

Flying Griffin Circus

By Kerry Reid

Flying Griffin Circus, at the Actors Gymnasium, through May 18. Adam Gopnik's 2002 New Yorker story "Bumping Into Mr. Ravioli"--about his daughter's imaginary friend, who's too busy to play with her--apparently struck a chord with time-impaired folks everywhere, judging by commentaries posted on the Web. Now the Flying Griffin Circus, the performing arm of the Actors Gymnasium, uses Gopnik's tale as a jumping-off point (quite literally) for the adventures of young Trudy, who seeks to stop time--or at least slow it down enough so her parents can savor each other's company and she can have a tea party with her phantasmal pal Hernando.

Created and directed by Kerry Catlin and featuring a stellar assemblage of Actors Gymnasium and Lookingglass Theatre regulars, the show isn't so much breathtaking as it is breath-easing. There are awe-inspiring acrobatics aplenty (though one or two stunts went slightly awry opening night), but the most charming aspect of the piece is its ability to draw the audience slowly and soothingly into a colorful world. The interactions between Alessandra Stevens's winsome Trudy and Tony Hernandez's silent, entrancing Hernando deserve more stage time than they get--which may be the point. But it's hard to ding any show that blends so many moments of precise physical beauty with comic looniness, and its sweet, soulful message about cherishing downtime with loved ones is welcome in these dark days.