

Becosi Mtshali loves dance

Billy Suter

ENCOURAGING art that is pioneering and nurturing dance artists who ride the crest of a new wave are essential components of the vision of Durban's Mdu Mtshali.

A lecturer in dance at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), he is among local choreographers who have contributed works to *Cosi... Cosi*, a collage of dance to be presented at 7pm nightly from today until Friday, at the university's Courtyard Theatre in Steve Biko (formerly Mansfield) Road.

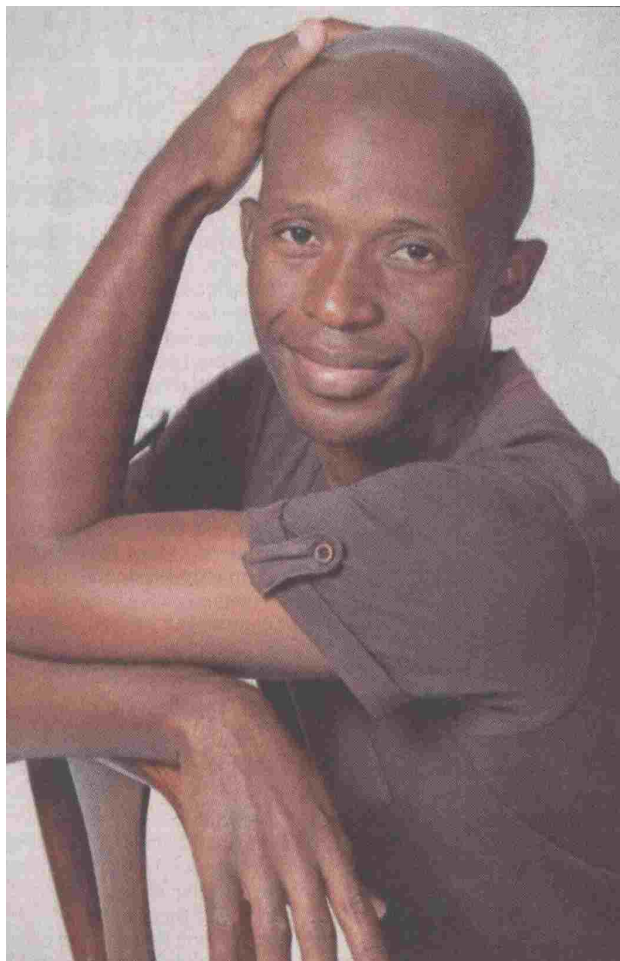
Mtshali has also directed this season of contemporary dance which involves all second-year and third-year theatre-dance students showcasing four new works by Mtshali, Sifiso Khumalo, Neliswa Rashualang and Sifiso Majola.

Cosi... Cosi, says Mtshali, is inspired by African storytelling and the manner in which information was passed from one generation to the next in the absence of written records.

A vibrant production, it explores oral traditions and the use of themes and values, their narrative structures and plots, their rhythms and styles, their images and metaphors, and their artistic and ethical principles.

"I'm trying to encourage art that is pioneering and dance artists who ride the crest of a new wave. This means that backing bold experiments and enjoying victorious failures are both essential components of my vision," he says.

"At the core of what I do is a drive to back the artists who can keep dance contemporary.



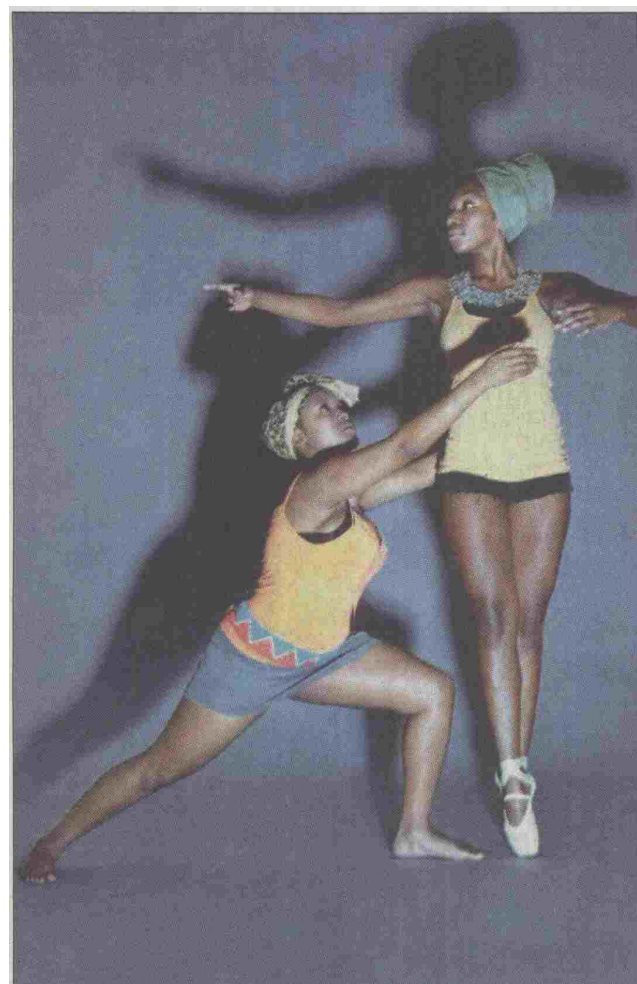
Our dance department at DUT is very proud of the currency of our reflection, as it's a fundamental part of our duty to invest substantially in the production of dance seasons and the creation of new works every year.

"For seven years, since I joined this department, students have been offered an opportunity to perform a new work outside the DUT premises, on the Johannesburg Dance

Umbrella platform. Also, they have had the opportunity to work with award-winning choreographers in our annual dance drama supported by the DUT. This support is vital."

Born, schooled and raised in KwaMashu, Mtshali realised his dream training as a dancer as part of the then Durban Institute of Technology's drama studies programme.

After receiving his diploma, he was awarded the Rio Tinto Richards Bay Mineral/British



Choreographer and Durban University of Technology dancer lecturer Mdu Mtshali, above left, director of *Cosi... Cosi*. Above right are Popi Qwabe, left, and Tembela M Mandela in a scene from the production, running from tonight until Friday at Durban's Courtyard Theatre.

Council Dance Scholarship to study in the UK, at the acclaimed London Contemporary Dance School.

He graduated with a certificate of higher education in contemporary dance, a one-year full programme he completed in 2002-2003.

Before further study at the London Contemporary Dance School, he performed and toured extensively with the French Jean-Françoise Duroure Dance Company, visiting France, Germany, the Netherlands, Congo, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Gabon, Senegal, Abidjan, Ghana and Cameroon.

Plans for the future?

"I have always had plans to further my study of dance and complete my Master's in contemporary dance. I have had an offer to study [again] at the London Contemporary Dance School, but it will have to wait until I gain more funding," he says.

"Some time in the future I would also like to get a dance training programme started for talented young dancers wishing to study contemporary dance, but who do not have the funding," he adds.

Tickets for *Cosi...Cosi* cost R35 each. To book, or for any further information, ring Lebohlang Sibisi at 031 373 2194.