

FOOTNOTES
ADRIENNE SIGHEL

Dance

Battle of the bodies

The year has begun with two major collaborative projects, in Cape Town and Johannesburg, which both experiment with text, design, movement dynamics and media. That's where the similarity ends

Jazzart Dance Theatre, South Africa's most down to earth yet perennially provocative dance company, has taken to the air.

What's more, with its latest venture titled *duck 'n DANCE - a faerie tale?* it has also taken on the classics. Well, sort off.

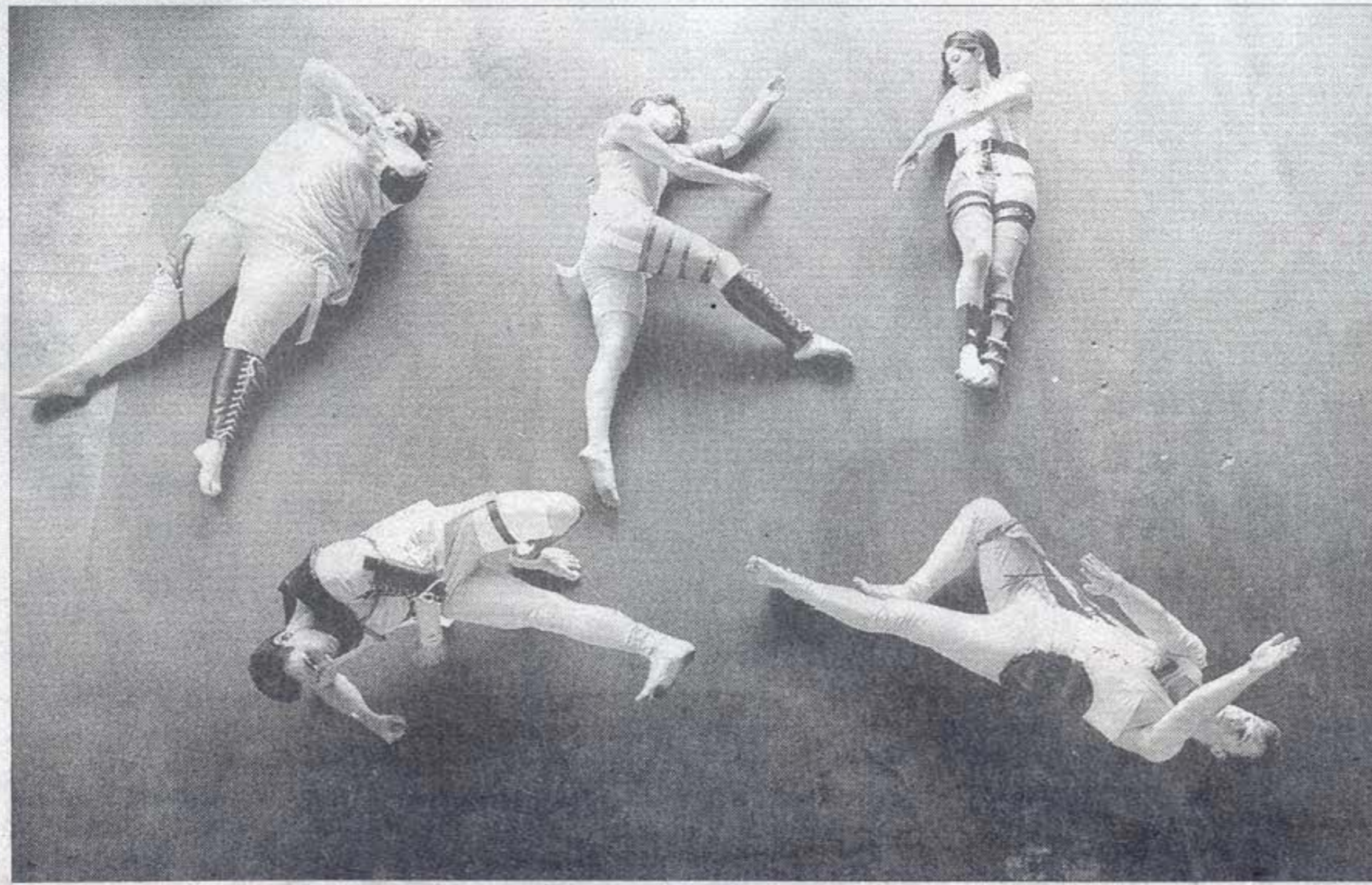
Swan Lake takes a loosely deconstructed dive into African waters creating a fresh choreographic idiom and vernacular.

The space is filled with a recorded Zulu praise poem, to all the characters, layered over the original Tchaikovsky prologue.

This love story flirts with language - Zulu, San and gay speak - and takes a subtle lesbian turn stitched into an allegory about the gay and straight worlds.

It also takes risks, with a touch of circus - with dancers flying out from the ceiling. The Act 2 pas de deux is partly airborne.

This production, conceptualised and directed by Debbie Goodman and Alfred Hinkel, was choreographed in collaboration with the dancers, with input from fly and stuntmaster Anthony "Mo" Marais (who worked with Hinkel on Sun City's *Baletsatsi*)



Bodyscape ... (above, clockwise from top left) Forgotten Angle Theatre Company's Tracey Human, Samantha Pienaar, Athena Fatseas, Craig Morris and Lanon Prigge in *Probes*

PICTURE: JOHN HOGG

Love match ... (right) Deezeal (Ondine Bello) swoops in on Danzwaater (Sbonakaliso Ndaba) in *duck 'n DANCE a faerie tale?*

PICTURE: PAUL ABRAMS



with Andrew McKenzie. *duck*, which premiered mid-December and ended on Saturday, is set to tour the Eastern Cape later this summer. This production is also tailor-made for national and international festivals.

But it still needs radical fine tuning to fulfil its undeniable creativity.

The choreography, and the superb quality of dancing, with its inventive totally integrated symbiosis of

essences of Zulu indlamu with classical and contemporary elements, need to be complemented by a more integrated dramatic structure and less contrived storyline.

There are other hazards like the dreadfully lame title and an unresolved, flat, ending.

Since British choreographer Matthew Bourne has slayed 'em in every possible high-profile aisle with his

male *Swan Lake* temptations to retackle this classic carry the price of comparison.

For a start there are only 10 dancers, some of whom have dual roles. Michael Mitchell's set and costumes, Paul Abram's and Juha Westman's lighting (and sound design) scream here and now. The black-walled Arena Theatre was studied with intermittent frames of wire fencing and metallic webbing.

The story goes like this. Danzlord (Gregg Adams), a tribal king, has lost his queen and the onus is on Danzwaater (Sbonakaliso Ndaba), the eldest of four daughters, to choose a mate and continue the dance line.

The most eligible suitor is captain of the warriors. Ntzimbi Ka Ygobi (the gloriously articulate Sifiso Kweyama, the embodiment of molten rhythms). But up above, Ondine Bello's Deezeal (as in dyke) has other ideas. As queen of the changelings she is has to find a mate to release her people trapped in social limbo.

She sends Klaura down to scout out the land. Celeste Botha (who also doubles as princess Sterre Danz) descends from the ceiling, perpendicular to the floor, with aerial athleticism and rippling arms. Lead swan meets Spider Woman.

Unlike Odette, this doomed queen is no anorexic ballerina. She's rather butch in a techno Peter Pan way. That doesn't stop her from being magical.

She makes her first entrance, appearing in Danzwaater's dream, arms preening, swinging head-first, feet

wrapped in a harness.

Ndaba's authoritative Danzwaater is a majestic figure. Her well-built body is encased in a bullet proof vest trimmed with lace, out of which peeps, covering her behind, a sawn-off, short, gold tutu. She can effortlessly, physically, throw men across the floor while retaining amazing grace and subtlety.

The reversals could get confusing if you are set in drawing direct parallels with Prince Siegfried and Co. *duck 'n DANCE* has its own tale to tell, its own agendas, audio-visual delights and energies.

Primarily what it has, to tie the whole concept together, is René Avenant's richly astute music.

In yet another collaboration with Hinkel Avenant has electronically sampled melodies from Tchaikovsky's score which has been revisited and rewritten "as a modern African experience". Time signatures are altered and rhythms and beats varied incorporating instruments like West African water drums.

The pas de quatre doesn't unleash cygnets.

Married to marimba it features in an Afro disco during which Deezeal stakes her claim.

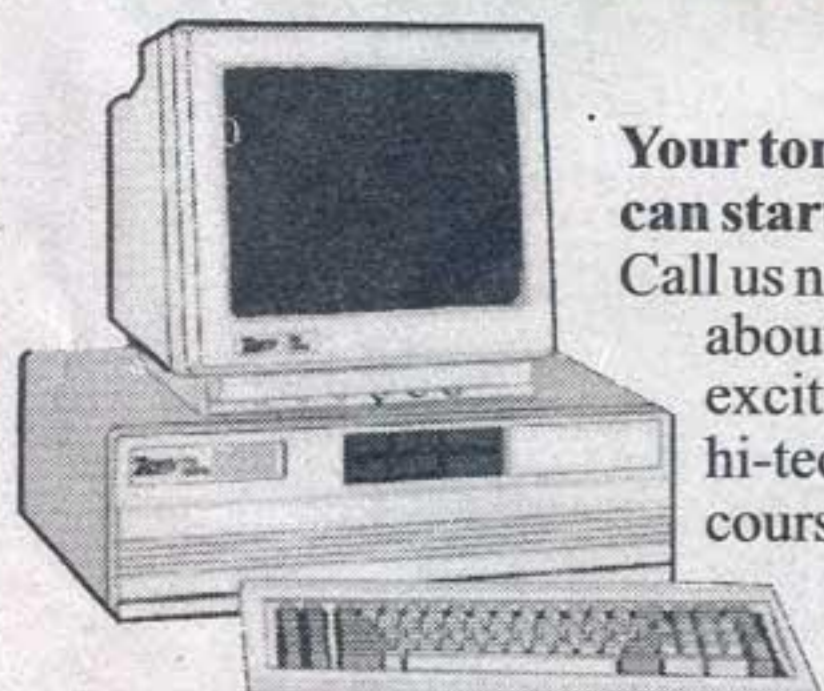
That was Cape Town. Shadow boxing with a mangled mortality expressed as cyber dance. That was my vivid first impression of *Probes* which ran at the Dance Factory from Wednesday to Saturday.

To probe the mysteries of the diseased, drugged or mutilated body PJ Sabbagha and The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative combined live video, photography, film, spoken text and intensely calibrated movement.

Certainly the most audacious of the collective's initiatives, *Probes*, which creates short circuiting realities, blends the impressive talents of video artist Malcolm Hecker, photographer Kirsty Charleton and designer Lisa Younger with the experience and maturity of Sabbagha's direction, the five performers and guest artist Timothy le Roux.

Most striking is that *Probes* was created on a National Arts Council grant and is the first phase of a fascinating venture which deserves to be further developed.

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