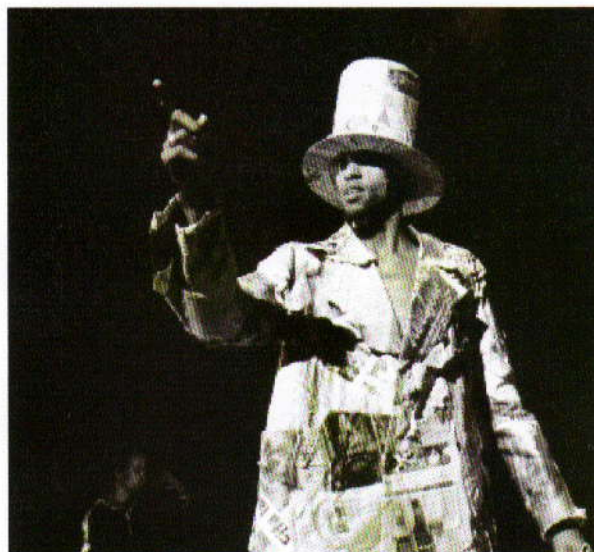


The fact that Eugene Terre Blanche's funeral took place the same day Afrikaaps opened at the Baxter Theatre provided an unexpected context for this ground-breaking stage work.



WRAPPED IN THE TAAL: Quintin Goliath, alias Jitsvinger, leads his 'mouth architects' in a wild ride through the Afrikaans of the people. Behind him is Shane Cooper Picture: ARYAN KAGANOF

The mixture of video, music, dance, hip-hop and poetry is an exhilarating one

- Theatre: Afrikaaps
- Where: Baxter Theatre
- Cast: Quintin Goliath (Jitsvinger), Kyle Shepherd, Emile Jansen, Janine van Rooy (Blaq Pearl), Moenier Adams (Monox), Shane Cooper, Charl van der Westhuizen (Bliksemstraal) with contributions from Jethro Louw. Video by Dylan Valley
- By: Die Argitekbeke and Aryan Kaganof
- Set design: Jantje Geldof and Catherine Henegan
- Director: Catherine Henegan
- When: Until April 24
- To book. Computicket
- Review: Marianne Thamm

The symbolic liberation of Afrikaans from demagogues and despots like Terre Blanche brought a delightfully transgressive edge to this multi-media explosion.

The individuals involved in this bold collective project - who call themselves Die Argitekbeke (loosely translated as the "mouth architects") - are all established artists in their own right and "genres".

For example, Kyle Shepherd is regarded as one of South Africa's foremost young jazz composers/pianists and a likely successor to Abdullah Ibrahim. Emile Jansen and Janine van Rooy have been fine-tuning their hip-hop, jazz and R&B talents for ages. B.Boy and "metaphysical" poet Charl van der Westhuizen, aka Bliksemstraal, is a well-known artist in this neck of the hood.

Moenier Adams has been steeped in the Klopse and Malay choirs of Cape Town since primary school; electric and double-bass player Shane Cooper is an accomplished composer and producer; the lanky Quintin Goliath - Jitsvinger - has been burning up the hip-hop circuit since 2000, while poet, sculptor, storyteller and activist Jethro Louw has been a major influence in the recent revival and celebration of Khoi culture.

The researcher for this project is filmmaker, novelist and poet Ian Kerkhof, alias Aryan Kaganof, and the director is Catherine Henegan, founder of The Glasshouse in Amsterdam.

The potential artistic pitfall of this piece of contemporary agitprop was that all of this brimming individual talent could have so easily overwhelmed and dispersed focus. But the good news is that co-operation and a single collective artistic vision has resulted in a cohesive narrative that sizzles with authenticity, originality, energy and intelligence.

The seamless mixture of video, music, dance, hip-hop, break dancing and poetry is an exhilarating one. Each of these talented artists brings a complementary but different flavour to the unfolding narrative, which is about the alternative history and reclamation of Afrikaans.

While David Kramer and the late Taliep Petersen traced the historic roots of the songs of the Cape in Ghoema in 2006, the emphasis was on the music and they avoided direct sociopolitical commentary.

But with Afrikaaps there is a distinct political voice, one that asserts that Afrikaans is, contrary to popular wisdom, not in its death throes, but a thriving language - albeit one that has not been recognised.

Far from being the tongue claimed by the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners - formed in 1875 to protect and promote suiwer (pure) Afrikaans - the language is a creole created by slaves who worked in Dutch kitchens in the Cape. It is a language first written in Arabic, and today is spoken by around 64% of the inhabitants of the Western Cape.

Far from being a dull history lesson, this is a slick and professional celebration that is visually and artistically provocative and exciting. Henegan and her cast are to be congratulated for breaking so much new ground.