

Artists from All Over the Country to Train in Evanston

The Actors Gymnasium is extremely pleased to announce its inaugural class of Professional Circus Training Program students. When the program was announced in December 2014, interest poured in from all over the world with applicants as far flung as Edmonton, Canada; Canberra, Australia and Mexico City, Mexico. Applicants sent in video auditions showcasing a wide variety of circus skills. Ultimately, 11 students were chosen for the program's first year.

These six women and five men from richly diverse backgrounds include:

Zoe (Evanston, IL) - a circus performer/yogi/sailing instructor

Joseph (Raleigh, NC) - an actor/handbalancer who is fluent in ASL

Brendan (Evanston, IL) - a capoeirist/athlete/musician

Liz (Delavan, WI) - an equestrian/musical theatre/dancer

Arik (Kalamazoo, MI) - a juggler/Israeli folk dancer/choreographer

Symphony (Bartlett, IL) - an actor/circus/physical trainer

Cassandra (Chicago, IL) - an actor/opera singer/aerialist

Olivia (Panama City, FL) - a magician's assistant/cheerleader/pilates instructor

Ashley (Naperville, IL) - a dancer/actor/singer/hoop artist

Andrew (Chicago, IL) - an actor/stage combatant who is "good at doing a Neanderthal face"

Joe (Chicago, IL) - a yoga instructor/CPA/ex-marine

The Professional Circus Training Program is designed to prepare students for professional circus performance, or to audition for a multi-year circus program. Intended for dedicated artists looking to take their circus training and theatrical skills to the next level, 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.

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. The 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.

"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 breathtaking," says AG Co-Artistic Director Larry DiStasi

Earlier this year, Chicago was featured as one of the U.S.'s top three vibrant circus cities according to Spectacle Magazine. At the recent 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.

Many of the new students will be in attendance at the Studio 108 Ribbon Cutting with Alderperson Jane Grover. The new studio space will be heavily used for the program and act as the students' home space.

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.

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 24 foot ceiling. All aerial equipment such as the Aerial Hoop, Spanish Web, aerial silks, static trapeze and more are provided, as well as the equipment for ground skills such as unicycling, juggling, tight wire and gymnastics. Starting Fall Session 2015 additionally classes will be taught in Studio 108, a 900 sq/ft classroom space that features a floating sprung White Oak dance floor, a fully rigged 14 foot ceiling, a handstand wall, conditioning ladders, and room length 12 foot mirrors for aerial work.

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. For more information, please visit www.actorsgymnasium.org