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'Cirque Des Rêves' is something wickedly wonderful

December 16, 2015

8:16 AM MST

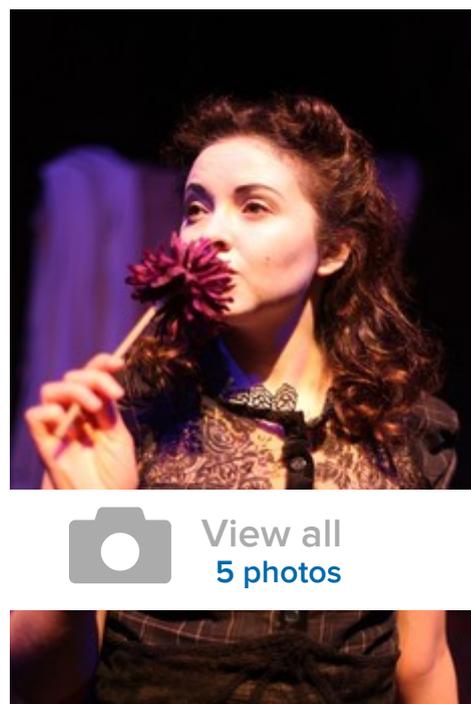
Cirque Des Rêves by Katie McCann

Rating: ★★★★★

Poppy Petunia Primrose Parker. A little girl with a big name and an even bigger imagination. Trapped in a stultifying routine dealing with dull parents and even duller school lessons, Poppy yearns to experience the world with its wonder and whimsy and not just read about it. When a mysterious circus comes to town Poppy seizes the opportunity to immerse herself in some much needed excitement. But in Katie McCann's excellent "Cirque Des Rêves," back at [Smock Alley Theatre](#) by popular demand, adventure might not necessarily take you exactly where you thought it would, especially if you choose to ignore the warnings. Wicked, wild and whimsical, "Cirque Des Rêves" is a delightful dark tale told by a wonderful theatrical ensemble that might possibly be the best seasonal show on offer.

In the tradition of Ray Bradbury's "Something Wicked This Way Comes," Sickle Moon and Illustrated Productions' "Cirque Des Rêves" tells a cautionary tale of being careful of what you wish for, for you just might get it. Like Bradbury's timeless classic, "Cirque Des Rêves" is populated by an array of wild, weird and wonderful characters who inhabit a mysterious circus that springs up overnight, and a sinister ringmaster whose efforts to fulfill your deepest desire conceal dark, ulterior motives. Fused with a healthy smattering of Victorian melodrama, with a sprinkling of Dickens and Dorian Gray for good measure, "Cirque Des Rêves" story of runaways and rovers and wild-eyed dreamers brims with warmth, charm and humor despite lurking in dark shadows.

Theatrically, "Cirque Des Rêves" showcases a creative ensemble working at the top of their game. With its cornucopia of closely observed details, Aoife Fealy's clever set design was given depth and atmosphere by Maggie Donovan's evocative lighting design.

[View all
5 photos](#)*Jeda de Brí*

Against which director Jeda de Brí brought Katie McCann's wonderful script to life with a heightened degree of theatricality. With snappy transitions, clever staging and some innovative use of props, de Brí crafts a highly physical, well paced production, although it does slacken fractionally three quarters of the way through. Her excellent and energetic cast comprised of Clodagh Mooney Duggan, Kevin C Olohan, Finbarr Doyle and Katie McCann, switched endlessly and seamlessly between McCann's rich array of characters, differentiated by carefully crafted physical articulations and vocal shifts, all of which were supported by subtle alterations to Nicola Burke's clever costume designs.

At first glance "Cirque Des Rêves" might seem better suited to the Halloween season. But like Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" it's a tale powered by magic, full of ghosts and shadows and strange, dark places, with wonderful characters that is thoroughly enjoyable. In trading easy sentimentality for something with a little more bite, it offers a refreshing alternative to many traditional seasonal offerings. Some call it an anti-pantomime. But "Cirque Des Rêves" is way better than that. For "Cirque Des Rêves" is a theatrical delight for any and all seasons, and for any and all over the age of nine.

"Cirque Des Rêves" written by Katie McCann, produced by Sickle Moon Productions and Illustrated Productions, runs at Smock Alley Theatre until December 19th with 3.00 p.m. matinee on December 16th and 19th

Show begins at 8.00 p.m.

Tickets: €10/€12

For further information visit [Smock Alley Theatre](#)



Chris O'Rourke
Theatre Examiner

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