



© Tibian Wyles as Ash, Kyle Shilling as Bear and Caleena Sansbury as Evelyn in Man With The Iron Neck Credit: Victor Frankowski, supplied by Adelaide Festival

FESTIVAL  
**Adelaide Festival review 2019: Man with the Iron Neck**

Tim Lloyd, The Advertiser  
March 9, 2019 10:50am  
Subscriber only



**Man With the Iron Neck**

Physical Theatre / Australia

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre

Until March 11

When Legs On The Wall, known for its spectacular physical theatre stunts, turns to staged, scripted drama, the chemistry is going to be very different.

This group has a long pedigree of dreaming up original ways of working on things such as vertical surfaces, not conventional stages with a fourth wall.

The play is by Ursula Yovich, herself a fine actress who plays mum in this portrayal of an Aboriginal family rent by the suicide of the father.



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He hanged himself from the backyard gum tree and it has made them fascinated with Aloys Peters, the Man with the Iron Neck, whose legendary trick in the 1930s and 1940s was to put a hangman's noose around his neck and somehow survive a 20 metre drop.

That is when things start happening that are not part of conventional theatre.

Legs on the Wall are able to bring surreal, memorable scenes to the stage through gambits such performing the Man with the Iron Neck's trick.

We see the twins Ev and Bear playing with their friend Ash with a Hills Hoist, but when the mood changes so does the Hills Hoist, and like Dorothy going to Oz, it takes off and carries the youths with it.



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At other times the actors fly abruptly over the stage, and their occasions of physical play and brawls are spectacularly fast and furious.

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So often meetings between theatre and circus go astray, but here the characters are strong and the youths, played by Tibian Wyles, Kyle Shilling and Caleena Sansbury, are fully realised.

When tragedy strikes for a second time, everyone has to decide how to handle it, and there is a life-affirming message to be found here. Aloys Peters, on the other hand, died in 1946 while performing his trick in the US.

- Tim Lloyd

