

Burn the Floor in SA. Now, that's entertainment!



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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The audience screamed with delight from the start. And I mean screamed. And waved their hands in the air. And would have jumped out of their seats if they could. Let's face it.

Glitz, glam and passion

The opening number of a *Burn the Floor* production packs a punch – as does the finale. It's got all the spectacle a show like this should have – how else would it survive 20 years on the road, a 193-performance Broadway season and two West End seasons?



Fuelled from the start by producer Harley Medcalf's vision and the enormous talents of directors and choreographers Jason Gilkison and Peta Roby – dance partners for no less than 40 years – the production has delighted fans of the ballroom and Latin-American dance genres since 1999.

So what keeps them coming back for more? The glitz, the glamour, the music, the moves, the bodies and the sheer passion of the cast that can be a little overwhelming purely because this production lacks enough light and shade for me.



That's what they used to teach us in the competitive ballroom studios in the '80s and '90s. Light and shade, rise and fall and, yes, Stephen Vincent, I remember the 'man is the frame, the woman is the picture' analogy well.

A winning principal couple

Nicole Westdyk used to train in the studio next door to me, arriving straight from school. The Durban-born dancer went on to compete in the UK, winning all the major Latin-American amateur titles with Matthew Cutler including the Worlds and the prestigious British Open Championships – twice. It was the precursor to a professional dance career that has many more highlights I won't go into now.



Suffice to say they were the principal couple in *Burn the Floor* in 1999, a performance I happened to see on a big screen set up in the El Gouna marina on Egypt's Red Sea when I travelled there in 2004. Gilkison and Roby performed in those early runs too.

Having been privileged to see them perform live when I was still competing in Durban, and having had many years watching Westdyk develop her world-class style, this is what I look for in any performance of ballroom or Latin-American styles that I see anywhere.



‘Ballroom Reinvented’

I wrote about the *Burn the Floor The Temperature Rises* tour to Cape Town in 2012, which included the then-undefeated Latin American champion Keoikantse (Keo) Motsepe in the cast. That was exciting.

Subtitled ‘Ballroom Reinvented’ (I still have the programme), it was memorable for some magnificent ballroom sequences and, if memory serves me correctly, a *rhumba* exquisitely danced by six men and a woman, dancing blindfolded. I missed the last tour a few years ago, but this one, dubbed ‘The Rebel Tour’, lacks those kinds of highlights for me.



What it does have is the required level of dazzle and daring, personality and energy and, of course, the drama that contributes to the ongoing success of *Burn the Floor*. Many dancers grow up in the show and they become family.

They make a cohesive unit that will no doubt inspire hundreds of new fans from this tour to hit the social dance floor or pursue similar heights of performance prowess on the world’s stages.

Burn The Floor returns to South Africa

6 Jun 2019





Proudly South African

I might be in the minority in my general feeling about the production but I know I'll get unanimous support for – once again – the South African contingent.

Dancer Kylee Vincent (married to Stephen, although she doesn't partner him in the show) holds many competitive titles, the most prestigious being her under 21 Open British Latin Championship (Blackpool) win in 2012. She joined *Burn the Floor* the following year. Her style is classy, confident and refined, underpinned by the control that comes with great technique. She commands attention, naturally.



Burn The Floor cast

This time, for me, aside from some sound challenges on opening night, the musicians stole the show.

South African Mike Swaga on percussion and Tyler Azzopardi on percussion and vocals deserved more time in the spotlight without the distraction of the dancers (perhaps something to consider for the future) and I would have loved to have seen and heard more of the charismatic and hugely talented Italian principal vocalist Mikee Introna.

As for South African Lelo Ramasimong – singer, songwriter, actor, performer – all I can say is WOW! And I never write in capital letters. It's considered shouting. But this woman is truly worth shouting about.

What an incredible voice and stage presence – she could hold her own anywhere, and she's already done a fair amount of work performing in China, Europe and in her home country. Remember her name. She is a rising star.



Burn The Floor – The Rebel Tour show at the Baxter Theatre in Cape Town till 17 August 2019. Tickets for this much-anticipated show can be purchased via www.webtickets.co.za, and are priced at R180 – R310 each or through the Baxter Theatre via 0861 915 800 or www.baxter.co.za.

The show will then move Johannesburg and Durban and will run from 22 August – 8 September at the Theatre of Marcellus at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg before closing out the tour in Durban at Sibaya Casino and Entertainment Kingdom from 12-29 September.

Tickets for the Johannesburg and Durban legs of the SA tour can be purchased via Computicket at www.computicket.com or via Checkers and Shoprite retail stores, countrywide, and are priced at R280 –R520 for Johannesburg and R285 each for Durban

www.burnthefloor.com

Photo Credit: Danie Coetzee

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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