

Showtime!

Cruise lines ramp up entertainment with new productions and venues. BY JAN SCHRODER



Follow the Yellow Brick Road:

The Wizard of Oz on *Icon of the Seas*

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Whether your taste runs to high-wire acrobatic displays or the soft crooning of classic show tunes, you can find a new show to entertain you on cruise lines. Ice skaters, magicians, singers, dancers, skateboarders and even a giant puppet take the stages and state-of-the-art venues of cruise ships.

Classic entertainment like variety shows remain popular, while some old classics have been re-imagined with high-tech special effects or updated elements. (Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* now has a smartphone.)

Unless you're a professional magician, you won't be allowed to visit The Magic Castle, a private club in Hollywood. But take a cruise on *Sun Princess* and you'll be able to step inside its replica, Spellbound by Magic Castle, a series of rooms filled with Victorian curiosities where you can enjoy the illusions of magicians Mark Gibson and Woody Aragón; listen to piano tunes played by the resident spirit, Isabella; and enjoy cocktails like The Conjuror.

In addition to a traditional theater, *Sun Princess* debuted a 270-degree theater for shows in the round with state-of-the-art sound and

technology where cruisers can enjoy three new productions.

The pirate adventure *Vallora, A Pirate Quest* features 1980s music and is created, directed and choreographed by Danny Teeson of *American Idol*. Audience members are invited to dance to Latin American beats during *Viva La Música*, choreographed by Latin Liz Imperio, who has worked on concert tours for Madonna, Gloria Estefan and Jennifer Lopez. And musical theater fans won't want to miss *Stage Struck* to hear favorite show tunes including "One Night Only" from *Dreamgirls*, "Take Me or Leave Me" from *Rent* and "I Could Have Danced All Night" from *My Fair Lady*.

On its newest ship, *Icon of the Seas*, Royal Caribbean enclosed the AquaTheater in the AquaDome for the divers, slack liners, high liners and aerial dancers in its new high-tech, high-action show *Aqua Action!*. Four robot arms are used as diving boards and for tricks for skateboarders. Also in the AquaTheater, you can watch a competition with fairy-tale characters in *Pirates vs. Mermaids*.

On *Icon* you also can see a re-imagined version of *The Wizard of Oz* featuring a 15-piece orchestra, a clever version of the yellow brick road,

Dorothy in her bed and the Wicked Witch of the West on her bike flying over the audience.

Fifteen of Royal Caribbean's ships feature ice rinks, and *Icon of the Seas* boasts the largest rink yet, Absolute Zero, engineered with state-of-the-art technology to showcase its two new shows — *Starburst: Elemental Beauty*, an interpretation of the periodic table, and a gathering of fairy-tale characters in *Once Upon a Time: The King's Royal Ball*.

The beloved novel *Pride and Prejudice* is reimaged on Cunard's *Queen Anne*. The servants share their version of the romantic tale, with karaoke, in *Pride & Prejudice** (*sort of), which originated in London's West End, where it won the Olivier Award for Best Comedy.

Set to sail in December 2024, Disney Cruise Line's new ship, *Disney Treasure*, will debut a new Broadway-style show, *Disney The Tale of Moana*. The show will feature Te Kā as a massive puppet created by master puppet designer Michael Curry, who worked on *The Lion King* on Broadway. In one scene a giant manta ray will soar over the audience.

While you may associate tailgating with sporting events, you can find a Texas-sized one on board *Carnival Jubilee*, launched late last year. The three-hour event, Lone Star Tailgate, takes place on the Lido Deck and includes games and a party band celebrating the music of Texas-born artists. Also on *Jubilee*, guests follow the adventures of a bride and groom in the new interactive show, *Dear Future Husband*, followed by a reception after the show.



CRUISING TO THE MUSIC

Holland America Line added four new concert-style productions this year, with rolling debuts from February to June, starting aboard *Eurodam* and followed by *Rotterdam*, *Zuiderdam* and *Nieuw Statendam*.

Hey Mr. DJ features a concert of pop hits from the 1960s to present day. Musical numbers from Broadway and Hollywood take center stage in *Song & Dance*. The new show *Class Act* focuses on the music, dance and comedy of Las Vegas, while *All That* will immerse guests in the world of classic TV variety shows from the 1960s, '70s and '80s.

The cruise line also added productions specific to the regions where ships sail. While Caribbean cruises feature Island Magic playing orchestral steel drums, guests on sailings in Europe hear classical string music with the Chordial Chamber Trio and Pantheon.

Magical Moments:

Princess Cruises' Spellbound Magic Castle (top), and Royal Caribbean's AquaDome (left)

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