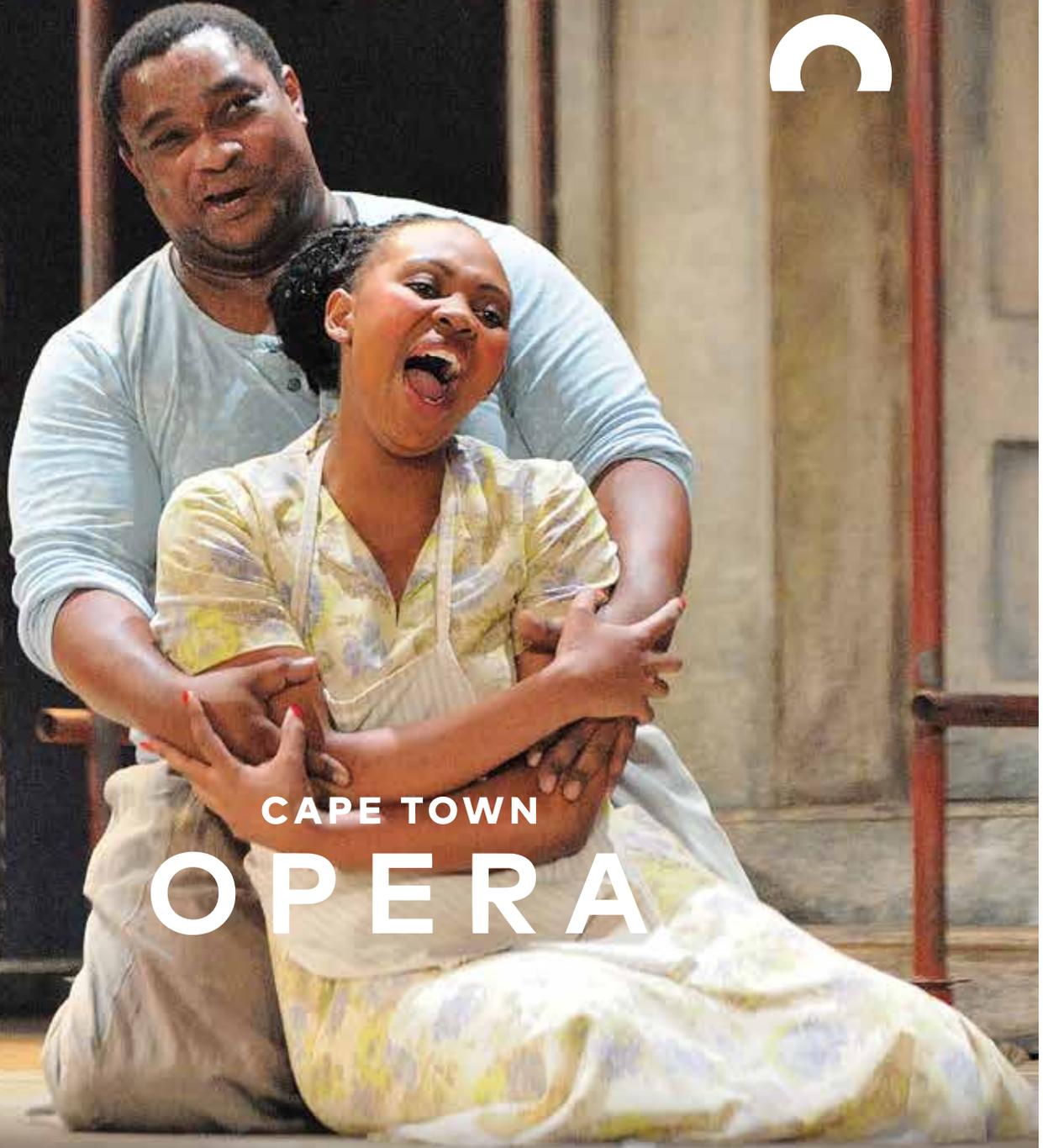


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CAPE TOWN
OPERA

THE GERSHWINS'®
PORGY and BESS™

DISARMING AND
ELECTRIFYING
INDEPENDENT

THE VIBRANCY AND QUALITY
OF THE CHORAL SINGING IS
INSPIRING THROUGHOUT
THE TELEGRAPH

ENERGY SURGES OFF
THE STAGE
**LONDON EVENING
STANDARD**

BACKGROUND

The Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess* is an opera of extreme complexity and technical difficulty. With its requirements for a large chorus of enormously talented black singers, the opera is ideal for Cape Town Opera's pool of performers.

This production of *Porgy and Bess* reflects the particular intensity and energy of South African singers. The daily reality of their lives and simply going home after a night's work are more dangerous and more fraught with melodrama than any of the operas in which they perform.

The action is set in the same era as Apartheid's highest arrogance and worst excesses. With forced removals, demolitions of ancestral dwellings, and lack of respect for human rights, life was all too expendable and miserable for those people so conveniently forgotten by the few who lived in comfort and security. This is the story of *Porgy and Bess*, and Cape Town Opera's production of Gershwin's classic work reflects the spirit of optimism that pervades contemporary South Africa.





CAPE TOWN OPERA'S
CHORUS IS QUITE MAGNIFICENT.
RUPERT CHRISTIANSEN
THE TELEGRAPH, UK

SOUTH AFRICA COULD RESCUE
OPERA... RETURNING IT TO
THE PASSION, HUMANITY, AND
PERSONALITY THAT INSPIRED
THE GREAT OPERAS
IN THE FIRST PLACE.
TOM SERVICE,
GUARDIAN, UK

PORGY AND BESS: THE SPIRIT OF A NATION



Poverty, racism, class-difference and displacement are universal issues. No matter against which background Porgy and Bess is set, these problems will always be with us, we face these social imbalances inherent to the human race daily. When I first approached the piece after its long performance history in Cape Town I was struck by some of the parallels between the life in Catfish Row and urban society in South Africa.

As a creative team, we were inspired by pictorial depictions of township- and urban society life in Soweto during the seventies in South Africa, by photographers such as Jürgen Schadeberg, Chief Photographer of the famous DRUM magazine and James Barnor. Urban society in the seventies in Soweto was a place where gangsterism was rife. The tsotsis were inspired to dress like American film



stars such as Richard Widmark, James Cagney and Edward G Robinson. Music-making on the streets and in shebeens were part of a seemingly contented everyday life. Dancing and music became a coping mechanism to the African working class. Gambling was a favorite pass-time and the richer swanky township-bosses engaged in all sorts of extra "business". To escape the harsh realities of their lives people turned to the church, especially the African Independent Churches like the Zionist Church. The Zionist church sprang from the Christian Catholic church in Zion Illinois, and was established in Africa by American missionaries in 1904. Apart from all the hardship, our townships have often been referred to as the place where the heart of the nation beats and a very strong sense of community still exist today.



Transferring this South African township history into Porgy and Bess seemed a perfect fit. The people of 'Catfish Row', a community who has 'hijacked' a derelict building, have lived here for some time, whilst newcomers seeking for shelter or a little corner to sleep, are almost always welcomed. This still happens today in our modern day society. All the cultures of township life in Africa rule in "Catfish Row"

The spirit of our nation is a unique one and Cape Town Opera is home to many singers from different cultures and communities, some still living in townships, bringing their extraordinary voices, hearts and souls to their performances. With this production of Porgy and Bess, we strive to reflect a true sense of the South African people.

CHRISTINE CROUSE
DIRECTOR





THE TIMES, UK



INDEPENDENT, UK



GUARDIAN, UK

The vivacious staging is everything one had expected and hoped for ... the loose-limbed spirit of African dance is never far away... you'd need a heart of concrete not come out smiling.

GEOFF BROWN
THE TIMES, UK



IN THE PRESS



Be it the thrilling wake scene or the great "Doctor Jesus" ensemble where the entire company comes downstage in a rising crescendo of impassioned and seemingly random invocations, the effect is thrilling.

EDWARD SECKERSON
THE INDEPENDENT



Cape Town Opera's Soweto Porgy and Bess was little short of a triumph. (They) put on a show that's thrilling from beginning to end... Its hard to imagine Gershwin's masterpiece better done.

DAVID MELLOR
THE MAIL ON SUNDAY, UK



full of singing of a juicily robust, old-fashioned kind that buttoned-up white folks no longer seem able to produce ... The spirituals towards the opera's end set my spine tingling.

HUGO SHIRLEY
THE TELEGRAPH, UK

Christine Crouse's newly sharpened production has real clout ... A fierce energy pulsates through the company.

RIAN EVANS
GUARDIAN, UK



Just as the Mariinsky Opera became a cradle for young singers after the fall of the iron curtain, so it is possible to imagine Cape Town as the next stop on the operatic talent spotter's itinerary.

RICHARD FAIRMAN
FINANCIAL TIMES, UK

The capacity audience was cheering to the rafters on Friday night as the stars of Cape Town Opera's sparkling, vibrant production of Porgy and Bess returned for curtain call after curtain call.

EDINBURGH EVENING
NEWS

the fantastic opera of George Gershwin is a worthy spectacular, well resolved and defended with an overwhelming display of energy by a team of singers, dancers and actors who let it all out on the stage.

EL PAIS
EDICION CATALUÑA

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

2015

TEATRO REAL, MADRID, SPAIN

2014

GRAND-THÉÂTRE, OPERA NATIONAL DE BORDEAUX,
BORDEAUX, FRANCE

GRAN TEATRE DEL LICEU, BARCELONA, SPAIN

2013

HESSISCHES STAATSTHEATER, WIESBADEN, GERMANY

2012

ARTSCAPE OPERA HOUSE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME THEATRE, BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL THEATRE, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE, CARDIFF, WALES

THE MARLOWE THEATRE, CANTERBURY, ENGLAND

THE MAYFLOWER THEATRE, SOUTHAMPTON, ENGLAND

THE LONDON COLISEUM, LONDON, ENGLAND

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA (CONCERT)

BERLIN PHILHARMONIE, BERLIN, GERMANY (CONCERT)

2010

THE ISRAELI OPERA, TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

2009

WALES MILLENNIUM CENTRE, CARDIFF, WALES

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON, ENGLAND (CONCERT)

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL THEATRE, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

2008

DEUTSCHE OPER BERLIN, BERLIN, GERMANY

DEN NORSKE OPERA, OSLO, NORWAY

2007

KINJANI FESTIVAL, HELLS GATE, NAIROBI, KENYA (CONCERT)

MALMÖ OPERA, MALMÖ, SWEDEN

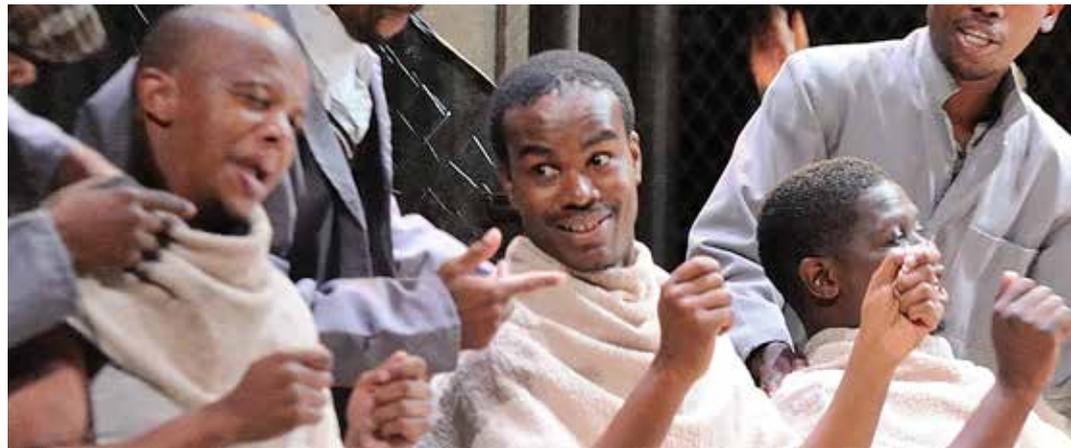
2006

ARTSCAPE OPERA HOUSE, CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

NORRLANDSOPERAN, UMEÅ, SWEDEN



ELECTRIFYING



SPINE-TINGLING



INSPIRING



THRILLING





CAPE TOWN
OPERA

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