



**'ZARKANA' AT RADIO CITY: The Quebec masters of circus perform 'High Wire' in their new show in New York, now playing through October 3, 2011. Photo: Jeremy Daniel**

*Circus Review*

# **Cirque du Soleil's *Zarkana*:**

## **The spectacular, surreal thing**

### **at Radio City**

**ZARKANA**

**Cirque du Soleil**

**Written & directed by Francois Girard**

**Tuesdays through Sundays**

**Through October 3, 2011**

**Radio City Music Hall**

**6th Avenue at 50th Street**

**(866-858-0008), [www.cirquedusoleil.com/zarkana](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/zarkana)**

**By David NouNou**

Another treat for the senses, courtesy of Cirque du Soleil, *Zarkana* is more for adults than the entire family, and it will not disappoint. However, I would not recommend taking children under 13; they would not appreciate the nuances and might be fidgety until the proverbial good stuff comes onstage. Although the storyline is negligible and thin, the music and visual effects are a thrill as usual.

The music, be it pop themed, classical, or heart-pounding percussion, is always amazing. However, with the acoustics at Radio City, most of the dialogue and lyrics are incomprehensible, and the continuity of the acts is undistinguished. Also what takes place on stage, along with the scenery is inexplicable and, at times, diverting. The scenery, filled with special effects, in a lot of cases takes our attention away from the actual acts on stage. Visually, some of the sequences are endearing and enjoyable. They do have a familiar look to them, as if we saw them all before. One can live without the annoying funnymen/clowns; in this version, known as Hocus and Pocus, with the squeaky, high-pitched babbling voices, which are more of a nuisance and cloying than funny. Unfortunately, they provide the dull "shtick" that is mandatory to sit through in any of the Cirque shows. (Maybe one must be a French Canadian to truly appreciate this sort of humor, because they appear in every Cirque show.)

Most of the acts, although familiar, are good, but three of them are unique standouts. All happen to be in the second act. The first is the Act II opener (Erica Chen and the Sand Painting), magnificent artwork in blue sand before our eyes. My only regret is that she makes the changes so rapidly that she does not give us a couple of seconds just to appreciate each creation. This I would fault the director for not pacing it properly to fully recognize each creation and be awed by their magnificence.

The second is The Wheel of Death, performed by Ray, Rony and Rudy Navas Velez and Roberta Navas Yovany. Heart-poundingly stunning, and there is no use to describe it because it would diminish the magical thrill witnessed firsthand.

The third is Hand Balancing by Anatoly Zalesvkiy; gymnastic body movement at it fluid best. It is absolutely mesmerizing how his body melts into the different positions. Awesome. Some acts involve different props, and it is amazing how they are incorporated. Visually, it is thrilling to see how the bodies defy gravity and seem to be suspended in mid-air.

Also noteworthy in this production: the set changes. Although not always comprehensible, they are a show unto themselves. For the sets do not change in the proverbial sense but morph from scene to scene, and it has a seamless quality to it that can only be achieved at Radio City, because no Broadway show is capable of doing it (unless you have a \$70 million budget and actually know what you are doing).

If you like going to a circus filled with acrobats, trapeze, and other high-flying aerial acts minus the animals, then *Zarkana* is for you. At times it does seem like you have seen them all before. Why? Because you probably have, in another Cirque du Soleil incarnations; or, if you are old enough to remember "The Ed Sullivan Show," you witnessed these acts on a weekly basis. Here, everything is done in one sitting instead of a weekly installment. Overall, the show is colorful, grand, and at times, spectacular.

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