

# British Theatre Guide

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## Wolfgang's Magical Musical Circus

Created by Yaron Lifshitz with Benjamin Knapton and the Circa Ensemble

Barbican Centre

12–22 December 2018

With an age guide of 3+, *Wolfgang's Magical Musical Circus* is an obvious competitor for pantomimes, giving the smallest of children the opportunity to sample what is known as contemporary circus in a friendly atmosphere with a running time of very manageable 45 minutes, while keeping the parents and grandparents happy along the way.

The underlying story could not be simpler. Birthday Girl portrayed by Kathryn O'Keeffe receives a record (or vinyl) and this mysteriously conjures up the world of Paul O'Keeffe's Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Accompanied by accordionist Gareth Chin and a soundtrack of the composer's greatest hits, the duo explores every possibility around this theme in a performance that is almost silent, although a few garbled words are uttered along the way.

The plot soon diminishes into insignificance as the audience discovers that it is merely a vehicle for the O'Keeffes to show off their prodigious talents as physical performers.

Kathryn gets up to wondrous acrobatics and proves herself to be a highly flexible contortionist, at one point practically turning herself inside out.

Paul builds more slowly, leading to a spectacular finale that is probably rather less dangerous than it looks, although that may be a moot point.

Before then, the pair complete an assortment of gymnastic feats, such as another highlight when Wolfgang does a reverse striptease while riding a bicycle, sometimes worryingly close to an enthusiastic front row.

Occasionally, the younger children seemed to be a little baffled by events but they soon got back into the spirit of an afternoon that clearly impressed and amused.

Ultimately, this combination of mime, acrobatics and good old-fashioned clowning barely needs the frame of Mozart and the Birthday Girl, since the primary appeal will be the efforts of these two Circa ensemble members extending their bodies in the interests of entertainment.

**Reviewer:** [Philip Fisher](#)