

### Purdue Theatre Alum Tom Moore's *The Flight Fantastic* LA Premier

The Egyptian Theater was the site of Hollywood's first full-blown movie premier in 1922, featuring Douglas Fairbanks swinging in as Robin Hood; how appropriate that on September 23rd 2015 the Egyptian hosted the LA premier of *The Flight Fantastic* with its thrilling aerial stunts.

Prior to the screening of Tom Moore's film about trapeze, the crowd in the Egyptian's historic courtyard was treated to an hour of dazzling acrobatics performed by Leia & Katrina and Le Petit Cirque under the guiding hand of Nathalie Gaultier. By the time the theater filled to sold-out capacity, people were buzzing with adrenaline and anticipation; the audience was primed and prepped for Moore's documentary about the history of trapeze and, in particular, the Flying Gaonas - a family of acrobats that elevated the art of trapeze to become the world's best known aerial artists.

Attendees included actresses Kathy Bates, Susan Sullivan, Michael Learned, Kathryn Helmond, Marilu Henner, Adrienne Barbeau, and Lee Meriwether. Many will recall the definitive film *Trapeze* produced by and starring former circus performer Burt Lancaster; his daughters Joanna and Susan were also in attendance. The Gaonas, tremendously inspired by Lancaster's film, still quote its dialogue to this day.

Judging by the spontaneous bursts of applause, occasional tears, and prolonged standing ovation, the documentary hit all the right notes. With thrilling archival and original footage, the film captures a compelling history of trapeze as well as a charming portrait of the Flying Gaonas

Over seven years in research and development, *The Flight Fantastic* had raised a level of anticipation among insiders; its LA premier suggests that any expectations were surpassed. Through imaginative editing, thrilling aerial footage, and innovative storytelling technique, the film is a rousing crowd-pleaser. The audience often responded like spectators at a circus.

Following the screening, Andrew Crane of the American Cinematheque moderated a Q&A, where filmmaker Tom Moore was joined by members of the Gaona Family: Tito, Chela, Richi, and Jose. The next generation of flyers was represented by Mando (son of Armando and Lela) and Alex (son of Richie and Keri Kelsey).

Moore himself proved agile and adept at maintaining the evening's brisk pace, magnanimously focusing most of the attention on the Gaona family. Originally trampoline acrobats from Mexico, the Gaonas had transferred their astonishing skills to trapeze, quickly ascending to a league of their own through discipline, daring, humor, and star power. All these qualities and more were on full display the night of Moore's Hollywood premier.

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