

Bullfights and bravado

7/10

SHOW: Carmen – The Ballet

CAST: South African Ballet Company, with guest artists from Cape Town City Ballet and Pro Arte Hoerskool

CHOREOGRAPHER:

Veronica Paepers
VENUE: The Mandela at Joburg Theatre, until August 29

ANNETTE BAYNE

GEORGES Bizet's unmistakable *Carmen* evokes images of Spain, bull-fighting and flamencos, toradors and red-hot passion and

Veronica Paepers's choreography aims to visually replicate those aural imaginings.

As a ballet and as a story, *Carmen* is much more raw than many of the classics and Paepers does not polish the edges to make it pretty. This is the first time I have ever seen a ballet dancer take a drag from a cigarette, and it really shatters the illusion.

Carmen is a brawling seductress with a violent streak and a foul mouth; she is, of course, also very beautiful and inspires burning passion in men.

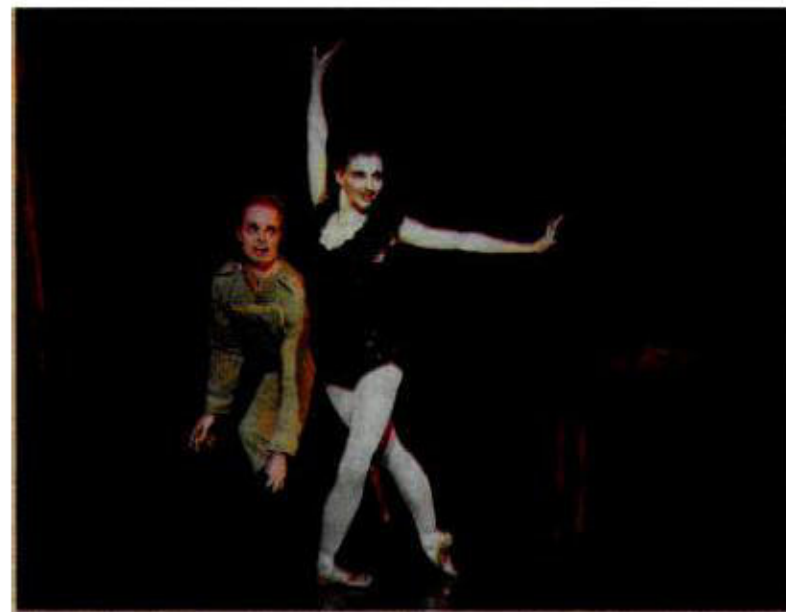
She's an intriguing character, interesting to watch and, as the parents sitting behind me discovered, a little bit difficult to explain to the young ballet fans in the audience.

The role seems to bring out a

rebellious streak in Burnise Silvius. As *Carmen* she is sexy, cocksure and dangerous, and there is often a bold little smile on her lips that suggests she is having a great deal of fun dancing the character.

But *Carmen* is not just the game-playing minx. There is a softer side, a side, one suspects, desperate for love or understanding. At the end of the Second Act, she submits to Don José (danced by guest artist Adam Thurlow) in the *The Flower Song*.

What follows is a beautiful, softer *pax de deux*. Silvius and Thurlow's interpretation allows a glimpse under *Carmen*'s tough shell. It is only a glimpse and she quickly returns to her fickle self, but you don't forget it and it adds to the poignancy and violence of the final scene.



TEMPTRESS. Anya Carsten as *Carmen* with guest artist Dirk Weyershausen as Don José. Picture by Michel Bega

