

These Actors Know How to Circus - Evanston RoundTable

EVANSTON ROUNDTABLE

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These Actors Know How to Circus



Performance artist, Dean Evans, left and Aerialist, Meredith Tomlins, above, entertain audiences in "Circuscope."

Photo by Cole Simon

By Brian Murphy

A green dot of light emits sounds similar to the grunts of "South Park's" Eric Cartman. A sack of tentacles slowly transforms into a butterfly. Children manipulate multicolored pool noodles to animate a living organism. A spiny-backed swimmer gently propels itself, floating in air. Two microscopic blobs fall in love.

These spectacles may seem like the feverish daydreams of a Mountain Dew binge (after

all, there are kids involved), but in the lofty space that houses The Actors Gymnasium, it signifies the opening of a new production, “Circuscope.”

Director Vanessa Stalling, who has worked extensively at Redmoon Theater over the years, has a massively creative production on her hands. She guides “Circuscope” to great heights with daring circus choreography by Sylvia Hernandez -DiStasi, and playfully emotive lighting (Nicholas J. Carroll), costumes (Delia Ridenour), sound (Connor Murray) and puppets (Lizi Breit).

All of these ooze into a petri dish of the absurd and the awesome.

Performance artist and frequent Actors Gymnasium collaborator Dean Evans came up with the idea for “Circuscope”— the tiny universe of organisms at the other end of a microscope. Mr. Evans was clowning around (pun intended) with the idea of, “...being just an organism, an amoeba or a blob or whatever.” Tardigrades, which are microorganisms capable of surviving extreme conditions, served as his inspiration.

“That was very interesting to me,” Mr. Evans said, “especially from a clown perspective, of being a character that is neither a human nor any type of life size-thing – just a blob that is existing.”

Enter Mr. Evans in an amoeba-like blob suit, spurning the advances of another blob, played by Molly Plunk. They mime, they clown, and they breakdance to dubstep, which was both hilarious and awesome. The two wildly talented physical performers are a joy onstage together.

The show’s two other professional artists are also a joy to watch, albeit for their solo acts. Tommy Tomlins puts on an elegant display as she soars above the stage with silks, and Leah Leor is dazzling as she shows off her mastery of straps in an audaciously shaggy costume.

Enough about the pros, the real stars at Actors Gymnasium are the kids who hone their talents at classes taught in the same space. Joking, juggling, singing and playing a variety of instruments are already in these preteens’ repertoire. The fearless performers employ acrobatic tumbling, double trapeze and spinning ropes to showcase their multifaceted chops.

The Actors Gymnasium is adept at making shows accessible for both kids and adults, and “Circuscope” should definitely be on your families’ “must see” list.

“Circuscope” runs through March 22 at the Actors Gymnasium, located in the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes St. Shows are on weekends.

Visit www.actorsgymnasium.org.
