

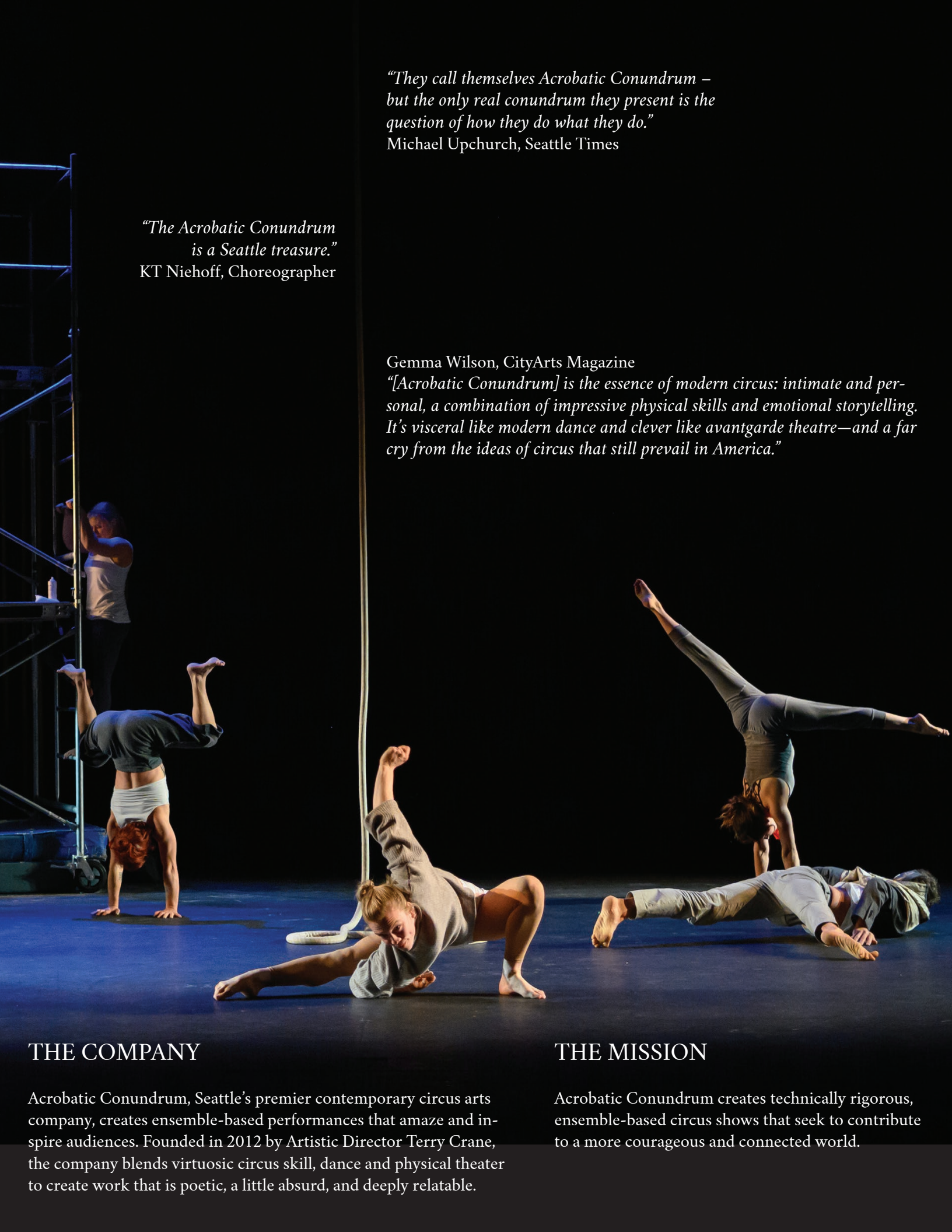


# ACROBATIC CONUNDRUM



For booking queries email  
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[www.AcrobaticConundrum.com](http://www.AcrobaticConundrum.com)



*“They call themselves Acrobatic Conundrum – but the only real conundrum they present is the question of how they do what they do.”*  
Michael Upchurch, Seattle Times

*“The Acrobatic Conundrum is a Seattle treasure.”*  
KT Niehoff, Choreographer

Gemma Wilson, CityArts Magazine  
*“[Acrobatic Conundrum] is the essence of modern circus: intimate and personal, a combination of impressive physical skills and emotional storytelling. It’s visceral like modern dance and clever like avantgarde theatre—and a far cry from the ideas of circus that still prevail in America.”*

## THE COMPANY

Acrobatic Conundrum, Seattle’s premier contemporary circus arts company, creates ensemble-based performances that amaze and inspire audiences. Founded in 2012 by Artistic Director Terry Crane, the company blends virtuosic circus skill, dance and physical theater to create work that is poetic, a little absurd, and deeply relatable.

## THE MISSION

Acrobatic Conundrum creates technically rigorous, ensemble-based circus shows that seek to contribute to a more courageous and connected world.



## COMPANY HISTORY

Contemporary circus company Acrobatic Conundrum was founded in 2012 by Terry Crane, a US-based circus artist with an international background. His circus training took him from Canada (National Circus School of Montreal), to China (Beijing International Circus School) and to England (NoFit State Circus). As a performer, he presented his solo rope act on stages (and in tents) in Switzerland, France, Finland and the US. After several successful years as a solo artist, he returned to his native Seattle, Washington, to focus his energy on building Acrobatic Conundrum, an ensemble-based circus company dedicated to performing technically rigorous, artistically challenging work.

Since inception, Acrobatic Conundrum has produced five evening-length works: *The Way Out*, *The Language of Chance*, *Love and Gravity*, *The Fig Tree Waltzes*, and *Unraveling*. Acrobatic Conundrum's shows are developed through a collaborative creation process. Each work blends impressive physical feats and delicate storytelling to create performance experiences that are simultaneously transcendent and relatable.

Over the past eight years, through self-produced and programmed performances across the U.S., Acrobatic Conundrum has built a strong and passionate following.

### TERRY CRANE, Artistic Director

Terry Crane surrendered to restless urges that led him to walk calmly away with the circus at the tender age of 20. He is the founder of Acrobatic Conundrum, a contemporary circus company based in Seattle. He has performed on 4 continents, in theaters, under the big top, and on the street. Terry is delighted to share his love of rope technique, circus creation, and collaboration via workshops and performances across the globe. As a director, Terry is on a relentless quest to tell true fictions, contradict human isolation, and portray paradox.

### NINA GERSHY, Managing Director

A native New Yorker, Nina discovered her love for circus and theatre at an early age. After graduating from Cornell University, Nina was admitted to the New England Center for Circus Arts' Professional Training Program, where she specialized in Aerial Rope. Nina has performed with Hijinx Music Festival, New York Fashion Week, ABCirque, and Cirque Us. In addition to performing, Nina coaches circus arts across the country. If she's not performing or teaching, you can probably find her behind her computer doing "circus consulting" (business development) for various circus schools, companies, and artists.

## CURRENT PRODUCTION

### UNRAVELING

15 vertical rope artists share the stage to elevate their aerial medium in a genre-innovating cirque opus. With Conundrum's signature style of mixing relatable humanity alongside breathtaking athleticism, "Unraveling" explores themes of interdependence, mortality, and love.

Length: 80 minutes

7-15 Performers, 1 tour manager, Rigger, 1 Stage Manager

Rate: \$11,000

Stage Dimensions: 30' deep x 40' wide x 20' visible height



# UNRAVELING

*18 Best Things to Do in Seattle in December 2019*  
*Our handpicked list of the best bets for entertainment*  
*this month. By: Gavin Borchert*

*"Alt-circus troupe Acrobatic Conundrum combines*  
*jaw-dropping physical performance with powerful, emo-*  
*tional storytelling."*



## PAST PRODUCTIONS

### THE FIG TREE WALTZES

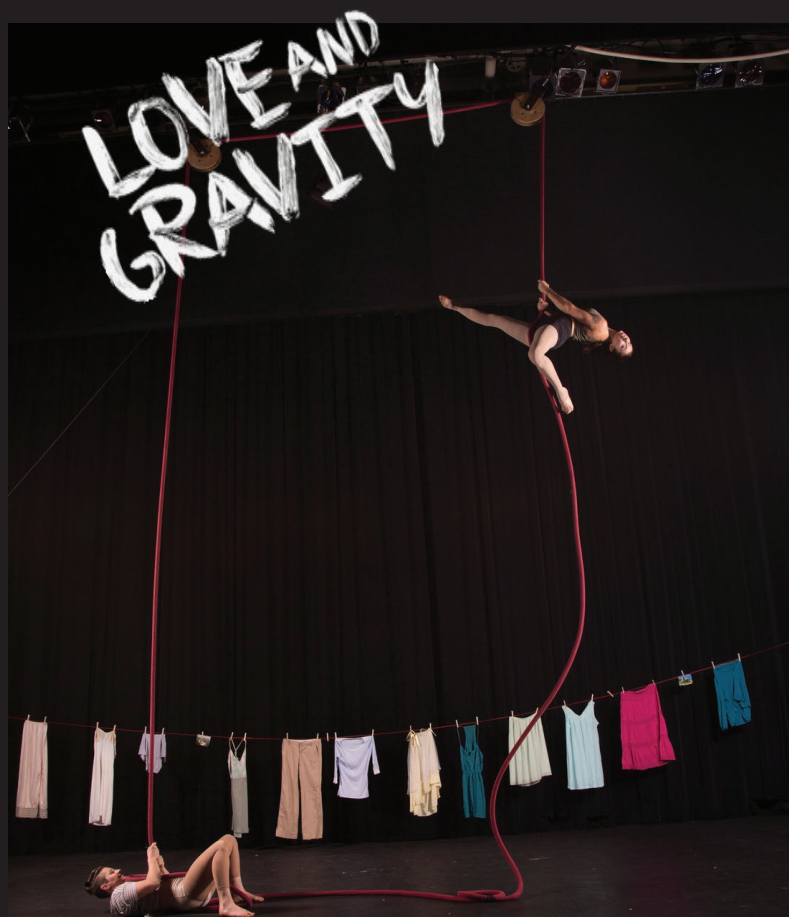
Featuring choreography from Costa Rica's Jimmy Ortiz Chinchilla, The Fig Tree Waltzes blends circus and dance into a poetic experience that pushes the artists to the edge. In a world where stakes are high and time is running out, The Fig Tree Waltzes is a paean to the human drive to keep playing against overwhelming odds.

Length: 1 hour, no intermission

5 Performers, 1 Rigger, 1 Stage Manager

Rate: \$6000 plus travel

Stage Dimensions: 40'W x 25'D x 20'Visible Height



### LOVE AND GRAVITY

Love and Gravity presents six artists on a minimal stage with little else but their talents and hearts. The performers explore, through a tapestry-like journey, the endless ways in which we find love, support and partnership. This evening-length piece is appropriate for all ages and will leave you feeling joyful and awed by the power of human connection.

Length: 1 1/2 hour plus intermission

6 Performers, 1 Rigger, 1 Stage Manager

Rate: \$6000 plus travel

Stage Dimensions: 40'W x 25'D x 20'Visible Height

## PRESENTER REVIEWS

“Combining amazing physical feats, emotional theatrics, and stunning dance, Love and Gravity embraces it all! Every performer is a master. Collectively, they deliver a performance that shares the right amounts of drama with comedy and physical achievements with perfect dance movement.

As a small presenting organization using high school auditoriums for performances, this company makes the technical requirements a breeze. What a joy to work with them all. Certainly, the “circus” identity appeals to a broader audience particularly families, yet Acrobatic Conundrum brings new definition to this contemporary interpretation of the art form. One of the most artistic and amazingly beautiful programs we have hosted.”

Steve Schrepferman, Executive Director  
Park County Arts Council, Powell, Wyoming

“What a stunning performance. TRULY BREATHTAKING and HEART WRENCHING! I have been booking great shows for 9 years but never before have I seen EVERY MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE completely captivated for an ENTIRE PERFORMANCE - bar none. Seamless transitions that not only became part of the story-line but added to it!

Exquisite artistry, impeccable timing and precision that leaves one with their jaw on the floor and their heart in their throat! NOT A WEAK LINK on STAGE and only a rare few dry eyes in the house! Talk about a moving performance!”

Jesse Devine, Artistic Director  
Whitefish Theatre Company,  
Whitefish, Montana

### EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Acrobatic Conundrum is invested in encouraging a more courageous and connected world. We pursue this not only through performance, but through educational outreach as well. Spending time in a community to share knowledge and inspiration is one of the main reasons we tour. We offer a wide range of educational experiences including hands-on, skill-based workshops for adults and children of all abilities, and workshops focused on creative process and development.

With a bit of information from you, we can develop a participatory experience that best suits your community.

### WORKSHOP OPTIONS INCLUDE:

Handstands, Aerial Technique, Partner Acrobatics, Contact Improvisation, Creative Collaboration.



# TOURING HISTORY

## 2014-2015 Selected Performances

January 9-11, 2014	Chicago Contemporary Circus Festival	Chicago, IL	The Way Out
August 21, 2014	City Park SummerStage	New York, NY	The Language of Chance
October 19-20, 2015	Backstreet Festival	Alexandria, Egypt	The Language of Chance
November 21, 2015	TedX Rainier	Seattle, WA	Rope Battle Royale

## 2016-2017 Performances

March 12-13, 2016	Echo Theater	Portland, OR	Love and Gravity
March 26, 2016	Le Cirque Center	Ashland, OR	Love and Gravity
April 1-3, 2016	The Great Star Theater	San Francisco, CA	Love and Gravity
April 8-10, 2016	Broadway Performance Hall	Seattle, WA	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 1/4, 280 Seats
April 15-17, 2016	New England Center for Circus Arts	Brattleboro, VT	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 1/1, 100 Seats
April 22-23, 2016	Arts at the Armory	Somerville, MA	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 3/3, 200 Seats
October 22, 2016	Smithsonian American Art Museum	Washington, D.C.	Custom Event
October 28, 2016	Orcas Island Performing Arts Center	Orcas Islands, WA	Love and Gravity
October 29, 2016	Lopez Center for Community Arts	Lopez Island, WA	Love and Gravity
December 9-18, 2016	12th Avenue Arts	Seattle, WA	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 3/10, 160 Seats
December 29-31, 2016	12th Avenue Arts	Seattle, WA	Volume 4 - Sold Out, 3/3, 160 Seats
September 15-17, 2017	Echo Theater	Portland, OR	Love and Gravity
September 19-21, 2017	Parks County Arts Council	Powell, WY	Love and Gravity
September 24, 2017	Oriental Theater	Denver, CO	Love and Gravity
September 28-29, 2017	Dairy Center for the Arts	Boulder, CO	Love and Gravity
October 5-6, 2017	ZACH Theater	Austin, TX	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 1/2, 250 Seats
October 9-14, 2017	Southern Fried Circus Fest	Dallas, TX	Love and Gravity
October 20, 2017	Rio Grande Theater	Las Cruces, NM	Love and Gravity
October 26-29, 2017	MASC Studio	Missoula, MT	Love and Gravity
November 2-3, 2017	Whitefish Theater Co	Whitefish, MT	Love and Gravity - Sold Out, 1/1, 330 Seats
November 5, 2017	Capitol Theatre	Yakima, WA	Love and Gravity
December 1-10, 2017	12th Avenue Arts	Seattle, WA	Volume 5 - Sold Out, 4/14, 160 Seats
December 15-23, 2017	12th Avenue Arts	Seattle, WA	The Fig Tree Waltzes - Sold Out, 3/8, 160 Seats

## 2018 Performances

September 22	Lake Placid Center for the Arts	Lake Placid, NY	The Fig Tree Waltzes
September 24-30	Arts at the Armory	Boston, MA	The Fig Tree Waltzes
October 1-7	Theatre Project	Baltimore, MD	The Fig Tree Waltzes
October 8-14	The Muse Brooklyn	Brooklyn, NY	The Fig Tree Waltzes
October 15-21	Fringearts	Philadelphia, PA	The Fig Tree Waltzes
October 22-28	NECCA	Brattleboro, VT	The Fig Tree Waltzes
October 29-November 4	Oberlin College	Oberlin, OH	The Fig Tree Waltzes
December 15-22	12th Avenue Arts	Seattle, WA	The Fig Tree Waltzes

## 2019 Performances

December 13-15, 2019	Broadway Performance Hall	Seattle, WA	Unraveling - Sold Out, 3/3, 295 Seats
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Entertainment

# Acrobatic Conundrum explores pitfalls of romance while expertly defying gravity

Originally published December 10, 2016 at 11:12 am | Updated December 12, 2016 at 1:54 pm



Cooper Stanton and Terry Crane in Acrobatic Conundrum's "Love & Gravity." (Marc Hoffman)

**"Love & Gravity" is a feast of acrobatics, juggling, mime, contortionism and dance, writes reviewer Michael Upchurch.**

They call themselves Acrobatic Conundrum – but the only real conundrum they present is the question of how they do what they do.

How do you launch into a somersault from standing position and land on your feet in perfect time with your partner? How do you plummet 15 feet down the silks into a catch-knot without breaking yourself in half? How do you pull your fallen trousers up while rocking a giant metallic hula hoop?

Acrobatic Conundrum's delightful show, "Love & Gravity," addresses all these issues and more. It's a feast of acrobatics, juggling, mime, contortionism and dance, served up in a package that examines the pitfalls of romance while defying the dangers of gravity.

The focus is mostly on the physical derring-do that its seven cast members engage in, sometimes alone, sometimes in tight unison. But there are antic verbal exchanges too. (She: "I actually don't know if we'll ever agree on anything." He: "I agree with that.") The two-hour show sounds notes both droll and melancholy, as it touches on loneliness and attraction, connection and uncertainty.

Artistic director Terry Crane founded the troupe in 2012, and each member brings a special touch to it. Ty Vennewitz, a

self-described "towering performer," looms a foot or two taller than the rest, and uses his height to goofy clowning effect. A duet he performs on the hoops with Crane (who's tiny) is a comic-poignant meeting of absurdly different physical types.

Lauren Joy Herley puts contortionist twists on her exquisite acrobalancing routines. Cooper Stanton seems as comfortable on his hands as on his feet, and the lithe circle of cartwheels he uses to try to escape a rectangular prison of light is a thing of desperate grace.

There's a spectacular duet between Crane and Erica Rubinstein where, at one point, he races up the side of her body and stands perched on her shoulders. Xochitl Sosa endows a trapeze routine with spiraling beauty. Carey Cramer throws a little song in with her fidgety dance and feisty acrobatics.

Props are minimal, and scenery nonexistent – unless you count a red circular rope on pulleys that the performers hitch a ride on. The strength of and trust between these artists is phenomenal.

The grand finale is a rope-artistry fantasia with six aerialists floating toward the rafters. It's a perfect closing image to an exhilarating show.

Michael Upchurch: [www.michaelupchurchauthor.com](http://www.michaelupchurchauthor.com)



# Astonishing Feats

As Seattle becomes a hotbed of American circus, local performers are transforming their spectacular craft into modern art.

by GEMMA WILSON January 25, 2017

On a dark, bare stage, a woman in a maroon sports bra and black shorts stands in a pool of light, breathless, arms bent at the elbows, eyes on her upturned palms. Suddenly her knees dip and she flings herself backward, revolving once and landing back on her feet. And again. And again. She moves through the space as though lost, supine bodies scattered on the stage around her, then bends slowly, impossibly from a handstand into a ring, feet near her cheekbones. The scene feels melancholy, lonely, beautiful, quiet. And I'm watching it at the circus.

More specifically, I'm watching *Love and Gravity*, an original work by Acrobatic Conundrum, a contemporary circus company based in Seattle. At various points during the show, performers cluster at a microphone, sharing snippets about their love lives. A woman and man, high in the air on side-by-side ropes, simultaneously extend an arm and a leg, as through reaching toward someone or something. One performer clings to another, koala-like, as they spin inside a giant metal hoop. And all throughout, the black box stage is largely bare, not a sparkle or spangle in sight.

**This is the essence of modern circus: intimate and personal, a combination of impressive physical skills and emotional storytelling. It's visceral like modern dance and clever like avant-garde theatre—and a far cry from the ideas of circus that still prevail in America.**

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, which recently announced that they're closing up shop in May after 146 years, effectively froze our country's understanding of circus around 1920: lion tamers and ringmasters in red tailcoats and top hats, fire-breathers and elephants, clowns piling out of tiny cars and daring women on a flying trapeze. Striped tents full of pure spectacle are designed to drop the jaws of children, their tongues stained blue by cotton candy, before the whole operation ships off into the night. It's wild and romantic—and "running away with the circus" is still shorthand for abdicating one's life and responsibilities for a life of itinerant adventure.

And then, at the opposite end of the spectrum, there's Cirque du Soleil with its staggering production values and fantastical sensibility.

Contemporary circus today is so much more. "For a circus act to really succeed, it has to be an extension of the performer's self or soul," says Terry Crane, an aerial rope artist and the cofounder and artistic director of Acrobatic Conundrum. Good circus, he says, isn't just about feats of incredible strength and flexibility, it's about saying something true, and making work that only you can make.

As opposed to traditional circus, which strings together discrete acts of spectacle, contemporary circus uses traditional circus skills—and no animals—to tell a story or express a theme. Like their predecessors, modern circus artists are world-class technicians, but they apply their athleticism and their disciplines to convey personal, poignant artistry. Elegant acts play out on corde lisse, as performers swing and climb the thick rope, their bodies somehow freed from gravity. The hypnotic, fluid motion of a Cyr wheel artist is as powerful an image as da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. Poetic acrobatic duets play with shifts of weight and balance, investigating the vulnerability of placing yourself entirely in someone else's hands. Much like music, circus can short-circuit a word-laden brain and tap into wells of joy, fear, sadness. Watching someone tumble down a rope only to catch themselves just short of the floor, your heart aches even as your adrenaline spikes.



# SPECTACLE

AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS ARTS

March 22, 2015

## The Beat of a Different Circus

by Judy Finelli



*A Review of the Acrobatic Conundrum's "The Language of Chance," directed by Terry Crane, music by Pietro Ravanni, Dance Mission Theater, San Francisco, California, March 22, 2015*

When the van I was riding in pulled up to the Dance Mission Theater I had no preconceptions about what I might experience once inside. So, when I entered the main theater space, I was instantly thrust into an unfamiliar world. Rows of large balloons lined either side of the playing area. The lighting was enigmatic. The mood was one of ambiguity. I knew then I was in for the unexpected.

Out of this obscure landscape, and in order to calm the disorienting sensation it created, appeared a sympathetic figure to establish a reassuring rapport. Terry Crane, in his role as director, wisely chose to use physical comedian Ty Venne-witz, whose off-beat, eccentric charm effortlessly placed the audience at ease. What followed was a seamless blend of top-level craft and evocative dance/movement. The Acrobatic Conundrum has achieved an impressive, slow-motion, acrobatically-infused, signature dance style.

Two contrasting, yet scintillating concepts unify this work and lead the audience through their abortive quest for purpose. After abandoning their fruitless quest in the first half, the performers become susceptible to risk, coincidence, and collective discovery.

# SPECTACLE

AN ONLINE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS ARTS

Continued

Terry Crane, on aerial rope, begins the performance with a prologue entitled “Words Fail,” a collaborative effort between Crane and KT Niehoff. In this inventive aerial act, Crane is both victim and victor as he wraps, unwraps, and spins ostensibly out of control, centrifugally guiding the audience into a vortex in which texts rule humanity, the theme of the first of the show’s two main segments.

The first piece, “A Book is Not a Ladder,” inspired by Jorge Luis Borges’ 1941 story, “The Library of Babel,” is the tale of a monumental collection of written words found to be indecipherable. The performance is an increasingly frantic search for meaning, with the circus artists rummaging through an avalanche of information, and tearing through endless printed pages. The result ultimately finds they are eternally confounded by the utter futility of the attempt. At one point an ominous wall of printed pages rises up from the floor of the stage, creating an entangling web hovering over the performers, further emphasizing the oppressive nature of words. Paradoxically, in this alternate universe the more one reads, the less one knows. Here the acrobats search for meaning, transforming themselves inside out. However, despite their vigorous efforts, meaning eludes them.

This is dramatized by the atypical aerial sequences, super-sustained acrobatics, and hand-balancing artistry. Nicolo Kehrwald performs his ambidextrous and cantilevered one-arms with flexible grace. The second half of the evening, “Secret Passages,” created by Vashon Island’s UMO Ensemble Executive Artist Elizabeth Klob, is a delightfully circuitous odyssey of “missed connections and serendipitous endings” building towards a triumphal single column 3-high. By the time the artists have successfully constructed it, they have thoroughly beguiled their audience. The audience I was a part of made this clear by their thunderous ovation. There was no ambiguity in their hunger for this groundbreaking company to return to the San Francisco Bay Area.

The message I took away from this show was that, in the first half, the artists were thwarted in their search for purpose, while in the second, these same artists accidentally discovered that purpose by looking inward and reaching outward towards one another, as though what they were looking for had been there all along. They just needed to put more effort into connecting with each another.

The Acrobatic Conundrum collective seeks to break down the traditional barriers between circus, dance, theater, and poetry. I can attest to their success in this endeavor. I didn’t so much remember individual circus “tricks,” however spectacular, because they didn’t deflect viewers’ focus from the singular vision. Rather it’s the sum of the emotional thrust that lingers.

I marveled at the climactic 3-high featuring strong woman (and impressive hand-to-hand base) Erica Rubinstein as base; Terry Crane, middle; and rope aerialist-singer Carey Cramer, the top-mounter. Jacki Ward Kehrwald, contortionist and duo straps artist, displayed a lavish sequence of expert technique, as did her aerial straps partner, Nicolo Kehrwald. Ty Vennewitz, who greeted the audience, exhibited quirky expertise using a Cyr-wheel as a hula-hoop and wryly spinning real hula-hoops on all four extremities. The Acrobatic Conundrum’s use of symbolism, emotional intelligence, and poetic insight is thrilling.

Anyone longing for a unique theatrical experience, featuring a masterful group of artists who trash formulaic and traditional methods, and take astonishing physical risks with precision, narrative, and perception, must see this extraordinary company perform.

Would someone, please, explain to me how only six people managed to perform this work in such a way as to appear to be twice their number? Those six people are Terry Crane, founder of the Acrobatic Conundrum – aerial rope, Cyr wheel, hand to hand; Carey Cramer- aerial rope, singing; Nicolo Kehrwald – hand balancing, duo straps; Jacki Ward Kehrwald – contortion, hand balancing, duo straps; Erica Rubinstein – hand to hand, strong woman; Ty Vennewitz – hula hoops, humor, Cyr wheel.

# Acrobatic Conundrum's 'Volume 4' at 12 Avenue Arts filled with show-stopping performances

By: L. Steven Sieden | AXS Contributor | Dec 31, 2016



Terry Crane and his Acrobatic Conundrum company are ending 2016 with one of their most brilliant shows - Volume 4 of the 4 High Circus Series. Those who wish to be amazed won't be disappointed as Volume 4 proves the acrobatic company's capabilities beyond any show in their past.

In a hilarious twist, the show wakes the audience up by beginning with the end of the show as the cast comes out for the curtain call and actually gets the audience to give several rounds of applause even though

nothing has happened. The story continues on the premise that the company now has to "improvise" recreating the show. Thus, the whole performance has an impromptu feel that make it extremely vibrant.

Despite the audience's suspension of belief, it is obvious that anything Acrobatic Conundrum does couldn't be pulled off without a great deal of rehearsal. Each of the acts stands out as show stopping in it's own right, but a few of the performance really have everyone on the edge of their seats.

For instance, in all the years I've attended circus shows, I've never seen a woman doing acrobatics while hanging from her hair. Initially, it was actually difficult to watch Rebekah Cavinder as she was slowly hoisted up by her hair, but her performance soon became a beautiful aerial ballet.

Then, there was the closing act, the Gentile Family. The last time I saw this act, it was the parents and three small children juggling everything (including the children) with their feet. In this performance, they have yet another baby who also gets balanced a bit. Add to all that a live five-piece band that includes two cello players who do their own act, and you have ninety minutes of nonstop, edge-of-your-seat entertainment. Or as Acrobatic Conundrum describes Volume 4 ... "filled with jaw dropping, knee slapping, thought provoking, heart filling circus." A true statement, and since the show is being performed at the intimate 12th Avenue Arts, every act is pretty much up close and personal.

All in all, this is a show as good as anything I've seen at Teatro ZinZanni or Cirque du Soleil, and it's far less expensive. Volume 4 continues at 12th Avenue Arts through Dec. 31.

<http://www.axs.com/acrobatic-conundrum-s-volume-4-at-12-avenue-arts-filled-with-show-stop-112377>

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