

## The Actors Gymnasium Announces 2015/16 Season

Showcases of daring new work, deadly laser fields, and friendships spanning generations are featured in the 2015-16 season from The Actors Gymnasium. "We are thrilled to be collaborating with exciting new artists and designers to bring the worlds of circus and theater together in a whole new way," says Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi, Artistic Director.

A new work directed by House Theatre's Chris Mathews brings Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi out of retirement to perform in the annual winter circus with long time collaborator David Catlin. *The Long-Awaited Debut of Marnie & Phil: A Circus Love Letter* also features Samuel Taylor and Lindsey Noel Whiting and explores the relationships we form when we're young, how those stay with us, grow over time, recede, and come back together. For the Fall Youth Circus, Buzz22 Chicago's Alex Tey and Sara Sawicki bring us a noir-infused Mission Impossible style thrill ride in *Secrets, Lies, and Super Spies*. The season also includes three showcases of new work which cement Chicago's reputation as the epicenter of contemporary circus, including the new showcase for the inaugural class of Professional Circus Training Program students.

"The Actors Gymnasium develops multidisciplinary artists who are able to engage their bodies, voices, and performance training to attain new levels of theatrical expression," DiStasi states, "The process for creating our shows usually begins with creative brainstorming, and embraces the strengths of each unique cast member or designer. We try to develop an atmosphere where artists can do their most remarkable work. The key, of course, is to start with very imaginative and talented people. This year, with folks like Chris Mathews, Sara Sawicki, Alex Tey and Dean Evans, it should be an extremely exciting season of circus-theatre exploration."

### About Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi, Artistic Director/Circus Choreographer

Sylvia, recently returned from a successful tour of *Lookingglass Alice*, is a second generation circus performer who grew up touring with various circuses, including Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus. She also performed at The Circus World Championships in London, England. In 1990 she moved to Chicago and began her career as a circus teacher and choreographer. Sylvia is a co-founder of The Actors Gymnasium and an Artistic Associate of The Lookingglass Theatre Company. Other theater credits include The Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Chicago Children's Theater, Marriott Theater, and The Steppenwolf Theatre, among others. She recently won the Illinois Theatre Association's Award of Honor, the 3Arts award for design, and she has been nominated for five Joseph Jefferson Awards for her choreography, winning four.

### About Alex Tey & Sara Sawicki, Youth Circus Directors

Sara Sawicki & Alex Tey (Co-Writers/Directors of *Secrets, Lies, & Super Spies*): Sara and Alex are Chicago-based actors, directors and facilitators. Both have worked nationally with Sojourn Theatre, most recently as performer/facilitators in the professional premiere of *How to End Poverty* in collaboration with Portland Playhouse. They also work together as members of the performing health collective, For Youth Inquiry. Alex is the founding Artistic Director of Thirteen O'Clock Theatre, and an instructor here in Evanston with The Actors Gymnasium and Mudlark Theatre Company. Sara is a founding company member and Co-Artistic Director of Buzz22 Chicago where she directed the professional premiere of Laura Jacqmin's *Ghost Bike*. Both Alex and Sara are thrilled to return to Actors Gymnasium for a second helping of Youth Circus!

### About Chris Mathews, Winter Circus Director

Chris is a company member with The House Theatre of Chicago where he has performed, written, and done every

little thing in-between. With The House, he has co-written *Dave DaVinci Saves the Universe*, *The Sparrow*, *Rose and the Rime*, and *The Hammer Trinity*. For The Actors Gym youth ensemble, he created *A'Musing Myths*, *The Last Voyage of Pirate Blackheart*, and *A Midsummer Night's Circus*. He was also seen on stage in *Lost & Found* in 2012. His work has also been seen at Lookingglass and Barrel of Monkeys, an outreach based theatre company that teaches creative writing in inner-city schools. Chris also performs motion capture for the Chicago-based videogame company Netherrealm Studios where he has embodied Johnny Cage and Batman. Thank you for supporting The Actors Gymnasium with your attendance.

### **About The Actors Gymnasium**

The Actors Gymnasium is dedicated to bringing a new physicality to the American Theatre. Encouraging groundbreaking theatrical exploration, The Actors Gymnasium teaches circus arts, physical theatre and multi-disciplinary performance to children and adults; produces original, daring works of circus-theatre; and serves as a talent resource, providing performance opportunities to our students and innovative professional event entertainment for a wider audience. At The Actors Gymnasium, people Learn To Fly - physically, emotionally, and creatively.

### **Performance Information**

The Actors Gymnasium venue is located at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes Street, Evanston, Illinois - just off of the Noyes purple line 'L' stop. Parking in the Noyes Cultural Center lot (permit & metered spots) is free after 6 pm Monday-Saturday and all day Sunday. There is additional free parking on Ridge Street and at the Civic Center around the corner, as well as metered parking on Noyes Street.