

DAILY NEWS

Sugarplum 'Dreams'

Cirque's amazin' 'Holidaze' show leaps into action

BY PHIL ROURA

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus— and this one flips kids high into the air. Mr. Claus is part of the immense fun that is “Cirque Dreams Holidaze,” Donald Trump’s glittering Christmas gift to Atlantic City, playing at the Trump Plaza through Dec. 28.

“Holidaze” is a delicious confection of lights, costumes and action featuring 22 performers. The shows in the “Cirque Dreams” franchise celebrate the strength and agility of the human body, and one would think that there are only so many ways you can twist and tumble before running out of ideas.

“Holidaze,” is well crafted by creator-director Neil Goldberg and choreographer Heather Hoffman, but a lot of credit must go to the performers. They have **charm, sparkle and talent by the sleighload**, as they proved at the world premiere the other night in the Trump Theater. If you haven’t seen a “Cirque” show before, you’re wise to pay attention to what’s going on around you. Those people in top hats and brown costumes helping you find your seats aren’t ordinary ushers, as you’ll discover when the lights dim and they weave you into the action with a whimsical bit of nonsense that is tough to describe but so easy to enjoy. The curtain parts to unfold a symphony of color and dazzle. A floor-to-rafters crystal Christmas tree is flanked by dozens of ornaments and playthings that suddenly come to life. (If you ever wondered where the Hula Hoop went, here is your answer.)

Then 10-year-old Canadian-born Nikita Gololobov, seemingly plucked from the audience by chance, is coaxed onto the stage to visit Santa. It is a joyful ruse. Before you can say “lucky kid,” Santa (Gololobov’s real-life father, Yury) is tossing him into the air like a beach ball.

Little Nikita is amazing. But the kid has competition. About 20 minutes later, Fabio Anastasini, 11, and his older sibling Giuliano literally go acro-batty with a routine that is so full of energy it could end our dependence on oil.

The brothers masquerade as a pair of Italian gingerbread boys, and Giuliano— using his feet while lying on an incline board — flips, tosses and boots Fabio all over the place. They end the routine with a dizzying set of twirls that leaves the audience breathless.

Despite all the dazzle, it’s the little things in “Holidaze” that give the show its unique charm. The three singers (Renee Heitmann, George Pappas and Julia Langley), for example, don’t hog any of the action, but their gorgeous voices are critical in driving the show forward.

Even the way the cast changes props has been choreographed with whimsical and funky routines. There isn’t a wasted movement anywhere. “Holidaze” is the second major Christmas show to come to The Boardwalk this season and is enormously entertaining. Where else can you see Santa flipping out?

