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La Soirée

by Winnie McCroy

EDGE Editor

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Mario, Queen of the Circus! (Source:Jo Duck)

Leave it to the French to add a generous soupçon of sex to their circus. At the new show **"La Soirée,"** now playing at Union Square Theatre, guests enjoy a campy, interactive theater-in-the-round experience that includes acrobats, singers, freaks, aerialists and jugglers, many of whom end their act with a saucy striptease.

Top acts in this two-hour show include Denis Lock and Hamish McCann, aka The English Gents, a pair of extremely skilled -- and extremely ripped -- acrobats who achieve astonishing feats of balancing in pinstripes suits and bowler hats. Their grand finale includes a mind-bending feat of acrobatics with the gents stripped down to their Union Jack boxer briefs.

Later, McCann did acrobatics on a light pole that defied gravity, with his shirt off, and his bowler cap on. Singin' in the rain was never this much fun!

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crowd favorite was Mario, Queen of the Circus, a Spanish-affected juggler and charismatic Freddie Mercury fan who had the crowd singing "We Are the Champions" as his tiny, leather-clad form body-surfed above the crowd. In another feat, he put an audience member on his shoulders and rode the unicycle to the strains of "Fat Bottomed Girls."

London's Ursula Martinez was also a winner, with her simple mix of prestidigitation and striptease. Dressed in a skirt and blazer, she produced a small red hankie. Cupping it in her palm, she made it disappear, and then produced it from her blazer, which she then took off. She completed the illusion several more times in the same manner. You'll never believe where the final hankie pull came from!

Miss Behave, the latex-clad geek featured in the subway ads for this show, was as gruesome as she was beautiful, swallowing scissors, piercing her tongue with a long-stemmed rose, putting a cigarette out on her tongue and swallowing an entire table leg. She even licked the bald head of a wary gentleman in an adjacent seat. Perhaps most disgusting: She randomly imbibed strangers' drinks as she moved through the crowd. Herpes much?

And burlesque star Meow Meow's kamikaze cabaret was funny at points, but the ramp-up became exhausting in repeated incarnations. Gruesomely funny was clownish actress "Gloria," who called an audience member onstage for her monologue, and then made it a dialogue by having him read prose artfully placed on her person. In one comic misstep, the man told her, "I love thin eyes," misreading "thine."

The acts aren't all runaway successes, but most of them are absolutely spectacular, with a wonderful blend of circus-worthy talent and cheeky outré. This is perfect for those who enjoy a night out at the theatre, but don't always need it to be a highbrow affair.



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"La Soirée" enjoys an extended run at Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th Street in New York. For tickets or information, call 800-982-2787 or visit <http://www.la-soiree.com/>.

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she writes about local restaurants in her food blog, <http://brooklyniscookin.blogspot.com/>

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