



# CASA

MULTIMEDIA MARKET GUIDE  
CZECH REPUBLIC  
CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS CIRCUITS

# CASA

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# SHORT HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF THE CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS

The Czech theatre has been incorporating circus art and aesthetics since the avant-garde era. Such trends can be traced in the work of the best-known representatives of the Czech theatre avant-garde – most notably that of Jiří Frejka, who started out working with the Liberated Theatre. The first performance of the Liberated Theatre, marking its launch in 1926, was a new premiere of Molière's *George Dandin*, called *Cirkus Dandin*. The production was a mixture of clowning and farce, and made use of dancers, clowns, jugglers and harlequins. From 1960 on, we can see further signs of circus' influence on modern Czech physical theatre. It was particularly clear in the work of Ctibor Turba, a leading artist and pioneer of non-verbal theatre and clowning who was also an important teacher. In 1974, Turba won a scholarship to study under Professor Jacques Lecoq in Paris, and went on to work as a director, dramaturg and mime with theatres in Locarno, Paris and Berlin. He also taught in the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (HAMU), at Scuola Teatro Dimitri, and at CNAC. Turba was also one of the first theatre artists to begin staging his theatrical clown productions in a circus tent.

Before 1989 the performing arts, especially its newer forms, could not develop freely. After the Velvet Revolution on 17 November 1989, and following the democracy established in its wake, the situation of the Czech artistic world changed. Ctibor Turba started to invite to the Czech Republic students and performers he met at the Dimitri School or in CNAC. Collaborative creative interventions, street theatre performances, even pieces with marionettes, started to emerge.

In the 90s, and later even at the turn of the Millennium, some Czech groups started to use circus art in their performances or cooperated with foreign (contemporary) circus professionals. One of these groups was The Forman Brothers' Theatre, which left for France at the beginning of the 90s and there became a partner of Théâtre National de Bretagne. The group soon used circus in their performance *La Baraque* (1997) in cooperation with Volière Dromesko.





**D**ivadlo CONTINUO Theatre is another early figure in the Czech contemporary circus – an international, independent theatre group which since 1995 has been based in the village Malovice near České Budějovice. So far they have concentrated on creating open-air theatre that plays in the countryside or in the streets. One of their most famous performances is *The flow of time* (2004), with acrobats Salvi Salvatore and Seiline Vallée. In 2006 these two artists established their own company *Décalages - Theatre of movement* that draws on contemporary circus forms.

**W**e first started talking about ‘contemporary circus’ in the Czech Republic when *Letní Letná* festival was established in 2004. It was the first festival to regularly import contemporary circus companies and thereby to raise awareness of this artistic style. Before *Letná* there were only one-off events. From around 2007, Czech companies and organisations devoted to the development of contemporary circus started to gradually come into being.

**C**zech contemporary circus did not emerge so much out of the circus arts as out of the theatre arts – its stories and themes – which then became an important source of the aesthetics of new circus productions. As elsewhere in Europe, contemporary circus projects in the Czech Republic are multi-genre productions that overlap with theatre (non-verbal and traditional), dance and music.



PHDR. HANUŠ JORDAN, CIRCUS  
AND VARIETY COLLECTION  
MANAGER, THEATRE DEPARTMENT,  
NATIONAL MUSEUM & MUSEUM  
OF CZECH PUPPETS AND CIRCUS

**What are the most important challenges for circus/  
street arts in your country, particularly when it  
comes to marketing and audience development?**

It is to maintain informal and non-competitive cooperation between all organisations in the field, from 'established' companies like Cirk La Putyka, Cirkus Mlejn and Losers Cirque Company, to institutionalised festivals like Letní Letná or Cirk UFF and umbrella institutions such as Cirqueon. Independent contemporary circus projects and individuals employed by institutions (as I am at the National Museum circus collection and Museum of Czech puppets and circus) cannot stand by. It is necessary to leave the flat and out-dated term 'new circus' behind and to talk about circus arts. A further challenge is the cooperation of different, even unique companies working in circus, movement, alternative music, and theatre.



# PUBLIC POLICIES AND SUPPORT SCHEMES

## Government policy

The Ministry of Culture draws up the State Culture Policy once every five years, with the current plan covering 2015-2020. This is a strategic document that provides a general summary of the needs of, and goals for, cultural support in the Czech Republic. Neither contemporary circus nor street arts / arts in public space are established or even independent art forms with specific support areas. Instead these artistic areas are part of a wider policy of the Ministry of Culture that supports live art with grant programmes at a national level.

The independent Department of Arts, Literature and Libraries administers professional artistic funding, and once a year opens grant programmes in five areas, two of which apply to contemporary circus and streets arts: 'Dance, movement and non-verbal theatre' and 'Theatre arts'. Street arts which overlap fine arts can apply in the 'Fine art' category, though it depends on the nature of the project. The amounts allocated to support individual areas have varied in the past few years; until 2014 they mostly decreased, and promises that 1% of the state budget for Culture would go to circus and street arts have not produced visible results. Contemporary circus projects are supported, though unsystematically, within the two categories mentioned. Cirk La Putyka and Losers Cirque Company consistently apply within theatre, while other artists, festivals and companies apply within professional dance and non-verbal theatre.

The Ministry of Culture's Department of International Relations oversees the support of Czech cultural 'exports' and the presentation of Czech Culture abroad. In 2014 the total sum marked for this programme was 12 million CZK (approx. 450,000 EUR).

The State Fund of Culture is another national body that distributes cultural funding. Its budget is part of the state budget and is therefore approved by the Ministry of Finance and the Parliament of the Czech Republic. The State Fund of Culture supplements the grant programme of the Ministry of Culture; it has its own rules and expert committee. In 2014 it distributed 35,209,875 CZK (approx. 1,171,268 EUR) within its Art department:

<b>Grant selection procedure results</b>		
<small>(from the 2014 annual report of the Czech Ministry of Culture)</small>		
<b>MCCR</b>	<b>total amount</b>	<b>number of projects</b>
Theatre art	33,281,000 CZK	68
Dance, movement and nonverbal theatre	18,860,000 CZK	54
Fine art	43,503,000 CZK	165
Program for orchestras and choirs	83,900,000 CZK	27

Out of those figures 2,120,000 CZK (approx 78,388 EUR) went to circus and 1,950,000 CZK (approx 72,101 EUR) to street arts.

## Prague City Hall

On the regional level, Prague City Hall is a great art funder and supporter. Prague City has a so-called Cultural Policy Concept. Prague offers different levels of cultural support. First of all it protects its own internal organisations, which are financed directly from the city's own budget and therefore cut out a considerable chunk of the culture budget. Another element, however, is the Prague City Partnership, which invites applications from outstanding cultural events. The projects are viewed by the Prague City Committee for culture, historical monuments care, exhibitions, tourism and foreign affairs, and this programme is an important political tool for winning support for projects. A final and very important programme is the Grant Programme, which offers the possibility of one to four years of financial support. During the last five years there have been turbulent discussions over the grant system, with the commercial and artistic worlds in dispute.



In 2014, the city distributed Prague City Hall Grants totalling 208 million CZK (approx. 7,680,000 EUR), and Prague City Hall Partnership grants worth more than 29 million CZK (app. 1,070,000 EUR), according to the official results of Prague City Hall grant programme.

Departments	total amount
Theatre art	128,225,000 CZK (approx. 4,730,000 EUR)
Dance, movement and nonverbal theatre	24,075,000 CZK (approx. 890,000 EUR)
Fine art	21,620,000 CZK (approx. 799,000 EUR)

Out of the above, 3,690,000 CZK (approx. 136,429 EUR) went to circus and 1,090,000 CZK (approx. 40,300 EUR) to street arts.



## PAVLA PETROVÁ, DIRECTOR, ARTS AND THEATRE INSTITUTE

What do you see as your most important task in circus/street arts in your country?

The Arts and Theatre Institute is trying to define contemporary circus and mime among other genres of performing arts, which is a long-term strategic task. We have also been developing this work through international cooperation – by inviting foreign workshop lecturers or foreign promoters and curators to festivals and presentations of contemporary circus in the Czech

Republic, or vice versa by sending representatives of the fields we represent on short-term trips. The Arts and Theatre Institute's mission is to promote the Czech performing arts abroad, and contemporary circus, free as it often is of language barriers, has great potential for succeeding on the international stage. Contemporary circus representatives are therefore regular participants at international performing arts fairs where ATI ensures Czech participation. Contemporary circus is also represented in our printed and electronic publications, guides and for-export catalogues or expert studies. In the future we would like to promote the sector even more and build the theoretical background of the field by organising conferences and symposiums.



# CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS COMPANIES CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE COUNTRY

Defining and counting artists or artistic groups from either area is very challenging. On its website Cirqueon presents a list of groups and projects in the contemporary circus field, but we need to point out that the artists themselves often do not create work falling strictly into one category, which of course is their right. Artists simply create and do not try to fit their work into a category. We often speak about multidisciplinary and cross-genre work.

There is no truly valid research or statistical analysis of contemporary circus or street artists in the Czech Republic – whether looking at the number of artistic groups or projects. In addition, most artists are part of multiple projects run by different organisations. Contemporary circus and street arts represent smaller artistic genres, or independent scenes, within which there is no special or specific education system. It is hard to reflect on or grasp this field in dates and numbers. After all, we can spend a long time discussing who should even be defined as a Czech contemporary circus or street arts professional and who should not.

Some examples:

## Cirk La Putyka

Cirk La Putyka is the biggest and at present the most popular Czech company devoted to contemporary circus. It tries to erase the boundaries between acrobatics, contemporary dance, puppet theatre, music and sport. It creates its own specific poetics and its own take on the genre.

[www.laputyka.cz](http://www.laputyka.cz)

## Loser(s) Cirque Company

Loser(s) Cirque Company is a new Czech acrobatic company with two successful contemporary circus projects – *The Loser(s)* (2014) and *Wall(s) & Handbags* (2015). A core team of acrobats invite artists from other disciplines – whether directors, dramaturgs or choreographers – to collaborate with them on each project, bringing unique poetics to the Czech stage. At present the company are also preparing a European tour, and in the future hope to succeed in the European market.

[www.loserscirque.cz](http://www.loserscirque.cz)

## Teatr Novogo Fronta

The origin of Teatr Novogo Fronta lies in St. Petersburg, Russia. After their first tour in 1994 they settled in Prague, Czech Republic. Teatr Novogo Fronta's creativity and stage presentation is impressive both in its scale and variety, ranging from street theatre and improvised sets, to exacting plays directed on classical theatre stages. Theatre critics describe their work as a "bitter dance grotesque", "divided dance", or compare their movement act to butoh. TNF won a Total Theatre Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2008.

[www.tnf.cz](http://www.tnf.cz)

## V.O.S.A.

V.O.S.A. Theatre is a group of acrobats and performers that transform the street into one big stage, spontaneously integrating balconies, street lights, and, most importantly, the audience into the action. They give spectators a new perspective on the city. The group was established in 2010 to coincide with the Czech Republic's presentation at the EXPO 2010 World's Fair in Shanghai.

[www.vosatheatre.cz](http://www.vosatheatre.cz)

## Kvelb

A strolling puppet and street theatre, Kvelb is a professional independent theatre with a distinctive creative style incorporating elements of music, dance and juggling. The group tours and performs in the Czech Republic and abroad.

[www.kvelb.com](http://www.kvelb.com)

# FESTIVALS AND VENUES PROGRAMMING CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS

The Arts and Theatre Institute collates a database of all festivals and theatres in the Czech Republic. This complex address list of theatre companies, festivals, theatres and other organisations is available in Czech at [www.divadlo.cz](http://www.divadlo.cz). For foreign professionals there's also [www.theatre.cz](http://www.theatre.cz), which offers a database of companies and performances chosen by the expert committee for 'touring' abroad. Cirqueon follows the contemporary circus field and offers a database of companies, performances and festivals on its own website [www.cirqueon.cz](http://www.cirqueon.cz). In the Czech Republic today there are a few specialist events that present only contemporary circus companies: Letní Letná, Cirkopolis, Fun Fatal, Cirk-UFF, and Fresh Maněž. These are important events, and each year they are joined by more small festivals. It is difficult to estimate the total number of theatres and theatre festivals that programme circus performances. With street arts, the situation is more difficult. There is no reliable database of festivals or theatres, and on top of this many events are organised by regional towns. A large percentage of theatre festivals have outdoor work in both their main and off programmes. The estimated number of events currently presenting street arts in the Czech Republic is around fifteen.



MICHAELA HOLBÍKOVÁ,  
ARTS MANAGER, ART PROMETHEUS

What do you see as your most important task in circus/street arts in your country

I consider the progress of the contemporary circus or street arts to be an important objective. However, any progress needs to respect the types of audience we have in the Czech Republic, staying attentive to their feelings and desires. Not flowing like a flood, but in harmony with them.







Some festivals:

## Letní Letná – International Festival of New Circus and Theatre

Letní Letná is the most important and also the oldest festival presenting contemporary circus in the Czech Republic. Over the years it has gained significant financial and media partners and grown in popularity. Prague citizens now cannot imagine the last two weeks of August without a city of tents at the heart of their metropolis. International performances tend to be large-scale works presented in the circus tent. Thanks to this programming we have seen in Prague companies such as Cirque Ici, Cahin Caha, Les Colporteurs, Cirque Baroque, Cirque Trottola, Cirkus Cirkör, 7 Fingers, and NoFit State Circus. During the festival, Czech groups and artists are regularly given the stage, and the programme for children is also very broad.

[www.letniletna.cz](http://www.letniletna.cz)

## Cirkopolis

Organised by Cirqueon Center for contemporary circus in cooperation with Prague stage Palác Akropolis, Cirkopolis is a week-long festival in Prague in February focused on contemporary circus and the ways it overlaps other kinds of art. Each year since 2014 the festival has hosted three to five foreign companies that represent contemporary circus' innovative trends. Part of the programme is a yearly international premiere called Cirkopolis vol. XX.

[www.cirkopolis.cz](http://www.cirkopolis.cz)

## FunFatale

Since 2011 the Prague scene has benefited from a unique festival focused on women's contemporary circus. The programme is concentrated mainly on smaller companies and stages. The unique direction of the programming has great potential for further development.

[www.funfatale.cz](http://www.funfatale.cz)



## Cirk-UFF International Contemporary Circus Festival

Since 2011 Cirk-UFF International Contemporary Circus Festival has been a regular part of the season of UFFO Trutnov Cultural Centre, the newly built multi-functional theatre building in the centre of the town Trutnov in the north of the Czech Republic. Cirk-UFF is the only regional festival focused solely on contemporary circus. It is a unique event that presents high-quality foreign and Czech companies. International groups presented include Compagnie EaEo, Compagnie leto, Akoreacro, Lonely Circus, Sirkus Aikamoinen, etc.

[www.cirkuff.cz](http://www.cirkuff.cz)

## Za dveřmi Prague Street Theatre Festival

The street theatre festival Za dveřmi was established in 2009. The aim of the organisers is not only to liven up the capital's centre during the summer months, but also to bring unique foreign and Czech street artists to Prague. Za dveřmi also regularly moves from the capital to Plzeň in Western Bohemia, where it appears as Za dveřmi je Plzeň! within Living Streets Summer Festival.

[www.zadvermi.cz](http://www.zadvermi.cz)

## 4 + 4 Days in Motion International Festival of Contemporary Art

This festival has been organised since 1996 with the aim of presenting contemporary innovative art projects. Around twenty companies from all over the world appear at the festival each year. Its speciality lies mainly in bringing elements of Prague's architecture back to life through theatre and the presentation of international projects co-produced by the festival. 4 + 4 projects involve all kinds of contemporary art (theatre, dance, music, fine art, film, video art). Each festival year has a specific topic or theme. Special seminars and workshops are also always a part of the festival.

[www.ctyridny.cz](http://www.ctyridny.cz)

Some venues:

## Jatka 78

Jatka 78 is a multifunctional theatre, music club, gallery, training hall, studio and gymnasium. It is ideally suited to contemporary circus and serves as the home stage of Cirk La Putyka in Prague. The space is open to Czech and foreign companies, and hosts resident projects, performances, workshops, discussions and exhibitions.

[www.jatka.cz](http://www.jatka.cz)

## Diod Jihlava

In 2011 this relatively new space for independent projects was established in a reconstructed Sokol building in Jihlava (Vysočina region). The theatre's programming is open and hosts art and social projects by regional, national and international authors. Diod mainly presents drama and dance projects from across the nation, in this way broadening the awareness of contemporary art in the region.

[www.diod.cz](http://www.diod.cz)





## JIŘÍ TUREK, DIRECTOR, LETNÍ LETNÁ – INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF NEW CIRCUS AND THEATRE

**What are the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country, particularly when it comes to marketing and audience development?**

I think the most difficult and important challenge is to keep a long-term interest in this genre, not only within the professional field but also within the non-professional public. A challenge is also to gain respect and recognition from state organisations; to build and strengthen the position of Czech contemporary circus in the world as an equal, respected and innovative partner; and to establish

the country as a sought-after destination. It is necessary to enlarge professional bases in the whole Czech Republic, to create more smaller centres engaged in contemporary circus, even to implement lessons at regular schools within physical training. Connected with that is also the need to broaden and build a high-quality pedagogic base. It is necessary to financially ensure the hosting of top foreign educators, and internships abroad for students and professionals. Cirqueon could and should be a fundamental player as it has the widest base. The top would then be to have a national circus school with accreditation, or at least a strong or professionally conducted department at one of the existing art schools. A challenge could also be to try to gain more substantial and regular financial and material support from the state or private sector – perhaps even a new space suitable for presentation of this genre. (...)

When in 2004 I founded the first International Festival of New Circus and Theatre Letní Letná, my goal was to introduce and promote the unique genre of 'new circus' – at that time unknown to the general public in the Czech Republic. The aims were to establish the tradition of a respected and sought-after international festival, and to initiate the establishment and development of this art form in our country. I dare to say we succeeded in both. My challenge for the future is of course to continue presenting the latest works of the international contemporary circus field – to inform, to show, and to promote its dynamic development and transformation. (...) It is also my goal, for myself and the festival, to be above all a uniting element – among different subjects, organisations, artists, professionals and members of the public. I want to unite people and support positive cooperation. I also want to try to find and build a space where all of this could become a year-round reality. This is a lot for one person to do, and therefore I would like to hand down my experience to younger people, waking up their zeal, zest and enthusiasm to continue this work. Finally, I gave myself the task of saving a few classical wooden circus caravans so that the 'new ones' would know how the 'old ones' lived.



# EDUCATION AND TRAINING

As already mentioned, contemporary circus and street arts are not very well established forms in the Czech Republic, and this fact is evident in the lack of formalised education.

## Street Arts

There is no special education programme for street arts in the Czech Republic. Professionals emerge from the Academy of Performing Arts – originating in virtually all the departments there, including dramaturgy, stage design, dramatic theatre, and puppet theatre. Many artists also come from art schools.

## Contemporary Circus

There is no professional accredited circus school in the Czech Republic. Within university programmes in Prague you can find pantomime training at the Academy of Performing Arts, while Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno offers a unique programme devoted to clowning and physical theatre.

Circus artists 'learn as they go' during their creative work. The stage itself is their school. They attend different workshops and masterclasses both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Cirqueon offers casual training through afternoon courses, weekend intensive workshops, and international masterclasses within the framework of multiple European education projects. Generally this latter category concerns education for teachers and creative masterclasses for artists. An important goal of Cirqueon is also to work with young people, and to prepare talented individuals for study at professional circus schools abroad. Cirqueon offers free training for registered professionals.



## HAMU/The Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts – Department of Pantomime, Prague

The Department of Pantomime was founded at HAMU in 1992. It evolved out of a tradition of specialised study in the field of dance that was developed in the 1980s by Prof. Ladislav Fialka. After Prof. Fialka, Prof. Ctibor Turba continued the development of this field and introduced the wider concept of non-verbal theatre and comedy. Ctibor Turba was instrumental in advancing the field of movement theatre and modern pantomime not just in the Czech Republic but also in France and Switzerland. The programme focuses on three genres of movement theatre: pantomime, clown arts and farce. In recent years there has been growing interest in the study of circus techniques in the department.

**[www.hamu.cz](http://www.hamu.cz)**

## JAMU/Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno – Physical Theatre School, Brno

Acrobatics and clown arts are circus techniques taught in the Studio of Clown Arts for Stage and Film at JAMU. The studio was also founded by Ctibor Turba and it is currently headed by the French teacher Pierre Nadaud. The studio's aim is not to train contemporary circus artists but to cultivate performers who have an understanding of the current forms of performing arts, including new circus.

**[www.physicaltheatreschool.jamu.cz](http://www.physicaltheatreschool.jamu.cz)**

## Courses for children and young people

Education for children and young people is slowly growing in the Czech Republic. Among the organisations specialising in this field of education are Cirqueon Center for contemporary circus and Culture Centre Mlejn in Prague, Circus Legrando in Brno, Umčirkum in Ostrava, and Žonglér o.s. in Plzeň. In other towns there are smaller projects working within 'youth circus' that offer juggling courses and similar activities. Within the youth and social circus network CIRKONET (a Cirqueon project) these organisations and individuals meet once or twice a year to exchange their experiences in the field.

# CREATION AND RESIDENCY CENTRES

The system of creative and residency centres in the Czech Republic does not have a long history. It is still not easy for independent artists to find support besides that offered by grant-making bodies. Co-producers are hard to find and functioning residency programmes are scarce.

## Cirqueon Center for Contemporary Circus

In 2008, Cirqueon became the umbrella organisation for contemporary circus in the Czech Republic. Its primary activities are aimed at supporting and advancing contemporary circus in the Czech Republic and disseminating information about current events in this field. Since early 2010, it has had its own training centre, where it regularly offers courses in acrobatics and juggling for children, young people, and adults, and which also serves as a base where professional artists can engage in creative work. In 2014, the center has expanded its facilities and now is able to offer residencies (2-6 weeks) to support 8-10 new Czech performances and 2-3 international projects each year. Cirqueon provides rehearsal space and mentoring from a choreographer, a director or artistic supervisor depending on the artists' needs. Cirqueon also supports selected projects through co-production and assume accommodation and cover travel costs for international companies.

Cirqueon is an institution covering education, production and advocacy, and, thanks to its many contacts abroad and to international cooperation, it is able to bring to the Czech Republic essential information on circus education, cultural policy, management, international creative projects, and more. Cirqueon is a member of Circostrada network, FACE, FEDEC, and Caravan Network, and is a partner in the European education project EDUCIRCATION and a partner of the European platforms CircusNext and CASA Circuits.

[www.cirqueon.cz](http://www.cirqueon.cz)

## Plum Yard

Located in the middle of the small village Malovice in the South Bohemian region, Plum Yard offers space and facilities for individuals and groups to do creative work. Artists of all fields can apply for residency – theatre, dance, music and visual artists, translators and writers. Residencies last from one week to three months. An equipped, multifunctional theatre hall 12 x 18m and 10m high, a rehearsal room 10 x 12m and 5m high, and three studios are also part of the space. Office space, a kitchen and a theatre club are available. If agreed, tools and a workshop can be provided. The residents are offered accommodation in year-round heated caravans and other spaces in the immediate vicinity of the working area.

[www.svestkovydvur.cz](http://www.svestkovydvur.cz)

MGR. VOJTĚCH HOLICKÝ,  
PSYCHOLOGIST, PHDR. JAROSLAVA  
HOLICKÁ CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY  
AMBULANCE & MANAGER,  
CASCABEL JUGGLING CLUB

*What are the most important challenges for circus/  
street art in your country and specifically when it  
comes to audience and marketing development?*

Upgrading the level of artists and the clarity of what they present to local audiences. Gradually developing a systematic way of preparing youth and adult performers capable of independent work and involvement in group creation. Making the most of local traditions of physical and drama training. Balanced connection with local traditions as the spice of the circus and street arts' international spirit. Developing the potential of street arts in a variety of forms, and direct communication with the current audience that connects clarity with exoticism.





# ADVOCACY AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDERS

In the Czech Republic there are no advocacy agencies dedicated solely to protecting the interests of circus or street artists in the fields of cultural policy, social security or health insurance. Nevertheless there are two organisations in Prague that include contemporary circus and street arts development in their activities.

## The Arts and Theatre Institute

The Arts and Theatre Institute (ATI) is a state-funded organisation founded by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. The mission of the Arts and Theatre Institute is to provide the Czech and international public with a comprehensive range of services in the field of theatre, and individual services connected to other branches of the arts (music, literature, dance and visual arts). The ATI collects objects and work relating to the theatre, processing and providing access to them; pursues research; initiates and participates in international projects; and publishes scholarly work. The ATI is also the headquarters of the Creative Europe Desk Czech Republic.

[www.idu.cz](http://www.idu.cz)

## Cirqueon Center for contemporary circus

Apart from the many activities described above, Cirqueon's main mission is to provide information about local and European activities in the circus field: it collects and publishes data, and houses a documentary centre which gathers documents as well as professional information and academic papers available for different users such as students, researchers, teachers, artists, policy makers, etc.

[www.cirqueon.cz](http://www.cirqueon.cz)





## ŠÁRKA MARŠÍKOVÁ, DIRECTOR, CIRQUEON

*What do you see as the most important task of your organisation in the circus/street arts in your country?*

The challenges are many, as contemporary circus is still a new artistic field. In the Czech Republic, there are not many professional artists and companies, and we have to take care to expand the platform and create good quality projects that are competitive in Europe. To do this we will continue our in-progress projects – residences and tutoring for arts groups and individual artists, projects for the professionalisation of youth, training for coaches at an international level, and activities to open the door to more and more international cooperation. The big challenge for us is cooperation within the Central Europe micro-region.



# CASE STUDIES OF THREE SUCCESSFUL AUDIENCE AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

## V.O.S.A.

V.O.S.A. Theatre was established in 2010 on the occasion of the Czech Republic's presentation at the EXPO 2010 Shanghai China World Exhibition. A group of acrobats and performers from the Czech Republic created a performance called High Dreaming with contemporary circus elements and live music. Since then the group has performed at Czech and foreign theatre festivals, in showcases, and through many other activities in the Czech Republic and abroad. The street performance High Dreaming uses six completely original machines that are based on the principles of the bicycle and its early precursor, the velocipede. Among those who worked on the design and preparation of the machines was Josef Zimovčák, famous for riding around the world on a velocipede. In this way, V.O.S.A. created machines that have the biggest spoked wheels in Europe. V.O.S.A. Theatre turns the street into one big stage; they spontaneously include balconies, street lamps, and, most importantly, the audience in the action. Their reputation and popularity among audiences has brought invitations to perform in European capitals of Culture – in Košice, in Polish Lublin, and in Plzeň, in West Bohemia.

[www.vosatheatre.cz](http://www.vosatheatre.cz)

## Cirk La Putyka

Cirk La Putyka is the biggest and at present the most popular Czech company devoted to contemporary circus. It tries to erase the boundaries between acrobatics, contemporary dance, puppet theatre, music and sport. It creates its own specific poetics and its own take on the genre. For Cirk La Putyka it is not only important to maintain a professional approach within their individual theatre and circus numbers; the subjects of the stories they tell are also

very important. Cirk La Putyka was established in 2009 after the success of their first performance *La Putyka*. November 2014 marked another milestone in the company's history with the opening of Jatka78, a multidisciplinary space in the Prague market hall in Holešovice. Today it is the company's home stage.

[www.laputyka.cz](http://www.laputyka.cz)

## Obludárium

In *Obludárium*, Forman Brothers Theatre present a two-hour-long cabaret-circus in an impressive circus tent. The artists undermine the conventions of commercial theatre by presenting a world that respects simplicity and embraces enigma and mystery. Assembled in the arena of this cabaret-circus are fifteen performers – jugglers, dancers, actors, and others – who combine remarkable physical, creative and theatrical skills. The characters on stage are intriguing, distorted and grotesque, matching the classical image of an itinerant circus. This unique experience culminates in a direct encounter between audience members and performers, who are transformed into hosts toasting their guests with glasses of traditional Czech beer. The company's performance *Freak Show*, co-produced by the Théâtre National de Bretagne, premiered in 2007 in the French city of Rennes. Since then the company have played hundreds of performances throughout the world. Their unique tent was built in central Paris at Champs Elysées.

[www.formanstheatre.cz](http://www.formanstheatre.cz)

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**What are the most important challenges for circus/  
street arts in your country in respect of audience and  
market development?**

Regarding the role of the Czech Republic in the framework of Central European contemporary circus, the initiative of people connected with contemporary circus should now be directed towards the establishment of a professional circus school that would prepare young performers for their contemporary circus careers, and eventually for other circus studies. We can find many artists with creative visions and several years of experience with contemporary circus in the Czech Republic. Now they can share their experience with a young generation in order to add intensive and professional training to creative activities.





**CASA** is a new European support programme designed by five arts organisations to equip professionals from the contemporary circus and outdoor creation sectors to work and cooperate internationally, raising their ambition and capacity to work at international level.

This brochure focuses on the particular cultural context providing information and analysis of cultural policies, cultural infrastructures and local artistic realities.

[www.casa-circuits.eu](http://www.casa-circuits.eu)

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