

SHOWTIME

Singers of interpretative power

THE SHOW: *Op die Hartstog Boulevard*
THE STARS: Laurika Rauch and Jannie du Toit
 (Theatre Rendezvous, State Theatre, Pretoria)
THE DIRECTOR: Stephan Bouwer

By Annarosa de Waal

"HOPE and despair, the transitory, the eternal, death and resurrection...the passions, longings and protestations which present themselves daily at the door of one's conscience" — this, according to *Op die Hartstog Boulevard* compiler and director, Stephan Bouwer, is the life and soul of the chanson concert.

Jannie du Toit and Laurika Rauch's particular talents are ideally suited to a celebration of human "passions, longings and protestations". Neither of them merely sing — they interpret. When the last notes of a chanson die away, you understand exactly what it was about.

Interpretation seems to come easily to artists who are so obviously and com-

pletely in control of their voices.

Both clearly understand — and use — the interpretative power of colour contrasts, which contributed in no small measure to Jannie's beautiful, touching version of *Empty Chairs at Empty Tables*, and Laurika's magnificent *Ek Lewe Nog*.

Laurika exploits her formidable acting talents to the full to leave her audience in no doubt as to what she's telling them.

Making her whole body work for her seems almost second nature to her, but *Die Gravin* en-

die Boswagter deserves a special mention: The flip-pant, abrupt note on which she ends the chanson raises far more questions than it resolves, and it is brought about by her body language more than anything else.

Jannie, on the other hand, is at his best when it comes to humour — *Madeleine* and *Mensch, durf te Leven* owe much of their success to his lively sense of fun and perfect timing.

Acting apart, both artists effortlessly take possession of the stage — and the audience — and hold them captive until they

decide it's time to let go.

This, I feel, is partly the result, of Laurika's exceptional ability to build up climaxes. When, as in the emotional tour de force, *Dry Land*, you feel that surely she must have reached top volume now — she starts a crescendo. Her chansons often end in explosions.

However, in some of the duets — *Op die Hartstog Boulevard* itself, for example — she seems unable to control that volume, which leads to sometimes disturbing imbalances. In *Take This Waltz*, her backing for Jannie tends to be intrusive and rather distracting.

As a whole, however, the concert is anything but disturbing — in fact, one wakes up to the real



LAURIKA RAUCH in *Hartstog Boulevard*.

world with quite a shock afterwards.

Which raises the question: What is the point of all this? Apart from pleasantly reminding us for our European — and especially Dutch — heritage, the show seems to be concerned mainly with enter-

tainment.

Or have we, in our isolation, become so obsessed with exclusive South African realities that we no longer recognise universal "passions, longings and protestations" when we're confronted by them?