

# Dralion Dazzles at Matt Arena

Whenever one sees a circus on television or in a movie, it invariably includes some sort of lion-taming act, perhaps a unicyclist juggling bowling pins while riding across a high wire, maybe a few smoking monkeys or some other cartoonish buffoonery. Cirque du Soleil has been changing that perception over the past 30 years, and thanks to the state-of-the-art Matthew Knight Arena, the company finally brought its huge production *Dralion* to Eugene June 8-12.

Cirque du Soleil is a circus to be sure, but it is a circus unlike any other. There are clowns, yes, cavorting and capering about on stage, but they function simply as a comic interlude between dazzling acrobatic displays.

*Dralion* is a visual overload. Multicolored lights, brightly costumed men and women gliding along stringers, acrobats tumbling through hoops, two-person dragons with manes – dralions, get it? – balancing on boulders, contortionists literally able to sit their asses onto their shoulders ... truly a spectacle to behold.

The show is a kind of organized chaos, and even though the spotlight draws your eyes center stage, you can witness something entertaining in a different corner.

There is a vague story running throughout the performance, with various colors used to describe things, ideas and concepts. Two performers sing beautiful arias in some aesthetically beautiful form of gobbledygook in the background of every scene. But following the story or analyzing *Dralion* in some deeper way, other than being stunned by the athletic feats being performed before your eyes, is a tall order.

Although there were a large number of more physically impressive acts, the understated one stuck with me most: a gentle dance between the sky and her male counterpart. The two danced on the ground; they danced through air after wrapping themselves in two lines of azure cloth. Every motion was performed with an effortless grace. Many of the other acts shared this grace, but nowhere was it more fitting than in this airborne tango.

Cirque du Soleil brought a cornucopia of physically impressive and visually dazzling performances to Eugene. If you took in the entire show without having your jaw drop or at some point muttering "wow," you must have been asleep. – *John Locanthi*



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