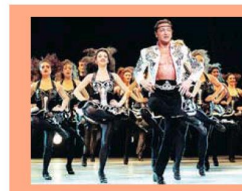


OUT & ABOUT



On every second Saturday night of the month, there is an Open Night at the Observatory featuring a talk on the stars, galaxies and our universe. Tonight, the topic is the atmospheres of planets beyond our solar system. The Open Night includes a chance to do some star gazing, weather permitting. Free entry. See www.saa0.ac.za



Michael Flatley's *Lord of the Dance: Dangerous Games* is a new take on his traditional masterpiece. A host of new skilled performers strut their stuff in a show that blends the best of old with thrilling new effects. Tomorrow is the last chance to see it at GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World. Tickets R255-R540. Go to www.bigconcerts.co.za or Facebook: Big Concerts

BIANCA COLEMAN

IT'S no secret I am a big fan of magic in all its shapes and forms – sleight of hand, illusion, mentalism and so on. I'm the one who is in the front row, hoping for the closest look possible while still remaining utterly and completely amazed.

This is what happened when I attended Stuart Lightbody's *Unique Wonders* show at the Alexander Upstairs Theatre. Lightbody is a two-time South African Close-Up Magic champion and multiple winner of the Grahamstown National Arts Festival Silver Ovation Award and his skill is mind blowing.

One of the many things I love about Lightbody's performances – I have seen two different ones in the past month – is that much of what he does is "just" with cards.

In the greater scheme of magic things this is quite simple, basic even. Everyone knows the "pick a card, any card" line and it's something in every magician's repertoire. Lightbody however, elevates this art to new levels; everything he does with a deck of cards is elegant, from the way he spreads them on the table to the flair and flourish with which he presents the jaw-dropping finale of the piece.

He is just as adept with silver coins, and even obliged with a tiny personal demonstration after the show, just centimetres from my face and yet I could still not detect how it did it. And that's perfectly fine – I don't want to know. Remaining in that state of awe is the way I like it.

Unique Wonders is a carefully considered show, with a set full of incredible attention to detail, calling to mind a parlour from yesteryear. These props are not just for show but provide devices to lead the narrative, eventually building up to a breathtaking grand finale which will literally leave you gasping (if you're anything like me).

Because of the great deal of audience participation, *Unique Wonders* will be different every night. When you enter the theatre you are given a beautiful ornate key on a red ribbon. This, says Lightbody, is to allow you to unlock the wonders of his mind, and to possible awe-inspiring adventures out in the world. It's also a keepsake, a memento of the



AMAZE: Follow SA magic champion Stuart Lightbody down the rabbit hole of his *Unique Wonders*

Capturing minds ONE UNIQUE show at a time

magical night – a special touch which delighted me.

The 75-minute show is directed by Tara Notcutt – their fifth collaboration – and frankly, while perfectly paced, it could have gone on forever as far as I'm concerned. Lightbody is not only a brilliant sleight-of-hand artist but a consummate stage performer; his presence and personality are

instantly likeable as he engages his audience not only with a combination of spectacular card "tricks" but stories of legendary magicians, and his adventures and travels... all dictated by choices made by audience members.

With several international accolades, including the Weekly Best of Fest Award at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the

Creative Award at the Prague Fringe Festival and a three-time nomination for the Australian Fringe World Festival's Theatre Award to his name, Lightbody has been captivating the imaginations almost 20 years.

"*Unique Wonders* offers a one-of-a-kind experience," he says. "Not just because each night the audience will decide on many of the pieces in the show, but because the adventure doesn't end there. After the show, everyone is invited to explore deeper. An even more immersive experience of wonder is available if they follow the clues, to see where their curiosity takes them and what their key opens."

Stuart Lightbody's *Unique Wonders* runs at the Alexander Theatre Upstairs until Saturday August 19 at 9pm every evening (except Sundays). Tickets are R140 (R120 online) and available at alexanderbar.co.za/show/uniquewonders or by calling 021 300 1652.

For more information about the show and the incredible Lightbody, go to www.stuartlightbody.com

Wine tasting in the city

A SMALL cellar dedicated to the quality production of pinot noir, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc, Bouchard Finlayson Vineyard was established in 1989 in the temperate Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, near Hermanus.

It's well worth a day trip out there, not only for the gorgeous wines but also nature walks – with a guide or on your own with a map; but, if time is of the essence, winemaker Chris Albrecht will be hosting a tutored tasting at Open Wine in Bree Street on August 15 at 5.45pm.

The fun, informal event can accommodate only 18 guests and is open to everyone from wine novices to oenologists. Nine vintages of the unique red blend Hannibal will be tasted, alongside a few other Italian varietal examples, and sampled with delectable canapés from Open Wine. The cost is R300 a person.

Albrecht is celebrating his seventh vintage at Bouchard, which is situated on 125 hectares of Walker Bay's prime viticultural land. Owned by the Red Carnation Hotels' Tollman family and under the leadership of Victoria Tollman, founder Peter Finlayson and Albrecht, 25ha are currently under vine with 50% devoted to the varietal for which Peter is most acclaimed – pinot noir.

Booking for the tasting is essential: call 028 312 3515 or email info@bouchardfinlayson.co.za. Should you miss out, the winery is open Mondays to Fridays from 9am till 5pm and on Saturdays from 10am till 1pm.

For more info go to www.bouchardfinlayson.co.za



TALENTED: Chris Albrecht