

FAIR TIME AGAIN

It's that time of year again: the smell of fresh cut grass in the breeze, children flying kites and playing in the park for summer break, and thousands of hippies descending on a well-loved property near Veneta. It's summer in Eugene, and that means the Oregon Country Fair is back. This year, we're looking forward to ogling the usual fun array of circus acts, dancing to great music like Chris Robinson Brotherhood and High Step Society, and reflecting on how the Fair comes together each year, bringing the community together with it. OCF not your thing? We've got you covered there too. Regardless, it's shaping up to be another beautiful summer weekend here in Oregon. — Kelly Kenoyer

THE CIRCUS IS IN TOWN

CIRCUS ACTS FROM JUGGLERS TO ACROBATS
COME TO THE FAIR BY MORGAN THEOPHIL

Everyone loves a circus. Acrobats, contortionists, clowns — the whole shebang. And now that the folks at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus have taken their final bow, the demand for a clever circus act is on the rise.

Fortunately, there is no better place to see Big Top-type acts than this year's Oregon Country Fair, and unlike Ringling, the acts at the Fair don't exploit animals.

Following Fair tradition, circus-type performances of all kinds will take the various stages to capture the attention of outdoor audiences throughout the coming weekend.

Everything from traditional, skill-based juggling and circus acts to performances focused on healthy eating or the acceptance of queer identities will be showcased.

Among the many acts, this year's "Stage Left Show" is sure to stand out. Sir Cupcake — aka Jack StockLynn — the main character in the show, describes it as a "queer circus explosion." And, he says, "If you can add the word glitter in there somewhere, even better."

Sir Cupcake's Queer Circus consists of eight different acts, showcasing many classic circus tricks with their own addition of pizzazz — contortion, partner acrobatics, bamboo poles, dance numbers, even light up costumes — to tell a story about queerness and acceptance.

"We tell our story throughout all of the acts by doing unique and unusual things," StockLynn says. "Sir Cupcake's Queer Circus is different than others, pushing the boundaries all the time."

Sir Cupcake says he begins the first act with a judgmental and closed-off heart. Through an interactive and creative take on the classic game of "Operation," Sir Cupcake's friends will perform their circus tricks and go inside of Sir Cupcake to change him.

StockLynn's real heart behind the show is clear: "A lot of circus performers are queer or transgender, but can't express it freely," he says. "But we try to really elevate those voices among ourselves, and do so in a way that whoever is watching can express themselves too."

The show will incorporate audience participation and prizes to get people engaged, helping share the greater message of inclusiveness and positivity. StockLynn says he hopes that whenever people wander by, they can be in-



SIR CUPCAKE'S
QUEER CIRCUS
PHOTO BY M. MAYRE
PHOTOGRAPHY

stantly connected with their circus.

"It's been really fun to adapt the show for a moving and changing audience that will come and go throughout the Fair — at any point when you come, you'll be engaged in what's going on," StockLynn says.

It is the troupe's first official time performing at the Oregon Country Fair, and they feel that performing something so "super fantastic, super queer and super fun" that highlights queer voices and identities will be a perfect addition.

"As a queer person, I knew I wanted to make a circus where people could be completely themselves and where an audience could come and be themselves too," Stock-

Lynn says. "We are all just so excited to share our story with the Oregon Country Fair family."

Along with this Stage Left show, many other circus-type performances are prepared to beguile and delight the masses. A staple of Fair for the past decade, the **Wanderlust Circus** returns again, planning to stand out by showing off their authentic circus skills.

"We have flamboyant performers and costumes, but focus less on a comedic and vaudeville element as others do," Noah Mickens, a show producer says. "We are a skill-based circus that is oriented toward impressive, difficult and skillful circus tricks."

Rhys Thomas and Charlie Brown make up another frequent Fair duo, **The Tossers**, returning to delight with "Brown's comedy juggling and Thomas' circus shenanigans," Thomas says. The brothers-in-law plan to perform their "tried and true material," including the classic acts of juggling cigar boxes and sword balancing, along with "some new stuff involving whales and Japanese movie monsters."

Another highlight will be the **Real Food Show**, a Community Food Co-Op sponsored circus-style performance catered toward children and focusing on healthy eating, exercise and community. The energetic characters, Frank and Beans, perform circus-style acts and "zany routines — juggling, joking and entertaining — all while discussing and encouraging healthy eating," Karl Meyer, a show sponsor, says.

The group will be honoring the recent passing of the show's original writer, Sam Williams, also known as Smerdyakov Karamazov, a longtime juggler and comedian with The Flying Karamazov Brothers. Meyer's says children leave the Real Food Show "inspired to make a positive change in their attitude and behaviors."

Other performances will be showcasing famous aerialist champions, renowned belly dancers and circus acts performing for the very first time.

Sir Cupcake's Queer Circus will be performed at Stage Left twice a day during the Fair; The Wanderlust Circus will perform at WC Fields Stage three times during the Fair; The Tossers will perform five times during the Fair, at Stage Left and Monkey Palace; the Real Food Show will be performed four times during the Fair, all at the Daredevil Vaudeville Palace. ■