

Forging fresh visionary artistic tracks

INZANGI MOVIES



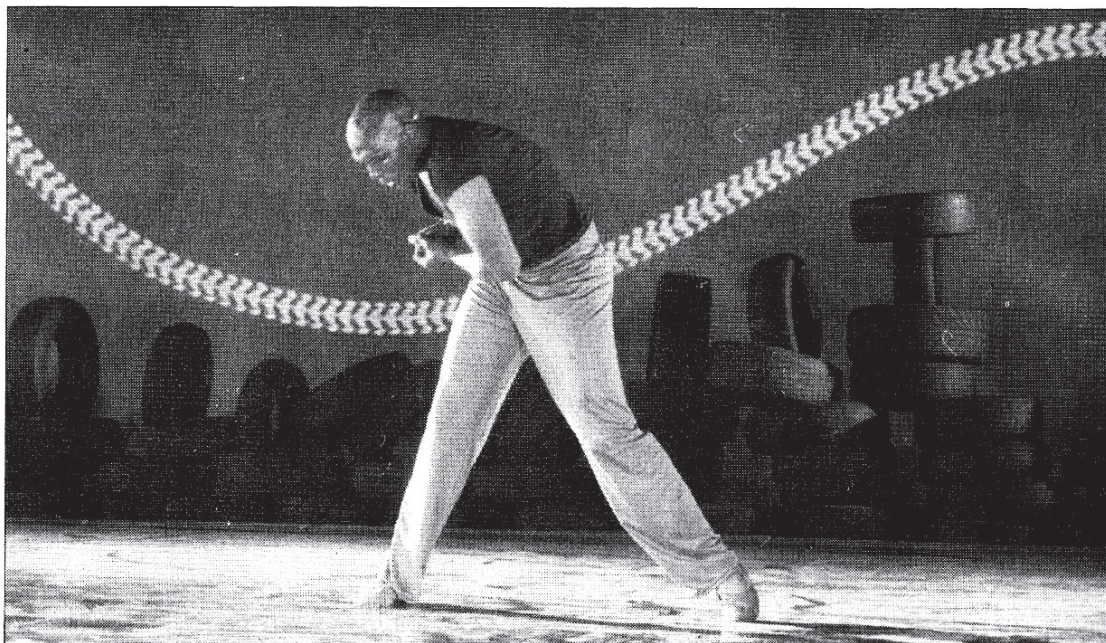
**ADRIENNE
SICHEL**

THE circles of razor wire topping the Kliptown wall mirror the tyres and the twirling projections on the impromptu stage below.

The optimistically titled final dress rehearsal, held in March, of Itumeleng (Tumi) Mokgope's *Tempered Souls*, has drawn a gaggle of children who are fascinated by the visuals, puzzled by the abstraction of it all, but galvanised by the dancer's dramatic impact.

The 70 worn tyres – which are arranged, roiled or manipulated by the choir – are familiar utility objects whose new metaphorical identities dovetail with their more mundane functions as toys, modes of transport, traditional sandals and instruments of death.

These resonances are stitched into the choreography and amplified by the photographic projections and animations. Tyre tracks dance to Karl Amadeus Hartmann's *Quatuor à Cordes No 1 Carillon* (1933), recorded by the Doeleann Kwartett. White rubberised ghosts, spirits of tyres,



TIRELESS ARTIST: Itumeleng Mokgope dancing his solo *Tempered Souls*, which is curated, directed and produced by Indra Wussouw.

PICTURE: HUGH MDLALOSE

float by in contrast to Mokgope's emotionally charged black body.

This corner in Kliptown, next to the railway track and the Battery Centre, is a far cry from the State Theatre, Nelson Mandela and Playhouse stages where Tumi Mokgope has spent most of his professional dancing career. But sitting on the kerb, chatting in the

dark after the rehearsal, I had a sense that this setting means more to him than any opera house.

Participating in this solo, directed by his producer Indra Wussouw, was his friend and fellow congregant tenor, Godfrey Ngobeni, who is the choir master in their Lutheran church in Meadowlands.

The choir of youngsters to

whom Ngobeni teaches music and computers in White City Jabavu also participated in *Tempered Souls*.

Last year Mokgope, 40, resigned from the South African Ballet Theatre (SABT), where he danced and taught in the outreach programme, to work as a ballet teacher and arts administrator at Rena le Lona (we are with you), in Diepkloof, Soweto. This holistic after-school centre caters for orphans and children infected and affected by HIV/Aids.

That's where the Meadowlands dancer with a proud training lineage stretching from Carly Dibakwane, Johannesburg Dance Foundation, Johannesburg Youth Ballet and the Rambert School in London teaches ballet.

It was in the UK that he realised that contemporary companies, including the black Phoenix Dance

dancers. "That is what bought me. I wanted to keep that discipline. People thought I was trying to be white, they misunderstood me, I knew I would never be Siegfried (in *Swan Lake*). I learned so much from the ballet company."

As well as from Adele Blank's Free Flight and the Playhouse Dance Company in Durban, where he was part of Boyzie Cekwana's newly formed Floating Outfit Project.

It was at the Playhouse that Mokgope created and danced his compelling solo *Rolihlahla*, a historic tribute to then president Nelson Mandela, staged at the 1996 FNB Dance Umbrella. Now he is back on stage "dancing me".

Tempered Souls is rooted in *Motho Mang-Ke Mang?* (Who's who?), which he choreographed for 10 SABT dancers (ballerinas Angela Malan and Burnise Silvius among them) commissioned by Dance Umbrella 2009.

His inspiration was the tyres stacked next to the roads, which got him thinking about what they symbolised in South African society. An ambitious conceptual work which needed careful reworking... that didn't happen.

But *Tempered Souls* has. This weekend this collaboration with videographer Jurgen Meekel and photographer Mileta Postic will inaugurate joziart: lab, an exciting new cultural and dance space in Doornfontein.

This 20-minute piece is also part of the Goethe-Institut's Football meets Culture programming. And thanks to the Sylt Foundation, Soweto also meets inner Jozi.

● See *Tempered Souls* on Sunday and Monday at 7pm at joziart: lab, Arts on Main, 260 Fox St, cnr Berea St. Info: 076 501 4291. Admission is free. The full production returns to Kliptown