

ECCENTRIC, UNRULY AND FUNNY

Madness melts away to reveal humanity

COSI. Directed by Scott Sparrow, with *The Mechanicals*. At The Little Theatre until July 31. **TERRI DUNBAR - CURRAN** reviews.

THE DISJOINTED craziness builds slowly to a crescendo of pandemonium as Lewis, a young director, watches in horror. Around him, his actors run, scream, slam furniture, laugh maniacally and beat one another. What began as an attempt as some well-meaning community work has descended into mayhem.

Staged by repertory company *The Mechanicals*, Louis Nowra's *Cosi* is a humorous and often touching look at what happens when a director attempts to stage an opera with a group of patients from a mental institution.

While the first performance of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* was staged at the Burgtheater in Vienna in 1790, Lewis (Andrew Laubscher) is working in a burnt-out theatre in Melbourne, Australia, in 1971, with people so eccentric and unruly that it's a wonder he stays long enough for the social worker to leave.

Tackling not only the flat Aussie accents, *The Mechanicals* launch fully into the insanity of their characters. Guy de Lancey's manic depressive Roy wins the audience over immediately. While he may come across as one of the saner members of the group, watching him unravel into misery is hilarious. Staging *Così* was his dream, but

the fact that none of the actors can speak Italian, sing or act somewhat puts a damper on his ambition.

De Lancey works his melodramatic character to full comedic effect – facial expression, wig and body language making the most of the dry humour.

At first glance the characters are so unhinged it's no wonder the company selected this play as part of its Lunatic Fringe repertory season. But as the audience gets to know each of them and their stories, along with Lewis, the madness seems to melt away to reveal the people beneath – people just like us, more or less. Sure, they may have killed their mothers, burnt cats alive or turned to drugs, but somehow you end up looking beyond that.

As Lewis, Laubscher finds the balance between abject terror and decorum when dealing with his charges. His transition from fear to miserable resignation and finally wholehearted acceptance mirrors the audience's reaction.

Kate Liguorish plays a formidable social worker with so much positive energy and complete disregard for personal space it veers dangerously close towards desperation.

The band of would-be actors consists of Henry (Adrian Collins) a largely silent, painfully uncomfortable young man who is content in his world of toy soldiers.

Then there is Doug (Wilhelm van der Walt), who would much rather

be doing a rock opera and who has an unhealthy interest in starting fires. Cherry (Deborah Vierya) is a bundle of high-pitched energy and sweetness, but switches lightning quick to menacing and back again. The chemistry between Laubscher and Vierya is at its funniest in the uncomfortable silences.

Tinarie van Wyk Loots's Julie, a drug addict sent to the institution by her parents, sticks to herself, watching the chaos around her. Her poetic musings about drugs and her attraction to Lewis seem out of place amid the confusion and disorder.

Notebook and pen dangling around her neck, Ruth (Emily Child) is obsessed with order and the boundaries between illusion and reality. As she painstakingly counts steps and agonises over pretend coffee there's a sweet innocence in her wide-eyed trust of Lewis.

Completing the unusual group of thespians is Wagner enthusiast Zac (Luke Ellenbogen). The passionate pianist has a penchant for pharmaceuticals, but in his more lucid moments proves to be quite an asset.

The cast plays the pandemonium well, but they also excel at the tender moments, where humanity shines through the madness. Soon discomfört gives way to affection and it's almost sad to bid the motley bunch goodbye as they go to their wards.

To book, call 021 480 7129. For information, see www.the-mechanicals.co.za



STAGE MADNESS: Adrian Collins, Deborah Vierya, Emily Child and Tinarie van Wyk Loots in *The Mechanicals'* *Cosi* at The Little Theatre.

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Winter Symphony Season

Thursday 29 July, City Hall, 20:00
Conductor: Martin Ventges. Soloist: Natasha Korsakova (violin)
Wagner - *Ring Cycle* Overture
Lalo - *Symphonic Variations*, Beethoven - *Symphony No. 5*

Thursday 12 August, City Hall, 20:00
Conductor: Owein Arndt Hughes
Soloist: Daniel and Alexander Gurfinkel (piano duo)
John Simon - *A Post of Balls*, Bruch - *Concerto for two violins*
Saint-Saëns - *Introduction and Fandango Capriccioso*
Dvořák - *Symphony No. 6*

Thursday 19 August, City Hall, 20:00
Conductor: Conrad van Alphen
Soloist: Ralph van Raaij (piano)
Falla - *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, Pfitzer - *Piano Concerto*
Stravinsky - *Song of the Nightingale* and *The Firebird* (1945)

Thursday 26 August, City Hall, 20:00
Conductor: Conrad van Alphen
Soloist: Ben Schoeman (piano)
Opfo Curjel-Roos - *Berlitz - Hungarian March* from *Damnation of Faust* (composer: Brandon Philippe)
Johann Wagenaar - *Overture: The Taming of the Shrew*
Shostakovich - *Symphony No. 9: Brothers* - *Piano Concerto No. 2*

Full programme details: www.ope.org.za
Booking: Computicket or KapaKapa Discountcard (021 421 7895)

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Sink your sexy skeef teeth into OppiKoppi

Arts writer

THE OppiKoppi Sexy.Crooked.Teeth Festival will once again transform the Limpopo bushveld into a non-stop party from August 6 to 8.

This year's line-up includes Albert Frost, Vusi Mahlasela, Architecture of Aggression, Billy Talent from Canada, Blk Jks, Boom Monk Ben from the UK, Die Heuwels Fantasties, DIGITAL RockIT, Gang of Instrumentals, Gemma Ray from the UK, Haezer, Jack Parow, Lucky Fonzi III from the Netherlands, New Holland, Pestroy, PHDJ, Philadelphia Grand Jury, Prime Circle, RhūtZ, Straatligkinders, Taxi Violence, The Narrag, Thieve, Yesterday's Pupil, Zebra & Giraffe.

Valiant Swart was one of the first artists to perform at OppiKoppi and to celebrate his 20

years in the industry, various artists will perform his songs on the Sunday afternoon. Collaborators include Jack Parow, Piet Botha, Die Heuwels Fantasties, Hot Water, Les Javan, Tamara Dey, Tidal Waves, Frost and Mahlasela.

In addition to regular faves such as Tumi, Van Coke Kartel, Terminatryx, Voodoo Child and Wrestlerish, fresh acts destined for the festival stage are Cortina Whiplash, Gordon's Suitcase, Namuh, Mr Sakitumi, Wedding Dj's, Die Tuindwergies, Dead Alphabet, Kenzhero, Killer Robot, Rumbling Bones, Richard The Third, Rko, Schalk Joubert Band, Sciooustic, Son Of A Thousand Blues, Spit Munky and The Makabra Ensemble.

Get your tickets for R450 on www.ticketbreak.co.za For the full line-up, see www.oppikoppi.co.za

What's on

Art for winter

The Hout Street Gallery in Paarl presents its annual Winter Gala from July 29 until September 30. The exhibition will feature a range of paintings, ceramics and sculptures by more than 30 established and new artists. Call 021872 5030, or see www.houtstreetgallery.co.za

VJR fusion

Pepper Club Luxury Hotel and Spa in Pepper Street hosts slick fusion act Virtual Jazz Reality on Fridays at 4pm. Enjoy sushi and tapas as well as oysters and bubbly specials. Call 021 812 8888, or see www.pepperclub.co.za

Hipper exhibition

End of an Era, an exhibition of work by Mark Hipper, at Erdmann Contemporary in Shortmarket Street on Friday and Saturday from 10am to 5pm includes works on paper, large paintings on board and canvas and watercolours created over two decades. Call 021 422 2762.



FLAMING ART: Redhead by Gavin Calf is showing at The Hout Street Gallery in Paarl from July 29 until September 30.

Free drum workshop

Drummer Kevin Gibson will lead a free drumming workshop at the Paul Bothner Superstore in N1 City on July 28 at 7pm. Call 021 595 2444, or see www.bothner.co.za

Say it with photography

The Image Says It All, an exhibition of work by 20 photographers, will open at Exposure Gallery at the Old Biscuit Mill in Woodstock on July 29 at 6pm. Participating artists include Nic Bothma, Brent Sturton, Nikki Rixon, Dale Yudelman and Stanislav Solntsev. Call 021 447 4124.

Carmel art relocation

Carmel Art at Constantia Village is relocating to the Cape Quarter in Green Point at the end of the month. They will hold a relocation exhibition and sale of works by leading SA artists until July 31. The exhibition includes works by Mel Brigg, Derric van Rensburg, Duggie du Toit, Hannejie de Clercq, Carla Bosch, Robin Mann, Isabel le Roux, Frans Claerhout, Paddy Starling, Marie Vermeulen Breedt and Catherine Paynter. Call 021 794 6262.

Conceptual art

Conceptual Matter will open at Erdmann Contemporary in Shortmarket Street on August 4 at 6pm. Includes works by Haidee Nel, Brendhan Dickerson, Jennifer Lovemore-Reed, Lynette Bester, Barbara Wildenboer, Kilmany-Jo Liversage, Nomthunzi Mashalaba, Elize O'Connor and Norman O'Flynn. Call 021 422 2762.

Kitt at Beefcakes

The run of *Daniele Pascal Sings Eartha Kitt* at Beefcakes in Green Point on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays has been extended until August 6. Pieter du Plessis accompanies her on piano. Tickets are R100. Call 021 425 9019, or see www.villapascal.co.za

Philadelphia Grand Jury

UK punk band Philadelphia Grand Jury will perform at the 3 Arts on Main Road, Plumstead, on August 7. Tickets are R150. See www.ticketbreak.co.za

Yiddish song fest

The Mazeltov Yiddish Song Festival will be staged at the Baxter on August 15 at 4.30pm and 8pm. The show will feature the Fire Klezmer Band directed by Matthew Reid, as well as artists Aviva Pelham, Ivor Joffe, Beverley Chiat, David Gordon, Dragana Jevtovic, Kevin Derman, Caely Levy, Richard Gore and Erez Shaked. Tickets are R60 to R120 at Computicket: 083 915 8000.

Matador at Da Capo

Da Capo on Greenmarket Square will screen Pedro Almodovar's *Matador* on Wednesday evening as part of its Cinema Classico series. The film, featuring Assumpta Serna, Antonio Banderas, Nacho Martínez and Eva Cobo, looks at the links between sex, death and religion. Tickets are R85 and include a two-course dinner. Call 021 423 1234.

Gatta Patat

Die Kaalkop Waarheid will perform at Gatta Patat Theatre Café at The Cape Diamond Hotel in Longmarket Street on Thursday at 8.30pm. Tickets are R80. Call 021 461 2519.

Soetes and Soup

Chris Chameleon, Ivan Zimmerman, Klojag and Dana Snyman will perform at the annual Breedekloof Soetes and Soup weekend on Friday and Saturday. Buy a mug at the first winery and enjoy complimentary homemade soups at other participating venues. Call 023 349 1791, or see www.breedekloof.com

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