

## **CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: INNOVATION IS MORE CULTURE THAN PROCESS**

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*“From their employees, artists, technicians, and managers around the world, great expectations, magnificent dreams, and creative products have emerged. They have learned to surrender to their senses, trust their instincts, take risks, and meet new challenges in an artistic and nurturing environment.”*

Guy Laliberté Founder and Past CEO, Cirque du Soleil<sup>1</sup>

Cirque du Soleil (French for Circus of the Sun) had evolved as one of the most famous live spectacles and success stories in the history of the entertainment industry. While Cirque du Soleil’s various performances had transformed over the years, its traditional elements of imagination, artistic entertainment, spectacle, theatrical storytelling, visual extravaganza, and incredible physical skill had remained at the core of this entertainment giant.

As Cirque turned thirty-six years old, most of its artists and employees had heard stories of its past. They learned about Guy Laliberté’s struggles with work as a youth and his supporting himself on unemployment insurance. They were told about Cirque’s beginning as a group of street performers in the picturesque village of *Fête Foraine de Baie-Saint-Paul* near the St. Lawrence River just outside of Quebec City, and very importantly its financial hardship at its beginning in the 1980s (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan 2002; Ghazzawi, Martinelli-Lee & Palladini 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> A forward by Guy Laliberté for the book by Heward, L. & Bacon, J. (2006). *The Spark: Igniting the Creative Fire that Lives Within Us All*. Doubleday Canada.

A turning-point for the company happened in 1987, when it embarked on its first tour in the U.S. It started with an invitation to perform at the Los Angeles Arts Festival; Cirque took a big risk in going to Los Angeles as it only had enough money to travel one way and counted on its ability to raise funds to get back to Montreal. What happened in Los Angeles - positive media reviews and audience support - led Cirque to tour other cities in California. Its success in the U.S. helped solidify its reputation and prestige at home (Leslie & Rantisi 2011).

For over three decades, Cirque held shows around the globe. Customers lined up to buy its expensive tickets, and money was easily made. At the end of the day, the Cirque entertainment phenomenon had permanency. Together with its sustainable culture of innovation, strong communication, and ethical behavior in its worldwide operations, Cirque maintained relational trust among all stakeholders while living and functioning as one company (Ghazzawi, et al. 2014). With an estimated \$845 million in revenue in 2014 (CBC.CA 2015), Cirque du Soleil expanded rapidly through the 1990s and 2000s, going from one show to 19 shows simultaneously in over 200 cities on five continents around the world. The company's various shows attracted close to 90 million spectators (Cirque du Soleil-c).

Cirque's culture, according to one of Cirque producers, was *"very open and accepting of people and open to doing things in different ways. You can invite problems or you can offer solutions"* (Ricotta 2013). The working environment was good-natured, with considerable freedom given to employees and artistic directors. The behavioral norms and values resulted in affirmation of family, or at the very least community (Ghazzawi et al. 2014).

The company's continued success was driven by its continual innovation and creative culture. Cirque's creative process usually began when its president and CEO Daniel Lammare and Guy Laliberté, its founder and artistic director, defined the theme of the next show. The theme of any show started as a broad vision as opposed to a confined mandate, in order to give others the opportunity to contribute to the creative process. Cirque executives did not use traditional brainstorming techniques to arrive at the theme (Dan 2012). Cirque CEO's belief was that *"no-*

*idea-is-a-bad-idea;*” acquiescence and consensus were emphasized over debate and openness (Dan 2012).

*“Cirque’s culture of innovation and creativity encourages honesty and judgment when ideas are explored. Passionate, provocative dissent and disagreements are not only tolerated but cultivated, to spur the best ideas and, as importantly, to eliminate bad ones quickly. While a consensus seeking approach may lead to a few incremental innovations, he (Lammare) says, a bit of tension, even friction during creative ideation, is likely to lead to innovation breakthrough” (Dan 2012: Para. 3).*

See Exhibit 1 for selected images of Cirque shows.

### Exhibit 1. Selected Images from Cirque Du Soleil Shows

Source: <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/press>



**Title:** Cadre from "O".  
**Picture credit:** Tomasz Rossa  
**Costume credit:** Dominique Lemieux.



**Title:** Hand Balancing from "Mystère"  
**Picture credit:** Richard Termine  
**Costume credit:** Dominique Lemieux

It was Cirque’s practice that once a theme had been selected, Lammare and Laliberté would step back and let the creative director take over and develop the concept over the 2-3 years that it took to put the show together (Dan 2012).

In addition to its world-renowned shows, Cirque had extended its creative approach to a variety of other entertainment forms, including multimedia productions, immersive experiences, theme parks, and special events. The company went beyond its creative activities by making a

positive impact on people, communities, and the planet - all through Cirque's valuable tools of creativity and art.

In 2015, ninety percent of Cirque was acquired. President and CEO Daniel Lammare and Founder and Artistic Director Guy Laliberté were revisiting the challenges of balancing the company's need to maintain high creative standards with an appeal to larger audiences, while meeting their new partners' financial expectations and remaining loyal to Cirque's values.

### The Creation of a Powerful Entertainment Company

Guy Laliberté left home at the young age of 14. He left behind a note to his anguished parents explaining the reasons for his bold act and quoting the philosopher Kahlil Gibran: "*Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's call to life*" (in Denton, 1988: Para. 7). Guy described himself as a "*dreamer, fascinated by the cultures of the world.*" For him, the best way to see the world was to perform on the streets. He performed for a while as a musician, playing traditional Canadian music on an accordion while he told stories and collected money in a hat from passersby. Feeling confident in his street performance skills, Laliberté decided to travel to Europe when he was eighteen (Browse Biography 2011).

As he was attracted to the busker's<sup>2</sup> lifestyle from a young age, he travelled to Paris in 1978 and learned the art of fire-breathing. After coming back to Québec in 1979, he began stilt-walking alongside his friend Gilles Ste-Croix while the two were organizing activities for the Baie-Saint-Paul youth hostel in the Charlevoix region of Québec<sup>3</sup> (Zarov 2014). See Exhibit 2 for images of Charlevoix, Canada.

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<sup>2</sup> Busking and street performing is the art of street theatre. It is a style of performance unlike any other. A musician playing in the open air - tap dancers hoofing on a side walk. Source: <http://www.buskercentral.com/defined.php>

<sup>3</sup> Charlevoix is a beautiful region of the province of Quebec, Canada. Famous for its idyllic topography of rolling hills and mountains along the St. Lawrence River, the region is very attractive to visitors because of its agricultural tourism and regional farm-to-table cuisine, arts and culture, and scenic driving routes (McLean 2019).

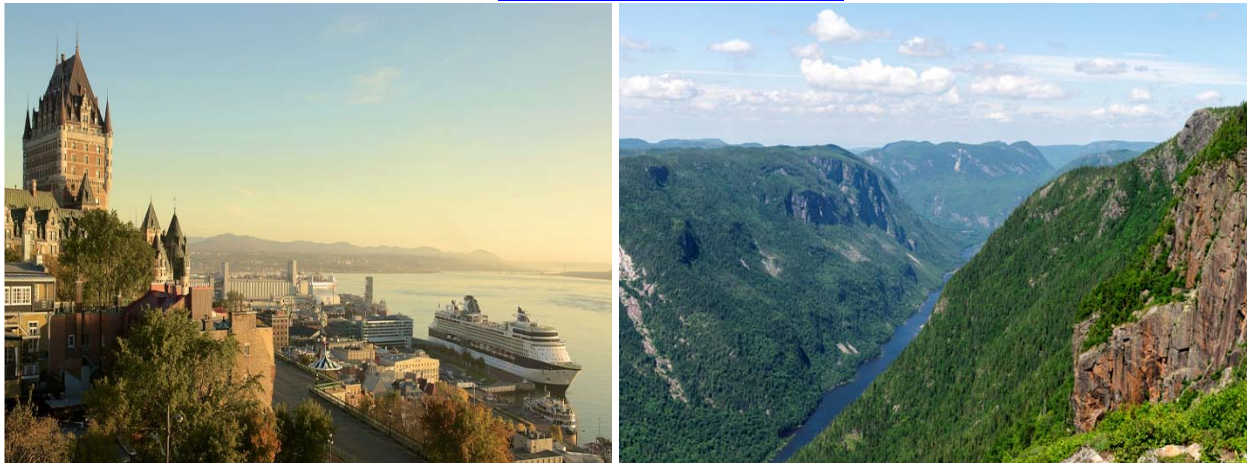
Guy did not have enough money to sustain his life in Europe, so eventually he returned to Quebec to accept a full-time job at a hydro-electric power plant. After three days, the plant workers went on strike and Guy was fired (Bass 2013).

In summer 1980, Laliberté joined Ste-Croix's stilt-walking theatre company *Les Échassiers de Baie-Saint-Paul* (The Stilt Walkers of Baie-Saint-Paul). The following year, Ste-Croix and Laliberté, along with stilt-walkers Serge Roy, Josée Bélanger and Carmen Ruest, founded the non-profit *Club des Talons Hauts* (High Heels Club) to promote stilt-walking events (Zarov 2014).

With financial help from the government of Québec, Laliberté founded Cirque du Soleil in 1984. The Cirque toured Québec, and its big top had a capacity of 800 seats (Zarov 2014). The tour performers and productions were such a success that the company began to generate demand outside of Canada.

### Exhibit 2. Images of Charlevoix, Canada

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/>



In 1985, the tour included stops in Ottawa, Toronto and Niagara Falls. In 1986, Cirque produced a new show, *La Magie Continue* (“*We Reinvent the Circus*”), which toured Canada, the U.S. and Europe. When it finally closed in 1990, the big top's capacity was 2,500 seats. Two years later, the Cirque would be running simultaneous shows on three continents (Zarov 2014). According to Tony Ricotta, Laliberté had a dream to reinvent the circus to the level of an art form. This



dream was encapsulated in the company's mission statement: *"To invoke the imagination, provoke the senses, and evoke the emotions of people around the world"* (Ricotta 2013).

Laliberté's artistic innovation bridged the entertainment culture of the circus with the artistry of acrobatic performance. See Exhibit 3 for an image of Cirque's big top.

With the creation of Cirque du Soleil, the mischievous days of popcorn, peanuts, sawdust, spangles, and calliopes were gone! Cirque was a hybrid of acrobatics and dance performance (Berry et al. 2006). This venue was *"a multi-level production without the menagerie of exotic animals, yet was one that captured the magnificence of the human form, agility, and creativity"* (Ghazzawi et al. 2014: 26-27).

Cirque du Soleil Entertainment Group became a world leader in live entertainment with about 4,000 people, including about 1,300 artists from nearly 50 countries who entertained over 180 million spectators with shows in about 450 cities in 60 countries. With Cirque's 28 residential and touring performances around the globe, the company's revenue was estimated to be more than \$1 billion annually (Gittleson 2013).

### Exhibit 3. An Image of Cirque Du Soleil Big Top

Source: [http://www.flyingkite.com/galleries/Features/2013/Issue\\_126/totem\\_fp02.jpg](http://www.flyingkite.com/galleries/Features/2013/Issue_126/totem_fp02.jpg)



From 1984 until 1989, Cirque performed only one show at a time. Its productions were divided into shows designated as either resident or touring. Resident indicated one location only, whereas touring indicated visits among cities. See Appendix 1 for Cirque's comprehensive list of resident and touring shows, Appendix 2 for important dates, and Exhibit 4 for an image of a resident show "Mystère" and one from a touring show "Alegria."

With Cirque's worldwide popularity across the world, its success came with a few challenges and organizational disputes including "artistic rebellions" and partnership clashes (DeLong et al. 2002). In 1998, Laliberté bought out Gautier's share and retained full control of Cirque which was valued at \$800 million at the time. On March 1, 2006, Laliberté resigned and was succeeded by Daniel Lamarre. Lamarre, who joined the Cirque executive team in 2001, maintained the title of Founder and Guide (Ghazzawi et al. 2014).

In 2015, Cirque du Soleil was acquired for an estimated \$1.4 billion. The company's founder, Guy Laliberté, retained a ten percent stake in Cirque, and ninety percent were acquired by three parties: TPG Capital (Texas Pacific Group-an American investment company), Fosun International Limited, a Chinese international investment company, and Caisse de Dépôt et Placement du Québec (CDPQ)<sup>4</sup>, also referred to in English-language media as the Caisse (Palmeri 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> Caisse is an institutional investor that manages several public and parapublic pension plans and insurance programs in Quebec, Canada (CBC.CA, 2015).

#### Exhibit 4: Selected Images from Cirque Resident "Mystère" and Touring "Alegria" Shows

Source: <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/press>



**Title:** Spermato and Spermatines from "Mystère"  
**Picture credit:** Richard Termine  
**Costume credit:** Dominique Lemieux.



**Title:** Crossed Wheel from "Alegria".  
**Picture credit:** MA Lemire ©2019 Cirque  
**Costume credit:** Cirque du Soleil

In 2014, the year before the acquisition, Cirque brought in \$845 million in revenue. In the same year, all the shows on Broadway combined brought in \$1.37 billion (CBC.CA 2015). Recognized over the world, Cirque du Soleil had constantly sought to evoke imagination and provoke emotion.

### Competitive Landscape of the Performing Arts Industry

Companies in the performing arts industry primarily engaged in producing live presentations involving the performances of actors and actresses, singers, dancers, musical groups, artists, and other performers (BusinessDataCodes.com). The U.S. performing arts industry included more than 8,000 companies and employed more than 120,000 people. There were also a large number of self-employed artists (Pearson 2019). The performing arts industry earned about \$35 billion per year (Vault.com). Growth in revenue was 1.8 percent annually from 2011 through 2016, due to the sluggish economy and federal and state budget cuts. Local government support for the arts had dropped 18 percent, and state funding fell 27 percent.



The recession resulted in less disposable income, and less spending on arts and entertainment. However, the outlook for the industry was brighter through 2020, as the economy was getting stronger and spending on performing arts had improved (Vault.com).

Demand for performing arts was driven by personal income and leisure time. The profitability of individual performing arts companies was based on what audiences wanted to see. While

*“large companies have advantages in marketing, fundraising, and attracting star performers. Small companies can compete effectively by specializing in new, unique, or popular works. The U.S. industry is fragmented: the 50 largest companies account for less than 30% of revenue”* (Hoovers.com).

In addition to show admission fees, performing arts companies were motivated to obtain revenue from contract and residual fees, licensing agreements, royalty fees, and in some cases private contributions and government grants (Ghazzawi et al. 2014). Admissions accounted for 45% of industry revenue, contract fees 25%, and private contributions 15%. Other revenues included food, beverage and merchandise sales, facility rentals, membership dues, and fees for entertainer management, advertising, and endorsements (Hoovers.com).

### ***Cirque du Soleil’s Top Competitors***

As an entertainment powerhouse, Cirque’s competitors were all companies in the performing arts industry, including Dodger Properties, Feld Entertainment, Jujamcyn Theaters, Live Nation Entertainment, Nederlander Producing Company, Renaissance Entertainment, Shubert Organization, and TBA Globa. Its top direct competitors were Feld Entertainment and Live Nation Entertainment. See Exhibit 5 for Cirque Top Competitors.

**Exhibit 5. Cirque du Soleil Top Competitors**

Source: Hoovers.com

<b>Company's Name</b>	<b>Gross Revenue</b>	<b>Net Profit Margin</b>	<b>Net Operating Cash Flow</b>
*Cirque du Soleil	\$ 342.9	N.A.	N.A.
*Feld Entertainment	\$ 1,368	N.A.	N.A.
Live Nation Entertainment	\$10,787	(0.16 %)	\$941.59M

\* Figures in USD millions. Figures are estimated as these companies are privately held and do not publish financial information (CBC.CA 2015).

**Feld Entertainment**

With a focus on clowning, Feld Entertainment was one of the largest live entertainment producers in the world. The company entertained people in North America through its centerpiece, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which visited about 120 cities annually. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus made its first performance in 1871. Feld Entertainment, through its partnership with Walt Disney, produced “Disney on Ice” shows, “Treasure Trove,” and “It’s Disney Live!”

**Live Nation Entertainment**

A U.S. global company founded in 2010 by the merger of Live Nation and Ticketmaster, Live Nation Entertainment was the world's largest ticket seller and promoter of live entertainment. Live Nation Entertainment operated more than 220 venues in North America and Europe (D&B Hoovers). Over 580 million people attended Live Nation events per year. Live Nation owned House of Blues venues through HOB Entertainment and dozens of prestigious concert halls. Additionally, the company owned a stake in more than 500 artists’ music, including albums, tours, and merchandise (Hoovers.com 2019-b). Live Nation had offices in 40 countries and performing venues in 11 (D&B Hoovers).

## Culture and Creativity at Cirque

Lynn Heward, Cirque's former president of creative content, credited the company's growth with its culture of innovation and creativity. In his own words,

*"Cirque du Soleil has been a world-renowned laboratory of creativity, enthraling audiences around the world by fusing dazzling acrobatics, staging and choreography, and music, along with beautiful costumes and technical effects to inspire and create magical, almost otherworldly theatrical experiences" (Heward & Bacon).*

This sentiment was resonated when Cirque founder Guy Laliberté provided a *forward* to a storybook about Cirque titled, *The Spark: Igniting the Creative Fire that Lives within Us All* by Heward and Bacon. Laliberté wrote:

*"Their stories - the people of Cirque du Soleil - are real. From their great expectations and "magnificent dreams," creative products have emerged. They have learned to surrender to their senses, trust their instincts, take risks, and meet new challenges in an artistic and nurturing environment. They work alone and they work together learning to connect with and touch people in new ways, endeavoring always to reinvent themselves. And they aspire to give back to the world in the endless continuum of change, exchange, and renewal; they are catalysts... From a tiny spark a great fire was kindled, and its flames warmed the world."*

New employees and artists were transmitted Cirque's underlying cultural values through stories. Some of the stories were about Guy Laliberté leaving home at the young age of 14. He quoted the philosopher Kahlil Gibran when he wrote a note to his family: *"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's call to life"* (Denton 1988). Employees were also told that Guy Laliberté was attracted to the busker's lifestyle from a young age; he started as a street performer.

The company's culture was open, nurturing, and accepting of people. It was open to doing things in different ways, and it encouraged people to take risks. This organizational culture accepted that *"there was no single formula for creative success - each of us must unlock the power of our imagination in our own way"* (Heward & Bacon). Artists remarked that what

ignited their creativity wasn't the pressure of deadlines but instead the exhilaration that came from risking it all. The culture changed the way they lived and worked as they felt creative and had the opportunity to tap into the powerful force that was Cirque (Heward & Bacon 2006).

### ***The Street: The Origin Cirque's Organizational Culture***

The culture at Cirque was rooted in its street performances. *"In the street you take a lot of risks, you never know how people will react"* (Leslie & Rantisi 2011: 1775). The founding father of Cirque had toured Europe, performing the arts of busking, fire-breathing, juggling, and stilt walking. The street was also the origin of the of the risk-taking entrepreneurial culture of the company (McGuire 2003). The ability to accept risk, uncertainty, inefficiency, and react to the needs of the audience helped Cirque to sustain a culture of continuous innovation and change. One creative director at Cirque asserted that his early experience working on the streets developed his communication skills needed to assemble a team of creative artists (Leslie & Rantisi 2011).

Street culture was well integrated in some of Cirque shows, for instance in the 1006 show *"Quidam."* Quidam meant *"a nameless passer-by, a solitary figure lingering on a street corner, a person rushing past and swallowed by the crowd."* It could have been anyone in the crowd, a member of the silent majority, or the one who cried out. The show as it was explained by the show director was for all the *"quidams"* whom this show allowed to speak - finally emerged from anonymity (Cirque Du Soleil-d).

Another show in the early nineties was *Saltimbanco*, Italian for *"jump on a bench."* The show explored *"the urban experience in all its myriad forms: the people who live there, their idiosyncrasies and likenesses, families and groups, the hustle and bustle of the street and the towering heights of skyscrapers"* (Yelp.com).

In sum, Cirque's company's culture was enriched with its humble beginning, street experiences, and street performing hippies who did not need more than their circus-like talents.

### ***Cirque Values, Dominant Culture and Subcultures***

Cirque had developed cultural values and norms that strongly emphasized the need for employees to be empowered, to experiment, and to take risks. While the varied productions, departments, and locations across the organization differed in some practices, they united along the organization norms and values. Ricotta (2013) recounted from Cirque's initial beginnings:

*“Those values [that] were created when we first began this company were such strong emotional values that they're almost impossible to erase and we wouldn't want to change them. ... there is no dipping in the values when you become part of the company. You just know that they are there and people make you fully aware. Further, they are not posted on the wall but somehow they get to you. At the heart of it all, Cirque sees itself as a global citizen. And it is doing its job for a purpose. I know it's going to sound trite, to make the world a better place, and we do that through entertainment.”*

The key to the company's cultural success was that its employees and artists lived up to Cirque espoused values and practiced norms, the “*Cirque unwritten rules*” that successfully guided the way its people worked and treated each other. Laliberté's leadership philosophy was built on his knowledge and artistic experience. As a leader, Laliberté was both paternalistic and protective of his performers' creative outlets and comfort capacities (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan 2002; Ghazzawi et al. 2013). Cirque's philosophy was that if it could sustain the performers' “*happiness*” then the audience/spectator would no doubt experience an emotionally driven, memorable, glitzy performance. “*This invaginate blanket served to establish Cirque's organizational norms and values. Thus, protection of a disparate and diverse band of performers resulted in motivating performers to excel in a one-of-a-kind entertainment excellence*” (Ghazzawi et al. 2013: 41).

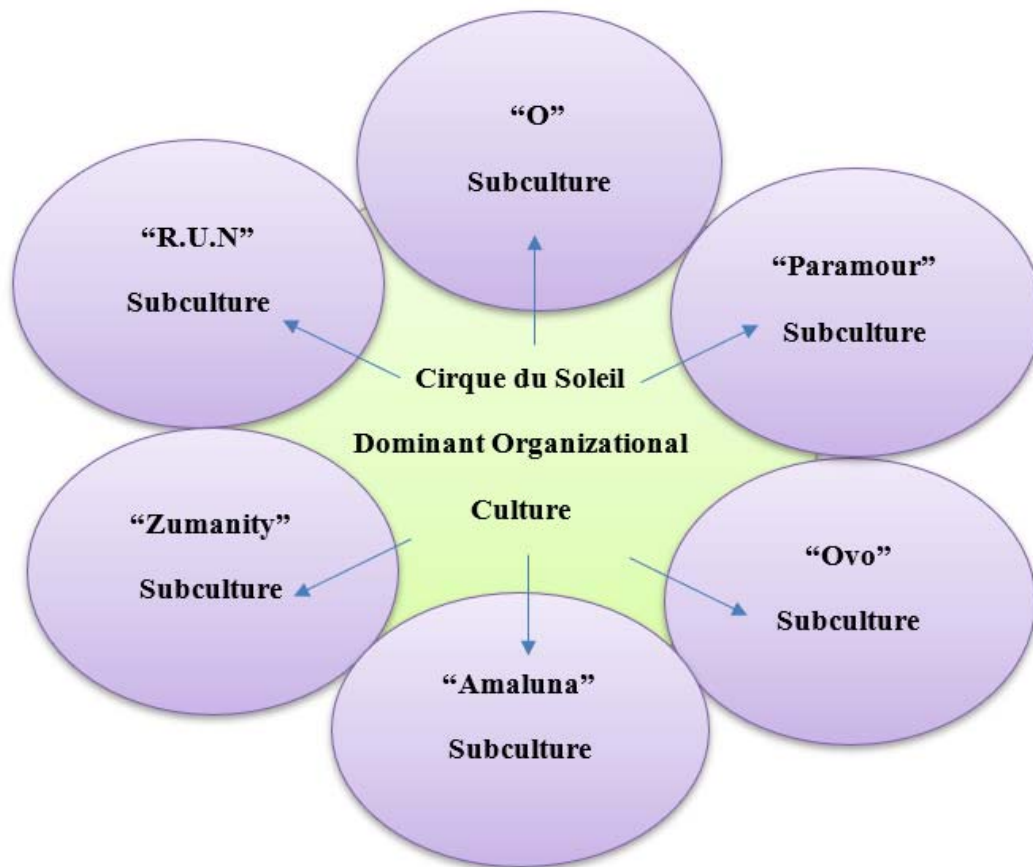
While the prescribed culture manifested the values and norms shared by Cirque's majority members, as a large company, Cirque had subcultures that were based on the characteristics of their own departments, shows, or geographical locations. See Exhibit 6 for an illustration of the organization's culture and sub-cultures as conceptualized by the author of this case.



Cirque was a company with a cause. Its people were “*citizens of the world;*” they lived and company values. They practiced it by showing joy, showing love, showing hardship, showing pain, and somehow getting people involved (Ghazzawi, et al. 2014).

### Exhibit 6. Organizational Culture and Subcultures\*

Source: Author's notes



\* **Subcultures** exist within parts of the organization rather than entirely throughout them. The above illustration does not cover all of Cirque shows, locations, or departments; it is merely meant to illustrate subcultures.

### ***Empowerment and Collaboration: Micro-Management is Not an Option***

The working environment at Cirque was good-natured, with a substantial freedom given to artists and employees. According to Dan (2012), once a Cirque theme was decided upon, Lammare and Laliberté empowered the creative director of that particular show to take over

for the purpose of developing the concept over the 2-3 years that were needed to bring the show to life. Both corporate leaders reviewed progress every 6 months,

*“but in order to encourage collaboration they do not dictate changes, simply point out what doesn’t work, and leave it to the creative director and the troupe to come up with solutions. The pair’s focus is on quality control, and making sure that the product unfolds within the original vision that they created, without micro-managing the “line executives” who are responsible for putting the show together”* (In Dan 2012: Para. 3).

Empowerment at Cirque was relevant to establishing directions and boundaries as opposed to micro-managing people. The empowerment aspect of Cirque was described by a performer who suggested:

*“We don’t have a big history of circus. When you go to Europe, they have 250 years of family circus, of circus schools, of people, for us it’s all new, so everything is merging right now ... We can still do what we want with it because it’s only 25 years old”* (in Leslie & Rantisi 2011: 1776).

As opposed to calling all the shots, managers at Cirque granted employees the autonomy to take charge of what they did. According to Grabher (In Fuchs & Shapira 2005: 65):

*“Diversity allows evolution to follow... The proliferation of a broad spectrum of different organizational forms and diverse practices - as opposed to the diffusion of a single “best practice” - provides a richer “selection environment” for regions, firms and individual actors to co-evolve.”*

As empowerment was well connected to innovation, Cirque leadership cemented this belief when stating,

*“As with any artistic endeavor, inspiration plays a big part in the creative process, but Cirque’s approach to innovation, while intuitive, is guided by a deep commitment to R&D as the catalyst of the creative spark”* (In Dan 2012: Para. 5).

The outcomes of empowerment were satisfied artists and employees who were innovative, creative in what and how they performed, and who felt a sense of achievement.

### ***Embracing Creativity and Innovation through Partnership***

To keep its creative brand fresh, Cirque believed that it was critical to strive for collaboration beyond its yellow-and-blue striped tent (Dan 2012). An important aspect of Cirque's culture was its openness to the outside world, and willingness to cooperate and embrace others' ideas. According to Leslie and Rantisi (2011: 1777),

*"the presence of interrelated and complementary industries suggest the importance of 'path interdependence'—situations where the path-dependent trajectories of different industries are mutually reinforcing."*

Cirque searched for talent all over the globe, both online and with in-country trend-spotters (Dan 2012). The company utilized a global network of talent scouts to discover new performers, and it relied on research

*"... within its own extensive archives that contained thousands of books, videos, musical scores, and images to establish accuracy of details. Scores of researchers feed information of what's "cool" and unique that allows the creative directors to determine the relevancy and appeal of the new show" (Dan 2012: Para. 5).*

Stephan Haves, a Master Teacher and Cirque consultant asserted that,

*"Technology nearly surpassed the artistry with seamless hologram projections and lasers that it becomes so immersive for the public that it has become a new generation [of entertainment]. The technology is . . . exponentially more incredible, an indication that via technology the future of the circus will be to the point of intoxication."*

Marc Gagnon, head of Enterprise Architecture at Cirque, commented on this relationship when stated:

*"Creativity and innovation are in our DNA... It's what we've been doing for decades. Using technology as a tool for intentional and frequent innovation is at the core of our strategy to become the world leader in live entertainment" (Newswire Today 2018: Para. 3).*

See Exhibit 7 for images of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI).

**Exhibit 7. Images of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)**

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/>



Cirque created on-going strategic alliance with a few entities, including Disney, artists such as Madonna (for whom it helped produced 2012 Super Bowl show, see Exhibit 8), and James Cameron (with whom it collaborated on a 3D movie, see Exhibit 9). Additionally, the company collaborated closely with engineering and art departments in as many as 17 universities where it solicited ideas from students, many of which were eventually incorporated into its shows (Dan 2012).

Equally important to Cirque's was the role of the City of Montreal where the company's head office was located. Montreal was home to the National Theatre School, the O Vertigo dance company, the world-famous Jazz Festival, and vibrant other independent music, arts, and design companies. Additionally, Montreal was recognized as the center of Canada's fashion, visual arts and design. This center of arts, design, fashion, and music had created a basin for creators and "spill-across" effects that were important to Cirque's artistic development.

**Exhibit 8. Images of Madonna 2012 Super Bowl Show**Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/>***Creativity through Teamwork and Diversity***

Collaboration was a key to Cirque's culture of creativity. Teams and teamwork were the basin of creative work at Cirque, as entertainment productions were based on collaborative efforts. Artistic show had to be done by teams. According to Ricotta (2013), the greatest competitive advantage that the company had was the diversity of its teams. Tony Ricotta, a "Zarkana" company's manager, reiterated:

*"If everybody is from the same side of the river, you are only going to look at it one way and you can't appeal to everybody if you are only looking at it from a very narrow field of vision. So everything is made up of teams. Whether it's the production team, the operations team, and the artistic team, they all come from all over the place. So there is a varied perspective and that is what gives us a competitive advantage. When we started, it was very French Canadian... Now we have the ability to reach beyond our headquarters and bring in new creators from around the globe and give them an opportunity to create in a way that they never been able to before and do some amazing things."*

Each Cirque performance required a team of people with specialized/complimentary skills who worked together to perform a unique production. According to Ghazzawi et al. (2014: 42):



*“Each production began on a storyboard with narrative development leading to an accrument of design levels not limited to lighting and stage design, gymnastic choreographers, music writers and composers, engineers and set developers, structural erectors, among other design specialists. Once developed operations took on a level of functions including auxiliary services such as catering, communications, medical services, business operations, marketing and human relations.”*

### Exhibit 9. Images of James Cameron, Cirque du Soleil Production

Source: <https://www.bing.com/images/>



For Cirque, Teams were important for the very simple reason that no one person could keep all these talented balls in the air. Additionally, performances, creative shows, and theater productions in most cases required collaborative, team-based work (Ricotta 2013). Exhibit 10 provides images of teamwork during a Cirque production. Each team member had a role of what was expected from her/him to perform. Roles at Cirque had rights and responsibilities attached to them. Team members needed to interact with each other to perform their specific roles. Accordingly, team members acquired roles through role-making and through role-taking. According to Ghazzawi et al. (2014: 41):

*“Given the diversity of merging cultures, communications among recruits and personnel was indeed challenging but certainly not impossible. Add to the mix the complexities of living arrangements and the constant adaptation required on a daily basis, one could easily imagine the critical trust requirements needed when performing highflying stunts promulgated by precarious drops and turns.”*

Cirque performers had high group efficacy; members of the performing team had a shared belief that they were able to achieve their goals and objectives as a group, in other words, “perform well together.” Said efficacy developed over time as group members came to understand each other, how the group functioned, the tasks it needed to accomplish, and the group’s capabilities (George & Jones 2012).

### Exhibit 10. Selected Images of Teamwork Performances at Cirque

Source: <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/press>



**Title:** Tabloid Junkie from Michael Jackson.  
**Picture credit:** Isaac Brekken/Getty Images.  
**Costume credit:** Zaldy Goco



**Title:** Counselor's Son and Spearmen from ONE KA  
**Picture credit:** Eric Jamison  
**Costume credit:** Marie Chantale Vaillancourt

Ricotta (2013) asserted that “the greatest competitive advantage that the company had was the diversity of its teams.” DeLong and Vijayaraghavan (2002) noted that the artists and performers originated from more than 40 countries and they spoke more than 25 different languages and dialects. Cirque was home to 4,000 employees, 500 of whom were performers who arrived from various destinations and from remote villages in Africa, China, and South America. The practice at Cirque was to allow at least two friends or family members to accompany a performer to help ease the challenges of changes in culture, language, customs, and environment (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan 2002; Ghazzawi et al. 2014).

Additionally, language (reading, speaking, and writing) courses and educational opportunities were provided for both performers and their accompanied family members. Celebrations of

cultural diversity were common at Cirque. Troupe parties were held with ethnic food and special events that reflected the company's diversity. Medical care, transportation assistance, food, social and psychological support, and living facilities were standard benefits for Cirque performers/artists.

### ***Cirque's Four Pillars of Corporate Social Responsibility "CSR"***

Cirque du Soleil established a philanthropic organization to help at-risk youth by discovering them, putting them on stage, and providing them an outlet so that they could be sheltered from life's challenges. Cirque was a company with a cause and Cirque people were "*citizens of the world.*" Cirque identified its four pillars as: "*Talent, Community, Procurement and Partnership, and Environment*" (Cirque du Soleil-d). (See Exhibit 11 for the author's conceptualized illustration of the four pillars.)

#### ***Talent***

For Cirque's "*Talent*" pillar, according to its own definition,

*"Our employees are the undeniable force on which our reputation is built. Their work environment has a great influence on their quality of life, their family life and their health. Hence, we make sure this environment is open, safe, creative and friendly"* (Cirque du Soleil-d).

Cirque emphasized employees' well-being and energy, health and safety, and access to the arts. Additionally, the company was passionate about creation. Cirque supported the local artistic community by purchasing exhibitions and shows tickets for its employees to enable them to discover new ideas. Cirque also organized the "PARADE" program, an annual exhibit to salute its employees' artistic talent. At the "PARADE," employees exhibited their artwork. The event took place at international headquarters and in a gallery in Las Vegas (Cirque du Soleil-d).

#### ***Community***

As for the "Community" pillar, the company communicated the following:

*“We strive to be a good neighbor at our offices and in the cities we visit by building relationships with communities through activities and programs that benefit at-risk youth. This cause is a natural fit for a company founded by street performers. We speak to youth in a language that is built into our DNA: art”* (Cirque du Soleil-e).

The company used art as an intervention tool to help its community. Cirque created two intervention programs for youth: *Cirque du Monde*, a program that promoted circus acts as a mean of intervention with at-risk youth, also known as the social circus; and “*Arts Nomades*,” a program that offered a pedagogical approach based on a partnership in a school setting. “*Arts Nomades*” featured a team of teaching artists working with teachers who wished to use the arts in support of academic concepts. Both programs “*used art to contribute to the personal and social development of the participants by fostering self-esteem, confidence, social skills, citizen development and creativity*” (Cirque du Soleil-e).

Cirque supported various community programs, namely “*Art Collection and Show Heritage*” and “*Montreal: City of Circus Arts*,” among others. The company encouraged its employees to participate in action-based initiatives and supported events that were meaningful to the local community. It supported the annual Run Away with Cirque du Soleil at the Springs Preserve and the 5K Run and 1-Mile Fun Walk where all proceeds supported educational and environmental programs (Cirque du Soleil-e).

### ***Procurement and Partnership***

In 2008, Cirque adopted a responsible procurement policy, with principles for environmental protection and work standards defined by the International Labor Organization. The company used responsible suppliers who shared Cirque’s Corporate Social Responsibility approach (Cirque du Soleil-f). The “*Procurement and Partnership*” Pillar was characterized as follows:

*“Cirque du Soleil has a social responsibility clause in its partnership agreements. This clause covers a set of social responsibility parameters, such as employee relations, responsible procurement, environmental protection and social and cultural action in the community”* (Cirque du Soleil-f).

## Environment

In 2006, Cirque adopted an environmental policy based on the following themes: *“water management, greenhouse gas (GHG) management, residential and hazardous waste management, and employee education and awareness building”* (Cirque du Soleil-g). To reduce its GHG emissions, Cirque connected its shows to cities' power grids whenever possible as opposed to using generators. Additionally, the company started using a light-colored canvas for its new Big Top instead of its traditional Big Top; the new canvas reflected the sun's rays, reducing air-conditioning needs (Cirque du Soleil-g).

The company became a member of the urban heating network that linked its international headquarters to the Biomont power plant in the Saint-Michel district of Montreal. The *“urban heating network transformed biogas from the landfill site of the Saint-Michel Environmental Complex into electricity. Controlled combustion of the biogas produces electricity”* (Cirque du Soleil-g). According to Cirque, the residual heat of the process was recovered, supplied the heating systems of its headquarters, and reduced its emissions by more than 1,200 tons a year (Cirque du Soleil-g).

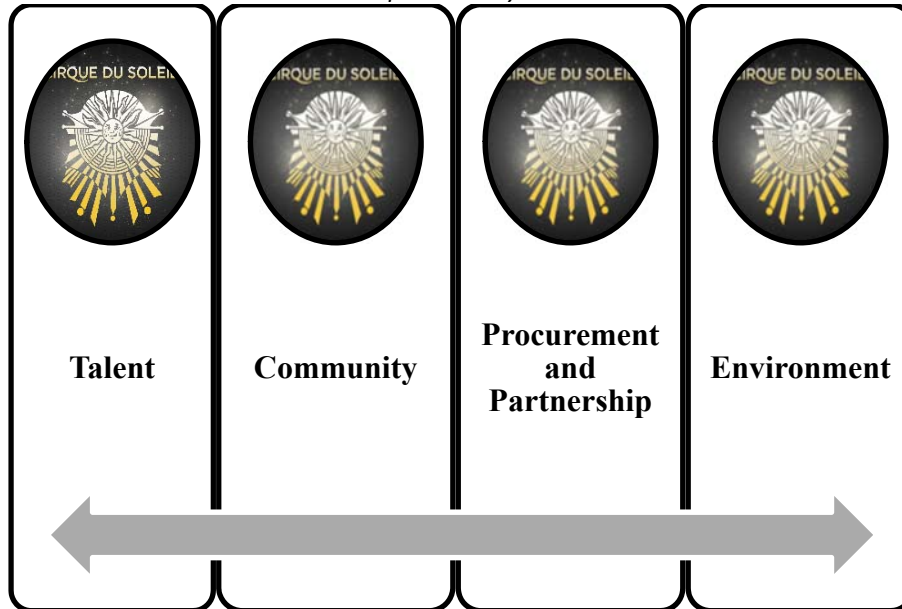
Other initiative including two-sided printing and elimination of disposable cups and dishes, reduction of water consumption, new methods and materials to increase the lifespan of costumes, and active recycling and compost (Cirque du Soleil-g).

Cirque international headquarters was certified “BOMA BEST®” Level 3. Said certification recognized the company’s environmental practices and its healthy workplace. BOMA BEST® covered six aspects: energy, water, waste reduction and sites, effluent emissions, the indoor environment, and the environmental management system (Cirque du Soleil-g).



### Exhibit 11. An Illustration of Cirque's Four Pillars "CSR"

Source: Conceptualized by the case author



### The Future of Culture and Creativity at Cirque

Laliberté's was a "talent harvester" and "cultivator of people" who was committed to developing his artists' and managers' talent while maintaining stewardship of their physical and emotional welfare. His vision for Cirque and its people "will be applied to future productions whereby he pursues and realizes ideals and creativity and hunts for the potential in individuals, while healing the very spirit of live performance" (Ghazzawi et al. 2014: 44).

Despite its historical growth and success, the company had been plagued by a series of failed shows and a decline in its profit. In 2010, Cirque cancelled *Banana Shpeel*'s scheduled run at the Golden Gate Theatre in San Francisco. After its troubled showing in New York City and Toronto, the show was dubbed as "one of the most frustrating failures in Cirque's history" by the *New York Times* (Arcand 2019). Entertainment critic Christopher Hoile wrote in his review of *Banana Shpeel*: "To remain creative, a company needs to experiment; this experiment just

*doesn't work out. It would be better for Cirque du Soleil to withdraw Banana Shpeel than flog it on tour and endanger its reputation"* (in Arcand 2019: Para. 5).

Adding to Cirque's trouble was the need to cancel five shows in 2011-12: Z and Zaya in Asia, *Saltimbanco* on Tour, Viva Elvis in Las Vegas, and Iris in California. Iris, presented at the Dolby Theater in Los Angeles, was put to rest in December 2012 due to a low audience attendance despite its positive critical reception (Baillargeon 2013). See Appendix 1 for Cirque shows. In 2012, the company announced a wave of layoffs at Montreal headquarters, including 30 head office positions (Baillargeon 2013). President Daniel Lamarre argued that said changes were necessary *"to support the sustainability"* of the company. To Lamarre, *"the situation did not seem catastrophic ... however, that after a decade of tremendous growth, global economic conditions were forcing a review of the business model"* (Baillargeon 2013, para. 6). According to Cousineau (2014):

*"Laliberté discreetly reclaimed half of the 20-per-cent stake in the Cirque du Soleil he had sold to Dubai investors in 2008 after the financial crisis in Dubai crushed their global real estate investments and turned this much publicized Cirque global expansion/partnership into a mirage. The failed expansion contributed to the Cirque's financial difficulties, which resulted in 400 layoffs in January, 2013. The financial difficulties were also felt in Las Vegas, where hotel groups gave into discounting, forcing their circus partner to follow suit, Mr. Laliberté said. The Cirque generates close to half of its \$850-million in annual revenue from its eight Vegas shows. The rising Canadian dollar, which swelled production costs, also hit the bottom line, shaving off at least \$50-million in profits per year."*

As ninety percent of Cirque du Soleil was acquired in 2015, some were questioning whether a traditional culture that valued social norms and stability would not work well with process-oriented and bottom-line requirements of the new owners. Accordingly, Daniel Lammare and Guy Laliberté were re-visiting the challenges that faced an organization during its growth cycle where Cirque culture needed to adapt to environmental changes. Cirque executives knew that the acquisition played a significant role in the survival and revitalization of the company. They for sure knew that the acquiring partners' expectations were to put in place organizational processes that would yield a reasonable return on their invested capital, gains in market share, and retention of key employees.

According to Leslie and Rantisi (2019: 264),

*“The intimate connections between performers and the audience that has also led to innovation have also been disrupted with the shift from big tops to arenas. The show creation process has become increasingly linear in a geographic and organizational sense, as aspects of creation are more tightly controlled...A standardization of work and rationalization of labor - as well as an increasingly closed script and regulated space-have created conditions whereby a growing number of young performers seek out employment at smaller, more innovative troupes... .”*

In moving forward, the big question before Cirque leadership was, how could Cirque proactively respond to the changes in its internal environment while maintaining its high creative standards, expand its appeal to a larger audience, meet its new partners' expectations, and remain loyal to its original values?



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## Appendix A Cirque du Soleil Shows

*Source: Wikipedia*

Venue	Premiere	Touring Vs. Resident	Style/Format	Status
Alegria	April 21, 1994	Touring show	* Grand Chapiteau (1994-1999, 2001-2009). Arena (2009-2013)	Retired
Alegría: In a New Light	April 18, 2019	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau	Active
Amaluna	April 19, 2012	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau	Active
Axel	April 4, 2019	Touring show	Arena	Active
Banana Shpeel	November 19, 2009	Touring show	Theatre	Retired
Bazaar	November 14, 2018	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau	Active
Corteo	April 21, 2005	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau Arena (since 2018)	Active
Criss Angel Believe	September 26, 2008	Luxor, Las Vegas	Resident (2008 — 2016)	Retired
Crystal	October 5, 2017	Touring show	Arena (since 2017)	Active
Delirium	January 26, 2006	Touring show	Arena (2006 — 2008)	Retired
Dralion	April 22, 1999	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (1999- 2010) Arena (2010-2015)	Retired
Iris	September 25, 2011	Dolby Theatre, Los Angeles	Resident (2011- 2013)	Retired
Joyà	November 8, 2014	Riviera Maya, Mexico	Resident (since 2014)	Active
Kà	November 26, 2004	MGM Grand, Las Vegas	Resident (since 2004)	Active
Koozâ	April 19, 2007	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (since 2007)	Active
Kurios: Cabinet of Curiosities	April 24, 2014	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (since 2014)	Active
La Nouba	December 23, 1998	Disney Springs, Lake Buena Vista, Florida	Resident (1998 - 2017)	Retired
Luzia	April 21, 2016	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau	Active
Messi 10	October 10, 2019	Touring show	Arena (since 2019)	Active
Michael Jackson: One	May 23, 2013	Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, Las Vegas	Resident (since 2013)	Active
Michael Jackson: The Immortal World Tour	October 2, 2011	Touring show	Arena (2011-2014)	Retired
Mystère	December 25, 1993	Treasure Island, Las Vegas	Resident (since 1993)	Active
Nouvelle Expérience	May 8, 1990	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (1990-1993)	Retired

**Appendix A, cont.**  
**Cirque du Soleil Shows**

O	October 15, 1998	Bellagio, Las Vegas	Resident (since 1998)	Active
Ovo	April 23, 2009	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (2009-2015) Arena (since 2016)	Active
Paramour	April 16, 2016	Hamburg, Germany	Theatre (2016- 2017, 2019 - present)	Active
Quidam	April 23, 1996	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (1996-2010, 2015) Arena (2009, 2010 – 2016)	Retired
R.U.N	October 24, 2019	Luxor, Las Vegas	Resident	Active
Saltimbanco	April 23, 1992	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (1992 – 2006) Arena (2007- 2012)	Retired
Séptimo Día - No Descansaré	March 9, 2017	Touring show	Arena (2017-2018)	Retired
The Beatles Love	June 2, 2006	The Mirage, Las Vegas	Resident (since 2006)	Active
Toruk - The First Flight	November 12, 2015	Touring show	Arena (2015-2019)	Retired
Totem	April 22, 2010	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (since 2010) Arena (2017)	Active
'Twas The Night Before...	November 29, 2019	The Chicago Theatre, Chicago (soft launch) and Madison Square Garden, New York City	Seasonal Theatre	Coming Soon
Varekai	April 24, 2002	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (2002 – 2013, 2017) Arena (2013 – 2017)	Retired
Viva Elvis	December 16, 2009	Aria Resort and Casino, Las Vegas	Resident (2009 – 2012)	Retired
Volta	April 20, 2017	Touring show	Grand Chapiteau (since 2017)	Active
Wintuk	November 1, 2007	Madison Square Garden, New York City	Seasonal Resident (2007 – 2011)	Retired
X (The Land of Fantasy)	August 10, 2019	Hangzhou, China	Resident (since 2019)	Active
Zaia	July 26, 2008	The Venetian Macao, Cotai Strip, Macao	Resident (2008 – 2012)	Retired
Zarkana	June 29, 2011	Aria Resort and Casino, Las Vegas	Arena (2011 – 2012) Resident (2012 – 2016)	Retired
Zed	August 15, 2008	Tokyo Disney Resort, Tokyo, Japan	Resident (2008 – 2011)	Retired
Zumanity	July 31, 2003	New York-New York, Las Vegas	Resident (since 2003)	Active

\* A “Grand Chapiteau” is literally a **mobile village**. It houses the venue as well as a kitchen, school, rehearsal space and items needed for the cast and crew.



## Appendix B

### Cirque du Soleil Important Timeline

Source: <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/press/kits/corporate/about-cirque>

#### 1984

Cirque du Soleil is born with the assistance of the Quebec government, as part of the celebrations surrounding the 450th anniversary of Jacques Cartier's arrival in Canada. The first production, *Le Grand Tour* debuts in the small Quebec town of Gaspé, and is then performed in 10 other cities throughout the province. The first blue-and-yellow big top seats 800.

#### 1985

After performing in Montreal, Sherbrooke and Quebec City, with *Le Grand Tour*, Cirque du Soleil leaves its home province for the first time to take its show to neighboring Ontario. It performs in Ottawa, Toronto and Niagara Falls and the show is simply named Cirque du Soleil.

#### 1986

Cirque du Soleil takes *La Magie Continue* across Canada, including Vancouver, where it puts on several performances at the Children's Festival and Expo 86 and in seven other Canadian cities. The big top now has room for 1,500 spectators.

#### 1987

Having triumphed in five cities in Quebec, *We Reinvent the Circus* is performed at the Los Angeles Art Festival and then moves on to San Diego and Santa Monica. Exhilarated by the Californian public's response, Cirque du Soleil is an overnight success. The participation of Cirque du Soleil at the L.A. Art Festival is not only an important milestone in its history but also its first visit to its American neighbors.

#### 1988

*We Reinvent the Circus* continues its North American tour, after a brief appearance at the Calgary Winter Olympics. Wherever it goes, the result is the same: the performances sell out, and the critics rave.

#### 1990

Montreal is the setting for the world premiere of a brand-new production, *Nouvelle Expérience*, in a new, 2,500-seat big top. With this new production, Cirque du Soleil shatters all previous records for ticket sales. Meanwhile, Cirque makes its first foray into Europe, staging *We Reinvent the Circus* in London and Paris.

#### 1992

*Fascination*, a collage of the best acts from past shows, enables Cirque to make a name for itself in Japan. The show opens in Tokyo and then moves on to seven other cities. Meanwhile, in Europe, Cirque du Soleil joins forces with Switzerland's Circus Knie and stages a show in over 60 towns throughout the country. In North America, 1992 sees Cirque du Soleil make its Las Vegas debut when *Nouvelle Expérience* kicks off a year-long engagement under a big top at the Mirage Hotel. *Cirque du Soleil* *adad*: a monument to its repertoire of shows, *Saltimbanco*. Premiering in Montreal, this latest production begins a lengthy tour of North America.

#### 1993

Following the successful Las Vegas run of *Nouvelle Expérience*, Cirque du Soleil moves into a theatre built to its specifications at the new Treasure Island Hotel. A 10-year contract is signed with Mirage Resorts to stage *Mystère*, a gigantic production befitting this show business capital.

#### 1994

Cirque du Soleil celebrates its 10th anniversary with another production, *Alegria*. True to tradition, the world premiere is held in Montreal. *Saltimbanco* embarks on a six-month run in Tokyo that attracts a great deal of attention.

#### 1995

Cirque du Soleil responds to a request from the Canadian government and creates a show for the heads of state gathered at the G7 Summit in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Also in 1995, *Saltimbanco* sets out to open officially the European market. Cirque's spectacular white big top with seating for 2,500 spectators makes its first stop in Amsterdam, followed by Munich, Berlin, Düsseldorf, and Vienna.

#### 1996

In April, Cirque launches *Quidam* in Montreal. After finishing its hometown run, *Quidam* heads off on a North American tour. Meanwhile, *Alegria* sets out to tour Japan for a few months.

## Appendix B, cont.

### Cirque du Soleil Important Timeline

#### 1997

In Montreal, the inauguration of the brand new International Headquarters is held; the Studio is now where all of Cirque's shows will be created and produced.

#### 1998

In October, the second resident show for Cirque du Soleil, "O", takes to the stage of a new theatre at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. This production is Cirque's first aquatic show and an important milestone in the company history. With this show, Cirque is now known internationally. In December of the same year, Cirque inaugurates yet another permanent show, La Nouba, at the Walt Disney World Resort near Orlando, Florida.

#### 1999

A brand-new Cirque du Soleil production, Dralion, launches its North American tour in Montreal. With Saltimbanco, Cirque sets up shop in Asia and the Pacific.

#### 2000

Movie fans come out in droves to see Cirque du Soleil on the IMAX screen for the first time ever, as its large-format film production *Journey of Man* (Passages in French), distributed by Sony Pictures Classics, premieres worldwide.

#### 2001

Cirque du Soleil keeps on growing with the inauguration of a 15, 000-square-metre addition (Les Ateliers) to its International Headquarters in Montreal.

#### 2002

In April, a fifth touring show is added to the seven Cirque du Soleil shows already performing simultaneously in 2002. *Varekai* premieres in Montreal, and from there begins a tour of North America. Cirque du Soleil made its first stop in Mexico this year with *Alegriá*. Cirque's Multimedia Division, called Cirque du Soleil Images at the time, produces its first television series, *Cirque du Soleil Fire Within*, for the Canadian and American television market.

#### 2003

The newest addition to the Cirque family, *Zumanity* is born in August. It is an adults-only resident show at the New York-New York Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. The filming of a new television series—the first to be produced entirely by Cirque du Soleil Images—is wrapped up in the late summer. This unique family TV series brings together acrobatic acts within a dramatic comedy framework. The series is aimed at international television markets, including Canada and the United States.

#### 2004

Cirque du Soleil celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2004. A number of events mark the occasion: among other things, a book is launched, entitled *20 Years under the Sun*, which recounts the unusual history of Cirque du Soleil step by step, and Cirque sets the first Guinness World Record for the largest number of stilt-walkers (544) at the same time and place. Cirque du Soleil launches a new resident show, *KÀ*, in the fall at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

#### 2005

The year 2005 is marked by the Montreal launch and world premiere of *Corteo*, Cirque's latest touring show. In July, Montreal hosts the XI FINA World Aquatic Championships, for which Cirque du Soleil creates the opening ceremony show.

#### 2006

Cirque du Soleil first-ever musical show in arena, *DELIRIUM*, premiered in Montreal in January and has begun its U.S. tour. Cirque du Soleil is also preparing a fifth permanent show in Las Vegas: *The Beatles LOVE*, which celebrates the musical legacy of the Beatles and premieres in June at The Mirage. After touring in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia, Cirque du Soleil has set out to make a name for itself in South America by presenting its show *Saltimbanco* in Chile, Argentina and Brazil in 2006. Cirque du Soleil entered into an exclusive agreement with CKX Inc.

## Appendix B, cont.

### Cirque du Soleil Important Timeline

#### 2007

KOOZA, a new touring show, is launched in Montreal in April 2007. In February, Cirque du Soleil puts on a pre-game show performance for Super Bowl XLI in Miami. In November, Cirque presents Wintuk, a show designed exclusively for the WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden in New York. Starting in 2007, this seasonal show has been performed for 10 weeks for four years. Cirque du Soleil has also launched a fiction/non-fiction book entitled *The Spark*, which invites readers to discover the power of creativity and imagination and apply it in their own lives. Written by John Bacon and based on an original idea by Lyn Heward, the book is distributed in several countries. After having toured for 14 years and being performed before more than 9.5 million spectators, *Saltimbanco* is reborn in July as it takes off on an arena tour of more than 40 cities in Canada and the U.S.

#### 2008

This was an historical year for Cirque du Soleil as the company launched three new permanent shows that year: ZAIA at The Venetian Hotel in Macau (China), ZED at the Tokyo Disney Resort in Tokyo (Japan) and *CRISS ANGEL Believe* at The Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas (United States). Cirque du Soleil also created a show-event presented at Colisée Pepsi in Quebec City in the scope of the 400th anniversary of the city. Istithmar World, the investment arm of Dubai World, and Nakheel have together acquired a 20 per cent stake in Cirque du Soleil.

#### 2009

Cirque du Soleil celebrates its 25th anniversary and launches the 25th production of its history. This new creation, *OVO* premieres in Montreal in April. The publication of a book on Cirque costumes and the launch of a double CD containing a music compilation, are among the commemorative activities of this anniversary. In September 2009, Guy Laliberté became the first Canadian private space explorer. His mission was dedicated to raising awareness on water issues facing humankind on planet earth. Under the theme *Moving Stars and Earth for Water*, this first Poetic Social Mission in space aimed at touching people through an artistic approach: a special 120-minute webcast program featuring various artistic performances unfolding in 14 cities on five continents, including the International Space Station.

#### 2010

Cirque du Soleil launches three new productions in 2010. *Viva ELVIS*, Cirque's seventh show in Las Vegas begins in February at ARIA Resort & Casino. *Banana Shpeel* is presented from November 2009 to June 27, 2010 in Chicago and New York. In April, *TOTEM*, first show designed to adapt to various performance spaces such as Big Top and arenas, celebrates its world premiere in Montreal. Cirque du Soleil, James Cameron (*Titanic*, *AVATAR*), and Andrew Adamson (*Shrek*, *Chronicles of Narnia*), joined their creative forces to develop and produce immersive theatrical 3D projects. In November, Cirque du Soleil's founder, Guy Laliberté gets a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

#### 2011

Cirque du Soleil will launch three new shows: *Zarkana*, written and directed by acclaimed film and theatre director François Girard will begin at the legendary Radio City Music Hall in New York City on June 9. Written and directed by director-choreographer Philippe Decouflé, *IRIS* created exclusively for the Dolby Theatre at the Hollywood & Highland Center will begin on July 21. The show *Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour™* written and directed by Jamie King will begin in Montreal on October 2nd.

#### 2012

Cirque du Soleil launched a new touring show in Montreal called *Amaluna*. The company has developed a new creative and production service dedicated to businesses and artists wanting to call on Cirque du Soleil's creative know-how for their projects. Within that context, Cirque du Soleil collaborated with pop star Madonna providing artistic direction services for her performance at the Super Bowl XLVI halftime show. In December, Cirque du Soleil and Bell Media created a new joint venture to develop media content for television, film, digital, and gaming platforms. Cirque du Soleil Media's mandate is to develop original entertainment projects, leveraging Cirque du Soleil's creative inventiveness and resources, consumer insight, and infrastructure, with Bell Media's production experience, media platforms, and diverse distribution capabilities.

## Appendix B, cont.

### Cirque du Soleil Important Timeline

#### 2013

Cirque du Soleil launched a new resident production inspired by pop icon Michael Jackson, *Michael Jackson ONE*, at the Mandalay Bay Hotel in Las Vegas. *Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL* show ranked among the 10 more lucrative tours of rock history, a first for a Canadian artist.

#### 2014

Cirque du Soleil celebrates its 30th anniversary and launched a new touring show in April in Montreal, *Kurios – Cabinet de curiosités*. In November, Cirque opened a new resident show in Riviera Maya (Mexico), *JOYÀ*, in a custom-designed theatre. In December, as part of its 30th anniversary, and for the first time in its history, Cirque du Soleil presents a unique, exclusive music event in Montreal celebrating 30 years of music.

In the context of an on-going strategy of diversifying its content and live-entertainment activities worldwide, Cirque du Soleil has created some 10 subsidiaries among which: 45 DEGREES, Cirque du Soleil Hospitality, Cirque du Soleil Theatrical, 4U2C, Cirque du Soleil Média and Outbox.

#### 2015

Cirque du Soleil announced an agreement under which TPG, a global private investment firm, was to acquire a majority stake in Cirque du Soleil to fuel growth and take Cirque's iconic blue and yellow big top to exciting new markets.

On December 21, Cirque du Soleil launched *TORUK – The First Flight*, an arena-touring show inspired by the world of James Cameron's history-making motion picture *AVATAR*.

#### 2016

Two new productions launched in April: *LUZIA*, a touring show under the big top inspired by the rich Mexican culture launched in Montreal, and *PARAMOUR*, a production created specifically for Broadway presented at the Lyric Theatre in New York.

#### 2017

In March, a new arena show will begin a South American tour. This show called *Sep7imo Dia* is inspired by the music of a popular band from Argentina, Soda Stereo. The most recent touring show *VOLTA*, inspired by action sports, will lift its marquee at the Old Port of Montreal in April.

The international success story known as Cirque du Soleil is, above all, the story of a remarkable bond between performers and spectators the world over. For at the end of the day, it is the spectators who spark the creative passions of Cirque du Soleil.

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