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Could you dance on stilts?



Acrotilters will be feature in this year's Dieppe Circus Festival.
PHOTO: CIRCUS STELLA

■ Acrotilting is one of the showcased arts at this year's Dieppe Circus Festival

JENNIFER GOUCHIE
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Circus Stella will present a discipline rarely seen in Canada at this year's Dieppe Circus Festival, which takes place July 23 to 26 at Place 1604.

Acrobatic stilts or acrotilting takes stilt-walking to a whole new level. The highly artistic art requires extreme flexibility and strength and physical stamina of its performers.

New Brunswick natives Julie Duguay and Lou Poirier along with more than a dozen other acrotilters from Montreal and Moncton will perform in *The Robes of St. Anne*, an original show co-created by The Carpetbag Brigade, Circus Stella and Julie Co Danse.

An excerpt from *The Robes of St. Anne* will be presented at the festival's opening show, part of the Mercredi (Wednesday) Show series, on July 23 at 6 p.m. Full productions taking place on both Friday, July 25 and Saturday, July 26 at 5 p.m. at Place 1604 in Dieppe.

In advance of its staging at this year's festival, *The Robes of St. Anne* will also be presented on the grounds of the historic Chapelle Sainte-Anne de Beaumont (Beaumont Chapel) along the Petitcodiac River in Memramcook on Tuesday, July 22 at 7 p.m.

Circus Stella co-founder and artistic director Julie Duguay is both co-ordinating and performing in *The Robes of St. Anne*. She promises that audiences will be wowed by the visually stunning production.

"Acrobatic stilts are a new discipline here in Canada," says Julie, who once coached other stilt-walkers with Circus Stella. "It's a union between dance and circus that uses the whole body in different ways and involves lifts with partners"

A great deal of training has gone into preparing for the 45-minute show that Julie says will be a combination of theatre, acrobatics, dance, music and lavish costumes involving about 25 acrotilters and people from the local community of different skills levels.

"There will be solos, duos and group pieces and then a finale at the end involving everyone," adds Julie who has been stilt walking for about four years and training as an acrotilter since last April.

The School of Toronto Dance Theatre graduate is no stranger to the festival, having performed there as a stilt walker in past years. A professional contemporary dancer/choreographer since 2004, Julie aspires to make contemporary dance more accessible to the public, especially here in her home province of New Brunswick.

She has had a passion for the arts since she was a child and is always looking for new ways to challenge herself

Circus festival schedule

Wednesday, July 23

- All Day: Launch of the Dieppe Circus Festival at the Wednesday Show, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 6 p.m.: Wednesday Show: Ten acts from circus companies in Nova Scotia, Quebec, California and across Acadia. An excerpt from *The Robes of St. Anne*, an outdoor spectacle from The Carpetbag Brigade, Circus Stella and Julie Co Danse

- 1 to 2 p.m.: Street shows, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 2 to 3 p.m.: Free circus workshop for children ages 5 to 13. Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 5 to 10 p.m.: Street show, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.: The Night Circus, Dieppe Centre for the Arts. A dance with entertainment and surprises.

Thursday, July 24

- 7:30 p.m.: 7:30 pm Spectacle-based drama in a cross-cultural exchange with Jay Ruby (English only). M.I.C. Canadian Eatery, Dieppe

Saturday, July 26

- 10 a.m. to noon: Children's mask workshop, Dieppe Centre for the Arts.
- 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Street shows, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.: All ages circus workshop (admission fee). Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 3 to 5 p.m.: All ages circus workshop, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall
- 3 to 5 p.m.: Open stage, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall. Young talent takes to the stage to test out their act before the festival audience.
- 5 to 10 p.m.: Street shows, Place 1604, Dieppe City Hall

Friday, July 25

- 10 a.m. to noon: Children's mask workshop, Dieppe Centre for the Arts.

as an artist. Her work experience in the worlds of dance, theatre and circus has been a valuable asset in the creation of the show.

Performing alongside Julie will be physical theatre artist Lou Poirier. Relatively new to the art of acrotilting, she's excited to be performing at this year's festival under the guidance and direction of both Julie and *The Robes of St. Anne* artistic director Jay Ruby of The Carpetbag Brigade.

Lou joined Circus Stella earlier this year and began to train seriously for acrobatic stilts.

Although this is her first time performing at the Dieppe Circus Festival, she has faithfully attended the event each year as a spectator.

"It's family-oriented but more so community focused at large," Lou says. "I think the Festival du Cirque really does it for reaching out to a crowd of different generations and backgrounds."

She strongly encourages anyone with a curiosity about circus to attend the festival.

"Whether you're an athlete, a senior, a parent encouraging your child to stay active and creative, or have been mesmerized watching artists interact with the crowd in their own special ways, you should go."

Contemporary circus showcases many different disciplines including dance, song, visual arts and skillful acrobats. It's both challenging and fun.

"We hope to generate an interest in the artistic process of circus shows but also in the happy marriage with the other disciplines like dance, for instance," Lou says.



An acrobat straps on stilts for a performance with Circus Stella.
PHOTO: CIRCUS STELLA

"Promoting healthy and safe ways to push your limits and have fun too."

Things quite often don't go according to plan during live performances. But according to Lou, that's the appeal.

"That's why we like it so much. The interaction with the public changes the flow of the act and gives us more playfulness and presence," she says. "The trust we build between us, the performers,

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Uma Thurman auctions private screening of Pulp Fiction



Nicole Richie
PHOTO: BANG NEWS SERVICE

Uma Thurman is auctioning a private screening of *Pulp Fiction*, the cult classic from 1994.

The 44-year-old actress plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the movie – which was directed by **Quentin Tarantino** and starred the likes of **Samuel L. Jackson** and **John Travolta**, by hosting a viewing for one lucky fan and 55 guests.

Uma, who is auctioning the screening to raise money for Room To Grow, which works to help babies born into poverty, said: "Seeing *Pulp Fiction* again after more than a decade ... I was amazed and reminded of just how eternal the film really is.

"I am so happy to share the film again, in a personal way, and to see the film do some real good for babies in need."

The auction is being staged on Charity-Buzz.com until July 23, and the prize also includes cocktails and a Q-and-A session with the *Kill Bill* actress.

Uma, who has been involved with Room To Grow for over a decade, has confirmed the lucky bidder much be available on Sept. 14, as that is when the screening will take place at NeueHouse in New York City.

Nicole Richie regrets her "virgin" tattoo. The 32-year-old reality TV star, who has



children Harlow, six, and Sparrow, four, with husband **Joel Madden**, got the inking on her right wrist when she was just 16 years old but now thinks it looks "embarrassing and desperate."

She said: "See this tattoo? It says 'virgin,' you guys. It's embarrassing and desperate you.

"Now, I am a Virgo so when I was 16 I thought, 'Ooh I'm going to be different and I'm going to put virgin, because the Virgin is the sign for Virgo.'"

Nicole, who was born in California, went on to joke she had considered ways to modify the tattoo, but doesn't think they'd be very convincing.

She told E! News: "I'd add an I and an A and say I'm from Virginia, but I just don't think people are going to believe me. So I'm just stuck."

Today's celebrity birthdays
• Country singer Sue Thompson is 88.

- Actress Helen Gallagher is 88.
- Country singer George Hamilton IV is 77.
- Singer Vikki Carr is 74.
- Musician Commander Cody is 70.
- Guitarist Brian May (Queen) is 67.
- Guitarist Bernie Leadon (Eagles) is 67.
- Actress Beverly Archer (*Major Dad*) is 66.
- Movie director Abel Ferrara is 63.
- Actor Peter Barton (*Sunset Boulevard*) is 58.
- Drummer Kevin Haskins (Bauhaus) is 54.
- Movie director Atom Egoyan is 54.
- Actor Campbell Scott is 53.
- Comedian Lisa Lampanelli is 53.
- Actor Anthony Edwards (ER) is 52.
- Country singer Kelly Shiver (Thrasher Shiver) is 51.
- Actress Clea Lewis (*Ellen*) is 49.
- Percussionist Evelyn Glennie is 49.
- Singer Urs Buhler of Il Divo is 43.
- Actor Andrew Kavovit is 43.
- Drummer Jason McGerr (Death Cab For Cutie) is 40.
- Actor Benedict Cumberbatch (*Sherlock*) is 38.
- Actor Jared Padalecki (*Supernatural*) is 32.
- Actor Steven Anthony Lawrence is 24.



Uma Thurman
PHOTO: BANG NEWS SERVICE