

Extra performance for Thumbelina



By [Debbie Hathway](#)

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It's heart-warming to see extra shows being scheduled due to popular demand, especially when it's a South African ballet premier. Robin van Wyk's *Thumbelina*, a Cape Town City Ballet Youth Project that features among the company's 80th birthday celebrations this year, has been an instant hit since it opened on 24 October. Lucky fans may just be able to secure a few seats for the extra matinee this Sunday, but you'll have to act quickly.

Hans Christian Andersen's timeless story about a little princess and her journey from birth in an acorn to marrying her handsome fairy prince has inspired wonderfully entertaining casting and choreography for a ballet that enthralls audiences of all ages.



For a theatre full of children to be spellbound by the spectacle of colourful and quirky characters, tiny tots dressed up as fairies, jitterbugs, flowers, lovebirds, mice and chickens, as well as beautifully presented company dancers speaks to Van Wyk's skill in this genre. He has a particular talent for working with children and a strong support team in company members and parents. Charles Petersen's set and props combined with Shamiel Abrahams' lighting helped to make it magical.

Charming pairing



The opening night's lead pairing of Elizabeth Nienaber as Thumbelina and Ivan Boonzaaier as Prince Cornelius was charming. Nienaber never puts a foot wrong and with Boonzaaier as a partner she looked like she could do simply anything. Their pas de deux was one of the best and most enjoyable I've seen.

Claire Spector's portrayal of Mrs Toad and Conrad Nusser as her son were delightfully menacing, their acting ability really impressive in these roles. Marc Goldberg seemed to come into his own as the Fairy King, with Frieda Mennen as his Queen showing potential for future classical kudos. Jesse Milligan's make-up and characterisation for Mr Bug were priceless, his effortless tap dancing with the ensemble adding fun variation to the choreography.

Leading lovebird Faith Aldridge and Oscar Pearson as Jacabo, a swallow, also deserve a mention. Pearson has been a regular feature in Van Wyk's ballets and this time was given the opportunity to showcase his musicality with a flute solo and his well-orchestrated coordination of dancing

to his own drum beat.

The role of Princess Thumbelina is shared by Nienaber, Mariëtte Opperman, Cleo Ames and Meghan Henegan, while that of Prince Cornelius is filled by Boonzaaier, Revil Yon, Conrad Nusser and Craig Pedro.

Thumbelina is on at the Artscape Theatre until Sunday, 2 November. Evening performances this week are on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 7.30pm with matinees on Saturday at 2pm and Sunday at 3pm. Ticket prices are R100 and R120. Bookings at [Computicket](#) (Tel: 0861 915 8000) or Artscape Dial-a-Seat (Tel: +27 (0)21 421 7695).

Photographs by Pat Bromilow-Downing

ABOUT DEBBIE HATHWAY

Debbie Hathway is an award-winning writer, with a special interest in luxury lifestyle (watches, jewellery, travel, property investment) and the arts.

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