

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE

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PUPPET MASTER: It was just a matter of time before Blair Thomas, founder and former co-artistic director of Redmoon Theater, turned out another puppet spectacle. An assistant professor in the School of the Art Institute's sculpture department, he also has formed the Puppetry Institute. Now, with assistance from the Cultural Affairs Department and the Chicago Opera Theater, Thomas and the students in the Gallery 37 puppetry job training class have created Master Pedro's PuppetShow. Originally commissioned by a Spanish princess in 1923, Manuel de Falla's colorful puppet opera is based on an episode from Cervantes' masterpiece Don Quixote. The 30-minute work features three singers and an orchestra composed of players from the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. Performances continue through June 3 at the Storefront Theater, 66 E. Randolph. Tickets: (312) 742-8497.

CIRCUS TROUPE: Over the past five years, the Actors Gymnasium has helped others master the intricacies of the circus arts. Now it's time for a circus of their own. The new resident professional troupe, the Flying Griffin Circus, features faculty, friends and accomplished students from the Actors Gymnasium school. Highlights include high-wire work by Tony Hernandez and Lijana Wallenda Hernandez, puppet vignettes by Michael Montenegro and clowning by the Bumblini Brothers (Paul Stubbings and Paul Kalina), whose act includes juggling fire. Opens tonight and continues through June 25 at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center, 927 Noyes, Evanston. Tickets: (847) 328-2795.

PROP FEST: New Play 2000, produced by Chicago's Prop Thtr in cooperation with the National New Play Network, continues with staged readings and workshop performances of 10 plays. The New Play Network is a consortium of 13 theaters around the country that are dedicated to producing new, provocative works. The core of the festival are the 10 in-the-works plays: "Goods and Services" by Eric Bagan, "Not What I Am" by Aaron Carter, "The Back Ache" by Mary Ruth Clarke, "Going After Cacciato" by Sean Cooper (from the novel by Tim O'Brien), "18 U.S. Code 871" by Joseph Fedorko, "Martin Furey's Shot" by Maureen Gallagher, "Wake" by Hillel Levin, "Rosemary" by Jim O'Connor, "The Deep Abyss of Pauly Vegas" by Paul Peditto and "Eight Day Week" by Peter Sherman. Continues through June 25 at the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Randolph. For more information, call (773) 486-7767.

A CHICAGO VOICE: From the 1970s to the '90s, writer and columnist Jon Henri Damski chronicled dramatic changes in Chicago's gay culture and community. Angels Into Dust: The New Town Anthology, an entry in Bailiwick Repertory's Pride 2000 festival, is a compilation of Damski's essays, adapted and directed by Fred Anzevino. Performances begin Saturday and continue through July 2 at the Bailiwick Arts Center, 1229 W. Belmont. Tickets: (773) 883-1090.

PANEL TALK: Olusegun Obasanjo, development manager for the Chicago Housing Authority's Cabrini-Green complex, will participate in a panel discussion following Cobalt Ensemble Theatre's 3 p.m. Sunday performance of "The Architect." The play is about an architect who faces the deterioration of public housing high-rises he designed. Tickets: (312) 458-9182.

Caption: Tony Hernandez and Lijana Wallenda Hernandez fly high with Flying Griffin Circus.

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