

Italian-style circus offers visual feast

By **SANDY POSNAK**
Special to The Daily Journal

Step right up folks, and get your tickets to "iL CiRCo."

This cirque-like production opened at Bally's Atlantic City late last month and runs through April 5.

The show's name translates to "The Circus" in Italian, but don't get the wrong idea.

You won't see a tent filled with lions, elephants, tigers and a ringmaster.

And don't expect to see the usual French-style cirque, either.

Instead, Bally's Palace Theater features an Italian-style circus with an international cast of 20 performers who keep audiences mesmerized.

Dazzling costumes, music and a youthful troupe of acrobats, contortionists, clowns, vocalists, comedians and dancers bring a highest level of cirque-style artistry to this production. In addition, a story line runs throughout the 70-minute show.

"It was a long, long process of development," show creator and artistic director Sam Trego said in a recent interview. "I was always the director of the show, but the show's artists and creative team all had a hand in the creative ideas."

The imaginative think tank ended up with a powerful story about the journey of a young girl who learns to listen to her heart, to believe in herself, and to fulfill her dreams.

Rather than being discouraged by outside voices, she's inspired by new friends that she meets on her journey, including acrobats and other disciplined performers.

The young lady who stars in the production is portrayed by Sasha Pivaral, a longtime veteran of "iL CiRCo."



Submitted photo

The cast of iL CiRCo features a troupe of acrobats, contortionists, clowns, vocalists, comedians and dancers. The show, which opened late last month at Bally's Atlantic City, runs through April 5.

IF YOU GO

What: "iL CiRCo," a cirque style production

Where: The Palace Theater at Bally's Atlantic City now through April 5

Showtimes: 3:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Sundays-Thursdays; 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.
Saturdays; no performances on Fridays

Tickets: \$25. They can be purchased by calling (800) 736-1420 (Ticketmaster) or online at www.ticketmaster.com.

Phone: (800) 772-7777 for additional information

"She was 6 when she did her first show with us," says Trego. "She's now 12 years old and has been playing the same role all these years. Her tricks are far more sophisticated at age 12 than they were six years ago. She's phenomenal!"

In a unique twist, her real parents portray her parents in the show.

Trego was the originator of Imagination Entertainment, the company that developed "iL CiRCo." He penned the story line and music for the production.

The Daily Journal: Why is the show's title -- "iL CiRCo" -- written in such a different way?

Sam Trego: That's a good question. It just sort of happened. I think to be honest, that it just looks better than "Il Circo." It stands out. I guess it's a branding thing.

D.J.: When did the show first run?

S.T.: The first "iL CiRCo" performance was on May 31, 1996, in San Diego.

D.J.: What distinguishes "iL CiRCo" from other cirque-genre shows?

S.T.: Ours is more Italian, while others are French-Canadian themed. All of our characters are Commedia dell'Arte, which is historically Italian improvised drama. Masks were a huge part of Commedia, as they are in our show.

D.J.: What are the performers' native countries?

S.T.: A fair amount are from Russia -- a lot from Moscow. We also have many from Montreal and Quebec, and a few from the West Coast that we've worked with for many years.

D.J.: How do you select the performers?

S.T.: We do audition shows every year throughout the United States and Canada. We audition hundreds and hundreds of acrobats and invite 40 of them to come to San Diego to train with us. Through that pool of acrobats comes our show.

D.J.: We've heard that the show features unique clowns and puppets. Can you discuss this?

S.T.: Our main clown is Columbina. She plays sort of like a mother to the young lady. In the "World of Puppets" Columbina is her guide. In the puppet world we have a new puppet named Marionetta who is about ten feet tall. Sasha finds her at a fair's marionette show and is kind of entranced with her. That's how it all begins.