

## The Actors Gymnasium's The Magical Exploding Boy and the Invisible Circus

As many of you probably know from attending (or hearing about) the Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival, Chicago is hot for circus. Being a central Illinois native, I left CCCF with a swelling sense of pride for the incredible, inspiring circus work coming out of my neighbor to the north and found myself with an insatiable hunger for more.

Not long after returning home from the festival, I received an email alerting me about the Actors Gymnasium's Winter Circus Extravaganza, *The Magical Exploding Boy and the Invisible Circus*, featuring celebrated Chicago clown Dean Evans. I was already somewhat familiar with Dean Evans' work after seeing him perform at CCCF as Honeybuns, and was intrigued to see him in a different role, performing with an ensemble. At the time, I had only heard of the Actors Gymnasium, and was not familiar with their work.

The Actors Gymnasium is a professional circus and performing arts organization in Evanston, IL dedicated to bringing new physicality to the American Theater. They teach circus arts, physical theater, and multi-disciplinary performance to adults and children; produce original, daring works of circus theater; and serve as a talent resource, providing performance opportunities for their students and innovative professional event entertainment for a wider audience.

At the end of February I headed up to the Actors Gymnasium to see *The Magical Exploding Boy and the Exploding Circus*. What a show it was! *The Magical Exploding Boy and the Exploding Circus* takes the audience on a whimsical, imaginative adventure into the mind of the Magical Exploding Boy (Evans) as he tries to figure out who he truly is. Throughout the narrative "the man" tries to bring Evans back to "reality", telling him he must quit his childish ways and grow up. The hour and half long performance takes the audience on a spellbinding and heart wrenching journey, as they anxiously await to see if Evans will give in to the man and conform. For me, the most valuable and moving part of the show was the message woven into the performance, one that every child and adult alike should adhere to: Be brave, be creative, be yourself, live your dream.



All photos by Sam Fishkin and Kate Tabor.



The cast of *The Magical Exploding Boy and the Invisible Circus* is comprised of professional, teen, and young performers, all of whom put on exquisite performances. What impressed me the most was how incredibly talented the youth performers are in many different disciplines. The youth artists not only performed their circus skills incredibly well, but they also acted, danced, and performed original music (including a stellar drum-line coordinated by percussion composer, Rick Kubes). The Actors Gymnasium is truly doing an amazing job at guiding their students to be well rounded, multi-disciplinary artists.



I wish I could paint you all a better picture of just how incredible this show was, but I guess you'll have to just go see for yourself! *The Magical Exploding Boy and the Invisible Circus* is playing at the Actors Gymnasium until March 23. For more information, visit the Actors Gymnasium's website [here](#).

## Comments

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