

10 REALLY COOL THINGS TO DO

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1 Backflips and slaptick

The Bumblinni Brothers are providing plenty of laughter with their new "Bigger and Better" show under way at the Actors Gymnasium in north suburban Evanston. The duo, Chuck Stubbings and Paul Kalina, are the Chicago area's only two-man comic theater circus team. The 90-minute show consists of fire juggling, acrobatics, circus stunts, precision whip-cracking and lots of comedy. The show runs through Sunday. Tickets are \$15; \$10 for kids age 12 and under. Show times are 7:30 tonight, 4 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday. The Actors Gymnasium is at 927 Noyes. Call (773) 665-4332.

2 Helping hands Those who want to do some holiday shopping and help a local charity at the same time should check out the Shop for a Cure's Winter Wonderland, running 10 to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Marriott Chicago Downtown, 540 N. Michigan. More than 200 local vendors with fashion, beauty, jewelry, art, pet gifts and children's items will gather for the fund-raiser for Gilda's Club Chicago; \$5 donation at the door. Call (773) 278-7467; www.shop4acure.org.

3 Join the Corps Members of the U.S. Marine Corps will host a Toys for Tots fund-raiser on Monday at Bar Louie Dearborn Station in the South Loop. The party, which runs from 7 to 10 p.m., will feature an open bar, buffet, DJ and silent auction. Admission is \$25 per person, plus a new toy for underprivileged children. Bar Louie is at 47 W. Polk. Call (312) 347-0000.

4 Surf's up for Christmas Los Straitjackets have brought their Christmas pageant to town for two performances. The group is known for instrumentals that are peppered with '60s-style surf music. Although touring behind its latest CD, "Supersonic Guitars in 3-D," the band is expected to perform many songs from last year's holiday release, "'Tis the Season for Los Straitjackets." Show time is 10 tonight at the Abbey Pub, 3420 W. Grace (773-539-6116) and 9:30 p.m. Saturday at FitzGerald's, 6615 W. Roosevelt, Berwyn (708-788-2118). Tickets are \$15.

5 Holiday humbug Monologues about the dark side of the season, Fa La La This ... 2: Even More Twisted Tales from a Hard Candy Christmas, will have its final performance at 10:30 tonight at the Live Bait Theater on the North Side. Despite the anti-holiday message, the show promises "to be a celebration of all that is good and pure about the holiday formerly known as Christmas." The theater is at 3914 N. Clark. Tickets are \$10. Call (312) 409-4357.

6 Songs of the season The Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra's Home for the Holidays Pops Concert will deck the halls with classic carols on Saturday at the Center for Performing Arts at Governors State University in south suburban University Park. Joining the orchestra will be guest vocalists Dawn E. DeVries, Jeff Mattsey, Marie Michuda and Jo Rodenburg, as well as the Grande Prairie Singers, Cantate Children's Choir, the Grande Prairie Children's Choir and the Homewood-Flossmoor High School Choir. Show time is 7 p.m. at the Center, at Governors Highway and University Parkway off I-57 at Sauk Trail. Tickets are \$25-\$65; \$15 for students. Call (708) 481-7774; www.ipomusic.org.

7 Making an Impression The Fulcrum Point New Music Project presents The French Connection: 20th Century Impressionist Music, at 3 p.m. Sunday at Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington. The free program features Fulcrum Point artistic director Stephen Burns on trumpet, Peggy Michel on oboe and English horn, and Jeffrey Panko on piano. Fulcrum Point is a local organization dedicated to the fusion of classical music and popular culture. Call (312) 744-6630; www.cityofchicago.org/CulturalAffairs/.

8Come to the kingdom The Shedd Aquarium's first Neptune's Holiday Kingdom celebration offers numerous activities for kids, such as puppet shows, storytellers and roving performers, music and face-painting, and workshops such as ornament-making. Neptune and his "sea creatures" turn up the holiday cheer daily through Jan. 4 (closed Dec. 24 and 25). Free with general aquarium admission. The Aquarium is at 1200 S. Lake Shore. Call (312) 939-2438; www.sheddaquarium.org.

9Yuletide tradition The Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony Chorus team up for the annual Welcome Yule! program tonight through Tuesday. The program features favorite holiday classics and "musical surprises" in a festively decorated Symphony Center, 220 N. Michigan. Tickets are \$10-\$58. Call (312) 294-3000.

10Handel with care The Elgin Symphony orchestra will present Handel's Messiah at 3:30 pm. Sunday at the Hemmens Theatre in Elgin. Tickets are \$12-\$58. The Hemmens is at 150 Dexter Court. Call (847) 888-4000. www.elginsymphony.org.

Section: News

Page: 3; nc

Column: THE MIX

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