

# THE FLYING KARAMAZOV BROTHERS



## Reviews

### BOOKINGS

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# The New York Times

February 17, 2010

THEATER REVIEW | 'THE FLYING KARAMAZOV BROTHERS'

## Pizza, Butter and a Cupcake, With the Greatest of Ease

By KEN JAWOROWSKI

The Flying Karamazov Brothers are a low-tech triumph. Employing a simple collection of props and a large supply of talent, the troupe's current show, "4Play," is as close to a sure thing as can be found onstage, 100 minutes of cleverness and comedy that go by in a flash at the Minetta Lane Theater.

The Karamazovs have been around in one form or another since 1973. In "4Play" they spend their time beating rhythms on cardboard boxes, singing songs and dancing a goofy ballet. And throughout it all, there is juggling. The four men juggle glowing balls in the dark. They juggle while playing musical instruments. They juggle treacherous objects, including a butcher knife and a flaming stick.

In their trademark bit, audience members bring items to be juggled, and three of those objects are chosen by applause. At a recent show a droopy slice of pizza, an unwrapped stick of butter and a fluffy cupcake were the winners. Paul Magid (the group's sole remaining original member) juggled them with remarkable ease. It's a skit the Brothers have been doing for years, yet the challenge still comes across as fresh and genuinely funny.

The Karamazovs' stage smarts are equally impressive. Their patter is filled with puns and intentionally bad jokes, part Marx Brothers, part Monty Python. (An egg is "a build-your-own-chicken kit"; the preshow announcement ends by saying there will be no



From left, Stephen Bent, Paul Magid, Roderick Kimball and Mark Ettinger, the Flying Karamazov Brothers, at the Minetta Lane.

preshow announcement.) And the occasional error or dropped prop is used as an opportunity for a witty ad lib. This welcome, ragged-around-the-edges feel adds a charm that is often missing from slicker, more special-effects-laden shows.

With such an abundance of entertainment, it seems nitpicky to point out that a few of the gags in "4Play" get lost amid all the action; punch lines or comments are sometimes delivered too softly for an enthusiastic, cheering audience.

Then again, if you wanted to be really picky, you could also point out that the Flying Karamazov Brothers don't fly, aren't related and have no apparent connection to Russia. Yet there's no disputing that these guys are great fun to watch.

Article can be found online at:

<http://theater.nytimes.com/2010/02/17/theater/reviews/17flying.html>



## NY1 Theatre Review:

### “The Flying Karamazovs At The Minetta Lane Theatre”

By Roma Torre

*The Flying Karamazov Brothers, a famed juggling comedy quarter, have now settled in for an open-ended run of their hit off-Broadway show at the Minetta Lane Theatre. NY1's Roma Torre filed the following review.*

They're not really Russian, nor are they related and nobody's actually airborne, but the pins and the puns sure do fly with the greatest of ease. The Flying Karamazov Brothers, who now star in "The Flying Karamazovs At The Minetta Lane Theatre," have been perfecting their juggling comedy act for 37 years now. Skilled and screwy; cerebral and goofy, nothing comes close to matching the quartet's extraordinary brand of entertainment.

It takes a lot of serious talent to be that silly. Paul Magid, who co-created the Flying Karamazov Brothers and continues to perform and direct, writes that the group was founded on the premise that they could combine juggling, music and theater to produce a unique art form. Adept at each of the disciplines, they added zany comedy to the mix and the Karamazovs were born.

Earlier in the year under the name "4 Play," the show was a big hit, and now "The Flying Karamazovs At The Minetta Lane Theatre" has settled in for an open-ended run. The Off-Broadway venue is ideal for the troupe -- just the right size to take in the routines up close and personal yet far back enough in the event something goes wrong.

Danger and terror, by the way, are an integral part of the show. The four men introduce nine objects, some of them potentially lethal, which they pledge to juggle by show's end. They include a cleaver, a flaming torch and a bottle of barely-corked champagne.

As funny and clever as they are, the bottom line is that they are master jugglers. And they've come up with some truly dazzling feats. There's an incredible free-for-all in which they toss pins every which way in seemingly chaotic fashion and almost always manage to keep them in the air. Even when they do drop them on the rare occasion, the men have a quick quip at the ready.

They're also fine musicians and even manage to swap instruments while juggling simultaneously. Offbeat, yet incredibly, they don't ever seem to miss a beat.

**So if you're in the market for smart, unconventional comedy, don't walk, don't run, yes, "fly" to see the amazing Karamazovs.**

Article can be found online at:

[http://www.ny1.com/content/ny1\\_living/theater\\_reviews/123815/ny1-theater-review---the-flying-karamazovs-at-the-minetta-lane-theatre/](http://www.ny1.com/content/ny1_living/theater_reviews/123815/ny1-theater-review---the-flying-karamazovs-at-the-minetta-lane-theatre/)

NY CULTURE | SEPTEMBER 10, 2010

## Artists Bound by Tradition, If Not Blood

The Flying Karamazov Brothers Juggle Art and Comedy

By Eric Uhlfelder

Hearing that the Flying Karamazov Brothers have performed with orchestras around the world conjures thoughts of "A Night at the Opera," the Marx Brothers' spoof of high culture. There may not be any scenes of crammed staterooms, hoodwinked heiresses, or hilarious nonsense uttered from balconies, but, like Chico and Harpo, the Karamazovs show off their classical-musical training and deliver visual and verbal one-liners, all while creatively tossing about anything they can get their hands on. God help an orchestra member with a bad hairpiece.

The Brothers—who are not really brothers, and whose cast has changed throughout the years, save for one—have been entertaining audiences for nearly four decades, currently at the Minetta Lane Theatre in Greenwich Village, where their show, "4Play," began on Aug. 9. They started out in 1973 at a Renaissance fair in northern California. Their first act, though, wasn't a juggling display. It was a naming.

"We were housed in a barn, still not knowing what to call ourselves, when a member was reading a Dostoyevsky novel, and our name was found," recalled Paul Magid, an original brother who still performs with the troupe.

By the early 1980s, the Kazamazovs began appearing regularly in theaters across the country, earning an Obie Award in 1981 for their performance at the Bitter End in New York. They've since made many visits to the city, having played the Vivian Beaumont and Mitzi Newhouse theaters, as well as the Brooklyn Academy of Music. But the Karamazovs have also performed in venues across Europe and Asia. They've interpreted Shakespeare, Cervantes and Dumas, opened for the Grateful Dead, and appeared on "Seinfeld."

"We've been lucky to perform all over the world," Mr. Magid said. "While the basics of the show don't change if we are performing in a theatre in London's West End or in front 26,000 young Lutherans in New Orleans' Super Dome, we've picked up the pacing in New York because

folks here push us to do more."

But what are these guys? Literally, they are Mr. Magid (the founder and director, who plays Dimitri Kazamazov), Mark Ettinger (the music director, who plays Alexei), Rod Kimball (Pavel) and Stephen Bent (Zossima). Describing them, however, is as challenging as trying to explain Cirque du Soleil.

Perhaps the best description was offered by Csilla Ritecz, a visitor from Budapest who attended the opening of "4Play": They're simply fun. They made me feel like I escaped reality and everything that was impossible for a while."

The Karamozovs' shows aren't perfect. Things get dropped. But the occasional failing is part of the entertainment. And the audience soon realizes that unexpected improvisation is one of the things that makes this 100 minutes of non-sequitur screwball antics such a pleasure.

"4Play" highlights the Brothers' trademark wit. Before a percussion routine, Alexi leans over a series of boxes used as drums, tapping gently to hear if the corrugation is tuned just so. Pavel announces, "No problem," he can fetch some fallen juggling pins, nonchalantly walking through a gauntlet of flying plastic pins being tossed rapidly among the other brothers.

While throwing and catching things has always been at the heart of their act, music is the Karamazovs' motif. This is evident not just in the performance, which involves various instruments and sound effects elicited from their juggling, but in the show's construction and pacing.

"Sound and movement are choreographed like a chamber ensemble," Mr. Ettinger said. Each performer has a musical background. Mr. Ettinger, the most accomplished, was a professor at the Mannes School of Music in Manhattan and a conductor before deciding to hang up his baton to join the more itinerant gypsy life that is Karamazov.

It's not a surprise, noted the show's sole benefactor, New York-based hedge-fund manager Roy Niederhoffer, that these



guys are great musicians. "Only a handful of professionally trained ears in the audience are going to notice that when they sing their four-part parody of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy,' they do it every night in the original D-major key via perfect pitch," he said.

The current ensemble has been together for two years, and "4Play" marks the first time this iteration (including the newest member, Mr. Bent, whose parents' first date was at a Karamazov show) has performed in the city. The production initially ran for a month in February. It then found new life in July with the help of Mr. Niederhoffer.

"Roy is our missing brother," explained Mr. Ettinger, who first met Mr. Niederhoffer more than 20 years ago, when both were players in the Long Island Youth Orchestra. That was the last time they had seen each other until a recent Facebook-induced encounter. "He chose a different day job, but his passions and wiring are very much in sync with ours. Roy brings an incredibly analytical mind and a tremendously passionate musician's heart that has not been given free range."

Mr. Niederhoffer contributes to the artistic side of the production with the same precision timing he applies to his day job, while surveying audience response to better understand market demand. Each time he sees the show, he notices something new. "It's like hearing a piece of music performed live again and again," he said. "It's the same piece, but the performance changes and communicates something different each time."

Article can be found online at:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703453804575480403680632816.html>



## Flying Karamazov Brothers Toss Puns, Clubs

Seriously talented, humorous Karamazov Brothers juggle with danger, gravity in '4Play'

By JENNIFER FARRAR Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK August 10, 2010 (AP)

Those four Flying Karamazov Brothers are back in town and better than ever, with their zany, pun-laden, seriously skillful juggling and musical act, titled simply "4 Play."

Once again, the off-Broadway Minetta Lane Theatre is awash in piles of cardboard boxes, the comical troupe's inventive "set."

Whether they are deftly wielding a dozen juggling clubs among themselves while dancing a jig, or staggering around the stage in long ballerina tutus, the quartet keeps up a running commentary of humorous one-liners and puns that appeals to audience members of all ages.

Founding Karamazov member Paul Magid produced, directed and stars as Dmitri, deadpan narrator and the master juggler known as "the Champ." He wrote the book for the show, along with the other Karamazov brothers — Mark Ettinger, Rod Kimball and Stephen Bent.

Magid's awesome juggling skills are highlighted in a lengthy face-off against the other three Brothers, who repeatedly hurl their nine clubs at him.

Ettinger is the musical director and pianist, performing as Alexei. He's quick with ad-libs, especially when the audience is invited to bring their own props to the stage for a juggling contest by Magid. Props must be "smaller than a bread box, no sharp edges."

Offerings at a recent preview included children's wooden pull toys, large metal pans and even a crutch, which was summarily rejected for being "seriously much larger than a bread box."

Underlying all the fun is a theme of rhythmic musicality, which is why the Brothers can make percussive rhythms with props such as four hard rubber balls and a table. They also play a few musical instruments,



In this publicity photo released by Richard Kornberg & Associates, the Flying Karamazov Brothers, from left, Stephen Bent, Mark Ettinger, Paul Magid and Rod Kimball, performing off-Broadway in "4 Play" at New York's Minetta Lane Theatre. (AP Photo/Richard Kornberg & Associates, Carol Rosegg) (AP)

either the one they are holding or, at times, an instrument held by a fellow performer.

And whatever else the tuxedo-kilted comedians are doing onstage, they're also gracefully wielding juggling clubs or balls or uncooked eggs. Suspense mounts as they gradually present nine objects that will constitute a finale act called simply "Terror," including a cleaver and a flaming torch.

Kimball as Brother Pavel and Bent as Zossima goofily deploy the astonishing Karamazov superpowers of humor, grace and uncanny timing that allow them, at one point, to miraculously walk among heavy juggling clubs flying through the air, without (so far) getting hit in the head.

If you like to laugh while watching amazing feats of dexterity accompanied by a hint of danger, don't miss the daffy, talented Karamazov Brothers.

Article can be found online at:

<http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/wireStory?id=11369382>



*Time Out Critic*

## The Flying Karamazov Brothers: Jugglers go wild.

On the night I attended the delightful new Flying Karamazov Brothers show at the Minetta Lane Theatre, one of the four kilted, off-kilter vaudevillians sustained what may well be history's first daikon-radish-related juggling injury. Let no one say there is nothing new under the sun! For the Karamazovs—anchored by Paul Magid, who cofounded the troupe in 1973—have always been a novelty act with an eye toward the unpredictable.

The centerpiece of 4Play brings that risk factor to the fore. Dressed in yellow rain gear, Magid attempts to juggle three unwieldy objects collected from the audience, which has been encouraged in advance to bring zany potential props. On my night, these items were a cheesecake, a flounder and a bizarre combination of red fishnets, three eggs and two turnips; re-



jected items included a scratching post and the aforementioned daikon, which wound up whacking a Brother in the face. (Moral of the story: Don't horse with a radish.) Buoyed by quick-witted one-liners and audience interaction, this sequence felt fresh and lively, as did a kaleidoscopic episode of improvisational pin-tossing in the second act. Less successful were a few bits of canned comedy, which seem to have spent too much time on the shelf. But even when a joke or a routine falls flat, the Karamazovs (whose current lineup consists of Magid, Mark Ettinger, Roderick Kimball and Stephen Bent) recover with grace. Potential failure is a proud part of their ethos: They juggle till they drop, then keep on juggling.—**Adam Feldman**

Article can be found online at:

<http://newyork.timeout.com/arts-culture/theater/63815/the-flying-karamazov-brothers-4play#ixzz1E4u8X1Nw>



## The Flying Karamazov Brothers deliver a stunning spectacle of feats as crazy as their moniker.

*This review refers to the first run of 4Play, which played in February and March, 2010. The show reopened for an unlimited run on July 22, 2010.*

The Flying Karamazov Brothers' feet may remain firmly planted on the ground during their cheekily titled new show, 4Play, but eclectic objects, from bowling pins to fish, soar through the air—and occasionally fall to earth with a hilarious splat. Combining circus performance, music, movement and sheer silliness with great success, 4Play is a treat for anyone with a funny bone.

The show opens with straightforward juggling, but soon the "brothers" (in name only) begin to multitask, drumming on cardboard boxes while effortlessly tossing around meat cleavers and flaming torches. The two-hour performance never drags, as there's always something ridiculous transpiring onstage. The audience is, of course, invited to get in on the action by offering up bizarre objects to juggle. On the night attended, the guys grabbed a cheesecake, a flounder, stockings filled with eggs and turnips (apparently they have an affinity for foodstuffs). Rejected items included a cat scratching post, so really, bring whatever you've got. Audience applause determines which offerings are chosen.

Parents of younger children, take note: As implied by its name, 4Play has a fair share of naughty jokes, but most of them are subtle enough to fly (pun intended) right over your tot's head. In addition, the show features a slew of loud noises and, in one instance, strobe lights, so the experience might not work for preschoolers. But for elementary-school-aged kids and older, a visit to the cozy Minetta Lane Theatre will definitely make 'em laugh.

—Thomas Sullivan



Article can be found online at:

<http://newyorkkids.timeout.com/articles/theater/83017/the-flying-karamazov-brothers-in-4play-at-the-minetta-lane-theatre-theater-review>

# VARIETY

The Flying Karamazov Brothers

## The jugglers themselves are only half the fun.

By Sam Thielman

*A Flying Karamozov Brothers presentation of a circus show in two acts, written by Paul Magid and the Flying Karamozov Brothers. Directed by Magid. Music direction, Mark Ettinger.*

*Dmitri - Paul Magid, Alexei - Mark Ettinger, Pavel - Roderick Kimball, Zosima - Stephen Bent*

At a glance, it looks like the biggest expense involved in the Flying Karamozov Brothers' enjoyably low-tech juggling show, "4Play," is the insurance. On a set of cardboard boxes, the quartet toss around everything from a meat cleaver to a flaming torch to a block of flesh-searing dry ice, but the jugglers themselves are only half the fun. The other half is the obnoxious Gotham audience, encouraged to misbehave by the performers and enthusiastically sinking to the occasion. Property seems tailor-made for touring engagements, but seen-it-all New Yorkers make its run at the Minetta Lane worth checking out.

The show starts off with a simple laugh at the audience's expense, then grows progressively more complex and even surreal. The Brothers carry out a destructive taiko drumming demonstration on some of the boxes, juggle in sync with metal-palmed gloves and sing a half-dozen folksy-sounding tunes with offbeat accompaniment from their fellow performers.

Sometimes, the latter involves one guy hitting frame drums with the pins he's also juggling; sometimes it involves two guys playing the same guitar with one hand and juggling to each other with the free hand.

As the jokes and the music get more technically involved (and the jabs at the aud more pointed), you can hear theatergoers cackling to themselves. Finally, the moment arrives: Dmitri (Paul Magid) will juggle any three things chosen by the



Stephen Bent, left, Paul Magid, Mark Ettinger and Rod Kimball juggle pins and punchlines in the Flying Karamozov Brothers.

audience, as long as they are heavier than an ounce, lighter than 10 lbs., and no larger than a breadbox. If he fails, he will suffer the indignity of a well-flung pie.

Word about this bit must have gotten around before the perf reviewed. The guy quietly unlacing his slush-and-mud-covered boot certainly had a malicious gleam in his eye, but the final three objects chosen by the giggling house were a snowball someone smuggled into the theater that was nearly big enough to violate the 10 lb. rule, an open umbrella, and a stick of butter. No pies were forthcoming.

There must be something in the Off Broadway water -- December brought us a nearly identical act at the New Victory Theater called "Chestnuts Roasting on the Flaming Idiots," and which act you prefer will depend on whether you favor physical skill or comic timing.

The Karamazov brothers write

themselves funny material and are pretty superior jugglers, but the ability to deliver a joke is spread unevenly throughout the cast. Magid is the funniest of the four, with bashful borscht-belter Roderick Kimball (who plays Pavel) a close second. The Idiots were more at ease with each other, but their act favored the enjoyably stupid over the spectacular, mostly because they were just as entertaining picking on each other as they were flinging tenpins in the air.

Here, auds get a generous helping of spectacle, and the show is calibrated so well by Magid (who also directs) that it seems to get better as it goes. You can quibble with individual sections -- a bit featuring Polish hillbillies wears out its welcome, although Mark Ettinger's appalling drag is a gas -- but nobody leaves the theater without a big grin.

Article can be found online at:

<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117942151?refCatId=33>

# Bloomberg

## Karamazov Brothers Juggle Fish, Cleavers, Ice, Puns

By John Simon - Aug 19, 2010



From left, Stephen Bent, Paul Magid, Mark Ettinger and Rod Kimball as the Flying Karamazov Brothers in "4Play" in New York. The show, combining juggling, music, comedy and audience participation, is at the Minetta Lane Theatre in New York. Photographer: Carol Rosegg/Kornberg PR via Bloomberg



Paul Magid, the last performing member of the original Flying Karamazov Brothers, juggles in "4Play." The show, combining music, comedy and audience participation, is running at the Minetta Lane Theatre in New York. Photographer: Carol Rosegg/Kornberg PR via Bloomberg

Like the Holy Roman Empire, which was none of the above, the Flying Karamazov Brothers are not airborne, Russian or kin. And though they call their new show "4Play," their multiple skills, profusely and diversely displayed, make it look more like 40 at multitalented play.

Founded in 1973 by Paul Magid, who alone is still with them, they have been at it ever since: a quartet that is musical, histrionic, jocular, balletic, acrobatic and almost continually juggling -- clubs, balls, and just about everything from a meat cleaver to a burning torch, from sundry musical instruments to a dead flounder.

Their act combines vaudeville jokes with expert, funny musicianship, e.g., playing the adjacent Brother's instrument with one hand while juggling Indian clubs with the other, or performing an outrageous ballet parody in absurd drag while spouting mostly punning jokes.

It is hilarious, thrilling and sometimes even beautiful, as when, in pitch dark, they juggle luminous clubs. That some of the show is improvised adds to the unleashed fun.

At one climactic moment, they ask for objects between one ounce and 10 pounds with no jagged edges and no bigger than a breadbox. From among the numerous ones proffered or tossed onstage, audience applause picks the unlikeliest three for Magid to juggle.

Failure results in a pie in the face, but success (which is near un-failing) leaves us wide-eyed with wonder.

Raw Eggs

What all is juggled with! A stick of unwrapped butter, a cube of dry ice, open umbrellas, a full backpack, a cheesecake, a fishnet stocking filled with raw eggs, and anything else you care to bring along.

Besides Magid (Dmitri), the brotherhood includes Roderick Kimball (Pavel), Stephen Bent (Zossima) and Mark Ettinger (Alexei), who is also the music director and apt pianist, though all four of them can uproariously play their trombone, trumpet, clarinet or piccolo.

Susan Hilferty's costumes are black, kilted biker and the set consists entirely of cardboard boxes of every size and description, some piled high, some suspended from above. On these, the brethren do some multifarious drumming when they are not climbing out of them, hiding behind them, or shuffling them around with maniacal brio to no purpose whatever.

Pranksters

There's an overlong number about Polish immigrant coalminers in West Virginia, but even that includes a hearty visual gag.

And while there is no actual flying by the pranksters themselves, everything else onstage flies in ever more daring patterns, to ever more stunning altitudes, and to ever growing audience delight.

Article can be found online at:

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-08-19/karamazovs-juggle-flounder-cleaver-ice-cheesecake-bad-puns-john-simon.html>

# DAILY NEWS

## 'The Flying Karamazov Brothers' '4 Play': Audience goes for the juggler

By Joe Dziemianowicz  
DAILY NEWS THEATER CRITIC  
Monday, February 15th

Take my iPad, please!

Earlier this week, that's what one plucky (or should that be, crazy?) audience member told the cast of "4Play," the latest Flying Karamazov Brothers presentation.

If you know anything about these juggling whizzes - or if you take five minutes to familiarize yourself with them on Wikipedia - you know one of their trademark tricks is a show-stopper called "The Gamble."

In it, one brother, in this case Dmitri (Paul Magid), must juggle three items provided by the audience. The objects, which must meet size and weight requirements, are chosen by the audience's applause.

If Dmitri doesn't succeed, he gets a pie in the face. Brothers Alexei (Mark Ettinger), Pavel (Roderick Kimball) and Zossima (Stephen Bent) are all too willing to slam the pastry in their brother's mug.

On Wednesday, that shiny new \$500 Apple gizmo was up for grabs but ultimately didn't make the cut from the oddball offerings by the crowd. Dmitri had his hands full with an open umbrella, an unwrapped stick of butter and a snowball.

The next night, things got even messier as Dmitri struggled to juggle a fresh fish, a



*The Flying Karamazov Brothers are up to their old tricks at the Minetta Lane Theater.*

cheesecake and a fishnet stocking filled with three eggs and two turnips.

That mix made for a very messy display (the put-upon cleanup crew got cheers), but that's business as usual at this show, which is part circus, part vaudeville, part food fight.

Mostly, though, the focus is on juggling. In a program note, the brothers link juggling with music. Far-fetched? No. Whether they're tossing around tenpins or balls, they do it with such power, skill and grace that it takes on its own rhythmic elegance and beauty.

If the brothers' stale jokes crash more than they fly, that seems part of the act, too.

Article can be found online at:

[http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music/2010/02/15/2010-02-15\\_the\\_flying\\_karamazov\\_brothers\\_4\\_play\\_audience\\_goes\\_for\\_the\\_juggler.html](http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music/2010/02/15/2010-02-15_the_flying_karamazov_brothers_4_play_audience_goes_for_the_juggler.html)