

# Kids disrupt ballet performance



□ SABB soloist Lorna Maseko caused a stir at a recent performance.

## SAMANTHA MOOLMAN

The South African Ballet Theatre (SABB) has pirouetted into the public relations danger zone.

Complaints have been pouring in from theatregoers who attended Sunday's matinee performance of *The Nutcracker*.

With an apparent disregard for theatre etiquette, children from the SABB outreach programmes created such a disturbance at the ballet that several people even walked out.

According to Debbie Allaway, who attended Sunday's performance, the children were extremely rowdy, like they were "more accustomed to a sports event".

She said: "It's great that they were excited about the dancing, and that through them SABB is creating our future performers, but it should have been made public that they were going to be there. I was disappointed."

The excessive cheering apparently lasted throughout the duration of the show, but reached breaking point in Act II, especially when certain performers came on stage. One of the children's favourites was Lorna Maseko.

Principal ballet master Iain

MacDonald, who plays the part of the Nutcracker Prince, said he was aware of the commotion in the audience, and at times he could not hear the music. But MacDonald was adamant that he enjoyed it.

"The sheer delight of the children was amazing. It was encouraging. I felt like a rock star. But we do need to take responsibility to teach and explain to them how they should behave at the theatre."

The children themselves had performed earlier that day during their annual outreach concert, and could watch *The Nutcracker* as a reward and Christmas gift from the SABB.

Fiona Budd, director of publicity, said they could not send them to the shortened performance today, which is being put on especially for children. This was due to additional transport costs the SABB could not afford.

She admitted to receiving a number of complaints and said they would reimburse those people who were not happy with the performance.

"We are reworking our schedule. In future the children will be spread out at different performances and will not all attend one show at the same time."