

THE MONTREAL  
WORKING GROUP ON

circus  
circus

RESEARCH

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**CALL FOR PAPERS (15 Dec)**

**Circus and its  
Others II, Conference**

**27-29 August 2018, Prague,  
Czech Rep.**

From powerhouse stage and television shows to Cirque du Soleil's status as the world's most successful live performing arts company, circus in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has undeniably gone mainstream. While this is positive news for circus companies, artists, and audiences with a taste for thrilling, high-performance entertainment, it also raises questions about circus's historic status as a site for the celebration and exploitation of differences. To what extent and in what ways is circus always-already different, and *about* difference? How does the mainstreaming of contemporary circus affect its status as a haven for the different, the outsider? In what ways are contemporary circus artists and companies embracing and exploiting (or not) difference in their practice? How do we discuss, stage, theorize, and practice such differences including questions of gender, sexuality, embodiment, ability/disability, ethnicity, class, and species?

The Circus and its Others research project was launched in 2014 under the aegis of the Montréal Working Group on Circus Research to explore these questions. The scholarship and

## Tour and talk

**McCord Museum (McGill  
University), Wed. 15 Nov,  
9:30 a.m. (new date)**

**A Brief History of The Golden Age of  
Stage Conjuring, Vaudeville and Circus  
in Montreal (1880-1930)**

**Guided tour and discussion animated by Dr.  
Joseph Culpepper (Concordia University) at the  
McCord Museum.**

**\* A very much reduced admission rate of 11\$ will  
be charged to enter into the museum upon  
confirming your presence *in advance*.**

**RSVP: [patrick.leroux@concordia.ca](mailto:patrick.leroux@concordia.ca)**

The Golden Age of Stage Conjuring (1880-1930) in North America and Western Europe encompasses a period of rapid technological advances in the performing arts, cinema, photography, lithography, and transportation. It also marks a fifty-year period of social and cultural transformations across the globe: power shifts in Europe and North America's colonial empires, a new wave of Orientalism, disillusionment during WWI, the zenith of spiritualism, victories in women's suffrage, and the stock market crash of 1929. How did the work of stage conjurers and circus artists mix during this tumultuous period? How do we see illusions from this period adapted to contemporary circus productions — *Raoul, Queen of the Night, Le soir des monstres, Rêveurs définitifs, Particle # B* — today?

conversation during our exciting conference in the context of the 2016 Montréal Complètement Cirque festival proved lively, provocative, and vital, with work showcased there being published in an upcoming issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Performance Matters* (May 2018, vol. 4.1).

**We are thrilled to announce the expanded international exploration of these concerns with the organization of the second Circus and Its Others conference to be held in Prague, Czech Republic, 27-29 August 2018, during the Letní Letná circus festival, who joins us as a partner along with Cirqueon and Charles University.**

We invite proposals for research talks that address questions of difference and otherness in the context of contemporary circus. We further make explicit invitation for presentations from artists and practitioners who address such questions in their work, practice, and/or research-creation (our conference venue also includes some space for performance).

Possible areas of inquiry might include, but need not be limited to:

### **Histories of circus and its others**

- What hidden histories of circus practice may be located in the visual archive?
- What are the histories of areas of circus practice that today are considered other to the mainstream, such as the use and display of animals?
- How do the histories of circus practice intersect with histories of colonialism and imperialism?

### **Periphery and center**

- What might the Czech context tell us about the place of circus and its others in European or global perspectives?

**Dr. Joseph Culpepper is a performance scholar, magician, and magic consultant. He teaches magic history and its adaptation to the circus arts at Montreal's National Circus School. He is an Affiliate Assistant Professor at Concordia University, a cofounder of the performance troupe Ars Mechanica and consults for both private and public organizations.**

## **Call for Proposals for a Circus and Education Study Day**

Organized by Alisan Funk (McGill), Dr. Marie-Eve Skelling (Concordia), and Dr. Louis Patrick Leroux (Concordia).

### **Submission Deadline: December 1st.**

The Montreal Working Group on Circus would like to invite you to participate in focused study day examining perspectives and futures of circus education in North America. Although there is an open call for presentations, we acknowledge that your contributions to circus education and knowledge about circus education have been significant. For that reason, we hope you will strongly consider contributing to this study day with a presentation on your work related to circus education.

This Study Day will be an opportunity to openly discuss pertinent issues of training and education in the circus, from teacher training, professional training to the emergence of a broad emerging academic field of

## **Invitation à participer à la journée de réflexion sur le cirque et l'éducation,**

Organisateurs:  
Alisan Funk (McGill),  
Dr. Marie-Eve Skelling (Concordia)  
et Dr. Louis Patrick Leroux (Concordia).

### **Date de soumission de votre proposition : 1er Décembre**

Le Groupe montréalais de recherches en arts du cirque aimerait vous inviter à participer à une journée de réflexion sur les perspectives et les enjeux liés à l'éducation / enseignement du cirque en Amérique du Nord. Bien que l'appel à présentation soit ouvert à tous, nous considérons que vos contributions à l'éducation du cirque et à la connaissance sur l'éducation du cirque sont significatives. C'est pourquoi nous espérons que vous accepterez de participer à cette journée d'échanges en présentant votre travail sur le sujet.

Cette journée de réflexion sera une opportunité pour discuter ouvertement des enjeux liés à l'entraînement et la

- To what extent do hierarchies in academic research, funding practices, and artistic recognition affect the place and presence of “the other”?
- How do differing regional or national practices affect recognition on the world’s stages?

### Travelling otherness

- What happens when circus talent and circus acts travel outside their cultures of origin and become “other”?
- To what extent do circuses use their national/regional/linguistic/ethnic difference as branding to enable their circulation in the global entertainment market? What practices of exoticification and self-exoticification may be employed in this?

### Circus bodies: Normal, extraordinary, other?

- What are the implications of shifts in the mainstreaming of contemporary circus and related changes in skill, artistry, and training for circus artists including those who may carry historical baggage of “born otherness” with them?
- What is required and expected of the bodies of today’s elite circus artists? With their toned, strong bodies do they now represent a societal ideal rather than society’s outsiders? How do circus trainers as well as circus artists deal with questions of body image?

### Gender and queerness in contemporary circus

- How are circus artists and companies resisting commodification and mainstreaming to keep the freak

circus studies. In preparation, we have been asking ourselves: What are the aims and objectives of circus education? What are the existing forms of circus education and who or what markets do they benefit? Is professional training viable on its own in supporting a circus ecology without instituting a wider field of circus studies? What is the present and future of circus education in north America? As people generating circus education, what directions do we hope to see?

To invite discussion around these questions, the Circus and Education Study Day will consider four large domains related to circus education

1. Training circus professionals (training directors and other domains related to circus; Pedagogical strategies for developing performers; Curriculum; Objectives; Challenges; Coach education)
2. Circus arts as a teaching methodology (teacher education; Physical literacy; Special needs; Social circus; Integration into other programs).
3. Feasibility of higher education for circus studies (graduate programs in circus studies (MA, PhD); research in circus arts; circus research networks)
4. Feasibility of Graduate programs for circus

formation en cirque, tels que la formation à l’enseignement, la formation artistique, voir l’émergence d’un domaine de recherche académique en études circassiennes. Au préalable, nous nous sommes posés ces questions : Quels sont les buts et les objectifs de l’enseignement du cirque ? Quelles sont les différentes formes d’enseignement qui existent et qui sont les personnes et les marchés qui en bénéficient ? La formation professionnelle est-elle capable à elle seule de soutenir une écologie du cirque sans le développement d’un plus vaste domaine d’études sur le cirque ? Comment apparaissent le présent et l’avenir de l’enseignement du cirque en Amérique du Nord ? En tant que personnes contribuant au domaine de la formation en arts du cirque, quelles directions souhaitons-nous voir se dessiner ?

Pour initier la discussion autour de ces questions, la journée de réflexion sur le cirque et l’éducation abordera quatre thèmes :

1. Formation des professionnels du cirque (formation des metteurs en scène et autres professions liées au cirque; stratégies pédagogiques pour produire des « performers »; curriculum; objectifs; défis; formation des formateurs).
2. Les arts du cirque en tant que méthodologie

- and queer in contemporary circus?
- Are women circus's perennial other?
- What and where are queer circus performances?

### Creation, pedagogy, and practice

- What place is or should be granted "the other" in our schools and training facilities?
- How are differences given space and form in creation and practice-based research, and what are the related roles of dramaturgies and direction?
- How does doing the "business" of circus affect the role of difference in the art?

### Social circus – the other of professional circus?

- How are circus artists and researchers using the circus arts to intervene in the lives of, and support, those othered by mainstream society?
- What are the power relations between social circus and professional circus, and how do questions of race/class/gender/ability figure in this?
- If social circus has become a conduit for those still considered other from the largely white European talent base to enter professional contemporary circus, what is the relationship of this flow of bodies to historical and current power relations between Global North and South?

Please send 300-500 word proposals for 20-minute presentations to [CircusOthersPrague@gmail.com](mailto:CircusOthersPrague@gmail.com) by **15 December 2017**. Please articulate clearly in your proposal if you plan to make a formal paper presentation or if as a practitioner/creator/researcher you wish to engage in a hybrid

performance (MFA for circus performance; MFA for directing)

You will present a brief position paper (10 minutes) and participate in panel discussions and a larger forum on the state and future of circus education, particularly in its North American context. Prior to the Study Day, please send a 200-300 word summary of your topic, position, and general conclusions so that we may effectively program the conference.

Please inform us of your interest and availability for participation in the Circus and Education Study Day. It is the intention of the organizers that a summary of conference proceedings will be published, reflecting the perspectives of the participants and the topics discussed. As a presenter, your perspective will be included and you will have access to edit the paper before publication.

Logistics:

**When: Friday 12 January**

**Where: National Circus School Library**

**Duration: 9:30-4:30, lunch available on site.**

**Note: Funding cannot be provided for transit or other expenses.**

Application Contents:

- Full name
- Institutional affiliation
- Email Address
- Brief bio (100-150 words),
- Title of presentation
- Summary of presentation topic

d'éducation (formation des enseignants; littéracie physique; besoins spéciaux; cirque social; intégration à d'autres programme).

3. Faisabilité d'un programme universitaire en études circassiennes (programme de deuxième et troisième cycle en études circassiennes (MA, PhD); recherches en arts du cirque; réseaux de recherche sur le cirque).
4. Faisabilité d'un programme de deuxième cycle en performance de cirque (MFA en performance en cirque; MFA en mise en scène).

Les présentateurs sélectionnés feront une courte communication (10 minutes) et participeront à une table ronde ainsi qu'au forum de discussion portant sur le statut et l'avenir de l'éducation du cirque, particulièrement dans le contexte Nord-Américain. En vue de cette journée, veuillez nous envoyer un court résumé de 200-300 mots de la communication proposée afin que nous puissions organiser la programmation de cette journée d'étude.

practice/talk/research/creation exploration. We hope to reply to all applicants in January 2018. The organizers are applying for financial support for the conference, but we regret that we cannot promise bursaries or travel grants at this time.

**Circus and Its Others Prague Academic Committee / Comité scientifique**

- Charles Batson, Union College, USA
- Michael Eigtved, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- Karen Fricker, Brock University, Canada
- Louis Patrick Leroux, Concordia University, Canada
- Martin Pšenička, Charles University, Czech Republic
- Veronika Štefanová, Cirqueon, Czech Republic

Merci de nous informer de votre intérêt et disponibilité à participer à cette journée d'étude sur le cirque et l'éducation. Il est dans l'intention des organisateurs de publier un résumé de la conférence reflétant les perspectives des participants et les sujets discutés. Votre contribution sera soulignée et vous aurez la possibilité de réviser votre texte avant sa publication.

Logistique:

Date : **Vendredi 12 janvier 2018.**

Lieu : Bibliothèque de l'École Nationale de Cirque

Durée : 9:30-16:30, diner disponible sur place

Note : **Aucun financement ne peut être offert pour les transports et autres dépenses**

A soumettre :

- Nom complet
- Affiliation institutionnelle
- Adresse courriel
- Titre de la communication
- Résumé de la communication proposée (200-300 mots)
- Notice biographique (100-150 mots)

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