

Casper de Vries' heavenly hell

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Although Casper de Vries has titled his latest show Vark in Hel (Pig in Hell), it's a heavenly experience that should not be missed.



Referring to emails from those who oppose De Vries' outspoken views and slander the existence of "people like him", there are many who applaud De Vries for this intimate journey into who we are, where we come from scientifically, and where we are ultimately heading.

A remarkable aspect of De Vries' show is that he does not have to go out of his way to be funny, or prove in any way that he is indeed an inspired and inventive humourist. His acute and inherently instinctive sense of humour is brainy and witty; he uses it skilfully as a tool of mass destruction, to deconstruct and reconfigure senseless irrationality. What also contributes to the uniqueness of his show and underlines his finely tuned craftsmanship, is that you constantly have to remind yourself that you are actually sitting in a theatre and not in his private lounge.

A personal tour of his intimate space

It is as if you are with De Vries at home, taking a personal tour of his intimate space and a life he shares wholeheartedly with his two adorable canine companions. And yes, he is joined on stage by his two dogs, Halfrida and Kent, which strut their own magic, showing that a dog can indeed be a comic's best friend and ward off sworn enemies.

During this intimate liaison, De Vries shares his thoughts candidly and does not shy away from a truth we mostly avoid. What may shock some people will amuse others, and what others laugh at reveals a lot about the world that we live in. De Vries honestly and passionately spells it out and will amaze you with his quick-fire sensibility. It is indeed a privilege to share his space and mindscape and re-evaluate our thoughts on humanity, religion, the absurdity of human existence and the crazy world that we live in. There is absolute sense in his astute awareness - and even his nonsensical quips make total sense.

De Vries' gentle demeanour is in sharp contrast to his previous shows, in which he allowed his chorus line of superstar characters to hijack his identity. Now it's personal, as De Vries boldly steps away from the fictional and embraces the factual - although this has been an important ingredient in his previous shows, he now strips off the mask completely and reveals an endearing side of his fragile persona.

His own personal heaven and hell

He opens a gateway into his own personal heaven and hell, proving that it is not such a bad dimension to occupy. We all have our own personal demons that torment us, if we allow others to turn our world and existence into how they see it and how they ideally perceive it to be. Perception is hell and demons need to be exorcised. After watching *Vark in Hel* you will realise that the key that will unlock the prison of conformity is in your own hands, and that you are in control of your own life, ideals, and destiny.

De Vries is all of us rolled into one; a spokesperson of human rights (and wrongs), showing that with a sprinkle of humour, our worst fears become laughable. True comedy and satire is an art and the only way to be really funny is to be real; it is the absurdity of our twisted reality that is funnier than funny, and our roaring laughter is fear set free.

The reality that De Vries creates in performance is captivating: it's like standing in the kitchen of your champion chef preparing a favourite dish and watching each action in detail. When De Vries dissects the current African and Afrikaans music scene, and the artists who are reaping rewards and accolades, he visually shares the cover of their CDs, then plays a track of music, and even goes to the extent of turning it into a dance routine that puts certain politicians to shame. What you see and then hear is truly insane and mindboggling, proving that truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

Fears, phobias and insecurities

De Vries allows his audience to confront and question their fears, phobias and insecurities through the prism of his unique point of view. You will soon realise that there is nothing to fear except the frightening realisation of what lurks behind a facade of fascism and indoctrination. You might need a translator to fully understand De Vries' insane subtextual innuendos, which he fires off effortlessly.

Make sure to take a sip of De Vries' sweet tonic and don't be shy to chat with him in the foyer after the show. You will soon find out that he is most definitely not a "pig in hell", but an ordinary alien with supernatural comedic powers.

Vark in Hel is on at the Artscape Opera for a short run until 24 November, so make an effort. You will save a lot of money in therapy. Book at Computicket.

Go to www.writingstudio.co.za/page1746.html for more information

ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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