

# Fresh Circus #2

European seminar on the sustainable development of circus arts

CIRCOSTRADA NETWORK



Synthesis  
of discussions

[www.circostrada.org](http://www.circostrada.org)

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European seminar on the sustainable development of circus arts

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# Presentation

Circostrada Network organised Fresh Circus #2, European seminar on the sustainable development of circus arts, on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2012. The goal of this moment of reflection and exchange was to formulate a series of practical recommendations to improve the infrastructure and recognition of the sector.

To create opportunities for artistic mobility, to bring the performing arts into the digital era, to facilitate access to culture, to think of new economic models, to increase recognition of the arts within society, to participate in the renewal of public policies - these are but a few of the challenges which the entire cultural sector faces, and each is a subject which can greatly benefit from circus' innovative contributions.

In order to facilitate the approach and the treatment of issues linked to our sector, the members of Circostrada Network proposed to articulate the seminar around ten thematic working sessions.

Within this framework, in order to take into consideration the diverse realities of Europe, we proposed that artists and companies, circus arts professionals, and more generally those from the performing arts field send contributions ahead of time in order to share their experiences and difficulties, to make known examples of good practice, and to help formulate concrete propositions that will improve the situation of the sector and reflect how to best position contemporary circus in the face of transnational issues.

The gathering of European circus arts professionals at the second Fresh Circus conference has been surprising and unique. Reunions, embraces, discussions aside or in small groups, the overall ambiance gave the impression of a multicultural arts community that was happy to examine the issues involved in the sustainable development of its artistic practices.

Exchanging views on the sector's values as well as its fears and difficulties, the participants have shown that the answers to many questions may lie in the existence of Europe itself, which is today considered to be the natural space of expression for the circus arts, and which has brought them into a rewarding dialogue with the rest of the world.

We invite you to discover a synthesis of the Fresh Circus discussions and to revisit the ten themes at the heart of the sustainable development of circus arts. We would like to share with you a few of the unique experiences of those artists or cultural professionals who contribute day after day to enrich the circus.

By Yohann Floch  
Coordinator of Circostrada Network

## Fresh Circus #2

2 days at Parc et Grande Halle  
de la Villette (Paris, France)

490 participants from 42 countries

44% of foreign participants

20 simultaneous interpreters, 4 keynote  
speakers, 30 speakers, 10 moderators,

13 European cooperation projects  
presented, 8 info sessions:

### 10 thematic workshops

- > Contemporary circus aesthetics: standardisation, globalisation, diversity of cultural expressions?
- > Artistic residency programmes: How to make use of space and time?
- > Which types of cooperation with business are possible?
- > Social circus: what impact for citizens?
- > Audience development: the role of new media?
- > How do you criticise circus arts?
- > From début to retirement: which professional pathways?
- > "Green circus arts": what environmental responsibilities?
- > Our neighbours from other continents: which collaborations are possible?
- > After production and co-production, who is commissioning?

Fresh Circus #2 was proposed by Circostrada Network, European platform for the circus and outdoor creation, and was coordinated by HorsLesMurs. This event was held on the occasion of the festival Hautes Tensions in partnership with the Parc et Grande Halle de la Villette, Onda, Fondation BNP-Paribas, Stradda, Institut Français/ville de Paris, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and the European Commission through its Culture Programme.

# Circus at the Forefront of Europe and the Arts

By Anne-Marie **Autissier**

Sociologist in culture and media.

Director of the Institut d'Études Européennes at the University of Paris 8

Fresh Circus #2 took place on 12 and 13 April 2012 at La Villette's Grande Halle, where it provided another chance to witness the mobilising force of the European circus arts network. Almost 500 attendees from over forty countries were present, with the topics to be discussed at the event prepared beforehand by all members of the Circostrada network. It would be impossible to summarise such a huge undertaking in a way that was not incomplete and partial – yet that's just the challenge I've decided to take on here at the request of Yohann Floch, the event's organiser.

For two days, I attended workshops and presentations, focusing on what I saw as the crux of the discussions running through these gatherings.

I decided to highlight certain themes among those discussed at the event, and I hope this necessarily incomplete rendering will succeed in transmitting the enthusiasm I felt while listening to these most pertinent remarks and appreciating the vast wealth of information offered by the Fresh Circus participants.

## "A social circus and its impact on citizens"

Street and circus artists are inventing new ways of working with development-based organisations. It's what in the Anglophone countries is called community circus. But looking beyond just the language, we must also recognise the role street and circus arts can play in expressing the experiences of a given social group. As Emina Višnic, the Director of Pogon in Zagreb and Vice President of Culture Action Europe pointed out, when staring down austerity measures "it won't do to just reason with people. You'll also need some muscle." Furthermore, "the notion of art for art's sake will no longer cut it. We need new tools. Public institutions must create platforms for citizens." The example of Pogon shows that the role of this kind of cultural actor is to "connect what was once separate", not only in the capital, but throughout the country. This is how Pogon came to organise 'expeditions' of artists and scholars in the most remote regions of the country, to "make some noise". Croatian citizens sent postcards to politicians and public discussions were organised. Former industrial sites were re-inhabited. In the end, Pogon managed to co-create policy with the City of Zagreb, and with its youth department in particular.

If the term 'social circus' has been criticised as giving rise to a lack of clarity in some performances, several examples were presented that seem to argue that the most important thing is to avoid labels. However, even if the 'social circus' label is studiously avoided, the question remains of how to actually compose the training that

## Anne-Marie Autissier

Holding a university degree in modern literature and a doctorate in sociology, Anne-Mairie is an associate professor PhD Paris 8 University and head of the department of European studies since February 2012. She is president of the association Culture Europe, editor of the magazine Culture Europe International (with the support of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and the institute of European Studies at Paris 8 University ([www.culture-europe-international.org](http://www.culture-europe-international.org))). She also works as a consultant for different French and European organisations (European Cultural Foundation, European Commission, different European artistic networks, the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, Institut Français, ONDA, ADAMI and Relais Culture Europe).

participants in this process undertake. The Fresh Circus contributions showed it is important to combine skills from both fields, artistic and social, in such a way that these two sectors are able to maintain their own autonomy and not dilute their expertise.

Clowns Sans Frontières have presented their work in various countries. Their performers do not stay in one place for long, but they prepare their intervention well in advance with local NGOs. According to the group's leaders, the most important thing is to hit on the right sense of time, especially as it concerns young people. One appropriate tool, for example, may be international residency periods for social circus instructors. Between the pedagogical and the artistic, performers of Clowns Sans Frontières wish to preserve what they see as the circus' double role: that of self-expression and of an out-of-the-ordinary encounter which leads to a true sense of complicity.

One participant also brought up the experience of the circus school of Guinea-Conakry, Cirque École Mandingue (CEM), run in partnership with the École Nationale des Arts du Cirque de Rosny-sous-Bois (ENACR). This circus group works with so-called homeless youths. Performance tours are organised with the



help of ENACR and the support of the French Institute. Regarding training and the most pertinent way to combine activism and the arts, the Caravan network (France) has developed a referential document on the various skills necessary. They offer 240 hours of training in connection with different universities. The idea is to create circus "with people who don't feel like it", and thereby to create a situation where education/creation/participation go together, giving a kind of "permission to enjoy oneself".

### "Artistic residency programmes: how to make use of space and time"

One important theme, also related to the previous one, is the question of artistic residencies, a topic for which a working group was formed and some original experiments presented. It seems a typology of residencies must first be established: production, research and distribution support.

Les Subsistances in Lyon focuses on hosting international artists "to develop the local territory". In response to this, Cathy Bouvard remarked that circus techniques have become increasingly sophisticated. Consequently, work periods have become longer and the need for appropriate facilities is now considerable. She believes that residency work must be based out of a production bureau that supports the development of emerging companies.

Working in networks appears to be a suitable response to the current needs and necessary costs. The other issue – and it's no small one – is the artists' status during the residency period. Answers to this question remain inconsistent on the European

level, although it would appear that cultural institutions are hesitant to consider the residency as a true time and space for work.

Lastly, there are a certain number of problems regarding the relationship with the artist. In Spain, for example, residency plans are unknown to artists. Furthermore, there is a high disparity of means from one residency to the next. Some artists would like more long-term support – two to three years. Others are unhappy with the working conditions and do not put much value on the residency offer since their main priority is to distribute their work.

### "Partnerships with the business world?"

A few examples of partnerships between artists and companies have turned out to be exemplary and a source of inspiration. The circus is, in fact, a force for activism and a means of creating more fluid, less hierarchical relationships within firms that choose to host artists.

We see this in a choreography imagined by Pia Areblad, which uses the industrial lifts of an oil company: a way of paying homage to the workers' skill while also showing the possibilities of a body engaged in manoeuvring machines. This activity was carried out at the initiative of the collective Creative Clash/TILLT from Gothenburg, Sweden. The show was presented in the public space. The firm's internal and external relations were greatly enriched by the experience. Other experiments of this kind have been initiated by TILLT and have taken place on the national level. Short, 'custom-made' residencies have been put into place. According to Anna Grzelec, a member of the group, the benefits are reciprocal. The artists acquire new skills and find a way to discover



new audiences. For firms, these experiences allow them to present the activities of their daily lives and develop a relationship with the artistic world, since today a business' ability to thrive depends on the quality and diversity of the relationships it is able to forge.

Beyond the habitual mistrust that exists between the performing arts and the business world, these kinds of initiatives show how beneficial cooperation can be, as long as the identity and motivation of each partner is clearly defined and respected.

Mike Finch of Circus Oz in Australia points out that, after decades of indifference, the Australian government now encourages artists to approach firms about possible patronage agreements. The model of the 'artist' has indeed spread in a society in search of expressivity (Genard, Jean-Louis 2009). Mike Finch therefore mentions that high-level executives will pay to practice on the trapeze and to "live our artist's life". Circus artists organise workshops and are asked to take part in conferences. New research paradigms between the circus and universities are emerging and Circus Oz continues to develop its idea of making a 'living archive' accessible on the web.

## "How are critics to talk about the circus?" – from writing to research

The space available for the arts and culture in widespread media is increasingly diminished. Despite its success with audiences, the circus is not supported by a great deal of literature. The exercise is first of all a difficult one for critics. Three levels must be taken into account – technical, artistic and cultural. As for the artists, they sometimes struggle to produce theoretical writing about their work. The circus is first and foremost a demanding corporeal art, and it

is not often easy to take this into account, nor is it easy to identify dramaturgical choices made when we lack a referential canon. Lastly, it is still very difficult for a critic to make any money writing about a circus show. Certain circus artists go so far as to assert that they have no need for written material. It does seem, nonetheless, that the appreciation of the circus arts must involve writing, most likely through new media and especially via the Internet.

Despite the lack of any circus arts department in the academic world, the number of theses dedicated to the topic has increased significantly over the last decade. Reminding us of the role of certain precursors in the Francophone world, such as Caroline Hodak, Emmanuel Wallon, Julien Rosemberg and Pascal Jacob, Anne Gonon draws a portrait of artist-scholars like Jean-Michel Guy, who saw academic research on the circus as triply beneficial, since it contributes to the field of research in question (history, sociology, anthropology, medicine, etcetera), reinforces links with other methodological domains, and, lastly, invigorates the artistic object of study. Anne Gonon cites, among others, the trailblazing experiences of the University of Quebec (UQAM, Montréal) and the University of Dance and Circus Arts in Stockholm.

## "Arts of the 'green circus': What are the environmental concerns?" What tools can be used for sustainable development?"

Yohann Floch reminded attendees that it was in 1987 in Grünland that the notion of sustainable development first emerged. He also described the gradual appearance, in this idea, of culture, which would become the fourth pillar of sustainable development through the Agenda 21 for culture. Equity, social rights



and ecology are now to be taken into account in cultural initiatives of all kinds – values that are shared by the fields of street arts and circus. It must also be remembered that Fresh Circus #2 was impacted by budgetary restrictions, severe ones in some European countries, imposed on all cultural and social actors including those of the circus. At the workshop dedicated to this question, alternative distribution models were evoked, including that of small itinerant circus tents, which elicit the participation of local companies. This inexpensive distribution model seems well adapted to the urgency of the moment. In such a context, cooperation with private companies seems decisive. Subtopia in Sweden presents itself as a wager laid on the importance of sustainable development. The idea was first to participate in a municipal initiative to breathe life into a rural and marginalised neighbourhood south of Stockholm called Botkyrka. The model developed by Subtopia, called 'Quadrohelix', consists of four major themes: art, entrepreneurship, education and social responsibility. Considered to be the centre of contemporary circus in Sweden, Subtopia hosts several artistic companies, as well as educational and training programmes related to the circus arts. The idea is to develop an infrastructure, supporting local artists, as well as invited participants. Workshops, artistic residencies, and production advice are the activities of Subtopia, which was created as a limited liability company whose main stakeholder is the municipality of Botkyrka.

### “Developing audiences: what is the role of new media?”

The experience of RomaEuropa was presented during this workshop. An important festival, RomaEuropa stands upon its declared purpose as a foundation for the public good. After some limited contact, cooperation with Telecom Italia led to the development of Romaeuropa Webfactory, which was intended for producers of Internet content, including art, videos, music, writing and street arts. Romaeuropa Webfactory organises its PerSe Visioni 3 – Visual Art Exhibition with the support of the Italian Ministry of Youth, the Apulia Region and the Polignano a Mare commune.

Marc Benaïche, the director of Mondomix, then presented the activities of this company, citing a few keys to success for this type of enterprise. Mondomix has created nearly 400 websites and multimedia historical site platforms. For three years, the firm has worked to maintain a participative Internet experience. Marc Benaïche insists on the need for skills, especially in community management. Access to traditional media has turned out to be quite difficult. But maintaining sustainable access to the Internet is not any easier. One needs 1 million distinct visitors per month in order to attract advertisers. According to Marc Benaïche, it is important to internalise skills to equip oneself with the tools necessary for true online visibility.

### “Our overseas neighbours: international collaboration.”

Clowns d'ailleurs et d'ici and the UBI dance company work with the Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS) Circus School. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported this initiative from 2006 to 2010. 65 Cambodians are employed on the PPS site and 1250 children are involved. One hundred artists and instructors from all continents are sent there. Known as a cultural hub in Cambodia, PPS works to piece together the funding it needs. But it also receives support from associations and foundations: CCFD-Terre solidaire, the Prins Claus Foundation (Netherlands), the European Union, UNICEF, UNESCO, OIF (Organisation internationale de la Francophonie), the General Council of Seine Saint-Denis, and the Ile-de-France region. The school organises tours in Europe, the United States (New York in 2013) and Asia. It makes use of its own network. There have been vast improvements in its professional training (thanks especially to a partnership with the Théâtre du Soleil). A final paradox of global exchange is that PPS, though considered a cultural hub in Cambodia, is called a 'social centre' in France.

### To offer a provisional conclusion...

The observed differences – in terms of status, financial situation and recognition – do not hinder the wonderful European and international impulse that I was able to observe throughout the Fresh Circus #2 event. Circus artists find themselves acting in multiform international collaborative initiatives, of which some have proven to be very original. It goes without saying that these naturally mobile milieus have come up against socio-economic and legal obstacles that still exist in Europe – a sign that legislation has remained resolutely national, despite some areas of progress. However, in their ability to create partnerships with firms, local governments, academic research and fields in difficulty, circus milieus seem ideally placed to implement four essential objectives for a Europe of the arts: transnationalism, social cohesion, digitisation and sustainable development.



# Social circus: what impact for citizens?

Across the world, a wealth of initiatives are emerging that use circus arts as a means to carry out social projects within sensitive, disadvantaged or endangered communities. Whether addressed to people with a physical or mental disability, migrants, those facing drug addiction, or young people with learning disabilities, circus seems to be an efficient tool for building independence, confidence, creativity and self-esteem within individuals, as well as for fostering solidarity and cooperation among the members of a group.

Circus consists of a series of disciplines, each with its own unique virtues, but all can help people to acquire the fundamental skills which are necessary for personal and social development. According to studies on the subject, circus uses alternative pedagogical tools that stress well-being.

Which conditions and tools are necessary to lead successful social circus projects, and how do we measure their impacts?

The first speaker, Catherine Magis, told us about her work setting up Espace Catastrophe as a rehearsal and creation space for circus in Brussels. She then spoke about a project that she had initiated with an integrated group made up of people with learning disabilities and professional circus artists. In the production *Complicités* eleven mentally disabled artists and seven circus artists become accomplices on stage. As director of the project, Magis took the time to explore the different universes of the performers, allowing the artists to find their space and their mode of expression: "I tried to lead the disabled artists to a place farther, higher, more absurd, more strange, more poetic, more philosophical ...". At the centre of the project are the desires and impulses of a group of people, all with different artistic skills, meeting each other in dreams and thoughts.

At the start of the project, Magis worked with a larger group of people with learning disabilities in order to teach them circus skills. They trained together three times a week, and then from this group Magis decided to cast eleven performers and to combine them with professional circus artists. It took six months to put the company together, but right from the start Magis aimed to tour the world with the group. This meant they had to engage and get support from the care workers and support networks that were needed to enable them to tour.

A great benefit for the professional artists joining the company was the necessity of working creatively to develop a common language among the group. The professional artists needed to excel in qualities including patience, commitment, energy and honesty, and had to display a willingness to enter into an authentic performance relationship. Each person was paired with a mentor and the outcomes were extremely positive. With *Complicités* they had succeeded in creating magic.

In addressing the workshop Magis stressed that she hadn't chosen to work with an integrated group for the sake of social impact, but rather because it would give her an opportunity to work with a group of people that could investigate new ways of communication.

## Reporter

Ali Williams (Circus Development Agency, UK)

Ali Williams is founder and creative director of NoFit State Circus, a company that turned 25 years old in 2012 and that has an international reputation for creating innovative contemporary circus. In the past Ali has been a circus performer, administrator and director, and is now creative director for the company as well as a producer for the ZEPA project *Barricade*, on which Ali has worked closely with director Oriz Azaz. Ali is also Chairperson of the Circus Development Agency UK, and supports many other circus companies and promoters in an advisory capacity. Though Ali focuses on contemporary creations she loves the traditional circus lifestyle of travelling and living outdoors with a community who share a common vision.

The workshop's second speaker, Felicity Simpson, a co-founder of the Colombian circus school *Circo Para Todos* and the director of its offshoot company *Circolombia*, began her contribution by recalling that ten years ago there had been another, similar meeting of people working in the social circus sector (including the Australian Women's Circus, Reg Bolton, Belfast Community circus, and many others). At that meeting they had discussed many issues and agreed on many things, but the one thing they couldn't decide on was the term 'social circus'. Some cultures believe this title can stigmatise participants, while others use the word to mean circus within the community – i.e non-professional circus. Felicity suggested that circus was circus, and that it didn't



matter where the participants came from or what special needs they might have. If they are well trained they can become professional and perform as professionals. She spoke then of the example of Circolombia, where performers who join the company have trained four years at Circo Para Todos, and for six months before that in the school's community outreach programme. Circolombia dislike being referred to as social circus because they feel it shouldn't matter what your background is once you are performing professionally.

Felicity then explained that Circo Para Todos and Circolombia run on an interesting model: the school is free, but the students have to pay back a percentage of their earnings for two years after graduating and this fee contributes to the school's running costs. Felicity closed her presentation by saying that she believed that in social circus projects there is a need for concrete evidence for the effectiveness of the work. Her example was that fifteen Circolombia graduates have bought their own houses in Cali, and that the graduates, as well as finding work as performers, make excellent teachers as they understand the needs of their peers.

The discussion was then opened to the floor and various participants described their work, including people that were working in Mali and Pakistan, people from Clowns Without Borders and Cirque du Soleil, and people involved in community and youth circus projects across Europe. The debate took place around three main subjects.

## Hip Cirq Europ'

The European project Hip Cirq Europ' is a transdisciplinary two-year project combining circus arts, hip-hop dance and emerging cultures that focuses on social inclusion, the professionalisation of young artists, and improving the recognition of cultures inhabited by young Europeans from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Twelve young European artists who are in the process of becoming professionals come together to create a performance work under the leadership of two professional artists (Eric Mezino of Cie E.Go and G aetan Lev eque of Collectif AOC). Once the creation has been drafted, the group travel through Europe and in Guadeloupe for six residencies (France, Guadeloupe, Belgium, Finland, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) where they work in collaboration with young emerging artists and amateurs from inner cities in order to nourish their creative skills and help them develop their own projects. The project is run by Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde, in association with five European partners: l'Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles (Belgium), Circus Elleboog (Netherlands), Belfast Community Circus (United Kingdom), Sorin Sirkus (Finland), M etis Gwa (Guadeloupe). The project is co-funded by the European Union under the Culture Programme.

[www.hipcirqueurop.eu](http://www.hipcirqueurop.eu)



## 'Social' Circus?

The question of whether the label 'social circus' was an appropriate one drew passionate responses from the workshop participants.

Many felt that it was important not to forget that the art itself is the core value, and that social circus can achieve high quality performance as well as achieving many other social benefits. It was recognised that the word 'social' has many different meanings, and that 'social circus' will be interpreted differently by different communities.

Participants of the workshop also expressed that it can be useful to talk about social benefits for fundraising purposes.

It was recognised that people who work in this field may be working with different groups with different needs, and that teachers might therefore need specialist training. The question was raised whether it is more sensible to train circus professionals to do social work or whether social workers should be trained to teach circus. While this question wasn't resolved, it was generally agreed on that circus artists who are working with people of different abilities might need training to work with specific target groups.

The directors of the UK youth circus organisation Albert and Friends felt strongly that there was no use in labelling people ("people are people and circus is circus") and that the aim should be integration not separation. Various examples of circus projects show that it is possible to integrate young people of various abilities in ways that not only achieve social objectives but also produce quality circus performance. The more we separate social circus by labelling it, the bigger the rift between social circus and professional circus will become – particularly as the circus sector grows

## Short-term / Long-term

The workshop also discussed the relative benefits of short- and long-term projects.

Some participants expressed that there were situations where it could be damaging to create a short-term project that only leaves the people involved wanting more. However, counterexamples were given to demonstrate that even a short visit or a one-off workshop could have a significant benefit – an example of which was the work that Clowns Without Borders have done in war zones.

The debate eventually concluded that long-term projects can maximise social and artistic outcomes, but that doesn't mean that short-term projects have no value. Projects should be the right length to fulfil the project's aims. What is more important is that the work is delivered by people who are trained to work in the situations they are placed in. It was also pointed out that specialist training for working with disadvantaged groups was becoming more available through European funded programmes such as Caravan.

## Speakers

### Felicity Simpson (Circolombia, UK)

Felicity Simpson began her career as a circus performer in Europe before moving to Brazil, where she founded Intrepida Trupe during the 80s, bringing circus into contact with musicals, opera and open-air performance. During this work she met Hector Fabio Cobo Plata and formed a long-standing professional circus partnership. In the 90s, they toured the world together with a satirical acrobatic tango that moved between the contrasting worlds of the classical and contemporary circus. In 1995, in Cali Colombia, the Foundation Circo Para Todos was born, with Felicity as co-founder and chair. Two years later, the school Circo Para Todos was created: the first professional circus school in the world specifically dedicated to underprivileged children. In 2005 it became the Escuela Nacional Circo Para Todos Colombia, a key institution in South America for world circus training, and a reference point for similar projects in South Africa, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Felicity is also the founder and director of Circolombia Ltd, a production company created in 2006 and based in London. Besides producing shows and providing jobs as an agency for the graduates of Circo Para Todos, Circolombia promotes the dynamic difference of Colombian performers through participation at international circus festivals and presence at major venues with the company's latest show, Urban.

### Catherine Magis (Espace Catastrophe, Belgium)

The artistic director and general coordinator of the Espace Catastrophe, Catherine Magis is also a stage director (lately for the project *Complicités*), project advisor and teacher, as well as a member of several expert groups, commissions and boards. She is also a founder - and until May 2010 was a member of the board of directors - of the Maison du Cirque. She is regularly invited to participate in meetings, conferences and debates to share her expertise in the circus field.

### Eleférios Kechagioglou (CARAVAN, France)

Born in Greece, Eleférios Kechagioglou moved to France after graduating from secondary school. He studied Political Science and Contemporary History (Sciences Po - Paris) and collaborated with UNESCO. From there, unexpectedly, he started a career in circus, theatre and writing, working as an artist, trainer and stage director. He also worked with several theatres, circus schools and companies. After following a vocational education programme on Business Administration for Culture, he developed different projects focusing on the social impact of circus, theatre and writing. He is project developer and director of Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde - Centre of Circus Arts and Emerging Cultures, a project combining youth and social circus, vocational training, international exchanges and artistic residencies and partnerships with artists. Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde is located in Bagneux, a town in the southern suburbs of Paris that has large disadvantaged areas.

## Evaluation and tools

Measuring social benefits can be difficult, but there are evaluation toolkits that can be used to measure the impact of social circus. Participants of the workshop agreed that as the competition for money becomes fierce, the need to justify funding will grow and it is therefore important to be capable of proving the social value of projects and of assessing the impact they have on communities and different groups of people.

As the workshop closed, it was suggested that there is a wealth of experience and a great variety of projects already working in a wide range of fields. There are also more specialist training opportunities and trainers working in the sector, and it would therefore be useful to create a handbook giving case studies, training directories, evaluation toolkits, etcetera.

## Circo Para Todos

Circo Para Todos was founded in 1995 in the city of Cali, Colombia, as the first professional circus school in the world specifically dedicated to training at-risk boys and girls. Circo Para Todos has developed many community workshops within low-income areas, and to date more than 3000 young people have participated in these workshops in Colombia. Following the early success of its workshops, Circo Para Todos opened its doors as a professional school in 1997. At the present time, all artists to have graduated from Circo Para Todos are working professionally in their specialisation - whether in Europe, Central America, South America or the United States.

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



# Contemporary circus aesthetics: standardisation, globalisation, and diversity of cultural expressions?

The 1970s saw the emergence of a new circus, one characterised by its research into an ideal, nomadic way of life, into big tops and the idea of freedom. But the big top, an integral symbol of the circus for many people, gradually became less prevalent as traditional circus acts were abandoned in favour of a theatrically denser dramaturgy that went beyond pure entertainment in order to integrate social context. In the 90s, the idea of the 'spectacle' was replaced by discourse and concept, and the circus invited post-dramatic theatre and contemporary dance to join in its play. Contemporary circus came to free itself more and more from its traditional denomination, and from the year 2000 onwards circus engaged in abstraction, visited intimate territories, and began to collaborate with playwrights.

Today, many people don't recognise themselves as working in circus anymore – some artists refuse this category because their work is interdisciplinary – and the public no longer find their familiar codes... Has the term 'circus' become obsolete, and with productions and artists travelling the entire world, is it still appropriate to speak about French circus, Finnish circus, Canadian circus, etcetera?

The working group for this session entered into lively discussions on many topics, debating the questions of international circus aesthetics with an energy which itself spoke of the lack of available platforms where these issues can ordinarily be discussed.

## How do we label circus performance?

One essential question, however, can be said to have fuelled these conversations: How do we label circus performance? At first glance it seems like a 'problem' that has been identified by programmers and then pushed onto the artists, who have to present themselves in a way that will bring them bookings and work. The workshop participants gave examples of companies who had avoided the labels of both 'new' and 'traditional' circus and in this way shut themselves out of both touring circuits, and, on the other hand, of companies who had avoided a specific label, or had adapted to take on more than one (circus, dance, theatre, etcetera), and consequently had managed to access the benefits of multiple networks and touring circuits.

Moving onto the question of circus' globalisation, the working group noted that schools are taking on increasingly diverse student bodies but that this hadn't resulted in a standardisation of aesthetic expression. Different performance styles can, to an extent, be associated with different national territories: artistic research, for instance, is associated with Finnish circus, a manner of directly addressing the audience can be perceived among Flemish and Spanish practitioners, and so on.

However, the group raised the question of to what extent these national labels actually make it difficult for emerging artists – who after all may not fit with the expected aesthetic of their national context. It was questioned also whether audiences could be disappointed because they go to see a French show with certain expectations for what French circus feels and looks like. Participants of the workshop pointed out that these national images

## Reporter

Ivan Kralj (Mala performerska scena, Croatia)

Ivan Kralj is the director of Mala performerska scena, a Croatian organisation dedicated to contemporary circus. He also directs Festival Novog Cirkusa (held every November in Zagreb), manages the Circus Information Archive (CIA), and leads various projects connected to producing, promoting and educating in the field of circus, burlesque, sideshow and variety. After years of experience in investigative journalism, which brought him several awards, Ivan now focuses his media work on critical writing covering culture and social phenomena. He is the editor of the book *Women & Circus* (Mala performerska scena, Zagreb 2011) and creative producer of the Red Room Cabaret.

can be created by public funding bodies as they decide what to support and what not to support – a fact confirmed by representatives of countries from Europe all the way to Australia. The group reflected that it might be very dangerous to insist on the idea of national aesthetics because it could end up shaping artificial territories rather than artistic territories.

For the artists who do not fit with the image promoted by presenters and programmers, it becomes very difficult to succeed. A workshop



participant explained that if you want to experiment with circus, and to head into new artistic territories or to create new languages, then you will have to test your ideas at experimental theatre festivals. The group suggested that there is a dark side to the circus festivals or venues that are focused exclusively on established, successful artists and using them to get results at the box office.

It was also noted during the session that there are few residencies which are focused on artistic research and which don't necessarily have to lead to a performance/creation. Many residencies are shaped on commercial terms as well: it is expected that the artists will present work at the end of it. However, there are also some examples of artistic laboratories, such as Juggling the Arts in the Nordic countries, where artists are given space and time to develop their own artistic language without having to worry about the cost and practical difficulties of such a 'luxury'.

### Artists or Performers?

The workshop revealed divided opinions on how to describe the role that circus people take: are they artists or performers? Do we see circus as intellectual or technical? Although there was a general agreement that we should avoid absolute categorisation, and leave this choice to the artist, it was suggested that it's very important to recognise how there are few circus artists who are socially or politically engaged in their work. There are a few artists, like Phia Ménard for instance, who use their work to take us toward reflections on ourselves and society, but it seems that the majority of artists, if they want to work and tour widely, perhaps have concluded that there is a specific kind of performance that will attract audiences and please presenters.

## Circus Arts Laboratory (formerly Juggling the Arts)

The New Nordic Circus Network arranges artistic laboratories for professional Nordic circus artists. The circus arts laboratories give young Nordic artists the opportunity to undertake a one-week residency where they will receive the opportunity to deepen and develop their artistic work and research, guided by internationally recognised mentors. The artists get the opportunity to test ideas, to get inspiration and receive feedback from the mentors as well as their Nordic colleagues. The project is funded by a grant from Kulturkontakt Nord.

The objectives of the laboratories are to:

- support artistic research processes within contemporary Nordic circus art
- offer artistic support to young Nordic circus artists
- support dialogue and the building of relationships and networks between Nordic contemporary circus artists and programmers
- support the development of creativity and professionalism within the contemporary circus field

[www.nordic-circus.org](http://www.nordic-circus.org)



One final problem that was accentuated in the discussions was that the focus of circus schools and venues is front-on work. Right from the start of their education, circus artists are being prepared to enter existing performance circuits and are being taught that non-standardised ideas are too expensive.

## New Nordic Circus Network

The aim of the New Nordic Circus Network is to place contemporary circus on the cultural map in the Nordic countries and to strengthen the sector at all levels. The Nordic partnership also serves to raise more interest at local, national and international levels. The project is already regarded in Europe and internationally as an example of very good practice. The network supports, and will continue to support, contemporary circus productions, festivals, tours, education programmes, and projects promoting social interaction.

[nordic-circus.org](http://nordic-circus.org)

## TRANS-Mission

The goal of the TRANS-Mission project is to improve the ways in which contemporary circus' creation, production and distribution are supported, and to increase the sector's overall professionalisation and recognition at the European level. The project places a particular emphasis on the writing of shows, which is often neglected within this sector, as well as the preparative steps that can be taken right from the very start of a creative work to assist its eventual distribution.

[www.transmission-europe.eu](http://www.transmission-europe.eu)

## Speakers

### Marc Jeancourt (Théâtre Firmin Gémier-La Piscine, France)

Director of Théâtre Firmin Gémier / La Piscine, Pôle national des arts du cirque, Marc Jeancourt has two different careers: theatre director and actor. He went to the university AES in Paris I, Nanterre and EHESS, and studied drama at the acting school Jean Périmony. He participated in several training courses (Claude Evrard, Christian Rist, Paul Golub), and after being an administrator for some time became an artistic director. He centres his artistic line around circus in big tops and theatres and keeps a multidisciplinary touch.

### Bauke Lievens (Independent Dramaturg / Frans Brood Productions, Belgium)

Bauke Lievens works as a dramaturg, journalist and manager for circus and theatre. As a dramaturg, she has worked with Théâtre d'un Jour and Cie Un loup pour l'homme and she is currently involved in the new creation of the Flemish theatre collective Tibaldus en andere hoeren. She has published various articles on the topic of contemporary circus. She also takes care of the international promotion and production of several circus companies who have found a home under the wings of the Ghent-based Frans Brood Productions (Circ?ombelico, Cantina and Le G.Bistaki). Bauke also teaches practical dramaturgy at KASK, School of Arts (Ghent, Belgium).

### Liv Laveyne (Belgium)

Liv Laveyne is a Flemish journalist and art critic. She writes about theatre, comedy and circus for the national newspaper De Morgen and the cultural website cobra.be. She also publishes regularly in Circusmagazine (Circuscentrum). Laveyne is also a programmer at TAZ (Theater aan Zee), an art festival in Ostend taking place during the summer, where she programmes young artists from theatre, dance, performance and circus.

# Artistic residency programmes: How to make use of space and time?

Why invest in artistic residencies? Odile Chenal from the European Culture Foundation is right in her remark that this question leads on to others: Why do we invest? Why do we have to continue investing? Who is investing? Artists, public powers, hosting structures? What do we invest: time, money, expertise? Already the number of residency programmes for circus artists is increasing all over the world. Festivals as well as schools are establishing residency facilities and artists have come to understand how crucial they are to their creation process.

However, artists, hosting structures and funders can play different roles in a residency, and they can have different expectations. The artists participate in a residency in order to develop a project; to benefit from financial, technical and human support; to find new inspirations, interact with other professionals, see other peoples, other cultures, etcetera. The hosting structure can have various formal or informal requirements and expectations concerning a production, but also concerning its environment or audience. It also makes the decision of either welcoming young professionals or well-known artists as it seeks to increase its visibility within networks and to promote its activities. Lastly, the funders, local or national, public or private, have expectations too: achieving their political objective, improving their reputation, encouraging tourism, working on local development, promoting social integration or practising cultural diplomacy, etcetera. Do we have to invent new models of residency, and if so, why?

The workshop began with presentations from the two speakers, Juliette Beaume, the coordinator of the project *Circ que o ! – Pyrénées de Cirque*, overseen by La Central del Circ, and Cathy Bouvard, the deputy director at Les Subsistances.

First was Cathy Bouvard, who explained that Les Subsistances, a cultural centre located in Lyon, has a dedicated budget for residencies, as well as facilities to house artists and several available spaces for creation. There are three different types of residency at the centre:

- > A residency to create a show, where Les Subsistances co-produce, invest money and provide technical support.
- > Lab residencies, where there is less material support but artists can develop work and ideas without having to present anything.
- > The 'résidence pour voir', a short test residency where the centre allows an artist to use a space to trial a concept/idea and then decides whether or not to follow this up with the offer of a further residency.

Artists from various backgrounds, working in various media, can receive a residency at Les Subsistances. The length of the residency depends on the nature of the project, as does the provision of financial assistance, working space, and administrative and technical support. Bouvard explained that Les Subsistances aim to be a flexible work and production tool for artists, one that offers them a variety of different ways to explore areas of interest in the world today and in the realm of their own work.

Juliette Beaume then introduced herself and spoke of La Central del Circ, an organisation which runs four new creation spaces in the Barcelona area. The spaces have different sizes, and La Central also provides accommodation for circus artists, with about twelve

## Reporter

Martine Linaer-Gijsen (Theater op de Markt, Belgium)

With a master in communications from Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Martine Linaer-Gijsen has worked for several cultural organisations since 1991. Since 1997 she has been working in Dommelhof, in an institute of the regional government of Limburg that focuses on performing arts. She was first in charge of the promotion for Dommelhof and the festival Theater op de Markt, and from 2005 has been in charge of the programming of Theater op de Markt as well as other outdoor theatre and circus events that Dommelhof brings to the Limburg region. She is a member of the advisory commission on circus arts of the Flemish government.

companies in residency each year. La Central launches calls for artists and calls for projects and then chooses which projects to support based on artistic criteria. La Central is also involved in various European cooperation projects, including TRANS-Mission, Pyrénées de Cirque, and Process()s.

Once the speakers had finished their presentations the session was opened to general discussion.

## Finance and pressure

One important issue which emerged in the course of the presentations, and which was discussed during the workshop, was the fact that many hosting structures rely on public funding and are therefore under pressure – and place artists under pressure – to produce results and to offer public presentations at various stages of creation. It seems there is a pressure to justify public investment by exhibiting a product, and it is therefore common for structures offering residencies to organise work-in-progress viewings, previews, etcetera. The core question that emerged was whether a residency is meant to co-produce products or to host ideas.

Some participants in the workshop felt strongly that projects are not always ready to be shown to audiences, and that research and laboratory work should be protected within the creative process. Debating the question of whether artists should be allowed to end a residency with 'nothing' to show for it, the counterarguments that arose covered the importance of testing material on a 'non-professional' audience while touching on the 'importance of artistic failure'.

## Pyrénées de Cirque

The project EGCC Pyr.n.es de Cirque gathers ten partners from the transborder Pyrénées area (Aquitaine, Aragon, Euskadi, Midi-Pyrénées, Navarre) around a common desire: to lift the circus sector across the territory by supporting the venues, centres and organisations that host circus projects.

[www.pyreneesdecirque.eu](http://www.pyreneesdecirque.eu)

## Process()s

Process()s gathers together The Central del Circ (Catalonia), La Grainerie - Manufacturers of Circus Arts (Toulouse Balma), the association Animahu, and the Tourist Office of Perpignan in order to encourage the creation and touring of contemporary circus in the Mediterranean Pyrénées area through actions that promote the circulation of artists and works.

<http://pyreneesdecirque.eu/spip.php?rubrique21>





## Access to information

Artists in the audience noted that they didn't have enough information on residencies, asking where they were, where they could find them, and wanting to know what their characteristics were in terms of conditions, length, facilities, etcetera.

The group agreed there is a strong need for centralised information and improved communication in order to facilitate exchange and access.

## Types of residency

Another issue raised during the workshop was the fact that it's not always clear what the term 'residency' means. In different cultures and different places there are different understandings of the word. Some artists are therefore lost when it comes to questions like: What are our obligations? Does it include a co-production? Is it paid?

There is a need for clarification of what a residency centre offers to artists, and what its responsibilities are (for example in respect of the insurance of the hosted artists).

## Long-term residencies?

Terms like 'artistes associés' (associate artists) and 'accompagnement' (supported artists) are common in the discourse around artistic residencies. In visual arts, long-term residencies exist. The group asked whether there is an opportunity for artists to undertake a long-term residency with one organisation? What responsibilities and obligations would this imply? One participant used the word 'cohabitants' as a possible term for artists in residence.

## Conclusion

In the session it became very clear that artistic residencies can come in many different forms. One of the biggest issues to be raised was the pressure placed on the artist to perform during their creative process.

Questions that remained open were: What is the artists' legal status during a residency? What happens after the residency? Would it be a good idea for hosting structures to introduce an 'after-care programme' for artists? How can we improve the conditions for artists and clarify what 'residency' means?

## Speakers

### Juliette Beaume (La Central de Circ, Spain)

After having gained a postgraduate certificate in Performing Arts at the University of Paris III, Juliette Beaume worked 2002–2008 at Ateneu Popular 9 Barris as a producer and promoter for the circus shows created there. During these years she was also a delegate at Ateneu for the European network of independent cultural centres Trans Europe Halles, and worked on the setting up of a Euro-regional project, Chemins de Cirque, with La Grainerie and Animahu. She joined the team of La Central del Circ in September 2009 in order to coordinate the project Circ que o! - Pyrénées de Cirque, as well as different projects on local and European levels to support the creation of circus works.

### Cathy Bouvard (Les Substances, France)

Since January 2004, Cathy Bouvard is deputy director at Les Substances, the international laboratory for artistic création in Lyon directed by Guy Walter. She has also been secretary general at the Théâtre de la Croix-Rousse and a journalist.

### Maria Tuerlings (Trans Artists, Netherlands)

Maria Tuerlings is the founder and director of Trans Artists. She is a member of the OMC working group on artists mobility support programmes, and of the expert group on Mobility Information Standards at the European Commission. She has been a member of the board (secretary and President) of ResArtis and of Pépinières Européennes pour Jeunes Artistes, and is currently on the board of On the Move. Previously she was the Chairwoman of the Advising Committee for Basic Stipends at the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts Design and Architecture. Her main expertise is artists in residence programmes and issues related to artists' mobility.

# Which types of cooperation with business are possible?

Cultural operators generally look at the business world with some sort of suspicion, and often reduce the dialogue with them to relationships of patronage or sponsorship. It is nonetheless true that at the present time, when public funding budgets for cultural affairs are being cut in Europe, the cultural sector needs to be more open about approaching the business sector for collaboration in the creation of artistic projects. Aren't there other types of exchange that can be introduced to the business world?

Cooperation exists, whether as a result of the initiative of artists, businesses or specialised agents and mediators. The situation of projects mingling arts and business is very different all over Europe – the levels of activity, interest and funding are very diverse. In certain countries, these forms of collaboration are in a bad state, whereas in others the relationships have existed for a long time.

At the beginning of each collaboration, it is necessary to clearly define the identity and role of each side, so that the motivations are clearly understood, the conditions are favourable, and the partnership can bear fruit in the form of exchanges of expertise, residencies, workshops, co-productions between artists and employees, etcetera. Can circus be useful to the business world, and can business companies be committed to the artistic sector?

The session began with the first speaker, Pia Areblad, explaining how the organisation TILLT works. She showed a video to give an example of a TILLT project: a dancer went to a factory to discover the people employed there and the work they do. She saw the forklifts and noticed that they were like dancers, and moved in a 'choreography'. Together with the forklift-men, she made a ballet, and performed it at a street theatre festival. She also found there was a gap between the business' production and marketing departments, and organised some workshops to bridge that gap. The company got good press reviews; the project gave their image a boost. Overall, everyone in the factory was slightly sceptical at first, but in hindsight very enthusiastic and proud of their participation.

In a nutshell, TILLT works as a matchmaker between artists and companies. They support and guide the delicate collaboration that takes place between the art and the business, fulfilling an intermediary role which is much needed. As a process it has its ups and downs, inevitably brings clashes between artistic and business values, and never goes quite how you expect – but in the long run it pays off, for both parties. It goes further than the initial step of sponsorship or patronage. It establishes a real relationship between the arts, the artists and the business.

Linda Mickleborough, the session's second speaker, is also familiar with this process. She's the head of the oldest circus company in Australia, Circus Oz. In the late nineties, the company struggled financially because the conservative government had questioned the necessity of arts subsidy. This raised the pressure on the company to find new sources of revenue. Their experience with sponsorship, in the usual sense, hadn't always been good in the past, so they decided to try something different. They wanted to rewrite the sponsorship formula and to start to draw in money from the business sector without compromising their artistic values. To this end, they organised 'Team Building Activities' teaching circus skills to managers. A team of managers would for instance learn flying trapeze, and in the process would learn how to help each other, work together, trust each other, etcetera.

Linda admitted that in the beginning it was about the money, but over the years it changed. The process matured. Oz discovered other advantages: they could keep a 'retired' artist on the payroll by using them to guide these workshops. For their part, the managers were very excited – they discovered new things about themselves and their team, and they enjoyed living 'the life of a

## Reporter

Gwendolien Sabbe (De Spil, Belgium)

Gwendolien Sabbe studied Modern History at the University of Leuven (1996-2000), and continued with postgraduate Medieval Studies at Trinity College Dublin (2000-2001). She has worked for the Province of West-Flanders (2002-2005), as a freelance journalist (2005-2007), as a communication manager for the circus company Cirq'ulation Locale (2005-2007), and as a programmer/producer for theatre, music, circus and comedy at the arts festival Nagt at Culture Centre Knokke-Heist (2007-2009). From October 2009 Gwendolien has worked as De Spil's programmer/producer for comedy, circus and street arts, and for the international circus and street arts festival groote stooringe. She also works on and contributes to a number of European projects and networks, is a member of the board of directors for Miramir0 (an international circus and street theatre festival in Ghent), writes for Circusmagazine, and is taking her first lessons in acrobatics with Ell Circo d'Ell Fuego, the circus school of Antwerpen.

## TILLT

TILLT is a producer of artistic interventions that brokers collaborations between businesses and artists, whether the artist is an actor, director, playwright, visual artist, painter, photographer, dancer, choreographer, writer, poet, composer, musician, or conceptual artist.

The aim of such collaborations is to cross-fertilise the competencies of the two worlds, art and business. The work of TILLT therefore has two main aspects. On the one hand TILLT focuses on processes of human growth and organisational development, and on artistic competence as a tool to stimulate creativity, innovation and human development. On the other hand, TILLT works to enlarge the field in which artists can work, creating new spaces where art can be born and new artistic methods can be developed.

This collaboration means that both the organisation and the artist need to rethink what they do, why they do it, and how they work - all questions key to personal and organisational development. Those engaged in these collaborations change their perspective in a way that ultimately leads to the development of creativity and a greater capacity for innovation. In short, TILLT produces new sources of sustainable growth with the arts as a catalyst, supports the discovery of the 'hidden' creative potential that resides within all individuals, and enables transfers of skills between different sectors.

[www.tillt.se](http://www.tillt.se)

circus artist', if only for a day. Another benefit of the scheme was that Circus Oz developed some strong, long-term contacts with certain business companies. In the case of the financial services firm Deloitte the connection was strong enough that a representative of the company is now on the Circus Oz board, gives them business advice, and supports them in using social media and building their audience.

### Key points

In the course of the workshop a number of key points were raised and discussed:

- > When bringing arts and business together you are certain to experience a clash between artistic and business values. Therefore it is important to focus on the process in the long-term, to give it time, and to bring in a matchmaker who can support and guide that intensive process.

## Speakers

### Pia Areblad (TILLT, Sweden)

Pia Areblad holds a bachelor of arts from the University College of Dance in Stockholm and a diploma in political science. After several years active as a politician, dancer and dance pedagogue she decided in 1997 to focus on the role of art and culture in society and business. She is now Director of Strategic Alliances at the organisation TILLT. Between 2001 and 2010 she was director of the organisation, during which time TILLT increased its turnover twelvefold. Since 2010 her role is external relations and advocacy at a European level. TILLT has carried out over 80 year-long projects where artists have mirrored the lives of business organisations to strengthen creativity and innovation in working life.

### Linda Mickleborough (Circus Oz, Australia)

Linda Mickleborough is the General Manager and Co-CEO of Australia's Circus Oz. She has previously worked at the Australia Council for the Arts, as the Coordinator of the Nanjing Acrobatic Training Project - a collaboration between the Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe of China and Australian circus artists hosted by the Flying Fruit Fly Circus - and as the Coordinator of Death Defying Theatre. On joining Circus Oz she spent six years as the Touring Company Manager travelling from Yirrkala to Bogota and many other places in between, before becoming General Manager in 1993. In this role she has been responsible for producing Circus Oz big top and theatre seasons in all Australian capitals and many regional centres, and at international events in conjunction with partners in North America, South America, Europe and Asia.

### Judith Staines (Culture360.org, UK)

Judith Staines is Europe Editor of Culture360.org, the Asia-Europe cultural platform of the Asia-Europe Foundation. She is a freelance writer, researcher, editor and project manager based in the UK who specialises in European cultural cooperation, Asia and international mobility issues. She has worked with many European cultural networks and was General Editor of [www.on-the-move.org](http://www.on-the-move.org) from 2004-2009. She is co-author of *The International Co-Production Manual* (2011, IETM & KAMS), English Editor of the *Europe-China Cultural Compass* (2011, EUNIC China - Goethe-Institut, British Council, Danish Cultural Institute), wrote *Excited Atoms* (2010, On-the-Move) on virtual mobility in performing arts, and co-authored *Moving Art*, a bilingual guide to the mobility of cultural goods between Russia and the EU (2007).

- > The thing that initially drives circus companies to start to work with business is usually financial need. But once the process has started they realise that much more can be gained in the long-term: new perspectives, important business contacts that can develop their company further, a sense of confidence and pride in their art, etcetera.
- Considering why companies are interested in working with artists in the first place, and what's in it for them, participants of the workshop reflected that they are looking for good press and to build a unique brand or improve their corporate image – but also that they can be very interested in the process of collaboration, and in the new perspectives it can give them on the way their company works.

In closing the session touched again on the subject of 'values'. Especially in economically straitened times, when figures and statistics don't hold the answers, or the truth, businesses can turn to another world, one with artistic values that cannot be measured. Companies think often about their 'mission', their 'values', and collaboration with artists can give them an important insight into the values of their company (or the lack of them).

## Circus Oz Team Building Activities:

Circus skills are unique and non-competitive. In a circus, people work together to achieve amazing results. Your business relies on the strength of your team, where communication, collaboration and creativity are crucial for success - and the circus is no different.

When a business team experiences High Flying Teams (HFT), they are taken on a journey to challenge assumptions and achieve the 'unachievable' where team work is the crucial element.

From soaring through the air on the trapeze, to performing incredible feats of strength and learning to laugh in the face of danger, these are all vehicles for bonding, collaborating, sharing achievement and encouraging a team to fly higher.

Facilitated discussions enable participants to identify links between the HFT experience 'on the mat', and their workplace issues and challenges.

Every High Flying Teams programs deliver a fresh perspective of core concepts like trust, support, mutual goals, collaboration, self-awareness, fun, innovation and achievement.





# How do you criticise circus arts?

The space available for arts and culture in the traditional media is about to disappear. Artists, critics and more generally cultural workers deplore this situation. It is not about knowing how to sell more tickets, but about tackling the issues of: intellectual recognition for artistic work; institutional recognition (dependent on a certain threshold of visibility); and finding a way to share knowledge, and to discuss and to disagree about works in a format that reaches and engages audiences as efficiently as possible.

In spite of their public success, the circus arts have limited written coverage in the form of university research or in-depth articles. Artists themselves often encounter difficulties in formulating theoretical discourse about their practical work – about the creation and production process – and they rarely have occasion to exchange conceptual thinking with critics and experts in performing arts. Many critics find themselves stranded when confronted with contemporary circus, still trying to link it to the images of traditional circus from their childhood. They don't know the circus disciplines and techniques and are lacking references for an analysis of dramaturgical choices or the quotation of other works.

Does contemporary circus need critical attention or recognition to fuel its work, and what reference frameworks need to be used or invented?

The first speaker of the workshop, Peta Tait, the Chair in Theatre and Drama at La Trobe University, began by putting forward the idea that circus arts have an extra dimension that sets them apart from other artistic disciplines: the combined visual and physical dimension of the artist's body. Without recourse to the spoken word, the circus artist communicates through their body, and there is therefore an ambiguity in circus' communication: the circus artist uses their body to create a world, a universe, and the audience is free to interpret it as they will.

Circus is, as well, an artform where the idea of liveness is central – it tests physical limits in a universe of life, danger and the threat of danger. But in spite of the centrality of these ideas to circus' aesthetics, circus is in fact a very safe industry. Some artists are even frustrated by the discourse of risk/danger, and would prefer that circus be seen as an artform that is about possibilities.

The circus arts handle a complex language that has three levels: the technical level, the artistic level, and the cultural level.

Given this complexity the circus arts can, for the public and for journalists, be difficult to put into words. The audience is part of an experience, and it's more difficult to describe an experience than to describe a production that's built around a linear text. In a circus show, each member of the audience discovers their own individual questions and experiences.

The very fact that the audience leave a circus performance with their own unresolved questions, however, makes it more important for journalists to engage them. In undertaking this work, conversations with the artists are important and necessary.

A spectator, an audience, a journalist will never understand 100% of a circus performance because artists explain themselves with their bodies and the public reads their bodies. It's important to write about circus, but journalists and critics need a framework.

## Reporter

Koen Allary (Circuscentrum, Belgium)

Koen Allary is the director of Vlaams Centrum voor Circuskunsten vzw, better known as Circuscentrum (Flemish Centre for Circus Arts). He works on the direction and activities of the centre in collaboration with its team and board, and is the contact person for all relations with the Flemish government and administration. He is also in charge of European networking.

Developing good criticism helps to develop the recognition of circus as an artform.

The second speaker, John Ellingsworth, the editor of the circus magazine Sideshow, then moved the conversation onto a practical consideration of the working conditions that journalists and critics find themselves under. As mainstream media reduces arts coverage (as well as all other kinds of coverage) in the face of its sector-wide crisis, fringe artforms like circus aren't covered or represented outside of big shows like Cirque du Soleil or productions programmed under the small number of high-profile festivals. The slack has since been picked up by bloggers and independent journalists running their own media outlets, but these operators find them-

selves economically constricted: there is simply no viable career path for critics or arts journalists. The people working in this space consequently tend to be very young, and will usually stay in the game for 3-5 years before giving up and dropping out.

Ellingsworth then argued that while this lack of sustainability is a problem that all media is facing, it's one that can potentially be solved on the level of the artform – i.e. that the circus sector can undertake actions to support critical writing and arts journalism. He gave the example of several initiatives from other sectors – a dance magazine, Bellyflop, that was given free office space by a dance centre; a live art festival, Inbetween Time, that hosted a writer in residence – and said that while circus would do well to take on these ideas and generate similar schemes, it was necessary also for organisations and festivals to help writers to discover new business models. For criticism to be truly sustainable, it needs to find what's next: newspapers are dying, online advertising only works for publications that have massive and wealthy audiences – so what new revenue models can be discovered?

## Workshop Discussion

The workshop then took contributions from participants, with the discussion ranging over a number of key points and issues:

- > The question was raised of whether a journalist needs to know about the history of circus in order to write about it. Participants of the group responded that circus' experiential, physical nature means that it can be written about on a personal level, but it was pointed out that writing about and criticising circus arts are two different things.

## Unpack the Arts – European residency programme for cultural journalists

Unpack the Arts is a European project that provides residencies for cultural journalists in the context of twelve major festivals programming contemporary circus. The goal of the project is to facilitate the circulation of knowledge and experience, to develop the critical discourses of its participants, and to further the role of the media within the (circus) arts and contemporary society. Cultural journalists, critics and chief editors from any form of media can apply for the project.

[www.unpackthearts.eu](http://www.unpackthearts.eu)



## Arts Writers and Circus Arts

In partnership with TEAM Network, the network of cultural magazines, Circostrada Network in 2009 organised a residency in Paris for twelve critics and chief editors from Europe. The purpose of the residency was to expose critics, cultural journalists and editors of arts magazines to the new aesthetics of contemporary circus, allowing them to attend a series of performances and scheduling encounters with artists to provide the necessary conditions for deep reflection on the creative and innovative aspects of circus within the realm of the performing arts and contemporary creation. This residency served to expose professionals to the new circus aesthetics, notably thanks to the collaboration of the festivals Des auteurs, des cirques (Parc de la Villette), and Solstice (Théâtre Firmin Gémier / La Piscine), as well as the Academie Fratellini. Twelve participants from ten countries were welcomed, most of them theatre and dance writers, all of them driven by the desire to get closer to the circus arts. All felt the need to confront the various contexts in which the circus is evolving today, and to reflect on the specificity of an analytical and critical discourse when writing about circus. As part of this residency, some participants were commissioned to produce articles so that they could deepen their reflection on the circus arts; these were published in the collection Arts Writers and Circus Arts, Volume I, downloadable from Circostrada.org. A second residency took place in 2010 during the fifth edition of Cirko Festival in Helsinki, Finland. Again, the participants were invited to write an article for the Circostrada publication Arts Writers and Circus Arts II, also available for download on the Circostrada website.

[www.circostrada.org](http://www.circostrada.org)

- > It was pointed out that training journalists can be dangerous because the training process can create a certain formal sense of what an artform is, and that understanding can in turn restrict artists who feel they have to fit the mould.
- > There was a varied response from participants on the necessity or use of critical practice. One contributor expressed that the public doesn't need a critic before a show, and that criticism kills the imagination, while an artist felt that there will always be a gap between the artist and the audience, and that writing about the circus, while difficult, is necessary.

While the artists, speakers, programmers and policy-makers of the group all had different points of view on the function of circus criticism, it was agreed that every approach had the same goal: the recognition of circus as an artform.

## Speakers

### Peta Tait (La Trobe University, Australia)

Professor Peta Tait is Chair in Theatre and Drama at La Trobe University, and publishes on the practice and theory of body-based performance including circus, theatre and drama and social languages of emotion. She is a playwright, author of numerous articles, and her most recent books are: *Wild and Dangerous Performances: Animals, Emotions, Circus* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); *Circus Bodies: Cultural Identity in Aerial Performance* (Routledge 2005); *Performing Emotions: Gender, Bodies, Spaces in Chekhov's Drama and Stanislavski's Theatre* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2002) and the edited *Body Show/s: Australian Viewings of Live Performance* (Rodopi 2000). Her most recent plays include *Mesmerized*, co-authored with Matra Robertson, translated into Portuguese in 2009 as *Portrait of Augustine* ([www.retratodeaugustine.com](http://www.retratodeaugustine.com)). Peta writes about innovative contemporary circus and *Circus Oz*.

### John Ellingsworth (Sideshow, UK)

John Ellingsworth is the editor of *Sideshow*, an online and offline magazine for contemporary circus, and the deputy editor of *Total Theatre Magazine*, a print quarterly covering puppetry, circus, mime, devised theatre, street arts, live art and other manifestations of physical and visual performance. He is currently working on a contemporary circus documentary mini-series with *Crying Out Loud* and *Xenoki*, plus is mired somewhere in the mid-stages of a book of essays covering such topics as the 2003 French cultural strikes and the concept of an artistic welfare state, small-scale arts journalism, commodification in Chinese circus, and the history and aesthetics of corde lisse. He is based in London, England.

### Veronika Štefanová (Cirqueon, Prague)

Veronika Štefanová is a Czech theatre critic and teatrologist. She holds a B.A. degree in Theatre Studies and Czech Philology from Palacký University in Olomouc and an MA in Theatre Studies from Charles University in Prague. She is currently enrolled in the Theatre Studies doctoral programme at Charles University, focusing on contemporary circus since 2008. Her work-in-progress doctoral thesis is entitled *Theatre and Circus*. She is the head of the Library and Documentation Centre at Cirqueon - the Czech organisation for contemporary circus in Prague. As a theatre critic and theorist, she has published articles and professional studies in specialised magazines and publications including *World and Theatre*, *Theatralia*, *Theatre News*, *Rozrazil Online* and *A2*; she also collaborates with Czech Radio - Radio Wave - where she prepares reports focusing on the contemporary performing arts.

# Audience development: the role of new media?

As shown by the November 2010 study commissioned by Arts Council England, 'Digital audiences: engagement with arts and culture online', the users of new media are mostly in search of additional information rather than seeking to replace the physical experience with a virtual one.

The use of new media in artistic and cultural contexts can be classified within five big categories: access, learning, experience, sharing and creation. The cultural sector has embraced the Internet and other new technologies in order to promote artists and programming, to explore new marketing tools, to develop ticketing systems, to broadcast events from one place to another, etcetera. One of the objectives seems to be to reach new audiences, younger ones particularly, and to increase awareness of contemporary creation by encouraging them to visit festivals and performance venues. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, Flickr, etcetera), like certain ticketing websites, have become dominant platforms for creating and sharing creative content, but also for the exchange of comments and ideas, critical discourse and promotional campaigns. If the audience uses these tools, is the circus ready for this?

The task of filtering out and concisely presenting the best practices discussed during the 'Audience development: The role of new media?' workshop is a complex one even without getting too deep into the meaning of such enormously broad concepts as 'audience development' or 'new/social media'. However, there is still a need for some simple definitions before we lose ourselves in the specifics of the Fresh Circus seminar.

Some people consider 'audience development' to describe a fundamental change in the way cultural institutions approach their audience – from how their posters look, to the way productions are commissioned and produced, to the very core of an organisation's structure. For others it's just one of those nice airy words you wave around trying to impress funders. And for a third party (read: communications departments) it's the culture industry lingo for relational branding or relational marketing. We'll get back to the relational part of things later. In this report though we'll try to stick to this definition: audience development is the conscious development of wider and deeper relations with existing and new target groups in an effort to invite bigger and more diverse audiences to (in this case) presentations of artistic work.

Social media is the wider definition for the different platforms of social interaction on the Internet that were given height and weight during the rise of Web 2.0 – the short term for the transformation of the Internet from a multitude of static points of information to the user- and content-driven participatory web. The best examples of social platforms would be Facebook (the social network connecting a little more than 10% of the Earth's total population), Twitter (a micro-blogging web site where your 'followers' get to read anything from what you think about the war in Afghanistan to your insights on baking cupcakes). There's also a group of location-based services that includes Foursquare, Gowalla, Google Maps and Facebook Places (which have 'check-ins' – e.g. "Hanna saw this amazing show at La Villette – 2 hours ago"). YouTube is a video publishing site and one of the heaviest content providers in the social media sphere together with blog services like tumblr and Wordpress. When it comes to pictures we

## Reporter

Ludvig Duregård (Subtopia, Sweden)

Ludvig Duregård is head of the marketing and PR department at Subtopia in Botkyrka, Sweden. His background is in the realm of advertising, but five years ago he left it for contemporary circus, first working for Cirkus Cirkör, and then for the last three years at Subtopia. The most noticeable shift for Subtopia in the last couple of years has been establishing Hangaren - "the Swedish venue for contemporary circus". With the new space dedicated to circus and film production, there have been many changes and challenges in working with new approaches to audience communication, as well as in establishing support programmes for the arts. Subtopia is a cluster of creative organisations dedicated to development of the arts as well as to social responsibility, education/research and entrepreneurship. The 14,000sqm site houses more than 50 different organisations and 200 people work there daily.

usually use Flickr as the best example of a site that is itself a vivid community of creators, while on the more self-absorbed side of things there is the picture micro-blogging service Instagram.

With that background out of the way we can move on to the content of the Fresh Circus seminar, outlining the key points to come from the expert speakers' presentations and the subsequent discussions.



### The need for professionalisation of social media management

A point of discussion returned to many times during the seminar, both in the expert presentations and in the later open discussion, was the need for professionals to undertake social media community work. There was a feeling in the group that you toss the task of managing your digital community on the web to the one that "has a Facebook account" or the web editor in the communications department. But let's be straight here: you are not directly qualified to be the face and primary contact of your organisation the moment you have an Internet connection. Well managed social media endeavours are made through in-depth analysis, large-scale monitoring, social skills (in regards to the tone conveyed as well as time management), and a deep understanding of your organisational vision and goals coupled with the necessary technical skills to actually get it out there.

A recommendation that arose during the workshop was that a community manager 'shared' between organisations would be one way to go, with the manager able to move between offices for a deeper understanding of each organisation and its communication strategy.

### Be BOLD, go viral

Art is engaging, art is bold – you can be too! For unknown reasons the day-to-day communications of cultural institutions are 'nice' at best and boring at worst. There are of course exceptions to this rule, but those exceptions are rarely the immediate work of a communications strategy but of actions connected to the artistic side of a project: be it flash mobs or a bleeding sergeant in the

## Subtopia

Subtopia is a launchpad for dreams and ideas in circus and film/media. Situated in the south of Stockholm, it is regarded as the centre of contemporary circus in Sweden, housing several circus organisations, schools and companies in facilities spread across six buildings and 14,000sqm. As a local, regional, national and international meeting place Subtopia builds networks and gathers a lively mix of skills, variously representing artistic expression, education, the entrepreneurial spirit and social involvement. Subtopia supports creation, research and artistic development, offers residencies and workshops, and provides information and intelligence on circus. Subtopia also presents Swedish and international circus performances in Hangaren, a 2300sqm venue inaugurated in September 2010.

[www.subtopia.se](http://www.subtopia.se)



town square telling passers-by about the Prince of Denmark. In all communication, boldness and surprise are great tools, and on the Internet even more so because of the potential virality of a given picture, video or quote. And remember: always be relevant.

Having a close dialogue between the artistic team and the communications department is one recommendation here: the creative output is going to blow your mind when those two sides of your organisation come together in a common effort. A more structured approach would be to always assign 10% of the communications budget to Fun, Bold and Brilliant actions with the chance of a big ROI from that relatively small investment.

## Increase loyalty and THEN develop new target groups

The fact of the matter is that we can't just create a Facebook page or a Twitter account and expect new target groups to find us. It's easier to start with what we have – the current audience. Talk to them and use this new set of tools for their intended purpose: inform and interact with Facebook, have conversations on Twitter, push YouTube clips of relevance (rehearsals, interviews), get into the habit of communicating content before everything, and only inform if there's no content to provide. This will deepen the relationship between you and your audience; in the best cases more post- and pre-performance dialogue can create deeper aesthetic experiences for the visiting audience. Encourage them to look you up on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube or any of the other social services you are working with. Create incentives for their interaction, make it obvious that you are gladly listening to them (and make sure you actually DO listen to them), and as a natural spin-off you will get feedback from your core audience. Neat, isn't it?

## Resources

Lets get real - How to Evaluate Online Success? Report from the Culture24 Action Research Project, by Jane Finnis, Sebastian Chan and Tachel Clements. Available for download here: <http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research/>

The Power of Like 2: How Social Marketing Works, a research collaboration between comScore and Facebook, by Andrew Lispman, Graham Mudd, Carmela Aquino, Patrick Kemp. Available for download here: [www.comscore.com/Press\\_Events/Presentations\\_Whitepapers/2011/The\\_Power\\_of\\_Like\\_How\\_Brands\\_Reach\\_and\\_Influence\\_Fans\\_Through\\_Social\\_Media\\_Marketing](http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Presentations_Whitepapers/2011/The_Power_of_Like_How_Brands_Reach_and_Influence_Fans_Through_Social_Media_Marketing)



## Don't be scared of the Internet

We need to adapt the mentality of our organisations by changing the habits of the people directly involved. Change – and there are a lot of different ways that change is connected to our presence on the Internet – may be resource heavy in economic terms, but asks much more of the social and mental aspects of our organisations. It's not the most intuitive thing for a director to start a blog while he's in rehearsal, just as it isn't the most natural thing for your curator to post images from an artistic meeting. If we are going to be that artistic beacon of light we would like to be we have to start changing our notions of transparency as well as of audience communication. And, contrary to popular belief, new media isn't always a cheap alternative to traditional media – it is a very resource heavy process in terms of working hours. But when done right it can have huge effects.

A good case presented was Romaeuropa, where digital media is an integrated part of the aesthetic discussion right from the start. And in this case it becomes something more than a single communication channel: it becomes an honest and transparent audience dialogue.

## Old questions still need answers

All those tedious questions about who, what, when and where are still very much alive when we move into the sphere of digital communication and interaction. Here's a nice quote from the seminar that sums it up: "The graphic design of our webpages has to be as aesthetically pleasing as the art we are presenting." Now, take away web pages and graphic design and think even bigger: "The communications, regardless of format, have to be as aesthetically impressive as the art we are presenting." Now there is a great vision for the future communications of art institutions.

## What we all need

We came back to one issue time and time again during the seminar: the question of what we actually really know about the effect of communications in new media. There's an apparent need for something more than pageview statistics. The question is – and this might be the core issue – does it work? Is social media generating the effects new media gurus are preaching? The question starts even earlier in the thought process than that: HOW do we measure success in our digital communication?

A case picked up during the seminar was Tate, who (this is unverified and coming from a single source by the way) apparently changed the overall goals of their web presence. They do not use their homepage primarily to drive ticket sales but to provide an art experience in an alternative way to the physical space. Tate.org.uk IS a museum in the sense that its digital audience get an art experience when they visit.

A second reoccurring notion during the seminar was the fact that there's a lack of discussion and documented good practices in regards to performing arts (circus in this case), and that there are a lot of institutions and companies struggling with the same issues, completely on their own, making the same mistakes as the girl next door. To have a concise resource with good cases and/or suggested guidelines is dearly wished for.

## Speakers

### Fabrizio Grifasi (Romaeuropa, Italy)

Fabrizio Grifasi is the current general and artistic manager of the Fondazione Romaeuropa where he has worked since 1991 on various tasks. Classically trained, he began working at the Radio Città Futura in Rome, 1979 to 1985, first as an editor, then as the head of the organisation of concerts and musical programmes. He was managing director of the Association EuropaCinema & TV from 1997 to 2001, for the organisation of the eponymous film festival in Viareggio, and a member of the Artistic Advisory Board of the Japan Foundation for the support of European tours. Since November 2008 he is the artistic advisor for dance of the Fondazione I Teatri di Reggio Emilia, directed by Daniele Abbado. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Fondazione Romaeuropa and the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo and also a partner of IETM, Réseau Varèse and the European network Theatron.

### Mohamed Bendjebbour (Parc de la Villette, France)

Since Autumn 2009, Mohamed Bendjebbour is director of communications and audience at the Etablissement public du Parc et de la Grande Halle de la Villette. He is in charge of coordinating the venue's external communication's strategy with institutional and commercial partners, and of audience communication and promotion of the establishment. He is also in charge of mediation with the public. He was responsible for marketing and development at La Cinquième (today France 5) from 1994 - 1997. He was part of the repositioning of regional aeriels that took place from 1997 - 1999. After that he worked in the French embassy on the West coast of the USA, created and developed the office of Franco-Indian audiovisual cooperation in Bombay, and worked as audiovisual attaché at the French embassy in India from 2004 - 2008.

### Anne Krebs (Louvre Museum, Paris)

Anne Krebs heads the Studies and Research Department of the Louvre Museum, conducting surveys and research covering Sociology, Statistics, Economy and Marketing. One important task consists of evaluating the performance of the Museum's cultural and educational offering. The department's activities also include forecast research to predict trends likely to affect attendance or changes in the Museum's public and social uses. Her research interests centre on the Museum's audiences and policies: attendance, visitor profiles, interpretation, fidelity and quality of cultural experience, social and economic role of museums. Her research programme for 2012 is titled "Virtual" museums and practices, Fundraising and cultural institutions'.

## Other notable ideas

- > Social media is not a magic wand; it needs to be a well-integrated part of your complete audience and communications strategy. If you post a picture of your amazing restaurant it had better be amazing when your readers come there for a bite to eat.
- > There are technical obstacles and practicalities worth keeping in mind: if you are developing an iPhone app for your venue, remember that it won't reach people without iPhones.
- > It needs to be mentioned again that a well functioning social media strategy and digital approach demands real engagement, heavy resources and professional execution and policy.
- > Don't believe for a second that the YouTube video of next week's circus performance is going to spoil the experience of the audience coming to the event. Performing art in general, and especially circus, is a live experience. Your audience knows this – so push those videos like crazy.
- > La Villette has done impressive work with augmented reality, most notably park guides and smartphone-driven event information connected to readers' geographic location in the park





# “Green Circus Arts”: what environmental responsibilities?

Today we find that cultural stakeholders are committing themselves to establishing better environmental practices, and that there are plenty of professionals wishing to improve the management of travel, of accommodation and catering, of logistics and environmental issues, of recycling and communication. Furthermore, artists, festivals and venues are progressively raising the public's awareness and encouraging them to adopt new ways to conserve energy. Looking for methods of sustainable development that are both economically and ecologically favourable, the arts and culture fields are starting to calculate the carbon footprint of their activities and to re-examine their ways of working. How has circus integrated the environmental question into its professional practices, and what can the sector do to ensure its future sustainability?

The participants of the panel discussion first introduced themselves. Stéphane Lavoie, the director of the venue La TOHU in Montreal, recounted the foundation of the building in the city's Saint-Michel district in 2002 as part of a huge regeneration project reclaiming a site that had previously been used as a landfill. One of a small cluster of circus organisations based at the Saint-Michel site (also called La Cité des Arts du Cirque), La TOHU has been dedicated to environmental sustainability from the moment of its construction: the building incorporates many innovative measures to cut down on energy consumption, notably using geothermal power to regulate the building's temperature and cooling the space in summer with the use of an ice cellar that lies under the building. Lavoie explained, however, that La TOHU's conception of 'sustainability' was about more than cutting down on energy consumption. The centre's interpretation of a truly sustainable project incorporates community activities: by establishing itself as a cultural project at the heart of the Saint-Michel community, TOHU can foster green engagement by bringing local citizens together to concentrate on local activities.

The second speaker, Alison Tickell, introduced herself as the director of Julie's Bicycle, a not-for-profit organisation based in the UK that works with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations to help them measure, manage, and reduce their environmental impact. Since launching in 2007, Julie's Bicycle have given support and advice to more than 350 organisations, and have published a number of guides – including a three-volume publication on managing the carbon impact of touring. The credo of the organisation is to make everything simple.

The moderator for the panel, Marie Le Sourd, introduced herself as the Secretary General of On the Move, a cultural mobility network with a focus on green mobility. In May 2011 On the Move cooperated with Julie's Bicycle to publish a freely available Green Mobility Guide.

## Reporter

Markus Wörl (Tollwood Festival, Germany)

Markus Wörl studied directing at the Academy of Theatre and Music in Munich. For many years he worked as director and dramaturg for theatre and opera houses in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and for more than ten years he has programmed theatre, performing arts, street arts and music in several cultural and arts centres in Germany. Currently he is head of the performing arts programme for the Tollwood Festival in Munich, which is one of the largest festivals for circus, theatre and street arts in Europe. With two festivals each year - one in summer and one in winter - it attracts close to 1.5 million visitors each year.

## First steps

The panel began its discussion by raising an important point: that everybody can act to improve their environmental policies, no matter how small their organisation and no matter their budget. The reduction of each individual's – and each organisation's – carbon footprint is more than an economic imperative, and should certainly be more than a concession to social pressure: it is a contributive part of the collective, global action society must take to reduce its environmental impact.

Organisations like Julie's Bicycle exist to provide practical information and to lay out, in clear terms, the first steps organisations can take. With the proper guidance, every company and venue can assess the current state of their operations, looking at energy and water consumption, waste management, travel and transport, as well as their use of show lighting, sound equipment, sets and materials.

The panel agreed that artists and companies should research each planned tour or event and use tools such as carbon calculators to measure their carbon footprint. In this way they can assess the impact of their activities, but also begin to better understand which variables affect the sustainability of those activities.

This self-monitoring is simple and crucial. Companies starting to examine their environmental policies for the first time will always run up against obstructive financial arguments: it is always possible to argue that it is too expensive to implement green measures. However, the panel emphasised it is important to research the real, long-term cost of investing in new technologies.

While environmental responsibility is an ethical imperative, there is a practical angle to be considered too: the cost of energy is sure to rise in future. For those running spaces and venues, heating and lighting are the most expensive costs, but there are other factors to consider – including transport, materials used (for programmes, posters, merchandise, etcetera), and recycling policies.

In three years Julie's Bicycle has helped venues to collectively save 40 million Euros. The actions taken have varied according to each situation. At Wembley Stadium a new heating / cooling system was installed; Circus Space in London ran competitions and events as part of a Staff Energy Awareness Campaign that aimed to cut energy usage by 5% over a period of three months; Glastonbury Festival started a shuttle bus service from the train station to the festival fields to reduce car traffic (and had musicians play on the shuttle to lure people in). Many more venues saved energy simply by switching to LED lighting.

## The Audience

Participants in the workshop affirmed the importance of communicating environmental responsibility to audiences, but at the same time warned against 'greenwashing' – overemphasising the greenness of an event for the sake of good publicity. Those who make this mistake can expect to lose their credibility. (The example was given of Madonna flying by private jet to a press conference to promote Earth Hour.)

The panel emphasised the importance of credibility – of engaging with the issues of sustainability candidly and honestly. Participants of the workshop pointed out that both artists and audiences are beginning to hold venues and festivals to account by questioning them closely on their environmental policies and practices.

## State of mind

The best and most simple way for individuals and organisations to start making changes is to ask: where am I and what can I do? The panel offered a number of suggestions of things cultural operators should consider when assessing their environmental impact:

## Tollwood and the environment

Since its very first festival in 1988, ecological thinking has determined the work and programming of the Tollwood Festival. What began with the demonstration of a small solar energy cell has grown over the years into an essential and extremely effective part of the festival.

In the early 90s, Tollwood initiated an important innovation that has since spread elsewhere: contrary to regulations that stipulated that festivals and similar events should only serve food in disposable dishes, Tollwood's cooks began serving food on porcelain, for which the festival organisers had set up a special dish-washing system. A little later, the city of Munich also required the Oktoberfest to serve food in reusable dishes.

From the beginning, Tollwood has served food and drinks that are as ecologically low-impact as possible. Since 2004, both the summer and winter festivals have been certified according to EU Eco-Regulation. This means that each food vendor must provide at least one main dish composed entirely of organic food. At Tollwood, however, most of the dishes consist entirely of guaranteed organic ingredients. In addition, the basic foodstuffs, such as meat and sausages, vegetables and fruits, dairy products, cereals and eggs, all come from certified organic farming.

At Tollwood everything revolves around the major environmental and social issues of our time: globalisation and equity, war and peace, environmental destruction and innovation, courageous people and forward-looking projects. In the festival's Weltsalon, people from all over the world – the "leaders in their field" – come together on stage to debate these issues. For those who come to listen, the focus is on experience as much as information. Instead of theories, the Weltsalon presents people. Instead of helplessness, the encouragement to act. It is a place of both calm and action.

[www.tollwood.de](http://www.tollwood.de)

- > When working with other professionals, check the travel routes of the artists and the audience. Touring companies need to rethink the fundamentals and ask themselves: how do we tour, and what do we use?
- > Encourage audiences to use public transport systems, and offer shuttle buses to reduce private travel.
- > Artists may need access to powerful lights for their shows, but front of house and ambient lighting can be replaced with LED units to reduce energy consumption.
- > Artists and programmers are asked to be leaders in the environmental field, and it is therefore important to be vocal: to make a fuss, to ask project partners what they can do to improve their own sustainability, and to come together as a sector to pressure commercial industry into making its own changes.

### Act now

In the current industrial system the price of carbon is too low, and environmental decisions made purely on a commercial basis will in many cases be destructive. There is an economic benefit to certain measures, but it is up to companies and organisations to accept their own responsibility, to consume less, and to recognise that the economic, social and environmental parts of an individual's life and work should be balanced.

Act now, today; not in the future. The consequences of climate change are already playing out – with islands in the South Pacific already under threat – and the contemporary arts, as a part of contemporary society, have to deal with this problem now.

## Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle provides cultural professionals with a great wealth of resources. Artists, festivals, venues, museums and many more can find case studies, practical guides and other publications that will help to make their business greener. The latest publication is *Energising Culture: A guide on future energy strategies for cultural buildings*, equipping arts organisations with an understanding of the core issues around energy demand and supply. It is the first in a two-part guide on future energy strategies for cultural buildings. It aims to equip arts organisations with an understanding of the core issues around energy demand and supply, and the implications it has for operational and investment decision-making. It can be downloaded at

[www.juliesbicycle.com/resources](http://www.juliesbicycle.com/resources)

## Speakers

### Alison Tickell (Julie's Bicycle, UK)

Alison established Julie's Bicycle in 2007 as a non-profit company helping the creative industries reduce their environmental impacts and develop new thinking in tune with global environmental challenges. She is Associate Professor at Buckinghamshire New University, on the Global Reporting Initiative, and a founder of the United Nations Environmental Programme Encore initiative. She is a trustee of Sound Connections, a school governor, and a fellow of the RSA. Previous roles include Music Director at Creative and Cultural Skills and Director at Community Music, founding Board of Creative and Cultural Skills, and lead consultant for the National Skills Academy for the creative sector.

### Stéphane Lavoie (TOHU, Canada)

For almost twenty years Stéphane Lavoie has been actively involved in performing arts and culture. Working at various performing arts venues he has played a key role in programming many Canadian and international companies. Before joining La TOHU he worked for almost seven years as director of communications, marketing and private financing at the theatre ESPACE GO. In 2002, he accepted an invitation to join the team at TOHU, La Cité des Arts du Cirque, as director of communications and marketing. In November 2008 he was appointed general director of the structure. Today, La TOHU counts more than 570,000 visitors and is known worldwide for its vitality and originality.

### Marie Le Sourd (On the Move, France)

Marie Le Sourd holds a Diploma of Political Sciences from the University of Grenoble (including one year at the University of Leipzig, Germany) as well as a Master of Law on International Cultural Exchange and Relations from the University of Lyon. From 1999 to 2006 she was in charge of the programme of the Asia-Europe Foundation's Cultural Exchange Department in Singapore (ASEF), working particularly in the fields of young artists' exchange and the development of cultural policies and networks of cultural professionals. In September 2006 she joined the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working as the director of the French Cultural Centre in Yogyakarta (Indonesia). Since January 2012 Marie is the Secretary General of On the Move, ensuring the daily management of the organisation and the implementation of OTM's strategic plan 2011-2013.

# From **début** to retirement: which **professional** pathways?

There are two essential steps in the life of every circus artist. The first is when they begin their career and begin to make work; the second is when the artist's career changes direction as they retire from performance or fundamentally change their way of working. It seems that the beginning of new careers is a subject of shared concern – for professionals in the sector, particularly schools, as well as for the public powers. For example, structures to help young companies initiate their first project exist in numerous countries in Europe, and professionals are mostly attentive to help these companies enter into networks of residency, production and touring. However, have these structures been built with a narrow point of view? What tools does the sector really need in order to succeed in integrating new generations of artists?

The careers of circus artists are short. Their artistic tool, the human body, is worn down by performances, accidents, fatigue and overuse; their profession is fragile. Why is the end of a career a disturbing experience? Certainly, it is supposed to happen in a faraway future, whereas the urgency for artists and professionals seems to be to create in the present – to mobilise energies around artistic projects; to live fully in art. Is there any preparation for the realities of this profession, and in what circumstances can a second career be imagined?

During the workshop we heard from professional artists, teachers, students, employers and representatives of schools on the subject of which career paths are open to circus artists. A few points were immediately clear. First, that while there is no one route, no one solution, that can be generally applied, it is nonetheless possible to improve the professional longevity of artists by concentrating on the two essential steps, or transitions, at the beginning and end of an artist's performing career. Second, that it varies greatly from country to country how much support is given by governmental bodies for these transitional periods – in some cases there is special funding allocated; in others there is nothing.

While the workshop briefly touched on the fact that circus artists have limited options at the end of their performing careers, often becoming teachers or school owners or else studying a totally new profession, the discussion was mainly focused on the earlier transitional phase, when students are freshly graduated and for the first time facing the problems of entering the professional field.

One obvious point that was raised was that there should be greater cooperation between employers and schools to ease the transition into working life. An example given was London's Circus Space, which organises open rehearsals with professional artists: the students are introduced to the working practices of these professionals and can learn through observation. Another example given was mentoring schemes where older or more experienced circus artists guide young artists as they move into professional practice; this doesn't mean just helping with creating work, but helping also with all the administrative tasks that come with it. Participants of the workshop identified incubators and labs/residencies as useful tools to give young artists artistic and production mentoring.

The workshop discussion identified a number of obstacles young artists must face when newly graduated. Chief among them were the business of setting up a company (legal requirements vary

from country to country, but in all cases there is an administrative process), and the difficulty of securing funding when you have no experience of the application process and have very little prior work to point to in proving your artistic ability. Participants of the workshop agreed that in addressing the latter problem it's helpful that some festivals, like France's CIRCa, give opportunities

## Reporter

Sari Lakso (CircusInfo, Finland)

Currently working as managing director at CircusInfo Finland, Sari Lakso is also a board member of the Arts Council of Finland, a chairman of the National Dance Council, and an expert with the Nordic Culture Fund. Since graduating from the Theatre Academy of Inland in 1990, she has gained 20 years of experience as a professional dancer, and, working on a freelance basis as a dancer, choreographer and dance teacher, has danced in more than 70 productions during her professional career. She has held several positions of trust, such as board member of Zodiak - Centre for New Dance (2000-2005), DancelInfo Finland (2008-2010), Union of Finnish Dance Artists (1995-2000 and 2003-2008) and Theatre and Media Employees (2004-2008). She has worked as general secretary (2007- 2009) for Helsinki International Ballet Competition 2009, and has written several articles on dance and edited newsletters for the Union of Finnish Dance Artists (2009-2012).



to young artists to present their early-stage projects to audiences of professionals.

Schools must take some responsibility for preparing their students for the realities of working life, but many of the circus school representatives in the workshop expressed their concern that there were too few funding opportunities for graduates. They don't have the experience or the body of existing work necessary to secure longer term funding, and therefore have to act in the short-term and manage many things at once: their artistic work, their entrepreneurial efforts to build a professional network, the administration of their company, and constant applications for project funding.

Given these conditions, the first two or three years after graduation can be very frustrating. Due to the fragility of the profession, and the constant threat of injury, it is very difficult to make long-term plans; the future is difficult to predict. It was pointed out, however, that this does not describe a universal experience: there are exceptional students who understand how to best operate within the sector, and who are talented enough to succeed in almost everything they do.

Another point raised during the workshop was how critical it is for a circus artist to maintain good physical condition. It was felt that schools need to be the first line of defence in educating students on how to adopt good working practices and take care of their bodies. The artist's health and safety needs to be considered at all times – from their education through to their professional practice.

## Leonardo: **Les Grandes Cirques**, European Partnership

This is a new project funded by the European Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo Da Vinci Partnerships). It will see an exciting partnership forged between three of Europe's most historic building-based circuses: Cirque Jules Verne (Amiens, France), Teatro Circo Price (Madrid, Spain), and The Hippodrome Circus (Great Yarmouth, UK). The innovative training and career development programme aims to increase the employability and adaptability of creative and administrative practitioners working in the sector. It will establish an ongoing partnership between the three circuses based on joint working in professional development, in building and sharing skills in training and professional development, in opening up new employment possibilities across diverse territories, traditions and markets.

The project will also work with emerging artists to develop new work, which will be showcased at the Out There Festival (Great Yarmouth).

[www.seachangearts.org.uk/project/-les-grandes-cirques-european-partnership](http://www.seachangearts.org.uk/project/-les-grandes-cirques-european-partnership)



It was also pointed out that working conditions differ between different types of work, for instance between indoor and outdoor productions, in ways that affect health and safety in the workplace. Ambient temperature, floor conditions, rigging – these are all factors that have to be taken into account.

## High-wire artists against solitude

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

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

## Educircation

Educircation is an international project for teachers of circus techniques that aims to improve the quality of circus teaching around Europe. It organises different activities between professional circus practitioners (teachers, artists, schools, directors, members of administration and management, etcetera) to get a clearer idea of the circus situation in Europe and to improve the methods of teaching.

[www.educircation.eu](http://www.educircation.eu)



## European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC)

Founded in 1998, the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC) is a network of 42 professional circus schools and 13 circus arts organisations located in 28 different countries (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, United Kingdom and United States). FEDEC's main vocation is to support the development and evolution of pedagogy and creation in the field of circus arts education.

FEDEC was established in 1998 in order to build relationships between vocational circus schools that share similar educational objectives. Most of the professional European schools are represented in the network, including Preparatory, Foundation and Higher Education schools. Thanks to its members and partners, FEDEC is, above all, a tremendous network that allows schools to get to know each other better and to share their pedagogical and artistic outlooks and experiences. The network enables the organisation of bilateral and multilateral exchanges of students, teachers and administrators. Its objective is to launch, formalise and implement initiatives aiming to promote the development and evolution of creation and pedagogy in the circus arts sector. To achieve this, it develops contacts with national and European institutions, such as the Ministries of Education, Culture, Trade and Industry, and develops European projects to support pedagogical and artistic training. The Federation also aims to ensure that Health and Safety standards are maintained in all member schools. Additionally, FEDEC maintains close relationships with circus troupes, companies, venues, national associations and leisure schools.

[www.fedec.eu](http://www.fedec.eu)

## Speakers

### Gérard Fasoli (ESAC, Belgium)

Gérard Fasoli has been head of the Ecole supérieure des arts du cirque (ESAC) in Brussels since 2008. Since 2009, he has also been a member of the board of directors at FEDEC, the European federation of professional circus schools, where he is responsible for the working group 'Needs of teachers in terms of continuing education and conception of pedagogical tools and modules'. He has previously been a teacher and pedagogical advisor at CNAC (France), and has worked as a stage designer, actor and circus advisor for several companies.

### Marc Sussi (Jeune Théâtre National, France)

Marc Sussi was an assistant stage director and production administrator before becoming assistant director at the Théâtre de la Bastille from 1991 - 2000. Since leaving that post he has been director of the Jeune Théâtre National (JTN). The JTN helps young artists from the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique (CNSAD) and from the Ecole supérieure d'art dramatique du Théâtre National de Strasbourg to transition into professional life, and organises meetings between artists and professionals. As a result of these meetings, the JNT is able to offer financial support for the employment of actors, stage designers, directors, stage directors and playwrights.

### Yannis Jean (Syndicat du Cirque de Création, France)

After having worked for seven years as an administrator of street arts companies, Yannis Jean became managing director of the Union of Contemporary Circus (Syndicat du Cirque de Création, SCC) in 2008. The SCC is the main professional organisation representing circus companies in France. Setting a high value on cooperation issues at the SCC, Yannis Jean is also a member of the board of directors of the National Formation of Circus Arts (Groupement National des Arts du Cirque, GNAC) and the vice-president of Ufisc.

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

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

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

## Conclusions

The workshop generated a number of recommendations to address some of the problems faced by artists transitioning their careers.

- > It would be useful to have an online toolbox or information service that included advice and instructions for young artists looking to set up companies, as well as information on ways circus artists can transition in their late careers.
- > A database of mentors could be established to connect experienced circus artists who are already retired with young practitioners.
- > It was recommended that others follow Circus Space's example and organise open rehearsals with professionals, and it was felt that there was a need for more mentoring programmes / labs and more production grants for young circus artists.
- > The workshop participants felt that it could be useful to organise a seminar that concentrated only on the health and safety issues relating to circus practice – the most common injuries and how to prevent them, how different working environments affect safety concerns, etcetera.

## Educircation

Educircation is an international project for teachers of circus techniques that aims to improve the quality of circus teaching around Europe. It organises different activities between professional circus practitioners (teachers, artists, schools, directors, members of administration and management, etcetera) to get a clearer idea of the circus situation in Europe and to improve the methods of teaching.

[www.educircation.eu](http://www.educircation.eu)

## European Youth Circus Organisation

The European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO) is a non-profit organisation/association bringing together national federations of circus schools. It was founded in 2009 and currently counts eight members all over Europe. The organisation works with several partners in order to encourage, promote and support the process of recognition and structuring of youth circus on a national and European level.

[www.eyco.org](http://www.eyco.org)

## Caravan

The international association CARAVAN gathers together eight youth and social circus schools from eight different European countries. Its objective is to promote circus practices in youth education throughout Europe, and to support their development through concrete actions such as youth exchanges and training for trainers. CARAVAN also distributes a number of free publications through its website, including guides to social circus methodology and training.

[www.caravancircusnetwork.eu](http://www.caravancircusnetwork.eu)



# Our neighbours from other continents: which collaborations are possible?

National agencies, the European commission, foundations and other professional organisations have put in place support programmes for cultural exchanges between continents. Often stating their objective to be the facilitation of artistic mobility and the dissemination of ideas and expertise, diverse cooperative projects have been developed between geographical regions or around occasional or one-off events: performance tours, exchanges of students, residencies and laboratories, co-creations and co-productions, training and workshops... The circus arts have participated in these collaborations and fuelled them with their energy, their values and their mobility. What is the impact of these international practices, and what are the benefits for circus?

The workshop kicked off with presentations from the two speakers, Lucile Mulliez, the administrator and coordinator of the French circus company Galapiat, and Michèle Bruhat, the administrator of the Collectif clowns d'ailleurs et d'ici (CCAI).

First, Lucile told us of Galapiat's visit to Argentina and Chile for three months of performances, workshops and exchanges in autumn 2011. This was a monumental project for the company, and was in fact its founding impulse: Galapiat was formed in 2006 by six CNAC graduates who had the shared dream of taking their circus to South America. Lucile explained that it was with good reason that it took them five years to make it happen: for a project that's logistically so difficult it's necessary to do a lot of research and groundwork, and the company even went to South America a year early on a scouting trip. It's common for these sorts of projects to have problems with freight going missing, or to experience difficulties with customs, so preparation is always the key.

Michèle Bruhat then introduced the work of the Collectif clowns d'ailleurs, an organisation that works to promote greater participation in the arts as a means of supporting sustainable development within marginalised areas. The CCAI was founded in 2002, and since then its activities have revolved principally around its partnership with Phare Ponleu Selpak, a school in Battambang, Cambodia which was originally set up in a refugee camp on the Thai border to help young refugees overcome the trauma of war through artistic expression, and which was later established as a permanent school. CCAI's partnership with PPS is cultural, social and educational, encompasses many different activities, and is built upon dialogue and reciprocal exchange. CCAI provides advice and training to support PPS in structuring their circus programme, works with the school to produce the associated Tini Tinou festival (first held in 2004), and have supplied them with equipment to improve their training facilities – most notably sending a 2000 seat tent which gave the school a dedicated performance space and left the main school free for training and rehearsals. However, Michèle emphasised that it has also been important for both partners that cultural exchange take place in both directions, and

so CCAI supports PPS to present its own productions in Europe twice a year. The Collectif also works to increase the employability of young artists trained at PPS, and has helped to create Piyop Cirk, a company of PPS graduates.

In both of the presented projects there were, strikingly, more similarities than differences, and as the workshop opened to group discussion some common ideas and practices began to emerge.

## Reporter

Mikey Martins (Norfolk and Norwich Festival, UK)

Mikey Martins has worked in the outdoor arts and circus sector as an artist, director, programmer and producer for over 15 years. After a few years as assistant director of Winchester Hat Fair, associate producer of the Out There Festival and the Theatre Bristol Project, he has since 2011 settled into a new position with the UK's 4th biggest multi-arts festival, Norfolk and Norwich Festival. At NN Festival he is the producer and programmer of the Outdoor Arts and Circus content and events, and he also leads a development programme for Artistic Development and excellence in Outdoor Arts supported by Arts Council England called Escalator Arts. Mikey is also the organisation's lead within the InSitu (Europe-wide) and Without Walls (UK) Networks and is working on a new international collaboration with Australia to develop a focus on 'The role and responsibilities of the producer', touring networks and co-productions between European and Australian artists.

## Local, Regional, National, International

Long-term, large-scale, intercontinental projects such as the Collectif clowns d'ailleurs' partnership with Phare Ponleu Selpak require a political infrastructure and close collaboration with NGOs, policy-makers and governmental bodies. Among the list of partners supporting PPS and their work are the Cambodian Ministries of Transport, of Culture and Fine Arts, and of Education, Youth and Sports; UNICEF Cambodia; CulturesFrance; and UNESCO.

However, it's not just about the big international partners. Many of the workshop participants shared their own projects, large and small, and in all cases their activities started with connections to policy-makers and organisations at a local or regional level. From there, it's possible to expand.

The workshop was attended by several representatives of arts councils and funding bodies, and from their contributions it was clear that in working for intercontinental projects we're 'pushing at open doors': at local, regional and national levels there is a willingness to support this activity. It was also felt that there are many institutions working globally that understand the transformative power of circus.

## Phare Ponleu Selpak

Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS), which translates as "the brightness of art", is a cultural organisation in Battambang, Cambodia, that offers young people a way out of poverty by training them to become professional artists and performers. Set up in 1994 by young Cambodians, returning from the refugee camps, who had learned to use art as a means of coping with trauma, PPS has played an influential role in promoting and developing Khmer culture over the years since the Khmer Rouge genocide.

PPS works mainly with disadvantaged young people and emphasises self-development and sustainability. PPS teaches circus skills, theatre performance, music and a range of visual arts. It combines local traditions with new creative and innovative genres. Daring athleticism is brought to stories that speak powerfully of Cambodia's not-too-distant history - for example, escape from tyranny is depicted through tightrope walking.

[www.phareps.org](http://www.phareps.org)



## Research, Prepare, Build a Network

In any collaboration it is critical for the partners to understand one another – their interests and their goals, but also their cultural context and how that affects their expectations for a project. The workshop contributions came back often to the importance of getting to know your project partners, but also of seeking out organisations who have undertaken similar work in the past in order to share knowledge. (The HorsLesMurs website was recommended as a resource for information on past inter-continental projects.)

The importance of research and preparation – and of building a good network of collaborators – also became linked through our discussion to ideas of sustainability and legacy.

Once these sorts of international projects are embarked upon, second-tier networks are created very quickly: you may want to do a project that on paper only involves collaboration with one company, but to facilitate that collaboration you end up having to make a number of other smaller connections. It was felt that this was something that companies should plan for and embrace: it presents an opportunity to expand a project, to draw more people into it, and therefore to increase its impact and to leave a bigger mark. The connections from a second-tier network might lead to a company giving a series of workshops, or might put them in touch with artists from another continent that they can support to visit and perform in their own – in all cases building a legacy and ongoing impact around the original project.

From this came one of the key recommendations of the workshop: do more. Don't just do a tour and then go home. Create a full programme of activities to make the most out of the opportunity and to offset the work that goes into managing the logistics of travel, freight, etcetera.

## Don't Forget the Home Crowd

One interesting point raised was that while you're working on another continent it's important to give that project some life back at home. It's good to document a project after the fact, to evaluate it or to write a book (Galapiat published two), but by keeping a blog or regularly updating your website you allow your regular audience to really follow your adventure.

## Speakers

### Lucile Mulliez (Galapiat, France)

Lucile Mulliez has been on a collective adventure with the company Galapiat since its first steps, working as an administrator and coordinating such activities as the annual festival Tant qu'il y aura des Mouettes and the company's recent trip to Argentina and Chile. Previously she worked in Argentina with the Red Latinoamericana de Arte y Transformacion Social and at the NGO Crear Vale la Pena in Buenos Aires. She also has a master's in Management of Cultural Projects (IEP, Grenoble), with a particular interest in the rural context, mobile structures, and connections between the artistic and the social.

### Michèle Bruhat (Collectif clowns d'ailleurs et d'ici, France)

Alongside her studies in fine arts, Michèle Bruhat was among the first students to follow a paid apprenticeship scheme at the circus school Carré Sylvia Monfort. She gained her first professional experience as a tightrope walker with Cirque Plume, Cirque de Barbarie and Archaos, and has since toured and played on the biggest theatre stages in France and Europe. After an accident that disrupted her performing career, she created a cultural and artistic development project with the University Paris 8 within the framework of the Nomadic Universities project. Gaining a master's degree in international project management, she then worked as an administrator for several companies before becoming head of training at the circus school of Bordeaux. For the last three years she has been in charge of the administration of the Collectif clowns d'ailleurs et d'ici (CCAI) which works in partnership with Phare Ponleu Selpak (PPS) in Cambodia.

### Jean-Luc Baillet (France)

Since 2011 Jean-Luc Baillet has worked as an independent advisor. He was the founding director of HorsLesMurs, French information centre for circus and street arts from 1993 until 2002, during which time he participated in the creation of a magazine on circus arts, Arts de la piste, which was published from 1996 until 2006. His achievements as director were amongst others the construction of a website on these two sectors, and the development of a circus year (2001 - 2002) in cooperation with the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. After working at the Centre national des arts du cirque, the French higher education circus school in Châlons en Champagne, he managed the French Cultural Centre in Bamako and opened up a 3500m<sup>2</sup> cultural centre dedicated to contemporary creation in Mali.

# After production and co-production, who is commissioning?

The models for the production of contemporary circus are as numerous as the contexts in which the artform is seen today. In Europe, they are generally similar to the models serving theatre and dance. But amid global economic and financial crises, national and public institutions in many countries have adopted a policy of cultural disinvestment and budget cuts. In what measure do these funding cuts have an impact on circus productions?

Large-scale productions are more and more rare: lacking performance opportunities and elevated budgets to match the production and touring costs, the big top and its itinerancy are in peril... Artists and promoters deplore the disappearance of large-scale shows. Is the commissioning of large-scale circus work still possible?

After music and film, the performing arts sector draws the most income from micro-patronage (the financing of a project by public donation). Is a new model of collaborative production about to be born?

The first speaker, Roger Le Roux, head of Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf, opened the workshop by explaining the ways in which the venue assists the creation of new works, supports the touring activities of circus productions, and undertakes to educate new audiences.

The Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf is one of the biggest houses in France with one of the biggest co-production and commissioning budgets in France; its resources are much larger than the those of circus venues in most other countries. However, at the same time the notion of a 'French paradise' is not entirely true: budgets in the cultural sector have been frozen or are being reduced. This can have a particularly big affect when the co-producing budget is pulled down: it means fewer possibilities to support artists or companies over longer periods, which in turn impacts the sustainability of the sector.

There are many smaller arguments, questions and quandaries contained within this discussion. On the one hand it can seem that there are too many productions in France, too many artists and schools; on the other that there are too few performances on a large scale. On the one hand that there needs to be more commissioned productions; on the other that if there are more productions then they will be able to tour less, because they will have to compete for a limited number of performance venues. There are currently more artists in France than the market can handle, but there are too few large productions, which Roger emphasised were important for publicity and needed in order to bring in large audiences. Finally there is the question of whether to create work for the theatre or the big top.

Roger pointed out that there are many questions that can be asked in trying to define the role of a co-producer, but that one of the most important functions of co-production is that it gives venues, and therefore artists, greater leeway to accept artistic risk. He gave the example of Elbeuf's co-production of the Aurélien Bory show *Géométrie de Caoutchouc*, a large-scale piece where a number of venues came together to support a show that was artistically a big risk.

## Reporter

Maaïke van Langen (Circusstad, Netherlands)

Maaïke van Langen co-organised between 2006 and 2010 various international cultural festivals in the Netherlands, and between 2007 and 2011 she worked regularly as a researcher for VPRO and VARA television. She has also been working since 2009 as a theatre consultant for the Performing Arts Fund. Furthermore, between 2009-2011 she followed the European training project SPACE: Supporting Performance Arts Circulation Managers Europe. Since 2007 Maaïke has been advising the Rotterdamse Schouwburg in circus and programming, and since the end of 2010 has worked as a programmer for the Rotterdamse Schouwburg on such projects as *Motel Mozaique* and *Imagine 2020: Art and Climate Change*. Since 2011, she has been a co-programmer of the festival *De Internationale Keuze van de Rotterdamse Schouwburg*. As one of the few circus specialists in the Netherlands, Maaïke is an expert on circus at home and abroad. Since the beginning of Rotterdam Circusstad in 2009 she has been involved as artistic director of Circusstad Festival. She is closely involved as well in national and international networks including *Circostrada* and the NL / BE circus programming network, and is a jury member of the *Circus BNG* prize for children's circus and young talent. Furthermore, she recently organised, together with Performing Arts Fund, Theatre Institute Netherlands and *Circo Circolo*, two debates about circus in the Netherlands.



The second speaker, Alexandre Boucherot, then brought the discussion onto the topic of micro-patronage / crowdfunding by introducing his own service Ulule. He started the site in 2010 with the desire of harnessing the power of social media and online networks to help fund new projects. Since its launch Ulule has co-financed over 700 projects. People can become co-producers by donating small or larger amounts of money, and in return they receive some sort of gift or reward. When posting to the site, each project sets a funding goal which they want to reach within a set timeframe, and if they don't reach this target then all the money is returned to the donators. 30% of the projects are films. The biggest project realised so far was a cinema in Florida, which raised \$100,000. At the \$500 tier you got a lifelong supply of free popcorn. The average for individual donations on Ulule is €50, while the average budget for a proposed projects is €50.

Alexandre then gave some basic principles that should be kept in mind when raising money through crowdfunding: that it's not exclusive, and that raising money in this way certainly doesn't prevent you from pursuing other sources of funding; that it can be a good option to fund side projects and additional activities linked to a larger event; and that the basic model can be adjusted to work for different organisations and different projects. He also stressed that sites like Ulule are tools; they don't work like magic. You need to have fans and supporters to make it work. He also stressed that Ulule makes no artistic judgement on the projects that use its service.

The workshop then opened to general discussion, with a few ideas and questions emerging.

## Without Walls

Founded in 2007, Without Walls is a consortium of leading arts organisations and festivals dedicated to the development of the UK's outdoor arts sector. Without Walls nurtures talent and skills by producing new work through commissions and co-productions, and by promoting work that supports the growth of the outdoor performance sector, on both the large and small scale.

Without Walls takes the interest of the outdoor arts sector as a whole and networks and partners with a range of other organisations and interests to achieve its aims. A consortium of festivals dedicated to commissioning, presenting and supporting new outdoor work, Without Walls' partners advocate for UK outdoor arts through their existing national, European and global networks. They also help to find and attract touring partners and promoters to present Without Walls shows, therefore helping to widen the market and sustainability of UK outdoor arts.

[www.withoutwalls.uk.com](http://www.withoutwalls.uk.com)



## Points from the discussion

- > Roger Le Roux explained that while he would like to commission more new creations he works with public money so the possibilities are limited. He therefore feels that the future lies in stronger collaboration with the private sector – but always protecting artistic interests before business interests. Another participant offered the counter-point that avant-garde productions rarely attract private money, giving the example of Afrika! Afrika! as an enormous production made with private investment.
- > It was pointed out that some circuses are independent and capable of self-financing, but that the support they need is in terms of logistics and publicity.
- > Alexandre Boucherot put forward the idea that theatres haven't fully worked out how to merchandise shows, and that they should consider selling photos, pins, buttons, etcetera.
- > There was some debate as to the usefulness and current state of co-production networks. Generally it was felt that if companies broadened their networks then they would be in a better financial position, though one workshop participant felt that a network can also be a 'prison' that limit's a company's options.
- > Many participants in the workshop contributed to drive home how much variance there is between different contexts. Between any two countries there will even a significant difference in what a 'creation' is understood to be. Even at a national level there is a great difference between big production houses and the independent sector.

## Ulule

Ulule is a crowdfunding website that lists creative, innovative, or community-minded projects. A solo rower crossing the Atlantic, short films, ecological odysseys, albums to be recorded, video games, humanitarian missions, high-tech or lo-fi products... All sorts of projects can be found on Ulule. To ensure that the amounts requested by project owners are realistic and consistent with their needs, a limited time frame and specific minimum amount are defined for the fundraising campaign. On Ulule, the projects are only funded if they reach their objective. Since Ulule's launch in October 2010, 1229 creative and innovative projects have been funded in 34 countries, with support from internet users from 128 countries. A new way to share great ideas and participate in making good things happen.

[www.ulule.fr](http://www.ulule.fr)



## PASS – Circus Channel

PASS - Circus Channel is a trans-channel circus project gathering eight structures from North-west France and South-east England. On each side of the Channel, these eight partners work together on the production and touring of circus works, as well as on training and the exchange of knowledge between artistic companies and technical and administrative teams. PASS also works to create greater awareness of the values and the needs of contemporary circus among the public and professionals.

[www.labreche.fr](http://www.labreche.fr)

## Le Plôt

With five years of collaborative experience working on the cross-border project CIRCULONSI, Autour des arts du cirque (Interreg III 2002-2007), Le Prato (France) and the Maison de la Culture in Tournai (Belgium) are the partners of a new and innovative initiative in the landscape of the circus arts with the establishment of a circus hub of international scale: Le Plôt, the first cross-border circus centre, running 2008-2012 as part of Interreg IV (FEDER fund). Through their historical involvement, their compatibility and their desire to support young circus creations, Le Prato and the Maison de la Culture are determined to develop projects that focus on production, on support for the arts, on distribution, on training, and on any activity contributing to the status of the circus arts. This centre also exists through the communal use of workspaces and skills: staff, infrastructure, equipment, etcetera.

[www.maisonculturetournai.com](http://www.maisonculturetournai.com), [www.leprato.fr](http://www.leprato.fr)

## Speakers

### Alexandre Boucherot (Ulule, France)

After receiving a degree in humanities and a postgraduate certificate in literature of the 18th century, Alexandre Boucherot soon began to concentrate on digital media. Founder of the online magazine Fluctuat.net in 1998 (the prehistorical web, so to speak), he spent ten years developing an expertise in web publishing. Starting with Fluctuat ("Arts, Culture, society, itching powder"), he later joined the team of Doctissimo, where he became general vice-director. Convinced that the power of social networks can help the developers of creative and innovative projects, in 2010 he launched a website for participative financing, Ulule.com, together with Thomas Grange. One year later, almost 500 projects from 22 countries have been financed via Ulule, with the support of users from 97 different countries. Being the first European website of 'crowdfunding' (participative financing), Ulule continues to evolve in order to support creators and project developers in line with their needs.

### Roger Le Roux (Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf, France)

In October 2006 Roger Le Roux began managing the Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf, Pôle national des arts du cirque after having spent sixteen years heading the Carré Magique. He started professional life as an engineer in hydrometeorology - a 'serious' profession that he soon abandoned. After a few years spent forecasting the weather, he started to take courses at the Jacques Lecoq school in 1976. For eight years he then worked as a comedian, stage director, playwright, teacher, administrator and co-director at the Théâtre de la Jacquerie. In 1986 he took up courses at the Centre de formation nationale d'Avignon, then opened the theatre Quai Ouest in Lorient, then created the Carré Magique in Lannion. By the end of 2006 he had become director of the Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf.

### Christophe Blandin-Estournet (Culture O Centre, France)

Since 2008 Christophe Blandin-Estournet has been director of Culture O Centre, Ateliers de développement culturel, and since 2005 he has also been director of the festival Excentrique, an annual international and multidisciplinary event that is developing on a territorial scale in the Centre region, in partnership with communities and historic sites. Previously he has worked as a project leader at Parc de la Villette, as secretary general at ONDA, as development delegate at CNAC, and as the director of CNT. Furthermore he is the author of various publications and articles.

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