

REVIEW: 'Tap Dogs' dances to its own tune

Thursday, August 30, 2018

eNCA (South Africa's first 24-hour television news service)

<https://www.enca.com/life/review-tap-dogs-dances-its-own-tune>



The global dance phenomenon, Tap Dogs, is currently whirling its way across Johannesburg's Teatro stage.

Erik Forster / eNCA

JOHANNESBURG - Shoes weren't just made for walking; they were also made for dancing, tap dancing to be specific.

The global dance phenomenon, *Tap Dogs*, is currently whirling its way across Johannesburg's Teatro stage.

The stage is a steelworks and the soundtrack two energetic percussionists. It's an industrial milieu that is a far cry from the pretty sets and pan-pipes of the Michael Flatley-style of tap show.

A cast of six muscular dancers, some tattooed, and dressed down in construction or street gear, tap and slide their way across the stage, jumping and performing on scaffolding and even tapping upside down.

The dancers have distinct personalities, from the foreman to the young 'pup' who's learning the ropes. Humour is infused into the show, giving it an infectiously boisterous feel.

Each foot is like a drumstick, the metal taps moving in a frenzied rhythm that is almost too fast to comprehend. There's the sound of metal hitting metal, knocking against wood, splashing through water or smacking the stage in perfect unison with the dribbling of basketballs.

The dancing is a combination of rhythm tap, in which the focus is on the shoes being used as percussion instruments on their own, and Broadway tap, which emphasises the dance itself and sees the performers execute their moves in perfect synchronicity. It's what the English poet John Dryden described as "poetry of the foot".

This is an experience that falls somewhere between a rock concert, a circus and a musical comedy. It is a dialogue without speaking.

The show has been seen in 37 countries by 12 million people, while 3.4 billion watched on television as 1,000 Tap Dogs performed in the opening ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Tap Dogs takes the audience on an exuberant journey that's sure to hit the right note and put a smile on your face.

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