

Olckers steals problem-beset Swan Lake glory

Ballet: "Swan Lake" performed by The South African Ballet Theatre, The Mandela, Joburg Theatre, (011) 877-6800

Choreography: after Petipa and Ivanov

Music: Tchaikovsky

Design: Vanessa Nicolau (set), Simon King (lighting)

Key performers: Burnise Silvius, Hyon Kyung Cho, Lauryn Summerley, Robin van Wyk, Yolandi Olckers and Guy Wheatstone.

Until: April 4

REVIEWED BY JONATHAN HURWITZ

FACING AN uncertain future, as the South African Ballet Theatre (SABT) is now, impacts not only on the logistics of presenting a major classic like "Swan Lake" but, as we saw last weekend, sets up a frisson of tension that can be propulsive and debilitating.

But despite reduction in the number of permanent company members and recorded music rather than an orchestra, SABT opened a long run of "Swan Lake" with three performances that, while tinged with apprehension, were mostly attractively and

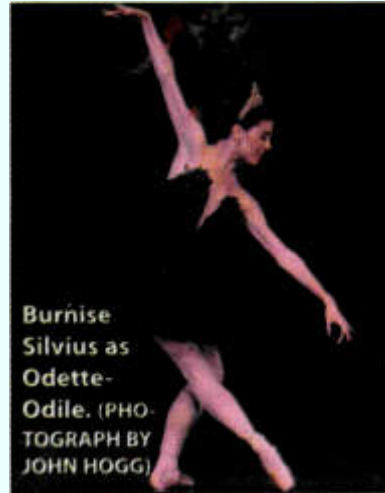
confidently performed by soloists and corps de ballet alike

Although not an ideal way to perform a great classic like "Swan Lake", given the company's reduced numbers and the ongoing shortage of male dancers (scarce at the best of times, given the present uncertainty of ballet as a career in South Africa, the problem becomes acute), the decision to shed sections of choreography makes sense.

Gone are Act I's pas de trois and some of the national dances in Act III; these cuts do not impact negatively on telling the story. The single interval format makes for a more streamlined narrative.

Injuries seem to have played havoc with the casting of the role of Prince Siegfried. On opening night Burnise Silvius was paired with technically neat senior corps de ballet dancer Hyun Kyung Cho whose slight physique and modest presence cause him often to disappear from the action.

The technically immaculate Silvius, superb in so much else, does not have quite the necessary amplitude for Odette-Odile; her



Burnise Silvius as Odette-Odile. (PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN HOGG)

performance, if translated into operatic terms, is akin to a fine Mozartean in a role of Wagnerian dimensions.

An even more marked economy of scale pervaded Lauryn Summerley's Odette-Odile at the second performance and this reticence was thrown into sharper focus by Robin van Wyk's generous showing as her Prince.

In his first-ever Prince Siegfried, the Cape Town City Ballet guest artist combines experience and pas-

sion to create a character that responds vividly to the drama and whose dancing devours space.

The weekend's most auspicious performance came from Yolandi Olckers whose Odette on Saturday night displayed a clean, elegant line, musically sensitive phrasing and a potent ability to both project character and tell the story of the bewitched princess-turned-swan.

The great Act II pas de deux effectively captures the awakening of her love for Siegfried and when she returns to her swan-like incarnation at the end of the act, she leaves a shimmer in the air.

She has the ability to enhance Guy Wheatstone's hesitant but attractively danced debut as the Prince, reflecting and making visible his love for her in a way that the youthful Wheatstone does not yet achieve in his own right.

Although less effective as the evil Odile, overall Olckers' performance was a notable achievement.

• Senior SABT ballerina Angela Malan dances her farewell performances partnered by visiting Latvian dancer Raimond Martinov, on March 21, 24, 26 and 28.

