

# Changing the canvas

**Still Breathing  
at the Sheldonian Theatre,  
Oxford  
on Saturday, October 29**

By JON LEWIS

**LIKE a boiling pot overflowing on a stove, Euton Daley's epic and angry masterpiece *Still Breathing* captures with bitterness and understanding the feelings of generations of black British citizens.**

Played out on the floor of Christopher Wren's stunning 17th-century Sheldonian Theatre, dancers, musicians, singers and

actors bring to an Oxford audience a narrative that is not heard enough.

Many of the performers are stars in their own right, working together in a shared vision.

Among the company is Oxford-based kora player Jali Fily Sissokho, well-known on the world music circuit. Daley's regular colleagues from his award-winning production of Kuumba Nia Arts' *SOLD*, Amantha Edmead and Amra Angie Anderson, are joined by one of my former students, mesmeric dancer Daniel Browne.

Usually Daley recites his poetry, but for this performance, that role is undertaken evocatively by Ben Owora. He takes on the role of a pastor conducting a service of a

young black man unlawfully killed.

His is the voice of every black person who is exploited, everywhere. This universality is evoked in the multitude of song forms from American gospel, South African township folk and West Indian spirituals.

Ayo-Dele Edwards, Lati Saka, Nicola Moses, Fimber Bravo and Emmanuel Edwards are all given moments to shine in their various art specialisms. Costumes and flags reflect the range in diasporas within black communities.

Their stories tell of brutal slavery and lynchings, institutionalised racism and extrajudicial killings by the police, weapons or drugs never found on the victims.

The constant refrain of 'I'm tired',



**Still Breathing**

Picture: David Fisher

recited over the mordant drumbeat of a human heart, is followed by a recital of a shameful list of injustices stirring that boiling pot.

However, Daley offers a vision of hope symbolised by blank picture frames that are held by the

performers, partners to a memorial to lives lost that decorate a table at the rear of the stage.

Once experienced, *Still Breathing* is not forgotten. This powerful and moving production deserves a wider audience beyond Oxford.