

The Flying Karamazov Brothers thrill with '4Play'

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by Clinton Stark

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Inreview

4PLAY - The Flying Karamazov Brothers



Touring the U.S.

Directed by Paul Magid

Starring Paul Magid, Stephen Bent, Andy Sapora and Harry Levine

On the Web: www.fkb.com

Apparently it takes a lot of salt to juggle. Cleavers, eggs, balloons, and even a brass bell also come in handy. Anything can happen when it comes to The Flying Karamazov Brothers (conceived in 1972) whose act is a combination of cirque, comedy, theater, music, and juggling,

4Play, the eclectic 90-minute show now touring the country is a fun evening of crazy antics that the whole family can enjoy. Many will remember the group from a famous Seinfeld episode in the 1980s. Known as The Flying Sandos Brothers, Jerry unwittingly becomes part of a routine when he is asked to toss his Friars Club jacket on stage. It disappears to great applause, only to never be seen again.

The Brothers are a bit like Blue Man Group, but without the body paint and shaved heads. Instead, their crazy hair and manic personas seem every bit as important as backstories concerning distant parts of Europe.

Dimitri (Paul Magid), hair in a pony tail, is the ringleader of sorts. You might see him hanging out by the wood chipper in *Fargo*. During the challenge portion of *4Play*, the audience is invited to throw objects on stage. If Dimitri can juggle them successfully then he earns a standing ovation. If he fails, he gets a pie in the face. On this particular evening, he even tried to juggle half a cup of beer (well, it looked like beer) that a boisterous audience member placed on stage.

In Alexai (Mark Ettinger) we have Colonel Sanders reincarnated. White hair, glasses and goatee, his quirky looks fit right in. His knee brace may be testament to the physical demands of the show which sees the performers hopping, jumping and dancing throughout.

Zossima (Stephen Bent) is a ringer for Jim from *The Office*. Hes the tall, younger one, but slightly goofy.

Pavel (Roderick Gimball) is the one most likely to be seen in *One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest*. Manic hair, crazy eyes and awkward body language are all part of his entertaining shtick.

Juggling, like music we learn, is all about rhythm. Timing, songs and instruments all figure during impressive juggling demonstrations that see pins go flying high, or zipping rapidly. There are hiccups. Occasionally a pin will drop, and the performers will adjust on-the-fly.

Short musical interludes include material by Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and even Lady Gaga.

The set may well be the antithesis of something like U2's 360. Cardboard boxes stacked three stories high line the stage. Loading the tour is as simple as flattening a few hundred boxes.

The Flying Karamazov Brothers is the kind of show that quickly charms. At its heart its all about the juggling. And if the show doesnt always connect with the humor, its the juggling that really amazes.

4Play The Flying Karamazov Brothers

San Jose Repertory Theatre

3.5 out of 5 stars

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