

Cas Cas

EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS CIRCUS

A photograph of four performers standing on a red carpet. From left to right: a man in a light blue patterned kimono with a yellow sash and a mustache; a woman in a green jacket, floral belt, and red boots; a person in a black fur coat; and a shirtless man in a black hat and green skirt. A blue circular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image.

*An overview
of circus and
street arts in
Sweden*

CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY
WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

An overview of circus and street arts in Sweden

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Government policies and budgets in Sweden

THERE IS NO CULTURAL policy on circus and street arts in Sweden, neither are there any statistics available on government or region expenditures for circus and street arts, or on estimated audiences. All support and statistics for these art forms go under the headings of theatre and dance, as do all handling of applications for funding.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The objectives for Swedish cultural policy were renewed in 2009 by the Ministry of Culture:

»Culture shall be a dynamic, challenging and independent force built on freedom of speech. Everybody shall have the possibility to participate in cultural life. The development of Swedish society shall be characterized by creativity, diversity and artistic quality.«

To reach these objectives, cultural policy aims to:

- facilitating access to cultural experience and to developing creative abilities
- promote quality and artistic innovation exchange and cooperation
- give special attention to children's and young people's right to culture.

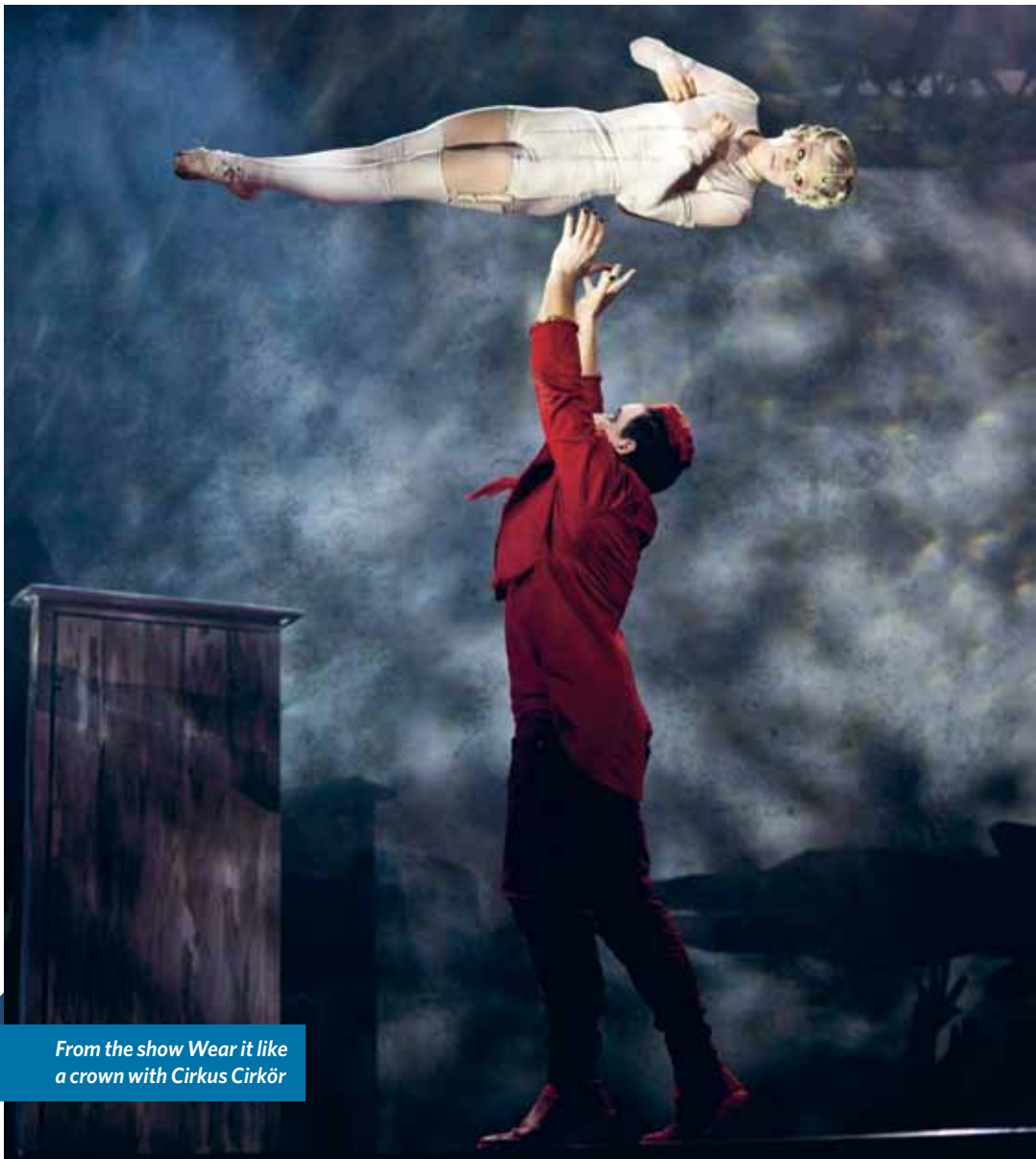
GENERAL FINANCING

In December 2010 a report on the financing of Swedish culture was published by the Swedish Arts Council. In 2009 the state, regions and municipalities committed altogether 2,4 billion euro to culture, which comprises 1-2% of their total budgets. The state contributed 45%, the regions 14%, and the municipalities 41%. The largest expenditure was on adult education, museums, performing arts and public libraries.

The whole performing arts sector was financed with 80 million euro by state and regions in 2009.

CIRCUS AND STREET ARTS

Despite the lack of cultural policies, it is clear that the number of projects, artists and organisations receiving public funding has increased in recent years, mainly in circus. This is linked to a change of attitude and an increased awareness within the sector. It also has to do with the fact that there since quite recently exists higher state educations within circus and street clowning. In 2009 the Arts Council supported the developing of a national federation of circus and street arts.



*From the show Wear it like
a crown with Cirkus Cirkör*

◆

Circus and street arts companies and artists currently working in Sweden

DEFINITIONS ARE NOT easy when it comes to the world of circus and street arts, which makes counting rather difficult. Are magicians circus artists? Are street working clowns circus or street artists – or just clowns? How do we define a circus or street artist as professional? Moreover, most artists are not defineable in one category, but mix circus disciplines with clowning, magic, theatre and work in tents as well as on the street, in theatre venues as in art galleries.

The estimated numbers below are therefore to be considered as exactly that: an estimation. Only street artists, clowns and magicians that define their work in a circus context or as working with some expression of circus are included in these figures.

Altogether there are about 200 professionally working individual artists in this field in Sweden, and around 45–50 companies. Roughly 50 % define themselves as circus

companies, 25 % define as both circus and street companies. The rest speak of their work in terms of clowning and/or variety.

Usually artists work in different companies, and in several companies simultaneously. New companies appear and disappear. The field is in constant flux. More or less everyone in the field knows each other in Sweden. Most artists work and tour abroad frequently, some having longer contracts with companies mainly in Canada, Spain, Finland and France. About 15 % of the »Swedish« artists are »adopted« Swedes, meaning that they moved to Sweden for education or work, and then stayed here, or still consider Sweden to be their base. Non-Swedish artists that were educated in Sweden or stayed for a period of work, but then left the country altogether, are not included in this counting.

There are 7 active traditional touring tented circuses with animals, and 6 active youth

circuses. Moreover there are 4 traditional circuses settled in permanent venues.

SOME EXAMPLES:

CIRKUS CIRKÖR

Cirkus Cirkör began as an independent contemporary circus group in Stockholm in 1995, founded by artistic director Tilde Björfors. In 2000 Cirkus Cirkör moved to Botkyrka, and since 2005 they have status as a regional institution. Today, being the biggest circus company in Sweden, their work comprises of touring performances in Sweden and around the world, plus events, courses and internationally recognised circus education at secondary school level. Current internationally touring shows are Inside Out and Wear it like a crown.

► WWW.CIRKOR.SE



From the show Blåställ with Vifira

VIFIRA

Vifira was the first company to spring from graduate students of DOCH, the University of Dance and Circus, in Stockholm – the only higher level circus education in the Nordic countries. The company was created in 2008, and today consists of juggler Viktor Gyllenberg and dancer Malin Stattin. Vifira strives to be a vital operator within the field of circus and dance. Their latest show Blåställ has been performed over 200 times around Sweden. The next show Hello! premiered in Hangaren in Subtopia in March 2011.

► WWW.VIFIRA.SE

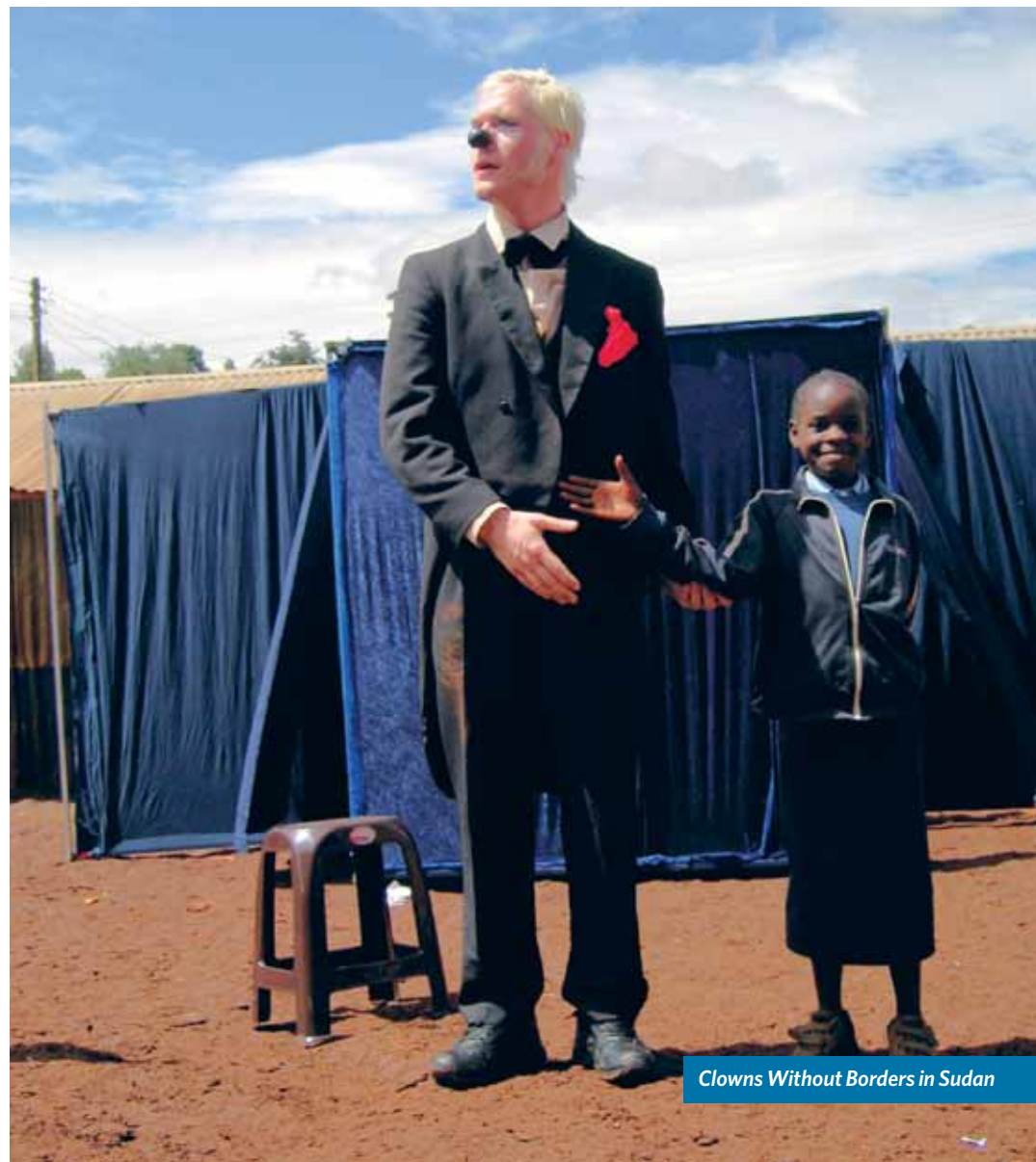
RUBY ROSE PRODUCTIONS

Ruby Rose call themselves »the most good looking production company in Sweden«. Since 2005 Rebecca Westholm, Angela Wand and Agnes Rosenberg have produced shows, clubs, and parties. They focus on working with female artists and stagehands, to make more space for women on and around stages in the world. For 3 years they have toured the country and western variety show The Big Ass BBQ in venues, tents and streets in Sweden and internationally. A new show is in planning, to premiere in 2012.

► WWW.RUBYROSE.SE

BALAGANS

Balagans is a contemporary circus company established in Sweden in 2008. The four artists met at the Circus Programme of the University of Dance and Circus, DOCH, where they studied 2007–2010. They share a passion for teeterboard, acrobatics and dance, and work for pushing the limits with a mixture of high acrobatic



Clowns Without Borders in Sudan



*Ruby Rose Productions performing
The Big Ass BBQ in Stockholm*

skills and physical movement. The company consists of two Swedish and two Spanish artists. During 2010 they worked in Spain.

► WWW.BALAGANS.NET

CLOWNS WITHOUT BORDERS SWEDEN

Clowns Without Borders sends artists to refugee camps and disaster areas to bring laughter, hope and joy to children and families in difficult circumstances. Since 1996 they have toured in Bosnia, Baltic states, Macedonia, India, Nepal, Mexico, Palestine, Lebanon, Western Sahara, Sudan, Kenya, Swaziland, Jordan and Burma. Many Swedish artists have at some point worked with CWB, or been educated in their clowning educations. From 2011 CWB will run a Master's Programme in physi-

cal comedy in collaboration with the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts.

► WWW.SKRATT.NU

SIRQUS ALFON

Sirqus Alfon create comedy based on the interaction between four eccentric characters and borrowing imagery from old music videos, in a style of old-school slapstick, in a new-rave context. They have been touring around the world since 1997, from Chinese theaters to refugee camps in Palestine to burlesque clubs in New York City, in street festivals as well as in national theatres. Sirqus Alfon's variety performance EUROTRASH has toured since 2009 internationally and in Sweden.

► WWW.SIRQUSALFON.COM



TESTIMONIAL

Charlie Caper

Magician and street artist

What are the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»I think the most important challenge is for artists to start creating more of their own independent projects. To stop waiting for an offer from a big ensemble and take destiny and art in their own hands.«

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

»I am first and foremost an artist with a creative and entrepreneurial drive. Also I believe I am more and more acting as a link between Sweden and the international street show community.«

TESTIMONIAL

Tina Petterson

The Swedish Arts Grants Committee

What are the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»The challenge is to create good conditions for all qualified circus artists based in Sweden, many of them educated at Cirkus Cirkör and at the University of Dance and Circus. During the last years contemporary circus has been well established in Sweden, and gives a lot of creative impulses into performing arts in general. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee supports many contemporary circus artists and several international collaborations and is looking forward to an increased cooperation with the circus scene.«



Festivals programming circus and street arts

FESTIVALS EXCLUSIVELY PRESENTING circus and/or street arts are very rare in Sweden. Several performing arts and music festivals program circus and street shows amongst other things. There seems to be 6 regularly occurring Swedish festivals that are clearly dedicated to these performing art forms. Two of these are city festivals that also present dance, music and theatre; however they show a consistent interest in developing this sector.

SOME EXAMPLES:

STOCKHOLM STREET FESTIVAL

Founded in 2010 and arranged by Funnybones Production, this festival aims to take place every year in July, filling Stockholm city centre with busking Swedish and international street

artists. The first edition of the festival lasted 3 days, presenting 8 different shows.

► WWW.STOCKHOLMSTREETFESTIVAL.SE

HALMSTAD INTERNATIONAL STREET FESTIVAL

Halmstad International Street Festival has been a yearly 4-day festival since 1998, inviting international street and performance artists to Halmstad in south-western Sweden. Artists have come from all over Europe as well as from Australia, Brasil, USA, Iran, West Africa, Canada and Russia to perform in the streets, alleys, squares and parks.

► WWW.HALMSTAD.SE

SUBTOPIAFESTIVALEN

Subtopia has organised several different festivals during the years, presenting Swedish and

international circus and street artists as well as local dance companies, DJs, film and young talents. In September 2010, the new venue for circus, Hangaren in Subtopia, was inaugurated with a 4-day festival, Subtopiafestivalen. It will most likely happen next in 2012.

► WWW.SUBTOPIAFESTIVALEN.SE

STOCKHOLM CULTURE FESTIVAL

Stockholm Culture Festival is a broad 6-day cultural city fest for the inhabitants of the capital, created in 2006 and regarded as inheritor of the yearly Stockholm Water Festival 1991-99. The artistic leader of both festivals, Claes Karlsson, was a pioneer in bringing international circus shows to Sweden in the early 90's

and still today partly dedicates the festival to circus and street shows.

► WWW.KULTURFESTIVALEN.STOCKHOLM.SE

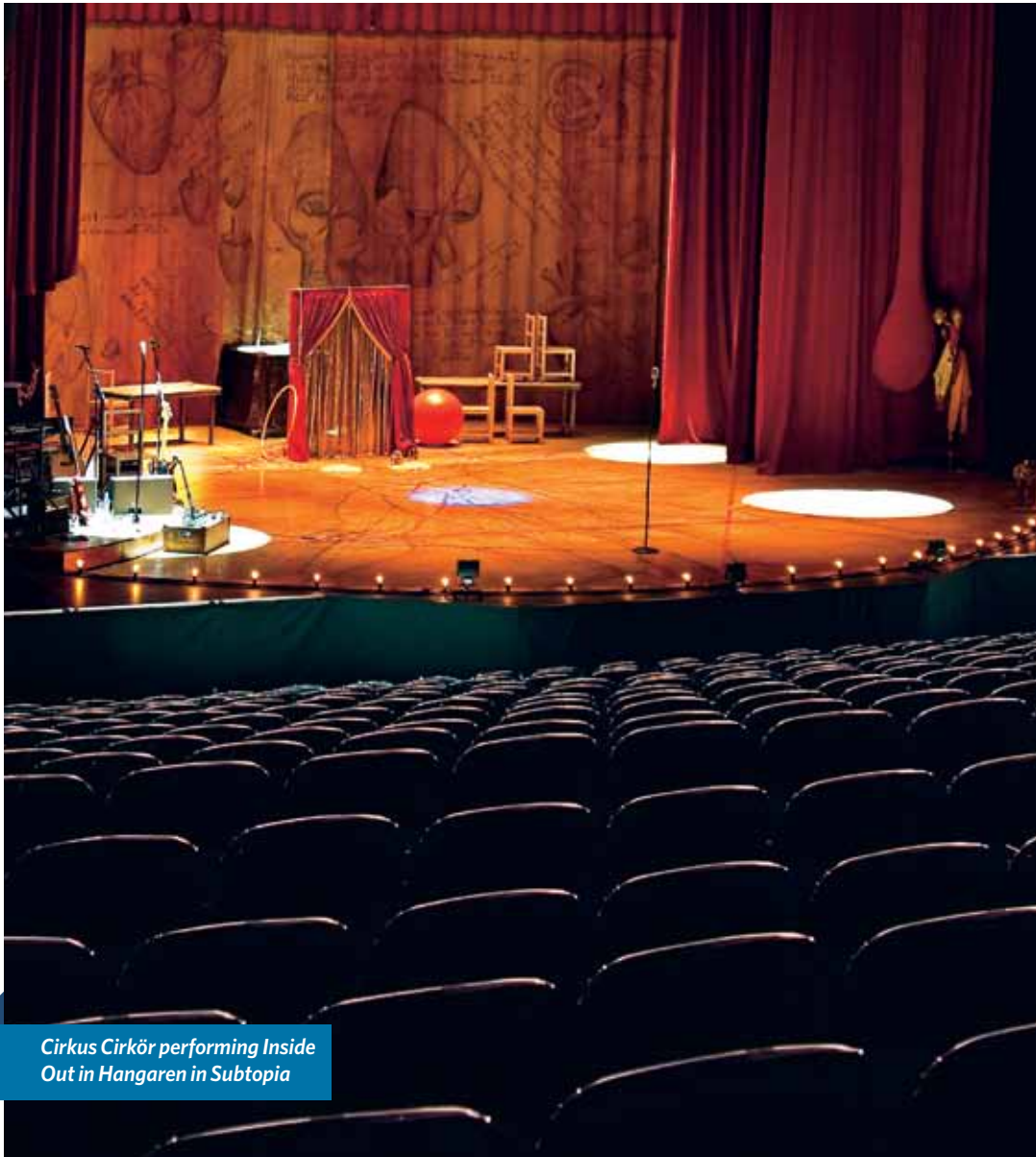
DAFLO BRAVEFEST

DaFlo Bravefest is a yearly small scale 3-day festival with a family feeling in the very middle of Sweden, in a homestead in the village of Dala Floda. This is a festival of dancing, canoeing and circus in a spirit of friendship, creativity, joy and music. Workshops in several different circus disciplines take place, along with courses in a range of dance and music styles. Shows are presented every evening.

► WWW.VIDGA.SE



DaFlo Bravefest



Cirkus Cirkör performing Inside Out in Hangaren in Subtopia



Venues programming related work

THERE IS NO existing mapping of Swedish venues programming circus and street arts. An estimation of venues that frequently present Swedish or international companies ends up around 10 – however other venues have presented shows. The Swedish national touring network organisation Riksteatern has in recent years shown a tendency to program more and more circus in the venues in their touring circuit around Sweden.

In counting venues that have either an outspoken dedication to presenting circus or just an evident profile in doing so, we get a handful.

VARIÉTÉ HABLINGBO

Variété Hablingbo is a tented venue that since 2002 has presented circus and variety shows every summer. Situated on the island Gotland, it has become a major public event. From 2011 the company Salong Giraff takes over the running of Hablingbo. Salong Giraff is a group of artists, directors and musicians who have presented a success night variety show for six years in Stockholm.

► WWW.SALONGGIRAFF.SE

HANGAREN IN SUBTOPIA

Hangaren in Subtopia, situated in Botkyrka south of Stockholm, presents itself as Sweden's venue for contemporary circus. It was inaugurated in September 2010, a former woodhouse renovated into a 2300 sqm flexible space with 13 m of height and a capacity of 850 people sitting/2000 people standing. Hangaren presents Swedish and international shows in circus and street arts, from intimate to large-scale, from broad to experimental. Once a year Hangaren presents a showcase for Swedish circus, variety and street art under the name of Subcase – Subtopia Circus Fair.

► WWW.SUBTOPIA.SE

ORIONTEATERN

Orionteatern is situated in a former machine workshop built in 1929 in central Stockholm. This 600 sqm wooden venue with 10 m of height presents itself as a place for artistic experimentation and collaboration that often do not fit in traditional theaters. Orionteatern presented circus shows already in the 80's. Artistic leader Lars Rudolfsson has directed

several internationally renowned circus shows, like TRIX with Cirkus Cirkör and FUSK with Royal Bones. They invited Cirque Invisible no less than 6 times over the years, and host variety show Salong Giraff since 6 years.

► WWW.ORIONTEATERN.SE

KARAVAN

Karavan is situated in a former garage in Malmö and run by the circus company Cirkus Saga together with a performance duo and a latin-balkan band. It was inaugurated in 2009 as a venue and working space for independent practitioners in circus and music. The aim is to establish contemporary circus in southern Sweden, where the art form had no permanent

place to gather and develop. The space is 380 sqm with 9 m height. Karavan presents Swedish and international companies and takes an audience of 150 people.

► WWW.KARAVANMALMO.SE

UMEÅ TEATERFÖRENING

Umeå teaterförening is part of Riksteatern's touring circuit for performing arts, and programmes theatre, dance, circus and performance. Through the years they have increasingly booked international and Swedish circus and street shows. Usually they program circus in Idunteatern, a 150 sqm stage with 7 m of height, for an audience of around 450 people.

► WWW.UMEATEATERFORENING.SE



From the show *6 mimare & 6 hästar* at Orionteatern



TESTIMONIAL

Kiki Muukkonen

Artistic programming director of Hangaren in Subtopia

What do you see as the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»Stable long-term infrastructure for supporting creation needs to be developed. More and more artists are educated, but after graduating they have difficulties to find spaces and funding for creation. Some stay, but many go abroad. Swedish creation centres need to be developed, so that they can offer residencies and commission work. To make this happen some cultural policies and priorities need to be changed; in effect we need support systems and perspectives that don't yet exist in Sweden.«

TESTIMONIAL

Camilla Damkjaer

Ph.D in Performance Studies

What do you see as the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»It seems there is a need to continue defining circus as an art form and broadening its artistic scope, to develop its different aesthetic approaches in depth. In other words to continue circus in all directions: up, down, to the sides, expanding circus horizontally and vertically at the same time. This needs to be facilitated and reinforced through a continued development of the infrastructure that surrounds circus. Circus needs both the support to spread, through developing networks, and the support to focus, through spaces and places for residencies, rehearsals and exchange of ideas.«



Tented circuses

IN SWEDEN THERE is one contemporary and 7 traditional active tent circuses. There are no official audience numbers for contemporary circus, but the traditional circuses have done their counting: around 400 000 people attend traditional circus shows every year in Sweden. The season is 6 months/year and each circus usually visits 150–180 locations in a season. In some small towns and villages a travelling circus is the only live entertainment ever offered.

The traditional circuses make a point of not applying for state or city funding, financing their activities by ticket sales only. On the other hand they lobby for reductions of land rents, service fees and taxes. In summer 2010 Cirkusakademien (an association for the preservation of circus, mainly traditional) wrote a letter to all Swedish cities, advocating different ways facilitate the touring of tent circuses.

SOME EXAMPLES:

VARIÉTÉTEATERN

Variététeatern was created in 2001 by 3 artists who live and work in the countryside south of Stockholm. In 2009 they received a support of 2,3 million SEK (about 240 000 euros) from Framtidens Kultur, a state organisation with

the mission to support long-term innovative projects. The support was given for the fabrication of a unique tent construction that semi-automatically folds in and out of a trailer. The tent holds 200 people and is unfolded and erected by 2 people in less than one hour. Variététeatern will present their own variety shows as well as other companies and theatres in what they call their »mobile cultural house«.

► WWW.VARIETETEATERN.SE

CIRKUS MAXIMUM

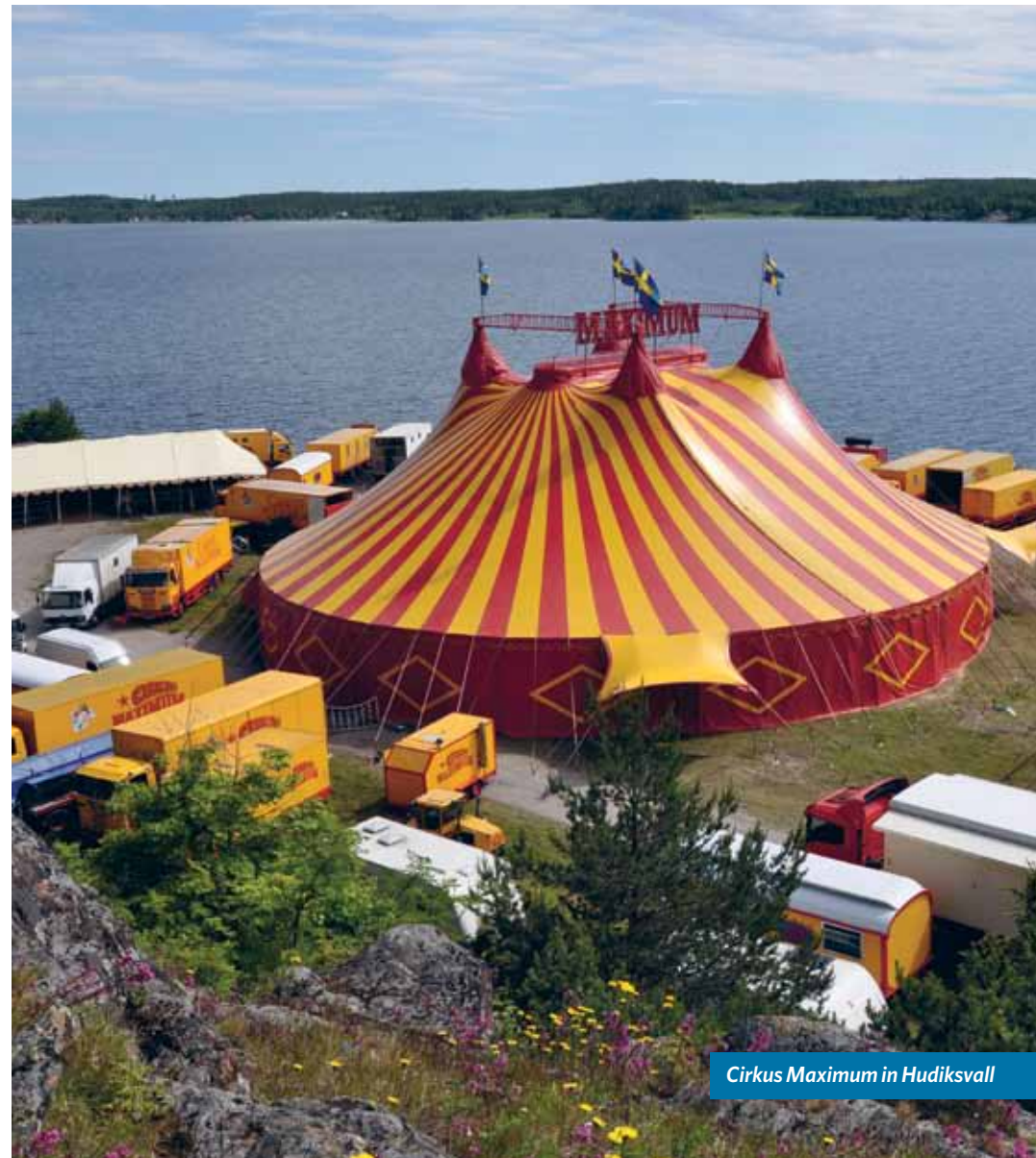
Cirkus Maximum was founded in 1983 (but was until 1989 named Cirkus Minimum) by Bengt Källquist, who is still the director of the company. Their tent holds an audience of 1000 people, they have 90 employees and they own 50 vehicles.

► WWW.CIRKUSMAXIMUM.SE

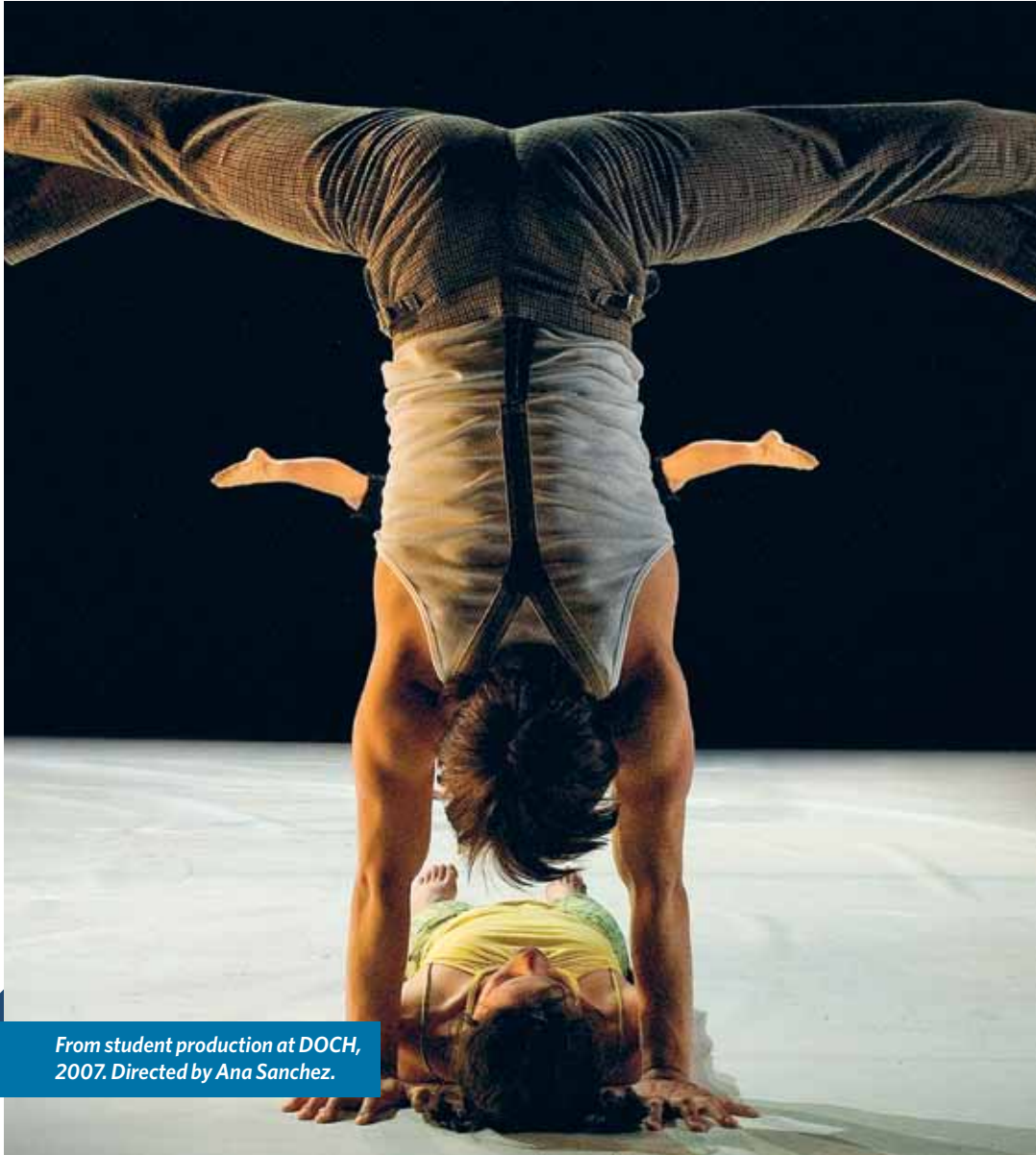
CIRKUS BRAZIL JACK

The Rhodin family has a circus history that stretches back to 1899. Ever since then, the family has been in the industry. Today, Carmen and Trolle Rhodin and their two sons run Cirkus Brazil Jack, founded in 1982. Brazil Jack have given themselves the title »National Circus of Sweden«.

► WWW.CIRKUSBRAZILJACK.SE



Cirkus Maximum in Hudiksvall



From student production at DOCH, 2007. Directed by Ana Sanchez.



Education

DOCH - UNIVERSITY OF DANCE AND CIRCUS

In Sweden there is only one higher level education for circus artists: the circus program at DOCH, University of Dance and Circus, in Stockholm. This 3 year program leads to a University Degree, Bachelor of Arts in Circus, 180 ECTS.

18 students are admitted to the circus programme every second year. Applicants come from all over the world. Every student has the opportunity to train on a primary and a secondary circus discipline as well as a complementary discipline and basic acrobatics. Dance, music and theatre are integrated components of the programme. The programme focuses on artistic experimentation and methodology in order to develop the students' own process of creation and unique artistic voice.

DOCH also offers research education and residencies for artists already in the profession. By establishing collaborations with numerous individuals and networks within the national and international circus arena - teachers, prominent artists and researchers - a diverse environment is created, facilitating

students' abilities to relate their activities to the broader artistic and social contexts.

► WWW.DOCH.SE

A YEAR OF PHYSICAL COMEDY

In January 2011, the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts in collaboration with Clowns Without Borders Sweden started the Master's Programme A Year of Physical Comedy. 10 skilled performers are trained in techniques and thinking developed by clowns touring areas of crisis around the world. The students go on tour to places like Rwanda, Burma and Palestine, spreading laughs and hope to tens of thousands of people.

During the year, public comedy shows and open rehearsals are arranged. Towards the end of the year, solo shows are publicly presented in Stockholm.

► WWW.SKRATT.NU

SECONDARY SCHOOL CIRCUS EDUCATIONS

There are 3 secondary schools with programmes in circus, for students age 16-18. The programmes last for 3 years and are all part of the



DOCH students training

public Swedish secondary school system. They are open for applicants from all over Sweden.

THE CIRCUS PROGRAM of Vasa School in Gävle was founded in 1988, and has educated many of the active professional artists in Sweden. Today the school admits 16 students every year. This education is focused on a »traditional circus« perspective. Gävle is called the »circus city« - because of its location in the middle of Sweden, many traditional circuses had Gävle as their winter quarters.

► WWW.CIRKUSGYMNASIET.SE

ST BOTVID'S/CIRKUS CIRKÖR circus program started in 2000 as a cooperation between Cirkus Cirkör and the municipality of Botkyrka. The school admits 16 circus students every year, and they have 20 hours per week of circus in their curriculum. The education has a focus on contemporary circus.

► WWW.CIRKOR.SE

IN JÄMTLAND IN northern Sweden there is a secondary school programme for winter acrobatics, which was founded in 2004 with the support of Cirkus Cirkör. Winter acrobatics here are considered a winter expression of the circus art form. Studies and training include drama, downhill skiing, acrobatics, performance production and various artistic expressions. Two classes of 16 students are admitted every year.

► WWW.JGY.SE/GYMNASIEPROGRAM/ESTETISKA/VINTERAKROBATIK

COURSES AND TRAINING

All over the country organisations and institutions of different sizes arrange courses and training for children and young people. Several training organisations report numbers of participants more or less constantly increasing. There are no statistics on the total number of children and young people taking part in circus courses and training in Sweden. Cirkus Cirkör trainers meet 20 000 children every year in their courses.



TESTIMONIAL

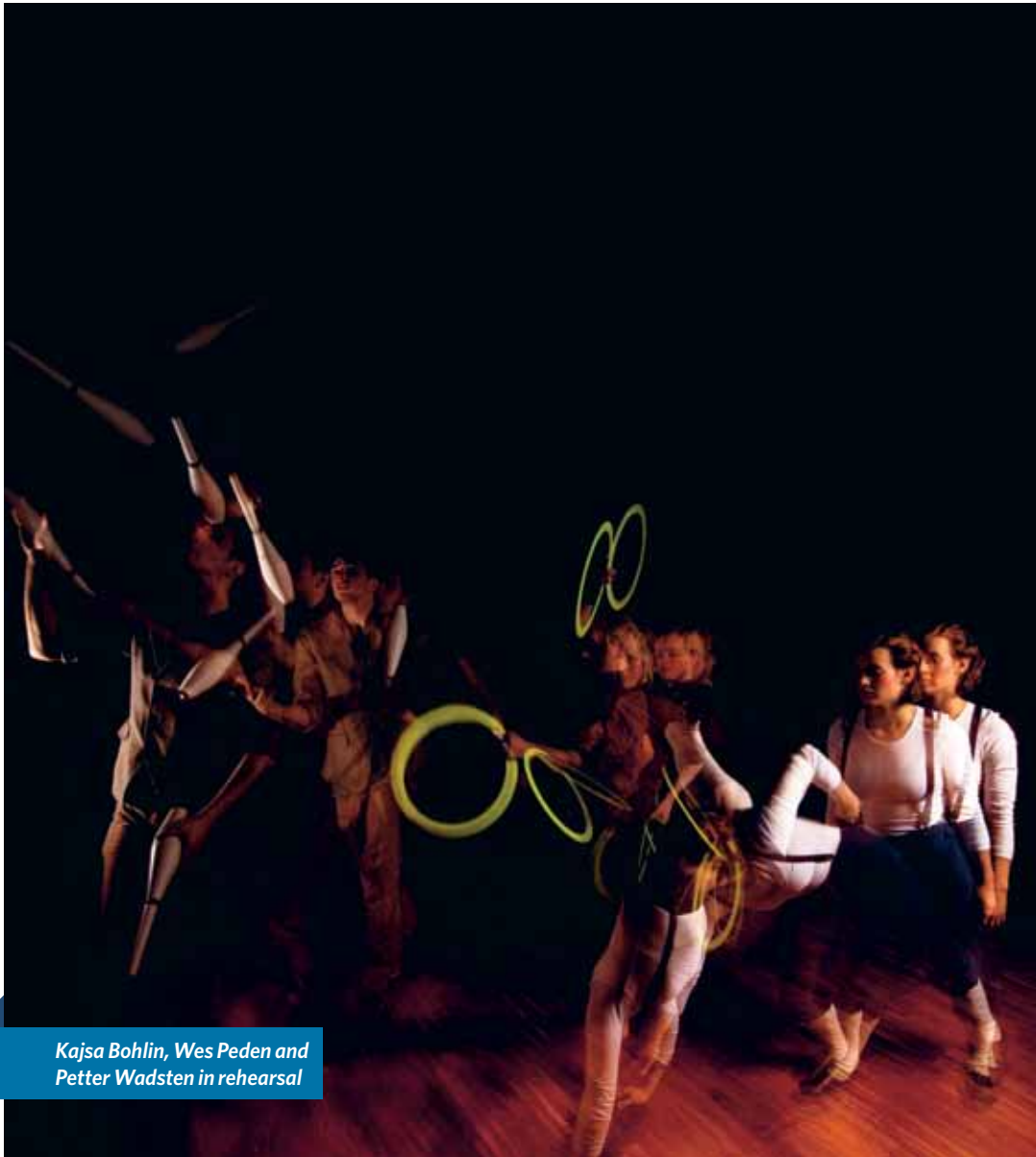
Eos Karlsson

Circus artist & film maker, graduated from DOCH 2010

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

»It's important for me to challenge myself and my co-creators, not to hide behind things we already know. I'm playing with cross arts to try new things, and I embrace failure. I would like the real failures to inspire us to try even harder. Then, maybe we'd find sensational discoveries ...or not.

Circus artists in Sweden can and should give each other valuable help. By supporting each other to achieve our goals and dreams, we will also improve the circus scene and successfully maintain a professional quality. It's dangerous to think about audience preferences. I'd rather trust my own intuition. I believe the audience will like to see me do what I truly love doing.«



*Kajsa Bohlin, Wes Peden and
Petter Wadsten in rehearsal*



Creation supporting centres

CREATION SUPPORTING CENTRES in the field of circus and street arts hardly exist in Sweden at the moment. Residency systems are rare, co-producing and commissioning are not common ways to work in Swedish performing arts. Circus companies, like those in theatre and dance, usually rent spaces for rehearsal, and apply for funding from the state, their region and their city to pay for it. Centres however, can not apply for funding from the state or regions to support artistic creation; the support goes directly from state and regions to the companies. Some institutions, f.ex. DOCH and House of Dance in Stockholm, every now and then offer residencies for circus companies.

SOME EXAMPLES:

KULTURGJUTERIET I BORRBY

Kulturgjuteriet (means The Culture Foundry), situated in the very south-east of Sweden, is a former community center built in 1929, that was later turned into a foundry. Today it is under construction to become a cultural centre with focus on contemporary circus. The

space is 150 sqm with a height of 6,5 m. The owner, Isak Lindberg, is a circus artist educated in Toulouse and one of the two artists constituting Tide Company, Jeunes Talents Cirque award winner of 2008. Kulturgjuteriet offered a circus company a residency and an opportunity to present their work for the first time in summer 2010.

► WWW.KULTURGJUTERIET.SE

SUBTOPIA

Subtopia is a launching pad for dreams and ideas, chiefly in circus and film. It is situated in the south of Stockholm, where it houses several circus organisations, schools and companies in 6 buildings and 14 000 sqm. Being a local, regional, national and international meeting place, Subtopia builds networks and gathers competence, representing a mix of artistic expression, education programmes, entrepreneurial spirit and social involvement. Subtopia supports creation, research and artistic development, offers residencies and workshops, as well as provides information and advice on circus.

► WWW.SUBTOPIA.SE



Advocacy agencies

IN SWEDEN THERE are two organisations that work consistently on advocating for circus and street arts, in order to develop state, region and city policies that affect the conditions for artists and companies working professionally in this field. There is also a Nordic network with the same goals on a Nordic level.

MANEGEN - FEDERATION FOR CIRCUS, VARIETY AND STREET PERFORMANCE

Manegen is the Swedish national federation for circus, variety and street performance. It was founded in 2008 as an initiative of several independent organisations, artists and producers, and was supported by the municipality of Botkyrka, Subtopia and the Swedish Arts Council.

Manegen is a member organisation (companies, creators, producers, presenters, educators, etc) that through joint efforts and activities aims to spread circus, variety and street performance to new areas of practitioners and audiences; increase media coverage;

encourage local and national authorities; create opportunities for professional and artistic development. Becoming a member of Manegen allows access to the network and its resources, experience and knowledge, as well as taking part in influencing the conditions of these art forms. Manegen has a mission to put circus, variety and street performance on the national cultural agenda.

▶ WWW.MANEGEN.ORG

CIRKUSAKADEMIEN

Cirkusakademien was founded in 1973 with the defined aims to preserve circus as a recognised art form in Sweden, and to spread knowledge about and promote the circus arts. Cirkusakademien has mainly worked for and represented traditional circuses. They work towards local and state authorities on issues like changing regulations to facilitate touring with tents and arguing for the importance of securing the existence of touring traditional cir-



Stockholm Street Festival 2010



Chipmunk Forge in creation during Juggling the Arts

cuses. Since 1975 they have built up one of the biggest archives in Europe on traditional circus, containing books, pictures and props from famous acts and artists. Six times a year Cirkusakademien publishes a magazine.

► WWW.CIRKUSAKADEMIEN.SE

NEW NORDIC CIRCUS NETWORK (NNCN)

NNCN is a partnership established with the aim of placing contemporary circus on the cultural map of the Nordic countries, and creating an

overall development programme to improve conditions for the circus sector. NNCN is organised by KIT in Denmark, Finnish Circus Information Centre in Finland, Circus Village Network in Norway, and Subtopia in Sweden.

Examples of important activities: Juggling The Arts, a workshop programme to support young Nordic artists, and Nordic Circus Year 2011, a development project which aims towards a Nordic cultural policy for the circus art.

► WWW.NORDIC-CIRCUS.ORG



TESTIMONIAL

Tilde Björfors

Founder and artistic director of Cirkus Cirkör

What are the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»The infrastructure is growing in Sweden, with both new buildings for circus and room for us at established venues. It is important to focus on the spirit of the art form, so we don't lose the inner qualities of circus arts in »great buildings«. We need to continue to work for the acknowledgement of circus and street as art forms on their own conditions and artistic qualities. Furthermore, we are too few and small not to support each other and each other's successes. Every artist and every initiative is of importance. Every success is a success for all – as it helps the art form grow stronger.«

TESTIMONIAL

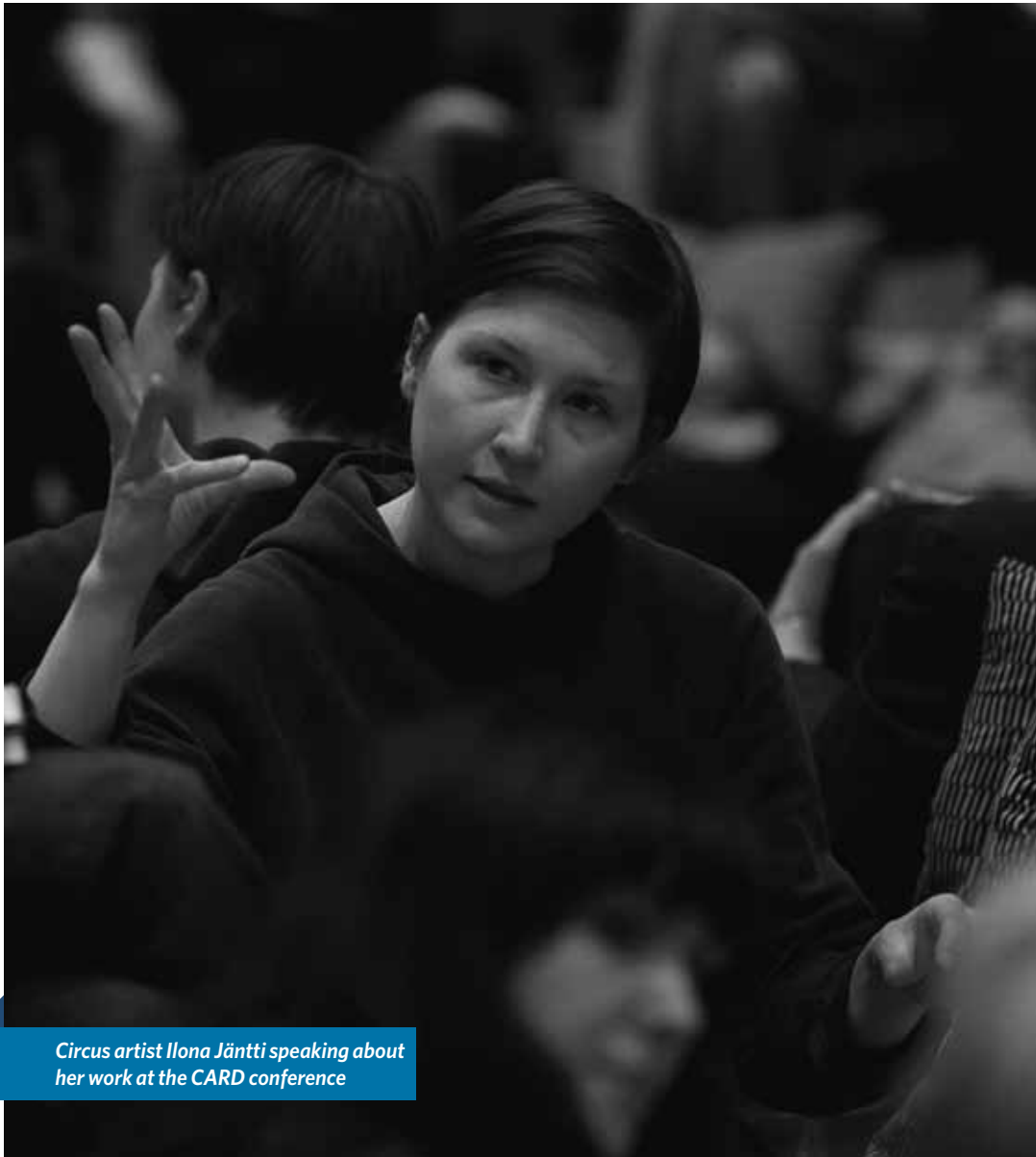
Thorsten Andreassen

President of Manegen, the Swedish national federation for circus, variety and street performance

What are the most important challenges for circus/street arts in your country?

»The main challenge is to maintain and explore the quality and the status of circus in Sweden, both externally and within the sector. Secondly, we need to expand permanent platforms for circus/variety and make the art form more accessible for the public and media. When it comes to street arts we need to work far more to pinpoint the streets as an attractive pitch.«





Circus artist Ilona Jäntti speaking about her work at the CARD conference



Research

IN SWEDEN THERE are two ongoing, state funded, long-term artistic research projects in the field of circus. In 2010 the first international conference ever on circus artistic research took place at DOCH in Stockholm.

CARD - CIRCUS ARTISTIC RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

In March 2010 about 50 international artists, directors and researchers from 12 countries met for five days of conversations, lectures, seminars and performances on the topic of artistic development of circus. The conference was initiated by DOCH and organised in cooperation with Subtopia and Manegen. CARD was documented by a DVD and a book, which can be obtained via DOCH.

► WWW.DOCH.SE

CIRCUS BREAKING BOUNDARIES IN ARTS AND SOCIETY

Tilde Björfors, founder and artistic director of Cirkus Cirkör as well as guest professor at DOCH in Stockholm, runs the 4 year research project Circus breaking boundaries in arts and society 2008-2011 with support from the

Swedish Research Council. This is an international project involving circus artists from around the world, as well as researchers from other fields of science: economics / organisation, pedagogy / ethnology, psychiatry, and performance studies.

► WWW.DOCH.SE

BEYOND AND WITHIN

In 2008-10 circus and theatre director Åsa Johannisson ran the research project Beyond and Within at the Dramatic Institute in Stockholm, with support from the Knowledge Foundation. The project investigated the cross disciplinary collaboration between circus arts, glass art and film, in cooperation with cultural institutions and businesses. This resulted in a long term project called Cirkus i Glasriket (Circus in the kingdom of crystal) in Småland in the middle of Sweden, focusing on the integration of circus with live glass blowing and music composed on glass. The result of the interdisciplinary work is artistic development, new kinds of working methods and site specific shows.

► WWW.CIRKUSIGLASRIKET.SE



Case studies of three local artistic projects

MANIPULATION RESEARCH LABORATORY - MRL #1, #2 and #3

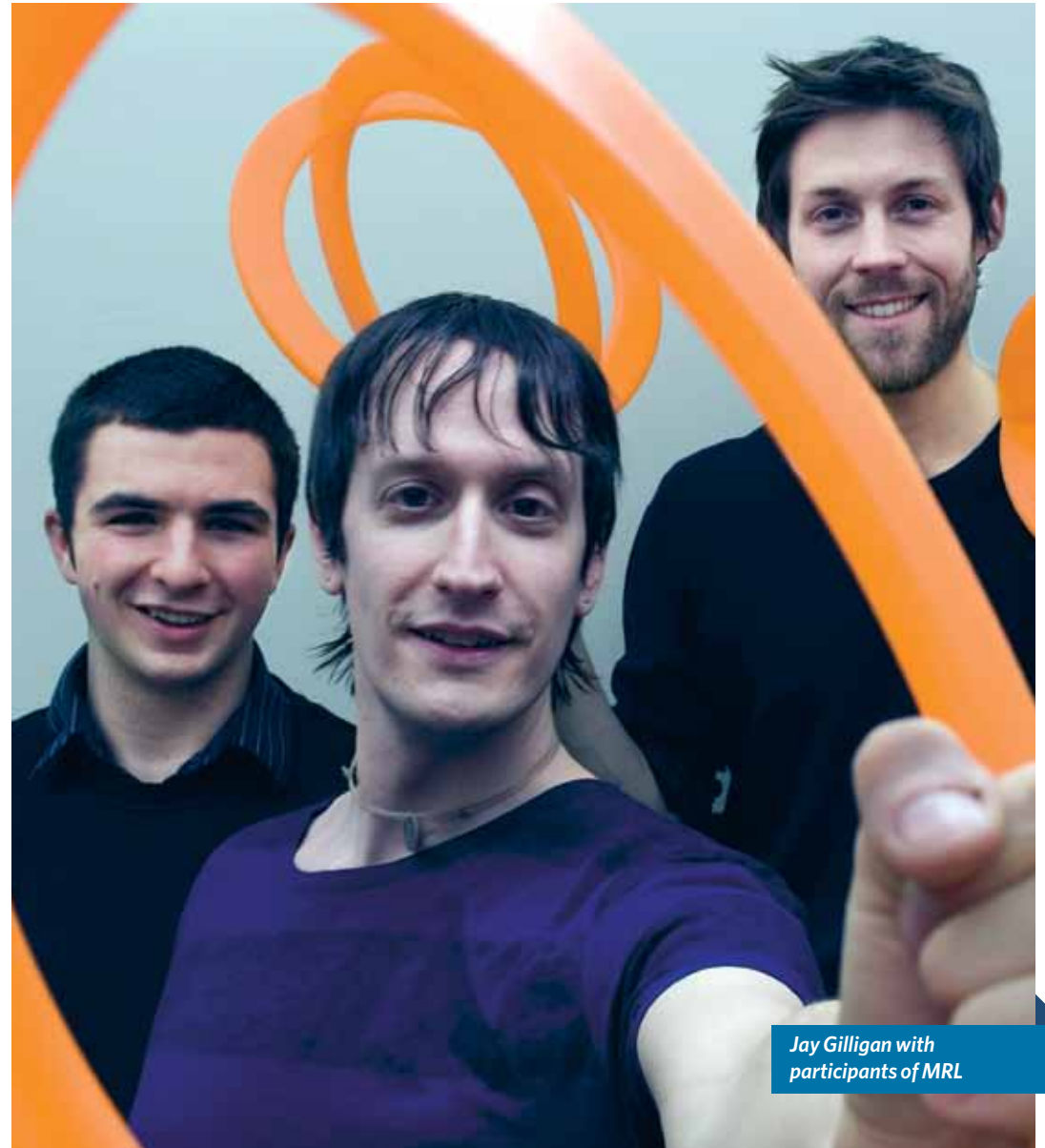
MRL was a set of three research laboratories in the field of object manipulation and juggling, that were initiated and organised in Stockholm by jugglers Jay Gilligan, Luke Wilson, Ben Richter and Erik Åberg. The idea was born from an urge to push juggling into the next era and to do this by researching - meaning collecting information to see where it would lead. A decision was taken to make a juggling research project, something that was never seen before in any organized or official sense.

MRL #1 took place in 2008 with the aim to define the »Rules of Manipulation«. The four jugglers discovered that juggling as an art form lacked an evolved language to talk about abstract concepts inside of its genre. They managed to invent some rules that seemed

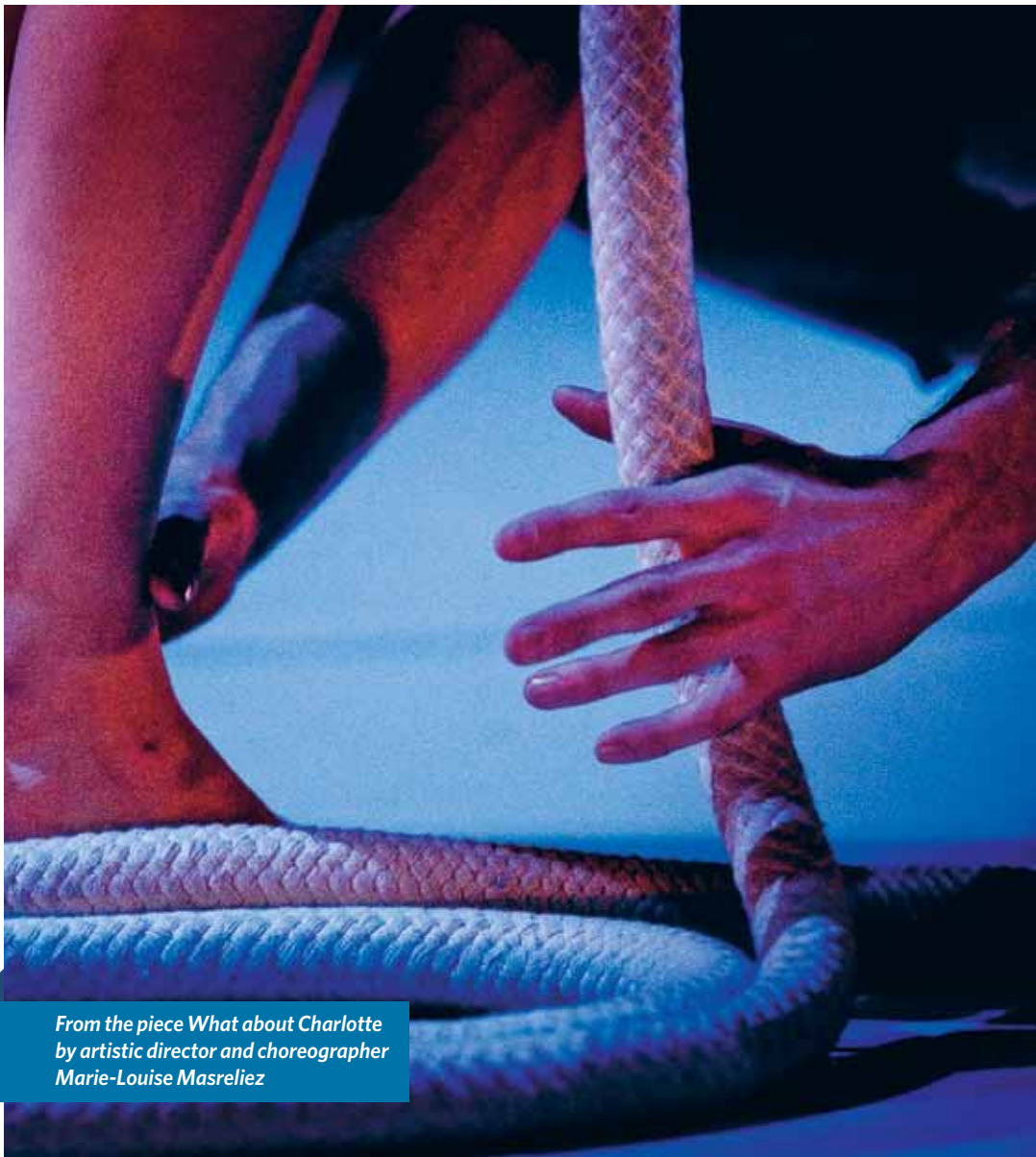
»true«, but felt that they ended up mostly talking about composition. So, in 2009 they made MRL #2, an exploration on composition for juggling. This time they discovered that composition was dependent on with what it was done - balls, rings, clubs, diabolo, aso.

So consequently, in 2010 MRL #3 was organised - this time about »Tricks & Props«. At the end of MRL #2 they had found that juggling was too undefined and undeveloped to keep having specific topics for research sessions. Language and definitions were needed before getting more specific and trying to see where to go next. So when starting MRL #3 they knew it would be the last one.

THE RESULTS OF each MRL have been available as DVD sets for purchase in limited editions online. The MRL project fed 3 tangible com-



Jay Gilligan with participants of MRL



From the piece *What about Charlotte*
by artistic director and choreographer
Marie-Louise Masreliez

mercial offshoot projects: one series of videos building upon ideas from MRL, the creation of a new commercial company manufacturing new juggling prop shapes and selling performances using them, and finally the use of concepts and findings from MRL in creating performances and other research processes.

THE MORE YOU HIT ME, THE MORE I LIKE YOU

For eight months choreographer Sérgio Mendes together with social anthropologist Christian Kuran explored the topic of domestic violence. Through meetings with organisations and individuals who work in different ways with domestic violence, they explored different personal stories, rehabilitation methods and violence hierarchies. The research was translated to stage in collaboration with circus artist Kajsa Bohlin and actor Thomas Magnus.

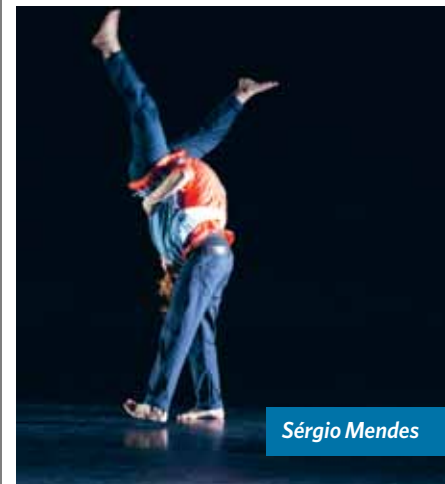
After eight weeks in various rehearsal rooms in Europe (Norway, Salzburg, Vienna and Stockholm) a finished piece was presented at the tanz_house festival 2010 in Salzburg. It was called *The more you hit me, the more I like you*, an intimate performance at the meeting point of circus, dance and theatre.

SÉRGIO MENDES' HOME country is Portugal – a country he describes as having certain cultural restraints; men are not allowed to cry, and do not share their thoughts and problems with other men. The sentence »the more you hit me, the more I like you« was commonly used as a kind of half serious joke during Sérgio's childhood; he learned that it is no problem to hit someone as long as you do it out of love.

Sérgio explains: »People are still being raised

in the belief that violence in human relations is a perfectly normal and correct thing. We are shaped by society and its values, the unwritten rules that are supposed to never be questioned, things we consider as natural facts just because it has always been this way. As a result of this, domestic violence has been minimized, justified and ignored in so-called modern society.«

The performance is based on real stories taken from interviews in cooperation with Catarina Ramm, a Norwegian doctor of psychomotoricity, researching on victims of domestic violence. Her study is on muscle contractions, breathing and perception of surroundings, objects and personal boundaries. This research material was the foundation of the choreographic movements. Research on the contrast of emotions was also important. Violence often takes place in the collision of basic and advanced emotions, where little things get



Sérgio Mendes



Burnt Out Punks

blown out of proportion. By improvising on the spectrum of feelings and emotions the artists could extract movements and gestures based on the work from the research with Catarina Ramm.

The target audience of the performance is teenagers and adults – though it’s also suitable for children.

CIRCUS EFFECTS NETWORK

Circus Arts AB and Burnt Out Punks, with the support from KK Nord and Nordisk Kulturfond, have initiated the building of a network of circus organisations in the Nordic countries. The aim is to develop the different organisations’ distinctive styles by common workshops and seminars, with the focus on rigging and pyrotechnics. A goal is to make a site specific production

in one or more of the participating countries.

THE FIRST NETWORK meeting was held in Punkshangaren in Subtopia in November 2010. The focus was on finding a common ground and future goals. Workshops and discussions were held around the art of pyrotechnics, rigging and site specific production. Participating organisations were AFUK in Denmark, Salpaus Further Education in Finland, Grenland Friteatret in Norway, Vesturport Theater in Iceland, Silamiut Theater in Greenland and Circus Arts/Burnt Out Punks in Sweden.

In future network meetings, decisions will be taken on the work of creating a joint site specific production.

- ▶ WWW.CIRCEFFECTSNETWORK.ORG,
- ▶ WWW.CIRCUSARTS.NU

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MiramirO (Belgium) www.miramiro.be
Finnish Circus Information Centre (Finland) www.sirkusinfo.fi



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CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

CASCAS is a European project led by four partners, each of whom provide information and advice on the circus and street arts at a national level. By offering facilitated tours of the context within each of the four countries, CASCAS will encourage the exchange of ideas and expertise across Europe.

This brochure provides information to those who wish to work in or with circus and street arts professionals within each of the four partners countries, to facilitate reciprocal exchange of information with the aim of developing additional partnerships across Europe. It provides an overview of the cultural policy, infrastructure and local context of circus and street arts in Sweden.

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