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by David Fick July 30 <http://www.broadwayworld.com/south-africa/article/BWW-Review-Darkroom-Contemporarys-BLUEPRINT-Offers-Alternative-Dance-for-Alternative-Audiences-20140730>



Sherwin Rhode, Remo Adonis and Leilah Kirsten in BLUEPRINT  
**Photo Credit:** Darkroom Contemporary

BLUEPRINT is the high profile, alternative new dance project by Darkroom Contemporary, a project being presented under the World Design Capital banner at the Cape Town City Hall. Setting out to connect architecture, design, dance, sound and visual art, BLUEPRINT takes the human body and places it in the midst of that inter-disciplinary melting pot, with Louise Coetzer choreographing a quartet of dances on a sestet of dancers to make up the programme.

Eschewing traditional theatrical spatial arrangements, the dances take place in multiple venues on the upper floors of the City Hall, with audience members seated or standing around the performance space. It is clear that Darkroom Contemporary has a driven artistic vision. Consequently BLUEPRINT has clearly defined conceptualisation that aims to stimulate the audience's intellect and aesthetic sensibilities. For the most part, everything holds together, but even when things do not come together completely, the show is never less than completely engaging.

The first piece, danced by Coetzer herself and Anderson Carvalho, is performed (mostly) inside a coiled white installation piece by Imraan Samodien in the first of the four City Hall rooms used in BLUEPRINT. The installation is fascinating, but its dialogue with both the site and the choreography is unclear. With the flow of impulse and response between Coetzer and Carvalho also rather stilted, this is the least satisfying piece in the programme. Nonetheless, Carvalho emerges as one of the most powerful presences in the company with his dynamic performance of Coetzer's mix of linear and circular patterns in this sequence.

The second and third pieces can be viewed in any order, depending on which route one follows from room to room. One of these features two dancers performing against a backdrop of sequences of binary code, while the other saw a trio of dancers moving around a series of rectangular wire sculptures.

The duet is danced by Carvalho and Kristy Brown, both powerful dancers who connected well with one

another in the tiniest of the four spaces used, and delivered the choreography with an intensity of purpose and focus that was lacking in the opening piece. Starting and ending on the floor, the piece consists of a series of angular locomotor sequences that progress through balances and lifts. The binary code, animated by Samodien, neatly picks up on the overall theme of BLUEPRINT, a systematic and electronic set of plans, and is cleverly married to the elements of dehumanisation in both Coetzer's choreography and the dancers' performances. Sharing the space less equitably than the concept and its execution, however, are the competing languages of multimedia, setting, lighting and live performance. The projections play mainly across a series of makeshift screens, disconnecting the site from the performance. The lighting on the dancers is less intense than the light that delivers the projections; this places the images in direct competition with the performers for the audience's eye. A better strategy for integration between site, installation and performance in this segment of the show might be to let the images of the code wash over the space itself and Carvalho and Brown's bodies.



Leilah Kirsten (front) in BLUEPRINT, with Remo Adonis  
**Photo Credit:** Darkroom Contemporary



Anderson Carvalho (front) and Louise Coetzer in BLUEPRINT  
**Photo Credit:** Darkroom Contemporary

The trio, performed by Remo Adonis, Leilah Kirsten and Sherwin Rhode, casts aside the dehumanisation that characterised the first two pieces and explores quite effectively the relationship between the human body and urban environments. With angular white lighting that throws fascinating shadows of the dancers' movements onto the white façade that hides the original architecture of the room in which this piece is performed, the sequence assumes an expressionist quality that is completely compelling. The ensemble work between Adonis, Kirsten and Rhode is seamless, allowing them to execute some thrilling contact choreography.

The final piece is conceptualised around a laser light installation by Fabian Humphry, which moulds pyramids of light around the full company of dancers who performed the piece. The six lit areas, with the audience placed in the round, allows for choreographic play with the concepts of mapping, scale and spatial arrangement, as well as with the dichotomy between entrapment and freedom. There are some dazzling movement sequences during this part of the show, although there needs to be greater specificity at times from individual dancers when negotiating the boundaries provided by the laser lighting. One of the most effective motifs in this piece is

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the sculpting of the dancers' bodies by the laser lights when the sequences take them through the beams. Reminiscent of the computer generated effects were used to create the electronic arena of the original 1982 version of TRON, the imagery starts to suggest a digital world, a futuristic blueprint, which presents a moral dilemma that - intentionally or not - plays out on stage with the dancers trying to liberate themselves from their respective cages of light.

One of the greatest assets of the show is the original score created by Ebenhaezer Smal especially for BLUEPRINT. Smal's score gives the piece a gritty, industrial feel and is really well integrated with the choreography. Design wise, the production meets its challenges with vigour. The costumes work well, with a sense of patterns and layers that build into the concepts of blueprints and building, while the installations are interesting even when they are not necessarily completely integrated into the space.

Indeed, the main area in which BLUEPRINT disappoints is in its tentative engagement with the City Hall itself as the production's setting, which is one of the primary purposes of site specific work. While the various connotations implied by its title are certainly explored in the other aspects of the production, the piece seems as though it could play in any four rooms in any non-traditional theatre space. For BLUEPRINT to be a completely immersive cognitive and emotive experience, it needs to get to grips with that which is suggested by the space. The tension between the City Hall's colonial glory days and its heart-breaking current state of disrepair haunts the performance because of the sheer character that the building that seeps into the audience's pores as they make their way up its steps and through its corridors. That the presence of this spirit is never really acknowledged is a pity.



Remo Adonis and Louise Coetzer in BLUEPRINT

**Photo Credit:** Darkroom Contemporary

As an independent physical theatre company, Darkroom Contemporary has found a way to transform contemporary dance into an experience that captures the *zeitgeist* of the times. Watching the company grow and develop as it promotes the voice of local choreographers and tries to appeal to a wider audience that Cape Town's diehard dance audiences will be intriguing. To that end, BLUEPRINT puts Darkroom Contemporary on the right path.

*BLUEPRINT* runs at the City Hall until 2 August 2014, at 8pm. Bookings can be made through [www.quicket.co.za](http://www.quicket.co.za), with tickets costing R100 - R120. For further information, find Darkroom Contemporary on the web ([www.darkroomcontemporary.com](http://www.darkroomcontemporary.com)), on Twitter ([@DarkroomDance](https://twitter.com/DarkroomDance)) or through their blog ([www.darkroomcontemporary.blogspot.com](http://www.darkroomcontemporary.blogspot.com)).

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