

Angels on Fire

Angels on Fire was produced by Hand-Held Films and broadcast by South African Broadcasting Corporation. This documentary follows children of Hillbrow – a bustling inner-city community in the heart of Johannesburg where children have to keep themselves busy while their parents are earning a living. The children have organised themselves to form a dance group that must overcome some challenges while preparing for the big competition. Will they get themselves organised and ready for the big day?

Angels on Fire was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2010 finalists in the 7-11 Non-fiction category.

International experts' opinions



Figure 1: Gugu loves dancing.



Figure 2: Many young people practice dancing.



Figure 3: Gugu and her friends are practicing dancing to participate in a dance competition.

The international experts had mixed opinion about the program. Many international experts liked the program in spite of the fact that they felt it was not directed very well. “I liked it a lot; it was straight, simple, but not so well crafted – but, ok, who cares in a way. It was very authentic, very close to the girls. I thought it was very nice” (female expert, Germany). Some loved the program because of its passion and love for dancing. “I loved it. It was full of passion. Lots of energy – they were fantastic kids that were full of life and so into it. Also the dance was so beautiful. It was a very well done movie and with kids” (female expert, Israel). Some appreciated the culture of South Africa which the program was able to display. “I think that it also showed on the side of South Africa, because usually you see these townships. This was another environment that you usually don’t see. I also liked it very much” (female expert, Sweden). Some liked the way the conflict resolution was shown in the program. “Oh, I liked it – I thought it was really interesting: the girls falling out and having to work out how to – very interesting to watch conflict resolution!” (female expert, UK). They also appreciated the conflict resolving skills of the children. “I just loved the interaction that the children had amongst themselves, and how they were like little women and trying to sort out their differences. Thankfully, they came together in the end. It was very nice” (female expert, Jamaica).

Some experts, however, suggested that the program was not able to generate the spirit of competition. “I agree with her, but I kind of missed seeing the competition that they were up against, these girls. You knew that they were going to enter a competition, but you didn’t know what they had to compete against” (male expert, Norway). Many international experts could not comprehend the



Figure 4: The name of their group is “Angels on Fire”.

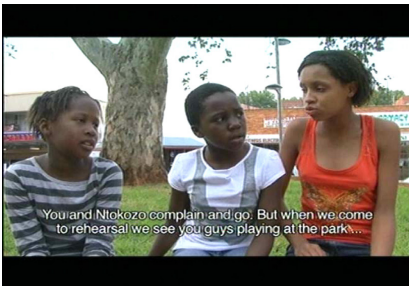


Figure 5: There is conflict among the children.



Figure 6: Gugu's mother also tries to help them resolving their conflict.



Figure 7: The dance master also tries to help them.



Figure 8: The group put their differences aside and win the best prize in the competition.

conflict shown during the dance practice. “I actually couldn’t even understand what the conflict was about. So, I think that they lost some of the dance part into the conflict, which then wasn’t possible for me to understand. I lost some of the program because of that. I would have had more of the competition and more of the dance – and not so much of the girl company” (female expert, Norway). Some were disappointed at not seeing the dance. “I was wondering at the end, because you could hardly see their dance. You saw a lot of the others, or you saw more of the other competitors; but the dance of the girls – it was so little shown, and it was edited in a way that I was thinking: were they really good?” (female expert, Germany).

Some felt that the program was very complicated and handled a lot of things together leading to the juxtaposition of themes. “I also think it was many things. You have the competition at the end; it should not be a very complex story: the good things happening they don’t tell out. I felt like it was many shots. They have filmed their film, and what are we picking? We take a little from everything. Then their competition should be the huge high, in the end, but it wasn’t that. I felt it was flat all the way through” (male expert, Poland).

There were conflicting views about the way the program was structured. “I think that the important issue here is that if you are building some suspense, till the end, that moment- has to be a big moment. It is missing” (female expert, Argentina). There were doubts about the quality of the dancing. “They won the prize, but I didn’t think that it was very good dancing. I thought it was on the script maybe” (female expert, Japan). There were also discussions about the way the program sacrificed the production value to appear more authentic. “I loved it. The only thing that I just... the very end... I would have liked to have wanted to cheat just a little bit and have a crew just elbow their way in there. I know it would have been kind of obnoxious for the crowd maybe. But just so you could see the whole dance; that was the only time where, speaking of production value, I was like: *oh, I really want to see the whole shot of them dancing.* It was ‘hand-held’ and you probably have people in the way and all that, but that was the only time that I would kind of go: *ok, let’s just be obnoxious and get in here and get the shot!*” (male expert, USA). “With Angels on Fire, I think they make that choice that they were going to go for complete authenticity and appear as the production team and just let it happen. I think Angels on Fire is definitely at the bottom-end in terms of production values, but they are called ‘hand-held productions’ and that is what they do” (female expert, Ireland).

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