

Arts Review

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Review: Noah Of Cape Town

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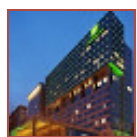
Picture by: Giovanni Sterelli



South Africa's first full-length a cappella musical, *Noah Of Cape Town* is currently enjoying an acclaimed debut season at the Baxter Theatre. The story is set in 2020 when Cape Town, like every other city in the world, is suffering from the destructive effects of global warming, fuel shortages, war and corruption. Gareth Martens a.k.a Noah, has visions about an impending flood and believes he has been called to build an ark in order to save his followers.

Noah of Cape Town has come a long way since 2005 when it was first performed in cantata version as part of Artscape's New Writing Season. With a few tweaks in the script here and there, this universally appealing production with its environmental message, stunning cast and outstanding delivery, will be able to stand its ground on any world stage.

From the opening number to the finale at the end of Act Two, this original tale is told and sung with great passion by a talented and enthusiastic cast of local actors under the direction of Jaci de Villiers. The effect of the company of sixteen in full voice is powerful and there are a number of stellar performances by individuals like Eben Genis and Anton Luitingh, whose duet in the second act with Lindy Abromowitz is marvellous.



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Other strong acting and singing performances come from Nicole Holm as the humourous Barfly, Christine Weir as

Maria, Gys de Villiers as the Commandant, Gile Motshwane as Zola, Nqobile Sipamla as Leah and Genna Galloway as Beryl. In the lead role, Francesco Nassimbeni comes across well as a fragile and conflicted character, but his singing voice is not on a par with his co-stars.

Visually, Noah of Cape Town is a treat thanks to the uber creative team. Aside from the extraordinary costumes, designer Dicky Longhurst has devised a simple hexagonal shaped set with movable and interchangeable sections that shift cleverly from scene to scene, complemented by Mannie Manim's excellent lighting.

All this considered, it must be said that the strongest aspect of the production is the music, which, to quote the words of one of the songs, is 'beautiful, beautiful, beautiful'! The exceptionally talented Graham Weir not only conceptualized Noah but wrote the songs, lyrics and arranged the music - a tremendous achievement. Every now and again, there are hints of Indian and Arabic influences in the music that seems to enhance the global feel of the production. Amanda Tiffin's musical direction is excellent and the absence of live accompaniment and backing tracks is unnoticeable as the cast consistently sustain the rhythm and beat and mimic sounds like the wind, helicopters and heavy drops of rain. In this regard one must acknowledge Aki Khan's fine sound management from start to finish.

Noah of Cape Town runs until 1 August at the Baxter Main Theatre. Tickets can be booked through Computicket.