all the toys come to life, dance and celebrate. Finally the Tin Soldier and the Paper Ballerina are reunited.

The set and props were done really well - the big fish being one of my personal highlights. Well done to all the dancers, and everyone else involved for putting together a lovely production.

The Tin Soldier runs until 24 December at the Artscape Theatre in Cape Town. Bookings can be made at [Computicket](#) or Artscape-dial-a-seat on 021 421 7695. Ticket prices range between R125-R225.

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out [Passing Stories](#)). She is also the editor of [Go & Travel](#), a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).
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