

Actors Gymnasium Partners with Organizations New Professional Program

The Actors Gymnasium (AG) was created in 1995 by professional physical performers looking for a place to hone their craft. Nearly 20 years later, the next chapter in that journey unfolds. The Chicago area's first and longest-running circus school launches a Professional Circus Training Program set to open in September 2015 under the direction of Master Teacher Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi. Applications are being accepted for all interested students at www.actorsgymnasium.org. The highly recommended Early Admission Application Deadline is February 17th.



The program is designed to prepare students for professional circus performance, or for audition into a multi-year circus program. It is intended for dedicated artists looking to take their circus training and theatrical skills to the next level.

"To me, circus is magic," explains AG Co-Artistic Director Larry DiStasi. "Circus is a dazzling display of one impossible thing after the next. In the circus, people can fly. Who wouldn't want to do that? I can't imagine anyone who wouldn't. And that's why we started The Actors Gymnasium. At least, it's part of the reason. And it's why I study circus myself."

Equally as passionate, Co-Artistic Director Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi elaborates, "The thing I love about Circus Arts is that it means different things to different people. It can be used to tell a story: it can be used to portray a metaphor: it can be used to show the limits of what the human body (and mind) is capable of. I believe there is validity in all forms of circus. Do it because it makes an audience feel something. Do it to amaze your audience. Do it because it makes you feel something. Do it to prove to yourself you can. I embrace any and all reasons that people do circus. "

Program Director Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi 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 Children's Theater, Marriott Theater, and The Steppenwolf Theatre, among others. She recently won the 3Arts award for design, and she has been nominated for five Joseph Jefferson Awards for her choreography, winning four.

To provide a foundation for The Professional Circus Training Program and ensure students receive a well-rounded education, AG is partnering with the award-winning companies Lookingglass Theatre and Lucky Plush Productions, who will provide dance and physical theatre instruction. Our faculty also features some of the leading circus and physical comedy instructors in the Chicago area, including Nourbol Meirmanov, Oyunchimeg "Oyuna" Yadamjav and Dean Evans.

Chicago was recently featured as one of the U.S.'s top three vibrant circus cities according to Spectacle Magazine. At the first annual Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival, it was cited in panels as one of the most supportive places for circus professionals to live due to the large number of circus companies, variety of working opportunities, and relatively low rent for living and working spaces compared to their West and East Coast peers.

The Actors Gymnasium has been a pioneer in Chicago's circus-theatre movement since 1995. Celebrated for its longstanding collaborative relationship with Lookingglass Theatre, AG has won awards for artistic excellence from 3Arts, The City of Evanston and the Joseph Jefferson Committee. Multidisciplinary training is a hallmark of AG, and applications are encouraged from those who have additional skills in music, acting, design, original work and more.

The 9-month intensive curriculum provides 27 hours per week of premier training in circus arts, dance and physical theatre. Aerial arts skills including trapeze, silks, lyra, straps, Spanish web, invented apparatus, and Chinese pole are featured, as well as handbalancing, tumbling, partner acrobatics, juggling, tightwire, and contortion. Study also includes stretching and conditioning, pilates, and special topics such as rigging and career management.

Each week, students work on circus skills, stretching and conditioning, dance (classical and modern forms), physical theatre training, and a special topic course. Students also receive one private lesson per week and 2-3 hours of open practice time daily. The program culminates in a capstone performance in May when students will showcase their work.

DiStasi continues, "For me, the idea of a year-long program, where a person can study circus full-time, with additional courses in dance and physical theatre, sounds like a dream come true. I've seen the incredible progress that kids make in our four-week long summer camp. I've seen stunning grace and strength and fantastically creative, original circus acts developed in our 6-week Circus Intensive Workshop each summer. Now, after 9 months of continuous study at the end of our new Professional Circus Training Program, I cannot wait to see what evolves. I think it could be breath-taking."

Complete details on tuition, faculty, schedule, audition deadlines, and more can be found at www.actorgymnasium.org/classes-camps/professional-training/professional...

Facility

Actors Gymnasium classes are taught in a 3,000 sq/ft gymnasium space that features a 1,600 sq/ft sprung floor and a fully rigged 17 to 24 foot ceiling. All aerial equipment such as the aerial hoop, Spanish web, aerial silks, static

trapeze and more are provided, as well as equipment for ground skills such as unicycling, juggling, tight wire and gymnastics. Classes in dance or physical theatre may take place in other dance studios within the Noyes Cultural Arts Center or our partnership location, Foster Dance Studios.

Location

The Actors Gymnasium is located at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes Street, Evanston, IL - just off of the Noyes purple line 'L' stop. The Noyes Cultural Arts Center is owned by the City of Evanston and home to over 20 artists and arts organizations offering music, theater, and visual arts programs and studios. The galleries exhibit local artists, with exhibitions changing every two months.

About The Actors Gymnasium

The Actors Gymnasium is dedicated to bringing a new physicality to the American Theatre. Encouraging ground-breaking 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. For more information, please visit www.actorsgymnasium.org

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