

# Cas Cas

EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

A woman with long, curly hair, wearing a white dress, is performing a balancing act on a narrow wooden beam. She is leaning forward, with her hands on the beam for support. The beam is part of a circus ring structure, and the background is dark, suggesting an outdoor setting at night. The lighting is warm and focused on the performer.

*An overview  
of circus and  
street arts in  
Belgium*

CASCAS - EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY  
WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

# *An overview of circus and street arts in Belgium*

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# *Government policies and budgets in Belgium*

**IN BELGIUM** the Communities - Flemish, French and German speaking - are responsible for cultural policy.

## **FLANDERS**

In Flanders, the policy is delineated by the Flemish Minister of Culture and the Culture, Youth, Sports and Media department. Street arts are not recognized as a separate art form. However, subsidies can be obtained within the framework of some existing decrees, such as, for instance, the Arts Decree. This decree organizes government support to professional arts organizations in the area of the performing arts, music, visual and audiovisual arts, architecture and design. The Arts and Heritage Agency is in charge of its administration, who's top priority is a rich and diversified artistic and cultural-heritage landscape.

In November 2008 a significant step was taken with the Circus Decree. This decree is meant to support circus arts in Flanders and to offer opportunities for organizations to improve quality, scope and supply of circus productions, to reflect on circus arts and to address wider and more diversified audiences. This decree is administered by the Social and Cultural Work Agency, who's mission focuses on promoting social and cultural participation and general education.

Within the framework of the Flemish government's Arts Decree, a total amount of €139.998.187 were spent on subsidies in 2009. 18,4% were destined to the theatre, 4,3% to dance and 3% to music theatre. It is hard to determine how much of this was spent on street arts. Of the €7.220.813 subsidies for festivals, €1.304.599 went to four circus and/or street art festivals.

The 2009 budget for the Circus Decree was

€1.350.000. In 2010 the circus arts budget went up considerably to €2.183.000, as a result of the transfer of three festivals and the long-term subsidies they received within the framework of the Arts Decree to the Circus Decree, or 42,6% of the total budget. Budget cuts for culture were made in Flanders too, as a result of the crisis - just under €100.000 on the circus arts budget. Compared to 2009, less was invested in distribution and training in 2010: €119.500 on creation; €100.000 for nomadic circus tours; €305.000 for festivals (1 edition); €930.000 for festivals (multi-annual grants); €22.500 for distribution of productions; €25.000 on promotion; €700.000 for the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts; €10.000 on scholarships.

## **FRENCH COMMUNITY**

In the French speaking part of Belgium, the General Culture Administration of the Ministry of Culture of the French Community is responsible for the administration. Apart from dance, theatre and music, the Performing Arts Decree also recognizes fair arts, circus arts and street arts. One administration department is specifically concerned with circus and street arts.

In 2009 €1.079.000 was spent on subsidies for fair, circus and street arts. The 2010 budget for the performing arts in the French Community was €84.605.000, or 31% of the global budget for culture. 1,3% of this budget was spent on fair, circus and street arts, in total €1.102.000: €10.000 on scholarships; €309.000 for artists and groups; €304.000 for festivals; €305.000 on creation; €166.00 for creation studios and promotion; €8.000 miscellaneous.



*Big Structure by The Primitives*



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# *Circus and street arts companies and artists currently working in Belgium*

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**WE MAKE AN** estimate of the number of companies and solo artists on the basis of the various circus and street arts guides available in Belgium: David, Le Nomade and the Yearbook 2010-2011 of Belgian Circus Companies.

Flanders counts about 95 active companies and solo artists, about half of whom are specifically concerned with circus arts. According to the estimate some 40 companies reside in the Walloon provinces (60% circus - 40% street arts) and 70 in Brussels (evenly divided). This makes a total of approx. 208 companies and solo artists. This includes a wide range of animation, circle artists and what is subjectively called art with a big A.

These figures require some terminological

clarification. »Circus« includes acrobatics, clown, animal training, juggling, magic and circus theatre, regardless of the location of the performances. »Street arts« is interpreted in the broadest possible meaning of the term, i.e. arts performed outside the traditional theatre venue – theatre, dance, visual arts, performance arts on and in – or outside locations, in the street, or in a tent. Puppet theatre was not included.

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## **SOME EXAMPLES**

### **THE PRIMITIVES**

The Primitives were established in 1995 as a result of Craig Weston's and Gordon Wilson's

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common desire to push the limits of the traditional theatre circuit. Both artists studied at the Paris Ecole International du Theatre Mime Mouvement. Their search for a wider audience took them into the streets. Human relationships and universal themes portrayed with a good share of humour have been their street performances' trade mark for years. Among their recent shows are Timber, Big Structure and Swan Lake.

► [WWW.PRIMITIVES.BE](http://WWW.PRIMITIVES.BE)



*M<sup>2</sup> by Cie EA EO*

### *CIE EA EO*

After individual adventures with circus companies such as Pol & Freddy, Cie Filophile and Shake That these four jugglers joined forces in the new company Cie EA EO for their indoor performance M<sup>2</sup>. Main feature of this performance is a shrinking stage. As their world grows increasingly smaller, the closeness of the other proves both a blessing and a curse. As the room to move and their individuality diminish, the interaction between the jugglers becomes increasingly hard and aggressive.

► [WWW.CIEEAEO.COM](http://WWW.CIEEAEO.COM)

### *OKIDOK*

These two friends from childhood, Xavier Bouvier and Benoit Devos, followed training together at the LASSAAD theatre school in Brussels and at the Montreal Circus school. In their performances HAHAAH and Slips Inside they use identical body language, one in combination with a clown costume and a series of attributes, the other on the basis of the character's personality and physical skills. Apart from the shows on their own, they have also worked with various French circus companies, including Cirque d'Ange Heureux and Chien de Cirque.

► [WWW.OKIDOK.BE](http://WWW.OKIDOK.BE)

### *COMP. MARIUS*

In 2006 Comp. Marius was founded by actors Waas Gramser and Kris Van Trier. Always of central concern is the text and its treatment; the open-air locations serve as a natural set, with only a few rudimentary props as needed. Comp. Marius makes their own, new translations and adaptations of (often lesser-known) classic texts from the



*Manon van Jean van Florette*  
by Cie Marius



*Charms by Compagnie Arsenic*

(theatre) literature and always plays in the main language of the country concerned. At the moment their repertoire includes shows like *Manon* and *Jean of Florette*, *Power of habit*, *Summer library* and *Small interrogation*.

► [WWW.MARIUS.BE](http://WWW.MARIUS.BE)

### **FERIA MUSICA**

Motivated by their desire to bring their artistic disciplines together and explore new

territory, Philippe de Coen, trapeze artist, and Benoît Louis, composer, founded the Feria Musica company in Brussels in 1995. The company soon stood out for its research within contemporary circus. Their aim is to develop a certain tension among the character and with the audience by means of a dramaturgy and choreography steeped in a world of music.

► [WWW.FERIAMUSICA.ORG](http://WWW.FERIAMUSICA.ORG)





#### TESTIMONIAL

## Lien Verwaeren

*Assistant Cabinet of the Ministry of Culture*

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### **How could optimal chances for the broad field of circus arts be created?**

»Circus arts in Flanders are in full development. A contemporary circus show can not be easily classified. The traditional forms are often abandoned in favor of multidisciplinary performances where circus is combined with dance and movement, theater, video art, plastic art and music. This evolution is also noticeable in the performing arts. Policy is challenged to support both traditional circus as the new forms through flexible regulations.«

*This text is only one part of a longer testimonial.*

#### TESTIMONIAL

## Benoît Van Oost

*Director La Maison du Cirque*

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### **What are the most important challenges for circus and/or street arts in Belgium?**

»More professionalism and not being afraid of real cultural marketing. It is important to further refine the relation between the creators and the responsables for the distribution, in order to get a real partnership from the beginning, the creation of a performance. If the issues and the reality of a production, the exploitation and the distribution are better understood, maybe creations can have a longer life.«





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# *Festivals programming circus and street arts*

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**MOST FESTIVALS IN** Belgium are pluri-disciplinary and present circus as well as street arts programmes. In Flanders we estimate about 22 festivals, 5 of which present themselves as circus festivals. The Walloon provinces count around 25 festivals. Unlike Flanders, there are 12 exclusive street arts festivals. There are also 2 circus festivals. Brussels has 5 pluri-disciplinary, 3 street arts and 2 circus festivals.

Four of these festivals receive structural subsidies from the Flemish government. In 2010 another 5 festivals received a one year grant within the framework of the Circus decree. The French Community gives financial support to two Brussels and 9 Walloon festivals.

## **SOME EXAMPLES**

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### **ZOMER VAN ANTWERPEN**

Zomer van Antwerpen has been organized

since 1995. This annual city festival takes place in summer - July and August - and presents a wide range of performances in all genres, shapes and sizes, open to the general public. One of the festival's basic principles is to work in unusual and unlikely locations. Concert and theatre venues are replaced by tents, hangars, uninhabited buildings and open air locations. Ambiance and surprise is what it is all about - music, film, new circus, visual theatre and dance in the most unlikely places and a series of special events and projects, such as, for instance, Royal de Luxe's The Elephant and The Giant.

► [WWW.ZOMERVANANTWERPEN.BE](http://WWW.ZOMERVANANTWERPEN.BE)

### **»LA FÊTE DES ARTISTES DE CHASSEPIERRE - FESTIVAL INTER- NATIONAL DES ARTS DE LA RUE«**

Ever since it was established in 1974, this festival has been intended to reflect current



tendencies in street and circus arts. This annual two days multidisciplinary festival takes place in August. Tickets are required to get access to the festival site.

► [WWW.CHASSEPIERRE.BE](http://WWW.CHASSEPIERRE.BE)

### MIRAMIRO

MiramirO is an annual festival organized in the second half of July and is part of the Ghent Fest. It offers a stage to a wide variety of art forms: circus, theatre, dance, installations... in tents, in the streets or at specific locations. Every edition is a combination of receptive performances and productions. The emphasis is on renewal, internationality and participation.

The festival includes an international contest named The Big Prize for young talent and new shows.

► [WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE](http://WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE)

### NAMUR EN MAI

The festival takes place in the centre of Namur over the 4 days of the Ascension long weekend. The purpose is to celebrate the modern creativity inspired by fairs and entertainers; to revel in the variety and international feel of the language of art; to experiment with and bring to the stage new theatrical and visual experiences; to give young creative talents a helping hand.

► [WWW.ARTSFORAINS.COM](http://WWW.ARTSFORAINS.COM)



Audience MiramirO 2010



*5 days of circus*



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# *Venues programming related work*

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**NO EXACT FIGURES** are available. But it is a fact that a majority of cultural centres include circus performances in their annual programmes. An estimate by La Maison du Cirque mentions 27 in the Walloon provinces and 8 in Brussels.

There are about 146 cultural centres and community centres in Flanders. An analysis of the websites revealed that 42 centres schedule at least one circus performance. Only seven or eight indicate circus theatre as a separate genre and schedule more circus than the average. The other centres often classify circus as family entertainment.

19 Flemish cultural centres invite a performance on location to their city or municipality. Often it is the same performance. For the 2010-2011 season, for instance, it 's almost always a Studio Orka production. The same applies to circus performances. D'Irque and Fien, Okidok, Circus Marcel, Circ'ombelico are names which frequently feature the 2011 programmes of the cultural centres.

## **DE SPIL**

At De Spil cultural centre in Roeselare, Gwendolien Sabbe schedules comedy and

contemporary circus. Each season, an average of about seven different circus performances are presented. This cultural centre wants make efforts to schedule programmes that make culture more democratic. Among the initiatives taken within that mission are school performances, social-artistic projects, theatre on location, street theatre and circus. Apart from that, De Spil also literally wants to 'come outside' which is done with the triennial street theatre festival De groote stooringe, next edition of which is scheduled September 2012. In the meantime, a kleine stooringe is organized in conjunction with the neighbourhood.

► [WWW.DESPIL.BE](http://WWW.DESPIL.BE)

## **MAISON DE LA CULTURE DE TOURNAI**

A good example of a cultural centre in the French speaking part of Belgium that makes a lot of room for circus arts is the Maison de la Culture de Tournai. That circus is a prominent feature in the centre's programme policy is not only marked by the organization of a biennial La Piste aux Espoirs festival; it is also a regular annual programme feature. Moreover, this



centre is committed to supporting the development of circus arts. A joint venture was set up with the Prato theatre in Lille (FR) to support young circus artists on a European level. The Interreg IV Programme's Le PLÔT, !, - pôle cirque Lille-Tournai - offers residences to circus groups. The project is a circus arts pilot intended to improve dissemination and diversification of circus performances and their audiences. Le PLÔT, ! wants to stimulate artistic exchange, generate creation and production and organize trans-national events. Person in charge of circus at the Maison de la Culture de Tournai is Geraldine Elie.

► [WWW.MAISONCULTURETOURNAI.COM](http://WWW.MAISONCULTURETOURNAI.COM)

**AT LEAST 10** centres in Flanders organize a circus or street arts event or festival in their city or municipality. No information was available for other major art houses or cultural centres. That does not necessarily mean that they do not make room for circus or street arts. We know, for instance, that thanks to an intervention by the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts, Ghent's Vooruit recently decided to include circus performances in its programme.

► [VOORUIT.BE](http://VOORUIT.BE)

**ANTWERP'S DE ROMA** is open to these art forms too, especially in its Circo Roma events.

► [WWW.DEROMA.BE](http://WWW.DEROMA.BE)



*Circusworkshops during  
Theater op de Markt*



#### TESTIMONIAL

## Martine Linear-Gijsen

*Programmer Theater op de Markt*

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#### **What is your own most important task in the sector?**

»The task of a festival like Theater op de Markt coincides with the challenges of the sector. It is of vital importance that the home base of the festival can keep being used as a residency center for artists and groups. The festival itself is one of the important cultural projects in Limburg. The challenge is to maintain this position with the right people and the right means.«

#### TESTIMONIAL

## Fabien Audooren

*Artistic director MiramiRO*

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#### **What are the most important challenges for circus and/or street arts in Belgium?**

»The creation of street arts without circus skills in Flanders is fragile. There's not a lived tradition, there's a lack of training and workshops and there is no street arts center. To develop performing arts in public space, the challenge is to create a context with good working conditions, to provide infrastructure and of course recognition and support by the government. Important is that in this recognition, regulations should be flexible as the field of performing arts in public space has a wide variety of disciplines. For the artists, the challenge is to dare to make new creations that go beyond the traditional streetbusker performance, to invest in learning to professionalize, to experiment and to think internationally. Go beyond frontiers in every sense!«





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# *Tented circuses*

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**THERE ARE STILL** some traditional travelling (family) circuses in Flanders, that tour around cities and villages. Circus artists active in new forms of circus are sometimes also interested to work in the context of a nomadic circus. Figures from the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts suggest that Flanders still counts some 14 nomadic circuses, 6 of which are traditional circuses.

For French speaking Belgium, no figures are available.

## **BOUGLIONE**

The best known traditional nomadic circus is Bouglione. Descended of the 1924 horse circus Cirque des quatre frères Bouglione, Bouglione is now in its sixth generation. This family circus still tours around Belgium and nowadays offers made to measure events for corporate clients and organizations.

► [WWW.BOUGLIONE.BE](http://WWW.BOUGLIONE.BE)

## **CIRCUS ROSE-MARIE MALTER**

In 1975 Jean and Rose Marie Malter founded travelling Circus Apollo. A couple of years later, they became known as Circus Rondeau, their circus featuring in a national broadcaster youth series of the same name. In 1986 the

name Circus Rose-Marie Malter was chosen. It has remained a family circus throughout the years. In the meantime, the circus received official recognition from the Flemish government. Apart from circus performances the family has extended its activities to rental of circus tents to third parties for events.

► [WWW.CIRCUSRMMALTER.COM](http://WWW.CIRCUSRMMALTER.COM)

## **CIRCUS RONALDO**

Circus Ronaldo is also a family circus. Danny and David Ronaldo represent the family's sixth generation. The history of this circus goes back to 1842 when Ghent citizen Adolf Peter Vandenberghe ran away from home to join a circus. In 1971 Jan (aka Johnny) and his brother Herman Van den Broeck founded their own circus and named it Circus Ronaldo. It was David and Danny, Johnny's sons, who pushed Circus Ronaldo towards circus theatre and Commedia dell'arte.

Since 1996 they have been making successful tours across Flanders, Europe and beyond with their performances in their own tent, among which Fili and La Cucina dell'arte. In Circenses, created 2009, even the seventh generation is on stage.

► [WWW.CIRCUSRONALDO.BE](http://WWW.CIRCUSRONALDO.BE)





*Circences by Circus Ronaldo*



*Un Poco Carmen by  
La Guardia Flamenca*



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# *Education*

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**A GOOD NUMBER** of courses and circus training programmes are directed towards amateurs. Flanders counts 22 circus workshops, at which all basic techniques are taught. There are groups for toddlers as well as for grown ups, for beginners as well as for advanced pupils. A total of approximately 3,500 pupils entered circus workshop all across Flanders. In the Walloon provinces there are some 15 organizations that offer circus training programmes mainly for recreation. Another seven reside in Brussels.

For professional training for circus artists, you have to be in Brussels, where three schools can be attended: ESAC, Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles and Espace Catastrophe. Only the first two are officially recognized and are allowed to present official diplomas. There is also one training institute in the Walloon provinces, exclusively for professional circus artists. The Flemish Centre for Circus Arts also organizes a number of courses, e.g. the Circus Arts Coach, open to anyone older than 18.

## **ESPACE CATASTROPHE**

Espace Catastrophe also organizes short-term courses open to everyone, mostly attended

by amateurs who are already familiar with circus arts. These courses are organized twice a year, for about 350 participants per session. Amateurs are given the opportunity to attend teaching practice three times per year for about 150 participants each. For professionals Espace Catastrophe organizes three international teaching practices and a number of workshops, annually reaching about 100 professional circus artists. Apart from that, Espace Catastrophe is also a centre for creation.

► [WWW.CATASTROPHE.BE](http://WWW.CATASTROPHE.BE)

## **ESAC**

For those who want to make a professional career in circus arts, there is the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque, Belgium's best known school. This school is recognized by the French Community and presents an academy diploma. Students receive a three year polyvalent training, including dance lessons, acting lessons, dramaturgy, music, stage design, art history... and circus techniques. The training seeks to integrate circus arts practice with high level skills in a circus technique of



## Circusplaneet



the trainee's choice and the development of a personal artistic project. Graduation students create a collective artistic project that is performed at the end of the curriculum. At this moment, about 52 students have entered ESAC. Each term, an average of 17 to 19 students graduate.

► [WWW.ESAC.BE](http://WWW.ESAC.BE)

## ECOLE DE CIRQUE DE BRUXELLES

The École de Cirque de Bruxelles offers an advanced training Artistic Pedagogics to students who wish to be trained as profes-

sional circus artists. This training is also recognized and graduates are presented a recognized certificate after three years. For some reason, the training for 2010-2011 has temporarily been suspended. Currently there are 12 students for this training. There is also a recreation department where children and teenagers are given the opportunity to learn various circus techniques, and the school also offers a specific training for the mentally or physically impaired. The school is currently having some 450 students in total.

► [WWW.ECOLEDECIRQUEDEBRUXELLES.BE](http://WWW.ECOLEDECIRQUEDEBRUXELLES.BE)



#### TESTIMONIAL

## **Danny Ronaldo**

*Circus Ronaldo*

### **What are the most important challenges for circus and/or street arts in Belgium?**

»The most beautiful thing the circus arts can give it's hungry audience today is hope. Between the big stunts and the technology in life today, the clown can show us that the ordinary can be special, if we just look at it in a special way. The circus reminds us of our deep primal emotions of love. Of who we really are, undone of all trendy packaging. Circus is nostalgic, not only because of it's rich international traditions but because it uncovers the deep roots of humanity. Circus shows man in a naked state, it's purest simplicity and in it's most wonderful imagination, it's most foolish desires. In a modern society where perfection becomes more important and more necessary, circus shows how funny and wonderfully beautiful it is to be imperfect. Circus shows that it is special and hopeful to be human. «



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# *Creation supporting centres*

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## *THEATER OP DE MARKT*

At the moment, there is only one centre for creation in Flanders that disposes of the required own infrastructure. Since 2003, Dommelhof, first with the House for Street Arts and later with Theater op de Markt, has been the home base of a production unit that has grown into a prominent centre of creation where young artists are offered opportunities to develop new performances and ideas.

Theater op de Markt is also a zealous advocate of the recognition of open air and circus theatre and wants to contribute to the development of these art forms by creating professional guidance. Throughout the year, artists reside at Dommelhof to work on new creations. The production unit does not only make rehearsal room available to artists and companies, but also offers logistic and financial production support during the creation process. Dommelhof's experience, expertise and infrastructure guarantee professional guidance and results.

The productions realized with the production unit's support are often included in the festival programme. In 2010, following companies received logistic, residence and/or financial support: Theater Tol, Kurt Demey, Compagnie Sweatshop, Dogwolf, The Primitives, Studio Orka and Laika/Circo Ripopolo.

► [WWW.THEATEROPDEMARKT.BE](http://WWW.THEATEROPDEMARKT.BE)

## *LATITUDE 50°*

An interesting example of a centre for creation for circus and street arts in French speaking Belgium is Latitude 50°. Artists can receive following support:

- accommodation in apartments or a place for caravans
- rehearsal room (various halls and a heated circus tent)
- storage room for material
- networking opportunities within the sector
- organization of tryouts
- guidance writing residence



- directing assistance for the design of lighting
- assistance in design and execution of back-grounds / decors
- office room and equipment

► [WWW.LATITUDE50.BE](http://WWW.LATITUDE50.BE)

**EXACT FIGURES ABOUT** the number of creation and production centres in Belgium are not available. Le Nomade mentions some five, the 2008 issue of David counts about ten organizations involved in production and creation.

A lot of festivals that do not have infrastructure of their own for creation, act as co-producers. Among them MiramirO, Leuven in scène and Humorologie. MiramirO often supports small

scale performances which are technically not too demanding, usually in the shape of financial or distribution support or assistance in the search for rehearsal room for artists, as well as administrative support, commissions and, if necessary, assistance in the search for suitable and competent crew. MiramirO also organizes informal occasions where artists can make acquaintance and is a member of the European creation network Meridians for arts in the public space, that offers artists from various countries opportunities to develop new productions across the borders.

► [WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE](http://WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE)

► [WWW.MERIDIANSNET.ORG](http://WWW.MERIDIANSNET.ORG)





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# *Advocacy agencies*

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## **THE FLEMISH CENTRE FOR CIRCUS ARTS**

The Circus decree, which took effect in 2008, gave rise to the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts (aka the Circus Centre). This centre works as a connection between the Flemish government and the various field actors. Its mission is to support and stimulate the Flemish circus sector through training, artistic support and promotion in an international perspective and to generate respect for circus heritage. Some of the projects launched by the centre are the One Wheel Convention, the circus youth animation course, the Circus Arts training coach, the Youth Circus festival, the Circus Magazine and partnership in Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe. The centre is supported by the Flemish government to promote, support and stimulate creation, practice and perception of circus arts in Flanders, government circus

policy and the Flemish circus artists, organizations, structures, networks and events.

► [WWW.CIRCUSCENTRUM.BE](http://WWW.CIRCUSCENTRUM.BE)

## **LA MAISON DU CIRQUE**

It's counterpart in the French speaking part of the country, La Maison du Cirque, also focuses on the development and promotion of circus arts on a local and regional as well as international level. La Maison du Cirque wants to develop projects in close dialogue with circus organizations to complement and support their activities and act as a catalyst for the sector. La Maison du Cirque takes various initiatives and offers tools to support distribution, communication and reflection about circus arts in French speaking Belgium. But it also supports and reinforces actions initiated by other organizations and artists.

► [WWW.LAMAISONDUCIRQUE.BE](http://WWW.LAMAISONDUCIRQUE.BE)





*Belgian circus and street artists*



One Wheel Convention

### FAR

A lot of French community professional organizations and companies have joined forces in the Fédération des Arts de Rue, des Arts du Cirque et des Arts forains (FAR), an organisation which represents its members in an advocating mission: establish common positions and joint strategies, and defend, promote and support the interests of its members. Communication among the members and exchange of information and experience are stimulated, and

positions, views and interests are communicated to the outside world. FAR frequently organizes debates on important issues and takes actions that reflect the interests and will of the members.

► [WWW.LA-FAR.BE](http://WWW.LA-FAR.BE)

**IN FLANDERS THERE** is no official advocating instance for street arts. Various festivals have been doing their best to assume this task as well as they can.



#### TESTIMONIAL

## Koen Allary

*Director Flemish Circus Center*

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### **What are the most important challenges for circus and/or street arts in Belgium?**

»Circus in all it's forms is still a young sector in Flanders. The most important challenge of the moment is the qualitative development of the circus arts within the existing circus decree and cultural recognition on all levels, including government levels. Therefore an important action is the new collaboration with the arts center Vooruit. De Vooruit is an important European arts center and the fact that it will program circus in the future is an important step ahead in the recognition of circus as an art form. «

#### TESTIMONIAL

## Julie Deschamps

*Circusplaneet*

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### **What is your own most important task in the sector?**

»It is the task of Circusplaneet to make children, young people and amateurs enthusiastic about circus with circus lessons, workshops and performances. We want to develop the art form circus and a specific circus pedagogy. Circus needs to be anchored on a regional and local level as an art form and as a youth culture. Circusplaneet wants to play a role in the development of social circus and in the implementation in city neighbourhoods in Ghent and Aalst.«





*Gehoornde Man (The horned man)*  
by De Rode Boom



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# Research

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**THERE IS LITTLE** scientific research in the area of circus and street arts in Belgium. The major problem is a lack of statistic data, which is also a setback when trying to establish government policies.

## GUIDES

Several guides who give an overview of circus and/or street arts have been published. First there was *Le Nomade*, which covers street arts and circus in the Walloon provinces and Brussels, an initiative of the French Community. The last edition was released in 2010. In 2008 MiramirO, then still known as International Street Theatre Festival Ghent, published the *David*, sort of a *Le Nomade* for Flanders and Brussels. More recently there's the *Yearbook 2010-2011 of Belgian circus companies*, a collaboration between the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts and *La Maison du Cirque* written in English. In addition the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts also published a Dutch guide focused only on the Flemish circus groups for 2010-2011.

## DOCUMENTATION CENTRE FOR CIRCUS AND ARTS IN PUBLIC SPACE

MiramirO, in collaboration with the Flemish Centre for Circus Arts, has an extensive documentation centre for circus and arts in public space. As a result of many years of contacts with companies, festivals and organisations at home and abroad, this collection has become the biggest in the Benelux, containing various audiovisual material, paper documents, books and magazines. In 2006 a project for digitalisation was started in order to preserve this unique collection for the future. In our current, increasingly technological, era the need for preservation of archives and documentation through digitalisation emerges. Much was invested in the creation of a digital data base in order to professionalize the documentation centre. This data base can be consulted online in three languages although the input of the documentation is still a work in progress.

► [WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE/DOCUMENTATION](http://WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE/DOCUMENTATION)



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## *Case studies of three local artistic projects*

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### **STUDIO ORKA**

In 2004 designers Philippe Van de Velde and Martine Decroo founded Studio Orka, a studio at which exhibitions and multimedia installations are designed on the basis of interaction between image, form and content. With its ambition to create projects and performances in which visual and narrative elements reinforce each other, this commercial design office grew into an original theatre collective in just a few years time.

Studio Orka produces performances on location. Based on a highly personal view on things and implementing contemporary design and sophisticated technique, a rich fantasy world is created. Studio Orka works with professional theatre makers who create charming and touching theatre for children and grown ups capable of cherishing childhood innocence and wonder.

Studio Orka's choice to produce projects on

location was very deliberate, as they explain themselves:

»As a designer, you enjoy the incredible freedom to define and explore ›space‹ yourself... There is no marked out theatrical space, the audience is not waiting for you in nice and comfortable seats, the acoustics are not as they should be... everything is different, unpredictable. Too large, too loud, too quiet...

Studio ORKA wants to go out into the grey city, the dark green wood... And we are constantly surprised, we constantly need to take different, new look at things and that is tantalizing. As form and content are developed simultaneously, this really pushes us on throughout the entire creation process. A particular, unusual spot to trigger a story. Theatre in a non-theatrical world.

You automatically establish an entirely different relation with your audience. People do not have a chat afterwards in posh foyers,



*Berninna by Studio Orka*



*Die Knedende Damen from  
the Bataclan show by CirQ*





but seek shelter from the rain under a tree. Familiar places take on a different aspect and inhabitants are tempted to go to places they hardly ever go to in daily life. A location project gives a village, park, beach a certain momentary magic that otherwise is not there, which of course makes people curious. It breaks the expectation patterns of classic theatre visit. It makes the experienced theatregoer meet the accidental passer-by. And both feel highly involved and interested with what is happening at that moment, without inhibition. We love that »hic et nunc« experience and what is more: location theatre helps us enhance the credibility of our story.

External factors add a new dimension to a storyline, such as, for instance, the weather, passers-by, local architecture, street noise, different languages... as it is we who visit the audience, and not the other way round, local dialect also plays a role in the performances.«

Some Studio Orka performances: Warmoes, Berninna, The Legend of Woesterdam

► [WWW.STUDIO-ORKA.BE](http://WWW.STUDIO-ORKA.BE)

### MIRAMIROPERAPHONE

In 2007 MiramirO produced *Aubade* and *Serenade* bringing famous love duets from well-known operas to homes in the popular quarters of Ghent. In 2009, MiramirO went one step further and commissioned composers Boudewijn Buckinx and Frank Nuyts each to write a ten minute mini-opera in Dutch. The project was realized in co-production with Theater op de Markt and Leuven in scène, with support from Hardscore npo. The commissions were financed by the Flemish government.

Frank Nuyts composed the opera *Mira and Miro's Wedding*. The *Weelchair* was written by Buckinx. For the performance, two opera singers were booked, as well as a bassoonist, a violinist and a clarinetist. Maja Jantar was commissioned to direct.

During the 2010 MiramirO festival, Ghent citizens were invited to order one of the two operas to be performed on their doorstep, a bit like ordering a pizza. The chosen opera would be performed in the street, allowing the neighbours to listen in. As these performances took place unannounced, it was a surprise every time. Thus not only opera buffs were reached, but accidental passers-by and neighbours as well. The fun of the project was that the operas were often ordered to surprise someone: the woman next door who is not very good on her





*Cucinema by Laika  
and Circo Ripopolo*

legs and does not come outside often, someone of the family's birthday, or a friend's, or a husband who wants to surprise his wife on their wedding anniversary, or simply neighbors who want to have fun together.

► [WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE](http://WWW.MIRAMIRO.BE)

### **COMPAGNIE CIRC'OMBELICO**

Compagnie Circ'ombelico first attracted attention with Dwarrel, a circus performance for toddlers. In 2009 young artists Iris Carta and Jef Naets started with the creation of their new performance, Da/Fort. This time, it became a location project that takes a limited audience into the belly of an old timer truck for a wordless choreography of down to the milli-

metre accurate acrobatics. The source of inspiration for this performance was lack of room, to make it a tribute to the beauty and greyness of existence.

The creation was supported by the Flemish government and co-produced with a lot of organizations including Centre Culturel Agora, Scène conventionnée de Boulazac (FR), Humorologie (BE), Flemish Centre for Circus Arts (BE), Le Carré Magique, Scène conventionnée de Lannion-Trégor (FR), Krokus festival/CC Hasselt (BE), Theater op de Markt/Dommelhof (BE) and Les Tombées de la Nuit (FR), with support from Villanella (BE), SACD, Latitude 50° (BE) and Cirque Trottola (FR).

► [WWW.CIRCOMBELICO.ORG](http://WWW.CIRCOMBELICO.ORG)

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EXPERIMENT DIVERSITY WITH THE STREET ARTS AND CIRCUS

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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 Belgium.

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