



CIRCUS 1903 - THE GOLDEN AGE OF CIRCUS
 February 14 - 19, 2017
 Hollywood Pantages
 6233 Hollywood Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90028
www.hollywoodpantages.com

BWW Review: CIRCUS 1903 Recreates the Golden Age of Circus at the Hollywood Pantages

by Ellen Dostal, Feb. 16, 2017 - broadwayworld.com

If Dorothy in THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ had run away from home and found this traveling circus instead of Professor Marvel and his crystal ball, she might never have gotten swept up in a twister and landed in Munchkinland. Instead, she might have become part of a new family, the kind that traveled the dust bowl in the early part of the twentieth century and instilled a sense of wonder in every child who was lucky enough to hear that the circus was coming to town.

Such is the world of CIRCUS 1903 - THE GOLDEN AGE OF CIRCUS now raising its tent nightly at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre. It only plays through February 19th and that isn't nearly long enough for this exquisitely crafted show from the producers of THE ILLUSIONISTS (Simon Painter, Tim Lawson, and MagicSpace Entertainment). Mesmerizing music, costumes that evoke the authenticity of the period, lighting and sets that transport you out of the daily grind into the fantastical...I would see every performance that plays in LA and still not have gotten enough of it.

The allure of the impossible and the graceful artistry of performers who have spent a lifetime developing their skills come together in a whimsically nostalgic presentation. The international cast includes some of the finest artists you'll ever see within their individual disciplines. From the teeterboard expertise of The Flying Fins, to the foot juggling act of the sexy Rossi Brothers, to the exciting showmanship of The Great Gaston - who juggles clubs faster than you can believe possible - it's a show you'll never forget.

One of the unique characteristics that sets it apart from other circus entertainments is that the character each performer plays is so human it is hard not to fall in love with them. Florian Blummel, the German Cycling Cyclone, circles the stage in an amazing display of "bicycle ballet" with a twinkle in his eye and a look on his face of complete joy. Duo Flash (Yevgeniy Dashkivskyy and Yefrem Bitkine from the Ukraine) combines intricately choreographed acrobatic skills and a lilting sense of humor while making what they do look so easy. They're like your funny, friendly next door neighbors who just bounced by for a visit.

Overhead you'll find beauty in the air with Lucky Moon, Elena Gatilova's aerial ballet on a suspended hoop. The luminous artist offers an emotional performance so affecting it will bring tears to your eyes, or at least make you believe in romance again. Les Incroyables, the husband and wife duo of Anny Laplante and Andrei Kalesnikau perform a passionate and dangerous aerial act that relies on strength, trust, and absolute precision, while The Lopez Family on the highwire defies the laws of gravity without even using a safety net. Rola bola man, Mikhail Sozonov takes balance to new heights in another dizzying demonstration twenty years in the making. The control these performers have over their bodies is remarkable.

The star of the side show is contortionist Senayet Asefa Amare, known as The Elastic Dislocationist, who can literally break her body in half and have the two sections move independently of each other. I've never seen anything like it and found it to be an unexpectedly beautiful and liquid performance that moves like a dance.

A number of wonderful surprises are built into the show that also reinvent typical circus conventions in an entirely new, highly-imaginative way. The puppeteers who created the National Theatre's production of War Horse have brought to life a massive mother and baby elephant who steal the show with their charms. Their eyes are so expressive and they move with such elegant ease that you'd almost think they were real.

A full-stage transformation from prologue to big top by the end of Act I, which includes the raising of the tent and revelation of the big top performers, is absolutely breathtaking and an incredible way to propel the audience into intermission. This circus has magic in its bones and good old family fun at its heart.

Overseeing it all is Willy Whipsnade (David Williamson), the charismatic and likable Ringmaster who resembles Sam Elliott and has the actor's same ability to hold the audience in the palm of his hand. He communicates volumes with only a raise of the eyebrow or a sideways smirk. The children he invites onstage into his act have no idea that they are about to provide some of the funniest moments in the show but, just when you think it's all about the comedy, Williamson turns it right around and delivers an arrow to the heart. This back and forth exchange between humor and pathos runs throughout the show giving it depth and richness that makes the whole experience something very special.

Gorgeous in every detail, CIRCUS 1903 overdelivers on the promise of a grand time for the whole family. Believe me, you want to see this show!

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