

THE CIRCUS ARTIST TODAY

ANALYSIS OF THE KEY COMPETENCES

WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING IS NEEDED
TODAY FOR WHAT TYPE OF ARTIST
AND IN WHAT FIELD OF ACTIVITY?

PASCAL JACOB

FEDEC

FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE
DES ÉCOLES DE CIRQUE
PROFESSIONNELLES



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PERFORMANCE WITHOUT SPIRIT OR SPIRIT WITHOUT PERFORMANCE?

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THE FEDEC

Created in 1998, the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC) is a network that is comprised of 38 professional circus schools located in 20 different countries (Albania, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia and United Kingdom).

FEDEC's main vocation is to support the development and evolution of pedagogy and creation in the field of circus arts education with the following objectives:

- to improve the education in professional circus schools,
- to reinforce the links between the professional circus schools,
- to represent these schools at European or international level,
- to promote the work of young artists who have graduated from these schools.

- intervening with the authorities on a European or national level, according to the needs of the Federation or one or more of its members,
- organising and implementing events or demonstrations that aim to increase the influence of creation and training in circus arts or to improve contacts with associations and organisations working in the fields of art, education, sport, economy, and the social sector.
- equipping the Federation with regulations and a code of ethics for professional training in circus arts.

To this end the Federation sets up different activities:

- facilitating a network of schools, allowing the organisation of numerous bilateral and multilateral exchanges of students, teachers and administrators each year,
- assembling and distributing information of all natures in the circus arts education sector.
- designing and coordinating European projects that aim to improve the teaching practices of its members (in particular through the production of teaching aids, seminars, professional exchanges, dissemination of best practice)

FEDEC is supported by the European Union (Education and Culture DG- Education and Lifelong learning programme), Cirque du Soleil, Dragone and Cirque Phénix.

PREAMBLE

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The European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC) celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2008. From very small beginnings it has grown into an organisation with close to 40 members from 20 countries, some even from beyond the European continent.
.....

We have spent quite a lot of time consolidating our base, clarifying our membership criteria and, in general, learning how to function as a federation. We have been dealing with all the issues that other federations like ours have to deal with (language, protocol, creating a sense of belonging and defining what our grand purposes really are). I personally feel that we have been doing an excellent job.

Now after ten years, the time has come for us to define what we need to do in order to advance circus arts training for the next decade. We need to understand our sector better so that we can respond to the requirements of all those that participate in it. From the children involved in leisure circus activities, to young people with desires to turn their amateur practice into a profession, to circus arts teachers, professional practitioners and those that collaborate with them in the performance and production end of the spectrum.

To accomplish this, we commissioned two works to be undertaken in 2008; the first task was to find as many circus arts training facilities that we could access across the world and then to compile this information into a directory. This would allow us to gain a perspective on the state of circus arts training across the world and help us to support new ventures that arise in places where provision is scarce. It will also help us to develop strategies

for the development of teacher training qualifications or arguments for those wishing to defend circus training projects to their local or national governments. The information gathered will be invaluable to us for numerous reasons and will fuel our debates on what directions need to be taken. As an extra benefit to those beyond our sector, the information obtained will also be available for public use, on demand. Please visit the FEDEC website for more information about this project.

The second task was to undertake a survey of employers across the European circus sector to discover what they consider to be the “Key Skills” required by young circus performers entering the profession. The results of this survey are what you are holding in your hands now.

It is always a bit daunting to commission a report because it is impossible to assume what the results will be. Daunting, but necessary, because if we really want to evolve in a fashion that is true to our fundamental beliefs, but which is also pertinent to the wider context in which we live, then we have to confront a certain reality. We have to be prepared to see, or hear, things that we may not necessarily agree with, or to find ourselves face to face with opinions and points of view that differ from our own. We may discover expectations of us that we were completely unaware of, and preconceived ideas that were formed outside our

scope of influence. As a mature organisation we must take the results of our commission into consideration as we define our position for the future.

In addition to that, we can not simply listen to one voice, in this particular case, the voice of the "profession". In doing so, we risk having a subjective view of our sector. For example, there is mention in this report of a certain disappointment at the disappearance of large circus discipline troupes (Flying Trapeze probably being the most obvious example). Regrettably that may be the case, but we as an organisation can not simply react to that as a given. Numerous factors need to be taken into account, questions need to be asked and actors from all parts of our sector need to be interrogated: Is the lack of such groups due to the fact that the financial investment of procuring the material, finding and maintaining a permanent training facility and creating the support infrastructure is too great for a fledgling bunch of recent graduates? Are there an adequate number of openings for groups like this? Are there young circus artists interested in actually undertaking that kind of training, for that length of time? And from another point of view, do any schools exist today that have the space and teaching staff available to support such a programme? Answering these questions will allow us to develop collaborations and development strategies that do not exist currently; it is an exciting prospect.

After this initial survey, and over the course of 2009/2010, we will have to undertake the same exercise with recent graduates, schools and current students in order to provide ourselves with enough information to make intelligent decisions, because our responsibility does not lie with the needs of one part of the circus world, but rather with the wider circus sector

as a whole. Our future as a federation will depend on our ability to evaluate the infinite needs and unlimited desires of everybody involved with circus arts, from the training in them to the performing of them. Our future will depend not only on how we manage expectations, but also how we harness passions.

As a closing statement, I would like to say that the FEDEC has commissioned this report because it needs to know what is going on now so that it can be influential in the future. Mr. Pascal Jacob has undertaken a huge task and we thank him for that. We have taken on his findings and we will integrate the views expressed by those he questioned with those that we will collect from other sources. We will consider his recommendations and eventually develop a strategy that, we hope, will do justice to the world of circus arts as a whole; because really, deep down, that is why we are all striving together in the first place.

TIM ROBERTS, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDEC
LONDON, 8TH DECEMBER 2008

INTRODUCTION

THE LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES

This study is based on a statement of fact.

If we consider the number of artists who have come from the top three French-speaking schools (Châlons-en Champagne, Montréal and Brussels), as well as the final year students from the NICA in Melbourne, the Circus Space in London and the Stockholm school, the number of students taken on approaches a few hundred each year - when it comes to the western world, at any rate. If we add to this figure the artists who have been through the professional training route, the figures would be around double. This is both low and high at the same time. It is low in the sense that, given the number of companies and the potential geographical coverage, this figure of a few hundred equates to only ten or so complete classic shows. Disparities on the market are also barely reflected by the schools: most students hope to focus on contemporary circus. The very best go on to create a new show for one of the leading companies of the decade or to create their own company, something which many students consider to be of equal value.

So a few hundred artists in this case is both accurate and recurrent - and a high number since there are not many companies able to create a new show each year (a new creation every 48 months for the Cirque Plume involves the recruitment of ten or so artists on average) and the relative increase in disciplines is cluttering rather than fuelling the market. This is a crucial point in terms of development and requirements. The schools favour individual offerings or duos (hand-in-hand, aerial cradle, Korean board) and in rare cases small groups (teeterboard, banquine).

The decision to support the development of a creative artist at one of the schools favours a focusing on a certain type of circus, undoubtedly to the detriment

of the more classic forms. In this respect, the disciplines which are often taught and chosen in the schools influence this narrowing of offerings: balance, hand-in-hand, aerial silk, swinging trapeze, climbing rope, slack and tight wire and variations on these genres are the key disciplines today - and are almost exclusive in their dominance. The list is not exhaustive and is not intended to be overly simplistic but apart from a few rare exceptions (local slant on the acrobatic ladder, simple wheel, German wheel and teeterboard), it presents a technical snapshot of the current offerings. The distribution is clearly geographical in nature and is influenced by the level of the teacher in question: the students concerned select a school based on their ambitions in a specific discipline and because they know they will be able to acquire the best skill level there which they need in order to progress. So, the CNAC does not train jugglers, the German wheel is not taught in Brussels and the flying trapeze, aerial perch and Washington trapeze are rarely featured any more, even though a few schools offer the space to practise them.

The selection system does not favour the integration of group acts: of a group of 6 people, only 2 or 3 are likely to satisfy the demands of the establishment. This does not mean that the others are bad, but rather that they do not meet the relevant selection criteria. This forces groups to break up. If they continue to exist in their initial form, there are many difficulties to be overcome in everyday life. Upon leaving the school, 3 years later, it is necessary to find an establishment able to take on 6 people for just one act. Taking on and training a group is therefore a challenge. In most cases, the more favourable situation is for a group of individuals to come together upon completing their training with a view to possibly working together.

This progressive disappearance of collective disciplines is inevitably leading to the development of virtual bridges between the schools and contemporary circus, to the detriment of other areas of the professional market. Without falling into the trap of generalisation, it cannot be denied that the initial diversity of circus techniques, many of them taught between the 2nd half of the 19th century and the 20th century, is beginning to disappear.

The aim is to offer simplified parameters within the international context so as to better understand the requirements and expectations of the international scene as well as to hone the skills of its key players. Regular visits to performance venues all across the world, as well as being entertaining, means that the aesthetic and technical developments of this somewhat marginalised sector can be assessed. It also makes it possible to investigate the reasons and causes for developments which are frequently anarchic, often complex yet never linear. The origins of the artists in particular evokes curiosity. Where do they come from, these boys and girls, men and women, who are able to thrill 10, 100, 1000 or even 5,000 or 10,000 spectators in the ring or as part of a show?

SOURCES?

The equation seems easy to resolve once formulated: when it comes to the artists working for contemporary companies, most come from the schools! Next question! The debate could stop there. But things are not that simple. Perhaps this is because the industry does not measure itself according to only one of its many facets and that, against all expectations, even this specific sector of the market does not draw systematically from the breeding ground of the schools. The remainder of the sector, more or less the vast majority of the so-called classic companies whether traditional or neo-classic, generally remain resistant to change, to such encounters and to the integration of young artists trained in the western schools.

In the case of Cirque du Soleil, a giant in the world of circus entertainment, only 27 of the 581 acrobats working for the company come from a circus school. This is a very small percentage for a category where it is hard to imagine there being any alternative training option.

In order to better understand and clarify the aspects of this problem, the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools has committed itself to two research objectives: to define the skill set of the artists as required by the markets and to sketch out a symbolic map or geopolitical diagram of the training offers available throughout the world, both in terms of quality and quantity.

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FIRST PART

SOME REFERENCE POINTS

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We are in the midst of a pivotal period when it comes to the formidable adventures of the modern-day circus: the ultimate cohabitation of a 'normal' classic circus and a contemporary circus with no recognised borders or limits. In order to anticipate, accept and understand these recent changes as well as to better appreciate any changes yet to come, it is sometimes necessary to review the situation.

.....

Here are some historical and chronological landmarks in an attempt to better understand the developments of form and style: a notion highlighted by Soviet circus and widely adopted and transcended by contemporary circus.

The notion of the act forms the basis of the simplified dramatic art of the circus known as classic circus. It is dependent on teaching and standardises shows. It is a significant code, regularly demolished by successive waves of the new circus and contemporary circus. Nevertheless, it is often a pre-requisite during the audition process, whatever the type of circus in question. It is essential to question the relevance of the act seen in relation to the reality of the market and the key themes of creation.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The modern-day circus emerged in the 18th century and has never really had to justify its existence. This form of show has developed into a family, forming dynasties and alliances where expertise is acquired and transformed into a secret of repetition within the shadows of the structures and marquees. This initial stage encompasses 2 centuries of activity. Two centuries exactly, almost to the day. Having first emerged one Spring morning in 1768, the modern circus underwent a transformation in Spring 1968 and faced a public rejection of its codes. This is a well-established fact: after 200 years of existence and controlled development, the artistic

expression at the heart of the profession and popular targets were absorbed by a new generation of creators and artists, bringing about an unprecedented process of regeneration motivated by the breakdown of families and the abandonment of the principle of transmission within the clans and dynasties. The entire sector was brutally and brusquely shaken by the calling into question of most of its assets. This triggered the dawn of the new circus complete with iconoclastic research and a shaky start in terms of style. It was also the time when an unavoidable split began to occur between two worlds, both indifferent to one another.

DISCREPANCIES

The circus arts have undergone profound changes over the last 30 years, perhaps more than any other art form. At the end of the 1970s, the international circus scene opened itself up to new perspectives. In France, Australia, Scandinavia and North America, the period from 1968 to 1978 was rich in teaching and opportunities. It was fuelled by a move towards aesthetic revival and multiple advancements in terms of recognition and development. This was the era when New Circus first began to emerge. During this same period, the first two circus schools were set up in western Europe. Annie Fratellini and Pierre Etaix opened the 'Ecole nationale du cirque' while Alexis Grüss and Silvia Monfort opened the 'Ecole au Carré' several weeks later. This was in

1974. Many contemporary artists have passed through these doors: from Jérôme Thomas to Philippe Goudard and Maripaul B. and from Antoine Rigaud to Stéphane Ricordel. Several went on to found their own companies, briefly tempted by classicism, and later to form part of the creative dynamic of contemporary circus.

In the 1980s, new companies were emerging regularly and began to capture the attention of a different public who were more attentive to the artistic performance rather than simply wanting an entertaining show. The circus began to acquire a level of maturity previously reserved for dance and theatre. A new concentration of companies and innovations emerged, notably supported in France by a strong institutional framework. The aims were very definite: to support the development of art forms considered to be up-and-coming and help structure a sector undergoing great changes by providing the means necessary to conquer new territories, both public and artistic.

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CHANGES

The creation of the Centre National des Arts du Cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne in 1985 was a crucial step forward in achieving a visionary plan to liberate circus arts. The Ecole Nationale de Cirque de Montréal, Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque de Bruxelles, and the National Institute for Circus Arts in Melbourne are all involved in helping to promote the recognition and validation of this somewhat overlooked industry.

The circus has now entered the third millennium with new tools to hand: it has transformed itself into 'circus arts', symbolising a return to the autonomy of the techniques which comprised it over the last 2 centuries. From then on, circus arts have featured regularly across the planet, often implicitly supported by the efforts of companies which justify and validate national efforts on an international scale and secure a share of the market in both a metaphorical and economic sense. There is no longer just one circus or one means of circus performance: this is undoubtedly at the epicentre of the developments which began 30 years ago. Today, the same question remains valid. What is the sense of a circus? Does circus still exist?

The answer stems in part from the companies and artists themselves. But sometimes this is not enough to understand. The professional sector has been considerably divided up.

The notion of a uniform and indivisible circus is no longer possible. Everything which once defined the circus has been called into question, either patiently or with brutality. This world on the move, and more often marginalised, has been faced by the most difficult of equations: evolve or disappear. Perhaps this is simply natural, in the Darwinian sense of the term. Yet it has proven to be extremely painful for those individuals involved, paralysed by the choice they have to make.

ACCESSIBILITY

In 40 years (1968-2008), the world has changed a great deal – drastically and irreversibly. The foundations of western society have been weakened in general while their performing art forms have been weakened in a very specific manner. Circus has achieved change through fission. It has diversified by drawing from the source of other art forms. The schools have begun to favour the development of new art forms before imposing a sense of control and establishing a dogma of aesthetics. When the schools opened, the prisons were symbolically closed. This poor paraphrase of Victor Hugo is indicative of the unbelievable freedom stimulated by the schools: the traditional codes and conventions of the circus were broken down by artists who were more concerned with creating than reproducing.

The old models wore out and the circus broke down. The flourishing of new training centres proved to be very successful and was both guided and supported by this profound structural shake-up: hundreds of establishments of all sizes and ambitions opened up across the world. Leisure activity schools, preparatory schools, advanced training schools as well as workshops, holiday camps and regular and one-off training sessions: circus arts became the latest adventure. This inestimable vitality has made it possible to establish a wide range of different professions and companies.

The sector generates a turnover of millions of euros and has undergone deep-rooted changes as well as triggering the emergence of various troops fuelled by the interest of the public and institutions and both denounced and encouraged by critics. Specific national features began to develop and helped re-shuffle the cards and promote the globalisation of the various aesthetical forms which had previously been split between the more classic western methods, the dominant Soviet model and the less well-known Chinese acrobatic forms. From then on, the circus arts have been accessible to the majority either at the schools, in the streets, on theatre stages or

in circus tents. This study is derived from this immense potential for development. The main themes and the beginnings of a conclusion can be formulated by focusing on as broad a range of typologies as possible and a subject for analysis which can accurately reflect the diversity of those involved in the market. This work adopts a proactive and flexible approach to investigating this ever-changing sector.

FORMS

Traditional circuses are based on families who pass the subtle art of one or several disciplines on to their children and occasionally take on Russian or Chinese acts, depending on their importance and means. Cabarets generally draw from Ukrainian and Russian acts. Contemporary companies employ a significant number of artists from the three big western schools - Ecole nationale de cirque de Montréal, the Ecole supérieure des arts du cirque de Bruxelles and the Centre national des arts du cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne.

In fact, many artists who have trained at these three institutions go on to found their own companies upon graduation and therefore fuel the market (in the sense that they are not integrating into an existing structure but rather creating new structures which may themselves become consumers as their creations progress). Atypical companies such as Cirque du Soleil and Dragone are based on different modes of operation and rely on acrobatic talent to develop the show sequences (the Cirque du Soleil has just signed a 4 year agreement with the International Gymnastics Federation).

The very low percentage of artists who have trained at the schools used by the Cirque du Soleil is highly indicative of this. Yet it also expresses a certain shortcoming: the company undoubtedly cannot find what it is looking for in what the schools are offering yet also struggles to convey these requirements to athletes who often have little involvement in their ambitious creative approach.

We are therefore faced with a strange structural dichotomy: the market expects to find forms which the training schools do not provide. This deficiency leads the companies to turn to other sources: the signature of a collaboration agreement between the International Gymnastics Federation and Cirque du Soleil confirms. However, the Kiev College of Circus and Variety Acts, the Berlin School of Ballet and Circus, the Budapest Circus School and the Moscow Circus School, to name but a few, train acts specifically for the cabaret and events circuits.

DIFFERENCES IN STYLE

The very low level of artistry offered by traditional circuses and technical mediocrity would seem to favour the improved integration of artists who have graduated from the schools in general. Their performance level is constantly progressing with some virtuoso performances in various specialist fields and their level of artistic awareness in many cases is superior to that of artists who have come through other channels.

Times are changing: during the last Moscow Festival, a gold medal was awarded to French tightrope walker Julien Posada who trained at the Académie Fratellini and a silver medal to the Polinde duo, an aerial cradle act who trained at the ESAC in Brussels.

These rewards for acts who have trained at the western schools represent a real revolution in terms of the stronghold of traditional values.

Yet the following case is also symptomatic: the young juggler Morgan, who trained at the Centre des arts du cirque du Lido de Toulouse, took part in the 29th World Festival of the Circus of Tomorrow. He won a silver medal and numerous special prizes. He was approached by several producers, agents and circus directors. His presence in the ring, his virtuosity and the humorous dimension to his presentation impressed many different entrepreneurs. Morgan is involved with a new creation as part of his own company and therefore declined all of these offers. These included a tour of several months in the United States with the Big Apple Circus in New York. Morgan is an excellent example of a school gradu-

ate: he focuses on contemporary circus yet his acts are perfectly 'sellable' throughout the world. He also has the enormous advantage of being at the border between two worlds. Nevertheless, despite being in a position to represent this ideal crossing point between the schools and the market in its broadest sense, he prefers to remain close to the source of his training.

Unlike this 'transferable' approach, many students from the schools have difficulty applying what they have learnt to a project other than their own. This is a very frequent criticism: schools format their students, unintentionally of course. In addition to their honest desire to offer students a maximum number of alternatives, to stimulate their creativity and provide them with time to reflect and take a step back, each school inevitably stamps a certain style on their apprentices

QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE

ACTS...

Ever since it was first established, the modern circus has been defined in terms of acts. This is both a means of structuring a programme by organising it in terms of the quality of the different 'acts' and a simple means of qualifying the timing of each singular act. There are on average 10 to 12 acts in a show, each of a pre-defined length of 6 to 7 minutes. The act adheres to strict rules in terms of rhythm and intensity. The artist then adapts his technique so as to reflect the impact they wish to make on the public within the framework of these requirements.

There is virtually no margin for improvisation and success or failure is determined by adherence to this code. Acts are sometimes deemed to restrict creativity and are explicitly derived from the traditional circus. In the schools, acts are known as personal career options, comprehensive assessments or technical presentations but they do not necessarily represent the final outcome of 3 or 4 years of study any more.

Sometimes it is purely a question of rhetoric and, whatever you call them, acts always exist in different forms. The focal point of this discussion, a Gordian knot of the training/market relationship, is the relevance, deconstruction and survival of the act. The debate about deconstruction was initiated by the *Cri du Caméléon*, a show put on by the 7th graduating class of the CNAC and directed by Josef Nadj. However, this is just one part of the industry.

Today there are no schools operating with regularity and consistency at the technical level of the traditional circus. The domination of aesthetics and abandonment of many intangible codes have forced the disappearance of a spirit linked to the perfection of movement and performance as an end in itself. This formed a focal point of the seminar and an objective of this analysis: the preparation of acts involves an entirely different discourse to

that which justifies the training of creative artists and their own art forms. This is an ambiguous issue among the participants: some take the principle of the act for granted while others do not even see it as a pre-requisite. There are places where acts can be created and places where they are not deemed to be important. The artist trained in each of these places will go on to fuel this respective market sector.

This is more or less a utopia: to consider the schools to be a single entity would be an error of judgement. One or several professional sectors correspond, or perhaps should correspond, to each school. Porosity is extremely rare. There is no or little transversality among the actors involved. Yet the Cirque du Soleil teams contain very few artists who have trained at the schools. This is at the very heart of the problem – training who for whom?



...OR THE REJECTION OF ACTS

The model initiated by the Moscow School of Circus Art in 1927 helped validate the aesthetic and technical principles of the act. The format – structured around a 7 minute session – has represented circus since the 18th century. The artists of the future are trained according to these requirements and teaching is supposed to reflect this. Until the 1990s, there was little satisfactory alternative to this. The *École au Carré d’Alexis Grüss* and the *École nationale d’Annie Fratellini* trained acts and technical competence was a pre-requisite for anyone wishing to enter the *Cirque à l’Ancienne* or *Nouveau Cirque de Paris*. The teachers aimed to re-create classic artists differentiated by their respective talents. In doing so, they adhered to and ratified a norm. They positioned themselves at the forefront of the market, aiming to produce the very best acts (and therefore the best artists). Yet it is not a question of polyvalence; it is more a matter of mastering one, two or even three disciplines. Behaviour in the ring and quality of movement are not taken into account until the moment that they validate these amazing feats. And they are not considered to be indispensable. This was the situation in the 70s – the market situation changed considerably at the start of the 80s. Today, there is something uncomfortable for students about having to reflect, devise and create something in school which will be simply reduced to an act. To be simply an ‘act’ in a show is a return to the simplified idea of the individual and his capacities to exist and create. This principle is at the core of the difference between a consenting interpreter and a creative artist. Nevertheless, the market remains hungry for acts: and this is the ambiguity of the situation. There is undoubtedly a certain degree of conformity in this obsession with acts, yet 2/3 of the sector does not operate in any other way. This therefore fuels the struggle and dilemma of the schools: the definition of aims linked directly to a structure’s business plan.

CHOOSING A COLLECTIVE

Historically speaking, schools have always been founded in order to provide a particular market (circuses and cabarets) with acts. This principle is clear in Eastern Europe but has gradually developed in western Europe since the 1990s. The misunderstanding – act vs market – stems from inevitable developments in the types of show during the last 40 years. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the events of May 1968. The development of circus art, and therefore circus schools, has faithfully followed developments in society and other living forms. Circus has mutated. What seemed indestructible in 1978 (the year circus was recognised as a form of culture by the French state and a shift in state supervision occurred from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry for Cultural Affairs) was proved not to be, just one year later. Following cultural and political decisions (creation of the *Cirque du Soleil* in 1984 in Quebec on the decision of Prime Minister René Lévesque), the states decided to support the artistic shift and spectator choice did the rest. The first 2 western schools (1974) were intended to serve the industry in general and the French circus in particular. The *Ecole de cirque de Montréal* was founded in 1981 and, in the early days of its existence, was closely linked to the *Cirque du Soleil*. In 1985, the CNAC was created to respond to these same demands: to provide the different French companies with artists and acts.

With this change, nothing functioned as it did before. The *Ecole au Carré* run by Alexis Grüss and Silvia Monfort closed its doors in 1988 while the *Ecole nationale du cirque Annie Fratellini*, after meeting its initial specifications and training numerous classic artists, developed to form the *Académie Fratellini* which opened in 2003 in Saint-Denis. The CNAC’s project of establishment has also been gradually transformed: the centre underwent a profound transformation in 1990, under



SECOND PART

TYPOLOGIES OF SETTINGS

‘Can a polyvalent creative and performing artist sell popcorn in the interval or help put up the tent?’



The circus arts sector is complex. We have sought to incorporate the wide range of opinions by including the director of a large German cabaret, the casting director of the Cirque du Soleil and her counterpart at the Dragone company, a manager at the Swiss Starlight circus and the director of the Sirkus Finlandia, the director of Cirque Archaos and Cirque Phénix, the agent for the Festival de Grenoble and the president of the International Festival of the Circus of Tomorrow as well as inviting several directors from the schools as witnesses.

Close ties as well as deep-rooted incomprehension quickly emerged. A real desire to get along as well as irreconcilable demands.

A brief look at some of the participants...

COMPANIES LISTENING TO PEOPLE AND THE PROFESSION: CIRCUS AS A WAY OF LIFE

‘The days are very long, but at the end people drink a beer together under the stars and are pleased about what they have accomplished. This is what they are looking for – a sense of personal satisfaction about a shared project which motivates them to look forward to getting up each morning, time and again’.

With 40 collaborators and 12 artists, some of whom have graduated from the Ecole Nationale de Cirque de Montréal, the Starlight circus is an atypical company which has been touring Switzerland for more than 20 years. It has caravans and trailers and regularly moves from one town to another covering 2, 3 or even 4 places each week, assembling and dismantling the structures each time in a well-oiled rhythm which functions so long as the structures of the circus are light. The circus employs artists who perform acts since this enables them to better assess their technical level. “Working for Starlight also means getting dirty, sometimes getting cold, and often facing long hours”. Nevertheless, this is a magnificent experience for those who experience it.

'Our main objective was to encounter performing artists capable of incorporating an artistic concept and who were also open to the world'

Archaos, a circus with character, was an immense permanent laboratory for almost 7 years. In 5 years, this company became what could be called Europe's largest circus in terms of volume since in 1991 it sold 6 million euros worth of tickets and some months handled 300 payslips.

The 1990s were a very successful time for the company with international tours, 2 distinct units and public and critical acclaim. Today, despite many changes and a reduction in its workforce, Archaos remains a historic player on the French scene.

Today, the proportion of graduates from the École Nationale de Cirque (Montreal) employed by the Cirque du Soleil at any point during their first 5 years of professional practice stands at around 30%.

The Cirque du Soleil, with some 15 shows active, welcomed 10 million spectators in 2007. The company considers it essential to support the schools in both the medium and long-term as part of their mission. According to the old principle of communicating vessels, the development of the whole – and therefore the development of other circus companies in Quebec – will prove to be very positive for the development of the company.

In a company such as this, the aim of the casting is to discover, develop and consolidate talent and creative performances.

Analysis of the casting process reveals that there are 3 main categories: sport, circus and other linked artistic forms. 50% of the artists come from the field of sport, 18% from circus in the broadest sense of the term as accomplished professionals and 32% from the world of theatre, dance, singing and music.

The clientele of the Cirque du Soleil are essentially expecting to see a performance and a sequence of feats impressive enough to raise the roof. Yet the aesthetic dimension is decisive. It is increasingly the synthesis of the two which guides the commitment and motivates the development of the shows.

Currently, of the 581 acrobats under contract with the Cirque du Soleil, only 27 were trained at a circus school. Of the 150 artists considered to be specifically circus artists, 21 come from the schools. Across all categories, only 6% of artists at the Cirque du Soleil come from the schools.

In the case of Dragone, the situation is different. The motto during the casting process and initial search for shows was 'no circus acts'. This restriction raises a paradoxical question: **what is performance? How can this be applied without 'doing circus'?** Yet it makes sense to turn to the circus schools. The pluri-disciplinary nature of the teaching here does not restrict the artists and enables them to incorporate a broader range of artistic and technical options.

Our field of activity has increased from 15 to 500 companies in 20 years'



The Phénix circus, with a marquee which holds 6,000, employs 150 people including some 50 artists. The show is completely new each year and, depending on the topic, Alain Pacherie often finds it difficult to find European acts outside of Russia and the Ukraine. His attachment to the French and European artistic scene causes him to ask: where are the artists from the schools?

The Wintergarten has a capacity of 500 seats (350 in the stalls and 150 in the upper circle). It is a new theatre, located in a different district of Berlin to the original Wintergarten, and was founded by Bernhard Paul, creator of the Cirque Roncalli, in 1992. ***In the 1920s in Berlin there were 85 variety theatres, large theatres and small theatres.*** Today, Berlin has only 2 left. Nevertheless, there are 1,550 different shows which play to 3.5 million spectators each day: concerts, cinema, operas, theatres, folk festivals, etc.

The Wintergarten employs artists of a very high level and increasingly from the schools yet who can easily adapt to the show in question.

These different circuses are symbolic of the diverse market. They also reflect in their own way the difficulties of providing new commercial and artistic offers. Millions of spectators expect to be impressed each time by new and talented shows. It is rather like squaring the circle with the schools gradually developing towards a role prescribed by new forms. It is at the heart of these training centres, sheltered by constraint, that some of the next aesthetical trends develop – with no regard for the market and with obstinance and perseverance.

‘Our field of activity has increased from 15 to 500 companies in 20 years’

The broad scope of the sector is highlighted by the size and respective requirements of the various companies. This represents the greatest difficulty in ensuring that the training matches the requirements of the profession. The schools must be able to combine the multiple capacities and qualities involved. They need to be able to compose using the students accepted into the school as well as taking account of the future. The objective is important but not decisive. The different forms are more a cause of concern than relief and for one simple reason: artists from the European schools are increasingly tempted by the idea of creating their own creative structures. These future artists are often preoccupied with the idea of being master of their own destiny. And how better to do this than to found a structure which is ideally adapted to their own demands and requirements in terms of style and creative freedom. This has been a recurrent phenomenon for several years as demonstrated by graduates from the Centre National des Arts du Cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne and is now also starting to emerge in Belgium where, for several years, each year of graduates from the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque de Bruxelles results in the creation of at least one company (Hoplà Circus, Cirque Hirsute, Carré Curieux). The Quebec company 7 Doigts de la Main, founded in 2002 and comprising several former graduates of the Ecole nationale de cirque de Montréal, employed 5 graduates from the same institution in 2005 to create a new show, thereby creating a second unit under the same company banner. The schools will have to take

account of, anticipate and support this trend and certain players in the industry will have to resign themselves to this fact before taking on the next generation of artists. The notion of the author, implicitly linked to creation, triggers another level of questioning: writing a circus show emphasises the maturity of an artistic form which had barely been considered until then. This represents a new acceptance of the role of the acrobat, the balance artist, the juggler and the clown who have all become equal in the prism of writer and composer creations.

Salaries

Money is always a decisive factor in the acceptance of rejection of any contract, as well as the terms proposed. In order to better understand the expectations and hopes involved, the issue of salaries must be raised. Within the context of this in-depth analysis of the market and its various sectors, it is appropriate to carefully assess the difficult relationship between salary and its corollary, conditions of work. There are a wide range of salaries involved. They vary according to the size of the company and geographical area with their different purchasing powers. Salaries also depend on the experience of the artist, the artist's ability to integrate within the show as a whole and especially the artist's level of technical expertise and value in terms of impressing spectators. The professional sector is also fluid and little structured and the demands are not the same everywhere. Knowing how to drive a lorry, how to put up a marquee or complete two or even three acts in the case of a family may be more important than the intrinsic value of the performance itself. There is also the inevitable and hard to quantify matter of the hierarchy in evaluating the quality of an act. Not everyone is looking for the same thing.

At the Cirque du Soleil, the salary is the same whether the artist comes from a school, institution or performing family or whether indeed he or she is self-taught.

The low capacity of an establishment like the Wintergarten means that it cannot increase its artistic budget. Good acts are becoming ever more expensive. The increasing rarity of strong acts who have been popularised by television programmes also means that the best acts are valuing themselves at an ever higher rate.

For a theatre which cannot increase the price of its tickets, this is a difficult exercise in balance from an economic and artistic point of view. To take on three acts from a school therefore represents an excellent opportunity. At school during the day and on stage during the evening, such additional training is always productive. The value of this approach has already been proven: after 6 weeks of rehearsals, the students have achieved a very good level and have improved day upon day through their performances. Today they can easily be compared to the more well-trained artists.

The result is clear and simple: this type of professional training works well, and with accuracy. It also highlights the importance of facing the public during training yet only makes sense when the objectives of theatre, the schools and the students come together and work together.

The Wintergarten hopes to develop this new policy of voluntary transfusion which it sees as an opportunity to discover new talent and to do so before these artists enter the marketplace, transforming them into productive and profit-yielding entities.

Squaring the circle

School –and company– looking for a base...

How can the impossible equation between the demands of the sector and the opposition of the schools be resolved? This is a crucial question. No doubt the primary stumbling block within an ocean of mutual good will. There is a paradoxical and invasive desire within the professional sector to commission the schools which are considered, with the best will, to be places of analysis and reflection, incubators of talent yet definitely not centres of made-to-measure training. Everyone recognises the importance of the schools remaining independent and the necessity to set aside a protected period of time when students can seek, and sometimes find, the means they need to establish themselves, using the tools offered by the institution in question. This is a fundamental point: it is at this price that the schools may begin to play a part in determining changes within the market. The possibilities are considerable. The aim of schools is, of course, to train skilled artists who are capable of entering one of the extensive range of companies on offer but they could also influence the aesthetical and technical development of all or part of the industry and contribute to the enrichment of the scene both before and after training. This is a structuring position which stems from a complex support process. There are companies today which keep an eager eye on each year of graduates from the schools and not simply out of curiosity; they are also increasingly interested in the new 'products' created by the years of training, research and evaluation. The majority of the seminar participants recognise that the including an act in a programme is not an end in itself. It is a notion which is also evident in many of the questionnaire responses (Starlight, Dragone). The availability of the artists and their ability to incorporate a process of creation, however simple, have become essential prerequisites to employment in any sector of the market. In the case of the Wintergarten, this is indisputable. With a rehearsal time of around 3 weeks for any new show, the availability of the artists is crucial. Their ability to aban-

don all or part (costume, music, even choreography) of their original act in order to take on a new vision and direct a new series of performances is essential.

The aim is to assess the distance that each of the 2 entities is able to travel in order to encounter the other. The market adheres to laws which are different from those of the schools. The schools are based on principles which are not necessarily the same as those of the market. The market has conjectural requirements. A notion which is poles apart from the aims of the schools.

The lack of bases demonstrates this fact well. Yet the question (crucial from the point of view of the companies) is not: who trains good bases today? The right question (essential to the school selection process) should read: who wants to become a base today? The dichotomy between desire and reality is breathtaking in this case. And yet, who better than the schools to train the best bases? The anecdote is perhaps something of a caricature yet clarifies the question of allocating skills and points to the schools. Nothing and no one today can force a student to become a base against his or her will. And, unfortunately, nothing and no one can train anyone to be a good base if the candidate for the title, despite his or her best efforts, does not have the minimum skills required. This is undoubtedly one of the initial limits of the exercise. The schools do not select students today based on their potential qualities as a base if they do not already have a partner. That is to say that today it is out of the question to train a base without a flyer or to simply educate an individual to be capable of catching just anyone based on a selective or possible use. However, a general enthusiasm for a technical profile at the intersection of dynamic and static forms of acrobatics is essential to the creation of several disciplines; the temptation to concentrate on this rare species is great. This demonstrates these new set of circumstances well: the needs and expectations of the industry are often not appropriate to the immediate resources available to the schools. The uncertain part is that it is absolutely impossible to guarantee the training of one or several

bases in a regular and planned manner in each annual intake. The shortfall, however well-known it may be, is clearly not close to being filled. For this reason it is sensible and intuitive to note that very few students want to spend 3 years of their lives 'catching' as a base in a collective group. The hand-in-hand role is undoubtedly more gratifying, but considerably reduces subsequent possibilities.

This may well be a small detail and a simple one at that, yet it nevertheless demonstrates a need, desire and shortfall. It highlights the time taken to train versus the expectations of the industry: which artist for which circus? And it raises the crucial yet delicate question of the involvement of the market in the schools.

Profile and involvement

To what extent can companies be involved in guiding or determining the training of students as future professional artists? This subtle nuance also plays a part in company requirements: a large proportion of the sector only need acts. And takes them on without any hint of uncertainty. In other cases, it is more a matter of acquiring polyvalent individuals able to incorporate any form of collective while retaining a sense of diversity. This second dividing line between acquisition and knowledge represents two forms of process and creation. In the case of the Cirque du Soleil and Dragone, the quest for available acrobats is essential. The notion of availability can be interpreted at various different levels: the physical or mental possibility of agreeing to erase a global image for the benefit of the construction and to enter into the service of a subjective vision where the individual is an element among other elements in the development of a scene or sequence. The process of creating shows therefore adheres to new standards. And the artists have to abide by the specific requirements of the project.

The time to create

The schools in many cases validate the individual in the broadest sense of the term. The personality of the student lies at the heart of the establishment project and helping the students to develop themselves artistically is the key objective of the teachers and the educational guidance provided. Here there is a discrepancy between the expectations and requirements. Yet the schools, as part of their initial training, need not be the first recourse in developing a collective sequence.

Consideration should also be given to the implementation of training 'chambers' in partnership with the schools, logistically involved in the development process yet detached from the advanced courses which are dedicated to research and the perfection of independent artists. This guarantees that the schools are both formative and prescriptive. This is an investment in the future for the companies: respecting this suspended time in training will enable future artists to influence another vision of the world, a vision more enriching to the modelling and development of the sector as a whole which is often constrained by daily demands which are difficult to combine with creation.

QUESTIONNAIRE

(see questionnaire in appendix)

INVENTORY

In order to investigate various questions on perceptions of the sector in relation to western circus schools, we chose to send a questionnaire to many of the key players in the sector. We developed the questionnaire through a collective thought process based on the expectations of training structures and the expectations of the professional world. The questionnaire was addressed to a panel of individuals involved in the sector, covering as broad a range as possible. It does not claim to be exhaustive (we deliberately excluded units deemed to fall into the 'small circuses' category, with no offence intended, since these are primarily family-based enterprises and active only during the summer period) yet seeks to achieve a real and realistic range of opinions and interests. It also reflects the geopolitical positioning of the various segments in the circus arts industry: this undoubtedly explains the importance of contemporary French companies and the number of companies deemed to be largely classical or neo-classical in the rest of the world.

We have nevertheless sought to balance out these requests, attempting to retain a proportional number of players from each of the sectors. We have also tried to expand the geographical scope so as not to highlight the French singularity further. In this context, the responses from a Lithuanian or Danish circus make all the more sense.

We also sent out some 80 questionnaires addressed to 30 or so contemporary companies, the same number of traditional companies and 20 or so intermediate structures (agencies, cabarets, festivals).

The questionnaire is intended to evaluate both general and specific requirements. In order to do this, it is based on a simple evaluation grid where the questions are grouped in terms of theme with a view to understanding expectations, satisfaction levels and any possible points of frustration.

A few key words simplify the method of approach: 'school', 'advantage', 'disadvantage', 'expectation', 'qualities' and 'criticism'. The interpretation of the responses is thereby simplified, representing similar data segment by segment.

THE FOLLOWING ESTABLISHMENTS TOOK PART IN THE INVESTIGATION:

Archaos ^{FRANCE}
Baltijos Cirkas ^{LITHUANIA}
Circ et Variete Globus ^{ROMANIA}
Circuits Scène conventionnée d'Auch ^{FRANCE}
Circus Krone ^{GERMANY // INTERVIEW}
Cirkus Dannebrog ^{DENMARK}
Cirque Conelli ^{SWITZERLAND}
Cirque du Soleil ^{CANADA}
Cirque Imagine ^{FRANCE // INTERVIEW}
Cirque Messidor ^{FRANCE // INTERVIEW}
Cirque Moralles ^{FRANCE}
Cirque Nikouline ^{RUSSIA // INTERVIEW}
Cirque Phénix ^{FRANCE // INTERVIEW}
Cirque Pinder ^{FRANCE}
Cirque Plume ^{FRANCE}
Cirque Starlight ^{SWITZERLAND}
Dragone Productions ^{BELGIUM}

Fantastica! DENMARK
Festival de Budapest HUNGARY // INTERVIEW
Festival de Domont FRANCE // INTERVIEW
Festival de Grenoble FRANCE
Festival de Latina ITALY // INTERVIEW
Festival de Moscou RUSSIA // INTERVIEW
Festival de Wiesbaden GERMANY // INTERVIEW
**Festival International
 du Cirque de Monte Carlo** MONACO // INTERVIEW
Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain FRANCE // INTERVIEW
Firebird Productions USA // INTERVIEW
Gandey productions UNITED KINGDOM // INTERVIEW
L'Arsenal CANADA
Les Acrostiches FRANCE
Les Frères Kazamaroffs FRANCE
Mauvais Esprits FRANCE
Moulin Rouge FRANCE // INTERVIEW
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey USA // INTERVIEW
Tigerpalast GERMANY // INTERVIEW
Winterfest AUSTRIA
Wintergarten Variete GERMANY

Certain establishments did not wish to respond because they were not interested in the topic as it does not concern them. Some companies stated that they consider the schools to be useless and would not consider taking on an artist who had come through this route.

This attachment to the festivals (whatever form they may take) speaks in favour of enhancing the visibility of artists from the schools within this type of structure.



Some of the more traditional companies felt that the schools are overly linked to contemporary circus and therefore do not meet their requirements.

OBJECTIVES

The questionnaires received were catalogued according to which of the different segments defined in the study the establishment belongs to. The responses to the key questions (7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17, 22) formed the basis for a more detailed analysis in order to establish the selection methods used by the majority of the companies and lay the foundations for a more accurate profile of competences, taking into account the diverse range of requirements. This questionnaire aimed to question the different sectors of the market and obtain their definition of the skills required to work in accordance with their respective criteria.

ANALYSIS

The first important evaluation concerns the methods and procedures for selecting the artists: the availability of a casting department and the resources needed to search for the artists required in the development of a show (questions 7 and 8).

Only a few establishments have their own casting department which is well-organised and dedicated entirely to searching for varied artists and talent. These include the cirque Nikouline, cirque Krone and the Wintergarten. In the case of the others, i.e. the vast majority of establishments, the means for recruitment stem from planned local or international meetings, using the services of an artistic agent or more random means such as recommendations, spontaneous applications, meetings or the internet.

More than half of the responses prioritise the festivals as the top source of resources. Notably the Wintergarten of Berlin, the Cirque Starlight, Imagine circus, Salzburg festival, Pinder circus, Dragone, Baltijos Cirkas, Cirque du Soleil, Cirque Phénix, Firebird Productions, Krone circus and Big Apple Circus depend on visiting festivals in order to develop or complete their shows or programmes.

These festivals represent an essential research and selection tool for the companies. This refers to festivals in the broadest sense of the term and the principle of encounter. The possibility of finding numerous players from the sector in the same place at the same time undoubtedly heightens the appeal of this method of selection.

The festivals take place during one part of the year (September to March) and correspond to the end of certain seasons (September, October, November) and the start of many others (December, January, February, March). This is the ideal time for developing programmes for the coming seasons.

This attachment to the festivals (whatever form they may take) speaks in favour of enhancing the visibility of artists from the schools within this type of structure.



Expectations

'Do you employ artists who have graduated from the schools?' (QUESTION 10)

Another important method of selecting and employing artists is to visit the schools during end of year shows or technical presentations beforehand. The Starlight circus, Cirque du Soleil, cirque Eloize, Les 7 Doigts de la Main, cirque Monti, Cirque d'Hiver Bouglione, Cirque Phénix and Archaos select all or some of their artists by attending these school shows. The *Traces* show by company Les 7 Doigts de la Main was created along with artists from the same graduation year of the ENC in Montreal. In the more specific case of companies created by artists of the same graduation class (Anomalie, Collectif AOC, Hopla Circus), there seems to be a degree of loyalty to the relevant training establishment and the addition of extra artists often involves subsequent graduates from the same establishment. The Cirque Plume 'sometimes' employs artists from the schools (several artists involved in the creation of *Plic Ploc* trained at the CNAC or ENC) yet it is indicated in the question relating to the selection process that greater emphasis is placed on meetings or planned auditions. There is a specific and intuitive protocol involved which is, to a certain extent, assumed and random.

Preferential ties

Companies often show a preference for schools in their local area. For example, the Quebec-based companies (7 Doigts de la Main, Eloize, Cirque du Soleil, Arsenal) select some of their artists during the presentations of the Ecole nationale de cirque de Montréal. The cirque Starlight, a Swiss company whose current artistic director studied at the ENC, chose graduates from the schools of Montreal as many of his artists. The Monti Swiss circus also selects some of its artists from the graduates of the ENC. In the case of the *Vertige du Papillon*, the Belgian company FERIA Musica favoured artists who trained at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque following the example of *Men need sleep*, directed by J. M. Frère, also in Belgium.

Historically speaking, Archaos has regularly favoured artists from the Centre national des arts du cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne to complete its teams. This is not a matter of generalisations. Indeed, although the Wintergarten employs artists who trained at the ESAC in Brussels, it does not disregard those who graduated at the Staatliche Ballettschule Berlin and Schule für Artistik. The Beneweiss Danish circus employs an artist who trained in Finland.

These examples suggest that the artistic potential generated in the schools across the world is not spreading. It highlights the necessity for improved collaboration between the training centres and companies, including at the initial information level.

When it comes to the specific category of festivals, the majority of the festivals state that they select some of their artists from the school graduates. In the case of the Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain, in 2009 half of the selected artists (around 14 acts) will be from schools which are members of the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools. The Wiesbaden Festival, dedicated to young artists, also draws most of its artists from the schools. The festivals of Latina, Massy, Domont, Grenoble, Budapest, Wu Han, Wu Qiao and Monte Carlo remain more cautious in their annual programmes. The Moscow Festival and the Golden Circus of Rome offer a broader selection and present acts which trained at the western schools (Julien Posada – gold medal– and Polinde –silver medal – who trained at the Ecole nationale du cirque Annie Fratellini and the ESAC respectively both participated in the 2008 Moscow Festival).

Recognising the excellence of the training (QUESTION 16I)

When we think of the traditional circus and, to a certain extent cabaret, the notion of exceptional feats is the first thing to spring to mind. This has almost become commonplace, i.e. the most technically strong of artists fall within this sector of the market. Virtuosity has long been synonymous with the traditional circus without calling into question this assertion for which there is little proof. The questionnaire makes it possible to re-evaluate this statement and suggests an unexpected balancing effect.

The majority of the responses confirm the quality of the training provided by the schools. This is a recurrent statement: when a company chooses to employ artists who have come through this channel, it is usually because of their artistic and technical abilities. This notion is repeated throughout, emphasised in particular by the Wintergarten of Berlin, the Cirque Imagine, Dragone, Baltijos Cirkas and Archaos for whom the schools represent **‘a time for experimentation and establishing the foundations of artistic potential...’**

The wide range of responses, united by the same expectations, sum up some of the doubts and uncertainties motivated by the difficulty of integrating artists in the professional sector. Although there is no question here of disputing the quality of the teaching provided in the schools, it is necessary to acknowledge that part of the route is already complete. The implicit recognition of the different players in the market, from the smallest to the largest, raises other questions yet does not cast any doubt over one of the fundamental features of the circus arts: the level of technical ability.

In this sense, it is important not to lose sight of the significance of the act. The acts serve as a yardstick, an instrument for measuring all of the establishments. Even if it is not an end in itself, mastering an act makes it possible to evaluate the artist's range of abilities and shows companies how they can use all or part of the artist's skills.

It should also be noted that the level of technical expertise is not a determining factor for some establishments. Dragone and the Cirque du Soleil consider this to be a basic condition, often a pre-requisite to employment, yet Starlight places this notion further down its hierarchy of requirements: the company instead favours a high degree of availability and an open spirit rather than an exceptional performance level. Beyond its doubts about the ability of artists from the schools to integrate into a traditional circus, Pinder considers artistic and technical quality to be a pre-requisite to employment. Les Frères Kazamaroffs admit that they do not hire artists from the schools yet mention creativity and availability as requirements as well as the level of technical ability as being essential. They also use their own methods of identifying artists who have come through this channel. The Cirque Phénix gladly takes on artists who have trained at the schools and emphasises their creativity and technical ability as do the Cirque du Soleil, Dragone and Archaos. Performance is a clear pre-requisite yet the ability to integrate into the act is also important. It is here that the multi-disciplinary approach of the schools is really relevant. The Nikouline circus of Moscow favours hiring artists from the Moscow School of Circus Arts and is also open to hiring artists who trained at the Kiev College of Circus and Variety Acts. Here too, it is the appreciation of creativity which motivates the selection and preference accorded to the young artists – indeed, this is often their first professional contract. One-off shows such as the Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain, the Festival International du Cirque de Monte Carlo and the Moscow Festival confirm that they are potential employers of acts trained at the schools. This is particularly evident at the International Circus Festival of Tomorrow in Paris where close to a third of the artists selected (half in 2009) come from circus

schools in Europe, North America and Asia. The festival represents an initial step towards recognition by several sectors of the market. It also confirms the successful fusion of technique and artistic vision and represents the beginning of external assessment, whether from directors or choreographers: an additional step towards the plurality of aesthetics and their influence on the development of the sector.

Reservation (QUESTION 16II)

While several companies confess that they never employ artists from the schools (Messidor, Pinder, Les Frères Kazamaroffs circuses), others (Baltijos Cirkas, Starlight) only employ artists who have come through this channel. The balance is re-established through traditional and contemporary companies (Cirque Phénix, Archaos, Cirque Plume, Wintergarten, Big Apple Circus, cirque Eloize, Mauvais Esprits, Cirque du Soleil, Dragone) which 'sometimes' employ artists who trained at the schools. It should also be noted that certain traditional companies do not consciously or deliberately employ artists from the school although such artists do sometimes take part in their shows (Cirque Knie, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, Big Apple Circus). Certain schools, like the College of Arts and Variety Acts in Kiev and the School of Circus Arts in Moscow train many artists who are focused on the cabaret or events sector. Numerous companies also employ artists from the schools without really being aware of their background.

When analysing responses relating to such 'reservations', similar preoccupations arise in relation to the ability of artists to blend into the sector in question. Although it regularly employs artists from the schools, the Wintergarten notes '**a lack of flexibility and difficulty adapting to the specific requirements of the show**'. The Cirque Messidor on the other hand emphasises the '(...) lack of practical experience. The circus is not only a show, it is a way of life'.

This is all the more evident in the case of the more traditional companies which question the fragility and difficulties experienced by the young artists in accepting this complex day-to-day life where the regularity of the

tasks involved in addition to participation in the show often has a de-stabilising effect on individuals who are not used to living such a rhythmical existence. While the Cirque Plume does not place adaptability to day-to-day demands as being at the core of its concerns, it mentions other shortcomings of the artists in general, especially those trained in France: **'They are overly shaped by the ideas they have been taught and by culture-specific ideas and a lack of ambition and openness to the world. The artists delegate the defence of their profession and artistic thought to administrators and commentators! The importance of the intermittence of the show is a concept which sometimes makes it difficult to see the artist's real project'**. Archaos also mentions the risks of stagnation, habit and confinement. Les Frères Kazamaroffs, a contemporary company, prefer to steer clear of artists from the schools, like the traditional Cirque Messidor and Cirque Pinder companies, claiming that these artists lack maturity and are not compatible with their respective requirements.

Means

Demands and compatibility (QUESTION 22)

Companies such as the Swiss Starlight circus reflect this situation and recommend preparatory stages whereby the students take part in training courses in order to familiarise themselves with the obligations linked to the lifestyle. The Cirque Imagine draws students from the schools and emphasises the need for students to familiarise themselves with this lifestyle beforehand, which they know very little about initially and which can generate friction and misunderstandings as they uncover the conditions of their future existence. Yet by the time this happens, it is too late to refuse (Cirque Imagine: **'The only way of preparing future circus artists from the schools is to make them complete training sessions at various different establishments in order to familiarise them with the sector as best they can'**). The integration of students

into companies during their training and exploring of the options available is an option favoured by a number of companies. Nevertheless, the requirements of a cabaret are different from those of a circus where the lifestyle of travel and other such constraints play a fundamental role. Starlight and Imagine clearly agree on the need to include this fact in the training process.

These doubts often reflect a form of disillusionment with the ability of artists to adapt to the lifestyle conditions: analysing the responses given across all sectors reveals a real questioning of the maturity of the trained artists and in particular their ability to integrate into the world of work. It is as if starting work in the real world modifies the perception the students have of the sector, creating a brutal confrontation with a reality which they have in many cases idealised. This represents a real shortfall which needs to be resolved in order to better meet expectations. From cabaret to contemporary companies, the reservations given are the same: the artists do not appear to be well-prepared or indeed to be prepared at all and are fragile and quickly discouraged by the demands of this profession with its unexpected angles (one artist from such a school preferred to break his contract after 2 days of work, such was the extent of his unease with this unknown context).

The demands of the so-called traditional circuses are certainly not the same as those of a cabaret or contemporary company yet these 3 entities propose the same suggestion: different more in-depth preparation, before the students undertake their real posts so as to guard against any feelings of disappointment on either side. This expectation also explains the opening of several establishments which welcome 'trainees' during their course training, therefore preparing them better for their future career in whatever sector of the market they choose. It is tempting to say that such preparations for daily professional life should be beneficial whatever the final route chosen by the artist. It is very encouraging to



hear these expectations expressed. This is a means of envisaging a degree of porosity between the different players within the industry and an excellent means of unveiling new artistic problems and new objectives. The principle of positive contamination, exchange and sharing strengthens this desire to try something different. It is the notions of confrontation and encounter which are implicit in the discussion and analysis.

Trainees QUESTION 22

Analysis of the questionnaires reveals a definite need among the companies to better evaluate the artistic and technical potential of the artists trained by the schools. There is a large degree of defiance towards these training establishments, essentially motivated by a total failure to understand this part of the market. This is evidently the main area which needs to be addressed following the results of this study. An improved understanding of the world of training is a major requirement in developing professional integration.

Openness to the idea of ongoing training

While Les Frères Kazamaroffs confess that they never hire artists from the schools, they do accept the principle of on-site training and approve of the idea of apprenticeship training. This is a point recognised by the majority of the establishments asked: the relevance of a stage of training where students can familiarise themselves with the everyday demands of the job is evident. The Wintergarten serves as both a tool of training and of development. During its last summer show (July-August-September 2008), the circus included artists from the Staatliche Ballettschule Berlin, Schule für Artistik and École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque de Bruxelles, proving the worth of this type of experience, specifically devised according to the individuals involved. The artists from the Berlin school were always undergoing training (on stage in the evening and at the school during the day) whereas the artists from the ESAC had already achieved the status of professional artists. Nevertheless, this was their

first real contract with an establishment of this type and their first real professional experience. The Cirque Starlight has long advocated this method of enabling young artists of the future to learn about this unknown world and the circus's response also serves as a commentary on the absolute necessity of encouraging this practice within the schools. The Salzburg Winter Festival is different in terms of its practice and objectives and also favours the approach of enabling future artists to experience the professional environment at an early stage. The Cirque Plume does not wish to take on trainees yet, Archaos does, from time to time. Several responses from very different players in the sector emphasise the desire and requirement to better prepare students to understand the market, which is often something of an unknown quantity to them. This is essentially a means of suggesting the creation of more structured bridges between the training centres and parts of the market which may become their employers in the longer term. It is a work of anticipation and the FEDEC must play a crucial role in this.

Several responses from very different players in the sector emphasise the desire and requirement to better prepare students to understand the market, which is often something of an unknown quantity to them.



Comparative analysis based on sectors

The classification of the 'priorities' expected by the various employers varies very little and reflects a desire for openness and adaptability. The technical level is both formative and recurrent yet is often placed in third or even fifth position. In other cases, this is a fundamental requirement and comes at the top of the list (Cirque Pinder). For many others, taking all trends into account, it is emphasised and something which is hoped for, yet not necessarily required. The Cirque Plume places it in second position as does Firebird Productions, just after creativity. This is an interesting difference: it is as if, finally, human qualities dominate over the more abstract vision of the circus artist, reduced to his artistic feats. Creativity seems to be something desired by many of those involved in the sector. The Wintergarten places it top of its list of expectations as do the Cirque Plume, Archaos, Mauvais Esprits, and Festivals of Salzburg and Auch. Dragone, Les Frères Kazamaroffs and the Cirque Phénix place creativity in second position. Cabaret, classic and contemporary circus, festivals and all of the players in the industry agree about the importance of creativity in a circus artist. This is also an implicit recognition of the training which takes place within the schools since this notion is often linked to the quality of the teaching, which is expressly recognised. Technical ability is a pre-requisite but is often more implicit than explicit: the question is somewhat obsolete when posed to circus companies. Virtuosity and the level of technical ability form part of the indispensable skill set in the eyes of many sector representatives and are not supposed to be called into question. A spirit of openness and availability also crop up regularly but simply reinforce the shared expectations of all those involved in the market.

Profile of competences

To make an initial assessment, it appears increasingly evident that a smoothing out process is underway. Of course, the Cirque Plume is not the Wintergarten and the Cirque Phénix is not Archaos. Yet their expectations are similar and also reflect those of Les Frères Kazamaroffs and Baltijos Cirkas.

The profile of competences which emerges following the meetings of May and the assessment of the questionnaires is interwoven with recurrent requirements and identical expectations.

The six requirements which make up the ideal profile

- The artist must be creative yet this creativity must be based on a high level of technical ability.
- The artist must demonstrate an exceptional level of technical ability yet this technical ability should be transcended by creativity.
- The artist must be capable of disregarding anything he or she has previously learnt in order to focus on the collective creation. This notion applies to all levels of the market, despite their different requirements in terms of creation time, and is common to certain classic and contemporary companies.
- The artist must be capable or open to adapting to methods and a working lifestyle which is often unfamiliar initially.
- The artist must be able to take on board a daily lifestyle which is linked to the demands of the market of which he or she is part, even if only on a temporary basis.

SUMMARY

There is undoubtedly an initial lesson to be learnt from these different responses: the market seems to be less naïve and adopts more of a wait-and-see approach than in the past. The requirement for artists of a high level is increasing and, while the schools are able to provide such excellence, it seems to be necessary to provide them with further support in areas where they are less well equipped. While the Cirque Pinder and Cirque Plume do not envisage taking on apprentices or trainees, they seem to be isolated cases. From the Krone circus to the Wintergarten, the trend is more in favour of better integration and is expressed in particular through pre-emption.

This is perhaps the sign of a change where empiricism, fate and chance are giving way to comprehension, adaptation through consent and recognition on both sides.





THIRD PART

TRANSMISSION AND VALIDATION

LEARNING THROUGH WORKING

The training system at the Académie Fratellini is based on apprenticeship. The trainees are paid for their work. This is a method of training which is otherwise unheard of among circus arts schools and favours the relationship between teaching the knowledge required to carry out the profession and gaining the required experience of this profession within a training setting. From the first year of training and during the three years of the course, there is the option to train with the teachers as well as to quickly progress to apply what has been learnt within the framework of the skills required by the artist. Immersion within a breeding ground of creation, cabaret, invitations from external companies and the chance to learn professions linked to that of the artist which, while peripheral, are no less important since are also necessary for carrying out a show. Putting up the tent, stage direction, understanding the role of the sound and light managers, securing the lines – all of this is incorporated into the training. Artists become interpreters of their own career and are free to choose and develop their professional direction and to manage the turning points in their career. Artists can also mix different experiences, moving from the Cirque du Soleil to the Cirque Phénix, integrating within a contemporary company or returning for a time to a cabaret while occasionally participating in other events. These twists and turns are possible for the artist provided that there is no explicit formatting. It is essential that the artists are not the product of the training centre but instead possess the equivalent of a 'tool box' which enables them to activate whatever skills are required by the professional field in question. The process requires participation and intuition and is enriching for both the artist and the sector as a whole.

DIVIDING TIME

The matter of ties between the artist and the profession lies at the heart of the CNAC process. The training period takes place independently of the professional setting (in contrast to the method applied by the Académie Fratellini, where training duties link the establishment to the companies in the sector).

The training period should also be a time when the student can experiment, make choices and forge his or her own route outside of the pressures of the employment market. This place of freedom is essential since the artists will not have many periods like this during their professional life. Yet it is also essential that this is not separated from the profession itself.

The notion of carrying out a professional placement period while at the establishment has therefore been developed: this takes place during the 1st and 2nd years and enables students to take stock of the realities of working for a circus company.

A company with all the relevant components, not just the artistic and technical dimension. Evaluating the economic constraints, understanding the workings of the company right down to the administration, communications and the limitations of putting on such productions. It is also important that the professional integration of the students involves close collaboration with the sector as a whole.

The contemporary circus is not a particularly inclusive setting. There are often historic troops involved based on ties which it is difficult to penetrate. Young artists must follow a route based on close collaboration with professionals who can help and guide them in their creative endeavours by offering them their experience and artistic opinion and by allowing them access to 'lab time' on occasion.

The schools guarantee innovation in terms of training even if there are fears of creating an imbalance between the schools and the professional world. It is essential to listen to professional requests and to continue to develop art as part of training as only then can the business world retain its interest in the circus in general.

It remains to be seen how it will be possible to instigate better communication between the schools and between the schools and the business world. The professional world often has difficulty finding artists able to meet its requirements. This is evidently a question of means: certain companies cannot tour around the festivals and schools in order to select future acts for their shows. On the other hand, it would be impossible to invite every employer to the school to assess the final year students.

Nevertheless, working together to make sense of the situation, investing in general information networks, in what happens in the schools and in artists undergoing training as well as identifying future artists will facilitate the exchange between supply and demand.

The schools guarantee innovation in terms of training even if there are fears of creating an imbalance between the schools and the professional world.



QUESTIONS OF VISIBILITY

One of the acknowledged shortcomings of any training system becoming increasingly structured, notably by the FEDEC as intermediary, concerns the visibility of the young artist. This is a crucial point if we accept the idea that a different circus, aesthetic, style and desire corresponds to each artist. Confronted with the impossibility of seeing everything and of taking on board all artistic suggestions at any given time, the companies are on the look-out for artistic forums where a selection of what is offered by the schools is available. This role could perhaps be fulfilled by a *showcase*, a presentation system which differs from that of a festival since it excludes the principle of competition. It could serve instead as a showground, open and diverse and able to demonstrate the immediate reality of creativity within the schools. This is therefore a strategy of participation whereby all of the players involved must complete their own section of a singular journey where there is nothing to lose and much to gain. Here, the companies will find the relevant facilities for constructing their shows and the artists will find a means of demonstrating their talents at a point in their career when they are still undecided as to which sector of the market they wish to enter. This type of opening must be based on variable geometry and take account of the broad range of trends on offer within the circus arts today. The appetite of the companies for a field of which they know very little must be satisfied, but not at any price.

The principle of a showcase supported and developed by the FEDEC is an idea which can be interpreted on several levels and implemented in stages. In fact, as indicated in many responses to the questionnaires, the notion of encounter - notably through the festivals - is recurrent. Yet, with the best wish in the world, it would be impossible for all the talent scouts and establishment directors to meet at the same place at the same time. Several key gatherings can be organised but it is always essential to take account of the availability of the different players involved. The separation of these gatherings linked to specific offers from each of the various sectors is not



nation effect – after all, it is always easier to appreciate something you understand and easier to master something you enjoy.

A number of the questionnaire responses suggest that the artistic potential generated by the schools across the world is not sufficiently distributed. This favours improved collaboration between the training centres and the companies, including at the initial information level. A more structured and incisive opening into Europe attracting more companies by offering them simplified services to help them find artists and facilitate their launch onto the market.

A crucial gear therefore needs to be operated in order to enable artists who have graduated from the schools to work better and also to fuel the development dynamic of the sector as a whole.

The schools need to prescribe new artistic events as well as being able to communicate this on a technical and artistic level. Festivals form an initial interface and

intuitive platform for the selective scattering of potential artists and aesthetics. It is also necessary to establish inter-mixing platforms and a time where artists and the establishments wanting to employ them can meet. The professional world needs to accept the schools and the schools need to take on board the professional world. Formulating a balance point between the virtual and the real should be a key goal for the years to come.

SAINT-DENIS, PARIS, LA LOUVIÈRE, MAY-NOVEMBER 2008



RECOMMENDATIONS

.....
This study has enabled us to gain an awareness of a number of key stumbling blocks in developing relations between the schools and the professional sector. Some of these points (highlighted by the companies who employ former students) come as no real surprise. Yet others do.
.....

Analysis of the responses given reveals a real lack of communication between the FEDEC schools and the business world. For many professionals, the schools are something foreign and indistinct which they either misunderstand or else do not know anything about. On the positive side, the existence of such an establishment arouses their curiosity. In Moscow, Wiesbaden and Las Vegas, those I questioned were keen to find out more. Based on my explanations, they came across a surprising discovery: there are hundreds of circus schools across the world where thousands of young people are learning about a profession of which some establishments thought they were the only agents. The existence of a federation also commands respect: it stands for the abolition of clans and systems and the acceptance of models and shared standards.

This consideration is often difficult to accept, based on the results of various questions on the viability of these 'new' artists and their possible ability to work in one of the circuses questioned. Of course, when a juggler like Morgan, a recent prize-winner at the 29th Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain, is approached by numerous agents and different companies, and declines all offers in order to dedicate himself to creating his own company, this does not help with the sharing of genres and sensibilities. Yet his very existence has been a revelation to many artists within the industry. And his sim-

plicity has enabled the majority of them to adapt their own territories: this is undoubtedly the best possible result of the encounter.

- Greater transparency in the activities of the schools therefore seems essential in order to promote porosity within the industry in all its diversity, which turns out to be thirstier for new discoveries than was initially thought.
- Companies must absolutely be allowed to familiarise themselves with the schools so as to encourage them not to be surprised if they receive the CV of an artist at a festival. A worldwide information campaign must be launched covering a wide range of companies, based on the heads of local networks.
- The creation of an online magazine should be considered where the different schools can be presented, the paths taken by their students described and the work in progress visualised as well as being able to view and comment on tests and end of year shows. Image will therefore play a dominant role.
- In my view, there is a major objective here in terms of visibility and diffusion. The different schools can ensure a certain number of relay opportunities in order to offer as many companies as possible the





APPENDIX

1. QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN SURVEY

Context

- 1 Company / Organisation Name
- 2 Area of activity within the sector (circus, cabaret etc.)
- 3 Size of the organisation
seating capacity
number of employees
- 4 Status of the organisation
 exclusively private
 exclusively public
 public-private partnership
 other
- 5 Regularity of performances
performances every

Requirements

- 6 On average, how often do you hire new artists and how many do you hire each time?
.....artists every
- 7i Do you have a casting department?
 Yes No
- 7ii If yes, how is it structured?

- 8 Where do you mainly search for your artists?
 Festivals
 Sports competitions
 Agencies
 Other
- 9 What guides your choices when selecting?
- 10i Do you hire artists that have graduated from circus schools?
 Exclusively
 Sometimes
 Never
- 10ii Why, or why not?
- 11 Do you train artists for specific requirements?
 Yes No
 Other
- 12 Would you consider engaging an external organisation in order to help you create a show?
 Yes No
 Other

Expectations

- 13 What are your expectations (artistic, technical, human etc.) of your artists during a show?
- 14 What do you think the expectations of the market in general are?
- 15 What are the expectations of your area in particular?
- 16i In your opinion, what are the advantages of school training?
- 16ii What are the disadvantages?
- 17 What do you expect most from an artist? Please place these qualities in order of priority (where 1 is most important and 5 is least important):
 Availability
 Open-mindedness
 Creativity
 Exceptional technical level
 Adaptability to the requirements of your sector (daily life, frequency of performances, ability to work as a team)

18 Do you have any criticisms to make regarding the artists available to work in general, and working in your area in particular?

19 Do you think that it would be useful for artists to have entrepreneurial skills?
 Yes No
 Other

20 Do you think that it would be useful for artists to have skills as a circus arts teacher/trainer?
 Yes No
 Other

21 What proportion of male to female artists do you hire, on average?
.....% male
.....% female

Resources

Apprenticeships offer students the possibility to complete professional work experience during their training. This allows future artists to evaluate the needs of companies, and to understand the daily demands of this field.

22 Would you support the integration of apprentices into your company?
 Yes, on a regular basis
 Yes, occasionally
 No

23 Do you have any further comments or suggestions?

2. STUDENTS FROM THE SCHOOLS OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION UNDER CONTRACT IN CLASSIC OR CONTEMPORARY CIRCUS BUSINESSES

In the current setting, many companies welcome former students from the western schools who have become artists in their own right. These are just some of the establishments, following various trends in the development of the circus arts, which regularly or occasionally take on artists from the educational route. This list is far from exhaustive and does not claim to be yet nevertheless reveals enormous possibilities. If some of these companies, which have been founded by former students, deliberately employ more artists with a similar artistic slant, other establishments may also open the way to a greater proportion of artists from the educational rather than the professional route.

There is an artist from the Kiev College of Circus and Variety Acts and two other acts presented by former students of the Centre National des Arts du Cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne in the 2008 show by the Cirque Phénix.

In the 'Le Fil sous la neige' show by the company Les Colporteurs, three of the tightrope walkers trained at the Ecole nationale de Cirque Annie Fratellini at various intervals with three others graduating from the Centre National des Arts du Cirque de Châlons-en-Champagne and the seventh having trained at the École Nationale de Cirque de Montréal.

Of course, there are plenty of other examples of this with many artists also falling under the banner of artistic agents (not forgetting their

integration in contemporary companies) who offer artists to a diverse range of companies (circuses, festivals, cabarets, events).

Conversely, it is possible to give other examples of establishments which have never even considered taking on an artist from one of the schools. Some of the large European circuses (a trip to Scandinavia convinced me of the importance of communication between the circuses across Europe) would have a great deal to gain from an interactive process where they would find food for thought and probably transform their ignorance into contracts. The large traditional circuses have benefitted from the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to refresh their ageing stock of artists, incapable of adapting to a semblance of aesthetical questioning. Supply was initially higher than demand and so the circuses were able to select their acts.

However, with time, the ageing of various Russian acts and a significant creative slowing of the Moscow circus school, the supply of acts has been considerably reduced.

It is now the schools which are taking over, sometimes timidly. Each year, they release tens of artists onto the market capable of integrating into the circuses which adopt more of a wait-and-see policy than an attentive policy as regards the renewal of energy and possibilities. The fact that more and more of these companies are turning to the potential breeding ground of the schools is a very posi-

tive indication of a real development taking place. The German, French or American cabarets deliberately draw from the resources of the Kiev College of Circus and Variety Acts but artists from other circus schools are also starting to appear such as Arlette Gruss, Knie and Roncalli. These initial steps mark a time of opening up – and require support.

CIRQUE PLUME
ARCHAOS (BRAZIL PROJECT)
CIRQUE ELOIZE
7 DOIGTS DE LA MAIN
ARLETTE GRUSS
CIRQUE STARLIGHT
CIRQUE MONTI
COLLECTIF AOC
LES PIEDS, LES MAINS ET LA TÊTE AUSSI
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
CIRQUE PHÉNIX
WINTERGARTEN
CHAMELEON
CIRQUE AÏTAL
CIRCO AEREO
RINGLING BROS AND BARNUM & BAILEY



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Survey realisation and report author **Pascal Jacob**

Project leaders within FEDEC **Philippe Haenen, Marc Lalonde, Donald Lehn, Jean-François Marguerin and Tim Roberts**

Administrative and editorial management **Eleanor Hadley Kershaw, Edwine Tita and Camille Vléric**

Graphic design **Emilie Anseeuw** / Translation: **Melanie Hersey** (Apostrophe – Brussels)

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FEDEC

Fédération européenne
des Écoles de Cirque professionnelles

146, boulevard du Souverain
1160 Bruxelles – Belgium
T +32 2 678 09 94 – F +32 2 678 09 99
info@fedec.net – www.fedec.net

