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Clowns Coming Home to Russia With New Tricks

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Local head of Cirque making a joke.

From near-offensive clowning to ultimate acrobatics in the wheel of death, Cirque du Soleil's "Kooza" is a jack-in-the-box circus experience presented in costumes representing the entire color palette.

"Kooza" has toured the world since 2007 and has been viewed by almost 4 million visitors. This fall it will come to Russia for the first time. The show premieres Sept. 7, but ticket sales started this week.

For those not familiar with the Canadian Cirque du Soleil, it is often described as a contemporary circus. But this classification does not, by far, fully capture what spectators will experience when they see the show.

Even if you have been to another of the company's productions, "Kooza" promises to be

something completely innovative. Unlike other performances, in this show the artist is not confined to the stage. The show goes into the audience and vice versa.

"Kooza" is a dual performance of clowns and acrobats, and both of these disciplines are pushed to the limit. Miraculous and dangerous stunts are performed high up in the big top, bringing the audience to the edge of their seats. The feeling of terror that the stunts inspire is salved with the laughter that the clowns aim to produce.

"Clowning in 'Kooza' is very bold. It is not sophisticated at all," said the show's artistic director, Michael Smith. "We challenge the audience as far as we can until we get complaints. And then we stop."

There is something special about the Cirque du Soleil performing in Russia. For some performers, these shows will feel like touching home base.

"The excitement backstage is going to be tremendous because we have a lot of Russian artists," Smith said, adding that Russian performers are very important to the circus. "We could not do what we do without Russians. Every show at the Cirque du Soleil has a large Russian community."

The reason could be that the Cirque du Soleil does not recruit a lot of people from the traditional circus. Rather, they recruit former gymnasts, which bodes well for the athletes from Russia's renowned national gymnastics team.

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