

Breathtakingly beautiful ballet



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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When it comes to watching world-class local ballet performances, it's long been at the stage where Cape Dance Company (CDC) is a sure bet. Now, however, with the addition of experienced professional dancers, Simone Muller, Grant van Ster and Marlin Zoutman earlier this year, the company has become a more cohesive whole since its last Cape Town season at the Masque Theatre, Muizenberg - settled, focused, impeccably turned out, superbly trained. In short, phenomenal.



Cara-May Marcus - When Dawn Comes

The space has a lot to do with it - the Artscape Theatre offers a far better expanse of stage for this season of neoclassical works, which runs until 11 December. While an ecstatic reaction to brilliant ballet is not entirely unexpected from women, when the men in the audience start getting emotional - that makes the point!

Shouts of "bravo"

In fact, this is the only local company I've seen at opening night that attracts shouts of "bravo" after every piece and, this time, already had a standing ovation before the interval. That response is standard for this cast at the final curtain, which features Grant van Ster, Henk Opperman, Simone Muller, Ipeleng Merafe, Marlin Zoutman, James Bradley, Louisa Talbot, Steven van Wyk, Cara-May Marcus, Stefania du Toit, Martin Harding, Tamryn van Houten and Tanisha Neill, plus Londiwe Khoza, Gemma Trehearn and Mthuthuzeli November from CDC's accelerated training programme.

The key to the CDC's success is also artistic director and founder Debbie Turner's selection of choreographers to create new work. The American, Christopher L Huggins, restages *Enemy Behind The Gates* - no less exciting for having been seen before - with kind permission of Philadelphia's *Philadanco!* on which it was originally created. It's a relentless, physically taxing, extremely powerful militaristic work that provides a fitting climax to the show.

This season's highlight

Huggins is a former member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and is currently resident choreographer for the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington DC and artist-in-residence at *Philadanco!* *Enemy Behind The Gates* previously won him the Best Choreography Alvin Ailey Award, but it's his new work, choreographed with assistance by his répétiteur Makeda Crayton, *When Dawn Comes*, which is arguably this season's highlight.

Set to exquisite music by Jef Story and Rachel Grimes, the dancers really deliver on this one. Mention has to be made of the partnership of Van Ster with Crayton, who performs as guest artist in this piece. Well matched in height, not to mention ability, they are an undisputed pleasure to watch.

Spins like a top

Crayton, who hails from New York, trained at the Juilliard School, Manhattan and the State University of New York at Purchase. She has performed in the Broadway version of Aida, on tour in China, and taught and choreographed around the world. Crayton flies through the air with every leap and spins like a top, her height doing nothing to hinder her speed and elevation. She smiles broadly when the choreography allows it, clearly loving every minute of her performance. Crayton also performs solo in Shedding, choreographed by Van Ster, Zoutman and Opperman, with assistance by Huggins.

The work by the renowned South African dancer, choreographer and director David Krugel, The Nature Of Being, gives Van Ster and Talbot the chance on opening night to show how much they've gelled. This time, their pas de deux flows easily and naturally, as they look a lot more relaxed with each other and the choreography, while the cast performs with usual aplomb.

An overdose of praise?

Regular CDC choreographer Michelle Reid's work features in God's Waiting Room, faultlessly performed by Merafe, Bradley and Muller, as well as On the Road To Nowhere, a pas de deux by seasoned Capetonian dancers Russell Cummings and Ananda Fuchs. Quirky as ever, the choreography lends some humour to the evening and more wonderful music through the soundtrack of Bagdad Café.

If you think there's an overdose of praise in this review, you simply have to attend a performance to understand its source. Performances run at Artscape Theatre until 10 December at 8.15pm and on Sunday, 11 December at 6pm. Tickets are from R110 via Computicket or +27 (0)21 421 7695.

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