

Cape Town City Ballet's Spring & Fall exceeds expectations



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

2 Oct 2014

Vocal reactions to Cape Town City Ballet's Spring & Fall triple bill, featuring three of Hamburg Ballet director John Neumeier's esteemed works, ranged from speechless to effusive. The consensus? It's a sure-fire hit. All that's left to say, agree Neumeier and CTCB honorary executive director Elizabeth Triegaardt, is "thank you".

Thank you to the company dancers, who proved unequivocally that they can deliver world-class performances comparable with their European counterparts; thank you to Hamburg Ballet guests Alexander Riabko and Silvia Azzoni for their unforgettable appearances; thank you to the South African John Cranko who inspired Neumeier's choreographic career and to whom this season is dedicated; thank you to the organisers and sponsors, and thank you to the public who voted with their feet. By the fifth and final Cape Town performance, tickets were virtually sold out.



Tom Thorne and Alexander Riabko

With the orchestra pit filled to capacity, audiences were treated to a double whammy at the hands of musicians from the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, under the baton of Tim Murray. "This is a serious, serious programme," said one patron, scrutinising the contents before curtain up. It opened with Antonin Dvorák's Serenade for Strings in E major to accompany the dancers in Spring and Fall, a neoclassical ballet featuring nine men and seven women in simple white costumes, the women on pointe. The cast ably conquered the complicated sequences in canon and the men showed tremendous improvements in the required athletic ability. Tom Thorne, spurred on by the lyrical music, gave of himself more than ever before, softening his upper body to allow more expression while simultaneously extending longer, leaping higher, turning sharper and rolling faster. His confidence was even more apparent in his duet with Riabko. "If you weren't a fan of modern ballet, you will be now," said a senior audience member during the first interval. "I'm a convert."

One of the highlights

Vaslav followed, to music by Johann Sebastian Bach played by Pieter Rooi on piano - a tribute to Nijinsky, based on original notations that his descent into madness ensured never manifested in a final creation. Neumeier took that inspiration and made a piece, featuring Riabko in this outing, which has contributed to his reputation as one of the best male dancers in the world. His quality of movement, absolute precision and emotive interpretation was a pleasure to watch; the trio with wife Azzoni and Ivan Boonzaaier one of the highlights of the programme. Boonzaaier has mastered the ability to be still, yet move with quiet confidence; his steady strength a joy for partners and audience alike.



Ivan Boonzaaier, Silvia Azzoni and Alexander Rjabko

Sarah-Lee Chapman and Milwhynne Williams, partnering Laura Bösenberg for the first time, captured the spotlight dancing to Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Chapman's training with the Cape Dance Company (she featured in the first performance of Christopher L Huggins's *Enemy Behind the Gate*) enabled her to shine brightest for the coveted solo pick, while Bösenberg and Williams impressed with their ability to cement difficult, often intimate, choreographic sequences in a matter of weeks.

Interestingly, every one of the casting choices by Neumeier, Hughes and Drower was spot on. In addition to those already mentioned, Thorne's pairing with Angela Cohen, Daniel Szybkowski with Bösenberg and Jesse Milligan with Rosamund Ford and Elizabeth Nienaber in *Spring and Fall* and *Vaslav* respectively, with a featured solo in the latter by Kim Vieira, and Bradley van Heerden in *Le Sacre* performed with immense commitment, enhanced by a sterling supporting cast that appeared stronger with each performance - they can be justifiably proud of themselves.



Full company

Le Sacre, in particular, was a company triumph, danced barefoot in a contemporary style seldom featured in their repertoire. Earthy and ritualistic, the dancers excelled in their execution of every movement. We look forward to supporting their future development on this upward trajectory into the next 80 years.

After a short break, Cape Town City Ballet moves into preparations for its next season, a new production of [Thumbelina](#) by Robin van Wyk. This Cape Town City Ballet Youth Project opens at the Artscape Theatre on 24 October and features budding young dancers from across the peninsula. Tickets are R70 for the preview, and R100 and R120 for the remainder of the performances. Book through [Computicket](#).

Images by Holger Badekow

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.

- REVIEW: Beachcomber Resorts & Hotels elevates the art of living beyond luxury getaways - 19 Feb 2024
- Growing a sustainable paradise: Salt of Palmar's herb garden blooms with local flavour - 20 Dec 2023
- *Set in Motion* shines a light on living with purpose - 10 Jul 2023
- Jonathan Roxmouth's "Key Change - My Favourite Pianists" is not to be missed - 22 Mar 2023
- Johaar Mbsaval honoured at Artscape Opera - 8 Mar 2023

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>