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l 520-SHOW or visit
on.org for details

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Tuesday

It's National
Poetry Month, and
locally the
Pikes Peak
Library
District
has
decided
to
celebrate
by hosting
readings
of
original
works by
local poets.
This evening,
the **Penrose**
Public Library, at 20
Cascade Ave., hosts
ading at 7 p.m.
on is free; call 531-
t. 1204. There will be
eading on April 23; if
e to participate, call
i at 634-2367.

— Kristen Sherwood



Bird Calling

New production celebrates the life of high-wire wonder

As spectacles go, there's nothing more romantic than the circus, and nothing campier than a musical. Put them both together in August Mergelman's production about Cañon City's own Bird Millman, purportedly the "greatest female wire artiste who ever lived," and you should have one camptacular show about one of our great forgotten local heroines.

Born in Cañon City in 1890, high-wire artist Bird Millman was raised in a circus family of modest fame. As is wont to happen in circus families, Bird's parents brought her into the business at a tender age, teaching her, as it were, "the ropes." As an adult, Bird Millman gained world renown for her work in Les Folies Bergère, the Ziegfield Follies, The Palace, and, most of all, the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus where she performed between 1910 and 1920 before her third marriage and eventual retirement from performance in 1924.

Sadly, Bird's husband was crushed by the market crash of 1929 and died shortly thereafter, leaving Bird with nothing. She was then forced to return to Cañon City and lived out her final years on a chicken ranch before dying from cancer in 1940.

In an attempt to celebrate her life, revive her memory, and put her onto Cañon City's historical map, producer August Mergelman wrote the book and lyrics for *Bird Millman: A Musical*. Music and additional lyrics were written by Sam Stokes, and the production is directed by Tom Ledbetter.

Though this initial run of five performances is short for a musical, Mergelman hopes to attract the attention of other potential producers.

Mergelman is also asking the public for any further information, historical documents, or leads to more information about Bird Millman's life.

— Noel Black

Independent April 4-10, 2002 **23**