

THE SKINNY

INDEPENDENT CULTURAL JOURNALISM



Hi-jinks and spectacle abound in this fun-filled family show.

REVIEW BY LAURIN CAMPBELL.
PUBLISHED 23 AUGUST 2012

Prepare to be amazed. *Mother Africa* is an explosion of energy and virtuosity that plants its roots in the continent's musical and movement traditions before lurching into a circus-filled carnival of colour. Tricks aplenty, this crowd-pleaser has something to astound even the most hard-hearted spectator.

From the first pounding beats of the drum, the supremely talented onstage musicians make their mark as the real drivers of this show. Whether playing oozing jazz melodies or providing a pulsing backdrop, they seamlessly flow between styles and support the transitions connecting the largely unrelated acts. Not once do they falter or lose their effortlessly cool flair.

The other performers are more obvious in their attempts to impress. They settle for nothing less than the most breathtaking stunts. Superman-like gymnastic feats are performed on top of a stack of chairs that almost touches the lighting rig, and one man contorts his body into such unrecognisable shapes that it's a wonder that he possesses any functioning vertebrae. But that's not even the half of it... Have you ever wondered what it's like for a man to lie on his back and repeatedly toss a boy into the air using only the power of his legs? Wonder no more, you can see it here. Did I mention that the child is spinning and flipping throughout?

Assisting the band in maintaining the African vibe are the dancers who deliver a masterclass in shimmying, bottom wagging and the rhythmic complexities of gumboot dancing. Every step seems a celebration and their enthusiasm is infectious. If you catch it too, don't forget to pick up your jaw on the way out. You may just have dropped it.