



## Press Release

### **LORCIA COOPER STRIPPED NAKED!** **Wednesday, December 7 at 6.30pm**

Lorcia Cooper is regarded as one of South Africa's foremost contemporary dancers and choreographers. Her obviously sexy body, flamboyance and outspoken conviction on any topic merely emphasises that star allure - on and off screen.

This year, Lorcia has moved into one of the most dramatic storylines on Backstage. As Charmaine, Vulindlela College's dance lecturer, she had to suffer the tragedy of her son Ethan's (Niyaaaz Ebrahinz) car accident and subsequent head injuries, resulting in irreparable brain damage and a coma. Charmaine then had to make a decision that no parent should ever have to make - authorise the withdrawal of her child's life support system.

Lorcia's acting skills - her raw, naked portrayal of rage and frustration, pain, disbelief and sadness over Ethan's death - moved studio cast members and producers to tears. It's been the same for the show's viewers.

How has Lorcia coped so far with such emotionally charged scenes? "When I watch myself act, I watch it outside of myself, otherwise I'm very critical of my acting. When I watched my performance with Ethan in the hospital, even I had tears in my eyes. I don't think I could have played it more real - and I wouldn't change anything about my performance. It was straight from the gut. Shot straight from the hip. This particular storyline had my whole heart in it. On set I really did feel like a mother. I really did attach to that part of my character."

How did Lorcia play the role of a mother when she has no child of her own? "It wasn't as challenging as it would seem, because women have a maternal instinct," says Lorcia. "I'm blessed because I work with great kids. Niyaaaz (Ethan) was a miracle sent to the set. At the time, he was four and because he never cried and always behaved, it made it seem like I was in control.

"I think the trick with kids is sincerity. They see through everything. And you realise kids have so much to teach you in the littlest of ways. As far as Ethan's death, from the first day I worked with this little boy, my heart was broken knowing the storyline.

"Emotionally, it was draining - more so because I don't use tear stick. I put myself in the storyline completely as if I was experiencing it in real life - so the pain was as real as it could be.

"I've had a lot of really uplifting comments about my performance - they've blown me away. I'm a performer and having my acting affect people makes all that hard work and dedication more rewarding than any material gain."

Does she carry her work home with her? How does she separate her acting from her real life, especially if her role is so intense? "Subconsciously, you always carry it with you. Consciously you make a decision not to enter into that space...but something in you is a little less loud," she says.

Has this role made Lorcia think about having kids of her own? "It's definitely made me broody," she says with a smile, "especially since getting married. The question everyone always asks me is, 'Do you want to have kids?', and the answer is, 'Yes, Yes, Yes!' "

Lorcia/Charmaine's major storyline continues - with a new child coming into her life, Sophie (Amulelani Muyanga). "After the death of anyone who is close to your heart, healing almost seems impossible and this is true for Charmaine, who has lost her only relation, her only family. To escape the pain, throwing yourself completely into something/anything else is a survival mechanism...

"This is the point where Charmaine is presented with an offer to teach at a community centre, helping kids. At first the decision is a hard one for her to make, because kids will always remind her of Ethan. And having not dealt with the pain of his loss, she rejects the offer. However, persuasive colleagues and friends eventually convince her it's better to try and make that difference.

"But her decision to teach dance to the kids at the centre is due to this very talented and beautiful little girl. Charmaine observes that Sophie's mother, Maria (Boshadi Nkomo), is negligent and that she could be ruining her daughter's dreams, her talent. Charmaine's anger towards Maria naturally stems from Charmaine's loss of Ethan. Charmaine observes the uncaring attitude this mother has towards her child, and it frustrates her because all Charmaine wants is to have Ethan back. He was her whole life.

"Psychologically, Sophie becomes a turning point for Charmaine," Lorcia concludes.

But be warned - Sophie is also the catalyst for a series of catastrophic events that span most of 2006 for her, her family and Charmaine. Lorcia Cooper has shown, however, that she and - Charmaine - can conquer most anything.

**For photos of Charmaine, Sophie and Maria, please contact:**

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