

# The Actors Gymnasium A Strange New Circus to Take Over Chicago

Circuscope, a theatre production unlike any other, opens February 14 at The Actors Gymnasium. Acclaimed Chicago performer and headliner, Dean Evans, describes Circuscope as "one of the most unique shows I've worked on in my 10 years in Chicago [and] visually incredibly different than any other circus I've ever even seen."

Assistant stage manager Lesley Fisher agrees, "I just don't think the general population has much experience with circus in this vein. They think of big top. They think of animals. They don't think of stuff like this. But, this is telling a human story through circus. This is telling a story using circus elements in ways that you didn't even know they could be used."

Enthralled by the extraordinary shapes and sizes of life, the creators of The Actors Gymnasium Winter Circus will explore a fascinating world on the other side of the microscopic lens. Directed by spectacle-theatre veteran Vanessa Stalling,

Circuscope will transport audiences through surprising acrobatics, mime, live music and other-worldly design.

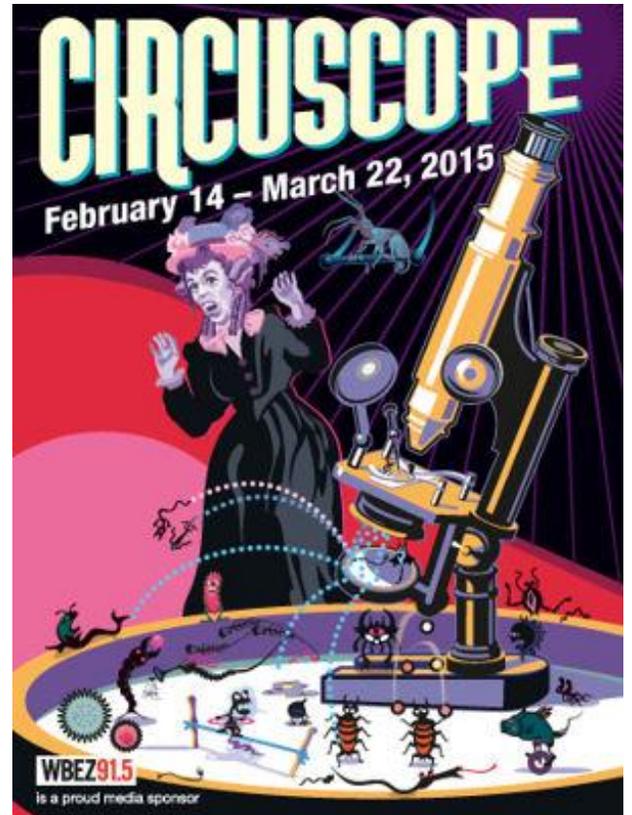
The show follows an Alice in Wonderland-type journey of two clowns, played by Evans and Molly Plunk. "Originally, I just wanted to explore the idea of not being a human character, of being just an organism, an amoeba or a blob or whatever," explains Evans, "and I started thinking about what's called a tardigrade, or a water bear, as an inspiration, which is just a little tiny microscopic organism that simply survives by being almost indestructible. That was very interesting to me, especially from a clown perspective, of being a character that is neither a human or any type of life size thing - just a blob that is existing."

The setting continues this abstract concept. "We aren't sure where or what place in time or space we are or if we are even on this planet. One character is a dot. One character is a tardigrade. One is this kind of air plant/aloe plant looking creature that morphs into a beautiful butterfly. There are all kinds of different creatures in this world," states Plunk.

The uniqueness extends to the costumes. "I just finished this really intense fringe costume that is inspired by Nick Cave's sound suits," says costume designer Delia Ridenour. "We wanted it to be this huge head-to-toe unitard covered in fringe, that really illustrates and accentuates body movement with every turn and move of [the performer]. The costume waves like crazy. Its awesome."

Circuscope also incorporates some of the great spectacle and flare that people are used to seeing at The Actors Gymnasium. From physical theatre perfection, to vigorous rope acts, to stunning black light moments; the cast and crew promises that the audience can expect numerous delightful surprises.

"This is my first experience with circus," admits Fisher, "Not only is it really amazing and beautiful to watch, but it's



accessible. We're telling a story that everyone can relate to."

Circuscope performances run February 14 - March 22, with shows at 7:30 pm on Fridays, 4:30 and 7:30 pm on Saturdays and 3:00 pm on Sundays (No 4:30 show on 2/14). Tickets can be purchased through [www.actorsgymnasium.org](http://www.actorsgymnasium.org). There are a limited number of tickets available for each performance and tickets are first come, first served. Check early for the best selection.

In addition to Dean Evans and Molly Plunk, Circuscope features professional circus performers, Meredith "Tommy" Tomlins and Leah Leor, as well as advanced students from The Actors Gymnasium's Teen Ensemble.

For additional information on The Actors Gymnasium's innovative programming, please visit [www.actorsgymnasium.org](http://www.actorsgymnasium.org) or call 847-328-2795.

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 Dean Evans

Dean Evans is a professional performing artist working in theater and television. He was recently ranked number 33 of Chicago's top 50 "players" of 2014 by New City magazine. He has studied Mime and Physical Theater at The School for Mime Theater, The Ohio State University, and with masters Marcel Marceau, Phillipe Gualier, Stephen Niedzialkowsky, and Avner Eisenberg. He is a former ensemble member of the Neo-Futurists and has performed with 500 Clown, iO, Kapoot Clown Theater, Redmoon, Chicago Children's Theater, Second City, The Goodman, The Actors Gymnasium and extensively as a solo artist. Dean is a faculty member of Columbia College's Comedy Studies program in conjunction with Second City. He also performs as the entity who goes by the name Honey Buns.

#### About Director Vanessa Stalling

Vanessa Stalling is most known for her work with Redmoon, where she served as Associate Artistic Director. She enjoyed collaboratively directing several Redmoon productions including a remount of The Cabinet, Last of My Species, Winter Pageant, Princess Club, and The Great Chicago Fire Festival. This spring, she'll be directing The America Play at Oracle Theatre and will serve as choreographer for Shining Lives: A Musical at Northlight Theatre. Vanessa is also an instructor at Columbia College and University of Chicago.

#### 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](http://www.actorsgymnasium.org)