

It's about time

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Every circus tells a story, don't it?

No? Well, don't tell the performers in The Flying Griffin Circus.

Every year, the performance troupe of The Actors Gymnasium circus arts training school in Evanston puts on a show that relies at least as much on theater as circus acts.

Last season, Flying Griffin incorporated "Gulliver's Travels" with first-class clowning, acrobatics, juggling and trapeze acts, performed by veterans of some of the world's great circuses.

This outing, the show is about time and how it flies whether you're having fun or not.

Young Trudy (14-year-old Allesandra Stevens, making her professional debut after training at the Actors Gymnasium) is the daughter of exceedingly busy parents (Katia Anderson and Michael Goldberg). Following their example, Trudy has become pretty busy herself. Too busy, in fact, to devote any more time to playing with her imaginary friend Hernando (Tony Hernandez, a clown and acrobat pictured above who also performs with his wife, Lijanna Wallenda Hernandez, in the famous Flying Wallendas aerialist troupe).

Seeing that his young friend could use a little extra time, Hernando sets out to find her some with the help of his circus friends.

"It's a simple story that allows us to play around with the concept of time in a variety of ways," said director Kerry Catlin, who developed the show in collaboration with the Flying Griffin performers.

A team of acrobats become time bandits. Clowns deliver a lecture on whether or not time is relative, based on an academic assist by Evanston Township High School physics teacher Larry Geni. A character becomes frozen in time.

"The circus can exist without a story, but we're trying to give the best possible show to the audience," Catlin said. "It doesn't hurt to offer a little moral: It's not about how to find more time, it's how to use the time we have. A little pitch for stopping to smell the roses."

_ Bruce Ingram

The Flying Griffin Circus previews at 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. Sundays through March 28th in The Actors Gymnasium, 927 Noyes St., Evanston. Tickets: \$7. It opens at 7:30 p.m. March 29th followed by a benefit party in LuLu's restaurant. Benefit tickets are \$50; \$25 for children. The circus continues weekends through May 18. Tickets are \$10. Call (847) 328-2795.

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