

'Cosmic' gives student second act in Flying High Circus

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Council on Culture & Arts

For 75 years, FSU's "Flying High" Circus has enchanted audiences with awe-inspiring stunts and soaring choreography in its bustling, on-campus Big Top tent. In spring 2020, during circus member Jordanne Cantrill's senior year, all three rings stood empty.

The COVID-19 pandemic might have canceled her last chance to fly above the crowd, but Cantrill's journey with the circus wasn't finished yet. While the world was locked down, she graduated with her bachelor's degree in digital media production.

In the following years, she pursued her master's degree in public interest media and communication. Now, two years later, Cantrill will have a second chance to perform in her final show as the circus presents "Cosmic" this April.

"We've stuck together and finally get to all celebrate together, and it being the 75th show is like the icing on the cake

If you go

What: COSMIC, the FSU "Flying High" Circus' 75th Annual Home Show Series

When: April 1-April 16, Friday-Sundays, days and times vary

Where: The FSU Jack Haskin Circus Complex, 269 Chieftain Way

Cost: Prices Vary from \$8-\$27

Contact: For more information, call 850-644-6500 or visit circus.fsu.edu/

and an extra reward for enduring the pandemic," says Cantrill.

"When you're live, you only get that one chance and are living it very intentionally in the moment. The people in the circus are really what make it special, because once the show is gone, it's really gone, and you'll never be with that same group of people again."

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Jordanne Cantrill will appear in acts on triple trapeze, lyra, hand-balancing, and Spanish web as a desert-planet warrior woman, an intergalactic superhero, a recycling-focused alien, and a water-planet space siren. TALLAHASSEE

Circus

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Science fiction on trapeze

“Cosmic” is a one-of-a-kind science fiction themed show that explores interstellar stories and features unique creatures and characters. Cantrill will appear in acts on triple trapeze, lyra, hand-balancing, and Spanish web as a desert-planet warrior woman, an intergalactic superhero, a recycling-focused alien, and a water-planet space siren.

“The effort put into this show is mind blowing because there’s nothing to base it off of,” says Cantrill, who credits costume designer Celina Dezzuto with helping the performers to get into character. “Each costume is so incredible. It’s inspiring to have something physical to base your character off of and the music helps you home in on what we’re supposed to be.”

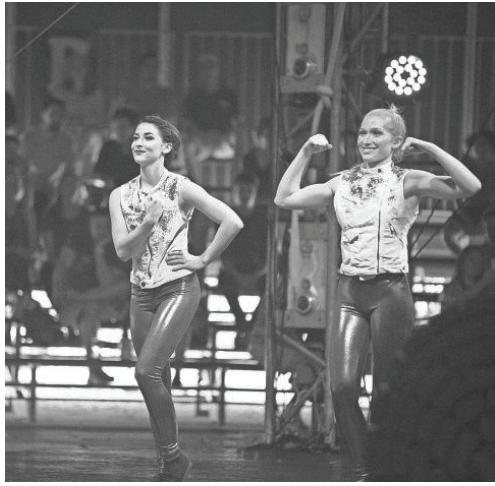
Growing up in South Florida, Cantrill had never been to a circus, let alone dream she’d star in one someday. She always had a love for performing however and was an active member of her high school’s theater troupe. Adept at handling sabers from her experiences in the sport of fencing and color guard, her skill sets all came together when she decided to audition for FSU’s circus during her sophomore year.

Her first show was “A Menagerie of Wonderment” in April 2017. Cantrill performed in the bike for five, which she says is often an introductory act for newly joined circus members. The bike is modified with pedestals so that one rider can balance five additional bodies on it to do various balancing tricks and poses.

Cantrill felt hardly any nerves her first time in the ring, and mostly enjoyed helping out her fellow circus members backstage with rigging, costume, and make-up changes.

Intense training schedule

“As a performer your secret hope is that people will wonder, how did they do that?” says Cantrill. “We train for months and months to be able to do these things



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and want people to walk away in awe. We want people to come away thoroughly entertained by something unique that they can’t get anywhere else.”

Cantrill was grateful to be able to participate in the circus’ summer program at Callaway Gardens and expand her repertoire. The intense training schedule in the program means working with young students during the day, performing in the afternoon, and then conditioning into the evening.

In addition to bike for five, Cantrill has worked hard on her triple trapeze, hand-balancing, Spanish web, and lyra acts.

Lyra is a giant aerial hoop suspended from the ceiling while Spanish web is a type of rope with a loop that performers will hold onto and dangle from by a single hand or foot.

Cantrill likens hand-balancing to acrobatic yoga as it features three performers balancing and counter-balancing on one another in precarious positions.

She’s thankful for the supportive coaching staff, including director Chad Mathews, who have taught her everything she knows how to do up to this point.

“Having a coach who is very confident, encouraging and gentle is very helpful because you fall out of things all the time,” says Cantrill. “The coaching staff is so patient and knows how to bring the best out of you. People who have never had any experience can get up on a triple trapeze 15 feet into the air, do a bunch of splits, and pick each other up. They’ve assessed our potential and seen us grow in most cases, and trust that we can do it which helps us trust ourselves.”

‘Cosmic’ features 20 acts

One of Cantrill’s favorite shows took place this past fall for Halloween. With only six weeks to prepare, the performance had a special meaning to Cantrill and other veteran members given that it was the circus’ first show back since the pandemic began. Cantrill dangled from her feet as a vampire on triple trapeze, hand-balanced as a wild woman, and drifted through the air as a ghost on Spanish web.

Rounding out the 75th season, the circus has had several partnerships across campus to share the history of the circus.

An exhibition at the FSU Museum of Fine Arts featured archived photography and documents, while a film event at the Askew Student Life Center showed “Man on Wire,” a documentary about Philippe Petit, the man who tightrope walked between NYC’s Twin Towers. There will be 20-acts for “Cosmic,” a two-hour show including an intermission. Whether she’s in the ring or backstage cheering on her friends, Cantrill will treasure every moment of her farewell performance.

“We all come from vastly different age ranges, majors and points in our lives and we meet each other in this really unique place,” says Cantrill. “We all trust each other to hold each other up, which creates this incredible atmosphere. I feel really lucky to get to come back to and finish out that year that got taken away by COVID.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).