CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
LUZIA
A WAKING DREAM OF MEXICO
PRESSKIT
SHOW OVERVIEW

LUZIA™ premiered in April 2016 and is Cirque du Soleil's 38th original production since 1984.

A WAKING DREAM OF MEXICO

LUZIA takes you to an imaginary Mexico, like in a waking dream, where light ("luz" in Spanish) quenches the spirit and rain ("lluvia") soothes the soul.

Through a series of grand visual surprises and breathtaking acrobatic performances, LUZIA invites audiences to escape on a surrealistic journey through a sumptuous and vibrant world suspended somewhere between dreams and reality. Smoothly passing from an old movie set to the ocean to a smoky dance hall or an arid desert, LUZIA cleverly brings to the stage multiple places, faces and sounds of Mexico taken from both tradition and modernity. Rich in awe-inspiring moments, LUZIA enchants by incorporating rain into acrobatic and artistic scenes – a first for a Cirque du Soleil touring production.
Acrobatic Performance

Surprise was the catch word when the time came to conceive the acrobatic acts in LUZIA.

Water as a source of inspiration – Integrating the element of water to a Big Top show is a first at Cirque du Soleil. The idea of placing a water basin under the stage floor and creating a rain curtain paid huge dividends on the acrobatic front.

The element of water enabled the creators to take the Cyr Wheel out of its usual context. Two artists perform on the apparatus on water and in the rain, which is, at first glance, unthinkable. In order to solve the adhesion issue, a bicycle tire was mounted on the wheel rim. Great ideas look simple… after the fact.

Breaking down barriers – LUZIA explores the combination of hoop diving – a traditional circus discipline from China – and two giant treadmills to generate speed and expand the discipline’s acrobatic vocabulary. The two treadmills can operate in the same direction or in opposite directions. Sometimes artists use the treadmill as a launching pad to perform daring leaps through the hoops; when placed on the rolling treadmills the hoops suddenly become moving targets for the divers.
THE SCENES/ACTS

PROLOGUE
The sound of a plane is fading away as a parachutist is free falling towards a land of memories. He lands in a field of cempasuchil flowers (yellow marigolds) surrounding a gigantic metallic key. As he turns the key by curiosity, the traveler gets taken away on a magical journey through time and place, somewhere between dreams and reality.

RUNNING WOMAN
As the morning sun rises, a woman and a metallic horse run together to awake this imaginary Mexico where the journey of the traveler will take place. The running woman spreads her “butterfly wings” in a tribute to the annual migratory journey of the monarch butterfly from southern Canada to central Mexico.

HOOP DIVING ON TREADMILLS
This tableau combines hoop diving with two giant treadmills in a soaring tribute to agility and speed. Seven acrobats wearing hummingbird costumes, complete with wings and a long beak, jump through hoops a mere 75 centimeters (less than 30 inches) in diameter. Performing the feat on two treadmills makes the challenge even more daunting. The acrobats leap through the hoops sometimes feet first, sometimes backwards, sometimes bent in half. Some even leapfrog over their partners in order to jump through the rings.

ADAGIO
In a nod to the golden age of Mexican cinema, this hand-to-hand act unfolds in a smoky dance hall reminiscent of Salon Mexico. Three porters proficient in the art of “flinging acrobats in the air” hurl a flyer above their heads where she performs intricate flips. Sometimes the porters hold her by the hands and feet, turning her into a human skipping rope.
THE SCENES/ACTS (continued)

CYR WHEEL AND TRAPEZE
With cacti silhouetted against the setting sun, two young women dance on stage in large majestic hoops as in a dream. Rolling among the *quioles* (Agave plants), they are soon joined by a trapeze artist who performs a series of original figures, sometimes hanging only by one heel. The performance culminates in the rain.

BEACH CLOWN
After riding his bicycle through the mountains in direction of the beach, the traveler stops to drink water out of his canteen...which is unfortunately empty. He finds an abandoned beach ball which allows him to break the fourth wall and engage in a competitive ball match with the audience.

HAND BALANCING
A lifeguard struts about on a buoy among the waves in a tribute this time to Mexican cinema of the 1920s. He gradually builds two rows of flexible canes on top of his buoy. Under the command of an overzealous film director, the artist performs a series of figures, sometimes balancing on one hand, sometimes doing push-ups, sometimes holding an iron cross position, all the while flaunting his great physical strength. He builds his tottering structure to an impressive 6 meters (close to 20 feet) above the stage.

FOOTBALL DANCE
This youthful act pays tribute to the modern ritual sport of football, highly celebrated in Mexico. A man and a woman try to outdo each other by deftly manipulating a ball with their feet and head. They make the ball bounce, roll and spin using their knees, feet, soles and the back of their neck. When it starts to rain, time seems to stand still as the artists carry on, impervious to the downpour.
THE SCENES/ACTS (continued)

CLOWN RAIN AND PERCUSSIONS PARADE
The traveler, still thirsty, tries to rehydrate with the providential rain water. Little did he know that rain would be very difficult to tame in this imaginary Mexico. Two-dimensional images created from water droplets and blank spaces start falling from the sky before a parade of percussionists and singers, reminiscent of the Day of the Dead celebrations, take over the stage.

MASTS & POLES
In a dreamlike setting that recalls experiments with peyote (a plant with hallucinogenic properties), acrobats climb up and down vertical poles and criss-cross in the air while leaping from one pole to the other.

SWING 360
In a nod to the very popular Mexican sport of professional wrestling called *lucha libre* (or ‘free fight’), an artist wearing a *luchador* mask and costume climbs onto a swing. Under his own power he makes the apparatus swing higher and higher until he reaches the tipping point and the swing makes a full turn.

AERIAL STRAPS
An artist representing a demigod of rain emerges from the pristine waters of a *cenote* recalling the naturally occurring sinkholes the Mayan believed were gateways to the afterlife. He performs a graceful aerial straps act, his hair whipping the surface of the water as he rotates on the straps in a circle just above the water. The artist interacts with a puppet resembling a life-size jaguar, an animal that has become a mythological figure of Mexican culture. The artist manages to gain the big cat’s trust in this tableau brimming with lyricism.
THE SCENES/ACTS (continued)

JUGGLING
In a tribute to the art of speed juggling popular in Mexico, an artist manages to juggle seven pins at breakneck speeds. The pins whirl so fast they become a metallic blur just like the propellers of an airplane. The juggler engages in a dialogue with the marimba, a musical instrument typical of the Veracruz region in Eastern Mexico.

CONTORTION
An artist enveloped in a mystical aura amid glowing candles puts his body in knots with astounding ease and flexibility. He twists his body in unimaginable positions, and even manages to touch the back of his head with his pelvis!

CLOWN SCUBA DIVING
The traveler takes a dive to explore the underwater world, which first looks peaceful until he disturbs three cacti relaxing on the ocean floor.

SWING TO SWING
Under a luminous red moon, nine artists perform a stunning Russian swing act. For the first time at Cirque du Soleil, the two swings are mounted on a turntable so that the audience can enjoy the performance from all angles. The pushers demonstrate impeccable timing by flinging their partners up to 10 meters (33 feet) in the air.

FIESTA FINALE
All the characters the traveler has met through his journey gather together for a festive celebration around a large dining table. They each wear a different costume incorporating the traditional Otomi embroidery patterns, giving a sense of unity and community to this final scene.
THE CREATIVE TEAM (continued)

Julie Hamelin Finzi  
Co-writer

Eugenio Caballero  
Set and Props Designer

Giovanna Buzzi  
Costume Designer

Simon Carpentier  
Composer and Musical Director

Edesia Moreno Barata  
Acrobatic Choreographer

Debra Brown  
Acrobatic Choreographer

Sylvia Gertudix Gonzalez  
Acrobatic Choreographer

Max Humphries  
Puppet Designer

Martin Labrecque  
Lighting Designer

Johnny Ranger  
Projection Designer

Jacques Bouchier  
Sound Designer

Philippe Aubertin  
Acrobatic Performance Designer

Danny Zen  
Acrobatic Equipment and Rigging Designer

Maryse Gosselin  
Makeup Designer
THE MAIN THEMES OF LUZIA

Through its set design, costumes, acrobatic performance and music, LUZIA explores various themes linked to the culture, history and mythology of Mexico, some of which may not seem connected at first glance.

Monumentality – Visitors to Mexico may experience a certain light-headedness when faced with the staggering beauty of the country's landscapes, forests and nature, but also with the richness of its culture and the splendor of its architectural wonders.

Speed – It is natural to associate Mexico with the idea of speed. One needs only call to mind the uncanny ability of certain people in Mexico, such as the Tarahumaras, who make seemingly superhuman efforts on a daily basis, deriving great strength from their deeply spiritual perspective of life.

Rain in all shapes and forms – In Mexico, there are as many types of rain as there are clouds that produce it – from the refreshing showers of Coyoacán, an iconic neighborhood at the heart of Mexico City, to the torrential rains that sweep across Baja California, to the plentiful autumn rains, as violent as they are sudden. In the diversified geography of Mexico, rain is part of the collective consciousness and has a narrative force all its own.

Surreal menagerie and poetic vision of reality – The fascination of the Mexican people for the animal world is as evident in the country’s traditions and mythology as it is in its traditional arts and crafts. This special connection with nature and animal life stems from a poetic – and even magical – vision of reality. This is apparent in the Mesoamerican concept of the nagual according to which the spirit of an animal lives in every human being from birth; this spirit protects and guides the individual throughout their life.
Set Concept – Set Designer Eugenio Caballero had three overriding objectives when he envisioned the LUZIA set. First, he wanted to convey the idea of monumentality and of grandeur commonly associated with Mexico. Second, he wanted to make sure that each spectator would have a great view of all of the acts, regardless of where they are sitting under the Big Top. And third, he set out to create an environment where location and timeline changes would be quick and seamless.

The creative team decided to bring the element of water into the overall set design – a first for a Cirque du Soleil Big Top show. Hence the idea to set the Aerial Straps act in a cenote, a naturally occurring sinkhole or cistern the Mayan believed was a sacred gateway to the afterlife. The cenote is a powerful symbol at the heart of Mexican lore and geology.

The disk, a symbol of the grandeur of Mexican architecture – The great disk towering above the LUZIA stage, which represents in turn the sun, the moon and the Aztec calendar, pays tribute to some of the most colossal manmade structures in the world. The Teotihuacan archaeological site located 50 km northeast of Mexico City features some of the most architecturally significant Mesoamerican pyramids in the pre-Columbian Americas, built around 100 C.E.

The huge disk, which rotates horizontally and moves forwards and backwards, undergoes various transformations during the show. The massive object is equipped with a giant light box that turns the disk into the sun or the moon.

A journey inside a Blue Box – It’s impossible to talk about one Mexico, hence the idea of a journey – literally and figuratively speaking – through the multiple places and faces of LUZIA’s imaginary Mexico. This was the starting point for the overall concept of the show: the spectator is taken from an old movie set to the ocean to the semi-desert to an undersea world to a cenote to the jungle to a city alleyway to a dance salon – passing smoothly from an urban setting to the natural world, past to present, tradition to modernity.

To make the idea of a journey through various geographic locations possible, Eugenio needed to create a neutral stage inside the Big Top. He came up with a variation on the black box theatre concept (a simple, somewhat unadorned performance space), which he dubbed the “Blue Box”. The purpose of the blue in the backdrop and on the floor is to enhance the various elements that appear on stage.
A field of cempasuchil – LUZIA starts with a field of 5,000 cempasuchil in bloom. These flowers – aka the Mexican marigold or the Aztec marigold – are the main element of Day of the Dead altars. The cempasuchil field in LUZIA is not there for purely esthetic reasons; it reflects a desire to share a profoundly meaningful ritual rooted in emotion.

The Papel Picado curtain – The keen-eyed observer will notice that the images on the huge Papel Picado lantern-like structure that descends on the LUZIA stage represent various narrative elements and characters in the show – a horse, a field of flowers, a flock of hummingbirds, a plaza, a cenote, a cave, an underwater world, raindrops, a storm, the sun, a city, and desert cacti.

Set design and props close-ups
• With its two revolving rings and central platter, the stage floor has 94,657 holes through which the water drains into a 3,500-litre basin hidden underneath.
• The disk is 6.9 m in diameter and weighs about 2,000 kg. It is supported by a giant bracket, called the “Cobra”, that functions like a crane. The disk can move over a distance of 5.5 m and can rotate horizontally 360 degrees in both directions.
• Mounted on a cylinder, the Papel Picado curtain is 11 m high by 30 m wide. Set Designer Eugenio Caballero worked with Javier Martínez Pedro, an artist from a small town in Guerrero, to create the images that were all drawn by hand. The imagery was created by punching more than 13,000 holes into the surface of the curtain.
• The two treadmills weigh 3,630 kg apiece and are powered independently by 28 automobile-type batteries.
• Made out of water, the images and patterns that appear in the rainfall are generated electronically by a graphical water display screen. The images interact with the artists and support the story and mood of the show. There are Otomi patterns, rain drops, flowers as well as various animal figures that are nods to the strange, warm and whimsical creatures of Mexican painter Francisco Toledo.

A word about the water curtain and water management – Integrating the element of water inside the Big Top represented a huge technical challenge on several fronts. The water must be filtered, disinfected and maintained at a constant 28°C (82°F) for the well-being of the artists. All 6,000 litres (1,585 gallons) of water used during the performance are recycled for the entire duration of a stay in a given city.

All of the metal-based infrastructure elements as well as the electrical and electronic equipment (including the lighting and sound equipment) installed close to water must be protected from electric shock. A bridge suspended 14 meters (46 feet) above the stage supports the water reserve and the set of 174 nozzles. The structure can rotate 360 degrees. The nozzles can be individually controlled to create two-dimensional images using water droplets and blank spaces.

The water in the basin is channeled to an external 2,500-litre (660-gallon) tank where it is treated and pumped up to the bridge 17 meters (56 feet) above the stage.
THE COSTUMES

When Costume Designer Giovanna Buzzi sat down with the co-authors of LUZIA to imagine the costumes, they decided to steer clear of the folkloric aspects of Mexico and Mexican culture and to avoid potential clichés, especially when it comes to the color palette.

Assigning specific colors to each scene – It is natural to associate Mexico with a mosaic of bright colors. But in order to avoid the pitfalls of turning the stage into a potpourri of colors, the creators chose to build a story in which each scene would have its own distinct color or combination of colors, like the subtle strokes of an artist’s paintbrush. In the Adagio tableau, for instance, a flying woman dons a beautiful pink corset in an otherwise monochromatic environment, while the artists in the Cyr Wheel/Trapeze tableau are clad in yellow hues. The nods to Mexican hues are deliberately subtle. Overall, the show proves to be highly colorful, but iconic colors such as cobalt blue and Mexican pink are not found in their usual contexts.

A noble menagerie – Animals play a prominent role in Mexican lore and mythology, a tradition that carries over into daily life. In LUZIA’s imaginary Mexico, it is no big deal to come across a man with the head of an armadillo, swordfish or iguana, or a crocodile playing the Marimba, or a woman with a hummingbird’s head and wings. At the top of the show, a group of hoop divers are dressed as a flock of colorful hummingbirds. Later on, the Adagio scene unfolds in a strange bar in which a female character is wrapped in an iguana shawl, an ode to the Mexican surrealist movement.

Technology in the service of art – Some of LUZIA’s striking costumes are the result of innovative research and development. A case in point is the dress that “magically” turns from white to red. In order to turn this vision into reality, the people at C:LAB (the creative laboratory of Cirque du Soleil) came up with a clever solution: the dress was fitted with 98 white, individually programmed flowers, each one equipped with a small motor. When the flowers open their petals, they reveal their red interior, thus triggering the metamorphosis. The dress weighs a whopping 9 kg!
THE COSTUMES OF LUZIA (continued)

COSTUME CLOSE-UPS

• Because some artists perform in the water, new types of soles had to be designed for shoes, while a system to dry costumes between shows had to be developed.

• The Running Woman spreads her “butterfly wings” in an tribute to the annual migratory journey of the monarch butterfly from southern Canada to central Mexico for the winter. Each wing is 6 m long, is made of silk and requires 40 m of material.

• The hoop divers are dressed as hummingbirds, complete with head, beak and wings. They are in costume when they leap through hoops a mere 75 cm in diameter!

• The puppeteers and prop manipulators all wear Guayabera shirts – the traditional men’s wedding shirt in Mexico – instead of the usual black bodysuit.

• The costumes of the male swimmers in the Hand Balancing act each weighs roughly 3.5 kg and contains approximately 850 tiny mirrors that twinkle under the projectors. Their female counterparts’ costumes each contains approximately 300 mirrors and weighs about 3 kg.

• There are 160 heart-shaped pieces sewn onto the artists’ costumes during the Swing 360 act. They are cut from vinyl and have a metallic sheen. The Sacred Heart is one of the most common motifs in religious folk art in Mexico.

• The artisans in the costume workshop developed 6 crocodile heads, 1 iguana shawl, 1 cockroach, 1 grasshopper, 1 armadillo, 1 snake, 5 swordfish heads and 3 tuna heads. Some of the “body parts” are manipulated like puppets so that the creatures look alive.

• Each performance requires 140 pairs of shoes.

• The 750 costume pieces seen on stage in LUZIA (and the exact same amount of back-up pieces traveling with the show) are carefully looked after by a team of 3 permanent wardrobe staff members and 4 local employees.

• Each costume is custom-fitted for each artist and handcrafted at the Cirque du Soleil International Head Quarters in Montreal. The average lifespan of the LUZIA costume pieces is 6 months.
THE MUSIC OF LUZIA

A musical journey – The music of LUZIA takes the audience on an incandescent journey to the heart of the show’s imaginary Mexico. The score whisks spectators away on a voyage of exploration that takes them from a traditional village to a desert by way of a tropical jungle, to the seaside and all the way to an alleyway in a bustling metropolis.

For LUZIA, Composer Simon Carpentier wrote a hot, lively score with distinctive Latin American flavors. A little like the Running Woman – one of the emblematic characters in the show –, the music jumps playfully from style to style, from one rhythm to the next, from emotion to emotion, striding across landscapes as joyfully as across musical boundaries.

Music of a thousand faces – Beyond clichés and stereotypes, the audience hears the buoyant rhythms of cumbia, a music genre close to salsa dominated by guitars, accordions and percussions, as well as the lively rhythms of bandas, the traditional music of traveling brass bands. Simon also drew inspiration from the rich, tonic rhythms of norteño, a popular genre in Northern Mexico, as well as from huapango, a flamenco-based music style from the La Huasteca region along the Gulf of Mexico coast.

Music came to Mexico by sea via the neighboring islands, but also from Europe. It is a collage of miscellaneous styles, genres and cultures. Rhythms of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin America blend with tribal sounds that dig the roots all the way to the Mayas and the Aztecs.

The music of LUZIA is steeped in this rich mixture – an amalgam of ancient and modern sounds infused with the brassy notes of tubas and trumpets and the suave melodies of the Spanish guitar, all driven forward by the relentless percussion and drums.

Voice “recognition” – In the realm of Latin American music, the voice is a powerful instrument – a vector of emotion, flavors and rhythms bolstered by a lively, expressive language. In LUZIA, the vocal parts blend tradition with modernity, with hints of opera, to spread the strong Latin American vibe.
SUPPORT TO THE PERFORMANCE

Unlike musicals or theatre plays, Cirque du Soleil productions keep evolving and changing even years after their first performance. The Artistic and Technical teams on tour have the dual mandate of ensuring the respect of the original concepts of LUZIA, while supporting their evolution through time. Under the guidance of the Artistic Director, slight changes are constantly being incorporated into the performance to keep it fresh and alive for the cast, the crew and the audience who experiences it for the very first time.

**Artistic Direction** – Gracie Valdez, the Artistic Director of LUZIA, has the extensive mandate of ensuring the quality of each performance, overseeing the selection and integration of new cast members, supporting and feeding the artistic and acrobatic evolution of the show, and managing the creation of back-up scenarios. With her team of Stage Managers, Coaches and Performance Medicine Therapists, Gracie oversees the well-being, work load and daily motivation of the 44 cast members of LUZIA.

**Show Technical Department** – A team of 21 show technicians are required to operate the show and perform the daily maintenance on all technical pieces. The team is divided in 6 departments: Lighting, Sound, Rigging, Automation, Props, Stage Carpentry and Wardrobe.

**Performance Medicine** – Two Performance Medicine Therapists travel with LUZIA to monitor the physical condition of the artists, procure treatment, develop targeted training programs, and suggest modifications to acrobatic performances when needed. Artists can also sign-up for appointments on site with a Massage Therapist and a Pilates Coach who are sourced locally.

**Tour Services** – An array of services is offered to the 115 cast and crew members of LUZIA. The Tour Services department takes care of the travel and lodging of all individuals, working visas, insurance programs and provides supporting accounting services. Two permanent chefs and a kitchen manager also tour with LUZIA and serve daily an average of 250 complimentary meals.

**FUN FACTS**

- A total 115 people from 25 countries are part of the touring cast and crew of LUZIA.
- The 45 artists alone come from 19 different nationalities: Australia, Belarus, Canada, Colombia, France, Guinea, Italy, Israel, Mexico, The Netherlands, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Spain, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia and Venezuela.
- There are more than 40 different job titles on site, including Electrician, Head of Tents, IT Specialist, Sales & Customer Experience Supervisor, Publicist and Plumber.
**VILLAGE ON WHEELS**

*Le Grand Chapiteau* – LUZIA marks the first time *Cirque du Soleil* presents a production under a Big Top featuring printed patterns directly related to the theme of the show. The patterns evoke the association between *Cirque du Soleil* (the sun) and Mexico (the word originates from Mztli, meaning ‘moon,’ and Xuctli, which means ‘middle’) and symbolize the meeting of two celestial bodies: the sun and the moon. A bird’s eye view reveals the path of the stars that spiral out from the centre of the Big Top – the symbolic meeting point between earth and sky, sacred and human.

The village – *Cirque du Soleil* mobile village includes the Big Top, one large entrance tent, a VIP tent, the artistic tent, a kitchen, offices and more. Completely self-sufficient for electrical power, the site relies only on local water supply and telecommunication facilities to support its infrastructure.

A few facts about the LUZIA Big Top and the *Cirque du Soleil* village

- The Big Top seats more than 2,600 people.
- The entire site set-up takes 8 days. This includes installation of the Big Top, the entrance tent, the VIP tent and the rehearsal spaces.
- The Big Top stands at 19 meters (62 feet) high and is 51 meters (167 feet) in diameter.
- The 4 steel masts stand at 25 meters (82 feet) tall each.
- 550 pegs are required to hold the big top firmly to 48,500 square feet of asphalt.
- The Big Top can withstand winds up to 120 km/h (75 mph).
- The light-coloured canvas helps counter the effects of the sun, thereby reducing energy consumption and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.
- LUZIA travels via 65 trailer trucks carrying close to 2,000 tons of equipment.
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL AT A GLANCE

From a group of 20 street performers at its beginnings in 1984, Cirque du Soleil is a major Québec-based organization providing high-quality artistic entertainment. The company has close to 4,000 employees, including 1,300 artists from more than 50 different countries.

Cirque du Soleil has brought wonder and delight to more than 180 million spectators in more than 450 cities in over sixty countries on six continents.

For more information about Cirque du Soleil, visit www.cirquedusoleil.com.

THE MISSION
The mission of Cirque du Soleil is to invoke the imagination, provoke the senses and evoke the emotions of people around the world.

THE CREATION OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
It all started in Baie-Saint-Paul, a small town near Québec City in Canada. There, in the early eighties, a band of colourful characters roamed the streets, striding on stilts, juggling, dancing, breathing fire, and playing music. They were Les Échassiers de Baie-Saint-Paul (the Baie-Saint-Paul Stiltwalkers), a street theatre group founded by Gilles Ste-Croix. Already, the townsfolk were impressed and intrigued by the young performers – including Guy Laliberté who founded Cirque du Soleil.

The troupe went on to found Le Club des talons hauts (the High Heels Club), and then, in 1982, organized La Fête foraine de Baie-Saint-Paul, a cultural event in which street performers from all over met to exchange ideas and enliven the streets of the town for a few days. La Fête foraine was repeated in 1983 and 1984. Le Club des talons hauts attracted notice, and Guy Laliberté, Gilles Ste-Croix and their cronies began to cherish a crazy dream: to create a Québec circus and take the troupe travelling around the world.

In 1984, Québec City was celebrating the 450th anniversary of Canada’s discovery by Jacques Cartier, and they needed a show that would carry the festivities out across the province. Guy Laliberté presented a proposal for a show called Cirque du Soleil (Circus of the Sun), and succeeded in convincing the organizers. And Cirque du Soleil hasn’t stopped since!

A Few statistics
• In 1984, 73 people worked for Cirque du Soleil. Today, the company hires close to 4,000 employees worldwide, including 1,300 artists.
• At the Montreal International Headquarters alone, there are close to 1,500 employees.
• More than 100 types of occupations can be found at Cirque.
• The company’s employees and artists represent more than 50 nationalities and speak 25 different languages.
• More than 180 million spectators have seen a Cirque du Soleil show since 1984.
• Close to 15 million have seen a Cirque du Soleil show in 2017.
• Cirque du Soleil hasn’t received any grants from the public or private sectors since 1992.
An organic process that promotes creativity

At Cirque du Soleil, the creation process is very organic—that is, while it operates within clear parameters, it is also influenced by the creators on the creation team and their respective experience. Each new production is first assigned a Director, a Production Manager and a Director of Creation, who is in charge of liaising with freelance creators and the various Cirque du Soleil in-house teams such as Casting, costume workshops and coaches. This trio will develop a preliminary idea based on a guideline formulated by creative guide, Jean-François Bouchard. Once the basic concept has been determined, other creators join the creation team, including a set designer, a costume designer, a composer, a choreographer, a lighting designer, a sound designer, an acrobatic performance designer, a rigging and acrobatic equipment designer, and a few other specialists depending on what is required for the development of the show.

Once the main theme has been defined, an "acrobatic skeleton" (i.e. the acts that will comprise the show) is developed. Floor acts, aerial acts, solos and group acts will make up the show, depending on the production's primary intent.

Room for discussion

The concept of a show then takes form based on extensive exchange and discussion among members of the creation team. Between each of these sessions, the creators retreat to work individually on developing ideas in greater depth, produce sketches, compose music, and so on, and then come back to the table to combine the fruits of their labour. This leads to new conversations and orientations.

As all these exchanges are taking place and during the development of the set and costume element prototypes, the Casting Department is called on to find the artists who will bring the show's concept to life. The Casting team, which is involved from the outset of the process, will suggest artists to the Director either based on specific requirements or proactively, i.e. artists with a special profile discovered in auditions with the potential to enhance a show. Sometimes a concept is changed or improved based on the artists proposed by the Casting team.

The creation period may take from one to three years, depending on whether it is a touring or resident show, and according to the very nature of the show to be developed.

International Headquarters in Montreal – The initial incubator

Cirque du Soleil International Headquarters in Montreal is the starting point for all new creations. Creation meetings, costume and set design, as well as the first rehearsals are held here. Artists from all over the world arrive in the city to begin exploratory workshops and rehearsals eight to nine months before the premiere. The creation team settles down in Montreal for a few months to fine-tune the concept, right up until the transfer to the big top or theatre for the last months of rehearsal and the adaptation of staging elements in the final venue.

Cirque du Soleil is privileged to be able to attract renowned creators with the desire to collaborate on various projects. The company offers them stimulating creation platforms in which exploration and innovation are the watchwords—and in turn, these creators allow Cirque du Soleil to innovate through their vision and diverse influences.
THE CASTING TEAM AT CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Cirque du Soleil is probably the only company in the world that recruits artists for an increasing number of shows that have an average lifespan of over 15 years. The challenge is huge, since there is no model to follow or reference in this field. The Casting team—composed of some 60 people, including 21 talent scouts—has the mission to discover and recommend talent for current and upcoming Cirque du Soleil productions. Talent scouts are looking for originality, talent and the unusual. The world is their playground, which they go over with a fine-tooth comb by holding auditions and scouting during competitions, festivals and various events.

Auditions, scouting, conferences and website
The talent scouting team is broken down by speciality, with individual talent scouts in charge of finding artists in their assigned discipline. Cirque du Soleil holds auditions year-round all over the world. These auditions take place over one or more days and involve in-depth analysis of candidates’ abilities in a number of different respects. Technical skills are assessed, along with candidates’ openness and ability to explore new ways of doing things and to step outside their comfort zone.

Via scouting and conferences, the Casting team also works to promote Cirque du Soleil, its roots, its organization, etc. Many people are not familiar with the company and its various opportunities for stage careers for athletes, acrobats and stage artists. A website dedicated to recruiting is also available in seven languages and acts as a “virtual talent scout” present on all continents.

Sports disciplines and circus arts
Around 40% of Cirque du Soleil artists come from a sports background. For many years now, Cirque du Soleil has been offering stage career opportunities for athletes whose competitive career is drawing to an end. This represents an opportunity for them to acquire new skills in the performing arts and to transform their career. This approach opens new doors for sports such as artistic, acrobatic and rhythmic gymnastics, trampoline, tumbling, synchronized swimming and diving.

As regards to circus arts, Casting has been developing and maintaining links with circus schools and touring companies worldwide for many years, and stays up to speed on emerging trends in both traditional and contemporary circus arts.

Artistic disciplines
Singers, musicians, dancers, actors and clowns play a big role in creating magic in our shows—whether through their musical talent, ability to convey emotion though movement, or aptitude for engaging the audience directly. All these artists have one thing in common—they all hail from the performing arts world. While complementary, each of these artistic disciplines has its own particularities. This is why the Casting team uses means appropriate to each discipline for recruiting candidates. For example, dancers are used to large auditions surrounded by other dancers, while clowns prefer to be seen in a show, where they benefit from the audience’s reaction. We must therefore follow the recruiting trends in each of the talent communities and adapt our approach.
In 2018, Cirque du Soleil will present 19 different shows around the world.

**AreNA SHOWS**

- North America: Cirque du Soleil Corto
- Asia: Toruk - The First Flight
- Europe: Cirque du Soleil OVO
- North America: Cirque du Soleil Crystal

**Touring Shows Under the Big Top**

- North America: Cirque du Soleil Luzia
- North America: Cirque du Soleil Amaluna
- South America: Cirque du Soleil Volta
- Asia: Cirque du Soleil Kooza
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