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## Cirque de la Symphonie, Philharmonic join up for 2 shows

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel  
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director/producer

Cirque de la Symphonie will return to the Embassy Theatre with two performances of "Cirque de la Symphonie: Encore" this Friday and Saturday as part of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Pops series.

Cirque de la Symphonie, who performed at the Embassy in February 2010, is a unique production featuring aerial flyers, acrobats, contortionists, dancers, jugglers, balancers and strongmen performing to the accompaniment of classical music.

The Fort Wayne Philharmonic, conducted by Andrew Constantine, will play music including Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D minor" and Mendelssohn's "Symphony No.4 in A Major, Op.90 'Italian' Movement 4."

Though this production is quite similar to the many Cirque du Soleil shows performed around the world, it is a separate organization and also quite different, said Bill Allen, Cirque de la Symphonie executive director and producer.

"The program (Cirque de la Symphonie) has been going on for about six years as an organized entity," Allen said in a telephone interview. "Cirque du Soleil is a fine organization; they're a pioneer of many of the cirque artistry programs. We don't have programs that necessarily would even be comparable. We only have 15 feet of stage space downstage from the orchestra.

"So what we do is uniquely adapted to that limited space, ... it's very elegant," Allen continued. "We never have more than two artists out on stage at any particular time, and we're not there to be a distraction to what the orchestra is doing but basically a visual enhancement to the majesty of the live symphony performance. We don't have dancing clowns up and down the stage and flashing lights and strobes and confetti flying," he added.

Though Cirque de la Symphonie may not have as much action as a Cirque du Soleil show, it certainly has its share of breathtaking feats. The show is comprised of some of the top cirque performers in the world, Allen said.

"We don't really take any undue risks in this show," Allen said. But "when Aloysia Gavre is performing to 'Capriccio Espagnol' in the first half, she's on an aerial hoop and she literally is flying out over the audience hanging by her feet suspended with nothing else to attach her to the hoop.

"There's absolutely no room for error," he said. "We've never had any close calls. ... That's why we only have real consummate professionals working in our program."

Cirque de la Symphonie is really meant to raise cirque artistry to a fine arts level and not just because it's paired with classical music, Allen said.

"These are some of the best cirque artists in the world — gold-medal winners, Olympians," he noted. "They really are the best at what they do, and this is the pinnacle of the success of many of their careers."

This Cirque de la Symphonie production also includes some of the best and most revered pieces of classical music, Allen said.

"They're familiar but nonetheless very enjoyable pieces, such as Aerial Duo performing to Tchaikovsky's 'Valse from Swan Lake,'" he said. "A lot of people associate this with ballet, but, when the audience sees this ballet in the air, they'll probably never think of this music in the same way again.

"The majestic Bach's 'Tocatta and Fugue in D minor' is just this incredibly strong piece of music as a backdrop for Jarek and Darek, our strongmen, guys in gold who one will literally be standing on top of the other one's head.

"It's not all just heavy classical music — there's some real light-hearted music," Allen added. "For example, there's a Brazilian piece 'Tico Tico No Fuba,' which goes with a quick-change act.

According to Allen, the key component of the Cirque de la Symphonie production that binds the two art forms together is the music.

"It's what makes cirque and symphony go together, and, if the music isn't right, you know it," he said. "This is the only program in the world that works exclusively



### More Information

#### Music and amazing feats

**What:** The Fort Wayne Philharmonic Pops series concert "Cirque de la Symphonie: Encore" presents cirque artists performing to classical music masterpieces.

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday

**Where:** Embassy Theatre, 121 West Jefferson Blvd.

**Cost:** \$25, \$38, \$52 and \$65. Tickets available at the Embassy box office, by calling the Phil box office at 481-0777 or at [www.fwphil.org](http://www.fwphil.org).

#### For young audiences

At 2 p.m. Saturday, The Phil will present the Star Family Series concert "Cirque Kidz," an abbreviated concert geared toward a young audience with juggling, clowns and cirque acrobatics alongside the Phil. Tickets for "Cirque Kidz" start at \$6 and can be purchased from The Phil box office.

with symphony orchestras.

“We have a great responsibility to put together a program which is going to be not a sensory overload, but something that excites them (the audience) and gives them a sense of fulfillment when they leave.”