

# Ballet dancers' symbiotic splendour tilts at perfection

■ Cape Philharmonic cherry tops Don Quixote

**DON QUIXOTE, Main, ballet, presented by the South African Ballet Theatre and the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra (Guy Butler Theatre, last performance tomorrow at 10.30am). Reviewed by Jason Perry**

SET in Seville, a small coastal village in Spain, *Don Quixote* is a seminal classic of literature, written by Miguel de Cervantes, which has been transformed in a variety of incarnations through the medium of ballet since as far back as 1786.

This production of *Don Quixote* by the South African Ballet Theatre company is a beautiful rendition of the classic choreography of Marius Petipa, with coaching by Chistian Tatchev. Particular mention must be made of Burnise Silvius, who plays the part of Kitri with incredible grace and strong technical excellence, no more so than in the magical way she performed the complicated solos which the role expects.

Angela Malan, as Mercedes, was an expressive joy to behold throughout, partnered by Iain Macdonald as the matador Espada, who, along with Andries Weidemann as Basilio, led the highly talented male dancers of the company.

Manuel Noram and Jacob Mosehla, as Don Quixote and his manservant Sancho Panza, respectively, brought tremendous depth through their character work.

In particular, Mosehla's comic physicality shone throughout the performance, even in mid-air as he was flung toward the rafters by the male chorus.

The corps de ballet were in fine

form throughout, keeping their balletic poise and staying true to character, even when relegated upstage to a cart.

While there were a few opening night glitches – and it did seem that the raising of the curtain surprised the cast, who were not all in position – they quickly fell into place and performed beautifully, as Don Quixote dreamt of his beloved Lady Dulcinea among the forest dryads.

The *pas de deux* throughout the performance was fantastic as each of the soloists showed their tremendous talents and skills, working alone and together in symbiotic splendour. Most *allegro* and *grand allegro* sections were well executed, with impressive height achieved.

The performers' ballon and use of space was exceptional in the tremendous Guy Butler Theatre, which is worth mentioning in its own right as a wonderful venue for dance and theatre in general. It was a welcome partnership between a professional and talented dance company and a great venue.

As if the venue and talent were not enough, this marvellous production was beautifully topped by the accompaniment of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, under the baton of Graham Scott. Their rendition of Ludwig Minkus's score was sheer perfection.

It was also a pleasant surprise to find the sound quality maintained throughout the show and kept at a tolerable level. Sound engineers all too often mistake volume for clarity, but it was not the case here.

*Don Quixote* runs until tomorrow and is an hour and a half in length, including interval, rather than the 2½ hours as advertised.