

# Reaching for the stars



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

1 Dec 2014

Audiences have come to expect only the best from the Cape Dance Company (CDC), the Tokai-based inspiration behind world-class performances in the neoclassical genre by dancers who can hold their own on international stages. They seldom disappoint and their 20th-anniversary season of *Blue*, now on at Artscape Theatre in Cape Town, is no exception.

The company's trajectory is determined by Artistic Director Debbie Turner - her vision, courage, passion and compassion continues to inspire generations, attracting dancers not only committed to excellence, but also to making their way on the global stage. Alice Godfrey is currently a member of NDT 2 in The Hague, while graduating student Mthuthuzeli November will further his training at the Central School of Ballet in London early in 2015, before taking up his one-year tuition scholarship at The Ailey School in New York City in September. Third-year student Londiwe Khoza joins him in London and theatre fans had the pleasure of seeing both of them deliver sterling performances in *Blue* and the Cape Academy of Performing Arts' *BitterSweet Reloaded* at the weekend.



Turner's ability to expose her dancers to international choreographers, such as Christopher L Huggins and Bradley Shelver, local luminaries that include Belinda Nusser and Michelle Reid, in addition to performance opportunities and educational tours abroad translates into consecutive seasonal hits. What that also means, to a degree, is some element of financial security for CDC - both Nusser's *Fadeout.Five* and Huggins's *Blue* were made possible by crowdfunding campaigns.

## Choreographic debut

The CDC season was also the platform for November's professional choreographic debut with his new work, *Calligraphy*, featuring the organisation's youth company, the CDC II Repertory Ensemble, while former CDC student Cara-May Marcus made hers with *Obscure Sorrows*, a reflection of her two-year contract with Spectrum Dance Theatre in Seattle. November's ambitious work for 20 dancers shows great potential for more of his creative output in the future.

Blue and BitterSweet Reloaded, respectively, also provided a platform for South Africans forging successful careers in London - Mbulelo Ndabeni and Simone Muller-Lotz - to perform in The State In-Between as well as for students from the Gugulethu-based Zama Dance School to dance a piece by Leanne Voysey.

The title piece, Blue, was powerfully performed by eight men: Bradley, Ndabeni, November and Thamsanqa Njoko as well as trainees Odwa Lindokuhle Makanda, Lwando Dutyulwa, Vuyo Mahashe and Devan Hendricks. The latter group has shown tremendous growth during the year and really delivered on tough choreography initially made by Huggins for Philadanco. Huggins's assistant, Levi Marsman, taught them the work with Huggins fine-tuning it later on.



## **Especially breathtaking**

James Bradley's pas de deux with Elzanne Crause during In the Mirror of Her Mind, the latest Huggins work to be added to the CDC repertoire, was especially breathtaking. Also featuring Ndabeni, November and Khoza, there is no doubt that this is going to be an audience favourite.

Fadeout.Five is well polished, with several performances completed this year already. Somehow Nathan Bartman managed to add even more nuances to his solo, incorporating gestures to elaborate on the voiceover about being caught in crossfire that I had not noticed previously.

The opening night of Blue was momentous on many levels, not the least of which was the opportunity for the mothers of November, Ndabeni and Njoko to watch their sons in the spotlight (and what brilliant lighting design there was by Niall Griffin for both shows)!

Shelver's opening Scenes and Huggins's closing Bolero proved the ideal works to showcase the level of technical excellence and stamina that CDC members are renowned for.

Watching CAPA's BitterSweet Reloaded on the following night, codirected by Turner and Nathalie Vijver, it's clear to see that the groundwork is well laid for professional careers early on.



There were several highlights - Asisipho Malunga's captivating acting, Reid's humorous Sunday Sinners and Jilted, the partnering skills displayed by November in the Nutcracker pas de deux with Khoza, and James Bradley's Crystal Contour, to name a few. The cute factor was well catered for in Turner's casting for her piece, Mr Melody, and the Ode to Fosse, choreographed by Turner, Nigel Lucas and Marelize Theron.

To get the full picture, treat yourself to at least one of the shows!

*Blue is on from 4 to 6 December at 8pm in the Artscape Theatre, with a matinee on 6 December at 3pm. Tickets cost from R140 to R160. BitterSweet Reloaded is on at the same venue on 2 and 3 December at 8pm. Tickets are from R100 to R120.*

*All booking is at [Computicket](#) branches countrywide and Artscape Dial-A-Seat on +27 (0)21 421 7695.*

*To contribute in any way to November and Khoza's travel and living expenses during their scholarship training in the US next year, please contact Debbie Turner on +27 (0)21 701 0599.*

## 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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