

# Gulliver's Circus

By Jack Helbig

Gulliver's Circus, Flying Griffin Circus, at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center. No one would ever confuse the tiny Flying Griffin Circus with better-funded entities like Cirque du Soleil or the Big Apple Circus. But its size is part of the troupe's charm. Performing in a space too small even to call a single ring, this collection of teachers and students from the Actors Gymnasium plus a few guest artists put on a show as sweet and charming as it is kid accessible.

Like the Flying Griffin's premiere production in May 2000, this one frames traditional circus acts with a simple story. The show is "inspired by" Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the playbill says, and certainly "adaptation" is too strong a word for a piece that contains only passing nods to Swift's story and none of his acid wit or wonderful misanthropy. Lemuel Gulliver appears as a character, and some of the acts are informed by attempts to describe his adventures, including one memorable scene in which five women dangling from the flies represent the inhabitants of the flying island Laputa.

But most of the time Gulliver's tale takes a backseat to the circus bits, with their emphasis on good-natured clowning, simple but impressive acrobatics, and the sort of spectacle that requires lots of ropes, hanging rings, and long strands of parachute cloth. The show's finale is truly awesome, involving every imaginable variation on the teeterboard.