

VLT

The Very Little Theatre presents



The Ruby Sunrise

A dramatic tale of ambition and dreams. What if the real inventor of television in 1927 had been Ruby, a poor but bright young woman? Fast forward to a TV studio in the grip of McCarthy-era censorship as Ruby's daughter Lulu struggles to tell her mother's story — whatever it takes.

By Rinne Groff | Directed by Chris McVay

May 27-29*, June 2-5*, 9-11

*Sunday Matinees

Tickets: \$15 (\$10 for Thursday)

Call the VLT Box Office: **541-344-7751**

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THEater BY RICK LEVIN

East Meets West Under the Big Top

Cirque du Soleil's *Dralion* soars into Eugene

Enter the dragon and enter the lion: When Cirque du Soleil's production of *Dralion* opens June 8 at Matthew Knight Arena, local audiences will be treated to a grand, towering production that fuses the acrobatic traditions of the Chinese circus with all the big-top splendor of P.T. Barnum. The name itself, *Dralion*, is a fusion, says senior artistic director Sean McKeown. "The word comes from the joining of the dragon and the lion, representative of the East and West influences of the show," he explained last month during a phone interview.

Everything about this show is big, big, big. The staging includes a 60-by-26-foot metallic backdrop covered in perforated aluminum tiles and resembling a space-age Chinese temple. Performers will soar through the air holding suspended rings, men will twirl and throw 25-foot bamboo poles, and there will be jugglers and hoop divers and aerial dancers. In all, this is a flying circus to take your breath away, more than once.

"With this show, our director went to China and really investigated the 3,000-odd years of acrobatic tradition," said McKeown, who has been working with Cirque du Soleil since 2001. He called *Dralion* a kind of "avant garde" makeover of Cirque's traditional productions, in that a show originally developed for a big-top environment has been transplanted to arenas, which hold more people.

"It's a feast for the senses," he said, adding that the transition to arenas works well. "In essence, we ran out of places we could go with big tops. I think that this show has a lot of 'wow,' if I can say that. There's a lot of big acrobatic numbers in this show and aerial acts."

McKeown, who runs a crew of 60 people, said that *Dralion* should appeal to a wide audience, from circus lovers to fans of extreme sports who like the thrill of death-defying stunts. "For me, the show has some beautiful visuals, beautiful music, acrobatics, dance, theatrics, circus acts," he explained, adding that one act includes a performer free-falling from 25 feet in the air and rebounding from a trampoline.

"Wow, these people are a little crazy," McKeown joked about watching his cast perform. "Sometimes I think I've got the best job in the world."

Cirque du Soleil's Dralion runs June 8-12 at Matthew Knight Arena; for further information and tickets, visit www.cirquedusoleil.com

