



Overview of the reflections of educational and artistic directors in professional circus schools

The FEDEC MAILLONS workshops (2010-2017)

**The role of educational and artistic directors
in vocational arts training**

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, a process of reflection and consultation was launched within the FEDEC network, the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools, for identifying and enhancing the competencies of educational and/or artistic¹ directors. At the initiative of Martine Leroy, Martin Gerbier and Marc Lalonde² and with FEDEC's support, educational directors gathered together at "MAILLONS Workshops" devoted to enhancing the competencies of educational and artistic directors in professional circus schools³.

The meetings that followed provided the opportunity of realising that although educational directors work independently within their schools, the problems they come up against in their practice sometimes prove to be mutual. They were individually searching for solutions to problems on the ground which, without necessarily being recurrent in any one school, were in fact recurrent given the number of organisations concerned.

The discussions arising from the initial meetings of the MAILLONS group had a considerable impact on all of the participants: the educational directors had been working on a daily basis without a counterpart, sometimes for several years, and suddenly they were receiving understanding and support from their peers. The MAILLONS meetings allowed shared reflection on issues such as injuries, work planning and teaching relationships, not to mention harassment and eating disorders. Each issue raised was a chance to focus on individual practices and question them in a curious, friendly manner: "So, what do you do?"

The diversity of contexts (school size, ages of students, cultures and societies) faced by MAILLONS members led to a wide variety of issues and responses; these meetings were an opportunity to become acquainted with them, put them into perspective and share solutions.

Furthermore, as inventors of their multi-faceted profession, the educational and/or artistic directors felt

they needed a space for sharing and developing their knowledge, enhancing their competencies and creating practical tools freely available to all. Thanks to FEDEC's support and the MAILLONS meetings, the educational directors were able to establish a common set of core skills, develop thinking on arts education and foster peer-to-peer exchange to encourage the setting up of high-quality educational projects. This collective dynamic also guaranteed that ideas were developed in connection with practice and promoted the professional mobility of an increasing number of participants.

These three people formed the FEDEC focus group "*DIRECTORS: Key skills enhancement for educational and artistic directors, peer exchange workshops and free, multilingual educational tools*", the role of which was to define the themes addressed in MAILLONS workshops, prepare and facilitate them. Today composed of Martine Leroy, Daniela Arendasova and Martin Gerbier, the group continues its work on developing exchanges between educational and artistic directors of professional circus schools that are members of FEDEC.

It was therefore established that the "**MAILLONS – Workshops for Skills Enhancement for Educational and Artistic Directors of FEDEC Higher Education schools and Training Centres**" project would have the following goals:

- Become better acquainted with the skills and professions of educational and artistic directors of professional circus schools
- Identify their needs and provide a series of themed workshops tailored in both form and content, encouraging specific lifelong training, knowledge exchange and mobility
- Create free, multilingual tools that can be shared
- Develop a proposal for a programme of twice-yearly themed workshops

¹ A definition of the profession of educational director is given in the Glossary.

² Martine Leroy, educational and artistic director of the Centre des Arts du Cirque Balthazar, Montpellier, Martin Gerbier, general director of the CADC Balthazar, Marc Lalonde, general director of the Ecole Nationale de Cirque,

Montréal, until the end of 2015.

³ MAILLONS project "Workshops for Skills Enhancement for Educational and Artistic Directors of FEDEC Higher Education schools and Training Centres": <http://www.fedec.eu/en/articles/504-projet-maillons>

MAILLONS themes

Three cycles of meetings have already taken place focusing on major themes tailored to the needs expressed by the educational directors of schools in the FEDEC network.

First of all, the MAILLONS project focused on defining rules and recommendations by drawing up an ethics charter (MAILLONS 01).

From 2010 to 2012, educational directors supported by an expert, Marc Lévêque⁴, took a deep look into ethical and deontological issues in education and produced the "Charter on Ethics and Deontology"⁵.

Between 2012 and 2014, the group identified the need to deal with the specific characteristics of artistic education applicable to circus arts. For MAILLONS 02, conferences were organised as well as the sharing of practical experience in the form of a repertory of resources: the "Repertory of creation exercises and experiences".

Finally, between 2014 and 2017, the FEDEC educational and artistic directors decided to develop all facets of Student Support/Guidance (MAILLONS 03). MAILLONS 03 provided the opportunity of welcoming a large number of participants to eight workshops in order to reflect upon and understand the support/guidance process as a whole. This reflection was organised into four key areas, enabling the different issues identified on the ground to emerge, as well as self-evaluation tools:

1. Health and well-being
2. Social and legal
3. Artistic education
4. Transition to work

The MAILLONS publication

This publication is for everyone interested in learning about the outcomes of the discussions between educational and artistic directors in FEDEC circus schools between 2010 and 2017. It therefore aims to summarise all the themes addressed, presenting the key outcomes produced by the group over this period as well as keys to an informed reading of each available resource.

For each of the sections presented above, it includes the main conclusions and recommendations made during the MAILLONS workshops which twice a year brought together all the educational and artistic directors of FEDEC circus schools.

The outcomes presented here are by no means prescriptive or comprehensive. They arise from accounts of a broad range of experiences, in a variety of contexts and across some twenty countries worldwide.

⁴ Marc Lévêque, a trained clinical psychologist, former football coach, professor at the University of Orléans and author of "Psychologie de l'athlète: radiographie d'une carrière de sportif de haut niveau" [Psychology of the athlete: X-ray of a top-level career in sport] (Vuibert, 2008) and "Psychologie du métier d'entraîneur: ou l'art d'entraîner les sportifs" [Psychology of the coaching profession: or the art of training sportsmen and women] (Vuibert, 2005)

⁵ See Annex FEDEC, Charter on Ethics and Deontology (MAILLONS 01), 2012

MAILLONS 01

Ethics and deontology in education and training

From 2010 to 2012, the MAILLONS Workshops addressed the subject of ethics and deontology, particularly in terms of the teacher's role in the school. A charter was then produced by the focus group members, in partnership with associate expert Marc Lévêque. The Charter draws on his expertise and the discussions which took place between the educational and artistic directors during workshops focusing on this topic. It proposes a set of recommendations regarding rules of conduct, interpersonal rules between people in a school and professional relationships.

It is divided into four sections:

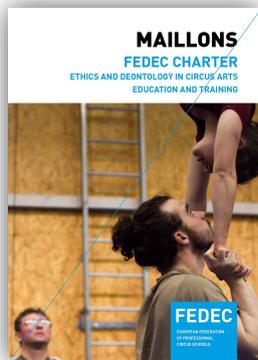
1. The duties of the teacher
2. The teacher and the student
3. The teacher and the educational team
4. The teacher and the institution

In 2012, FEDEC published its Charter on Ethics and Deontology, which ever since has served as a benchmark in the sector of circus arts education and training. It has helped professional circus schools overcome the lack of an institutional framework on the subject, which any educational and training institution nevertheless requires.

There are plans to extend it in light of recent events regarding sexual harassment which occurred in 2017-2018 (the #metoo viral movement on the Internet and its repercussions) – a new edition is expected in 2020.

The original charter is available in French and English on the FEDEC website.⁶

Here is an excerpt:



"01 THE DUTIES OF A TEACHER

The teacher is in a position where he is accessible to a young person and can give him his attention. He supports the student's project while taking into account the student's characteristics and performances. This role calls for him to no longer make reference to himself or his previous career, but instead keep his own impressions and models of introspection at a distance in favour of openness to others and shared discovery."

⁶ See Annex FEDEC, Charter on Ethics and Deontology (MAILLONS 01), 2012

(<http://www.fedec.eu/en/articles/1-charte-ethique-et-deontologique-de-l-enseignement-des-arts-et-du-cirque-maillons01-2012>)

MAILLONS

FEDEC CHARTER

ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY IN CIRCUS ARTS
EDUCATION AND TRAINING



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03	03	THE TEACHER AND THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM
04	04	THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL INSTITUTION

SCHOOL INSTITUTION: Generic term representing different types of FEDEC member schools: secondary, vocational or higher education schools (secondary A-level with Circus Arts as an option, training centers, vocational schools, circus arts department as a part of a university or college etc.).

PROFESSOR: A generic term representing different types of teachers in FEDEC member schools and training centers (teachers, speakers, lecturers, professors, etc.).

STUDENT: A generic term representing different types of students in FEDEC members schools and training centers (apprentices, pupils, students etc.).

For definitions of the terms please see the Terminology of European education and training policy A selection of 100 key terms , Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2008
ISBN 92-896-0472-7, © European Center for the Development of Vocational Training, 2008
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/369/4064_en.pdf

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MAILLONS

FEDEC CHARTER

ETHICS AND DEONTOLOGY IN CIRCUS ARTS
EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FEDEC 2012

FEDEC

EUROPEAN FEDERATION
OF PROFESSIONAL
CIRCUS SCHOOLS

01

THE DUTIES OF THE TEACHER

The teacher is in a position where he is accessible to a young person and can give him his attention. He supports the student's project while taking into account the student's characteristics and performances. This role calls for him to no longer make reference to himself or his previous career, but instead keep his own impressions and models of introspection at a distance in favour of openness to others and shared discovery.

He continually questions his practice, attitudes, reactions and relationships to perform his job "with full consciousness" while continually questioning his skills and the procedures he uses. This "introspective position" and continual self-assessment enables him:

- to carry out his job and his role as a teacher without tipping over into the private sphere;
- not to impose too restrictive a vision of the work and to develop his own teaching style;
- to examine his subjective position in relation to the student.

The teacher should "put the human factor before everything else" and always favour human issues in his judgements: motivation, contribution, self-esteem, anxiety, feelings...He should match his approach and training process to the student's pace and needs, to the detriment of any yearning or pursuit of a vain validation of his own worth.

02

THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENT

The teacher always favours an educational and understanding attitude towards the student's behaviour, in respect of individual differences (age, gender, personality, culture...). This attitude must be combined with encouraging the student to assume more responsibility and continually stimulating, by all known educational avenues, his commitment to his training and the preparation of his project.

The empowerment of the student, his socialization and the construction of his identity remain the major issues in the training process. The educational link serves these objectives.

The teacher continually questions his own position in relation to the student, as well as the request and the (transferred) expectations of this student. Doing so guides him in adapting his role.

Competitive and jealous behaviour or emotional demands between students within the group are handled fairly by the teacher with the aim of resolving them equitably.

The teacher is held by a duty to provide the best effort, not a duty to achieve specific results. The resources and approaches used by the teacher (scheme of work, content, objectives, assessment methods...) are clearly and precisely explained and communicated to the students. His competency and responsibility are not assessed through student success or integration into the professional world. Preserving the student's psychological and physical integrity is always worth more than meticulous achievement of performances.

Supporting a student with his project and giving him educational guidance cannot be confused with prescriptive tuition. Any form of student dependence, even if it is sought by the student, must be examined and questioned on its limiting effects in the medium and long-term.

03

THE TEACHER AND THE EDUCATIONAL TEAM

The teacher maintains a positive and encouraging attitude towards the students' efforts. He gives students individual attention, but also encourages sharing knowledge and guidance between peers and makes the most of group resources so that everyone benefits.

The teacher continually adjusts his emotional distance to the student according to the latter's emotions, psychological state and future projections. This adjustment aims to give optimum support, but also respects the limits of his professional responsibility and the non-intrusion into the student's private sphere.

Within a system of complex interaction (training, life as a student, relationship with families and loved ones...), the teacher keeps an eye out for signs of subjective well-being, or dysfunctions, shown by the student, with the aim of sorting out and anticipating crises or accidents.

BODY CONTACT

Close contact with the student's body is an essential part of the circus arts education and training process and experience. However, the teacher should continually make sure to:

- cancel out any impressions of flirting, over-familiarity or devalorisation/depreciation created by this closeness or clothing;
- preserve the integrity of the student's body and instil in him a cautious attitude in relation to risk;
- pass on requirements in regards to personal hygiene, diet, recuperation etc. in keeping with the physical, psychical, emotional investment that is required.

In the artistic domain, the student's body conveys personal expression, creativity and a capacity for improvisation or innovation which should be recognized and allowed to assert itself.

Each teacher maintains a relationship of respect, reciprocal trust and mutual listening with the members of the educational team. A strong and cohesive educational community around an educational project can be created with this attitude, where cooperation and communication prevail without affecting individual responsibility and where everyone benefits from mutual enrichment.

The partnership between teachers includes sharing knowledge and experiences, giving and receiving information about students, delegating issues to a peer or supporting the latter if there is a problem.

Peer accessibility and communication between team members aims to resolve problems, supplement and coordinate individual contributions, attain an awareness of the efforts and difficulties of each person and combine their efforts for the benefit of the team project.

The confidentiality agreement relevant to the team and the content of its meetings serves to reinforce everybody's educational responsibility and its relevance in uncertain situations.

Every teacher receives (and offers) within the team unconditional moral and functional support for their ventures; with this aim in view, each individual gives their utmost attention to summary meetings, group talks and comparisons of experiences without judging the opinions or confidential positions of his peers.

The combined analysis of observations and regular exchanges within the team allow each teacher to spot signs of dysfunction in students and to adjust preventive measures.

04

THE TEACHER AND THE SCHOOL INSTITUTION

The teacher reflects in his work the directives and the organisational or statutory methods recommended by the institution and its authorities, particularly towards students.

In return he receives from the organisation a framework and a system that firmly and legitimately supports his responsibility and status. The institution symbolically and legally protects the teacher and supports his authority. It exhibits and defends the values of the circus world which the teacher passes on in his educational and humane actions.

The school supports and encourages lifelong learning opportunities and processes for its teachers, especially when this additional training confirms the school proposals regarding health, safety, reinforcement of student skills, etc.

Besides turning to the other members of the educational team, the teacher can inform school management if he is in difficulty or concerned, in order to draw up an effective and compatible strategy with the institution. Approaching existing line managers aims to protect the teacher and help him resolve contentious situations in his work.

The various systems of coordination, collective development and situation analysis recommended and set up by the institution represent opportunities for developing strategies and reinforcing skills.

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- all the members of the FEDEC network
- educational directors and educational teams of FEDEC member schools and training centers
- the associated expert to the workshops and the charter, Mr Marc Levêque
- the team in charge of coordinating the MAILLONS project

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MAILLONS 02

Elaborating an artistic and educational project repertory of exercises

To kick off the work on the “Repertory of creation exercises and experiences”, four participants contributed to the MAILLONS workshop which was held in October 2013 in Auch.

All four work and have teaching experience in schools, but they also practise in a professional capacity as creators outside the classroom.

- **Martine Leroy:** circus artist and educational and artistic director of the Centre des Arts du Cirque Balthazar in Montpellier.
- **Guy Alloucherie:** theatre director, circus director, artistic director of the Compagnie HVDZ in Lille and contributor in several circus schools.
- **Howard Richard:** choreographer, circus director, creation director at the ENC Montréal and experienced artistic consultant.
- **Christian Coumin:** circus director and stage director. He has come a long way at the Lido in Toulouse and is continuing to move forward. He also works as a professional stage director and circus director with companies.

The “Repertory of creation exercises and experiences” is a collection of around 60 wide-ranging systems/creative exercises shared by some fifteen schools which took part in the survey⁷ between 2013 and 2015.

This shared tool is one of FEDEC’s Open Educational Resources (OER) which allows our own network of schools as well as other arts schools to enrich their teaching, incorporate new artistic aspects through access to a series of artistic research exercises and a variety of methods, and raise the issue of training the teachers supervising these creative exercises.

This repertory is meant to evolve. That is why schools can still contribute to it by filling in the questionnaire with their educational teams, including all types of exercises to share with other schools and educational teams.

Research in the repertory is based on five criteria enabling users to select the relevant criteria for their own research. Each criterion contains settings for users to refine their requests:

1. Objective: lesson/creation/research
2. Level of school: preparatory1/preparatory2/professional1/professional2/professional3⁸
3. Number of participants: 1 - 4 / 5 - 10/ over 10
4. Duration: 1 - 5 days / 1 - 3 weeks / 1 – several months / 1 year
5. Method : Non directive / Semi-directive / Directive

Free to choose from among the 540 existing combinations, users can access a set of exercises suggested by the network schools.

Repertory of exercises MAILLONS02
Repertory of creation exercises and experiences developed as part of
MAILLONS directors' workshops

Objective : Objective

Level : Level

Number of participants : Number of participants

Duration : Duration

Method : Method

Rechercher

⁷ See Annex, repertory of creation exercises and experiences

⁸ The focus group members identified five education levels by analysing the FEDEC schools. They do not refer to levels connected with a training framework, but are situated between the high school diploma level and the end of the second cycle (Master)

ANNEX : Questionnaire for the Repertory of exercises

MAILLONS

Repertory of creation exercises and experiences

(By « creation exercises and experiences », we mean every exercise, research experience, or creation process allowing to experiment in situation and likely to be used in our schools.)



Name of the exercise	
Name and website of the school	
BACKGROUND AND IMPOSED CONSTRAINTS	
Main purpose of the exercise	
Secondary objective - sub-objectives of the exercise	
Prerequisites for the exercise	
TEMPORALITY	
Duration	
Number of hours	
Frequency/rhythm	
PARTICIPANTS	
Number	
Age range	
Level, year	
Multidisciplinary	
Mixed-gender/nationality...	
PLACES, LOCATIONS USED FOR THE EXERCISES	
Frontal, circular approach, other	
Indoors/Outdoors	
AUDIENCE	
Audience	
OTHER RESOURCES	
Equipment, logistics...	
METHODS	
Method used	
PROJECT'S PRESENTATION	
How did you present the exercise to the students ?	
How did you present the exercise to the teaching staff ?	
How did you present the exercise to other people outside of school ?	

SUPERVISION	
How is the exercise supervised?	
Do the supervisors have some rules? for themselves? for the exercise?	
How many people supervise?	
What are the different functions/roles of supervisors?	
Were the supervisors prepared to guide the exercises? if yes, what type of preparation did they have? Or have they received some continuous training?	
REVIEW OF THE EXERCISE AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	
What method has been used to assess the exercise with the educational/artistic director ?	
What method has been used to assess the exercise with the students/the supervisors ?	
What is the review/assessment of the exercise? Where the objectives met? In terms of	
- teaching/educational ?	
- artistic ?	
- humans ?	
- logistics/financial/ administrative ...?	
What problems have arisen?	
How these problems have been overcome?	

MAILLONS 03

Support and guidance for students

The members of the MAILLONS group turned their attention to a work and reflection process considering the various facets of support and guidance for circus arts students and the ways in which directors and teachers can intervene. These issues were addressed during 8 workshops held between April 2014 and October 2017 (Auch) and are now collectively known as MAILLONS 03.

The members' active participation via discussions and exchange of best practice culminated in the sharing and dissemination of resources, methods and approaches. A simple self-evaluation tool for directors, based on the student support diagram, was drawn up by Martine Leroy at the end of MAILLONS 03 and made available to all.

This publication reflects the approaches undertaken and the recommendations adopted for students to receive optimum support from educational and artistic directors. Following the chronological order of the themes addressed, it will firstly focus on the physical and mental health issues encountered by students before describing a few social and legal systems some schools have set up. The discussions regarding arts education and the specific characteristics of circus education shall then be summarised. Finally, the issue of transition to work shall be mentioned while awaiting a more detailed examination in MAILLONS 04.

1. Health and well-being

The health aspect (physical and mental) of the "Student support/guidance" theme focused on dealing with the physical issues inherent in the physical side of the circus and the psychological parameters specific to dealing with the vagaries of training and the stress of performances.

The workshops were launched by a presentation of the 'health' systems set up by three of the network's experts (Martine Leroy – Educational and artistic director of the CADC Balthazar, Daniela Arendasova – Educational and artistic director of the ENC Montréal and Anna Beentjes – Director of the Department of Circus Arts and executive director of the Department of Performing Arts at Codarts Rotterdam) in their respective schools.

In April 2016, Janine Stubbe, professor of Performing Arts Medicine, presented the Health and Well-Being Department and the Student Life system set up at Codarts. She was assisted by Diana van Wilden (a PhD student who was nominated for the Young Talent Award in research). The conference ended with three Codarts students (Toesi Mizai Kobi, Stefan Bauer and Tarek Ramo) presenting their end-of-studies theoretical projects.

Areas for discussing and considering the issue of injury in the training process and student mental health were set up and coordinated by the MAILLONS team. They resulted in quite a few recommendations presented below.

1.1. Physical health

Any practice of circus arts carries the risk of physical injury due to the intensive training of the body in the vast majority of circus disciplines. Preventing the risk of injury is therefore essential to the successful completion of a vocational circus arts training course, not to mention the viable pursuit of a career in this field.

Regarded as a central issue from the very first MAILLONS Workshops, the issue of circus students and their bodies led to both the production of the "Charter on Ethics and Deontology" (see above) and two MAILLONS 03 meetings (Auch 2014 and Rotterdam 2016). These focused on the physical health of students and the steps to be taken if an injury occurs during intensive training.

Injuries are actually so prevalent among circus students that specific systems need to be set up to prevent, consider and take care of these injuries. It is partly the responsibility of the educational and artistic directors to reflect upon and contribute to transforming this challenge into a constructive step in the artistic journey.

This chapter will deal with minor physical injury, from which students can recover (e.g. sprains). Serious physical injury was not addressed in the MAILLONS Workshops and is not covered in this publication. This chapter's conclusions cannot apply to serious injuries.

Preventing physical injuries

Recommendations

Newly enrolled in a circus school, young students do not always have family around them or the required maturity for looking after their health by themselves. To guide them effectively, they should be provided with all of the information regarding the organisation's healthcare environment.

The MAILLONS 03 Workshops resulted in the following recommendation: the production of **welcome booklets**, possibly available online, listing all the existing systems and procedures such as the names and telephone numbers of doctors/physiotherapists affiliated to the establishment, the emergency services, the names and telephone numbers of the lead managers as well as the organisation chart of the school and its external partners.

With this in mind, Martine Leroy also recommends setting up safety training modules or materials. Ideally, a **training booklet** could be put together using interview grids, tests and information about the monitoring of student health.

Moreover, setting up **partnerships** with medical centres that employ lead experts seems to be essential, regardless of the size and scope of the organisation. Although Codarts has been able to incorporate a comprehensive medical department, other organisations choose to rely on external facilities. For example, Lido students have access to a medical centre once a week which has doctors, physiotherapists and osteopaths. As well as this weekly open session, time slots are reserved for emergencies.

Background knowledge and analysis of injury prevention measures

At the April 2016 meeting in Rotterdam, discussion on the preventive process was enhanced by the presentation of the "**Life Monitor**" system used by Codarts⁹. The expertise developed by this school concerning student "health" monitoring highlighted the importance of taking students' "**passive injury**" into consideration. Even before they came to the school, in fact, almost 82% of students asked as part of the "Student Life Monitor" tests revealed that they had suffered an incapacitating injury for over one week.

The analysis of factors and types of injury seems vital to setting up appropriate preventive measures and treatment. The preventive strategies established after these in-depth interviews are evaluated throughout the training and modified according to their relevance. Codarts also uses a system of **personal health feedback questionnaires**¹⁰ completed by students once a month, and is therefore able to intervene early in a large number of health issues.

A system such as this requires a significant investment of financial and human resources; replicating it in every school in the FEDEC network is therefore impossible. Nevertheless, certain basic principles can be applied even in small schools: a lesson can be spent discussing the students' physical history and spaces can be set up where teachers, educational and artistic directors and students can discuss preventive strategies.

⁹ Life Monitor : <https://www.codarts.nl/2017/08/in-the-picture-student-life-monitor-screening/>

¹⁰ Personal health feedback refers to an interview by a health professional to establish a student's state of health, on an individual basis.

Training and self-management

Taking care of students' health is obviously essential. Their **empowerment** as regards health issues is also to be encouraged. Indeed, according to a consultation carried out during the MAILLONS Workshops, overwork and denial of pain related to making too many demands on the body are the main sources of injury. Eager to fulfil their training commitments, students do not always pay attention to signs of tiredness, strain or pain sent by their bodies.

Furthermore, as performance and excelling oneself are very highly valued in the fields of art and sport, some students will try to exceed their limits by increasing the time they spend training or consciously raising the level of difficulty and risk of the exercises practised. Suffering then becomes a "necessary evil", even perhaps a matter of pride, as it is seen as a symbol of extreme devotion to one's practice.

Voluntary or otherwise, there may be a period of one to three weeks before pain is reported, according to the consultation carried out during the MAILLONS Workshops, and may be combined with waiting times for medical appointments. The discomfort therefore has every opportunity to turn into an injury, of which the physical, mental, educational and financial repercussions have increased tenfold. It is the responsibility of the educational and artistic directors to promote body awareness and the practice of safe, restricted training sessions. They should also encourage students to correct postural flaws and report any strains at every stage of the training course.

Interpersonal relationships and interactions

The experiences recounted during the MAILLONS 03 workshops highlighted the impact of the school's general atmosphere on the risk of injury. Having discussion spaces involving all of the school's stakeholders proves beneficial for setting up preventive measures. In fact, being free to express themselves in a caring place for listening, students will be able to mention any obstacles or physical difficulties they have encountered. The educational team will then be able to draw on its expertise to offer appropriate solutions.

Furthermore, the members of FEDEC's "DIRECTORS" focus group recommend having a "focus group on practice" to unify the educational and artistic team and so that everyone sings from the same hymn sheet. It is important that all of the school's members of staff who are in contact with the students provide consistent responses to the problems encountered by students in difficulty. In this respect, the educational and artistic directors must **position themselves as "resource people"** and value what every teacher has to say. Teachers will know that their superiors will listen to them carefully and will be able to report any concerns or questions about a specific student or behaviour.

In some cases, students can receive personalised coaching from a mentor¹¹: in some schools, this is a resource person outside the educational team who is in charge of dealing with questions about injuries, risks, etc. While this type of support is offered by Codarts, it is conceivable that it can be adapted into a mentoring system between students in different year groups, for example.

All of these measures aim to offer a secure environment for students from the very first months of instruction throughout their training. In a position of trust, students shall to a certain extent be protected from material, physical, social or relational risks inherent in circus arts. By encouraging dialogue at various levels (between students, between students and teachers or between teachers and directors), schools will facilitate sharing information privately in order to reduce risk.

¹¹ See Glossary

Impact of injury and care

Frustration and responsibilities

From the very first Workshops on the topic of physical support for students, the word 'frustration' was used time and time again. Although the issue of frustration seems at first to be purely psychological (see chapter on "Mental Health"), it may result from a concrete, physical manifestation: injury. As it deprives students of their learning environment and therefore seems to distance them from their career path, injury goes hand in hand with frustration.

Also, foreign students or students whose families do not live nearby find themselves cut off from their network of family and friends. Finally, financial pressure may exacerbate a student's delicate state of mind. A large number of students actually have to work to finance their studies and an injury can deprive them of income or funds.

Some students may therefore try to identify the liability incurred when they sustained their injury: equipment failure, supervision failure, unsuitable premises, etc. An injury can therefore represent a trigger or an added risk of depression as well as tension within the school.

The solution offered by AFUK to the financial issue consists of applying the "**precedence**" principle. When AFUK comes to the aid of an injured student in need, this aid is declared as available to all of the school's students. For a school- or practice-related injury, AFUK provides the injured student with financial support and pays for some costs (including three physiotherapy sessions).

Teacher training and the role of educational and artistic directors

To overcome all of these complications, educational and artistic directors should help teachers take their students' physical and mental suffering into consideration. Using all of their interpersonal skills, they take on the role of mediator and facilitate a calm, constructive dialogue concerning the causes of the injury, its treatment and the student's future, too.

It is their responsibility to arrange teacher training on the use of different forms of communication and to raise their awareness of the educational needs of vulnerable students. With their outside yet experienced perspective, educational and artistic directors are excellent allies for producing programmes which are scalable and tailored to student health issues.

On another note, it is important to reflect upon injury management protocols in advance as the educational and artistic directors of the CADC Balthazar are able to do using a chart listing the internal and external experts. When an injury occurs, there is no room for panic or improvisation: the sequence of actions is ready and the people responsible have already been designated.

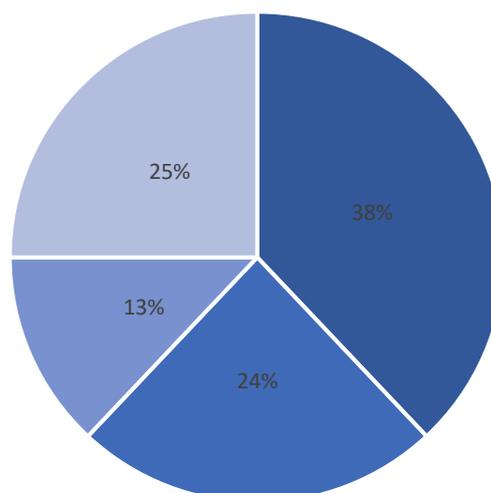
Finally, it is the directors' responsibility to disseminate and enforce the confidentiality rules associated with discussions about students' health. The Charter on Ethics and Deontology is an example of a tool to become acquainted with and use.

General and administrative implications

It seems unrealistic to hope that injuries can be completely prevented from happening. Nevertheless, supporting and guiding students throughout their training, and consequently when they are incapacitated, will allow educational and artistic directors to perfect the safeguarding processes referred to in the previous chapter in order to limit the frequency and, above all, the severity of injuries.

The survey conducted at Codarts shows that the vast majority of injuries listed (75% of cases) involves the following three parts of the body:

- In 38% of cases, the shoulders
- In 24% of cases, the lower back
- In 13% of cases, the ankles
- In 25% of cases, other



Based on these results, educational and artistic directors must tailor the preventive measures established in their organisation to the parts of the body considered as vulnerable, thereby helping to effectively reduce the risks. If their school is not the same as the Codarts model, they can emulate the type of survey conducted and compile their own statistics¹².

On another note, the presence of organisations such as the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO) and the French Federation of Circus Schools (FFEC)¹³ within the FEDEC network could mean that additional insurance can be obtained for students. It is up to directors, teachers and students to emphasise FEDEC's current reach (nearly 4 million people in Europe).

Changing goals

Although a minor injury seems to have a detrimental impact on a student, it is important to note that negative body energy can be transformed into positive mental energy: it allows students to develop their ability to let go and to take a step back from their emotions. A standstill moment in the hustle and bustle of studies, an injury gives students space to question their present and future goals. Students can take advantage of this interlude to become interested in other forms of expression, harnessing their capacities of observation, reflection and creation through different mediums, such as video, writing or painting.

Depending on the discipline, level and academic environment of the student, he/she could be given new assignments within the student group, thereby remaining actively included: outside perspective, communication tasks for productions, directing, etc. It is important that the student still contributes to his/her professional artistic development and is therefore involved in the treatment of his/her injury as well as in its sublimation.

Body awareness and change of pace

When heeded and understood by the student and the educational team, an injury can lead to the development and transformation of the relationship with the body and the chosen discipline. By underlining the fallibility of the body and its limitations, an injury leads the student to understand its mechanisms and question his/her treatment (changes in sleeping pattern, diet, training frequency). The team and educational and artistic directors are responsible for encouraging this overall improvement of health as well as suggesting a second discipline is learned which is gentler or more suitable for the student's physical realities.

¹² The questionnaire is available on request from the educational team of Codarts Circus Arts Rotterdam.

¹³ See Glossary

Serious injury

The MAILLONS Workshops had little or no discussion regarding the issue of serious injury which should be considered in a differentiated manner. Serious injury is understood to be an injury causing a loss of motor or neurological functions necessary for recovering minimum capacity levels for working as a circus artist.

In this case, students have to deal with giving up their dream career. The role of the circus school is therefore to take this eventuality into consideration. This subject could be developed as part of a study on the professional retraining of circus arts trainees or performers who are the victims of serious accidents.

Conclusion

Minor physical injury sometimes appears to be an important factor in the learning process. It is not a question of being dramatic about it, but instead establishing a number of systems and attitudes to allow students to continue their training and enriching them with this particular experience. Under no circumstances should it symbolise a break, but should be incorporated into the student's overall journey.



1.2. Mental health

Mental health is the second aspect of student 'health' care and often proves more difficult to monitor, strengthen and deal with than its physical counterpart. Yet, as a performing art, the circus requires a mind which is resilient to stresses and demands. The role of educational and artistic directors will be to engage with their students' feelings and make the educational team aware of them. A number of tools can be offered to students in need, along with a tailored care system.

Impact of the mind

The relationship between mental and physical health is the focus of a great deal of research and is the particular subject under consideration in the Codarts "Life Monitor". On this occasion, a close correlation was noted between the stress level and the level of pain felt. The sensation of pain is considered greater when students are under a high level of stress whereas students with a focused mind and free from worry feel less pain.

On another note, some disorders related to stress or sleep or diet problems will have a direct impact on students' performance. The lack of attention and the negative thoughts associated with such disorders significantly increase risk-taking and therefore the occurrence of injuries. By reducing peripheral vision and causing muscle tension (somatic responses), stress will lead to a lack of coordination and flexibility and therefore be responsible for many injuries.

Finally, during the MAILLONS Workshops, it was established that injured students find themselves weakened and isolated, providing fertile ground for depression to develop. Furthermore, stopping training sessions can cause a "withdrawal syndrome" which affects the student's morale: the endorphins released when making a physical effort have a calming effect. When students are deprived of training, they experience a "movement deficit"¹⁴.

Educational and artistic directors must become involved in the care and psychological monitoring of students, whether they are injured or not, by making professional resources (referrals to psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.) and educational resources (training modules, preventive interventions, etc.) available to them. In practice, the establishment may cover part of the consultation fees (cf.: the Ecole Nationale de Cirque de Montréal subsidises the first two therapy sessions).

Recommendations

When they spoke during the MAILLONS Workshops, former students who had suffered injury mentioned the importance of sound mental preparation for managing deadlines and avoiding injury. By optimising physical preparation and stress resistance, it seems to be able to arm students against a certain number of setbacks during auditions, examinations or performances. Educational and artistic directors must offer training programmes dedicated to certain mental tools, such as:

- 'centering' which consists of blocking out any distracting thoughts and fully focusing on an exercise¹⁵
- the mental picture (visualisation) where you see yourself accomplishing an exercise or achieving a goal
- 'positive cueing', namely a combination of the first two tools, for gaining self-confidence and concentrating better on different parts of an exercise
- reading and introspection for getting better acquainted with your mind and body

In fact, although coaching/support and self-knowledge are essential in prevention and recovery after an injury, continuous mental preparation will help students adapt to the environment and to external factors (tight deadlines, high-risk shows, long tours, etc.).

Furthermore, training on specific diet or sports nutrition issues is also crucial for keeping students in good health.

¹⁴ See Glossary

¹⁵ Find out more : <http://www.bodymindcentering.fr/>

In particular, a growing number of circus students are choosing a vegetarian or even vegan diet, or suffer from food allergies, which can sometimes make it more difficult to receive the balanced diet required by a body which is subject to intensive training on a daily basis.

Furthermore, the directors reported a growing number of illnesses such as anorexia or bulimia and agreed on identifying the need to prevent such eating disorders. Extremely difficult to detect and treat, these disorders may be contained by providing modules on nutrition, dietetics and health and by raising the awareness of teachers and educational and artistic directors with regard to observing symptoms.

Examples of care systems

As regards mental health, setting up a comprehensive programme (such as the one offered by Codarts) is particularly beneficial. It monitors students and takes care of any problems they encounter during their course (with the study coach¹⁶). Additional issues, psychological ones in particular, are discussed with the student's personal mentor whereas dietary issues are dealt with by the school's health centre.

However, not all organisations lend themselves to a system like this. In a more modest setting, the introduction of focus groups for discussing stress, relationship issues, mental rumination, procrastination, the end of studies, etc., may help students identify possible sources of concerns and propose adjustments. The benefit in terms of communication and relationships that arises from such moments of sharing is a guarantee of better mental health and anchors students in the school's social network.

In some organisations (ENC Montréal in particular), the setting up of a specific stress management support group, overseen by a supervisor, is producing good results, especially in the juggling and balancing disciplines.

Finally, as recommended for physical support, teachers must be made aware as early as possible in their career of the observation of risky behaviour and a system must be set up for reporting to the director of studies. As a reminder, any reference to students' health and mental well-being entails full compliance with the codes of ethics and confidentiality.

Examples of prevention systems

Integrated in the Swedish secondary school system, the Nycirkusprogrammet training programme has a mental health service offering monitoring by a mentor, in collaboration with students' parents.

The ENC Montréal has established partnerships with associations and organisations which specialise in the field of prevention, training and psychological intervention. Conference workshops are held on a regular basis, particularly on:

- eating disorders (with the ANEB organisation – Quebec Anorexia and Bulimia¹⁷)
- preventing and treating various drug addictions and dependencies (with detox centres)

The ENC has also introduced a three-lesson module aimed at helping students tailor their mental preparation to performance and reinforce it. These lessons, spread over three years, help students get to know themselves better, develop as an individual and an artist and explore several resources / tools.

CADC Balthazar has a mental health help centre at the Voltaire association which provides free care and provides students with referrals to psychologists and psychiatrists. There is also a sports psychologist on site, available for private sessions.

“Student Life” is a programme designed and set up by Codarts¹⁸, which provides students with housing assistance, insurance advice, medical examinations and nutritional and psychological advice.

At the AFUK-AMoC school, the youngest students or those in higher education receive free mental health support funded by the State. Thanks to this funding, all students benefit from the presence of a psychologist within the school.

¹⁶ See Glossary

¹⁷ <https://anebquebec.com/>

¹⁸ More information about the « Student Life » programme (in English and Dutch) : <https://www.codarts.nl/en-circus/>

Conclusion

In order to guarantee their students a fulfilling training programme, educational and artistic directors should take a firm grasp of the “psychological” issue by increasing the number of awareness-raising workshops for teachers and students, offering sessions for building mental toughness and establishing partnerships with specialist medical centres. It is important for each training programme stakeholder to be aware of the key role played by the mind in the perception of injuries, the introduction of a health lifestyle and the quality of the services.

Find out more:

Florence Legendre, « La transmission de la gestion du risque dans les écoles supérieures de cirque en France », Sociologies [En ligne], Dossiers, La transmission du métier, published online on 07 March 2014, consulted on 26 July 2018. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/sociologies/4554>



2. Social and legal

Although the social and legal aspect threw up a great many questions and proposals, it proved difficult to address in the MAILLONS workshops. The social and legal support systems are, in fact, not only specific to each establishment, but also to the different countries' regulations.

The workshops on this facet of support involved Silvia Barros, student coordinator at Chapitô, and Soren Flor, teacher and head of higher education training at AFUK/AMoC, who presented the systems in place in their respective schools. This chapter will therefore identify some of the best practice described and discussed during the April 2015 workshop in Lisbon. Without serving as examples, they may provide food for thought and inspiration for organisations in need.

Legal and administrative support for students

Generally speaking, schools should be capable of providing all the information required for the successful completion of foreign students' stays/courses. There should be guaranteed supervision of Erasmus students in order to sustain the various artistic and educational networks and to enhance the reach of circus education across the globe. Furthermore, organisations would gain by being able to suggest legal contacts for obtaining residence permits or work permits for their students.

We can cite the situation at AFUK, in terms of legal care: thanks to the partnership established between the school and the DAF (Dansk Artist Forbund), students can take out third party liability cover when they enrol as union students. They therefore benefit from the same rights and privileges as artists who are members of this union. Furthermore, lawyers are available to give them legal advice in terms of potential contracts, legal structures for creating a company, etc.



Social support

While there is no doubt that circus education transforms students, it seems reasonable to think that graduating students will pass on this change within society through their actions and stances. The social impact of circus education therefore appears to be considerable and should be presented as one of the discipline's greatest assets.

Chapitô, a private non-profit institute, considers the circus and, more broadly, the arts as a way of achieving the qualification of individuals and their inclusion in society. Social action, education and culture are valued and made available to children and young adults considered to be at risk or in positions of social and economic vulnerability. Chapitô is a guarantor of **social inclusion** through education and consequently a conveyor of civic values.

The EPAOE School (Professional School of Arts and Crafts) is attached to the Chapitô project and provides its students with social support based on two key areas: the viability of the students' life plans and the promotion of educational and professional achievements. These principles are ensured by the presence of mentors who give students social, educational and psychological care and attention. Students are encouraged to take part in socio-cultural events and activities outside the circus, in conjunction with Chapitô, working with audiences of different ages: the idea is to help them gain experience, independence and autonomy. Furthermore, this type of job opportunity prepares students for the world of work whilst giving them monetary compensation ensuring they are financially viable.

From a more practical point of view, some schools face accommodation issues. For example, students at the AFUK, a school situated in Copenhagen, are subject to Danish property market law: accommodation here is very difficult to find and very expensive. However, students have set up an informal network for sharing helpful accommodation tips. Furthermore, AFUK is currently in negotiations with the city to obtain municipal housing. This type of proactive approach could be implemented in other schools, making tiresome house-hunting easier for new arrivals.

Financial assistance schemes for students

Whether they are included in the school budget or the fruit of one-off actions, financial assistance schemes set up for students have proved to be numerous, varied, but above all necessary. A large number of students are faced with financial hardship at some point during their course. Yet it is practically impossible to combine circus training with a student job under suitable conditions; the long days spent training and studying leave little room for the responsibilities of gainful employment.

Within the AFUK-AMoC school, the state pays for the youngest students' studies (those under 25 years old) whereas older students can be helped by the budget which AFUK has. The state is highly committed with regard to students, providing them with mental health support – the psychologist being already on site. A social funding system has been set up in the school, enabling a fair distribution of resources among the students. Furthermore, although the training is free, AFUK asks students to sign a contract stipulating that they must expect to incur a few costs (e.g.: individual equipment, seats at performances).

Other assistance strategies may be developed such as those of socially conscious projects, like CADC Balthazar which provides a grocery store for students in need. As for the ENC Montréal, it offers its students financial assistance for studies thanks to its Foundation. This is a bursary (as required and not based on merit of performance), the amount of which varies depending on the student's financial situation. Canadian students also receive loans and grants from the government of their province of residence. The ENC can also agree to take part in paid external events. Depending on the situation, some of these sums are paid into a special fund (student fund) and then reinvested for organising activities for the students.

Conclusion

The social and legal systems available to the participants of the MAILLONS 03 Workshops reflect the resourcefulness of the directors, educational and artistic teams in freeing up an often restricted budget for the items which are essential for their students to blossom and thrive. The proliferation and diversification of support systems could allow students to fully devote themselves to their training.

3. Artistic education

From 2012-2013, the DIRECTORS group focused on the special characteristics of circus education. The workshops on this aspect of student support and guidance were launched by the presentation of the INTENTS¹⁹ project by Tim Roberts (President and vice-president of FEDEC between 2008 and 2017) and by Anne Morin (leader of the TEACHERS group and member of the INTENTS committee, Centre de les Arts del Circ Rogelio Rivel) in Auch in 2015.

While the technical characteristics are hardly open to debate, there are many issues concerning teaching situations, the role of teachers and tailored education. Sometimes associated with general arts education, circus education must find a way of enhancing its special characteristics and incorporating them in its own context.

The MAILLONS focus group ended with a special Workshop presented by Manolis Tsipos, artist and graduate of the Amsterdam University of the Arts, on the DasArts²⁰ feedback method.

The role of teachers and educational / artistic directors

Developing programmes, objectives and assessments

While the teachers' role is to pass on knowledge, that of educational and artistic directors is to develop clear, understandable and appropriate objectives. The MAILLONS Workshops in fact raised the issue of the definition and transmission of educational content.

The target audiences are diverse and need to be taken into consideration in each teaching organisation. To this end, educational and artistic directors and teachers work on tailoring the form and content of lessons: training objectives should be fundamental and achievable whilst remaining motivating. They should be known, understood and accepted by all students.

Moreover, in order to subscribe to policy imperatives, educational and artistic directors are required to be able to measure and nurture student motivation, a vital ingredient in a course's success. To this end, they will try to develop programmes which alternate between regular lessons/workshops and one-off internships; apathy can be avoided by changing the pace during the year.

Although it is important to vary teaching methods to maintain motivation, opening them up to other arts and organisations can also encourage student involvement. For this reason, teachers and directors can work on networking their organisation with the immediate surroundings (local or regional culture policy) and the wider environment as well (other art schools, circus schools, etc.). They should expose students to other art forms by taking them to shows or creating partnerships with different schools or sectors. Some learning can be shared (history of art, physical preparation, etc.) and joint projects may emerge.

Once the objectives and educational content have been clearly defined, the educational and artistic directors will be tasked with looking into the issue of assessment, the criteria of which should be discussed with the students and made publicly available (see DasArts training insert)²¹.

¹⁹ INTENTS –Strategic partnership for the definition and recognition of the profession of circus arts teachers. Find more : <http://www.fedec.eu/en/articles/129-projet-intents>

²⁰ Find more on the Feedback DasArts method : <https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/theatre-programmes/das-theatre/feedback-method/> (en anglais)

²¹ For further information, a guide on planning and designing continuing training for teachers was published by FFEC and FEDEC as part of the INTENTS project: FFEC, FEDEC "Continuing training for circus arts teachers – Planning, facilitating and evaluating", 2017

Teacher / director relationships; relational characteristics

The MAILLONS 03 discussions showed that it is useful to define specific programmes of study within each organisation or networks linking them together, but that it is also necessary for the entire educational body to be given a certain amount of freedom with regard to said programmes. In order to officiate in a pleasant working environment, educational and artistic directors and teachers claim the right to be able to suggest original organisational and educational approaches. Moreover, some successful innovations will result from chance responses driven by extreme educational situations.

To encourage the development of new forms of educational management, the INTENTS training sessions highlighted the importance of collaborative work among teachers. However, it seems after the MAILLONS Workshops that educational and artistic directors would also gain from this way of working. By learning to work with others, they will be in a better position to question their practice and suggest how it can be improved.

Finally, in schools for young students, educational and artistic directors must act as a link with parents whose support and involvement are crucial.

Educational and artistic directors must ensure the team has a consistent educational and artistic approach. They have a real educationalist role with regard to the teachers in their team and also a role of mediator between the various demands. The quality of the human relationships between students, teachers and directors represents a considerable challenge.

Know-how and interpersonal skills

Even though the change of environment and the mental adjustment brought about by studies make young students vulnerable, this confrontation with reality is necessary for their progress and future empowerment.

By valuing their students' qualities and encouraging them to be independent, educational and artistic directors will help them become active participants in their training by empowering them as much as possible. This is why it is important to encourage their everyday resourcefulness, a form of creativity which can be transferred to other areas.

Furthermore, educational and artistic directors should offer a personalised approach even within large year groups; it is to their advantage if they keep in mind the students' individuality. For this reason, it is important to develop the widest possible range of relationships: supporting and guiding students requires approaches ranging from leniency to strictness, depending on the circumstances. Finally, each student's own rate of progress should be respected, especially in the principle of trial and error.

The first points made in the MAILLONS discussions highlighted the importance of the key skills circus students should develop. Know-how was mentioned, including technical assurance²² in the chosen discipline, openness to other art forms (theatre, dance, etc.), mastery of exercises, etc. as well as interpersonal skills, such as curiosity, the ability to let go and engagement with society. Personality and experience also have an impact on the training and hiring of a circus artist. As mentioned above, each student's individuality will be a unique blend of his or her know-how, interpersonal skills and life experience.

By becoming aware of the links between psychical, morphological and psychological identity, working on oneself is intrinsically linked to the research approach. So it is important to leave time for introspection as well as offer students the opportunity to mature at their own pace: directors and teachers can deliver a spirit of openness through meetings with engaged artists, but must be patient when it comes to potential returns from their students.

Furthermore, students will only reach their potential if they gain confidence in their surroundings, their abilities and themselves; a favourable climate will allow them to gamble and take risks, vital to creation. Personal well-being and healthy self-esteem encourage the development of relationships, dialogue and collaboration among students.

Finally, the role of the group in students' educational progress is highly significant: students develop in line with but also in opposition to the group. Transfer of energy, imitation and identity dynamics must all be taken into consideration throughout the training course.

²² In this context, 'technical' refers to the degree of difficulty in mastering a discipline: e.g. "performing a triple salto on straps is a technical achievement for this student"

Creativity

While the role of creativity in circus education has provoked much debate, there is consensus on the need for a rich and reliable technique²³ for free and original expression.

Several speakers have highlighted the importance of opening up to the world in the development of the imagination and therefore creativity. Echoing the notion of **letting go**, opening up to the world will question students, shake up their convictions and turn them into a blank canvas, ready to live the creative experience to the full. By positioning themselves as citizen artists, faced with external issues as well as a variety of audiences, venues and collaborations, circus students will be able to offer inspiring performances.

As Christian Coumin highlighted in Auch in 2013, it might be assumed that this type of approach should result from the training received to that same end within the school and on stage. It is therefore a matter of offering educational support tinged with an artistic approach as well as a creative approach enhanced by a didactic presentation. In this respect, educational and artistic directors could encourage teachers to become fully involved in the creative approaches of their students.

Without imposing their own ideas or wishes, teachers should be able to challenge students to surpass themselves in their creations. As Martine Leroy points out, creation within the training course is a driver of conflict: lesson time is not necessarily creation time, rehearsal time is not workshop time... Educationalists and educational and artistic directors are proactive in transforming support and guidance time into a creative process, so leading students to integrate the permeability of boundaries. Each educational problem can be subject to creative responses proposed by educational and artistic directors, teachers and students.

Conclusion

A subtle blend of constraint and freedom, repetition and invention, know-how and interpersonal skills, circus arts education seems to be like the art to which it refers: complex and constantly evolving. Nevertheless, after these workshops, it seems there is a need to structure training courses around a clear educational programme, defined objectives and specific assessment tools.

It is important to value and develop the students' human qualities and technical competencies by attempting to find a balance between physical preparation, curiosity and technical and artistic acquisition.

Raising awareness of openness must take place from the very outset of the training course. By centring the training programme on the learner, not the content, there is scope for reducing or even enhancing the paradoxical relationship between educational requirement and creative requirement.

²³ In this context, 'technique' refers to the degree of difficulty in mastering a discipline: e.g. "performing a triple salto on straps is a technical achievement for this student"

Presentation of the European INTENTS project

The INTENTS project, which ran between 2014 and 2017, addressed the profession of circus arts teacher²⁴ through 4 transdisciplinary European training sessions for teachers, each resulting in a training manual, the SAVOIRS 01 study on teaching competencies and a guide to planning and designing continuing teacher training.



The planning and designing of continuing teacher training component of the INTENTS project is connected to the issues addressed in MAILLONS which focused on the historical role of the teacher.

The INTENTS training sessions held between 2014 and 2017 entailed teachers attending and working for a full week. In this way, the INTENTS training sessions aimed to create long-lasting ties between the different schools, promoting the exchange of knowledge and future mobility. These training weeks provided an opportunity for in-depth consideration which was then formalised through the production of educational tools and the development of a guide to planning and designing continuing teacher training with the help of a university researcher²⁵.

The people attending the INTENTS sessions were teachers from the network's European schools and the aim was to strike a balance between men and women as well as vary the types of schools involved and the profiles, disciplines and countries represented.

The sessions included a presentation by a speaker followed by an informal question and answer session between participants and speakers. Discussions in small groups on thematic issues were subsequently held.

Presentations of the activities and resources produced as part of the INTENTS project are available on the FEDEC website, in the form of open access multilingual publications: <http://www.fedec.eu/en/articles/?c=186>

Educational directors of schools deal in particular with continuing teacher training. No matter what the topic, a tool is ready for educational and artistic directors to use: FEDEC, FFEC, "Continuing Training for Circus Arts Teachers: planning, facilitating and assessing", 2017. The publication was produced as a result of the INTENTS project and is available in French and English. It contains practical tools for developing a range of training courses.



²⁴ Here, the term 'teacher' is used in its broad sense to refer to any teacher in vocational schools that are FEDEC members, regardless of the level at which he/she teaches.

²⁵ FEDEC, FFEC, « La Formation continue des professeurs en arts du cirque : concevoir, animer et évaluer », 2017.

DasArt feedback training

The presentation of the DasArts feedback method seemed relevant in the context of the MAILLONS Workshops as it aims to offer tools for commenting on and assessing a piece of work from a contemporary, hybrid, cross-disciplinary artistic practice. Reflections on a circus creation or performance should be organised and structured to enable constructive criticism to be given.

Manolis Tsipos, an artist and a graduate of the Amsterdam University of the Arts, explained the main DasArts objectives for such feedback situations at the MAILLONS Workshop held in Madrid in 2017:

- empower the artist who is getting feedback on his or her work
- create more structure and a sense of self-discipline, to allow fundamental criticism
- create a learning experience for both those receiving the feedback (the artists) and those giving it (the audience).

The feedback method tends to counteract the following issues:

- tendency of some people to dominate the conversation
- unequal command of the language
- variability of fluency when speaking and in public
- hierarchical inequalities reflected in the attention given to each person
- dealing with artists' feelings/egos, not their work
- tendency to reflect the commenter's individual taste

The DasArts method entails establishing a criticality space, the role of which is to leave room for the mystery of the work and uncertainty; participants must accept not knowing or even being wrong. By creating a kind of egalitarian community, the criticality space changes human relationships by forging ties through the questions asked by individuals and through the work. A moderator is in charge of coordinating and running the session.

The context:

- self-designed research and practical production
- collective feedback from peers, the team and advisors²⁶
- on work currently in progress
- no assessment

The aims of good feedback:

- empowerment of artists
- more structure and self-discipline in these moments
- more attention and enjoyment
- increase the level of feedback
- provide a shared learning experience

The format (between 70 and 80 minutes in total):

- face-to-face conversation (10 minutes)
- affirmative feedback (5 minutes)
- putting into perspective (10 minutes)
- open questions (5 minutes)
- consideration by point/by concept (15 minutes)
- 'gossip round' or open discussion (10-20 minutes)
- tips and tricks (5 minutes)
- final word from the creator (5 minutes)
- letters (10 minutes)



²⁶ See Glossary

4. Transition to work

The final component of student support and guidance, the issue of transition to work was the subject discussed at the last MAILLONS 03 meeting in Auch in 2017. However, this being a very broad theme, the educational and artistic directors decided to devote a complete cycle of meetings to it over three years (2018-2020): MAILLONS 04.

The speech by a former student of CADC Balthazar, then CNAC, on his experience of entering the world of work and the discussions that followed enabled the educational and artistic directors to reflect upon the challenges of transition to work faced by young artists graduating from the schools when putting together educational programmes. The educational and artistic directors then discussed their difficulties and their respective employability arrangements in their own schools.

This workshop isolated four main strands in the issue of transition to work which will be used to develop recommendations for the 2018-2020 period: the student, the school, the market (i.e. the work environment) and the artistic dimension.

Training in creation

Borne out by the claims of students who were interviewed, it seems that FEDEC schools should offer better training in the administrative issues of creation. Although they are quite able to devise and develop shows, former students are at a loss when it comes to putting together a dossier, applying for grants, organising festivals or meeting a judging panel's requirements. These types of administrative and legal skills could be addressed during modules punctuated with question and answer sessions.

The upgrading of transition to work in professional circus schools (such as the work/study course offered by the Académie Fratellini, a year divided between classes in a training centre and a work situation²⁷) could help young artists understand and meet the demands of the professional circus world.

Logistics of post-study training

At the end of their course, circus students frequently find themselves faced with the following question: where will I be able to continue my training? Suitable training facilities are rare and generally expensive to use. Although some schools allow former students to use their facilities, young circus artists who choose to live far away must arrange their own training premises. Students, teachers and educational and artistic directors would all gain by thinking within their schools of practical solutions which would guarantee that training could continue once studies are over.

After graduation, students must learn to practise their discipline without the group and also without the advice and support of school staff. Some students experience difficulty in finding their own new rhythm. Their frequency of training and healthy lifestyle may suffer; young artists are then at risk of their health and skills deteriorating. Times for raising 'post-training course' awareness could be introduced in each organisation.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that during their studies, some learners will object to performing workouts or exercises they do not understand; sometimes it is not until months or years later that these processes take on their full meaning and are included in the former student's personal practice. The issue of the teacher's role in explaining why he/she is giving the student a specific instruction and making sure the student fully understands and sticks to performing the instruction, all to do with teaching skills, should therefore be considered, as it questions the way movements and exercises are explained during the training course. It is important to move beyond repetitive and instinctive implementation for faster and more conscious integration.

²⁷ Find out more about the Académie Fratellini Work/Study Training Centre: <http://www.academie-fratellini.com/ecole-superieure/le-cfa/temps-professionnels.html>

Striking a balance between gender, discipline and job

Some disciplines are under-represented in programming organisations and should therefore be made visible through personal creations. For example, very few venues call on aerial artists; swinging trapeze and flying rope artists should therefore create their own companies, shows and organisations. It is a cumbersome procedure and should be prepared for beforehand in schools.

Furthermore, it has emerged that the issue of artist gender depending on their field is not adequately addressed: as regards acrobats, men will be much more likely to find work than women. It will be worthwhile taking the time to look at the conclusions of the MIROIR 03 European study on former students' transition to work²⁸ and carrying out a similar analysis based on an overview of hiring for students' speedy, indeed possible transition to work.

Although there is no question of interfering with students' wishes as regards the direction they have chosen, it seems sensible to suggest they learn a second discipline when their main discipline does not guarantee access to a job: aerial artists could be encouraged to learn a second ground discipline, something offered by Salpaus²⁹, a school in Finland.

Openness

One of the qualities of circus training praised by former students is its openness to other artistic disciplines. The diversity of speakers and the multidisciplinary offered in organisations are a real strength for students who will be able to adapt to all sorts of creations. This is good practice which should be maintained and developed.

Furthermore, it seems students need to be encouraged to develop their professional network throughout their training course. By maintaining a spirit of openness to the arts, they can increase the number of people they meet which will help their future transition into work.

Furthermore, it may be worthwhile to offer a residency or collaboration with a company within the school. Putting the job of professional artists into perspective like this demonstrates their daily lives. For example, it is not unusual for circus schools to host artists in residence, thereby bringing together students and artists on a daily basis.

It is the responsibility of educational and artistic directors to bring cultural and artistic partners into school life so that students can understand how a theatre operates and get to know their future working environment.

Conclusion

The transition to work theme provides an opportunity to question the responsibilities of all the training course protagonists: how can students play an active role in their training and their future? What are their needs in terms of training and what do they remember? Do they understand what the school is providing them with?

Alongside these questions, the school's role should also be questioned: are its programmes tailored? What limits should it set regarding student support and guidance? What resources can it make available to students?

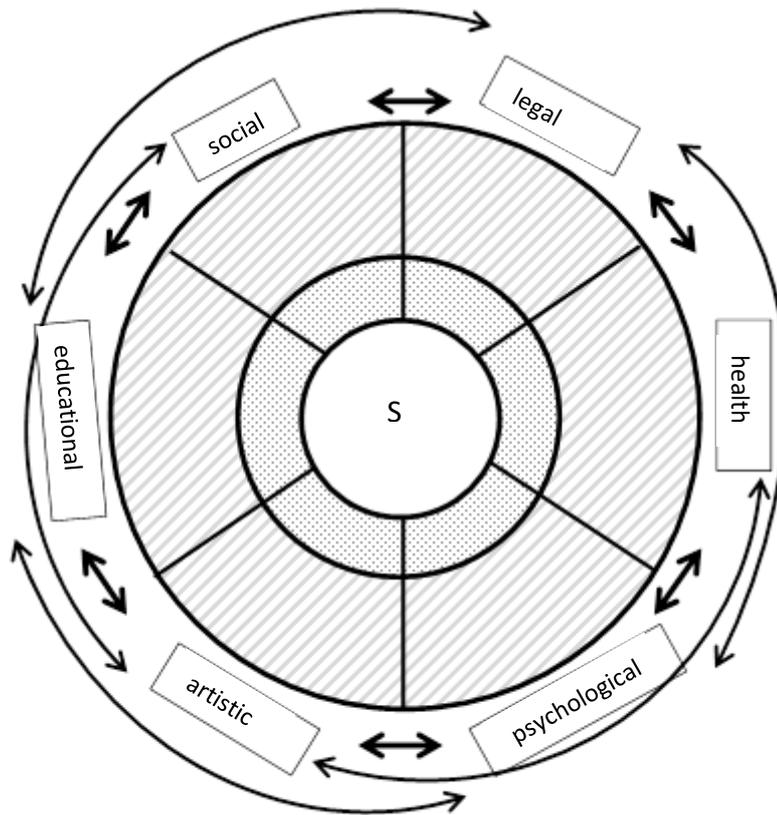
Finally, schools should take into consideration the working environment, namely all the aspects relating to the job market targeted by the school's young graduates. A part of the course is dependent on this. What are the pre-requisites for a successful transition into the targeted job market? What connections can be established between organisations providing training and the working environment stakeholders? What artistic and technical dimensions are present in it? This long list of questions can be addressed during MAILLONS 04 and will enable better training to workplace matches.

²⁸ Find out more about MIROIR 03 project : <http://www.fedec.eu/en/articles/152-miroir03>

²⁹ See Glossary

ANNEX : Support diagram

The following diagram represents a general action plan for support and guidance in an effort to surround students as much as possible in the various areas of support.



 Students/pupils/trainees → actor of their training → Personal resources

 Internal resources, team

 External resources, partners

 Different links according situations

CONCLUSION

This publication is the result of several years of collegial reflection aiming to improve the quality of student support and guidance and to strengthen the specific competencies of educational and artistic directors in professional circus schools.

Although not meant to become an obligation, the good practice identified above should encourage positive initiatives and constructive collaborations depending on the needs and the context of the schools.

Further reflection and connecting educational and artistic directors are the only two requirements for developing a valuable educational and artistic approach.

Biographies

Member of focus group « DIRECTORS » and contributor

MARTINE LEROY



Before becoming artistic director and head of vocational training at the Centre des Arts du Cirque Balthazar in Montpellier, Martine Leroy was an aerial clown at the Cirque Bidon (1978/80), then formed the Cirque Constance with Pierrot Bidon (1981/85) and after that created Archaos, once again with Pierrot Bidon, where she was a trapeze acrobat (1986/90).

After studying at the Ecole Decroly in Brussels, she trained in Education Sciences and completed a Master's degree in psychology. She specialises in body and artistic practices.

Following her thesis on supporting young circus artists, she continued her research regarding the links between artistic approach and identity construction. She gives university classes in clinical sport psychology, belongs to a phenomenology research group, has conducted action research for circus arts and is an active member of the French Federation of Circus Schools pedagogy and training groups, as well as an expert for the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools.

At the same time and in tune with everything else, she has always pursued painting, collage work and writing.

Synthesis realised by

CAMILLE MULLER



Camille Muller is a trained musician with Master's degrees in the cello and didactics from the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. Now an educationalist, she participates in several socially-oriented schemes and takes part in numerous musical and multi-arts projects in France and Belgium.

Glossary

Acronyms

Sigle	Full name	City, Country
AFUK / AMoC	Akademiet For Utaemmet Kreativitet – Academy for Modern Circus	Copenhagen, DK
CADC Balthazar	Centre des Arts du Cirque Balthazar, Région Occitanie	Montpellier, FR
Chapitô	Chapitô - Escola Profissional de Artes e Ofícios do Espectaculo	Lisbon, PT
Codarts	Codarts Rotterdam - Circus Arts	Rotterdam, NL
DAF	Dansk Artist Forbund	Copenhagen, DK
ENC Montréal	National Circus School	Montreal, CA
EYCO	European Youth Circus Organisation	Montreuil, FR
FEDEC	European Federation of professionnal circus schools	Brussels, Belgium
FFEC	French Federation of circus schools	Montreuil, FR
Nycirkusprogrammet	Nycirkusprogrammet - Cirkus Cirkör	Stockholm, SE
Salpauus	Salpauksen Sirkusartistikoulutus / SaSak	Lahti, FI

Definitions

MAILLONS workshops	Workshops for enhancing competencies, open to all educational and artistic directors of FEDEC higher education schools and training centres. Two workshops are held a year, each lasting on average 3 hours.
Movement deficit	When the need for physical activity, which a circus artist has become dependant on, is not satisfied.
Artistic direction	Defines artistic characteristics, chooses, puts together and coordinates the whole cultural offering. (Source : APEC, 2018)
Educational director	Manages the training system, develops teaching resources, organises and supports the qualification of trainees. May provide training initiatives and devise and market educational tools. Coordinates and leads a teaching team of instructors. (Source : Pole Emploi, 2018)
Personal health feedback	Interview by a health professional to establish a student's state of health, on an individual basis.
Mentor	An attentive and wise guide, an experienced advisor (source : Larousse.fr, 2018)

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