

Circostrada Network

A person with reddish-brown hair, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and light blue trousers, is performing a handstand on a blue perforated metal surface. The person is upside down, with their head near the bottom left and their feet near the top right. The background is a grid of circular holes in the metal, creating a pattern of light and shadow. The overall lighting is a cool blue.

Tiago Bartolomeu Costa
Verena Cornwall
Thomas Hahn
Morgane Le Gallic
Louise Mongalais
Kiki Muukkonen
Tomi Purovaara
Anne Tucker
Jean Vinet
Yohann Floch (coord.)

Fresh Circus
european seminar
for the development
of contemporary circus

HORS LES MURS

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for the development
of contemporary circus

September 25 & 26 2008

Parc et Grande Halle
de La Villette (Paris, France)

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CIRCOSTRADA NETWORK

HORS LES MURS



MAIRIE DE PARIS



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Presentation

For an outside observer, the gathering of European circus arts professionals at the Fresh Circus seminar might have been a bit surprising. Reunions, embraces, discussions aside or in small groups; the overall ambiance hardly gave the impression of an official, cultural colloquium. This is because these artists who travel around Europe, the festival directors or the members of the Circostrada Network all know each other and certainly do make up a united, consanguineous European circus family.

For two days this community examined the issues involved in the development of its artistic practices by facing, without any taboos, its utopian views as well as its fears and difficulties. Although the situations vary from country to country, the challenges to be faced are still the same: recognition for new circus forms, the development of high-quality professional training, professional integration of young artists, the mobilisation of public funds for productions, the defence of the circus tent as a tool of distribution, etc.

The debates have shown that the answers to many of these questions lie in the existence of Europe, which is today considered by the participants to be the natural space of expression for the circus arts. The initiatives are multiplying in several countries: the creation of schools, of festivals and of collaborations between programmers or artists. These initiatives show the dynamism possessed by professionals, who wish to defend the circus' place in society and accompany new artistic adventures.

We invite you to discover the minutes of this seminar and to revisit the six themes at the heart of the issue of development in the circus: access to the circus profession, knowledge of and access to information, diversity and intercultural dialogue, circus tents and technical regulations, etc. We would like to share with you a few of the unique experiences recounted by artists or culture professionals who contribute day after day to the Europe of the circus.

Stéphane Simonin
Director of HorsLesMurs

Fresh Circus

2 days at La Villette

288 participants from 18 countries

30% of participants are foreign

8 simultaneous interpreters

24 speakers, 6 moderators, 6 reporters

6 thematic workshops:

- > creativity and innovation;
- > diversity and intercultural dialogue;
- > the production and distribution of circus works;
- > technical regulations for tents;
- > knowledge of and access to information;
- > access to the circus profession.

Organisation: HorsLesMurs (Circostrada Network) in partnership with the Parc et La Grande Halle de La Villette, with the support of the European Commission, CulturesFrance and the city of Paris.

1. Access to the circus profession

Summary proposed by **Jean Vinet**

Jean Vinet pursued his studies in political science and earned a PhD from the University of Paris X on the evolution of the processes of transmitting knowledge in the circus arts. He was the Pedagogical Director of the Centre National des Arts du Cirque (National Centre of Circus Arts, or CNAC) in the 1990s before creating and running La brèche, a space dedicated to creative work in the circus field in Cherbourg (France).

Summary of contributions and debates:

Circus artists, technicians and supporting professionals enter the job market after one or several training courses (long, short, graduate, certifying or not): are they granted easy access to the sector? Are they given adequate tools? What are their needs at the various stages of their careers? The moderator, Jan Rok Achard, introduces the workshop's theme:

- > How do we define professional integration?
- > What are the missions and desired end result of professional schools?
- > What distinguishes professional integration from creative works and the distribution of a performance?
- > What are the knowledge levels of actors, schools and professionals?
- > How can we define the job market (while remembering that there is a shortage of circus artists in the world)?
- > How can we include outside countries, such as those of Africa, in the development of the circus arts in Europe?

He then gave a few examples of the current state of professional integration in France and throughout the world: schools are taking on the role of producers, students are sometimes at the service of a commercial project, schools encourage the creation of new companies and companies that host artists' workshops, etc.

"Personally, I think it would be good to explore the possibilities that companies may have to offer real workshops. I would even say that this should be part of their mission statement. Will the Ministry of Culture have the courage to impose this obligation upon the companies that are considered national? When have we ever gathered the schools and representatives of the job market together at one table? Whose responsibility is that?"

He then presents the workshop's two speakers. First Gwénola David, who has been a journalist and critic since 1998. She is Vice President of the professional trade union of theatre, music and dance critics and has been an artistic and pedagogical consultant with the Centre national des arts du cirque (National Centre of Circus Arts, or CNAC) since 2007. She has been a member of the commissions of Theatre and Dance experts at the Direction régionale des Affaires culturelles (Regional Direction of Cultural Affairs, or DRAC) in Ile-de-France.

Gwénola David focused her intervention on the re-structuring of professional integration at CNAC following the observations and conclusions drawn, most notably by a work group:

- > The context in France has changed: evolution of the job market, dramatic increase in the number of circus shows, growing number of companies, increase in the number of artists and more schools geared toward professional life.
- > The observation that the milieu of the contemporary circus in France is not open to new integration; companies are taking in few young performers.
- > The CNAC project was based on this growing divide between training institutions and the professional world, breaking away from a profession that, just a few years ago, denounced the very idea of a school –this brings about a poor understanding of the professional world, difficulties in the implementation of projects artistically, financially, technically, in terms of public relations, the absence of contacts with professionals to learn of possible professional opportunities.
- > Certain principles that were expressed: the quality of a training course is the best way to encourage professional integration. The training course must remain autonomous in relation to the job market while remaining aware of the issue of entering into the professional world.

The reform notably entails:

- a) The implementation of an immersion workshop at the end of the first year in the two-year graduate programme.
- b) The third year of professional integration will take place in two phases; performance creation first, then participation in companies' on-going productions, or time spent with partner structures who are engaged in research laboratories linked with an individual or collective project.

The moderator then introduced Tim Roberts, the Higher Education Courses Director at The Circus Space in London (United Kingdom), where he is in charge of the development of the only higher-education degree in the circus arts. The curriculum lasts for three years and brings together 57 full-time students.

His circus experience, however, goes back to 1979, when Ringling Bros and Barnum and Bailey's Circus in the United States first hired him as a clown. He then co-founded the Juggling Institute, a company based on theatre, comedy and juggling and he spent several years at the CNAC, where he was a juggling teacher and professional training co-ordinator until he left for the United Kingdom in 2000.

Tim Roberts elaborated on the context in which he operates:

- > 86% of the total funding for The Circus Space is raised on an annual basis, thus we have a wide array of activities for amateurs and initiation into the professional world, with a total of nearly 1,000 people every week.

- > In the three-year programme, there are 57 students of 17 different nationalities.
- > 45 to 55% of the foreign students return to their country of origin once their training is completed, which means we must train students to deal with different situations regarding integration into the professional world.
- > The students that pursue a career in the United Kingdom are quite few (7 to 9) given the population (60 million inhabitants). These students can create a show in groups, work as solo artists, cabaret artists or teachers. The firms are usually the ones that have to attract the young graduates, and not the other way around. The school receives a great deal of support from the profession. It is quite different from the high number of professional schools in France, considering the number of students that enter that job market each year.
- > If the school is to keep its funding, it must prove that at least 70% of its graduates have regularly been able to find work over a period of three years.
- > The circus in all of its facets, and particularly the contemporary circus, is underdeveloped in the United Kingdom. However, the central idea is that if we want to see more circus, and a larger audience for the circus, then we must increase the offer, all the while presenting a wide variety of aesthetics.
- > Through the course of their second year, the students have a management class called 'Business of Being a Performer' and in their third year as part of a fruitful partnership with Deutsche Bank, which grants a scholarship, the students must lay out a 'Business Plan' for a project they would like to develop upon leaving the school. However, we must also admit that the classes dealing with administration, career management and promotion have a very high absentee rate and do not necessarily interest the students.

Based on these presentations and their own experience, the participants discuss their points of view. The comments point out a few important observations:

- > There is more than one path. There are as many potential careers as there are circus artists.
- > No school could adequately prepare a student for life outside of school. There are too many demands considering the amount of time that we have, especially since there is so much expected of us in terms of technical and artistic training. It is a first step and the students must go on learning and gaining experience while pursuing whatever professional path they wish to pursue.
- > Professional integration is an issue involved in training. No solution to this issue can be found without the close collaboration of professionals.
- > There is a multitude of job markets, ranging from entertainment agencies to distribution networks for the performing arts. In France there is a tendency to consider only one path.
- > The trap of creating a company is to be avoided.
- > It is difficult to integrate artists/interns into companies, even if the desire to do so is present.

"The standardisation of tools seems essential, as is the idea of creating a system for older companies to sponsor young ones to inspire young actors to embark on crazy projects, but also to help them in a concrete way. This kind of sponsoring could be carried out by several companies or artists under different perspectives: hosting the said company as the first part of a circus tent show / offer administrative help to get them started / allow for formal or informal discussion time to talk about issues that artists may have and that are often unique to their world when embarking on a creation." (Company manager, France).

The European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)

This network was founded in 1998 so that the majority of professional European schools, both at the foundational and higher education levels, could get to know each other better and exchange their experiences in both pedagogy and artistic integration. The network has allowed hundreds of bilateral and multilateral exchanges of students, professors and administrators to take place.

FEDEC has given itself the goal of improving the quality of circus education by organizing a professional programme that includes education for children and teenagers as well as for artists and professional instructors. To achieve this, it develops contacts with national institutions and elaborates European projects intended to fund pedagogical and artistic training workshops. It also ensures that security and health regulations are met in all member schools.

The network members work together in exchanging instructors and students, ensuring, for example, the replacement of specialised instructors of a circus discipline in the case of a temporary absence. The FEDEC has developed actions for greater exposure in collaboration with the Circa festival in Auch (France) or La Piste aux Espoirs (Belgium), to present students' work. One of its latest and most successful actions was the creation of educational material (CD-ROM and Manual for Basic Circus Skills) thanks to the support of the European Commission's Leonardo da Vinci programme.

www.fedec.net

- > There are many unanswerable requests coming from young companies/artists for work spaces.
- > Artistic excellence does not solve the problem of distribution. This is a matter of structuring the market, helping companies, promoting management and creating networks.
- > The English example shows that schools have to be more pragmatic and closer to the reality of the profession.
- > These days, students have more choices. They can move throughout Europe and throughout the world.
- > The 'intermittent' status in France makes young graduates less dependant on the social and economic context than graduates in other European countries.

Upon reading the written contributions, we find that professional integration seems to be more of an issue in the French context. Indeed, in the other European countries, the circus is still scarcely recognised and the issues of training, production and distribution

are so important that there is little time to worry about access to the profession.

"Before entering the job market of circus arts, the proper educational mechanisms should be available to future practitioners. However, the situation in Eastern and Western Europe is significantly different, especially if we are speaking about education for contemporary circus creation. The lack of schools or of an educational system in general leaves a wide gap between those two potentials (East and West). The situation in more developed countries (in circus terms) favours a sort of elitism, with schools that even prepare the students for preparatory schools. The great competition obviously stimulates the best ones, even if the preparation for enrolling into such schools doesn't guarantee your successful step forward in education, then the potential applicants from Eastern European countries (who did not have either preparation, or the financial capability to prepare abroad) have incomparable disadvantages. The professionalism of an artistic scene is not measured just by the means of

The Circus Space

The Circus Space is devoted to enhancing, protecting and advancing the circus art form and has been enabling the creation of innovative circus for nearly two decades. 14% of their turnover comes in the form of regular grants for running costs from the Arts Council of England (ACE) and another 30% comes from the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) for the Degree Programme.

The Circus space is not solely a "school" but also a circus charity that operates circus activities for a range of populations. Their diverse range of work includes the UK's only BA (Hons) degree level education in Circus Arts, a structured progressive training programme for under 18's and professional development opportunities for aspiring and established performers. Adults and young people can take part in a range of recreational classes and they provide highly regarded workshops, away days and teambuilding events for the corporate community.

There are over 1,000 people per week who use Circus Space on a regular basis.

Along with the profession-related modules, there is also complementary content and other actions put into place to help students gain a better link with the profession. Possible employers are invited to all performances that the students give in the 2nd and 3rd Years, allowing them to see the students in a variety of performance contexts.

Students also share practise time and space with professional performers in the building. This creates a network of contacts and eases the transition into the real world.

www.thecircusspace.co.uk

circus practicing as a way of funding one's own basic needs, but also by possibilities to achieve professional recognition from the wider community. It is essential to encourage the opening of new low and high level schools in countries without an educational system and also to increase the awareness of education as a necessity for any future improvement in the circus field in these countries, and consequently in accepting European diversity." (Director, Croatia)

The European disparities that have been mentioned underline the lack of training courses (initiating or professional) in Europe apart from the large schools of Western Europe (Chalons-en-Champagne, Brussels and London) where only France has a specialised structure. There is a lack of instructors in the technical and artistic domains as well as in the ancillary domains such as performance technique, directing, scenography and circus show security.

"I personally don't feel equipped to find my way around in the life of a professional artist, and that is after two years in a school. I now have to learn a whole new side of my profession, which at times can be difficult and very frustrating. Questions like: 'How do I establish a network?', 'What about taxes?' etc." (Artist, Denmark), "The integration of young artists in the professional world is closely relative to the knowledge that they have of the milieu, the professional experience they already have and how well they are guided and supported upon entering the 'market'. Generally speaking, we have noticed that, in terms of technical and/or artistic knowledge, these artists are not well prepared to enter the job market. They usually concentrate on artistic creation, neglecting aspects of management, legislation, networking and public relations." (Venue Director, Belgium)

There is also a recognition problem regarding the status of circus arts education in Europe.

"In Germany we need teachers in youth circuses to be qualified for their work. We need preparatory schools. We need another policy in the existing circus schools." (Artist, Germany), "The status and qualification of different circus schools in Europe is not always clear." (Festival Director, Finland)

One contribution also mentions the aesthetic divide between the East and West. Eastern countries are still heavily influenced by the Soviet model of training and professional integration for artists, which is far removed from the current field of circus creation.

"In most Eastern European countries there is only a traditional circus school (if there is such a thing at all). Hungary is in a lucky position to have it's first (!) Alternative Circus School where education is focused on contemporary circus and the performing arts. After finishing the 2-year training course it's very difficult to find a job in the sector due to its marginalized position, lack of funds and lack of companies and audience. There are also difficulties in studying abroad due to the lack of funds, language barriers and lack of information." (Producer, Hungary)

Inversely, one contributor regrets the small amount of financial aid available for traditional circus artists compared to the grants allotted for new circus artists.

Mobility has been hindered in Europe due to all of its disparities, especially in dealing with the different levels of training and structuring within curricula, barriers of language and knowledge of the circus world and the identification of networks in each country as well as at the European level.

Many contributions insist on the daunting border that exists between training and the profession. One is often ignorant of the other and that ignorance is often accentuated by goals that are sometimes competitive, especially with regard to production and distribution.

*"It is important for structured professional schools to be associated with cultural establishments that allow them to better appreciate the profession. It is important for everyone to occupy a distinct function instead of wanting to clumsily take responsibility for the totality of the domain."
(Venue Director, France)*

All contributors lament the lack of training courses in schools or tools that allow students to better understand the job market. Companies take in few young artists. Producers consider that students are not sufficiently prepared to lead a project or to be an entrepreneur. They are scarcely aware of the realities of the profession, wherein there are always certain financial risks and failures to overcome. There is a growing amount of training courses available in Europe, while there is a decrease in funding for production and distribution. This is why we find an enormous level of frustration throughout, which often results in a limited performance life for shows.

While they recognise that the work involved with public relations and sales is difficult and frustrating, artists deplore programmers' lack of curiosity and their refusal to take risks. They therefore look to schools, which are often left with a responsibility for which they are not prepared, that of ensuring professional integration.

One contributor remarks that integration depends on knowledge of the sector, professional experience and the way in which one is guided and supported. One person points out that there are few places where one can ask questions and obtain information.

However, there is a certain number of positive points on professional integration for circus artists in France, and especially for CNAC students, thanks to more structured training and the creation of a network of producers and distributors. Artists in France recognise that professional integration is more difficult in other domains of the performing arts. The profession is relatively easy to access –even if one contribution remarks that the circus centres seem distant and overly institutional– especially with the quick granting of the 'intermittent' status at the end of the training course. This is also amplified by a strong demand for teachers. The situation is not nearly as idyllic for artists who have not come out of CNAC.

Two contributions insist on the ignorance perceived among young artists who are new to the profession regarding the political and social issues of art, as well as the notion of composition, which, whether they face these by choice or by necessity, are far from easy to resolve.

Examples of good practice, success stories or innovative programmes:

'Model' schools

- > The school initiated by Anna Teresa de Keersmacker (Belgium) or the training course of Myriam Gourfink in Royaumont (France)
- > CNAC or the Lyon circus school, which, like other professional circus schools in France, trains students for professional life through an increased awareness of networks and mechanisms, meetings with artists/former students, cultural organisations, events on the administration and the world of the circus.
- > The rare university training courses in domains related to the circus arts. These are open to European students and allow for mobility among students and instructors, as seen in Toulouse with Le Mirail.

More ongoing training

- > Training for distribution (in France, Illusion & macadam or Agecif, in partnership with HorsLesMurs)
- > Bureau International de la jeunesse (International Youth Bureau – interdisciplinary workshops for young artists, Belgium).
- > Masterclasses organised as part of the European project Circle Around in Belgium, Hungary and Denmark (co-funded by Culture programme).
- > Training workshops in Catalonia (Spain) to structure different levels of training for artists and technicians with the collaboration of a certain number of local operators.

Initiatives that bring together professionals and young teams

- > European projects that are co-funded by the Interreg or Leonardo de Vinci programmes, including the exchange of circus skills or the mobility of circus school students (Circ-Que-O, EPE –Échanges pédagogiques européens) and existing European platforms for the street arts (In Situ).
- > Jonglierkatakomben in Berlin (Germany) as an alternative practice space.
- > The network of distributors C1 métier (France).
- > The biennial operation Jeunes Talents Cirque (France).
- > Gardens in Marseille (France), an organisation that consults and helps to implement projects. It is a sort of cooperative wherein each member can maintain his or her own identity.
- > The network of circus centres in France is an inadequate response, but it does take into account the needs of young artists and companies –for example, the two-year hosting of a company at La Cascade in Bourg-Saint-Andéol.

Furthermore, there are national measures such as in Belgium, where an employer can benefit from a reduction of social charges for a year in order to facilitate the integration of students who have completed their professional training.

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

All agree that certain essential preliminary conditions must be met before we can seriously work towards a better educational system for the circus arts and better integration for students into the professional world. For example, there must be greater recognition for the cultural and artistic value of the circus, the indispensable support needed in terms of public policy regarding this form of the performing arts, the overall need to rethink the specialisation as a whole (from amateur practices to the retraining of professional artists) and therefore give to operators the opportunity to develop the field.

The proposals point out the lack of communication or the poor circulation of information within the existing mechanisms (informal and formal training, mobility grants, life-long learning, detailed curriculum directories, job opportunities, etc.).

- > A support system for employment must be put into place.
- > There must be a mutualisation of means for young companies and artists coming out of professional schools.
- > There must be an evaluation of training courses and mechanisms with the goal of adapting them to the job market(s).

Improve training

- > It is essential to clarify training specialisations for circus artists
- > It would be good for schools to host more artists and companies (masterclasses, residencies, etc.) in order to improve practice and diversify the curriculum.
- > Training must be conceived according to an asserted vision, *"The idea is to give students a creative momentum on top of the mastery of technical gestures. Transmission through creation allows for beneficial encounters and mutual autonomy –without fearing that which the 'new circus' has rejected (the idea of an ossified tradition seems obsolete to me)." (Artist, France)*
- > Explore technical subjects, reflect upon the poeticism of the circus and create a specific and open-ended educational programme.
- > Schools should develop 'placement' systems like in other sectors. *"For artists: systematically implement professional integration modules in schools and other training courses so as to grant greater autonomy to students when they leave the school. Allow for more exchange among European training programmes as well." (School Manager, France)*
- > The future technicians, producers and directors should be trained to participate in the circus domain (as they are with theatre, films, television and radio).
- > Artists must be made more aware of administrative realities so as to better understand the work world and to be better equipped to manage their own professional activity.
- > Circus artists that wish to become instructors should be able to follow pedagogy courses and be evaluated.
- > Artists must be more aware of the possibilities open to them and they should be supported in their reorientation and retraining.

Development of networks

- > Improve the quality of professional orientation through increased knowledge of the sector.
- > Bring together organisations from within the sector for regular forums that might create bridges between students and the different levels of the professional sector.

Develop public policies

- > The standardisation of degrees in Europe.
- > Encourage companies to host students or young graduates (financial incentives, specific grants, conventions, "subsidised contracts", etc.).
- > Create structured specialisations from initial studies up to the student's career so that young artists can better set their own course and professionals can better assess the discipline.

Professional integration

- > A kind of sponsor system should be created between established companies and new ones (hosting them as the first part of a show for one year, offering administrative support, holding formal or informal discussions on artistic issues, etc.).
- > Create more showcases and platforms for young artists.
- > Develop more local consulting and support platforms (administrative support, project development, mutualisation of jobs and tools, etc.).
- > Festivals should serve as an opportunity to assess the reality of the profession and to establish oneself as an artist (springboards).
- > Partnerships between professional schools and cultural establishments with shared, non-competitive responsibilities.
- > Partnerships between circus schools and training courses in cultural management to create closer ties between young artists and young administrators.

Mobility

- > Develop European workshops, itinerant seminars from one school to another in Europe.
- > European circus schools could open 'branches' in countries that do not have schools so as to better structure its training system and allow for the circulation of instructors and students.
- > Develop exchanges between circus instructors/teachers from several countries so as to better understand each other's practices and pedagogy and to increase the level of instruction.
- > Develop gatherings of students and artists from different artistic disciplines.
- > Facilitate access to existing mobility grants.

The workshop was moderated by Jan Rok Achard, a development consultant for the performing arts since 1999, particularly in the domain of the circus arts. He has been Stage and Tour Director at the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Director of Production and Director of Programme development at the École Professionnelle de Théâtre of the Lionel-Groulx school, co-founder of the World Federation of Circus Schools and the General Director of the École Nationale du Cirque from 1985 to 1998. Jan Rok Achard is also a founding member of TOHU, a space for training, creation, residencies and distribution in the circus arts in Montreal (Canada).

2. Technical Regulations for Tents

Summary proposed by **Verena Cornwall**

Verena Cornwall has worked as a consultant to traditional and contemporary circus proprietors, festivals and artists for over twenty years, in the UK and beyond.

Projects have included: touring circus school with an intensive professional level training programme (lead consultant); national contemporary circus showcase and conference (executive producer); festivals (programmer for circus and street arts); circus and street arts performers (agent); government (creation of policy for circus; headline research); touring companies, tented and outdoor (business management); local government (festival development); regional circus consortium (international advocate.)

Verena has for nine years chaired the UK Circus Arts Forum (national organisation for contemporary circus) which has assisted the UK Government to formulate a Circus policy. In addition she is an Honorary Member on the Association of Circus Proprietors of Great Britain (traditional circus.) In 2008 she participated as a selection committee member for Jeune Talent Cirque Europe and has previously assessed work for artistic merit for a variety of organisations. On behalf of the Republic of Ireland, Verena is a Circostrada country representative.

Working with a circus tent has become an increasingly difficult artistic choice. Aside from the financial factors, contemporary creation is widely influenced by regulatory constraints involved in hosting and touring a circus tent within European countries: hosting an audience, certification, standardisation of material, cost of administrative processes, European norms and local laws ... The workshop asked Ute Classen and Arie Oudines to address these issues.

Ute Classen is the founder and Director of Ute Classen Kulturmanagement, an independent management firm for the performing arts. The firm focuses mainly on the development, production and distribution of original artistic projects, with a specific interest in the street theatre and contemporary circus.

After studying journalism and the social sciences, Ute Classen began her professional life working in public relations and the promotion of cultural and theatrical projects within Berlin's independent arts scene. She has also worked as a producer and programmer, particularly with the Tollwood Festival Munich.

Ute Classen is an active member of different international networks, such as Circostrada or Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe, and is a founding member of the German federal association for the street theatre.

Arie Oudines has been Director of the European Circus Association since 2006. He began his career as a teacher and vice principal at a boarding school. He is a fan of the circus, and became a board member of the Dutch Circus Fans Association and served as secretary of the Dutch Circus Proprietors Association (VNCO) until October 2003. He then joined the European Circus Association as secretary before becoming its Director.

The exchange with workshop participants allowed for a discussion of several regulatory concerns as well as difficulties encountered during circus tours with tents. It also allowed us to gather individual accounts and important proposal ideas.

"In Germany, regulations are different from region to region. A technical document in German is needed so you have to translate all of the documentation if you are foreign." (Producer, Germany)

"Regulations for circus can be overly strict." (Director, Netherlands)

"Programmers know that they need to pay – a technical contract should underpin this. Technical translations of documents are a real problem and can be costly. Also information can be lost in translation. One promoter in the UK can translate a 'Fiche Technique' into French and Spanish then the company can use this documentation again. This is one way that promoters can help companies." (Promoter, UK)

"Not all tent manufacturers know of the EU regulations. Standards are produced by organisations that have benefits for them. In Europe there is a standards group in Belgium. All the work is paid for by the manufacturers. ECA discovered that there is a working group looking at standardisation for tent fabric."

"We have toured to several countries – Spain, Germany etc. The only country we had to make changes in was Germany, in Munich. With the seating, for example, we needed to reinforce the structure with wood. And of course depending on the number in the audience, the rules change. The best people to help are those hosting the event." (Circus Company, France)

"We would like to expand within Europe. Should we start with technical issues? I have a list of federal legislation in each one but no one wants to waste time. How do we know in advance?" (Circus Company, France)

Experiences and difficulties encountered in Europe:

It is interesting to note from the contributions received in advance and throughout the session that many people who are involved in the creation or touring of contemporary circus work do not see the use of tents as integral to presentation of performances. Of all of the sections within the Fresh Circus questionnaire, the answers provided here were across the board far fewer than for other issues. Indeed several contributors made the comment that they do not presently have plans to use tents.

Scale of Work

This can be attributed in part to the scale of many contemporary circus shows. Students leaving circus schools with finished work often produce performances that contain only two or three artists, for which the hire or purchase of a tent to show this work would not be financially viable. Similarly work toured by emerging or established companies is predominantly of a smaller scale in nature, which means that companies are able to perform this within a variety of indoor contexts, and in a number of cases on the streets

also, negating the need to utilise a tented structure. Most contemporary circus companies aim to produce work that can tour and many are working in both the subsidised (in venues or festivals) and unsubsidised (for commercial clients) environments. Portability of work therefore, often across Europe, is key to survival. It is far easier for a company to produce work that can be set up in a short period of time, and with minimal props, then it is to undertake a tented tour. Even major contemporary circus companies, such as Cirkus Cirkör from Sweden and No Fit State Circus from Wales, make large scale work that is presented indoors as well as in tents, to ensure that the product is available to as wide a market as possible, at an affordable price.

"We have no mobile structures, but I know the difficulties under the big companies to locate in the Lyon region. Bureaucratic procedures to accommodate a tent are drastic and may discourage many." (Circus School Director, France)

"In Greece and some other countries of Europe it is more difficult to have a tent in a festival and the authorities are not willing to help a circus show. To have permission for an area to build the tent is not so easy and in most of the spaces you have to pay a big rent, the winds some times are strong and make the organisers not take the security risk of a Circus tent." (Artist, Greece)

"Which way around do you start when making work? Leading with artistic notions, or leading with technical restrictions. Touring across Europe is increasingly difficult as regulations, for anything from fire exit sizes to seating, vary from location to location." (Circus Proprietor, France)

Cost of Touring

There are major advantages to touring in a tented format, from the perspective of being able to bring the creative product directly to audiences by physically placing the tent within a specific location into the heart of a community, and from the technical position of the performers who by touring in a tent are able to control the environment within which they work far more than when visiting a new venue for each show.

However the costs of physically providing a tented venue at each location are high. Alongside the outlay required in respect of tent hire or purchase of a suitable tented structure (which needs to be water tight, certificated etc.) there are the additional costs of providing, including:

- > Hiring or purchasing generators to power the show and living wagons, plus fuel to run these;
- > Provision for water on the site;
- > Toilets;
- > A staffed box office;
- > Seating;
- > Living accommodation and catering for artists and crew;
- > A fee for the hire of a ground or site, and often a deposit in case of damage;
- > Security;
- > Vehicles and fuel for vehicles to move the show from location to location.

This is in addition to the costs of creating the show (artistic and technical) and paying for the crew, artist and management wages, and elements such as marketing.

"In Hungary there aren't any Contemporary Circus groups who would own a circus tent. It's difficult to invite shows and companies with their own tents to Hungary because of the large costs of transportation and of the shows themselves. Lack of space in festivals, lack of audience otherwise" (Circus Director, Hungary)

"To go and perform in Italy, you have traveling difficulties with trucks carrying tents (too old for the Mont Blanc tunnel) so the trip has to cross the Alps. The commission in Italy is more severe than in France, so the company has to adapt" (Head of Production, Circus Company, France)
"One of the biggest obstacles (to touring) is language – the official requires the documentation to be in his or her language. This can cost several thousand euros. Promoters can assist by working with companies to create documentation in the language of the country, then sharing this with other promoters." (Promoter, UK)

European Circus Association (ECA)

The classical circus is under growing pressure from numerous legal and regulatory constraints, competition with television, movies, theme parks, and other forms of entertainment as well as the unscrupulous tactics of some activists. In 2002, ten large European circuses founded the ECA with the certitude that collective and long-term action was necessary in order to guarantee the future of the classical circus. Through its activities, the ECA ensures that the circus, including performances with animals, can continue to enchant, educate and entertain children of all ages.

The ECA's work plan until 2010 focuses on five main principles:

- > Promote the circus so that it is better recognised by the Member States as a central cultural element;
- > Work towards increased circulation for artists through the simplification of visa and work permit procedures;
- > Work for greater mobility for circuses through the standardisation of technical regulations;
- > Implement higher standards regarding performance with animals;
- > Ensure quality education for circus children and young artists.

The network has a consistently growing number of members, and now consists of 85 circuses, festivals and animal training companies from 20 different countries. The ECA's permanent office maintains an ongoing working relationship with the European Commission's services and allows for a better understanding of the interests and issues involved. It is able to offer consulting services regarding European and national legislation, thus facilitating the implementation of classical circuses. Thanks to these efforts, in 2005 the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for an increased amount of support for the circus as part of European Culture.

www.europeancircus.info

Availability of Sites / Grounds

There are two main methodologies that those touring in a tented format adopt depending on how the work is promoted. Either the company is contracted directly by a festival or venue, which will typically provide a site for the tent to be erected, or the company undertakes to 'self promote', which involves the hire of a site. For those seeking sites, finding a 'suitable' site has year on year become more difficult. Such a site would require a number of factors to be in place, not least a durable covering (hard-standing or well-drained grass area), water and preferably power, drainage, proximity to a main road (to ensure audiences are aware that the show is 'in town') and car parking.

The provision of sites varies hugely across Europe. In some main cities purpose-built circus 'stands' will be created using public money and will have a straight forward booking process. However in many countries, with the development of land with a commercial value, sites that have been used for years by traditional circuses, which would also therefore be available to contemporary shows, have been sold. In fact there are examples of circuses being offered sites where the developers have been turned down for planning permission, purely on the basis that the council would then award planning permission on appeal as they would rather have the land used for building than for hosting of a circus.

Where grounds do exist for hire, these are either controlled by local government structures, for either a set hire fee or through a tendering process, or hired directly from local landowners. In some countries, the ground requires a license to enable performances to take place. This can take time and money to obtain, adding to the touring burden.

"Accessible spaces in the capital are very difficult to obtain. The municipalities are hesitant to provide permits for the installation of a circus and spaces are becoming smaller." (Programmer, Belgium)

"In highly growing urbanistic developments, which are eating meadows and building shopping or business centres, it is possible that in the future circus tents will be thrown to the edges of the cities and to the margin of cultural life." (Festival Director, Croatia)

"Self promotion – can be good to break up a journey but you need to know the regulations for the country in advance and be able to access a site" (Circus Director, Belgium)

Regulation

The regulations surrounding Health & Safety and certification (of say, the fabric of the tent) vary widely across Europe, providing conflicting requirements in countries. In some locations, the regulations provided through Europe differ from those identified by federal governments, such as within Germany (for instance.) This offers a complexity of 'architecture of law' (between European v/s national, National v/s federal, Standards and agreements.) The European Standard was released in 2005 (CEN/EN/ 3782) and this includes the membrane of the tents, but there is little knowledge of this on a country level and often national norms, of a more detailed level or with higher constraints, still apply. This serves to make the touring of contemporary circus in a tented structure highly complex to achieve.

"The rules regarding the health of employees and public safety are not standardised with regard to the ERP and CTS." (Director, France)

"Fear of municipalities when they announced a tent because they see immediately the side itinerant travellers, and are afraid there will be an overflow. They are also large structures with many caravans for each show" (Circus Manager, France)

Les Rencontres

The Les Rencontres association was created by and for elected officials working in the domains of culture and education within the different local authorities of the European Union and beyond. The Association is a platform for cooperation, discussion and activity in the sector of cultural policy for cities, departments, regions and provinces.

It encourages the implementation of real cultural action and thus participates in the construction of cultural Europe. The association works in direct collaboration with experts, scholars, cultural networks and associations of elected officials and artists, truly engaging in a process of deep research.

The Association pursues its goal of taking part in the construction of a Europe of Culture on the local level and strengthening the notion of European citizenship. The group focuses its work along three lines:

- > Reinforcing local cultural policies and affirming the role of the cultural elected official within his or her assembly;
- > Creating a lobbying group to work at the level of the national Culture Ministries, which do not sufficiently take into account the important role of local policies –including with regards to budgetary matters;
- > Demonstrating that Culture and Europe must be combined with cities and regions.

The network is the only one of its kind in Europe and brings together 160 local authorities from within Larger Europe. Its mission is both to develop relationships within the European continent and to encourage contacts and cooperation between local authorities outside of Europe, in the Mediterranean region, for example, or on the American continent. Moreover, the network hopes to bring to light the important role of local authorities in the development of cultural industries. It also hopes to promote cultural policies within different sectors, such as, for example, within artistic education and the relationships between culture and education, urban planning, heritage and the defence of artists' rights.

www.lesrencontres.org

"We have toured to several countries –Spain, Germany etc. The only country we had to make changes in was in Germany, in Munich. The seating for example, we needed to strengthen the structure with wood. And of course depending on the number in the audience, the rules change. The best people to help are those hosting the event." (Circus Director, France)

Examples of good practice, success stories or innovative programmes:

Over and above the physical elements required to undertake tented touring come the human skills that are necessary to tour safely. It is often the case that those leaving circus schools have difficulty making the leap between having the technical assistance provided through the schools whilst there, and the professional world which requires them to be self-reliant. Integrating programmes of study that include making and performing work within a tented structure, as part of a set course would greatly assist in a smoother transition. There are a number of schools, which have started to take this approach.

Practical solutions include

- > For touring companies to hire a local country specific tour manager who understands the technical issues.
- > Or touring a show with a certificated tent hired from the country that the show is being produced in.
- > Phoning foreign companies who have toured to the country before to ask for advice.
- > Asking promoters to work on translating documentation into specific language so that this can be offered to other promoters in the same country.

Sharing of information was also identified as a way of enabling larger projects to reach fruition. The creation of cross-country art form specific networks such as HorsLesMurs, and links to organisations such as the European Circus Association, assist with both lobbying and also comparison of country conditions. Lobbying on a national and European level, with a defined message that has been agreed upon by all parties, offers a clear pathway towards filtering down information on a localised level to those who are in decision-making roles.

"The University rents a tent during the university courses, which can accommodate a permanent artistic production (music, dance, circus, poetry, drama). A year-long technician was assigned for its operation" (University Director, France)

"The existing companies in Germany need networking in Europe and help and experience from abroad" (Company Manager, Germany)

"Info for municipalities to properly equip their town (tent space with power, water, sanitation)" (Company Manager, France)

"The concept of cooperative, or each individual identities, and exchange with other autonomous entities (production office, office design, sound and light) seems appropriate given the diversity of aesthetic. It allows professional sharing and common reflection, without consistency or hierarchy." (Producer, France)

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

This is one of the major shared issues with classical tented shows. The European Circus Association (ECA—the advocacy agency for classical circus) has put much work into the EU level lobbying, resulting in an EU mandate adopted in October 2005 for circus to be recognised as culture in Member States. It was felt there would be strength to be gained by HorsLesMurs working with the ECA on the next steps to be taken. This would offer an opportunity for lobbying on the European and national level for workable regulations for tented shows.

Through responses to the questionnaires and the positive sharing of

practical localised solutions and strategic initiatives voiced through the Fresh Circus session, a range of practical initiatives were outlined:

- > 'Droit de cité pour le cirque': There is a document in existence within France, which circuses and local authorities sign up to. It is recommended that this be translated and adjusted to become a document that is relevant to be presented to all cities and circus companies using tents in Europe;
- > Create a strategy in partnership with ECA to implement and regulate this;
- > Formulate a handbook and/or put this on a website which details regulations for the tented shows in each country and allow it to be updated via a web moderator;
- > Include tent manufactures in discussions and any working groups.

"Establishment of a European regulation; equivalency diplomas and functions from one country to another (governor general) + skills and acquire qualifications to fill these positions" (Cultural Director, Belgium)
"A charter should be signed by municipalities, but still too little common accession. There should be a European equivalent" (Circus School Director, France)

The workshop was moderated by Gentiane Guillot, who is in charge of consulting and training at HorsLesMurs, the French national resource centre for the circus and street arts. She graduated from EDHEC in 1994 and joined the company Lexmark International, where she became a project head and was in charge of European financial and computing projects. In 2003 she began her retraining for the performing arts: she managed the Aurachrome Dauphine company until 2005, while working towards her DESS degree in Cultural Management at Paris Dauphine. A few missions later, Gentiane Guillot joined HorsLesMurs and worked for the editing and publication of the "Guide des bons usages pour l'organisation d'un événement artistique dans l'espace public" (How to Organise an Artistic Event in the Public Space), as part of Temps des arts de la rue.

3. The Creativity and Innovation of the contemporary circus

Summary proposed by **Yohann Floch**

Yohann Floch is Head of International Relations at Hors-LesMurs and has coordinated several European studies, including *Street Artists in Europe* for the European Parliament. He is also the coordinator for Circostrada Network, a European platform for information, research and professional exchange within the circus and street arts (based in France). He co-presides over the 'Creativity and Creation' work group of the structured discussion platform Access to Culture with the European Commission. He collaborates with several magazines, including *Obscena* (Portugal) and *Arributos* (Spain). He is an expert for the Déclics Jeunes grants of the Fondation de France and was Founder and President of TEAM Network (Transdisciplinary European Art Magazines Network).

The workshop begins with two interventions. The first one is by a Danish programmer who is involved in the search for new forms of artistic support for a sector that is still seen as an emerging one in her country. The second intervention is by a Swedish artistic director at the head of a major circus company.

Katrien Verwilt is the Co-Director and Circus Arts Programmer for Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT), an organisation that has been involved for 25 years in presenting contemporary creations from abroad on the Danish stage. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Romance Philology and obtained a degree in Theatre Science at the Universities of Leuven (Belgium) and Bologna (Italy). She then studied with the Chaos Pilots in Aarhus, Denmark. From there she was chosen to join the bureau of Copenhagen 96, Cultural Capital as the International Secretary. She has been working with Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT) since 1998.

KIT is involved in the organisation of workshops that inform circus artists of different techniques and artistic practices, but also of artists from other sectors who would like to learn more about circus practices. The goal of these workshops is intersection: the intersection of disciplines; the intersection of individuals of varying backgrounds and nationalities; the intersection of aesthetics and creative universes.

The workshops are there to fill the current need for greater access to circus training as well as to 'nourish' artists. KIT therefore works to develop a high level of quality in a creative contemporary circus that can make itself a part of the European artistic landscape. Mobility of artists and access to artworks constitute two essential elements.

Katrien Verwilt is a participant of the New Nordic Circus platform, which brings together six partners: Cirkus Cirkör Lab and Subto-

pia in Sweden, Sirkunst N in Norway and the Finnish Information Centre for the Circus and the Cirko Festival in Finland. Their first operation, Juggling the Arts, is based on providing support to four artistic projects, from their composition to their public performance. Juggling the Arts was inspired by the French operation Jeunes Talents Cirque, and allows for artistic mentoring and a period of residency in Stockholm; the artists chosen for this first edition are Rudi Jensen (Norway) with the project *Goldfish is meant for dying*, Mille Lundt (Denmark) with the project *Somewhere/Nowhere*, Niclas Stureberg (Sweden) with the project *Human Timing*, Petri Tuominen and Rauli Kosonen (Finland).

Katrien Verwilt is also involved in the cooperative project Circle Around, supported by the European Commission's Culture Programme. A part of the activities between Denmark, France, Belgium and Hungary is dedicated to holding thematic Master Classes that allow for the exchange of skills, informal training, access to different aesthetics and cultural diversity. The first workshops were dedicated to aerial dance (with Éric Locomte) and the handling of objects (with Jani Nuutinen), etc.

Tilde Björfors is the Founder and Artistic Director of Cirkus Cirkör. She also teaches contemporary circus classes at Danshögskolan (The University College of Dance) in Stockholm. She started out as an actress at the Orion Theatre in Stockholm and then arrived in Paris to study the Beijing Opera. Having made the acquaintance of numerous circus artists, she discovered the contemporary circus and decided to import this new artistic form to Sweden by creating the Cirkus Cirkör company. Cirkus Cirkör developed very quickly and now has many employees, hosts 50 secondary school students and gives classes to more than 10,000 children each year. The company is partners with the New Nordic Circus Network platform.

Tilde Björfors reminds everyone that each artistic career is built upon the notion of commitment and respect for something larger than oneself. After having maintained close ties with other disciplines and having worked on inter-disciplinarity, she believes one should not be 'ashamed' to consider oneself a circus artist. She therefore discourages circus artists from trying to find legitimacy through other genres and encourages them to stand behind their choice of lifestyle and artistic techniques. When the sector does gain its proper recognition, it will in part be thanks to its actors' desire to stand by it.

Cirkus Cirkör is an historical circus arts company in Northern Europe. With its teams it has opened an aesthetic path, developing the sector from the ground up (through productions, training and increasing awareness, etc.) and inspiring other artists to start themselves out in the sector.

Her recent research work, especially the work carried out in rehearsal for her new show *Inside Out*, reminded her just how much the circus experiments with stage composition: to create a certain dramaturgy and write a circus show is also to allow the artists in the ring or on stage to participate in the creative work. There is not one but many authors. The time required for rehearsing and fleshing out the show is therefore longer. To produce quality work one needs to have enough time to create a show. This is an essential period of time and it is sometimes difficult to acquire the right conditions to bring one's aesthetic research to fruition.

Tilde Björfors does not want to debate the distinctions between the artist-creator and the artist-performer, but defines her artistic intervention as that of a researcher/author/circus director.

The workshop participants particularly emphasised the need for time to develop one's ideas and performance projects. The artists and cultural operators adamantly discussed the poor working conditions in Europe, stating that they have a strong influence on their ability to create and innovate.

Several French operators, including the 'Pôles Cirque' mentioned the large number of residency applications they receive each week and their inability to accept most of them. The material and financial support are not adequate for the number of emerging projects taking place each year within their territory. They all attest to the shortage of locations dedicated to the circus in Europe. These locations would provide more concrete solutions for artists in their individual or collective growth.

Experiences and difficulties encountered in Europe:

On the many aesthetic forms within today's circus

- > Bringing together music, dance, the theatre and new technologies, the circus arts have established themselves as one of the most inventive disciplines within the European cultural world. New forms are constantly appearing, remaining in perpetual evolution. *"Contemporary circus is the ultimate interdisciplinary art form bringing theatre, music, circus arts, and multimedia together both to communicate and to entertain. Its economical function is also very important as it can bring income to poorer countries through creativity (refreshing existing art forms) and also be part of a healthy creative industry in rich countries."* (Artist, Hungary)
- > Certain circus forms are disappearing, especially the 'large formats' that require a large cast. Economic and logistic restraints have done away with these 'big' shows: loss of the tradition, stunted aesthetic growth, etc.
- > The contemporary circus is a new phenomenon and a young sector in many countries. This sector is growing rapidly. At the same time, the large number of current circus forms blurs the definition of the discipline. *"The problem that I am faced with is that my work does not fit into a single category."* (Artist, France)
- > Certain schools only train for the 'cabaret', for the traditional circus, or for a circus that does not always have much potential for artistic innovation.
- > It is hard to take note of what is exclusively set aside for the circus arts. Many companies offer mixed forms. Some companies perform for the street, some indoors, and other in a circus tent.
- > Artists are afraid of being 'formatted', or to have their work standardised (show length, dramaturgy, inter-disciplinarity, etc.).
- > Some do not oppose the traditional circus and the contemporary circus and underline a common heritage and common values.

"The creativity of the contemporary circus is tremendous. However, it should be viewed as an alternative choice, not as the ONLY choice which merits support. There is still a high proportion of contemporary circus which is so avant-garde as to have no appeal whatsoever to the vast majority of potential audiences. It's good to experiment; but ultimately, projects should be encouraged which have a chance of acceptance and long-term viability, rather than simply being clever experiments." (Independent consultant and artist, United Kingdom)

Certain artists, however, are in favour of a distortion and transgression of codes.

On the effects of production conditions

- > Due to the lack of funding and in order to simply survive, artists are inclined to present shows that are 'popular' and can be distributed as widely as possible. Very few distributors are willing to take risks. On a 'voluntary' basis, companies produce shows that are efficient, inexpensive and low-maintenance ...
- > The economic outlooks in creating a show are different in Europe. *"The European countries are not equal in their ability to produce shows with a contemporary aesthetic, as broad as that domain may be. Moreover, it is difficult to host proposals coming from certain countries because, from an artistic standpoint, they are so far off from what we hope to present to our audiences. Inversely, that is also what makes the exchanges so interesting seeing as creativity and innovation are cultural phenomena."* (Programmer, Belgium)
- > Poor conditions for creative residencies or rehearsals. *"There is a bleak shortage in all countries of work places that are adapted for the circus arts. There is also a shortage of funding to cover the cost of these artists' residencies (food, housing, transportation)."* (Programmer, Belgium)

On the effects of the distribution of contemporary aesthetics

- > What are the shows offered as part of support programmes for cultural exportation (CulturesFrance, British Council, etc.)? Which aesthetics are 'supported' and which are not?
- > Other European countries are more open to and curious about inter-disciplinary forms than France is. France has very set ideas on what the aesthetic of today's new circus MUST be. Aren't these 'prejudices' now spreading throughout Europe? *"The main difficulty lies in the way that professionals perceive these forms, which THEY consider too avant-garde. (...) This question is linked to distribution, as well as to the general apprehension of the notion of creativity and innovation in the circus. The idea is to avoid pigeonholing the circus within a populist category by ascribing it with social values."* (Artist, France)
- > The presence of text remains a barrier to the circulation of shows within Europe. How does one integrate the translation of shows?
- > The high cost of specified technical material and its transportation within Europe. *"Circus artists travel the most of all artists. They are also the most open to other arts. They feel "at home" at the intersection of these arts. The main obstacles are mostly found in the matter of technical feasibility."* (Programmer, Belgium)
- > Distribution within Europe, mainly with festivals, forces artists to create faster and faster so as to have a chance of being programmed. Rehearsal time is being shortened and it shows in the levels of creativity and innovation.

On overall work conditions

- > The limited mobility of cultural operators (programmers): the difficulty of discovering artists, helping/programming them.
- > The limited amount of spaces for practice and rehearsal: the circus requires regular practice time outside of rehearsals and productions. The limited availability of spaces that are not used year round.
- > Artists in some countries find it very difficult to create new shows due to their unstable financial situation.
"Regarding Germany, contemporary circus doesn't exist. There are a few separated people (often trained in schools in Belgium or France) who try to find their way." (Artist, Germany):

On the hosting of contemporary artworks

- > The audience must get to know this inter-disciplinary sector in order to appreciate it better. The contemporary circus does not always look like circus work. It does not even always look like contemporary circus.
"There are different kinds of new circus shows, but the problem is that too many different arts interact within the domain. This sometimes creates anarchical shows, without any points of reference. They are hotch-potches that are placed under the category of "contemporary circus." (Company Administrator, France)
- > The mediation between the contemporary circus work and the audience is necessary so as to prove the richness of the sector and its many doorways into different sectors.
- > The presentation of projects and different phases of the work to professionals is necessary so as to better explain and develop a project: the abundance of new compositions is not always expected or understood by cultural operators.
- > The circus is an open form of exchange, of learning and of diversity both at the moment of creation and in the show that is performed (relationship with the audience, messages communicated, etc.).
"By its interdisciplinary quality contemporary circus creates a new language which reaches a wider audience and which enables it to carry a deeper message apart from the aesthetic values." (Artist, Hungary)

On the individual growth of the circus artist-creator

- > There is a difference in artistic maturity between the countries of the Union.
"There is a large difference between the Eastern and Western countries. These countries have been emphasising technical performance training for a very long time. Many countries are 15 years behind in comparison with the French productions. It is therefore difficult to present productions coming from these countries." (Programmer, Belgium)
- > Artists, either by preference or necessity, would like to write their own artistic project, but do they have the right tools and skills to do this.
"Circus is for sure more open to the influence of other artistic disciplines, mixing them and using all necessary means for passing on the artistic message. But many times I have encountered "inter-disciplinarity" as camouflage for not fighting for the integrity of the circus arts." (Programmer, Croatia)
- > The difficulty of fitting into a 'category' conceived by the administration/institutions while requesting support (financial, hosting of a residency, partnership, programming, etc.).
"A kind of formatting that comes from I don't know where imposes parameters on us in the presentation of files, the implementation of projects and the creative rehearsal time scheduled years in advance (how can we plan so much...), the need for production details before the artistic maturation of a project." (Company Manager, France)

- > Artists seem to favour informal self-managed training so as to find solutions to the problems they face, and they do not hesitate to ask for advice or assistance (from other artists, representative organisations, information centres, etc.).
- > The distinction between Art and Culture is not obvious to all: young companies are less and less aware of Art's political and social role.
"Creativity and innovation are highly valued in the contemporary circus, but the actual implementation of these ambitions are still shaky. I find a continuation of obsolete references (the recognition of academic figures, the principal of spectacular virtuosity...), that does not seem to help the originality and quality of the art of the circus." (Artist, France)

Examples of good practice, success stories or innovative programmes:

- > Intermittence: the French system of unemployment benefits that allow artists to continue receiving a salary when they are out of work.
- > The Interreg project between Prato (France) and La Maison de la Culture in Tournai (Belgium): distributing shows and increasing public awareness.
- > The cooperative project Circle Around, bringing together Les Migrateurs (France), Trafó (Hungary), KIT (Denmark) and Les Halles de Schaerbeek (Belgium), a project supported by the European Commission's Culture Programme: distribution of shows, Master Classes in several countries with artists of different nationalities.
- > The Interreg project Circ-Que-O!, which brings together eight cultural operators from the Pyrenees-Mediterranean region of Europe, spread out to Aragon, Catalonia and the Midi-Pyrénées: Animahu in Huesca, the association of jugglers, Saragosse, the city of Jaca, the Association of Circus Professionals of Catalonia, the Rogelio Rivel School in Barcelona, La Grainerie in Balma, the Lido School in Toulouse and the Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail.
- > The Pla Integral del Circ, by the Generalitat of Catalonia, which aims to: promote production and creation, create work-spaces, structure training, create distribution circuits, work for the intellectual and institutional recognition of the circus and define policy (specific funds and legal framework)
- > The International Youth Bureau, which organises inter-disciplinary workshops for young artists (Belgium)
- > The biennial support programme Jeunes Talents Cirque (France).
- > Certain 'Pôles Cirque' (France) that support commissions for artists or directors who do not usually create shows for circus tents so as to broaden the creative field and support circus tent creations.
- > Certain production houses (France) have adopted the principle of associated artists, which allows circus artists to enjoy specific hosting and rehearsal conditions. Some lament that only a handful of renowned artists are associated and would like to make these partnerships more widespread.
- > Work spaces that favour exchange between artistic teams of different countries, workshops and directors.
- > Some 'exemplary' artists who have long worked on performance creations and whose experimental approaches were mentioned (especially Johann Guillerm).
- > The French experiences of certain choreographers, 'Pôles Cirque' (Abbaye Royaumont, the Cent-Quatre, Espace Périphérique):

long residency periods for artists allowing for growth in their work and encounters with other languages.

- > Cooperative European projects in the street arts sector supported by the European Commission's Culture Programme (Meridians, In Situ, etc.).
- > Agencies/Production Houses that help certain artists in their experimental work (Artsadmin, Crying Out Loud, Et Bientôt ..., Gardens, etc.).
- > The collaborations between operators and universities (KIT in Denmark, Cirkus Cirkör in Sweden and La Grainerie in France) and the hosting of artists in places of learning.

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

- > More collaborations between residency centres and more funding so as to host more artists.
- > Acknowledgement and taking into account of the fact that a specific kind of writing is needed for the circus.
- > Informing institutions of the importance of supporting the contemporary circus as well as of the numerous 'investment returns' (regional image, economic repercussions, vitality, etc.)
- > Common access to facilities and skills for creation projects that allow artists to present their work to various structures.
- > Find more efficient mediation tools (with regards to the audience as well as to performing arts professionals).
- > Create 'European workshops for artists' so as to allow for exchanges, encounters, etc.
- > More partnerships between organisations of differing missions (public institutions, schools, festivals, residency centres, etc.)
- > Create 'slow residencies' that take into account the creative process.
- > Create specific support programmes: the purchase and construction of facilities, the development of new techniques, workshops in other sectors, support from experiences artists able to host young artists.
- > Facilitate greater circulation for artworks, particularly those that are less accessible to a wide audience.
- > Promote mobility and networking for artists in order to develop intercultural dialogue as a true source of inspiration.
- > Promote mobility for cultural operators (directors of organisations, programmers, etc.).
- > Develop research and writing on the contemporary circus in different languages so that the thought behind these aesthetics can be distributed and enriched.
- > More funding.
- > Promote exchange between networks.
- > Support programmes for European creation centres mixing artists from different disciplines and countries.

This workshop was moderated by Claude Véron, the president of TEAM network and of Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe. After holding a position at CEMEA (organization for popular education) in the culture and activities department, Claude Véron quickly turned to the management of cultural institutions. He has held Directorial positions at the association Pépinières Européennes pour jeunes artistes (1991-1998), Relais Culture Europe (1998-2002), and the French Institute of Zagreb (September 2002 - November 2003). He is also a co-founder of EFAH (European Forum for the Arts and Heritage), of which he was a member from 1993 to 2002.

3^{bis}. Freedom is ours

Article by **Thomas Hahn**

The creative and prolific contemporary circus draws from all sources, the visual arts, dance, theatre ... with two wonderful tools: its craftsman's hands and its freedom.

Where does the magnificent creative flight of the contemporary circus come from? Of all the families of the performing arts, today's circus artists are the most open-minded and the most innovative. They practice arts that are found at the crossroads, and they are endlessly creating new roadways into the fields of dance, the visual arts, theatre, the digital arts ...

Otherness

The infatuation with otherness goes back a long way. Animals were always part of their creative world. And although this part of the tradition was initially rejected by the new circus, it still has its own importance. The current circus is part of a continuity and not a rupture with its past. No other domain of the performing arts is quite so heterogeneous. No other performing art is quite so linked to the culture of craftsmanship. Installing and breaking down circus tents are only the external aspect. Craftsmanship fully includes bringing people up into the trade. In nearly all forms of acrobatics, juggling and even when working with animals, it all starts with the hands. Even on the high wire they are indispensable. In English, we say *handicraft*, in German it's *Handwerk*. With all of its apparatuses, craftsmanship is at the heart of performance. Its presence is a wonderful entryway toward the visual arts. The circus takes us back to a time when the craftsman was an artist by definition and when creativity was one and indivisible. However, the advent of a different circus was needed for its creative potential to take form; a free circus, unburdened by the latest hierarchical structures. The dismantling of hierarchies is art's driving force. The intrinsically egalitarian and cross-disciplinary nature of the new circus is a wonderful driving force for creativity, but it is still part of an historical context. Even the traditional circus is characterised by the absence of hierarchy, whether it be between the audience members in a circus tent or between men and animals. There is, of course, the element of taming, but at the moment of performance, one could always ask the question: who needs whom?

Full body

The current circus was developed amidst an increasingly intense dialogue with dance. Although in acrobatics everything starts with the hands, the hands by no means attempt to steal all the attention. Since its invention, the circus has never had any kind of hierarchy between the different parts of the body. This is why it has always had an advantage over dance, which continues to struggle against this intrinsic hierarchy by examining its relationship with eroticism. The circus has always fully assumed its eroticism, be it by grace or by sweat. And even if, of all the genres of the performing arts, the circus is the one that is closest to dance, there are still fundamental differences. For starters, the circus represents a nice challenge to a choreographer's creative potential in that it imposes different bodily schema due to the central role of the hands and the relationship with the object or with the other. Today, the circus is following

A laboratory for international research

Katrien Verwilt, the programmer for the Københavns Internationale Teater (KIT), tells of the difficult birth and the first successes of the contemporary circus in the nordic countries.

> As a culture professional, you are witnessing the still recent history of the current circus in Denmark.

It all started with Archaos. Their shows, presented by KIT, inspired the creation of a circus school. It still exists, but it's constantly fighting for institutional recognition. We still do not have any policy aimed at helping artistic creations within the contemporary circus. The traditional circus families are opposed to it and enjoy a certain amount of influence. But artistically, they are opening themselves up to contemporary ideas. An increasing amount of Danish dancers are interested in the circus. The audience is very curious and consistent. Certain directors have noticed this and are beginning to integrate the circus arts into their shows.

> How do you encourage creativity?

KIT's international workshops bring together the circus, dance and movement arts. We created Juggling the Arts, a laboratory where tutors like Jean-Michel Guy mentor young students from the Nordic countries throughout the creative process. Good circus creations take longer than theatrical ones. But the State does not subsidise the research process. Everything is geared towards production. We also have to train technicians for the circus' specific needs. Also, our artists don't start their circus training until the age of eighteen. This involves a period of intensive training, perhaps in Russia. But it takes a long time to become a fully trained artist.

Interview taken by Thomas Hahn.
www.kit.dk

through in its evolution. The body is freeing itself from the object the way that modern dance freed itself from its submissiveness to music. Movement and gesture are encouraged to exist on their own, which opens the circus up to choreographic creation.

Research Units

At the same time, the circus is following the same evolution as contemporary dance in that it is switching over to a landscape dominated by duos and even solos. The reasons for this are clearly economical. However, due to its cross-disciplinary nature, the contemporary circus has been energised by the small size of its companies. The smaller the creative unit, the quicker they come into being, are mobile, and find themselves obliged but also desirous to exchange with other arts. It is too early to say if the growth of mobility will lessen the output of research. In the end, what has caused crisis in the domain of dance has energised the circus. While rupture thwarts dance, the circus seems to thrive off of it. The growth of individualised approaches broadens its creative potential. Inversely, the more heterogeneous elements there are to absorb, the more this internal constraint absorbs creative energy. As a result, these small structures find more freedom of tone when the goal is to take a political position with regards to the current state of society. And this is easier through the spoken word. When the theatre enters into the ring, the circus is able to take a more critical stance.

Assemblies

However, the large productions are increasingly rare and we now notice that creative works with a dozen acrobats are mostly seen in countries where salaries remain low, such as in Morocco. After a collaborative period with Aurélien Bory, the Acrobatic Group of Tangiers will be creating a piece to be directed by Martin Zimmermann and Dimitri Perrot in 2009. In its last work, the Zurich-based duo perfectly demonstrated the modular state of today's circus. Their *Öper Öpis* is an assembly that composes with an acrobatic duo of an Argentinean and a Spaniard, a Franco-Finnish duo known as Cirque Aïtal and the contemporary dancer Eugénie Rebetez. The performance shows all the potential, but also all of the difficulties, of this type of assembly. The creative process is at the heart of the show. *Öper Öpis* is symptomatic of the abolition of all hierarchies and borders since the duo that sealed the union of the circus and the world of DJ-ing, of scratch and contemporary music, just called for acrobats of a rather classic background such as Blancaluz Capella and Rafael Moraes.

Expanding galaxy

Contemporary dance has stepped into a veritable creative crisis and is increasingly obsessed with its own history. The circus has not yet come to this. Its galaxy is constantly expanding and it still has new creative worlds to explore. Its history has only just begun and international exchanges will free up new creative energy. Cooperation between European companies and Africa and even Asia can only boost the level of creative energy in Europe and elsewhere.

Crossing borders, transgressing roles

Gulko, the artistic director of the Cahin-Caha company, discusses his research work and his method of mixing and matching different disciplines.

> With Cahin-Caha you are building up your level of experience abroad. How do you see the French circus in comparison with what is done elsewhere?

The problem in France is that between the schools and the venues, which are limited to specific objectives, there is a lack of structures engaged in research, or spaces that are free enough to create something other than what is acceptable within the network of venues, even if that means artists would earn less money. Elsewhere artists have less funding and fewer institutions but greater liberty. The French power has its positive points, but it is also important to cultivate what is popping up elsewhere.

> Is your nomadic laboratory an attempt to fulfil this need? With my meagre sums, yes. I have no location. Perhaps that's all the better. Isn't that the definition of the circus? I am trying to set up a research project that will last three years. We are working with dramatic artists, choreographers, musicians, visual artists and scientists. It's carried out through work across borders, in Sweden, in the Czech Republic and elsewhere.

> A 'bastard circus' based on transgression? That's not a goal in itself. In the end, we are working with people. We work with a dream analyst and a Sufi dancer, for example. Then we 'transgress' these individuals. That's my definition of the circus, and it's the one by which I suggest that other people carry out their research. It is crucial because we need to create new languages to discuss the society of tomorrow.

Interview taken by Thomas Hahn.
www.cahin-caha.com

4. Knowledge and access to information

Summary proposed by **Kiki Muukkonen**

Kiki Muukkonen is a coordinator for projects in the circus, the performing arts and the audiovisual arts at the cultural centre Subtopia in Botkyra (Sweden). She has produced and managed performing arts and theatre projects in Sweden for 10 years, with a heavy focus on the circus for the past two years. Subtopia hosts over 40 companies and training projects in domains such as the circus, the clown arts, the performing arts, the street arts, music, film and radio. The location hosts programmes for the University of Dance, Cirkus Cirkör, Fan-Atticks, Clowns Without Borders and several newly formed circus companies. Subtopia runs projects such as the presentation of shows and seminars in collaboration with the municipality of Botkyra, Cirkus Cirkör and other companies and artists. They are currently developing a residency programme for artists, increased training opportunities for professionals and the initiation of an information centre.

The workshop was divided into discussing two questions separately, one being research and the other being knowledge and professional information. Each question was introduced by a speaker. Here we present a synthesis of the participants' discussions, the questions raised by the speakers in the workshop and the given proposals for development and better structuring.

Overview of the European situation

It is generally recognised that information is found where there is an organisation taking care of it –as in France's HorsLesMurs. In many countries contemporary circus is reported as being very little known among the general public and the institutional culture, as there are no, or only few, information structures. The image of the contemporary circus is not clear and there is a lot of clichés. In some countries traditional circus is well documented –e.g. in Belgium, Hungary and Germany.

"In Germany there is practically no knowledge about contemporary circus. People know traditional circus and heard about Cirque du Soleil. But for example, companies from France are unknown. There are some information centres but they are all about traditional circus. Information about contemporary, we can just find abroad." (Artist, Germany)

Information on contemporary forms is in many countries mainly found abroad. But there are many language barriers and scarce information flow.

"Although Circostrada Network has a database on a European level it's not everywhere known and in some cases it isn't easily accessible for the artists because of language barriers, etc." (Producer, Czech Republic)

There are few countries in Europe that have information centres: UK, France, Finland –there was one in Croatia but it had to close.

"My experience is very different from European experiences I have

encountered with. After two years of running the Circus Information Centre in Zagreb, we are forced to close it (or to reorganise and reduce its functions) due to the lack of cultural recognition and financial support from local authorities. Obviously, establishing a Circus Information Centre in Croatia, a country that is still in the beginning of development of all other circus-related areas (education, production, diffusion...), may be considered as too ambitious goal. But, nevertheless, it did help in raising public awareness and visibility for the circus sector in Croatia and also increased the development of the circus in the wider region." (Festival Director, Croatia)

Unfortunately, much information is left out due to the lack of places where information bases are thriving. There is more knowledge, but it is very widely placed and it is squandered. It is, for example, difficult to find reliable listings of events throughout Europe and to keep up-to-date on new trends and tendencies

On a European level, HorsLesMurs and Circostrada Network are recognised as the main sources of information –also the magazine Stradda, however it is only published in French. Circostrada Network is continually working on a common European database and information in three different languages. This database is however not known everywhere and in some cases it isn't accessible because of language constraints.

"The information put into place by Circostrada is very useful (especially the database of artists' contact information)." (Administrator, France)

"Helping young artists to make themselves known within their own country and with HorsLesMurs; pursuing the establishment of federations for schools, trade unions for companies and networks for production and distribution houses..." (Director, Belgium)

"Continuing the gathering and storing of information. Offering information and resource platforms in several languages." (Project coordinator, Belgium)

Schools and companies often create their own resources but don't disseminate them, so the work is often forgotten.

Where information centres have been developed the attention towards circus activities has grown on national and European levels –e.g. in Croatia the information centre is reported as having resulted in positive effects in the raising of public awareness and visibility for the circus sector and boosting circus development in Croatia.

There is a call for and general need for writing and research on the development and the aesthetics of circus. There is a lack of literature and studies, and of translations for already existing books and studies.

"There is strong need for new research and writing on the development and aesthetics of contemporary circus, especially in English. I propose a series of studies of this issue, starting from the definitions, artistic approaches, production processes, networks etc. A whole range of information is yet to be done." (Festival Director, Finland)

Problems with defining the art form creates difficulties in conduc-

ting research, in making databases, in delivering information and also in communicating with the audience. There is a lack of studies on attendance and audience.

New research on the sector is mentioned as being crucial for the recognition of the circus as an art form.

There is consequently much to be done on increasing the understanding and knowledge of circus.

Academic research:

Camilla Damkjaer spoke on research. Camilla Damkjaer is a researcher in the Musicology and Performance Studies department at the University of Stockholm. Her research focus includes the circus, gymnastic performance, dance and theory/philosophy. Her doctoral thesis discusses the choreography of Merce Cunningham and the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. She is currently working on the circus and will offer a Masters-level course on the contemporary circus beginning in October 2008.

Camilla Damkjaer brought up some questions concerning research: For whom do we want to develop academic studies on the circus? For artists, journalists, administrators, students?

- > How should it be organized? In what institutions should it be conducted?
- > Where in the intellectual history is contemporary circus situated?
- > What methodology and theoretical tools do we use? Very little research has been done –how do we conduct research when there is hardly any literature and most of it is in French?
- > How do we involve artists in the studies? How do we relate theoretical research with artistic research? How do we combine practice and theory? Maybe new methods of research can be developed?

There was a discussion in the workshop, which stated that practice shouldn't be separated from analyses and theory. Research should be done in interaction with artists and circus students. In schools there is a lack of thinking and theory, and of dialogue about thinking. As one participant in the workshop put it:

"An art becomes big when thought about and not merely practised."

Academic work needs to be for the benefit of the practitioners.

The question of how to work on a European level was raised. As it is conceived, players on the field are focused on their own countries, doing their own thing. It should be possible and beneficial to broaden the scope.

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

- > Conducting more research and studies of artistic approaches, production processes, definitions, audience, aesthetics, history and repertory.
- > Conducting more research and thinking in the circus schools, and linking research with the professionals.
- > Development of European research networks and work on the European level, maybe developing collaborations between universities from different states. These networks could exchange knowledge in workshops, publications and festivals.

"The 'Chercheurs Nomades': creating a network of European researchers whose knowledge of the circus domain can be exchanged from one country to the next through festivals, publications, workshops, creations, etc." (Artist and Researcher, France)

- > Funding for translations of existing studies and books.
- > Development of specific libraries and collections.
- > Encouraging university departments in theatre studies to research the field.
- > Support from governments to organizations that work on remembering the history of artistic fields. "This is crucial work and it should be encouraged, especially for the circus, which is a young yet already established artistic form."

Stradda

Stradda is a magazine dedicated entirely to the current creative forms now taking hold of the public space. Since July of 2006, *Stradda* has been published by the French national resource centre HorsLesMurs and bears witness to the experiences of artists from the street and circus arts as well as other domains such as the visual arts, dance, photography, or even architecture and urban planning.

Every three months in *Stradda*, cities and villages, streets, public squares, apartments, industrial wastelands, or sometimes the beach and countryside are all examined through the lens of the artistic gesture, evoking a sense of surprise or complicity on the part of the audience and the public.

The authors of *Stradda*, whether they are journalists, writers, scholars or photographers, offer an informed and insightful perspective on these protean spaces and turbulent forms, which have now spread throughout the world.

Each issue is structured around one or two central "Dossiers", dissecting an important theme found within the field of outdoor creation: "The Nomadic Spirit", "Clown Generation", "The Fleeting City", etc. The magazine spreads the word about current shows and offers inside looks on events or profiles of certain artists.

Stradda travels to the cities of the world, wherever population density and urban constraints present the greatest challenges for street artists (Seoul, Barcelona, Tirana, Istanbul ...).

In every issue, thirty or so photographers contribute to the quality of *Stradda's* images. The published photographs can be viewed in our online gallery.

In addition to their magazine issues, subscribers receive our supplement, *Les Brèves*, which provides important professional information for the circus and street arts. The information is split into six categories: professional life, forums, creation projects, new shows and calendar of events.

www.stradda.fr

- > More ways to facilitate meetings between players of European countries –e.g. by economical facilitation for participating in international seminars and meetings.

"(...) We need to invest more in gatherings of different European actors within the circus world so as to allow for a true networking of different levels of information." (Director, France)

Knowledge and professional information:

Yannis Jean, who has been the representative of the Syndicat du Cirque de Creation (Union of Creation Circus, or SCC) since 2008, spoke on the issue of knowledge and professional information. Yannis is a trained political sociologist and was elected on the board of directors of the National Professional Federation of the Street Arts. He has been an administrator for circus and street arts companies and created a Virtual Resource Centre in 2004. The Petite Agora (www.petiteagora.net) is intended for administrative professionals of the performing arts. It is today an important site, receiving from 5 to 10,000 visitors per month. The site is now managed by the SCC and focuses mostly on the specificities of circus creations as well as, in a general sense, on the particularities of performance in the public space.

He raised some questions on the issue:

- > How to make basic knowledge known to everyone ?
- > How to link the circus world to other fields of art and other types of cultures, and how to make them more interested ?
- > How to bring better structures for knowledge ?

Yannis Jean talked about the need for organizations to make information available if we want the contemporary circus to be accessible. Translation is a main tool to be developed to know what is going on in Europe. There is a need for better communication between players –*Stradda* and *HorsLesMurs* are the only real tools for communication. A lot is done already, but not enough –we have little information regarding the audience. Yannis Jean created a resource centre linked with the trade union when realizing how squandered information is. This was intended as a way of putting circus on the same level as theatre and dance.

Forgotten history was also discussed during the workshop. How can work survive over time? There is a lack of memory and cultural heritage.

Some work already done was mentioned: *HorsLesMurs* is working on bringing resources together. *Circostrada* is the first organization to study circus on a European level, working on a common database in three languages. The French circus venues network, *Territoires de Cirque*, has conducted a survey on audiences published in January 2009. In the French school *CNAC*, there is a media-library.

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

European-scale websites and magazines are recognised as an essential base to a better understanding of the sector. The systematic translation of websites is called for, with all information equally available in English and French.

- > A central website and Internet database connecting national databases and networks all over Europe.
- > Creating repertoires of circus performance and developing the quality and structures of how to record shows.
- > Publishing more articles on shows and theories, more booklets and books, etc.

- > The idea of the *HorsLesMurs* DVD could expand to other countries to make a European DVD, to prove the existence of different and new forms of the art and to broaden knowledge.

- > More countries could follow the practices of *HorsLesMurs* in France and *Cirko* in Finland for the visibility of the art form and the work accomplished.

- > A symposium on only resource and professional information was suggested, making use of those who are 'on the ground' as well as resource persons specialised in communication strategies and marketing.

"The governments should support the work of organisations that work on remembering the history of artistic fields. This is essential work and it should be encouraged in all artistic domains (dance, theatre, film...), and especially in the circus as it is a young yet already established artistic form. The recognition of resource centres would enable future academic work as well, carrying out needed studies on the field, development of specialised critique work for the circus, theoretical education etc." (Director, Croatia)

Let's conclude this synthesis with the words of a contributor: "A new intellectual discussion of these issues has to begin. This is crucial for the recognition of the circus as an art form. Without knowledge and words there is no understanding and recognition."

This workshop was moderated by Stéphane Simonin who, since 2003, has served as Director of HorsLesMurs, the French national resource centre for the circus and street arts. HorsLesMurs is one of four French resource centres dedicated to the performing arts (with the Centre national du théâtre, the Centre national de la danse and the Centre d'information et de ressources pour les musiques actuelles). Beforehand, he was in charge of the administrative board and jury for proposals for artistic projects within the organisation. Stéphane Simonin has also been the administrator of the Salamanazar, Theatre in Épernay (France) and Assistant Director of the French Cultural Centre in Groningen (Netherlands).

5. Diversity and intercultural dialogue

Summary proposed by **Anne Tucker**

Anne Tucker has been the Artistic Director of festivals and events in the public space in Manchester and in North-western England since 1994. The structure that she co-directs, Manchester International Arts (MIA), has organised several events, such as Ona Catalana (1994), Street Ahead (1995, 2000), Garden of Delights (2003, 2005) or Feast! (2006, 2007). She also works with x.trax, the biggest showcase organiser in the United Kingdom. In Manchester, Anne Tucker has presented large-scale shows performed by artistic companies from Europe, Asia and Australia. Anne Tucker works to create events that are able to attract a wide audience of all ages, social categories and cultures in order to share a communal artistic experience. MIA is also committed to working with minority, refugee, handicap and asylum-seeking communities, offering programming that is accessible to the largest number of people.

The circus is often considered a popular form, with easy access and a large audience. But does circus participate in the dialogue between communities and the fight against inequality? From 'social circus' to the search for new audiences, is circus a tool of social mixing and cultural diversity? The seminar on this topic served to highlight the above questions, and addressed a range of issues. The discussion was led by two speakers and included a summary of the main findings of the responses that had come in earlier to the questionnaire.

There are particular identifying features of circus productions that enable this art form to access a wide section of audiences

- > Using tents instead of conventional theatres (which both enables circus shows to be performed in places where there are no social buildings and enables people to enter a less intimidating space that generates excitement rather than anxiety):
"If we start from the idea that circus is a popular art form (even though it is not always obviously accessible) some people are less anxious/resistant about going to a show or circus in a tent. Its for us to use that fact to encourage people to go to other similar things." (Promoter, Belgium)
- > The minimal use of text on many occasions (though not exclusively as several respondents point out):
"The difficulty is language, as I use lots of text and our theme –mental illness– gives rise naturally to language. The theatres who book us can't always afford to bring in an interpreter." (Marketing, France);
"By avoiding spoken language and creating a new body language it's more easily understandable and available for a larger audience without cultural, religious educational or language barriers. By its interdisciplinary nature, it reaches people on different fields." (Performer, Hungary)
- > The concentration of physical body skills, lighting and music enabling a more sensual rather than intellectual response,

- > The very immediate fascination of danger and risk associated with much of circus work.

More international tours could take advantage of this, as the circus is able to cross borders artistically very easily. However, tent legislation in different countries makes this immediately difficult again. However, one respondent claimed it is not taken advantage of:

"Sadly, contemporary circus is mostly performed for other performers and their friends. Get contemporary circus out of the capitals and into the suburbs!"

Circus training in Europe takes place in specialist circus schools that include many young artists from different countries

However, these are mostly from other EU countries, there is an attempt from some schools to set up bursaries to encourage students from outside Europe to attend. How many schools think this is a principle to be upheld? One respondent decried the commitment of schools to open up to diversity; one called for more integration of African circus.

"It's already happening in circus schools where young performers come from all over Europe and beyond. Also there are 'leisure schools' which are taking part in opening up to cultural diversity, enabling a much larger public to experience this art." (Marketing Officer, Belgium)

Circus practice is accepted now in many countries as a 'social tool'

Circus workshops are used to bring different social groups together, to build confidence in people struggling with life, to work with deviants, people at risk of offending, vandals, disaffected youth, people with disabilities and many other disadvantaged groups. But,

"We must keep the open image portrayed by circus but not fall into reducing everything to its 'social' role. That can be a beginning but not an end." (Promoter, Belgium)

Several respondents mentioned Clowns Sans Frontières and their role as reconcilers/peacemakers who work with victims of trauma. However there were also notes of caution about this role, that it may be too simplistic, it limits resources for circus to only socially beneficial work. It undermines creativity. A few respondents felt very strongly that this was a dangerous precedent to set, that circus must be acknowledged principally as art. One respondent commented on the fact that circus performers are expected to take part in social protest –marches, demonstrations etc., for little or no money. Several respondents cited the role of circus to help cultural integration with new migrant communities. One respondent denied that this worked:

"I don't think circus can be a tool of social mixing or cultural diversity, on the contrary it has observed the growing inequalities on the social map of Europe and hasn't the means to take hold of it and do something."

Circus can play a role in the struggle against obesity

Large numbers of people in some countries (especially colder ones where the outdoor life is less enticing) will not take part in any sports, but circus appears to be much more acceptable. Physical stamina, self esteem and the acquisition of skills that are self-evident fairly quickly all offer ways forward for people whose weight is not healthy.

There are few artists in European circus companies from Black, Asian, Oriental or Latin American origins

Why is this? Is it connected to immigration and funding, lack of training opportunities, is it a result of it not being culturally acceptable to wish to pursue a career in circus? Are there particular reasons why existing structures are inappropriate or impossible for people of other cultures/faiths –e.g. do we now accommodate maternity breaks as a matter of policy, but not breaks for those fasting for Ramadan?

There is relatively little circus from other parts of the non-white world that reaches Europe

Promoter respondents described the difficulties with immigration restrictions for visiting companies from Africa and South Asia. In the UK, only very large commercial operations manage without considerable difficulty (2 companies from Africa with extensive tours were unable to enter in 2007). How can we improve this situation and share/exchange the fascinating experience of South American, Chinese, Indian or African artists, without exploiting them? This would seem an ideal form of intercultural exchange and dialogue as again the work is skill-based, not language based.

"Consider circus artists as 'creators of perception' – give value to 'the senses in action' in circus creations which unite everyone via their senses and awareness that one gains and develops from being associated with circus vibes." (Artist/Director/Researcher, France)

"Good practice: international exchange programs with a show (creation of the workshops/projects/community) at the end of the project for the locals. My experience was always a very positive, fruitful creation process between artists with different cultural and social backgrounds, and very positive feedback came from the audience, in France, Hungary, UK, Poland, Germany, etc." (Performer, Hungary)

Cost

Several respondents discussed the prohibitive cost of moving tents; the problem of ticket prices being high, therefore excluding some. Some respondents mentioned 'special funds to keep prices low'. In several EU countries there is normally more than one rate for entry, with concessions for unwaged/students/children on production of cards. Are there other ways circus companies can work with promoters to encourage non-arts attendees to come? Are there ways to access special resources for the particular demands of touring with tents?

Internal Diversity

A few respondents described the division/rancour/struggle between 'traditional/popular' circus and 'new circus'. How do these two forms sit together? Are they both valid and in deserving of 'arts' resources? Is there a big difference between 'entertainment' and 'art'?

"The internationalism of the traditional circus is a role model for international and intercultural relations. Propagate ALL circus – it's essential to avoid the risk of destroying something of great value (the traditional circus) to replace it with something of narrower appeal and therefore less value." (Artist, Consultant, UK)

General summary of conclusions from the seminar and the contributions:

This was an extremely ambitious seminar that covered two large, relatively unexplored and indeed controversial areas: social mixing and cultural diversity; and the role(s) that contemporary circus could and should play in each of these. Additionally, there was concern that these topics needed to be considered outside European boundaries as well as within (which was not the case with any other of the other seminars). One premise was agreed upon by all parties that circus is by its very nature accessible to a very wide range of audiences; that circus practitioners are committed to promoting equality and communication across barriers of class and race.

The seminar began with two opening contributions that were astonishingly different: the first was Rachel Clare. She created Crying Out Loud in 2001 as a new company for producing and organising tours for new, innovative shows with the help of production grants given by the London Arts Council. Before that, she played a role in the development of a new way of thinking of programming and producing for several interdisciplinary art forms. She has worked with numerous artists both in the United Kingdom and abroad and has combined the circus, the theatre, dance and the visual arts in performances. Her main accomplishments include The Great Outdoors Programme from 1992 to 1999 at SBC, Easter Delirium Season at QEH, The Catch at Lyric Hammersmith from 2000 to 2005, Free Time at the Somerset House as well as work with James Thierrée, Aurélie Thierrée and Victoria Thierrée Chaplin. On top of her projects with Crying Out Loud, Rachel Clare is a programmer associated with the Roundhouse circus. She is working towards an alliance between different locations within London in order to develop a new way of conceiving of the contemporary theatre and theatrical programming.

She examined the active efforts within the UK to encourage greater involvement in circus by cultural minorities (as performers and audience). She highlighted special funding streams for culturally diverse projects, targeted marketing approaches and initiatives such as Decibel designed to give greater public awareness and support for artists of all disciplines (not just circus) from minority cultures. This was followed by a speech from Martin Gerbier. He is the Director of the Balthazar Centre of the circus arts in Montpellier and has acquired solid pedagogical experience within the circus arts. He was an active member and initiator for the circus arts with the association SGS Cirque de Geneviève des Bois from 1995 to 2000. Before that, he occupied the following posts at the Balthazar centre for the circus arts: Pedagogical Director for the B.I.A.C. training programme, Pedagogical and Technical Director and head of instructor training. He has also been a member of the Directory, the board of directors and the Pedagogical and Training Commission of the FFEC (French Federation of Circus Schools).

Martin Gerbier looked in detail at the intrinsically important role within circus schools of training for diversity –pupils are helped to realise the real value of their individual strengths, skills and ideas; and that the confidence gained by a real understanding of these, enables their shared work with others to be much deeper and more meaningful. These two need to be in balance, in order to enable real communication, to appreciate other points of view, ideas and inspirations that may arise from very different experiences.

The discussions that followed were extremely varied. These can be broadly grouped into the following topics:

- > Many speakers described the value of their work with people of other cultures; some doubted the success of this, or described the very great difficulties in achieving real integration between people of very different backgrounds. There was some disagreement as to how easily this can be measured, and whether we may delude ourselves as to the apparently successful outcome of projects. What do we use to measure such success?
- > There was recognition by most that artists from outside Europe face great difficulty getting work permits and visas to tour within the EU, and that this prevents much fascinating work being able to reach us. This is particularly the case with 'non-white' developing nations (Africa and the Indian sub-continent). In the questionnaire responses, a number of people suggested that visa restrictions and other border controls were oppressive and hampered free movement of creativity between nations – within the EU as well as people coming in from outside.
- > There was concern that when bringing in arts from other cultures, that we are just adding another layer of 'exoticism', which is all superficial. There is still a large amount of traditionalist imagery in indigenous cultural projects, which may be uncreative and inexpressive. However, there was a recognition too that minority cultures may take a while to move from traditional (safe and understood) cultural expression to contemporary. Retreating into ones known traditional cultural forms is safe in an environment that may be risky and unwelcoming – this should be acknowledged.
- > There was a query about whether "intercultural dialogue" is this year's buzz word, and that next year the circus/arts community would move onto something else.
- > There was considerable discussion about the relative merits/value of:
 - a) Exporting Western cultures for the good of others,
 - b) Importing other cultures as exotic additions to Western consumerism, and
 - c) Real integrated cultural work, where something new evolves out of the use of elements from the cultures of participating artists. This inevitably requires a commitment to equality of value of each person's contributions
- > There was an awareness soundly articulated by some participants and endorsed by many listening that the European landscape has changed massively over the last 10 years. Cities in the UK have always had a mix of cultures in their inhabitants, but this is spreading now across all of the EU and the social and creative implications must be appreciated. One participant noted: "our immigrants are prisoners of a culture they do not necessarily adhere to"; where immigration is extensive, issues of 'adopting the majority cultural mores' become very muddy, indeed impossible to stipulate. In these circumstances, cultural organisations must be able to be leaders in unravelling prejudices and tightly held beliefs, enabling safe environments to form in which new creative expression may be explored.
- > Circus is an admirable art form to lead the debate on social and cultural integration. By its very nature it is accessible to a wider public than most other art forms – by using tents instead of conventional theatres circus shows may be performed in places where there are no social buildings and enable people to enter a less intimidating space that generates excitement rather than anxiety; on many occasions there is minimal use of text (though not exclusively as several respondents point out); circus concentrates particularly on physical body skills, lighting

and music, enabling a more sensual rather than intellectual response; and the very immediate fascination of danger and risk associated with much circus work is thrilling and immediately appealing.

Interestingly, there was a very different emphasis in the seminar (towards racial diversity) to the questionnaire results (which focused much more on social mixing).

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

It was clear that the seminar was just starting to grapple with these issues, each of which is a vast area. Many things can be suggested:

- > Training opportunities that are "realistic, not tokenistic" for people from cultural minorities.
- > Cultural confidence to be achieved, through real social mixing and economic weighting.
- > Lessening of visa restrictions for circus artists across the world,
- > Clear and targeted marketing to attract minorities as audience members and participants.
- > More work to validate circus as an acceptable career path,
- > Looking at funding streams to effect some of the changes articulated in the meeting.
- > Further discussions on these topics at circus forums, meetings and conferences.

Although the discussion was frustratingly short and fairly disconnected at times, there were clear lines of thought emerging albeit sporadically; these, coupled with the introductory paper that summarised the areas of thought in the questionnaire responses, adds up to make a substantial first contribution to this very important area.

This workshop was moderated by Patricia Kapusta, who is General Secretary of Prato, international neighbourhood theatre (Lille, France) and is in charge of programming, press relations and publicity. She is a trained and experienced teacher who submerged herself into culture through her work as a dancer. She also volunteered for the first dance festivals in Lille. With The Year of Dance in 1988 came the opportunity to make dance her career. In addition, she has had programming experience in the domain of video art. She created a public relations agency Au Service de la Création, ZOU. Then in early 1991 she joined Prato, a theatre founded in the 70s by a troupe of clown and comedy enthusiasts. Their permanent goal is to accompany 'unclassifiable' youths and to meet, in the frame of classes given over the course of several years at the Centre national des arts du cirque (National Centre of Circus Arts or CNAC), a generation of circus artists geared towards innovation and full of theatre and dance. The junction of these three centres of interest (transmission, dance and burlesque theatre) is now a reality: both the movement and the art it has recovered; the circus being one of the most diverse art forms of today.

5^{bis}. The circus esperanto

Article by **Louise Mongalais**

Since the 1980's, the circus has tried to establish a creative dialogue with 'the other', be it as a partner or an audience member, and this regardless of all social, ethnic or cultural differences.

From centre stage, a peculiar archivist tells us the story of Nasredin Hodja, a mythical character in Islamic cultural. Through words, projections, and feats of acrobatics and juggling, he unveils the adventures of this hero who is much celebrated from the Balkans to Mongolia. The show *Hodja*, which has been performed in France and in Turkey, was initiated by Vincent Berhault, and conceived as a bridge between two civilisations. "The French spectators get to immerse themselves in a culture that is unfamiliar to them", says Vincent Berhault. "And thanks to this popular character, the Turks discover the circus, which has been a forgotten art in their country for many years". In this era of globalisation and intermixing between cultures, the circus can boast itself as a motor for intercultural dialogue. It is a special tool for encountering the other, regardless of ethnic or social origin.

Respect

And in this respect we find many positive elements within this art form, which is preceded by a reputation for being popular and accessible to all. As an art of the body it transcends linguistic barriers. As an art of exploit and risk it fascinates all men. It is often hoisted up, at times unrealistically so, as a universal language. Above all, it is associated with the values of respect and consideration for the other. All of these elements make it an ideal tool to promote social and cultural diversity for the artists as well as for the audience.

But despite what legend tells us, this approach is a rather recent one. Although the circus has been intermixing populations for a long time –even the great families of the European circus used to invite foreign artists to perform by their sides at the end of the 19th century– this diversity had nothing to do with any kind of intercultural dialogue. "In the beginning, the idea was to present fairground phenomena and men from the colonies ..." explains historian Julien Rosemberg. "And even afterwards, the circus' relationship with multiculturalism was a rather opportunistic one: 'I'll take skilled work wherever I can find it, the best number, or the most efficient manual labour ...'. Even today the co-called traditional circus works in a similar way. Christophe Crampette, the director of the Cirque de Lomme in Northern France points out that "It is not enough to put artists of different nationalities together for a true encounter to occur. Many private traditional circuses operate like businesses. Once a show is finished, the artists go back to their caravans and never see each other again."

Construct something together

He travelled throughout Europe with Circus Bidon and created Circus Baobab in Guinea. Pierrot Bidon, who is today the director of the Circus Studios of Marseille, is a specialist of the encounter.

> You are a fervent supporter of intercultural dialogue ...

Yes, always have been. It all began with the Archaos company, whose motto was 'culture shock'. For the show *Metal Clown*, we worked with artists of thirteen different nationalities. I also travelled a great deal; in Europe, Africa and Brazil. I wanted to discover different ways of seeing and of thinking. My team and I created circus schools in Guinea and in Brazil. We also created shows in Russia, in China ...

> How did you work?

People the world over engage in circus arts, even if they don't know it. In the African forests men climb onto stilts, not just for the challenge, but to pick fruit in the trees. And then we find the same thing in the circus. Before working together we have to get to know each other, to study each other's traditions and respect each individual. Then there can be a period of training. In Guinea, we held auditions with the ballets, these percussive and dance troupes one finds in each neighbourhood, to create Circus Baobab. We taught them basic technique so we could then mix our skills. The idea is not to bring the contemporary circus to the Africans or to the Chinese. The idea is to construct something together. We learn just as much as we instruct. We therefore construct a sort of world circus, crossbred with several different influences. Today the former students of Circus Baobab have taken the baton and are themselves teaching. All we did was to open doors.

Interview taken by Louise Mongalais.
www.studiosdecirquedemarseille.org

Social dialogue

The use of the circus as a tool for diversity goes back to the 1980's, and was heralded by the new circus in the wake of May 1968. This approach, initiated by artists, was reinforced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which wished to promote French cultural excellence abroad. "But performing one's show in another country, or speaking to the audience for half an hour after a performance is not enough to create dialogue", Christophe Crampette comments, "That requires time and a real investment." A real project to either artistic or social ends is needed.

Education is one of the main points of entry on which the circus can rely. A few schools have therefore developed a form of social circus. In Bagneux, an inner city in the Paris region, the Plus Petit Cirque du Monde organises workshops in partnership with social centres, associations, family welfare centres, etc., for young people living in underprivileged neighbourhoods, or handicapped or marginalised audiences. "The circus is an opening into the artistic world. It teaches us to work in groups without any sense of competition. It develops self confidence and autonomy", explains the company director Elefterios Kechagioglou.

Hoping to share its experience with others, the Plus Petit Cirque du Monde has joined a European network, Caravane, which brings together seven schools. Together, they organise training projects on the European scale and exchange practices. "We were able to observe how our European counterparts work with their partners and were inspired to develop new projects, intervening in prisons, etc."

Children from Cambodia

Educational and social projects are also carried out abroad. Since 2002, the French association Clowns d'Ailleurs et d'Ici has been working side by side with the Cambodian NGO Phare Ponleu Selpak, which offers, among other things, circus classes for street children. French artists perform in Cambodia and the association allows these young students to present their end of the year show in Europe. Throughout the tour they are hosted by families and circus schools. Marie-Aimée Larue, the administrator of the Clowns d'Ailleurs et d'Ici collective tells us that "The encounter goes well beyond the performance. The students discover another culture and another way of life. Some forge special relationships with French families." But she does not fall into naïve optimism. "It doesn't always automatically just happen. Sometimes our young students get homesick, and the language barrier also complicates things."

Intercultural dialogue can bring about encounters between artists as the fruit of personal affinities. Gulko, an American artist who's been based in France since 1993, has worked regularly in the Czech Republic. As a result of this experience, he is now putting into place a nomadic creative laboratory organised around three hubs: Marseille, Stockholm and Prague. His project takes elements of each circus culture: the virtuosity of the Swedes, the aesthetic inventiveness of the Czechs, to create a common vocabulary. "The goal is not only to nourish my own work, but also to allow each of these artists to benefit from the experience to move forward and create."

Intercultural dialogue in the circus context is still a relatively recent and somewhat hesitant movement. However, the initiatives are no longer limited to exporting European forms abroad. Partnerships and aesthetic mixing are both coming to light, at times accompanied by the creation of a new performance piece. The circus artists of the Phare Ponleu Selpak school have, as such, developed an innovative and personal aesthetic. "They took in everything they learned from the French artists regarding narration and consideration of

Promoting expression among ethnic minorities

Rachel Clare, the Director of Crying Out Loud, a multi-purpose structure that is based in London and serves as a tour organiser, artistic agency, and production company, gives us a British perspective on intercultural dialogue.

> What is the state of cultural diversity within the English circus world?

After the racial riots of 2000, the government has taken measures to help integrate the immigrant population. Concerning culture, a system was put into place to promote artistic expression from members of ethnic minorities so as to ensure that these artists get the same opportunities as others. It was a controversial measure, but it has encouraged the discovery of new talent. Different programmes were put into place, like Décibel, a showcase organised every other year that allows these artists to perform in front of an audience of professionals.

> Does this system encourage intercultural dialogue?

Yes, it also helps to support these artists who today want to be recognised for their talent and not for their ethnicity. The circus needs to broaden its horizons if it wants to renew itself. This concern is at the heart of my work. Artists must push past boundaries and mix genres and cultures so that new aesthetics can emerge. We live in a multi-ethnic society. Art and culture should reflect this diversity.

> How do you encourage diversity within the audience?

When Moroccan artists from the Taoub circus came to perform in London we made a special effort to reach the Muslim population. The press release and the name of the show were translated into Arabic and posters were hung at shops within the community. These marketing strategies worked very well.

Interview taken by Louise Mongalais.
www.cryingoutloud.org

the lighting and costumes ... so as to insert their own culture", comments Marie-Aimée Larue. Today the only remaining difficulty is in France, where the status of "socio-cultural" is still regarded with suspicion, making it an enticing prospective work site.

6. Production and distribution of works

Summary proposed by **Tomi Purovaara**

Tomi Purovaara (Master of Arts & Arts Manager) is the manager and one of the founders of the Information Centre for the Finnish Circus and Cirko, the Centre for the New Circus, which are both based in Helsinki. Outside of the circus sector, he has worked since 1993 as a producer, director and screenwriter for theatrical dance, music academy, theatre of marionettes and the National Gallery. Tomi Purovaara has written books (*Contemporary Circus: treasures, keys and enigmas*, 2005; *People of Miracles: heroic stories of the Finnish Circus*, 2008) as well as several articles and critical essays on the circus. He is a member of the Finnish Arts Council as part of the Stage Arts Committee and the Circus Arts section.

Overview of the circus situation in Europe:

This synthesis takes into account the submitted written contributions as well as the discussions that took place during the workshop.

Traditional circus has been a fine example of the international distribution and exchange of ideas and labour. Fundamental for a circus artist is professionalism and skill, the question for distribution is one of distributing a circus act. Production-wise the touring of traditional circus is still balancing between the requests of its audiences, innovations of the artists, different national laws and regulations as well as its long history of commercial entertainment.

Even though contemporary circus has its own history of artistic development, many of the same questions tend to be as accurate for it as they have been for its predecessors. And it is important to notice that in some countries the conceptual division between traditional and contemporary circus is not recognised by the authorities. Without support, contemporary circus is forced to operate with the same production mechanism as traditional circus.

Some European countries have, during the last decades, witnessed processes of institutionalising the contemporary circus. This has generated increasing subsidies and support by the public authorities. It has been possible for the modern circus to shift from the field of entertainment to the field of art. Education, research, production structures and increasing knowledge have generated a significant cultural and artistic ascent for the circus. New vitality has fed the circus both artistically and financially.

It is easy to realise that recent development has also made the new forms of circus more fragile and reliant on public cultural policy. Whereas traditional circus has its nomadic tradition and freedom as private enterprise, the artistic freedom of contemporary circus is linked with growing dependency on its public and private supporters.

A characteristic of contemporary circus is also its great individuality. Whereas traditional forms of circus have been artistically fairly closed-in, with a framework of seven-minute circus acts and well managed touring arrangements, contemporary circus expanded to an innumerable amount of different artistic universes and personal initiatives. This is both a strength and a weakness. Rich diversity can cause difficulties while setting definitions on contemporary circus, and this could close doors for understanding and recognition.

"The problem that I encounter is that my work cannot be categorised. You know what I mean? So programmers and institutions don't know what category to put me in and they lose their point of reference. What are my influences? What trend am I a part of? I consider myself to be an 'interdisciplinary' artist for one because if you keep mixing disciplines they eventually disappear. But I also feel 'undisciplined' in that I don't match up to proper artistic conventions." (Artist, France)

"The difficulty of fitting into categories set out by administrations, the extreme multitude of forms, which blurs the definition of the discipline." (Manager, France)

On the other hand, contemporary circus has managed to build fusion between many other art forms. Dialogue between circus, dance, theatre, visual arts, music has given birth to completely new modern aesthetics of performing where there is not, in fact, anymore room or need for definitions.

"I like the way new circus can be incorporated into other kinds of productions, but I do prefer that new circus be accepted on its own values." (Researcher, Denmark)

As a conclusion, a different phase of institutionalising means different possibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the whole mechanism of contemporary circus. To develop means for production and distribution, it is crucial to also develop means for education, research and understanding of a new art form, public cultural policy, touring circumstances and international development processes etc.

"I would find it interesting to start a cultural practice of developing programs that could enable a specific support for developing new circus techniques, disciplines, new equipment or objects use... Those who are finding the 'new' in new circus should be entitled to a special kind of recognition for their work, which could enable the future richness of circus arts." (Festival Director, Croatia)

Questions of directions

Two speakers, Marc Fouilland and Giacomo Scalisi, were invited to share their experiences and points of view regarding the production and distribution of circus works.

Since 2001, Marc Fouilland has been the Director of Circuits, a subsidised performance space for the circus arts in Auch. He is currently President of 'Territoires de Cirque', an association that

brings together 20 production and distribution structures with a particular focus on contemporary circus forms. He is also president of APEMSAC, the association for the elaboration of support mechanisms for the circus arts. Before that he occupied the posts of Director of Municipal Theatre and of Cultural Development in the city of Auch, Director of the Espace Prévert, a cultural centre of the city of Savigny-le-Temple and Director of Cultural Affairs for the city of Quétigny. He is also a member of the Committee of theatre experts for DRAC (French Ministry of Culture) in the Midi-Pyrénées and Aquitaine as well as of the Committee of dance experts for DRAC in the Midi-Pyrénées, Aquitaine, Limousin and Poitou-Charentes.

Giacomo Scalisi was originally trained as a stage and screen actor. He is also an active cultural programmer and teacher whose work is characterised by performance programmes, exhibits and training courses based on different artistic disciplines: theatre, dance, music, new circus and interdisciplinary projects using new technologies.

These programmes are the result of created contexts that allow for a coherent relationship between audiences, performance spaces and artistic projects.

His pedagogical work is in courses geared toward qualification and specialisation in the cultural domain, with a focus on art and education, programming strategies and theatrical artistic concepts.

He has worked as the Artistic Director of the Percursos Project, a European performing arts festival for young audiences, and he is currently a theatre and new circus programmer at the Cultural Centre of Belém in Lisbon. He teaches courses organised by the Dance Forum as well as within other cultural organisations.

Artists and companies

It is unquestionable that artists and companies of different countries have very different bases for their production and distribution. Artist and companies have to find answers to some basic questions like:

- > How should I reflect the artistic and institutional situation of circus in my own country?
- > How should I be in dialogue between my art product, programmers and audience?

In many European countries the structures of sites for production and support for contemporary circus are weak or not existing. In every country there are too few venues with well enough equipped stages.

"There is little consideration for or interest in the circus arts among small, local distributors. Performance spaces rarely have enough space or facilities to host companies." (Trade Union, Belgium)

Also many existing festivals and theatres have prejudices to have a long-term collaboration with circus companies. In many cases production periods tend to remain too short. Without permanent subsidies it is possible for only very few companies to maintain an artistic team with salaries for artists, administrators and artistic directors.

There is also a question of national development. Many young artists from scarcely developed circus countries are forced to move abroad because of the lack of professional education and rehearsal places, poor production structures, etc.

"The difficulties that we have observed concern mostly emerging artists that have been, as much as possible, guided in structuring themselves, both on the public relations and administrative levels." (Circus School Director, France)

"(...) from one space-structure to another the circus artist elaborates and tests his or her research; creations result from this slow process. So we should favour long time periods and offer artists work tools through a networking of European residency structures (performance spaces are not an end in themselves, but are a step forward)." (Artists, France)

A negative spin maintains: without artists it is not possible to establish structures, without structures it is impossible to develop an art form.

"The countries of Europe are not equal in their ability to produce shows that are of a contemporary aesthetic, as vast as that domain may be. Furthermore, it is difficult to host proposals from certain countries because they are so far off from what we aspire to offer our audiences." (Director, France)

Therefore, in the long run, even though circus is a very international art form, it is most important to ensure positive development in each country. The same goes for recognition. As long as there is positive news and publicity generated by the circus community, there are possibilities of having growing support from authorities and increasing audiences. In the development phase it is also valuable to be able to refer to other positive examples of different European countries.

Programmers

Contemporary circus is a new, developing phenomenon. As such, it has to be introduced to the public, and still, in many cases also to programmers and authorities. In most of those countries that are still struggling for recognition for circus there is not enough information. In this situation a programmer has to define first his own position in the art field in his respective country programming contemporary circus. And, as always, there is also the fundamental question of the role of art in each society, region and city.

It is not possible to solve problems of production and distribution as long as there are open questions like: What is contemporary circus, how does it differ from traditional circus forms? A link from distribution to research, literature and education is again to be found.

Nevertheless, while building the fundamental structures, it is also necessary to ask questions like: What is a profitable production model? What kind of things does a touring performance require from a venue? What are the circumstances in each country economically, culturally, politically?

In France, as a country with the longest tradition for state-supported contemporary circus, there are also some specific questions.

"While France may have once served as a model in the European circus arts, this is no longer the case today as much as the sector's difficulties are taking hold abroad." (Director, France)

A wide-range model for education can also generate problems. Since there are annually so many graduating professional circus artists from different schools, the programmers are forced to carefully consider which new artist and companies they will support and program.

"Don't we also support a bit too much the teams of tomorrow while neglecting those of today?" (Artist, France)

Another difficult issue in France and elsewhere is the distribution of large-scale circus productions touring with big tops. To support the vitality and diversity of the art form it would be necessary to find tools for the profitable touring of different sized productions.

The leading role of French touring performances also generates one important question for a circus programmer in Europe. To introduce a diverse spectrum of different kind of shows from many European countries a programmer is continually in need of more information. Where are the most interesting new things emerging, how could I afford to introduce to my audiences a new unknown artist from a new circus country?

"It is up to the programmer to be daring. Distribution support is essential to offset the financial risks involved in the arrival of shows and the potential economical differences for the performance from one country to the next. Networking our structures is essential to remaining open and informed of what is created elsewhere so as to favour the circulation of artwork." (Director, Belgium)

Authorities

The 'mother of cirque nouveau movement' France is a positive example and exception with its state-supported network for residencies, production centres and festivals programming circus art. Nevertheless, the French cultural policy is also at the moment open for many questions. In spite of the national, regional and local public support, the situation for young professional companies is not easy even in France. For authorities it is a question of expertise to select the right initiatives and artists to be supported.

"I notice that distribution in France and in Europe is focused on a few hand-picked companies. In my work, and in order for my creations to be produced and distributed more widely, I must attract the attention of networks that support creation and emphasise artistic research in the circus." (Artist, France)

This selection process generates a question for international distribution supported by the state. This system involves a specific risk to maintain an artistically one-eyed focus of the supported companies and projects. The already acclaimed companies tend to be first in line as the exportation support is granted, whereas the young projects do not get their opportunity.

For authorities making decisions for circus, as a conclusion there is a consistent question to be discussed: to what extent should the circus arts be supported? Which projects and artists should be on focus? Or should contemporary circus function according to the same principle as traditional circus: the law of supply and demand?

"In Belgium we have a lot of common denominators with France, although the networks, criteria and sources of funding differ. Beginning companies have a hard time finding producers and distributors. Funding for the arts provided by the French Community is scarce (€15,000 in 2007 for the circus, street and fair ground arts) and the cultural structures do not have funding for co-productions." (Director, Belgium)

Propositions formulated in the contributions and throughout the workshop:

The post modern time has changed circus from its old tradition of circular, horse-riding based, entertaining focus into a form of contemporary performing art with great possibilities for artists to express themselves by their own circus disciplines and techniques as well as with many initiatives combining different art forms with circus.

As the increasing artistic fragmentation and individualism has

divided circus into many sub-forms and set unsolved definitions it is necessary to press the great role of European collaboration and solidarity.

Structures

As information and research do form a basis also for production and distribution activities it is important to continue to support the maturation of those initiatives of promotion and development that have been taking place in some countries. Horsles-Murs, Circostrada Network, CulturesFrance, Onda, the 'Pôles Cirque' and other French structures, Circus Arts Forum and City Circ Network in the UK, Maison du Cirque in the French-speaking part of Belgium, New Nordic Circus Network and Finnish Circus Information Centre among others work for the better recognition of circus as well as for the development of the production and distribution circumstances.

"It seems difficult to us to work on the European scale without a knowledge of the specificities of each country or geographical region: economic context, practices, cultural policies... Especially since the rarity of professional encounters can make it difficult to make contacts." (Producer, France)

Solidarity

It is undeniable that the solidarity between better developed and developing circus countries is needed to be able to exchange best practices and to learn from processes already taking place. To help and collaborate with new countries and organizations means better prospects for each of the partners in their own struggle of recognition and development.

"The venues and festivals in one region should work on better coordination and possible cooperation in distributing artistic works. Enabling the touring of a company means saving the money of those distribution places as well." (Festival Director, Croatia)

"Developing cross-border cooperative projects in order to improve and facilitate the distribution of companies in Europe." (Location Administrator, France)

"In my opinion, the mutualisation of tools is crucial. We also need a system whereby more established companies can sponsor newer companies to inspire young actors to engage in crazy projects and also to help them in a concrete way. This kind of sponsoring can be carried out by several companies or artists in several ways: by hosting them as a first part of a circus-tent show for one year; the company can offer administrative support; or it can allow for formal or informal periods of exchange on themes that are unique to artists, who are often alone in their world while creating." (Company, France)

Festival, platform for meetings of professionals, European touring structure

For supporting the exchange and development in distribution of ideas and communication as well as international touring it would be excellent to have annual European circus meetings with presentations of some of the newest productions, platforms for meetings and colloquiums for artists, administrators, programmers and other professionals.

One initiative worth considering would be the opening of some of the major festivals of France to the new, artistically sophisticated contemporary circus performances of European countries. For example, the festival of Seyne-sur-Mer could focus on the northern parts of Europe and Circa festival of Auch could do the same with Southern European projects.

In addition to this it would be necessary to form initiatives to build a European network structure for the international touring

of circus performances. Also it is important to continue to develop initiatives like Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe and to build new networks of projects on the European level.

"We must favour the circulation of art works, especially those that can be less accessible to an audience... because in this way, by widening the aesthetic field, through variety and different forms of composition, the circus can truly survive as an art of its time."
(Director, France)

Information – equality of access

Modern forms (websites, databases, newsletters) of collecting and distributing information should be supported. A network of European information centres should offer information for local and international programmers as well for the companies and artists. To ensure equal access to the information the central sources of information should be translated to 2-3 European languages. For the improvement and expansion of markets of European circus productions it is also necessary to offer assistance with translation costs to the companies willing to tour internationally.

This workshop was moderated by Nathalie Vimeux, who has been the General Secretary of the Office national français de diffusion artistique (French National Office of Artistic Distribution or ONDA, France) since 2007. Before that, she worked for the Avignon Festival as a project director (2005-2007) after having been in charge of the Eastern European programme (1999-2003). She put into place and coordinated the Theorem project (1998-2005), a platform of projects bringing together 26 directors of European theatres and festivals whose common goal is to support and distribute the work of young artists of Eastern and Central Europe. She was also an administrator at the Centre national français du Théâtre (French National Theatre Centre or CNT) and worked for two editions of the international festival Les Allumées in Nantes.

6^{bis}. The driving networks

Article by **Morgane Le Gallic**

While institutional support does exist in Europe, and especially in France, nothing can replace the determination of people like Ivan Kralj in Croatia, or Tomi Purovaara in Finland, or the energy of people like the Colporteurs' high-wire artists.

It would seem that circus companies in Europe are not in such a bad situation. Can we imagine a world in which circus tents can effortlessly cross borders, or one in which borders are abolished by the often universal language of the contemporary circus? According to the protagonists of today's circus, who gathered together at the Fresh Circus seminar at La Villette, there is still a long way to go. While a certain number of countries (France, Belgium, the Scandinavian countries ...) are at the vanguard, others chronically suffer from a lack of support and recognition, be it institutional or among the media. Here is a quick overview of the ideas gleaned to promote greater solidarity within the European circus world.

France, the land of plenty

Although few of its inhabitants may realise it, France is often referred to as a circus haven as far as support for artistic teams is concerned. The successful co-existence of amateur and professional networks and the wide variety of support available for creative work have cleared the way and allowed the contemporary circus to blossom over the past thirty years. Thanks to the groundwork carried out by a handful of festivals, distribution has progressively spread out to traditional performance spaces, and circus artists have even been dubbed 'authors' by the sacrosanct SACD (Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques).

For a while French companies had a near monopoly in foreign festivals, but now the circle has opened up. This is because training institutions, above all the CNAC, have taken in many foreign students who then return to their country of origin.

The Scandinavian Spingtime

Tomi Purovaara, the Director of Cirko in Helsinki recognises that the presence of Finnish students in European schools was the initial force bringing about new encounters and exchange with foreign programmers. Since the year 2000 he has slowly but surely obtained public grants to develop within Cirko the activity of promoting and providing information on both the circus and circus production. "We do not suffer the heavy weight of tradition, as is the case for countries like Italy. We were starting from scratch in Finland, which made the challenge all the more interesting". Now Finland has made itself a key player in the world of the contemporary circus by creating a network of dynamic schools. Cirko is thinking big and has partnered up with the cultural centre of Helsinki to create a regional circus centre in a former gas plant. In 2010, it will open its doors to host a festival, a rehearsal and residency space, and an information centre dedicated to the contemporary Finnish circus.

On all fronts

By fighting to obtain grants and schools, Tomi Purovaara, the director of the information centre Cirko in Helsinki, has placed Finland into the creative ring.

Finland does not have a circus tradition per se and, as such, did not have to kill the father before throwing itself into the circus ring. Since the year 2000, the very active new circus centre Cirko, which was established in Helsinki, has been fighting on all fronts: information, production and distribution. Tomi Purovaara, who directs the centre, concedes that "it is thanks to the presence of Finnish students in foreign schools that Finland has been able to forge relationships with foreign professionals and begin to shine. Thus, Jani Nuutinen of the Circo Aereo company was the first Finnish student to enter the Cnac (of Châlons-en-Champagne) in 1998".

Support for the circus arts has been in full swing in Finland since 2002 with the first grant allocated by the Finnish Ministry of Culture. Twenty-five recreational schools ensure the discovery of an art and several disciplines within the country while two professional schools nurture the artists of tomorrow. Cirko has been a leading figure in production and distribution by helping companies with their transport and tour costs, and also hosting an international festival.

"Cirko is now integrated in the Circostrada network as well as in the New Nordic Circus Network, a network of Scandinavian countries that defend the contemporary circus. In honour of the occasion, we are hosting a selection platform as part of Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe. But clearly, if political support and greater resources are not granted to companies, they will all export themselves abroad." Let's wager on the Finnish circus reaching its age of reason before too long.

Interview taken by Morgane Le Gallic.
www.circo.net

From the boost given by the Cirkus Cirkör company in Sweden to the scout work carried out by the KIT festival in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Scandinavian countries have proven themselves to be good students regarding production and distribution. The sun is also rising in the East with the recent or potential entries into the European Union, who are compensating for a dire lack of

funding with an iron will. Such is the case of Ivan Kralj, the founder of Novog Cirkusa in Zagreb, Croatia. He began his festival with the help of international support as well as through his own personal financial commitment. Hosting companies from France and throughout Europe who are often performing for the first time abroad, Ivan Kralj notes with satisfaction "that Novog Cirkusa has received strong regional and European support". He is optimistic about the festival's evolution and would like to see an increase in the Croatian financial contribution to spare his team from exhausting itself in the solicitation of funds.

High-wire artists against solitude

In parallel with the institutional mechanisms, companies also invent forms of informal exchange with their neighbours. One example of this is the initiative put forth by the Colporteurs company, which invited high-wire artists to gather together for a convention in the month of July in Bourg-Saint-Andéol in the Ardèche region. "The high wire is a very solitary discipline", explains Fanny Du Pasquier, the company's administrator. "For two days, we placed forty-five high-wire artists from thirteen different countries in different spaces of the Maison des Arts du Clown in Bourg-Saint-Andéol. We installed wires everywhere, which created an extraordinary emulation in terms of practice and technique."

Some came with their own gear and others did not. They all came at their own cost and found lodging once they arrived. The experience is repeated every other month now. Fanny Du Pasquier does, however, qualify the ease with which companies are able to travel with their circus tents in Europe. For the Colporteurs' latest show, *Le Fil Sous la Neige*, the tour is going well, but the circus tent's transportation fees and the camping fees represent such a great cost that some countries are unable to host them without the support of CulturesFrance, the DRAC, and the Rhône-Alpes region.

"We will have to think of standardising European technical norms, regarding bleachers, for example. A compatibility problem recently cost us a performance date in Germany", Fanny Du Pasquier points out. One easily assumes that this kind of work site will not be a priority for the 27-member European Union. It is a shame, for once again the circus and circus tent will be the first ones threatened by this formatting.

Michel Almon, the artistic co-director of the Janvier dans les Etoiles Festival, is campaigning in the same direction, and believes that "a European standardisation of performance security norms would allow for greater porosity between countries." This year, the festival will be hosting an equal number of French and foreign companies, and we notice that, in terms of quality, the European productions can easily compete with the French ones. "We also decided with the CREAC [European Research Centre for the Circus Arts in Marseille] in Marseille to host two European companies from Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe for a creative residency at the CREAC and for distribution at the Janvier dans les Etoiles Festival. We cannot do without an international presence if we want to have a truly diversified performance programme that may suit both a domestic audience and a more informed one."

Conventions, platforms and networks all remain flexible so as to leave room for many kinds of audacious approaches. To counterbalance the weight of European institutions, the Europe of the circus world must invent new tools (political, technical and financial) to support the performances of a fledgling and fragile art.

Croatian pressure

Ivan Kralj reached into his own pocket to begin Novog Cirkusa, the international festival in Zagreb, in the hopes of opening a door for young Croatian circus artists.

Supported by the Mala Performaska Scena association since 2005, the contemporary circus appeared in the Novog Cirkusa festival in Zagreb in a country where it was far from being a cultural priority. Ivan Kralj, the structure's director, himself invested financially in the festival to put an end to the prejudices of audiences and structures alike against the circus. "We decided to take the audience off-guard and to programme not only established international successes, but also creations that would be presented for the first time."

He therefore hosted shows from Portugal, Finland and, of course, from France, although he makes sure that the festival does not become purely Francophone. With the help of foreign embassies and cultural centres, he puts together a diverse and well-informed performance programme, as with the French Institute in Zagreb "which plays a crucial role, not only for the sums that it grants us, but even more so for the financial and moral support that it offers to young Croatian projects."

In the end, Ivan Kralj would like to see the Croatian contemporary circus develop beyond the performances offered as part of Novog Cirkusa and the commercial performances to which it is now limited. While the regional and international partners rightfully appreciate the enormous job taken on by the association, the desire to defend the circus artists of tomorrow must come from Croatia itself.

Interview taken by Morgane Le Gallic.
www.cirkus.hr

7. What does 'contemporary circus' mean?

Conclusion proposed by **Tiago Bartolomeu Costa**

Tiago Bartolomeu Costa is a dance critic and founder of the stage arts magazine *Obscena* (Lisbon, Portugal). He regularly contributes to the daily newspaper *Público* (Portugal), the magazines *Mouvement* (France), *Ballettanz* (Germany), *Maska* (Slovenia) and *Stradda* (France), as well as the website www.idanca.net (Brazil). He is also a member of the International Consulting Bureau of the Divadelná Nitra Festival (Slovakia) and the International Association of Critics and is a voting member of the Europe Theatre Prize for New Theatrical Realities. These past few years, he has held critic workshops in Spain, Austria, Lebanon, Turkey, Italy and Portugal.

TEAM Network, which I have the honour of representing before you today, was created in 2006 at the initiative of the French revue *Mouvement*. It includes sixteen European revues from eleven different countries. *Stradda*, which you all know well, is the network's only publication dedicated to the circus and street arts.

We acknowledge that we have not allotted much space to the circus in our revues. We are not afraid to admit that we still do not know exactly how this should be done. This is why we've put into place a plan of action regarding this discipline: we will organize a residency-workshop for critics in June of 2009 in collaboration with the *Des Auteurs, des Cirques* festival at the Parc de la Villette (Paris, France) and in collaboration with the *Circostrada* Network. This residency will host editors and collaborators from our revues. But we also need your help, your comments and your publicity, and we need to know what it is that you want. This network of revues exists because artists exist. Revues do not have the desire or ambition to take on the role of artists. However, the dialogue cannot continue to be a unilateral one.

In preparing my brief conclusion, I realised that the title of this seminar was not "for the development of the new circus", but rather, "for the development of the contemporary circus". It's interesting to examine this change of designation –which involves a change of meaning for the intervention of the artistic project– especially when this term is used to define a discipline that has not yet managed to find its own recognised place amongst the other performing arts disciplines. As you know better than I, the circus lacks institutional and political recognition (the level of funding is very low and often nonexistent), as well as intellectual and critical recognition (reception of the work).

This designation seems strange to me when placed in the context of a discourse on contemporary creation in the performing arts,

founded on the desire to reach out to an audience, on the rhetoric of cross-disciplinarity, on the ambition of presenting oneself as an easily accessible (and therefore very democratic) aesthetic form, but also, and for good reason, on the illusion of including a wide and diverse audience. It also seems strange in that the discourse on contemporary creation relegates the circus to the background.

It is often said that in the hierarchy of public recognition for major art forms (and therefore in the level of their allotted public funding), the performing arts are, in comparison with the visual arts and cultural heritage, like an antelope for the lions. To stay with the food chain metaphor, you know better than I that the circus is more like a rat handed over to the serpents.

This situation can be witnessed by observing certain elements: the lack of a definition for the discipline works against you, for although we like the hybrid nature of artistic proposals, we are unable to accept a work when we do not know what kind of work it is. What you present is put into question due to the ambiguous manner in which it is perceived. Venues want entertainment and adopt an event-by-event policy rather than a mid-term and long-term strategy. The fragility of this context is fed by and takes advantage of your natural inclination for presenting and showing what is called the 'honest, creative urgency'. The context takes advantage of you to create moments of instant gratification rather than a bilateral relationship between creation and reception.

Why is this change of definition necessary? Are we really dealing with a different notion of the circus? Is it a notion that integrates the elements of the market and of marketing so that the shows 'sell' better? It might not be a bad thing if this were the reason – a true *zeitgeist*. Lofty values aside, no one wants to live in financial insecurity. Art for the love of art, money for the love of God. Perhaps this term is merely an act of cosmetic surgery, intended to 'sell' the circus better. I know you may find this to be a shocking hypothesis.

Or perhaps we have finally arrived at a discourse that rejects sectarianism, forces openness in artistic creation –which is not the same thing as inter-disciplinarity– and proposes a different way of addressing what is presented as a performance and not as an exhibition of unlimited abilities, and in your non-fictional cases, of performers?

If this is the case, it would be more interesting to work on the widening of the definition of the circus rather than to say that this is one thing and that is another and it is entirely different from us. For, in truth, you will find differences amongst yourselves without having to look for them elsewhere. And so why use the word 'contempo-

TEAM Network

In the hopes of promoting an increased level of international cooperation as well as the open exchange of ideas, the constitution of TEAM (Transdisciplinary European Art Magazines Network) has spoken out in favour of a communal discussion of various essential issues, as well as a common, collegially agreed-upon definition for an ensemble of projects.

Confronted with the current restrictive economic reality and with the need for strong political and intellectual discussion of contemporary creative works, these magazines felt the need to share and contrast their critical perspective and practices as independent publishers.

TEAM was founded two years ago by ten magazines –Alternatives Théâtrales (Belgium), Art'O (Italy), Ballet-Tanz (Germany), Danstidningen (Sweden), Highlights (Greece), Maska (Slovenia), Mouvement (France), Obscena (Portugal), Scènes (Belgium), Stradda (France)– and aims to contribute on both the European and international level to the circulation of writing, ideas and knowledge in the domain of the arts. It also aims to contribute to greater mobility for workers within the cultural sector; to open communication between independent publishers of all countries; to the promotion of intercultural dialogue and respect for cultural diversity and multilingualism; to increased awareness of cultural life; and to the defence of contemporary artistic creation as an essential, cross-border element of our societies.

TEAM network has conceived of several types of actions to accomplish these missions: editorial exchanges between magazines, the publication of a yearly, communal and multilingual magazine issue, the creation of a resource website and the distribution of e-newsletters, the organisation of workshops for young critics as a part of international festivals.

www.team-network.eu

rary', which is broader and emptier and which does not actually offer anything new?

The term 'contemporary' says everything and nothing with regards to the theatre and dance, for example. Today it serves as an excuse to say, and especially to do, anything one wants. One can say that it is the *zeitgeist*. We have once again committed errors in the name of contemporaneity. We have forgotten about heritage, evolution and the true desire to communicate, as we are faced with the opportunism of certain artists, programmers and audiences that say "well, its of our time".

So what does the circus want? Does it want to recover a definition that no one believes in? Does it want to use a rather generic and particularly rhetorical word to define itself? Today, is being traditional not the most radical, innovative and intelligent gesture there is? To know how to gauge references, recognise influences and set a discourse without bogging it down with a demand for novelty? Is that not the reason why you have abandoned the expression 'new circus'? The reason why you do not wish to remain trapped in artistic emergence? Because, like yogurt, 'new' has an expiration date? If you have decided not to go on being thought of as yogurt, then why believe that you can be fusion cuisine?

I wanted to talk about the lessons that critics could learn from circus practices. I have to tell you that when I said that to my colleagues and friends, most of them looked at me with suspicion. "What do you mean 'lessons'? Critics don't need 'lessons'", I was told. But I am becoming increasingly cynical and pragmatic –an occupational hazard, surely.

However, to respond more concretely to both the invitation that was extended to me, and to your curiosity, if you allow me to believe that it exists, I will tell you this: if the circus is synonymous with a laboratory, then the critic must also be thought of as a permanent and intense research laboratory, less concerned with the establishment of an objective and more focussed on a diagnosis that leads to deep reflection and discussion. This is why we created a program of action for the circus critic at TEAM Network: "To become travel companions with creation", as Hans-Thies Lehmann said.

This is also what we should expect from a discipline that has had the courage to abandon its classification as 'new', not in order to say that it is 'contemporary' –for we are all contemporary but it doesn't necessarily bring us together– but to say, as I hope it will, that it is 'of today'.

I heard a wonderful definition yesterday: classical circus and circus of today. Meaning that one understands that being contemporary does not help a discipline that does not want to include itself in the context, but rather to passively say that it is part of the context. No one can say, "I am contemporary" without bursting into laughter. It's like saying "I am honest". A person who would say that is not really honest. A person who says, "I am contemporary" wants to belong to a context but does not take part in it. And I hope that person will never be part of it. To be 'of today', on the other hand, is an entire agenda in that we do not need to say that we are current. We just are, that's it. We simply use whatever skills we have to indicate what it is that we belong to. And, above all, we do not propose another world within this one. We transform the world. Isn't this what we are really after, not as a utopia, but as reality?

I like to quote a phrase from Homi Bhabha, who specialises in reflecting upon the state of the world: "when the world becomes dark due to contradicting and ambivalent opinions, aesthetics –fiction,

art, poetry, theory and metaphor illuminate our cultural and political position. At the centre of the aesthetic experience we find the communicative voice of cultural expression, wherein human creativity and political democracy stand".

We must take on the definition of the circus as it is, as well as the fact that democracy works. Instead of fighting against traditionalism, we should accept it and disrupt it. Even if you wind up proposing the same thing, the road is an individual one and that is precisely what the circus must teach the critic. It is this notion of proximity, of complicity, of anchoring oneself to the cities and to the needs of the public, in the centre of artistic discourse, in the melange between investment and improvisation, between technique and freedom, between metaphor and pragmatism.

In short, I believe that abandoning the notion of contemporary would be the most radical and contemporary of gestures, as opposed to accepting it so as to feel that one belongs to a creative context. As you have proven these past two days, your problems are the same as those found in all other disciplines. So I encourage you to bring your originality to this great battle of the performing arts. It is precisely that you do not need to say "I am here". You are already here.

Acknowledgements to respondents

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FRANCE

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CHRIS BARLTROP
CONSULTANT INDÉPENDANT
ET ARTISTE
UNITED KINGDOM

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FRANCE

CLAIRE PEYSSON
MAISON DES ARTS
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FRANCE

CLARA MATAS VIDAL
DEPARTAMENT
DE CULTURA I MITJANS
DE COMUNICACIÓ,
GENERALITAT DE CATALUÑA
SPAIN

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FRANCE

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SPAIN

CLÉMENCE COCONNIER
MEIDOSEMS
FRANCE

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ELODIE PILLOT
COMPAGNIE 36 DU MOIS -
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FRANCE

EVE DOMENACH
ECOLE DE CIRQUE DE LYON
FRANCE

FABIEN AUDOOREN
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LA GRAINERIE
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GÉRALDINE ELIE
MAISON DE LA CULTURE
DE TOURNAI
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GIACOMO SCALISI
CENTRO CULTURAL
DE BÉLEM
PORTUGAL

GWÉNOLA DAVID
CENTRE NATIONAL
DES ARTS DU CIRQUE
FRANCE

ISABELLE DUVAIL
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FRANCE

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SCENA
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JAN ROK ACHARD
CONSULTANT
EN DÉVELOPPEMENT
DES ARTS DE LA SCÈNE
CANADA

JEAN VINET
LA BRÈCHE
FRANCE

JEAN-MARC BROQUA
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ECOLE DE CIRQUE DE LYON
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JEAN-PIERRE MARCOS
AMIENS MÉTROPOLE
FRANCE

JOHANNA MÄKELÄ
FINNISH CIRCUS
INFORMATION CENTRE
FINLAND

JONATHAN SUTTON
GARDENS
FRANCE

JORDI JANE
ASSOCIACIÓ
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JUSZTINA HERMANN
CIRKUSINHÁZ PRODUKCIÓ
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KAARINA GOULD
HELSINKI FESTIVAL
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KATRIEN VERWILT
KØBENHAVNS
INTERNATIONALE TEATER
DENMARK

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CULTUURCENTRUM DE SPIL
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LAURA VAN DER MEER
EUROPEAN CIRCUS
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FRANCE

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ARTISTE DE CIRQUE
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COMPANY KIMONOKÉ
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FRANCE

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CZECH REPUBLIC

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VILLE DE LYON -
LES RENCONTRES
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RELAIS CULTURE EUROPE
FRANCE

PATRICIA KAPUSTA
LE PRATO
FRANCE

PHILIPPE DEMAN
MAISON DE LA CULTURE
DE TOURNAI
BELGIUM

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FRANCE

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SWEDEN

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FRANCE

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GREECE

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TRIB'ALT, COOPÉRATIVE
DE CIES ET D'ARTISTES
FRANCE

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INTERNATIONALE TEATER
DENMARK

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COMPAGNIE 36 DU MOIS -
CIRQUE 360
FRANCE

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OBSCENA
PORTUGAL

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CIRCUS CIRKÖR
SWEDEN

TIM BEHREN
HEADFEEDHANDS
GERMANY

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THE CIRCUS SPACE
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FINNISH CIRCUS
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FINLAND

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SYNDICAT DU CIRQUE
DE CRÉATION
FRANCE

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FRANCE

ZITA HERMANN
TRAFÓ, HOUSE
OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS
HUNGARY

ZSÓFIA MOLNÁR
TRAFÓ, HOUSE
OF CONTEMPORARY ARTS
HUNGARY

Programme of the event

September 25, 2008

9:30-11:15 Plenary session

- > Welcome by Jacques Martial (President of Le Parc et de la Grande Halle de la Villette) and Jean Digne (President of HorsLesMurs)
- > Opening by Thierry Pariente, Head of Theatre at the Direction of music, dance, theatre and performances (DMDTS) of the French Ministry of Culture
- > The cultural dimension of the French Presidency of the EU by Laurent Burin des Rozières (General Curator of the European Cultural Season)
- > European Agenda for Culture, a new dialogue with the civil society? by Aline Denis (Directorate-general for Education and Culture, European Commission)
- > Roles and contributions from performing arts European networks by Pascal Brunet (Director of Relais Culture Europe)
- > Stakes and objectives of Fresh Circus seminary by Stéphane Simonin (Director of HorsLesMurs)

11:30-13:30 Working sessions

Access to the circus profession

Speakers: Tim Roberts (The Circus Space, UK), Gwénola David (Centre national des arts du cirque, France)
Moderator: Jan-Rok Achard (Consultant, Quebec, Canada)
Reporter: Jean Vinet (La Brèche, France)

Technical regulations involving circus tents

Speakers: Ute Classen (Ute Classen Kulturmanagement, Allemagne), Arie Oudenes (European Circus Association, Netherlands)
Moderator: Gentiane Guillot (HorsLesMurs, France)
Reporter: Verena Cornwall (Circus Arts Forum, UK)

Creativity and innovation in the contemporary circus

Speakers: Katrien Verwilt (Københavns Internationale Teater, Denmark), Tilde Björfors (Cirkus Cirkör, Sweden)
Moderator: Claude Véron (Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe, France)
Reporter: Yohann Floch (HorsLesMurs/Circostrada Network, France)

15:00-17:00 Working sessions

Knowledge and access to information

Speakers: Yannis Jean (Syndicat du cirque de création, France), Camilla Damkjaer (université de Stockholm, Sweden)
Moderator: Stéphane Simonin (HorsLesMurs, France)
Reporter: Kiki Muukkonen (Subtopia, Sweden)

Diversity and intercultural dialogue

Speakers: Rachel Clare (Crying out loud, UK), Martin Gerbier (Fédération française des écoles de cirque, France)
Moderator: Patricia Kapusta (Le Prato, France)
Reporter: Anne Tucker (Manchester International Arts, UK)

Production and distribution of circus works

Speakers: Marc Fouilland (Territoires de cirque, France), Giacomo Scalisi (Centro cultural de Bélem, Portugal)
Moderator: Nathalie Vimeux (ONDA-Office national de diffusion artistique, France)
Reporter: Tomi Purovaara (Cirko, Finland)

September 26, 2008

9:30-11:00 Plenary session

Thematic syntheses

Tomi Purovaara, Anne Tucker, Kiki Muukkonen, Verena Cornwall, Jean Vinet, Yohann Floch.

11:15-12:30 Plenary session

Networks at work

- > Circus as element of European Culture by Laura van der Meer (European Circus Association Representative in Brussels)
- > From education to work market: imagine new links by Tim Roberts (Administrator, European Federation of Circus Schools)
- > Cirque and the cities by Pascale Bonniel-Chalier (Councillor to the mayor of Lyon city, Les Rencontres network Representative)
- > Circus arts and the cultural Europe by Yohann Floch (Coordinator of Circostrada Network)
- > What does mean 'contemporary circus'? by Tiago Bartolomeu Costa (Chief Editor of the magazine *Obscena*, TEAM Network Representative)

Event organised by Circostrada Network and HorsLesMurs, in partnership with the Parc de la Villette and the magazine Stradda. The seminar took place in the framework of 'Pop'S, festival pour des arts turbulents' and the European Cultural Season (July 1 - December 31, 2008) with the support of Cultures-france and the City of Paris.

HorsLesMurs · English publications on the street arts and circus



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Stradda is the French magazine on the circus and outdoor creation. A special issue, entirely in English will be published in November 2009. It will consist of thematic dossiers focusing on the street arts and circus in Europe. This issue will include articles on the street and circus arts that have appeared in Stradda's previous publications (nos. 1 to 14) .

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HorsLesMurs · French national resource centre for street arts and circus.
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HorsLesMurs · 68, rue de la Folie Méricourt · 75011 Paris · France
Tel. : +33 (0) 1 55 28 10 10 · info@circostrada.org · info@horslesmurs.fr

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CIRCOSTRADA NETWORK

Circostrada Network - street arts and circus arts
European platform for information, research and professional exchanges

Circostrada Network works towards the development and structuring of the circus arts and street arts on the European scale. Although these sectors represent a dynamic contribution to the European arts, they are in need of a common forum to allow for collaboration, discussion and professional representation at the European level. Founded in 2003 by HorsLesMurs and composed of over 30 correspondents, the network contributes to the sharing of information and resources within these artistic milieus by favouring encounters and co-operation between European professionals and by carrying out common actions to further the recognition of these artistic forms.

Circostrada Network

c/o HorsLesMurs - 68, rue de la Folie Méricourt - 75011 Paris - France
T. +33 (0)1 55 28 10 10 - F. +33 (0)1 55 28 10 11

info@circostrada.org

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