

REVIEW

Fine performances from Rauch, Du Toit at launch of new theatre



Tender moments: Rauch in concert.

DIANE DE BEER

SHOW: "Op Die Hartstog Boulevard"

CAST: Laurika Rauch, Jannie du Toit

BAND: Surendran Reddy (Keyboards); Reuben Samuels (drums); Spiro Paxinos (bass)

DIRECTOR/COMPILER: Stephan Bouwer

VENUE: Théâtre Rendez-vous, State Theatre

DATE: Until August 9

IN the programme prologue, director Stephan Bouwer reflects on this "Chanson Concert" in what he titles "some loose talk about wordsongs". He explains that it attempts "to celebrate hope and despair; the transitory, the eternal, death and resurrection. It is the 'broad way' the 'narrow way' and above all it is 'life's way' that is being discussed here".

"No," he argues. "Rather — it is being sung."

And having paid their dues in "Van Berlyn tot Bapsfontein", talented troubadours, Jannie du Toit and Laurika Rauch had the honour of launching the latest Pact theatre. Combining pleasure and pain, passion and pathos, protestation and pacifism — in fact a melting pot of emotions — the concert of songs tells the stories, some sad, some glad and others celebrating life.

In one of her finest performances, Laurika Rauch winds her magical voice, in all its richness, round every song. From the hauntingly beautiful Joan Armatrading's "Dry Land" to the charmingly comical "Ek Leef Nog", she stuns with her confident yet comfortable approach. Camping it up with a tarty red feather boa in "Ek Leef Nog", she enriches the cheeky lyrics with her adept handling of this almost over-the-top prop.

How fortunate to experience her stage craft, finely tuned, together with the wondrous quality of her voice in a performance which was tailor-made to showcase her versatility.

With his melodious voice, co-star Jannie du Toit is the perfect foil. Moving from the comical to the more cynical, he performs at his peak in songs like "Ik Zou Wel Eens Willen Weten" where he communicates with the

audience directly — almost gently.

But he also has great appeal in the more comical numbers like "How Could You Believe Me" and "Madelaine", an unusually light Brel song which was tackled with great gusto by the duo.

It's all in the interpretation, says the director, and with a repertoire which ranges from Koos du Plessis to Joan Armatrading, including a wealth of music from European cabaret doyens, both performers succeed in painting rich

textures which vary in emotional shades.

But any suggestion that the lyrics do all the talking must be dispelled at the sight of the exuberantly energetic keyboard wizard, Surendran Reddy. No one in his

right mind would employ this piano man simply to provide background noises.

If "Op die Hartstog Boulevard" is a sample of what this venue has to offer, Pretoria has been blessed with yet another quality theatre.