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# Coffeehouse Chronicles #169: Circus Amok



The Downstairs  
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003  
Feb 4, 2023

# Coffeehouse Chronicles #169: Circus Amok

**Moderator: Laura Helton**

**Panel:**

**Jenny Romaine, Jennifer Miller, Cathy Weis,**

**Performers:**

**Sarah Johnson, Gregory Corbino, Pher Gleason**

**Band Members:**

**Jenny Romaine, Mary Feaster, Ben Meyers**

**Curated and Directed by Michal Gamily**

Circus Amok is a New York City based circus-theater company whose mission is to provide free public art addressing contemporary issues of social justice to the people of New York City.

Directed and founded by Jennifer Miller, the group has been together since 1989, bringing its funny, queer, caustic and sexy, political, one-ring spectacles to diverse neighborhoods throughout the city. Traditional circus skills — tight rope walking, juggling, acrobatics, stilt walking, clowning — are combined with experimental dance, lifesize puppetry, music old and new, gender-bending performance art and improvisational techniques, creating new meanings for circus while continuing to entertain crowds of all ages throughout the city streets, gardens, parks, and playgrounds.

Circus Amok invites the audience to envision a more empowered life of community interaction while enjoying a queer celebratory spectacle.

*Running time 90 minutes with no intermission*

**Opening of the house (Pre-show slideshow)**

**Live Act #1: Stilt Dance Performance**

**Panel #1: JM, JRo, Cathy, Sally May, Pher -  
Discuss the early days**

**Clip #1: Sample tape**

**Panel #2: JM, JRo, Cathy, Sarah  
Discuss the 1990's**

**Live Act # 2: Juggling(**

**Panel #3: JM, JRo, Pher**

From the beginning, Circus Amok was about making queer theater in public space. It's an expansive realm: where a pie in the face can play next to a postmodern dance, where acrobats discuss the national debt and eminent domain, where women lift men, everyone wears sequins, high art and low art are both art, and the ringmaster is a lesbian with a beard. Can you talk about making queer art in the commons? What does that mean for you as performers, and how have audiences responded?

**Clip #2: Excerpts from Circus Amok benefit**

**Panel #4: JM, JRo, Cathy**

**Closing: Band Plays and Sings**

**Laura Helton** is a historian, documentarian, and archivist who, once upon a time, also wrote grants, sewed sequins, and wrangled puppets for Circus Amok.

**Jennifer Miller** is the director and founder of Circus Amok—a one ring, no animal, queer as fuck, free circus extravaganza that has been touring the parks of New York annually since 1994. She is the writer and director of *Cracked Ice* and *The Golden Racket*. Besides touring solo shows internationally she works with a myriad of choreographers and performance artists including Jennifer Monson and Vaginal Crème Davis. She is the recipient of an OBIE, a “Bessie”, and an Ethyl Eichelberger Award. She had a 10 year stint at Coney Island Sideshow by the Seashore and is a Professor of Performance at Pratt Institute.

A native Kentuckian, **Cathy Weis** performed with the Louisville Ballet from 1961 to 1966. Subsequently she tap danced on the streets of San Francisco and did a stint as a disco queen before coming East where she received an MFA, a Bessie Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship among other honors. Along with her own work, she has performed with Circus Amok since 1993. She lives and works in NYC and East Charleston, Vt.

**Sarah East Johnson** has been Amok-ing around since 1989. She is also the founder of LAVA, feminist acrobatic dance since 2000.

**Mary Feaster** (Bassist, Circus Amok Band) has been paying bass in various bands/projects in NYC for many years. Current music projects include CHRISTEENE and Machine Dazzle, each of which released albums this past year. Working with Circus Amok has been one of the most inspiring and joyous projects I have had the pleasure of being part of, and hope to continue!

**Ben Meyers** is a graduate of the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus and Hungry March Band School of Honk, and has been playing trombone with Circus Amok since 1999. He enjoyed a life of applied bohemianism until becoming a lawyer in 2012, and now works in protest law and parole support.

**A full program with information on this  
production can be found on the  
*Coffeehouse Chronicles #169: Circus Amok*  
page of the La MaMa website.**

**In addition you can scan the  
QR code Poster located in the theatre  
lobby for access to the digital program.**

# LA MAMA



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*Rendering: 74 East 4th St.*

La MaMa's historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street is undergoing an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit [www.lamama.org/remakeaworld](http://www.lamama.org/remakeaworld)

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July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

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Feb 4, 2023  
The Downstairs

### **The Hip Hopera of 5P1N0K10**

Feb 16 - 19, 2023  
The Club

### **La MaMa Puppet Slam**

Feb 16 - 19, 2023  
The Downstairs

### **La MaMa Kids:**

**Tarish "Jeghetto" Pipkins**  
Feb 18, 2022  
The Community Room

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### **Han!**

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### **Radio 477!**

March 10 - 19, 2023  
Ellen Stewart Theatre

### **A Scream in the Dark**

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The Downstairs

### **ICELAND**

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