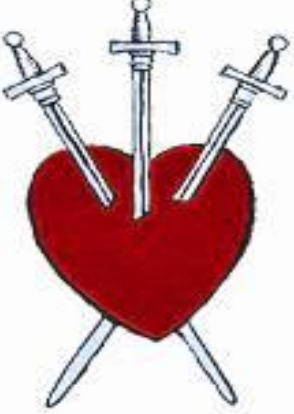


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Acrosports presents City Circus in

KAMIKAZE HEART

An urban circus fairy tale about a Boy with a mechanical heart, a grant-writing Swan, B-boy heroes and the Little Urban Circus.

Original story and direction by Tim Barsky
Choreography by Shannon Gaines of Vau de Vire Society
Performed by special guest artists and City Circus
May 1-31 at BRAVA! Theater (San Francisco)

(San Francisco, CA – March 31, 2009) **KAMIKAZE HEART** is a visually stunning, inspired fairy tale about true love. Written and directed by **Tim Barsky**, Artistic Director of **City Circus**, **KAMIKAZE HEART** is a groundbreaking collaboration by an award-winning team of hip-hop music, dance and circus artists.

The imaginative story is told through a new, hybrid performance style called *Urban Circus Arts* – a genre unique to City Circus. It is a performance discipline that crosses traditional circus arts (acrobatics, aerial acts, and contortion) and newer city-born forms (breakdancing, parkour, and hip-hop theatre). Urban Circus Arts is an energetic and innovative juxtaposition of art forms.

Urban Circus Arts was first seen in **AND IF WE SHADOWS** (2008) Tim Barsky's original production for City Circus about the challenges and triumphs of life in the Bay Area circus and hip-hop communities. Many of the lead artists from **AND IF WE SHADOWS** have re-teamed for **KAMIKAZE HEART**.

They are: director/playwright **Tim Barsky**, choreographer **Shannon Gaines** (co-founder of the Vau de Vire Society, named "Best Circus Troupe" by the San Francisco Bay Guardian 2008), legendary drummer **Kevin Carnes** (Broun Fellinis/P-funk), composer-vibraphonist **Brandi Brandes** (Climate Theater), b-boys **Iron Monkey** and **Finesse** (from the Renegades Crew), aerialist **Chloe Axelrod** (considered one of the top aerial static hoop performers in the world), performance acrobat **Jodi Power** (whose act involves the use of a highly dangerous singlepoint sling apparatus), and the students and master artists of City Circus. Act choreographers include **Angelo Rodriguez** (Cirque Du Soleil), **Brett Womack & Simon Chabon** (lead & soloist, Crucible's **DRACUL: PRINCE OF FIRE**) and Mongolian master contortionist **Serchmaa Byambaa**.

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City Circus performers cross three generations - the youngest performer is 11 years old. A house band, led by Kevin Carnes, will perform the original score live on the vibraphone, keyboards, drum set, percussion, drum corps and electronics.

KAMIKAZE HEART is a fantasy about a Boy with a mechanical heart made of gold who falls in love with A Beautiful Grantwriter for a Little Urban Circus. After being called into the Army Reserves and shipped overseas, the Beautiful Grantwriter turns into a Swan and then begins her journey home. On her expedition back she encounters The City of Fire, moon spiders, swans, and forests of demons. The story also involves the 4 Kingz of The Elements (b-boys with kamikaze hearts full of love) and a Little Urban Circus. It's a joyous and imaginative urban fairy tale, which is brought to life through death-defying feats of contortion, juggling, acrobatics, aerial performance, parkour, ballet cirque, and puppetry, beat boxing, and breakdance!

Their story about true love has the conventional elements of broken hearts, challenges and heroic rescues. But it's told with the unconventional theatricality of Urban Circus Arts, cross-gender casting, with political references to Prop 8 and current events.

KAMIKAZE HEART will open on May 1 and run Fridays through Sundays throughout the month at BRAVA! Theater in San Francisco's Mission District.

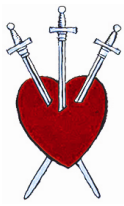
ABOUT ACROSPORTS / CITY CIRCUS: San Francisco and Montreal are the two primary training centers for circus arts in North America. Acrosports and the SF Circus Center represent a powerhouse for US circus, with two out of five professional circus schools in the U.S. on the same block in San Francisco.

CITY CIRCUS is a three-generation strong professional circus ensemble & training program based in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is the performance arm of AcroSports, a physical and circus arts gym, founded by Bay Area resident, Dorrie Huntington, and performers from the Moscow Circus. This multi-ethnic ensemble, which ranges in age from 14-34, is a product of the vibrant circus and hip-hop communities fostered by the Bay Area, and draws strongly from both traditions.

As in the old world tradition, teen apprentices study and perform alongside acknowledged master performers. Participants in the program have gone on to perform with troupes including 7 Fingers, Cirque Du Soleil, Ringling Bros, & the Ecole Nationale DuCirque in Montreal.

Tim Barsky, Artistic Director of City Circus since 2007, has been developing the world's foremost training and performance program that specializes in Urban Circus Arts which will come to represent a major stylistic movement within the history of circus. Over the past couple of years, the movement has been blossoming in the 'indie circus' world. There has been an explosion of new styles appearing on underground stages, and Acrosports/City Circus rapidly became established as the foremost training and performance program that specialized in Urban Circus Arts.

This past year, Acrosports established the **New Urban Circus Artist Residencies** program - the only one of its kind in USA. This replicates the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Apprenticeship program structure in that it provides residencies for master circus artists, stipends for low-income apprentices, and youth circus ensembles that study and perform with master artists.



(The story of) KAMIKAZE HEART by Tim Barsky

Once upon a time in a little place they used to call the new country, there was a Boy who had a Heart Made of Gold. Only it was not nearly as nice as one might imagine. In fact the Heart was mechanical, and had to be wound up constantly, and created incidents with homeland security regulations whenever the boy boarded a plane. But most of all it made the Boy feel that with a heart that was so heavy and difficult and cumbersome, that no one would ever love him. But he did find love, with A Beautiful Grantwriter who had just secured a large grant for a Little Urban Circus from San Francisco.

Unfortunately, no sooner did they fall in love then the Beautiful Grantwriter was called into the army reserves, which she had joined to pay for college. The Boy received a series of letters. A letter that said, "I love you and it is hot." A letter that said, "I miss you and it is dusty." A letter that said, "We regret to inform you that an improvised explosive device bombing has resulted..."

And when he got the news, the Boy climbed into an ebony tower, and locked his Heart away in a birdcage made of loss. And swore he would never love again. Only the Beautiful Grantwriter didn't die. Instead she turned into a Swan; and began to fly home through The City of Fire.

Meanwhile, the Boy wasted away. Even his Tsayde and Bubbe (his grandparents) were no help. Not even their acrobatic goat could cheer him up.

One night the Heart escaped from the birdcage, and flew away to the Moon, where the Moon Spiders found it. But they didn't eat the Heart. They adopted it as a foster child.

Back in the new country, the Boy was slowly dying because his heart was gone. But as he was watching the rain, who should he spy but a breakdance crew, The 4 Kingz of The Elements (Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, and Iron Monkey). In town for a b-boy competition, they explained to him how no one would offer them shelter, except for the one manger (and some nice lady was giving birth in it). The Boy told them, "I may have no heart, but even I know that a society that leaves artists out in the rain is signing its own death certificate." And he welcomed them to spend the night in his tower.

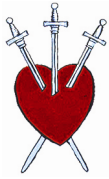
Meanwhile The Swan found herself in The Forest of Demons. Finally she managed to escape, and winged her way to the boy as he lay dying (for who can live without their heart?). The Swan kissed him, but let's be realistic – when you need shock-trauma surgery a kiss just ain't gonna cut it, not even in a fairy tale. All seemed lost. But just then, who should appear but the 4 Kingz, and The Little Circus.

The B-boys (who had smoked the competition) offered to keep the boy alive with their heart (since everyone knows b-boys have kamikaze hearts full of love). And the Little Urban Circus said, "Oh Noble Swan, you helped us in our hour of need with a fast-tracked NEA grant application. And now we will help you by building a bridge to the Moon."

And that is just what they did. There they met the Moon Spiders, who had taken care of the Heart and were very sad to see it go. But the acrobats invited them to visit on the earth. And so the Moon Spiders descended with the Circus. And The Heart came back to The Boy. Everyone celebrated with a grueling acrobatic dance routine, in the garden of the ebony tower; a tower that stands at the end of the narrow road that lies between war and peace.

As for the Swan and The Boy? I'm not sure if they lived happily ever after – after all, The Swan was still a Swan, and who knows if the Boy was ready to handle a relationship with a person who was transitioning into being a bird? After all, he could be a bit emotional at times. But let's just say that they had time to figure it all out – and maybe that's as happily ever after as anyone ever gets.

THE END



KAMIKAZE HEART

Artist Biographies

City Circus performs Fridays –Sundays May 1 – 31, 2009 at BRAVA! Theater

TIM BARSKY (director) is a playwright-performer and circus director with extensive ties to the bay area hip-hop community. A graduate of Brown University with a degree in Medieval Islamic and Judaic studies, he was recently awarded a \$50,000 Gerbode Emerging Playwright's Grant for TRACK IN A BOX, a hip-hop and circus based play which premieres in 2010. Best known for his underground-hit THE BRIGHT RIVER, he is a co-founder of Vowel Movement Beatboxers, an artist-in-residence at SF's Climate Theater, and has lectured at Stanford, Oberlin, and The Royal College of Art, London. timbarsky.com

SHANNON GAINES (choreographer) began her career in Southern California as a competitive artistic gymnast and later as a performance acrobat. Hailed by the Associated Press as one of the prominent circus choreographers in the Bay Area, she is co-founder and choreographer of the dance/circus company Vau de Vire Society in San Francisco. She also works as a professional dancer, stilter, roller skater, living statue, fire performer and clown.

KEVIN CARNES (composer/drum-set/samplers) is an acoustic and electronic drummer, percussionist, composer, and producer who played music ranging from jazz to punk rock for more than 25 years. He has performed and recorded with George Clinton and the P-Funk Allstars; Bernie Worrell and the Woo Warriors; world music DJ Cheb i Sabbah; rock bands Storm and Her Dirty Mouth and the Eric McFadden Trio; electronica-driven Soulstice; as well as Consolidated; Little White Radio; Post Junk Trio; Tyler Stone and Sutro; Shaunna Hall of 4 Non Blondes; and Radioactive of Spearhead fame. Carnes is a founding member of Broun Fellinis, a jazz roots trio based in San Francisco, and he co-founded The Beatnigs, a political punk noise band that exploded in Europe in the late 80's. Currently, Kevin can be seen performing with P-Funk's Electrofunkadelic, Ronkat and the Katdelic Revival, Alittle Friction, UAF and Broun Fellinis.

CHLOE MARVEL LIGHT AXELROD (aerialist, acrobat, The SWAN), a native San Franciscan, is a circus prodigy who began flying trapeze lessons at age 12. She was quickly recruited by Master Lu Yi (Nanjing Acrobats) for his Youth Circus troupe where she performed double straps, bungee, tumbling, teeterboard and hoop. Her unique static hoop style is based upon her study with artists including Master Lu Yi, Gypsy Snider (7 Fingers) and Angelo Rodriguez (Cirque Du Soleil). She has toured internationally with Britain's Generating Company, and was a featured soloist with Universal Studios Osaka and Tokyo Disney (Japan). She recently returned from a national tour with Cirque Productions, performing her double hoop act Scarlett & Axelrod. A long term coach working with the next generation of Bay Area Circus, she is a master artist-in-residence with City Circus.

BOBBY "FINESSE" VICARIO (breakdancer, parkour acrobat, King of CLUBS) is a San Francisco native and active member of the Bay Area's own Renegade Rockers, a b-boy crew formed in 1983. As a member of the Break Beat Assassins Finesse has performed globally, acquiring a championship at Battle Kings in 2002, and Euro Pro Am 2003. He is considered by many to have been one of the dancers who have defined West Coast b-boying. A two year veteran of the Golden State Warrior's Dance Troupe, he is currently a master artist-in-residence with City Circus.

Artist Biographies- continued

EDWIN JOHNSON AKA "B-BOY BLACK" (breakdancer, parkour acrobat, King of DIAMONDS) has been dancing since 1999 and is part of Bay Area's own Renegade Rockers and one of the founders for the East Bay breakdance crew know as Cloud 9 Tribe. Known within b-boy circles as a rising prodigy, B-boy Black has won the many events including the Out for Fame City title in 2007 and has also appeared in the Crown City Rockers video "B-boy" in 2006. Edwin still to this day continues participate in Bay Area dance and Hip-hop events. He is pleased to be the first recipient of the AcroSports folk apprenticeship program award.

SHAWN HALLMAN a.k.a IRON MONKEY (breakdancer, parkour acrobat, King IRON MONKEY) has been b-boying for eleven years. An internationally known and sought-after artist, he has won individual and crew competitions at the international level and toured with hip hop legends including Kurtis Blow and KRS-1. His work has taken him across the US, Europe, Asia & Australia, and has seen him hailed by dance historians as a master performer & innovator in the field of hip-hop dance.

BRANDI BRANDES' (composer, vibraphone, keyboards, percussion, electronics) love for music and drama was founded in high school marching band and classic rock. Her composition style is an exploration of dramatic dynamics, from subtle space to big banging. She has had the great fortune to study with SF Ballet percussionist David Rosenthal and Bay Area Latin jazz legendary arranger/composer/director John Calloway while earning a B.A. Music degree with emphasis in Jazz & World Percussion. Compositional credits include two original solo-performed theatrical scores: Betty Shamieh's TERRITORIES at the Magic Theatre and Tim Barksy's 7 BEGGARS. Theatrical pit orchestra credits include WEST SIDE STORY, THE WIZ, KILLING MY LOBSTER, and FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. She is currently an artist in residence at the Climate Theater, and a composer-in-residence with City Circus.

JODI POWER (acrobat, aerialist, b-girl, The King of HEARTS) is a performance acrobat, dancer, and circus generalist based in the San Francisco. As a solo performer, her collaborations stretch from working as go-go dancer for Jay Z, to performing as a featured dancer with The National Ballet of Senegal. A mainstay of Bay Area circus she has performed with a who's who of local ensembles including Vau de Vire Society, Earth Circus, the Oakland Opera, Velocity Circus, and Fou Fou Ha. A resident artist in Bay Area schools with Young Audiences, she is pleased to be a master artist-in-residence with City Circus.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALENDAR LISTING

High-res jpegs available upon request from NEQA/Communications

WHO: **Acrosports** presents **City Circus**

WHAT: **Kamikaze Heart**

A Boy with a mechanical heart, a grant-writing Swan, and B-boy heroes meet in this urban fairy tale written and directed by **Tim Barsky**.

Choreographed by **Shannon Gaines**

Music by **Kevin Carnes**

Performed by City Circus featuring aerialist Chloe Axelrod;
performance acrobat Jodi Power; and
breakdancers Finesse, Iron Monkey, and B-boy Black.

WHEN: **May 1 – 31, 2009**

Fridays at 8pm;

Saturdays at 4pm and 8pm;

Sundays at 4pm

WHERE: BRAVA! Theater (2781-24th Street @ York, San Francisco)

TICKETS: \$14 general admission; \$25 reserved seats

BOX OFFICE: (415) 665-2276 and citycircus.org

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