

Catch some quirky fun at Circus Amok's LIC show

by Ryan Brady, associate editor | Posted: Thursday, August 23, 2018 10:30 am

Ever seen a “border patrol clown act?”

Probably not. But you will if you go to Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City on Sept. 1 to see Circus Amok kick off the tour for its new production “Enough is Enough.”

The 25-year-old company bills itself as the city’s “only one-ring, traveling political queer circus extravaganza.” For slightly more than two weeks in September, it’s taking the show to a variety of parks, all the way from the South Bronx to Coney Island.

The group has a five-piece band and a six-member performing troupe.

As one might suspect based on the role the clowns will play, the performance will get political.

“It’s stilt dancers and jugglers and acrobats and a discussion of the particular social political moment,” Circus Amok’s bearded founder and ringleader Jennifer Miller told the Chronicle.

Folks who can’t stand the policies coming out of Washington these days may feel at home with the show’s political attitude.

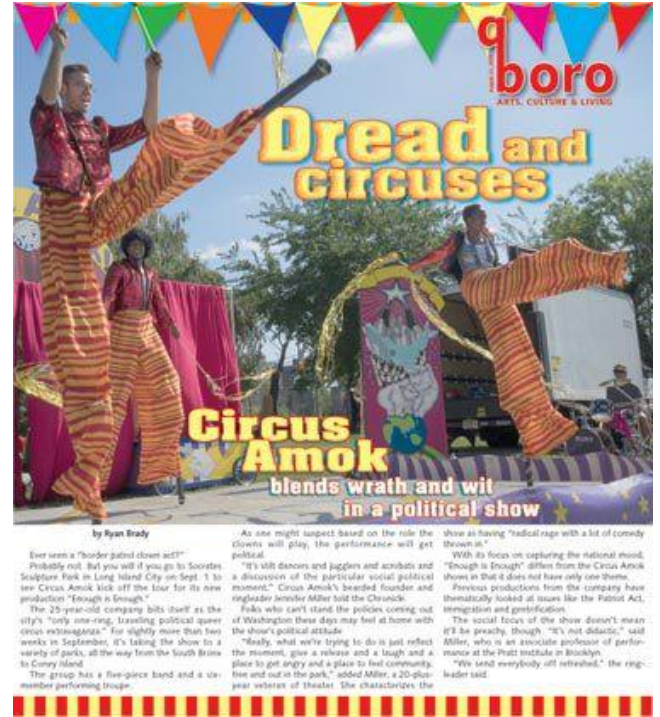
“Really, what we’re trying to do is just reflect the moment, give a release and a laugh and a place to get angry and a place to feel community, free and out in the park,” added Miller, a 20-plus-year veteran of theater. She characterizes the show as having “radical rage with a lot of comedy thrown in.”

With its focus on capturing the national mood, “Enough is Enough” differs from the Circus Amok shows in that it does not have only one theme.

Previous productions from the company have thematically looked at issues like the Patriot Act, immigration and gentrification.

The social focus of the show doesn’t mean it’ll be preachy, though. “It’s not didactic,” said Miller, who is an associate professor of performance at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

“We send everybody off refreshed,” the ringleader said.



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Artistically, Circus Amok's influences include the former Judson Dance Theater from Greenwich Village, the Theater of the Ridiculous Genre, the neo-burlesque performance style and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

Those who have seen Circus Amok in years past may find "Enough is Enough" to be a bit grander than previous shows.

"We had scaled back last year," the director said. "We're bouncing back up. We've got more stilt dancers, we've got acrobats that are flying higher. And the rage is roaring a little louder."

The border patrol clown act won't be the only zany part of the show. Spectators can expect peacocks that dance and an appearance by the Medea figure from Greek mythology, who Miller said will be "representing raging, exiled women everywhere" — among other curiosities in the show.

People of all ages are encouraged to check out Circus Amok's show. The company's manager, Lee Houck, said in an interview that one aspect of the group that attracted him to it is "how it's really for everybody.

"Kids really love the clowns and the acrobats and the puppets, and adults really like the political humor, the pointed commentary and the fact that it's free of course," he explained.

Many people who became fans of Circus Amok stumbled upon the group by chance, Houck said.

"They're wandering through the park and they might see the band warming up," added the company manager, who has performed in past shows but will not be doing so in this year's.

The 3 p.m. performance at Socrates Sculpture Park is Circus Amok's only one in Queens during its tour for "Enough is Enough."

The show is free and no RSVP is required.

"It's definitely celebratory, it's exciting it's curious, it's fun," Houck said. "There's live music."

One can learn more about Circus Amok and see a complete list of upcoming "Enough is Enough" performances online at circusamok.org.

'Enough is Enough'

When: Sat., Sept. 1, 3 p.m.

Where: Socrates Sculpture Park, 32-01 Vernon Blvd., Long Island City

Entry: Free, no RSVP required