

Cape Town City Ballet gears up for Shades of Love

Cape Town City Ballet (CTCB) prepares for its upcoming season of Shades of Love at Artscape in Cape Town. Since January this year, the company has been working with international choreographer, Ashley Killar, to prepare four of his ballets - Towards Illusion, The Miraculous Mandarin, Serenade and Glazunov Variations.



Thomas Thorne and Claire Spector in Towards Illusion.
Photographer: Pat Bromilow-Downing

Added to these, the company also prepared the brand new Romeo and Juliet balcony pas de deux by Robin van Wyk, the Beauty and the Beast pas de deux inspired by that of John Cranko, as well as the pas de trois, Tritsch-Tratsch, again adapted and performed in his honour. The magic thread that binds these ballets is the universal theme of love, with different kinds of love portrayed in each remarkable interpretation. Hence, a very enchanting programme called, Shades of Love.

With its highly provocative subject matter, The Miraculous Mandarin is arguably the most anticipated ballet and the one on everybody's lips. Originally written by Hungarian composer, Béla Bartok, the work caused a big scandal when it was first staged in 1926 and was banned on moral grounds. For the CTCB season, Killar invited his longstanding friend, colleague and award-winning designer, Peter Czalet, to take care of the designs. Audiences can expect dancers in electrifying costumes and an equally dramatic set.

The ballet tells the story of a girl who is forced by three thugs to stand in a window luring men inside to be robbed. Her first two victims, an old rake and a shy young man, are penniless; the third is a mysterious, but wealthy, Mandarin. The thugs attack him, but he cannot die until he finds compassionate love in the arms of the girl. With reflections of true love found between two people, juxtaposed with destructive, corrupt love for power and money, The Miraculous Mandarin is bound to keep viewers on the edge of their seats from arresting start to explosive finish.

In Towards Illusion, the audience is drawn into the fascinating world of the dancer and their passion for dance, their quest for perfection, the ecstasy of performance and, in the words of Killar, the threshold between reality and stage illusion. The ballet features 14 dancers - a lead couple, backed by six corps couples - and is performed to the score of Benjamin Britten's Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge.

According to Killar, Sarabande is inspired by the extraordinary beauty of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand with its glittering cascades of notes and dark sensuousness. The sarabande is a stately dance from 17th Century Spain and this is suggested in Ravel's introduction and by some of Killar's dance steps. A solitary man is visited by cloaked figures, apparitions from the distant past. A woman whom he recognizes appears. She dances with him and he yearns to claim her. This ballet, like the others, ends with a duo danced by the protagonists.

Finally, there is the Glazunov Variations. Especially created for the Shades of Love season, Killar found his inspiration in Marius Petipa's original choreography for one of the most elegant ballets of all time, Raymonda. The variations are danced to the original music by Alexander Glazunov.

Audiences are advised that The Miraculous Mandarin will only be performed at evening performances and be replaced at matinee performances by Glazunov Variations and the pas de deux from Romeo and Juliet. The Tritsch-Tratsch will be performed at all performances. Tickets for evening performances range from R120-R220 and for matinees from R100-R180.

Cape Town City Ballet presents Shades of Love at Artscape in Cape Town from 7 to 22 May. Tickets are available through Computicket or Artscape Dial-a-Seat on 021 421 7695.

For more information, visit www.capetowncityballet.org.za or the company's Facebook page.

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