

Dancing on Air: Amid COVID restrictions, local family of circus artists turns their yard into a stage



Twinkling lights spin down from the trees then disappear, while ribbons of music infuse the night - *Rise Like a Phoenix*, a three person, multi-act circus show, ran for four magical nights in June 2021. The performance was the work of Air and Silk, a family trio of circus artists who brought the enchantment of the circus into their own backyard.

The idea began in 2020 as an effort to reach out to an elderly friend in NYC who was isolated and cut off by COVID from the theater and concerts she loved. Simone Jogl, along with daughters Skye and Anneken, created a story in movement as a gift for her, tracing their friend's life story as an immigrant. They called the production *Cirque for Sophia*.



"We took all the routines that we already knew and put that together with the story," Anneken says. As the trio began working, the idea got bigger - with costumes, music and professional rigging for aerial silks. After filming a few runs to make a video for friends and family, the trio got even more ambitious: "Let's do another story!" They began developing their ideas in February 2021. *Rise Like A Phoenix* is the breathtaking result, and the speed at which the production came together was astonishing.

Simone explains: "This only works when it's pretty warm, and because of the pandemic, there was limited aerial time to rehearse the acts." As a result they had only weeks to develop the full concept - but the trio had years of training and skills to assist them.



Simone and her husband, Gerwald, were both competitive amateur ballroom dancers in Austria, though not as a team. Their careers overlapped only by a year or so, then Gerwald went into martial arts and Simone focused on Latin American and 10 Dance, making the Austrian national team in both disciplines. Anneken inherited that same love of movement - she began aerial silks when she was 9, and later on began training in contortion as well; she is a Troupier at Circus Smirkus camp in Vermont this summer and she hopes to make this her career. "I'd like to do it professionally, maybe go to a circus college." There are circus colleges? Anneken nods. "There's a lot in Montreal, that's the center. There's one in Vermont, and in San Diego, but there aren't that many in the US." Does Skye have any ambitions to perform? "She is 14 so her ideas shift and change a lot," says Simone, "but she loves performing and is thinking to fold that into her life for a few years, maybe as a street performer."



Air and Silk is a remarkably versatile trio. They do everything themselves, from building the staging, platforms and green-rooms, to the design and set-up of lights. Air and Silk have produced some impressive multi-act circus shows as Lafayette Backyard Productions, and they are available for parties, corporate events and site-specific performances.

To see a trailer and stills from Rise Like A Phoenix, visit simone0023.wixsite.com/website/blog/. To receive a recording of the entire performance, contact simone@rolfing-providence.com.