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10th August

Fringe Children's Shows: Circa:Wolfgang, Underbelly's Circus Hub, three stars. Stoel (Chair), Zoo Southside, three stars

Mary Brennan
Dance critic



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Circa:WolfgangPhoto by Damien

Bredberg



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Underbelly's Circus Hub

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart isn't likely to be high on most parents' lists of children's entertainers - yet here he is, in periwig and frock coat, doing back-flips and clowning around to the amusement of youngsters in the Beauty marquee on the Meadows. Wolfgang's presence - and indeed his music - are here because Circa, that perennially popular Fringe attraction from Oz, has decided to create a children's show around some of its own favourite things. Namely circus skills that don't rely on high-tech equipment, a delight in mischievous sight gags and a genuine belief that classical music and acrobatics make good partners in performance. A solitary birthday girl is listening to her favourite composer

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when the man himself materialises - along with a live accordionist who has an upbeat, frisky style of playing. Before long there are precarious balances, impressive lifts (by her of him!) and a wonderfully silly, but clever, routine where she dresses him completely while he cycles at speed round the stage. Tinies love the pratfalls and comedy mayhem, adults recognise the brinkmanship and Mozart - by all accounts a bit of a joker - would be delighted he'd joined the circus.

A chair is just a chair - until it becomes a character in a fantasy adventure that has hidden traps, sudden dangers but also merry surprises for Compagnie Nyash's two dancers, Colin Jolet and Miko Shimura. Choreographed by Caroline Cornélis, Stoel (aimed at age 3+) makes a higgledy-piggledy assortment of everyday chairs into handy props for games-play: piled high, they form a tower, or a mountain peak while - if cunningly jigsawed together - they can sprout into a tree. Or is that maybe a monster? There's real stimulus for young imaginations here, even as the movement - to a cellos soundscore - introduces them to dance as a source of grace, humour and expressive body language.

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