

# Theatre review: *Every Brilliant Thing* destigmatizes mental illnesses

 By [Aa-isha Hassiem](#)

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Miguel de Sampaio, along with Jeff Brooker Productions, brings this heartfelt play to the South African shores.



*Every Brilliant Thing* revolves around an unnamed main character who navigates the uncertainty and weight of having a parent who suffers from a mental illness.

After his mother's first attempt at suicide, the character, who is seven at the time, decides to create a list of the small and extraordinary things that make life worth living, hoping to provide her with reasons to keep fighting.

This list continues to grow as he does, following him through high school, college and beyond. Soon, the list becomes a way to remind himself about the beauty of life, as he, too, finds himself suffering from depression.

This play gracefully navigates the topic of mental health. It depicts how families are affected by a loved one with a condition that is not always easy to talk about, and the fear and the desperation that comes with not being able to help them.



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Despite this heavy theme, the show is charming and lively. You are guaranteed to shed a few tears but you are also guaranteed to let out many laughs. The audience participation adds to this.

When the doors close and the only one at the front of the room is de Sampaio, you find yourself wondering where the other actors are. It then becomes clear that the audience will be filling in the roles that he won't be able to do himself.

Interactive plays might not be for everyone (myself included, too many anxieties) but the atmosphere the lead creates is welcoming and warm, free of the tension you would expect from everyone waiting for their cue.

And to bring it all together, the production is filled with timely musical classics, along with de Sampaio's wonderful voice accompanied by the piano.



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As we continue to destigmatize mental illnesses, plays of this nature serve an important part in helping to articulate the emotions and ideas that might not be easy to express. Duncan Macmillan and Jonny Donahoe have taken on this challenge by creating this production, and de Sampaio has brilliantly executed it.

*Every Brilliant Thing* is currently running at the LAMTA Studio at the Theatre on The Bay from 17 November 2023 to 2 December 2023.

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