

EVANSTON REVIEW

See flying feats and acrobatic wonders at 'Circus in Progress'

By **Myrna Petlicki**

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Hurry, hurry, hurry. That's what you have to do if you want to see "Circus in Progress: An Evening of Daring New Work" on Sunday, May 30. The Actors Gymnasium show has sold out for the past three years. Clearly a lot of people enjoy watching daring feats on duo trapeze, acrobatic bottle acts, comedic puppetry and other thrilling circus skills.

"It's a great opportunity for our advanced students and faculty to show off what they can do and work on new pieces they are developing in front of an audience," said Larry DiStasi, co-founder and co-artistic director of the Actors Gymnasium.

The show also helps "expand our community," DiStasi added. "There are a number of different circus organizations and aerial dance companies in town and it's great to have an excuse to work with folks from those other organizations like Aerial Dance Chicago. There are also companies like Foster Street Dance, right down the street from here, that we're going to work with for the first time."

Michael Montenegro of Theatre Zarko, who has performed at Actors Gymnasium many times, is in the show. "He's a local puppeteer and he's brilliant," DiStasi declared. "He's doing one of my favorite pieces of his — which is going to be amazing."

DiStasi also praised Eric Allen, describing him as "an amazing straps performer and clown," as he did Alison Tye, a former teen ensemble member. "She was incredibly talented when she was with us and she's been studying more at Southern Illinois. It's great to have her back."

Another performer who DiStasi lauded is Ariele Ebacher, who will either perform an acrobatic bottle act with her partner Jan Damm or do a solo tight-wire act.

Ebacher has performed all over the world. "I've done cruise ship contracts in the Mediterranean and I've done military bases in Japan. I've done a very contemporary touring circus show in the U.K. and theater shows in the U.S.," she said. "The whole gamut."

Advanced student Jennifer Breen will partner with her 8-year-old daughter Una. "We are doing a song that is happy and uplifting and playful," Breen said. "We're kind of doing a day in the life. We wake up in the morning, we're going to the park and we're playing on the silks together."

Una started practicing the silks when she was five and has taken classes for a year. "We have silks in our home hanging from our bedroom ceiling," Breen revealed.

Breen will also do a group silk knot piece with her intermediate aerial class.

She first took classes in the circus arts three years ago. "I had always admired Cirque du Soleil but never thought it

was accessible to me," Breen related. "But when I came back to my hometown of Evanston and saw that Actors Gymnasium was there, I said, 'I'm not going to die never trying this.'"

The Actors Gymnasium presents 'Circus in Progress: An Evening of Daring New Work'

4:30 and 7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 30

Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston

\$15

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