

# Journey for the Sun Review – Silly Story, Great Circus



The cast of Journey for the Sun at The Actors Gymnasium.



Circus, sci-fi, cartoons, puppetry, and performers of all ages. That's a pretty tall order to fill in a ninety-minute show, but that's exactly the challenge that **The Actors Gymnasium** has taken on with their latest work, **Journey for the Sun: A Sci-Fi Cartoon Circus**. The resulting performance is fun and beautiful, if disjointed, and shares a strange thread in common with our current political culture in that the teenagers are the most impressive part.

The premise of **Journey for the Sun** is silly, drawing inspiration from a 1960s comic book: the sun itself is heating up, and a team of drive-in employees, played by **Kasey Foster** and trio of young actors, must blast into space to save the Earth from certain doom. In truth, the main storyline is the least appealing part of the production; although the child actors are charming and **Foster** is certainly committed to her

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role as a kooky middle-aged drive-in owner, the plot itself is convoluted and hard to follow, and its broad cartoonish style clashes with the other, more enjoyable elements of the show.

These elements include a performance by **Yuri Lane**, who, according to his bio, “pioneered the art of playing harmonica and beatboxing at the same time.” This is a combination of skills I would never in a million years have imagined, but it is incredibly impressive and a great start to the performance. In fact, the unusual nature of much of the show is its biggest appeal; how often, for example, do you get to see a giant robot puppet onstage or a circus piece performed on a chandelier-shaped trapeze? Not often enough, I say.



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Some of the classic circus elements are also at play here; I would have been disappointed to leave without seeing any juggling or unicycle riding, and both are present in **Journey for the Sun**, as are aerial silks. In fact, the aerial silks piece at the beginning of the show, performed to hypnotic, outer space-sounding music, was perhaps my favorite part of the show. The strength and grace required to perform the various circus skills demonstrated in **Journey for the Sun** are incredibly impressive, and even more impressive is the fact that the ensemble consists of high school students. When I was in high school, I could barely walk up the stairs without tripping, much less climb up poles, hang from trapezes, and do backflips. The teen ensemble is magnificent.



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Also highly compelling is performer **Jean Carlos Claudio**, an adult who plays the mostly silent **Luck Starhopper**, a new drive-in employee who accompanies our heroes on their journey through the stars. **Claudio** has charisma in droves, and both his facial expressions in reaction to the events of the play and the physical skills he performs are the highlight of the central storyline.

**Journey for the Sun** is a mash-up that doesn't work terribly well. The cartoonishness and straightforward storytelling of the main plotline and the elegance and abstract expression of the circus skills clash like stripes and plaid. Taken separately, the circus elements are the more impressive half of the pair, and it's these skills that are the most entertaining and engaging. Perhaps **The Actors Gymnasium's** next performance can cut the unnecessary framework and just stick to the impressive stuff: teenagers with mad circus skills.

### **Ticket Information**

**Location:** Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston, IL

**Dates:** February 17- March 25, 2018

**Times:** Fridays at 7:30PM, Saturdays at 4:30PM and 7:30PM, and Sundays at 3:00PM

**Ticket:** Tickets start at \$25 and can be purchased online at [the Actors Gymnasium website](#), onsite or by calling 847.328.2795.

All photos by Cole Simon.



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