

AF1

AF1 was produced by the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK). *AF1* is a fast and furious mixture of song, dance, romance and drama. Lisa is a highly talented classical ballet dancer and has the main role in the show that her class is putting on at the Norwegian Opera. However, Lisa is restless and fed up with all the ballet rules. At the club a hip hop battle is taking place and she is fascinated by the free style of the dance. Lisa tries to join *AF1*, but she quickly discovers that hip hop is full of unwritten rules. In her search for acceptance by *AF1* she finally breaks away from the ballet, putting the whole performance at the Opera in jeopardy. A meeting between Lisa and Stig makes Lisa realize that she must help. But the Opera performance is fast approaching.

AF1 was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010 finalists in the 7-11 Fiction category.

International experts' opinions

"I think it was great – a hallelujah moment – these days" (female expert, Sweden). The international experts liked the program because it empowered the characters in the program to decide for themselves. "I thought it shows several possibilities for youth: you can choose any dance, and also you decide, as the girl said" (female expert, Sweden). They liked the characterization of the program. "I thought that was great. I thought it was pretty well casted as well" (female expert, Sweden). One of the producers from Norway discussed the choice of characters in the program. "It kind of paralleled there. When we finally found the children, we were adjusting the script to fit their abilities, because in Norway there aren't that many people. We have actually a really tough audition process to find the kids that were actually capable of singing, dancing, acting – especially the guy, the break-dancer" (female expert, Norway).

Many experts liked the issues children relevant raised in the program. "What I did think would be appealing is the sort of Soap Opera quality of it for this age group. I thought that was really well targeted, and I thought the issues were well targeted. I just didn't think that they were presented as well, as authentically as they could be" (female expert, USA). Some appreciated the issue of self-esteem in spite of being poor that was shown in the program. "Even more beautiful – she is not fighting for her because she is Muslim, but because they are coming from a poor area, and it is a special project of ballet, so that they could show that even if you are coming from this part of the town, which is known as not the good part, you can still do something. This is great, and it is because you are a girl and you are coming from this area, and show the world that you can



Figure 1: Lisa's ballet teacher is very angry at her when he learnt she wants to do hip-hop.



Figure 2: Lisa and Nabil make up after they exchange feelings using music.



Figure 3: Faiza is finally allowed to dance ballet again.



Figure 4: The beautiful ballet dancing wins warm applause from the audience.



Figure 5: Lisa is fascinated by hip-hop.



Figure 6: Tariq's self-centred rap is met with a cold shoulder from the audience.



Figure 7: Tariq apologize via his rap and his friends joins him in hip-hop.

do it. I think that is a wonderful way” (female expert, Germany).

There was a lot of discussion about the use of music in the program. “The musical style, they solved all the problems in a song” (female expert, Sweden). Some found the use of music innovative. “For me, I think it is a very sophisticated way to solve their problem” (female expert, Japan). They also appreciated the use of lyrics in the program: “I think he said a lot in the lyrics, instead of the talking dialogue. I think it is a relief to see a hip-hop dancer in that context. I really liked that. With dialogue, we have seen so many times that kind of character doing something totally different – like arguing and yelling, or provoking in another way. So, I found it like a relief” (female expert, Sweden). “It was a really cool show; it was very well made. I liked the dancing and singing” (female expert, Germany).

Some experts could not relate to the use of music in the program, due to cultural differences. “In Japan we don't have drama and musicals like this – with no explanation – it is kind of new. I live in the United States and have seen these kinds of shows a lot, but if I think back about Japan – they will think ah- hmm- why are they singing? I would just be shocked and surprised” (female expert, Japan). However, some found the use of music very normal. “When you consider the form of musical here, I think that was quite natural – there are hip-hop girls and boys. Maybe that is the way that they compromise or they go back to their friendship?” (female expert, South Korea). However, few did not like the use of music. “But as a drama it stops a little bit- I think- it is difficult to put a song in the middle” (female expert, Denmark).

Some experts thought that the program had too much of information. “I thought this was another one of those where producers were trying to get too much in the head of the kid” (female expert, USA).

They appreciated the program for showing diversity. “It would have a lot of diversity in this short one, because of the diversity in the different cultures, different races – you like ballads, you like hip hop; so it is all together. Even if we are different, we can live together as one group. It is like a forum of sketches where you do that together: *one for all, all for one*” (male expert, Poland).

Few experts really liked the production of the program. “I think it was very slick, very well done production. So, it did fit this whole hip hop theme, because it was very now and very modern- and it moved very quickly. It showed the diversity. A lot of the ballets have a lot- It just fit the production: it was very beautiful and very pretty and clean. That is what struck me as well- with this musical element” (female expert, Jamaica).

One of the producers from Norway elaborated the effects and popularity of the program in Norway. “So, the effect of it was that the kids- they started to have AF1 birthdays; they started to make their own AF1 crews doing the choreography from the series. Because this was low cost all the way, we didn’t want to try to make that much money out of other aspects of it. So, we put the script for free as a download on the Web. So, kids at school and different gatherings were actually taking parts of the script and making their own shows at school or wherever. So, you have sensed the project has kind of been there online” (female expert, Norway).

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Screenshots from AF1 © NRK

Figure 8: Finally, Lisa also joins the AF1.