STATE OF AFFAIRS

CIRCUS ARTS IN QUEBEC AND IN CANADA

Shedding light on a paradox
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1. INTRODUCTION: SHEDDING LIGHT ON AN IMPORTANT PARADOX

1.1 A GRAND TRADITION: THE CIRCUS THROUGHOUT THE AGES AND AROUND THE WORLD

The circus arts have a long and rich tradition. Primarily developed in the West, they have many historical roots: ancient Greece and Rome, troubadours, tumblers and other public entertainers in the Middle Ages. As well, a great number of circus techniques have origins in the Far East, which over time spread to the West by means of the Silk Road.¹

The traditional circus appeared in Europe in the 18th century with acrobatic and military equestrian displays that were performed in a ring. This “traditional” circus featured a series of independent physical acrobatic numbers, with comic relief provided by clowns in between acts. The performers’ skill and the danger of the shows struck a chord with the public. With its popular appeal and the celebrity of the big circus families, the circus was immensely popular up until the early 1920s and the development of the modern media (gramophone, radio, talking pictures).

In was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the circus arts experienced a revival, which in many places, including France, Quebec, Australia and California, resulted in the emergence a new circus, one influenced by the major movements and public events of the time. Inspired by the creation of circus schools, artistic collectives, circus troops, etc., this trend was characterized by a more intimate circus with stronger narratives, in which the performance becomes an idea in motion. The use of menageries was called into question, and the circus ring became a breeding ground of artistic disciplines: dance, theatre, music, multimedia, etc.

1.2 EVOLUTION OF THE CIRCUS IN QUEBEC AND CANADA

The first circus performances in Canada were held at the very end of the 18th century in Montreal. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, a number of traditional circuses toured around Quebec, without creating a real tradition.

The turmoil and excitement of the 1960s and 1970s in Canada, particularly in Quebec (Expo, the Olympics, the Superfrancofête de Québec, etc.), helped open our society to the world. It was during this period that we witnessed the emergence of street performers and collectives.

In the early 1980s, two major players in the Canadian circus revival arrived on the scene: the National Circus School, which contributed to the democratization of this art, and Cirque du Soleil. Since then, the circus arts have come into their own and flourished. From this core group, a real circus community has sprung up, a community made up of artists, companies, organizations, structures and networks that have common concerns and support the development of their discipline.

Here are some milestones in the evolution of the circus arts in Canada:

- 1974: Creation of the Théâtre de l'Aubergine in Quebec City, with a focus on theatrical clowning;
- 1981: Creation of the National Circus School in Montreal;
- 1984: Creation of Cirque du Soleil;

¹ Jacob, Pascal, A Brief History of the Circus Arts, National Circus School, [consulted online], [www.enc.qc.ca] (July and August 2007).
• 1986: Creation of the Halifax International Busker Festival in Nova Scotia, a major international festival showcasing street performers;
• 1988: Creation of the École de cirque de Verdun;
• 1993: Creation of Cirque Éloize;
• 1995: Creation of the École de cirque de Québec;
• 1996: Creation of En Piste, the national association of circus arts professionals;
• 1999: The Estates General on Circus Arts is held at the initiative of En Piste;
• 2001: Official recognition of the circus arts by the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ) as a separate artistic discipline;
• 2002: Creation of the 7 Fingers collective;
• 2002: Creation of the Toronto International Circus Festival;
• 2004: TOHU, Montreal's Cité des arts du cirque, is founded by En Piste, Cirque du Soleil and the National Circus School; TOHU is now one of the world’s largest centres for circus arts training, creation, production, performance and promotion;
• 2007: Second Estates General on Circus Arts is held.

With the incredible growth of the circus arts over the past thirty years, Montreal and Quebec have emerged as leaders on the national and international stage. This is no longer an emerging, but rather a developing sector. Although it does not have a long history, circus in Canada has some strong resources that need to be maintained and consolidated in order to promote and enhance its creativity, talents and expertise.
1.3 IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN: CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

The first thing that comes to mind when talking about the circus arts is certainly Cirque du Soleil. How could it be otherwise?

Cirque du Soleil, the largest theatrical producer in the world, is the unchallenged world leader in circus arts, generating $620 million in revenues. The company has 3,800 employees on five continents, including 1,000 artists. In 2007, it presented 15 different shows simultaneously that were seen by close to 10 million spectators. As an important ambassador of Quebec's creativity and technical and artistic expertise, the company has made Quebec a world reference of the contemporary circus and one of the largest exporters of this art form. The trailblazing Cirque du Soleil has certainly given the public a taste for the circus, setting off a circus craze both here and in the rest of the world. In 2008, Cirque du Soleil will be included in the proper nouns section of the dictionary *Le Petit Larousse illustré.*

It is important to remember that Cirque du Soleil did not come into being on its own and without support. Clearly, it was the child of creative visionaries, but from the very beginning Cirque du Soleil received sufficient resources to ensure its development, including $7 million in government funding between 1984 and 1991. Looking back, it is easy to see that the public investment has proven highly profitable.

Naturally, the Canadian circus community rejoices in the tremendous success of Cirque du Soleil and recognizes its undeniable and immeasurable contribution to the growth and reputation of the Canadian circus, which would not be where it is now without Cirque du Soleil.

A source of great pride, Cirque du Soleil is, for many people, their only point of reference when it comes to the circus and, too often, their only concept of the circus arts.

However, the circus does not begin and end with Cirque du Soleil. As mentioned earlier, this company is definitely in a class of its own. This is why it is impossible to compare it to what is happening in the rest of the Canadian circus community. The gap between these two realities is just too large, making any comparison implausible and unreasonable.

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2 Cirque du Soleil, [consulted online], [www.cirquedusoleil.com] (July and August 2007).
1.4 THE OTHER REALITY: THE CANADIAN CIRCUS COMMUNITY

There is no doubt about it: there is such as thing as Canadian circus beyond Cirque du Soleil, and it is alive and well. Quebec and Canada are teeming with independent artists, collectives, small and large circus companies, each with their own artistic signature. For some years now, the circus arts in Canada have experienced a rapid and incredible explosion, in large part because of the large, dedicated and well-organized circus community, the public’s increasing appetite for this artistic discipline, and the international influence and recognition of the creativity, excellence and expertise of Quebecois circus.

However, although some companies may seem to be active and prosperous, what is the reality? They perform internationally, but what about in Quebec? In Canada? Is the Canadian public being kept waiting, hungry for circus performances that are rarely staged in Canada?

Ironically, the circus community is suffering from its apparent “good health” owing to the presence and influence of Cirque du Soleil. Because of its size and huge influence, Cirque du Soleil is distorting the facts, through no fault of its own. This distortion gives rise to and feeds several misconceptions about the circus arts sector in Canada, particularly in terms of funding and the dissemination of works.

When we expose the real situation, we see a circus community that is profoundly misunderstood and suffers from lack of recognition of the reality and diversity of Canadian circus arts. The community is running out of steam, forced to survive by squandering its energy and resources. The circus, our circus, is not recognized as its own, distinct artistic discipline by most political and decision-making authorities. This means that the circus community must unnecessarily quadruple its efforts to move forward, exhausting its resources and creative energies. This deplorable situation has repercussions for the entire sector.

The community is very concerned about this blatant lack of recognition, for which it is paying the price and which greatly impedes its development. The entire circus community, without exception, agrees that this priority issue is central the sector’s development problem. It now wishes, once and for all, to lift the veil on this paradox in order to address these entrenched misconceptions, which are seriously undermining Canada’s circus arts sector.
1.5 NEED FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION: RAISING OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE

In the current context where the existence, reality and diversity of the Canadian circus are seriously underrated, and where the growth of the circus arts is an international phenomenon that has created a competitive environment, it is more important than ever that the Canadian circus be fully recognized and that it receive the support it needs to preserve its resources and vitality. It needs consolidation and development tools to provide new momentum and ensure its diversity and long-term survival. These tools must address all aspects of the growth of the circus arts, through support for these organizations’ operations and the specific stages of creation, production and distribution.

Given that urgent action is required, En Piste, the national circus arts association, held the second Estates General on Circus Arts in Quebec and Canada on April 18 and 19. This unique event, Les arts du cirque dans tous leurs états [The circus arts up in arms], was attended by close to 100 circus professionals, most of them members of En Piste (independent artists; performance companies; organizations providing professional, preparatory or recreational training; arts presenters; provider organizations), as well as representatives from political and cultural agencies (current and potential partners).

The Estates General were an excellent opportunity for the community to exchange views, rally its forces and develop a united voice on the major issues of development, creation, production and presentation in order to assess the current situation of circus arts and the sector’s future.

There were two parts to the event. On the first day, participants were consulted during workshops, which made it possible to identify the trends and challenges of the development of circus arts, as well as measures to be taken to meet these challenges. The results of these consultations were presented on the second day to various political and cultural representatives and members of En Piste.

In light of the results from the 2007 Estates General and in order to gain full recognition for the circus arts, En Piste, with the support of its 300 members from across the circus sector, wanted to record the common concerns expressed by the community at the Estates General. Everybody wants these views to be heard in order to ensure that this unique sector continues to thrive.

Armed with this tool, En Piste will continue its efforts to promote and increase awareness of the circus arts, to raise its profile with politicians and decision-making authorities, to increase funding, and to position the circus arts in the arts and culture landscape of Quebec and Canada.
2. OVERVIEW OF THE CIRCUS ARTS IN CANADA

The circus is a form of artistic expression with a rich potential for diversity. The multidisciplinary and eclectic nature of the sector makes it unique. It brings together into the same ring various artistic and acrobatic disciplines, which are divided into six main techniques:

- acrobatics;
- manipulation;
- balance;
- clowning arts;
- aerial;
- equestrian arts.

In addition, circus artists and companies are characterized according to

- genre: multidisciplinary, single discipline
- legal status: independent artists, collectives, non-profit organizations, for-profit companies, companies with more than one status
- size of production: solo, duo, small companies, large companies, etc.
- market: festivals, events (public or private), etc.
- presentation space: theatre, street, big top, etc.

The circus offers a wide range of possibilities, but a work may claim to be circus arts when it is connected to the ring through the discipline or genre. With a focus on the creative intent, the circus is continually renewing itself, nurtured and enriched by a rich diversity of artistic forms and disciplines, such as theatre, dance, music, multimedia, etc. The expression of an idea or an emotion is only limited by the creator's imagination. With the explosion of genres, the proliferation of aesthetics and the crossbreeding of approaches, the circus has become an art form with a plural and authentic language. "The circus' imagination is much greater than its reality [translation]." This circus vocabulary is unique. "If there is a common message in all circus forms, it is always this: everything is possible. When we watch a trapeze artist, we tell ourselves that human beings will fly [translation]." The Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec defines the discipline as follows: "The circus arts encompass forms of expression in which the mastery of one or more circus techniques is essential and in respect of which the practice, language and works are aimed, first and foremost, at the renewal of this artistic discipline." The circus practice is demanding and requires mastery over gestural and body expression, which requires rigorous training. Circus artists are completely dedicated to their art.

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3 Kludak, Bernard, Cirque Plume, comments recorded by Laurent Gachet, Arts de la Piste n°13, April 1999, [consulted online], [www.cirqueplume.com] (August 2007).
5 Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, [consulted online], [www.calq.gouv.qc.ca] (August 2007).
Over the years, Canadian circus artists and companies have developed an organized and active community that is committed to the growth and expansion of the circus. Currently in Quebec and in Canada, there are:⁶

- around forty **circus companies** and hundreds of **professional circus artists** in Quebec; a number of these have been very successful, two examples being Cirque Éloize and The 7 Fingers;

- more than 5 **social-change** organizations (Cirque du Monde, Artcirq, Dr Clown, Clowns Sans Frontières, Fondation Éloize, etc.);

- twenty or so **schools** that provide **professional, preparatory and recreational training**, including the National Circus School, École de cirque de Québec, École de cirque de Verdun, not to mention the wide range of circus **recreational activities**;

- around ten corporate event **production agencies**;

- around twenty **festivals and special events** dedicated to the circus arts;

- a specialized **location for circus arts presentation**, TOHU;

- a **national association of circus arts professionals**, En Piste, which currently has around 300 members.

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⁶ Data based on En Piste’s membership, 2007.
3. A SECTOR WITH GREAT STRENGTHS

3.1 GROWING PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE CIRCUS

The circus arts are now attracting a bigger and broader audience. They provide unique opportunities for meetings between artists and the public. One good example is *Loft* by The 7 Fingers, a show in which spectators were welcomed on stage by the artists themselves, after going through a refrigerator, and where they were invited to share apple pie with the performers after the show. The universality of the circus arts means they have the power to break the isolation, to bring different cultural or ethnic communities together, and to develop intergenerational links. The circus brings people together and is a meeting point. In addition, through this meeting, the spectator experiences the full gamut of human emotions, from fear to wonder, from laughter to tears.

There is great market potential for the circus arts, both domestically and internationally, because of the growing demand and ever-increasing public interest in this artistic discipline. While the total number of performances for all performing arts dropped by 5.4% between 2003-04 and 2004-05, the number of circus and magic shows increased significantly by 64.9% during this same period. Along with song (3.8% increase), this was the only performing arts sector that experienced an increase in performances during the reference period. Between 2005 and 2006, the circus registered a smaller increase in the total number of performances, only 2.6%, but an increase nonetheless.

As well, we should point out that in Quebec, the occupancy rate in 2006 for circus and magic shows was 82.7%, which is significantly greater than for all variety (75.8%) and all performing arts (71.6%). On average, the halls are fuller for circus performances than for any other type of show (theatre, song, music, comedy, dance, etc.). In addition, the circus arts sector had the highest occupancy rate of paying attendance in 2006. The table below provides details about this data.

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8 Institut de la statistique du Québec, Observatoire de la culture et des communications, [consulted online], [www.stat.gouv.qc.ca] (July and August 2007).

9 The occupancy rate is the percentage of the number of spectators compared to the number of tickets available.

10 Institut de la statistique du Québec, Observatoire de la culture et des communications, [consulted online], [www.stat.gouv.qc.ca] (July and August 2007).
## Occupancy rate for performing arts and variety performances by show genre, Quebec, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Occupancy rate</th>
<th>Occupancy rate of paying attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>75,5 %</td>
<td>63,5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circus and magic</strong></td>
<td><strong>82,7 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>76,2 %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Comedy and Music-Hall</td>
<td>72,0 %</td>
<td>60,8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – Variety</strong></td>
<td><strong>75,8 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>65,1 %</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>72,1 %</td>
<td>62,9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>69,2 %</td>
<td>55,9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>64,9 %</td>
<td>52,3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>71,5 %</td>
<td>59,1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>75,8 %</td>
<td>65,1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total – Performing Arts</strong></td>
<td><strong>71,6 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>60,3 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, Observatoire de la culture et des communications.

TOHU, which houses the first circular performance hall in Canada specifically designed for the circus arts, is a key player in the community in terms of presentation and promotion, and it also functions as a veritable laboratory. Its commitment to the circus community is evident in its resident shows, as well as the services it provides to professionals and its public exhibits. Since it opened in June 2004, close to 300,000 visitors have taken part in TOHU activities. TOHU has:

- presented 18 series of circus performances in a variety of styles and forms, including 6 from outside Canada, which were seen by 115,000 spectators
- presented 11 temporary exhibits about the circus in its exhibition hall, in addition to the permanent Terra Cirqua exhibit;
- provided professional artists with 12,500 hours of free training and artist and production residencies
- supported 28 succession initiatives through artist and production residencies.

The circus enjoys a certain public appeal, and it is an ideal meeting place for everyone. This social phenomenon unites differences through the universal language of emotions.

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11 Data from TOHU, 2007.
3.2 INFLUENCE AND RECOGNITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Circus works are unique in that they have universal appeal and are easily exported, in part because there are no language barriers. Over the years, Quebec has carved out a unique and privileged role on the international stage in the circus arts sector. Its circus community is one of the most mobile in the world and is constantly included in networks, festivals and prestigious events on all continents, which increases the potential longevity of each work presented through these international networks. Quebec’s creativity, expertise and artistic and technical know-how in the circus arts are recognized around the world. “Quebec has become a capital of circus development. Clearly, it has an influence, an international reputation and an impact on the audiences [translation].”

This situation is not foreign to Cirque du Soleil, which has played a huge role in making Quebec a world leader in the contemporary circus and the biggest exporter of this art form.

The Quebec circus is often solicited and used as the ideal ambassador to promote our culture, our creativity and our artistic and technical know-how. “The international success of teams of circus arts creators from Quebec is an excellent showcase for Quebec’s cultural originality and vitality [translation].” By 2001, the Government of Quebec wanted to help “the circus arts industry become more competitive in order to conquer new markets and position Montreal as the international capital of the new circus [translation],” through its support for the expansion and relocation of the National Circus School.

As a result, Cirque du Soleil is not the only one that enjoys an international reputation. Other artists, companies and organizations are making Quebeckers proud. Here are just a few examples:

- **Cirque Éloize** has toured its productions over a total of 800,000 kilometres, which is 20 times around the earth. The show NOMADE alone toured for 5 years, to 129 cities and 17 countries, for a total of 707 international performances (500,000 spectators), 42 in English-speaking Canada (60,000 spectators) and 73 in Quebec (50,000 spectators). In addition, Cirque Éloize was involved in the theatrical design for the closing ceremonies for the 2006 Olympic Games in Turin, which was seen by 1.5 million television viewers.

- **The 7 Fingers** currently has 4 shows on tour. Altogether, it has presented around 600 shows since 2002, including 100 shows in New York in summer 2007.

- **Cavalia** has presented over 800 shows to 1.5 million spectators in four years of touring.

- The National Circus School has gained a reputation for excellence around the world and has become one of the most influential reference points for training circus artists and instructors. It is the only institution in North America to offer a complete professional training program that leads to a college diploma. Since it was established in 1981, the National Circus School has trained more than 300 professional circus artists who work or who have worked in various international circuses.

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15 Data from Cirque Éloize, 2007.
16 Data from The 7 Fingers, 2007.
17 Cavalia, [consulted online], [www.cavalia.net] (August 2007).
18 Data from the National Circus School, 2007.
• All the independent artists from Quebec, who are often invited to perform their numbers abroad (cabaret, festivals, special events, television, etc.).

Lastly, we should note that Quebec’s circus community has received many prestigious awards and citations at the local, national and international levels. At international circus festivals alone, our circus artists have won close to one hundred awards.¹⁹

3.3 A MAJOR ECONOMIC FORCE IN QUEBEC

3.3.1 Employment

The circus is a veritable sector of the economy in and of itself. The Conseil québécois des ressources humaines en culture (CQRHC), which acknowledges that the circus market is booming all over the world, particularly in Quebec, finds that the circus “is now the principal vehicle for the development of stage production jobs. This growth has tremendous spinoffs in terms of employment for creators and stage technicians [translation].”²⁰ Obviously, the circus arts are not the sole domain of artists; this sector also attracts a variety of other professionals, all of them indispensable: designers, choreographers, directors, producers, trainers, coaches, presenters, administrators, technicians, riggers, suppliers, etc. The circus has created an entire industry of specialized services in Quebec.

There can be no denying that the circus has economic benefits for our province. It is estimated that the circus arts sector alone created around 4,000 jobs in Quebec in 2006.²¹ Of course, Cirque du Soleil is a key employer in this sector and a powerful magnet for artists and artisans from the circus community and other artistic disciplines. It surrounds itself with the most well-known and respected creators in the country: Robert Lepage, René Richard Cyr, François Barbeau, Dominic Champagne, François Girard, Gilles Maheu, Michel Cusson, etc. However, it is not the only player in the circus community. In a much more tenuous position, many artists have decided to produce their own works independently, while relatively stable jobs are created by other circus organizations and companies. For example, Cirque Éloize has a team of 55 full-time employees, including 35 artists;²² The 7 Fingers is made up of 30 people with a unique production style, the collective;²³ and, the National Circus School has a teaching and artistic team of over 60 teachers and artistic advisors, in addition to its management and administrative staff.

It should also be noted that, in Montreal’s Villeray/Saint-Michel/Parc-Extension District, 3.4% of all local employment is in the circus community. This neighbourhood houses the Cité des arts du cirque, a true circus centre that “[alone] provides more than 1,500 jobs in the District, making the arts and performance industry one of the most active economic sectors in the neighbourhood [translation].”²⁴ The establishment of the Cité des arts du cirque in Montreal has had a significant positive impact, particularly through its involvement in the social and economic renewal of the Saint-Michel neighbourhood. “The establishment of Cirque du Soleil and the Cité des arts du cirque on the site [of the former Miron landfill] is beginning to change the face of this neighbourhood [translation],” noted one observer in 2004.²⁵

¹⁹ Data from En Piste, 2007.
²¹ Estimate from data gathered by En Piste, 2006.
²² Data from Cirque Éloize, 2007.
²³ The 7 Fingers, [consulted online], [www.les7doigtsdelamain.com] (September 2007).
²⁴ Ville de Montréal, Arrondissement de Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension, [consulted online], [www.ville.montreal.qc.ca] (August 2007).
3.3.2 Ticket sales revenues

According to the Observatoire de la culture et des communications, in 2006 the variety sector, which includes the circus, was the top performing sector in terms of ticket sales revenues, even surpassing song. In fact, the circus arts alone generated $70.7 million, which is 35.6% of the total ticket sales revenues for the large performing arts sector. In comparison, song generated 32.8%, theatre 16.0%, music 12.1%, and dance 3.1%. The following table shows this information in detail.

Paying performances and ticket sales revenues in the performing arts by show genre, Quebec, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Theatre</th>
<th>Dance</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of performances</td>
<td>5,973</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>2,223</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>16,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket sales revenues excluding taxes</td>
<td>$31.7M</td>
<td>$6.1M</td>
<td>$23.9M</td>
<td>$65.3M</td>
<td>$70.7M</td>
<td>$198.7M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, Observatoire de la culture et des communications.

It is particularly interesting to note that the circus and magic genre alone generated almost one third (30.7%) of all ticket sales revenues in the variety sector, and 10.9% of all ticket sales revenues in the performing arts sector. The table below presents detailed data for the variety sector.

26 L’Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec includes comedy, circus and magic, and musical comedy and music-hall in the variety sector.
27 Institut de la statistique du Québec, Observatoire de la culture et des communications, [consulted online], [www.stat.gouv.qc.ca] (July and August 2007).
28 Excludes certain types of paying performances: private performances, amateur productions and performances presented in primary or secondary schools for these students. Also excluded from these figures are performances, for which admission is granted with a valid pass for a festival or event, and performances for which audience members pay a cover charge.
29 Le total inclut les spectacles de discipline inconnue ; il se peut donc qu’il n’égale pas la somme des cinq disciplines.
30 The Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec includes circus and magic in its statistics.
### 3.4 Human and Social Impact of the Circus

In addition to its creative and economic contributions and its unifying power, we cannot ignore the significant human and social impact that the circus arts have had, since these are clearly inclusive. At a very fundamental level, the circus is a collective adventure, in which all possibilities are impossible without the others. Its basic values are solidarity, mutual assistance, sharing, trust, team spirit, creativity and imagination, which it practices at every moment to ensure the success of the performance and the survival of the artists. In addition to trust and achievement, the feeling of camaraderie is an integral part of the circus life.

Given the very nature of this discipline, the circus arts are increasingly being used as a tool for social change and integration and for alternative education: with troubled youth, people who are ill, economically disadvantaged populations, etc. Some examples include:

- **Cirque du Monde**, developed through the partnership of Jeunesse du Monde and Cirque du Soleil, uses circus arts workshops to provide at-risk youth with the opportunity to forge new links with the communities from which they are alienated.\(^{31}\)
- **Dr Clown** works in Canadian hospitals to improve the quality of life of patients through its programs of therapeutic clowning which involve cooperation, fun and imagination.\(^{32}\)
- **Clowns Sans Frontières** is a humanitarian organization that crosses borders in order to improve the living conditions of disadvantaged children, victims of war and misery in the world, and to bring them laughter, hope and a touch of humanity.\(^{33}\)
- Lastly, **Artcirq**, the arctic circus, has been developing circus initiatives for almost ten years with youth in the Inuit community of Igloolik in Nunavut, with the goal of suicide prevention, by providing them with a means of expression and communication tools.\(^{34}\)

As for Quebec's circus schools, many of these are very involved in their community. For example, through its social circus program, the École de cirque de Gaspé works with the region’s youth in the areas of social reintegration and dropout

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31 Cirque du Soleil, [consulted online], [www.cirquedusoleil.com/cirquecitoyen] (October 2007).
32 Dr Clown, [consulted online], [www.drclown.ca] (August 2007).
33 Clowns Sans Frontières, [consulted online], [www.clownsf.com] (August 2007).
34 Artcirq, [consulted online], [www.artcirq.org] (August 2007).
prevention. The École de cirque de Verdun, located in an economically and socially vulnerable part of the Montreal, has a mandate to make the circus arts available to all. Lastly, the École de cirque de Québec plays an active role with youth centres and people with autism.

The circus is an art form that is socially engaged in its community, with people at its centre. A promoter of social cohesion, a catalyst for self-esteem and personal achievement: these are all reasons to increase the significant positive impact of these unique experiments in social circus.

3.5 CIRCUS ARTS PREPARATION AND TRAINING: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Just as the circus represents an important tool for social change and alternative education, we also recognize that this discipline fosters child development. This “play-based cognitive intervention,” the circus, helps develop the child’s curiosity, determination, desire to learn, concentration, motor skills and coordination, in addition to the aforementioned values. According to Québec en Forme, the circus arts would adequately respond to the child’s requirements in terms of psychomotor development. Researchers confirm this: “the circus seems to be a good medium for children. It requires psychomotor skills and imagination, organizational planning and it uses the five senses. Moreover, the circus provides structured activity based on effort and determination.”

In Quebec and in Canada, more and more schools, day camps and recreational organizations are including the circus arts in their programming for children and youth. This is in addition to the programs offered by circus schools:

Circus schools:

- There are around twenty schools that provide professional, preparatory and recreational training in Canada; including the National Circus School, École de cirque de Québec, École de cirque de Verdun, not to mention the many circus recreational activities;
- Every year, 15,000 young people attend the École de cirque de Verdun, in all categories of training.
- An average of 1,200 young people every year register in the regular program of the École de cirque de Québec.

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36 Québec en Forme is a non-profit organization whose goal is “to support local communities to implement sustainable participation in physical and sports activities, in order to contribute to the improvement of the global health and autonomy of children ages 4 to 12, with priority on the underprivileged.” Québec en Forme, [consulted online], [www.quebecenforme.org] (September 2007).
38 Data from En Piste, 2007.
School and extracurricular (recreational) settings:

- More than 170 primary and secondary schools in Quebec use some aspect of circus arts in their after-school programs or physical education classes. Some schools offer a circus studies program that enables young people to prepare for auditions for one of the biggest circus schools in the world, the National Circus School.
- A number of universities offer introductory courses in the circus arts as part of a bachelor’s program in physical education.
- In total, Canada has 26 schools and organizations that offer circus-related recreational programs, 15 of these in Quebec. More than 70 camps (mostly summer camps) in Canada have a circus arts focus, including 34 in Quebec.

As a conservative estimate, around 100,000 children and youth in Quebec are introduced to the circus arts every year. This raises expectations because not only do the training facilities represent the critical foundations for developing and achieving professional calibre in the circus arts, but they also raise awareness and develop future audiences. Recreational and school activities in circus arts should therefore be more structured and better supported (for example, by training instructors) in order to increase the accessibility and quality of the circus and, in so doing, prepare for the future and ensure the sustainability of the circus in Quebec.
4. A SECTOR FACING MAJOR PROBLEMS

As we saw earlier, the circus arts in Canada has many strengths to draw from in terms of development. However, the sector is facing some major problems, which were discussed at length by participants at the 2007 Estates General on Circus Arts. This event provided circus professionals with an opportunity to share their views on the major trends and challenges for the development of circus arts, and on the three inextricably linked stages of creating, producing and presenting a work.

In addition to the lack of recognition by various orders of government that we mentioned earlier, the following is a summary of the major conclusions of participants’ discussions.

4.1 INSUFFICIENT FUNDING AND AWARENESS ABOUT THE REALITY AND DIVERSITY OF CANADIAN CIRCUS

The ignorance about the reality and diversity of the circus arts in Canada and the lack of full recognition for the discipline are, as we saw in the introduction, at the very centre of the sector’s development problem. This is one of the reasons that the circus arts sector is seriously underfunded, a situation exacerbated by the fact that some circus organizations are not eligible for tax credits from the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles du Québec (SODEC) and cannot gain legal status as charitable organizations. There is also a lack of consistency and follow-up between the stages of creation, production and presentation in the existing support programs. More often than not, artists and companies are in difficult financial and professional situations, basing their development, if not survival, on corporate contracts and international contracts. For example, in order to make ends meet, a large company such as Cirque Éloize is forced to generate approximately 15 to 20% of its annual revenues from corporate shows. This deceptive good news actually reveals the need for companies and independent artists to invest some of their resources and energy in activities other than creation.

The fact that existing support programs are ill adapted to the sector’s requirements stems from a lack of understanding and recognition of the reality and diversity of the circus arts in Canada. On the surface, everything seems to be going well. However, as we saw earlier, the sector is severely affected by a deep and persistent misunderstanding: the misconceptions about the circus arts sector in Canada are obscuring the truth. In shedding light on its real situation, we see a vulnerable circus community that is running out of steam, limited in its development and forced to survive by expending and exhausting its resources and energies, always asked to be in two places at once.

4.2 CREATION AND PRODUCTION: INEQAUATE SUPPORT

In terms of creation and production, the problems facing the circus community come down to a clear lack of support at various levels:

- In the circus, the processes of creation and production are inextricably linked; these two aspects form a whole. The artists must be involved from the beginning of the creative process, since they are a living instrument, the raw material. Current funding and support programs do not reflect this reality, and in some of these programs there is a lack of consistency between these steps, marketing and presentation.

- There is not enough funding for the creative stage; for example, living expenses are inadequate. The support provided by funding agencies does not adequately reflect the timing and requirements for this stage of developing a work. The key steps of creation and research often place circus artists in a tenuous position. The uncertainty of the professional practice of the circus arts is also associated with the career transition (short duration of the career) and physical integrity (recovery, maternity, etc.) of artists.

- There is also a lack of funding at the production level. Producers are constantly in a precarious position, since they have no room to manoeuvre. In fact, they assume all of the risks for each production. Sharing the risk would ease their burden and ensure proper support for this critical stage in the development of a circus work.

- The production stage involves huge costs that are not easily absorbed, particularly because of the difficulty of forming partnerships and developing co-productions (government, sponsors, presenters, etc.).

- The research and development for new equipment is very expensive.

- The lack of research and development initiatives is one of the things that make aesthetic, creative and technical renewal difficult.

- There is a lack of infrastructure for the creation and production of circus works. Of course, the artists, creators and producers can apply for TOHU’s residency programs, but this does not reflect the diversity of circus expression nor the community’s varied needs. A number of existing facilities could be better adapted and utilized for these stages by members of the circus community (theatres, cultural centres, etc.).
4.3 THE CHALLENGE OF BREAKING INTO PRESENTER NETWORKS

The circus arts face the major challenge of breaking into Canadian presenter networks. Currently, the lack of networks that present circus arts in Quebec and Canada is a huge obstacle to the development and expansion of the circus in Canada. Presenters’ lack of knowledge about the circus is limiting the community’s ability to tour and increase its visibility. For this reason, and because companies cannot guarantee their artists long-term employment, many companies are forced to export all of their productions in order to ensure their survival. One very revealing example of the current situation is the fact that Cirque Éloize gave 380 performances in 2005, including 20 in Quebec; in 2006, only one of its 311 performances was in Quebec.\(^40\) This situation unfortunately does not meet the expectations of the Quebec public, which has very limited access to varied circus performances. This is all the more unacceptable since, in Canada, there are:

- More than 300 presenters capable of presenting circus works, including 127 in Quebec;
- More than 400 performance halls that could accommodate a circus production, 180 of which are located in Quebec;
- Approximately 90 festivals and special events that have circus components, including 25 in Quebec.

On top of this, the circus is seriously constrained by the fact that self-presentation is not really recognized by funding agencies, nor is the use of the big top in Quebec towns and cities. In fact, a circus work can be presented in a variety of ways. Currently, the most popular are presentations in performance halls and on the street. However, we must also not forget about the “caravan and big top” tours, which are less common but which have a long circus tradition, dating back to the time when the circus was a family affair. The great advantage of the big top, which was temporarily set up in a village or neighbourhood, was its ability to reach a large audience that would not otherwise come to the circus. In Quebec, very few circuses tour this way. Productions Éclats de Rire\(^41\) is one of these. The company, which tours with twenty members, managed the amazing feat of giving 58 performances for more than 10,000 spectators in 2007.\(^42\) This type of presentation is not encouraged nearly enough, especially by funding agencies. Its special situation requires a different type of financial support. Unfortunately, existing public funding is inadequate, ill adapted and hard to access.

There is only one presenter in Canada that specializes in the circus arts: TOHU. This is a definite asset for the circus community on a number of levels (presentation, promotion, audience development, etc.). However, the existence of TOHU acts as a smoke screen by creating and nurturing the false illusion that, because there is a special performance hall, all of the community’s needs have been met and that the circus no longer has to do performances elsewhere. The circus comes in a variety of forms, and a single performance space cannot answer all of its needs, nor reach all audiences in all regions of the country.

These are some other problems relating to the presentation of the circus arts in Canada:

- When it comes to including the circus in their programming, Canadian presenters are overcautious and poorly supported. The circus is generally more expensive, does not have star performers and is less well known by the general public. As well, presenters usually have little or no experience in presenting circus works. These are some of the reasons why it is more difficult to sell a circus work. Presenters are afraid to take programming risks and technical risks.
- The costs of presenting a circus work are higher than other types of shows because of the technical requirements and stricter safety standards. So, in addition to the fact that Canadian performance spaces have insufficient

\(^{40}\) Data from Cirque Éloize, 2007.
\(^{41}\) Productions Éclats de Rire, [consulted online], [www.eclatsderire.ca] (August 2007).
\(^{42}\) Data from Productions Éclats de Rire, 2007.
resources to present the circus arts, the financial support provided by funding agencies for touring (in Canada or abroad) is inadequate.

- Despite the willingness and ingenuity of circus creators when it comes to adapting productions for general-purpose performance spaces, a number of which could be used more (theatres, cultural centres, etc.), these are usually poorly adapted to the requirements of the circus. In addition, because of a lack of incentives, these requirements are rarely taken into account during construction and renovation projects.

- The independent artists and small companies (emerging or otherwise) lack support in terms of market development. They are not able to invest the time and resources in this critical aspect of career or business development.

### 4.4 LACK OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND SPECIALIZED RESOURCES, AND EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT

Lastly, here are some other problems specifically related to support services, specialized resources and circus equipment:

- Independent artists, managers and small companies, emerging or otherwise, are not properly equipped in terms of administration and management. They lack support for various management and development tasks: business and project start-up, planning, fundraising (grants, sponsorships, bursaries, etc.), production, marketing, legal advice, etc. They also need professional services to address their tenuous status: insurance, etc.

- The sector does not have enough specialized circus arts resources – designers, directors, technicians, managers – who, more often than not, have gained their experience and expertise in other disciplines (theatre, dance, film, etc.). This means that, when they join the circus community, they know very little about the special requirements of the circus.

- It is expensive to acquire and maintain circus equipment. The circus arts require very specialized and safe equipment and material, since safety is the community’s main concern. While some types of equipment can easily be designed or salvaged, other equipment must be built, repaired and maintained by qualified professionals (e.g., the aerial equipment).
What we have described above provides an overview of the current situation of circus arts in Quebec and Canada. Above all, it enables us to provide an analysis of the situation by identifying the sector’s strengths and weaknesses. Here is a summary of its major strengths and weaknesses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major strengths or opportunities</th>
<th>Major weaknesses or constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The existence of an engaged and organized <strong>circus community</strong> that is represented by a national association of sector professionals, <em>En Piste</em></td>
<td>• The existence and persistence of a <strong>fundamental paradox</strong> that <strong>distorts reality</strong> and feeds <strong>misperceptions</strong> about all aspects of the circus arts in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A <strong>vibrant</strong> sector for over 30 years that is no longer an emerging but a <strong>developing</strong> sector</td>
<td>• The <strong>lack of full recognition</strong> of the circus arts as a distinct artistic discipline by political and decision-making authorities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The presence in Quebec of a world <strong>leader</strong> in circus arts, Cirque du Soleil, which has contributed to the development of the Canadian circus and its advantageous position in the international arena</td>
<td>• The <strong>ignorance about the reality and diversity</strong> of the circus arts sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As a result of its very high standards, <strong>professionalism</strong> and the extreme <strong>mastery</strong> of the discipline among Canadian circus artists</td>
<td>• The <strong>lack of funding</strong> and ineligibility of sector organizations for SODEC <strong>tax credits</strong> and for <strong>charitable organization</strong> status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The international <strong>reputation</strong> and recognition of Quebeois <strong>creativity, expertise</strong> and artistic and technical <strong>know-how</strong> have made Quebec one of the biggest circus exporters in the world</td>
<td>• <strong>Funding programs that are poorly adapted</strong> to the sector’s reality and requirements, primarily the lack of <strong>consistency and follow-up</strong> between the stages of creation, production and presentation for circus works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>International business networks</strong> developed by Canadian circus artists and companies</td>
<td>• The lack of special <strong>support services</strong>, particularly at the <strong>administrative, entrepreneurial and management</strong> levels, for independent artists and small companies (emerging or otherwise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The <strong>market development</strong> opportunities in Quebec, Canada and abroad (increasing demand and public interest)</td>
<td>• The uncertainty of artists’ <strong>working conditions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The <strong>exportable and universal</strong> nature of circus works: no language, age, culture or social status barriers</td>
<td>• The lack of <strong>professional services</strong> for independent artists, managers and small companies (emerging or otherwise) to help them address their tenuous status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Affirmation of <strong>Montreal</strong> as a <strong>gateway</strong> and the <strong>capital</strong> of circus arts in North America</td>
<td>• Lack of human, material and financial resources for <strong>recreational activities</strong> in circus arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The high costs of acquiring and maintaining <strong>equipment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The possibility of reaching and delighting a large and diverse audience
• The huge **economic impact** of the circus arts, as the main vehicle for the creation of stage production jobs
• The significant **human and social impact** of the circus arts
• The **longevity** of the works, particularly in international presenter networks
• Creators’ willingness and ingenuity in **adapting productions** for existing performance spaces
• The **professionalism** with regard to **safety** surrounding the discipline and its practice
• The popularity of **recreational activities** which contribute to **audience development**

• Risk of an **exodus** of talent, creators and entrepreneurs due to the increased **mobility** of the circus workforce
• A poor **presenter network**

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In addition, the following outlines some specific problems with the creation, production and presentation of circus works:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major problems</th>
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| **Creation and production**

- The high **research** and **development** costs make aesthetic, creative and technical renewal difficult
- Inadequate **funding** during the creation stage, and the difficulty that non-profit organizations have in accessing private funding
- **High production costs**
  - The difficulty of developing **co-productions** (government, sponsors, presenters, etc.)
  - The lack of **infrastructures** for the creation and production of works

| **Presentation**

- The challenge of breaking into **presenter networks** in Quebec and in Canada
- **Lack of support** for presenters
- **Presentation costs** higher than for other types of shows
- **Performance spaces** often poorly adapted to the requirements of the circus
- Lack of support for the **development of domestic markets**
- Inadequate funding that is not well tailored to different **presentation methods**
The current state of affairs in the circus arts inevitably raises some questions about the consolidation, development and expansion of this important sector. Below we have outlined the challenges that the circus community must address, grouped under six key issues. The participants at the 2007 Estates General on Circus Arts suggested some ways to address these challenges. Key actions are listed for these six issues.

**ISSUE 1**

**FULL RECOGNITION OF THE CIRCUS ARTS SECTOR: ITS REALITY AND ITS DIVERSITY**

*This is the priority issue that is at the very heart of the circus arts sector’s development problem. All other issues are in some way related to this central issue.*

The circus community intends to dispel the insidious misconceptions people hold about the circus arts sector in Canada, which have a detrimental effect on all parts of the industry. In addition, the sector hopes to receive full and tangible recognition as its own, distinct artistic discipline by political and decision-making authorities.

The need to immediately address this critical problem is confirmed by the profound fatigue felt in the circus community, which is constantly torn between creation, management, development and financing, and is spreading its energies and human resources very thin.

*Possible solutions:*

- Work with the authorities in question.
- Inform and educate political and decision-making authorities about the reality and requirements of the circus.
- Ensure that circus organizations have access, depending on the legal status, to the various financing options available (e.g., tax credits).
- Ensure there is a circus presence at presentation and promotion events (RIDEAU, CINARS, etc.).
• **Call on different orders of government for specific purposes:**

  ➢ **Obtain recognition at the federal level of the enhanced development of the circus in Canada through:**
    - Canada Council for the Arts;
    - Canada Revenue Agency.

  ➢ **Obtain recognition at the provincial level of the need for improved funding for the circus arts and policies that are more specific to the discipline through:**
    - Provincial and territorial arts funding agencies, with the exception of the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, which already recognized the circus arts;
    - Société de développement des entreprises culturelles (SODEC);
    - Ministère du Revenu du Québec [department of revenue];
    - Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport [department of education, recreation and sport] (to have the circus arts recognized as a subject in education);
    - Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec (to raise awareness about the importance of separating quantitative data about the circus arts from data about other artistic disciplines so that the sector has an accurate and fair picture of its reality).

  ➢ **Obtain recognition at the municipal level through:**
    - Montreal Arts Council (for full recognition of the discipline that makes Montreal an international centre);
    - All municipalities, including Montreal (for greater recognition of circus-related recreational activities).
ISSUE 2

PROPER SUPPORT FOR THE CIRCUS ARTS: DEVELOPING AND DIVERSIFYING CIRCUS OFFERINGS

This issue summarizes the favourable conditions that ensure the balanced development and growth of circus organizations and the sector as a whole. In addition, the discipline plans to expand and diversify its offerings, which will give the sector the full capacity to create and provide for the renewal of aesthetics and circus forms.

A) Financial resources
The circus arts sector wants to increase its financial resources and ensure these properly reflect its reality and requirements. The financial support must take into account the legal status of circus companies.

Possible solutions:

- Help develop and improve funding programs.
- Increase existing resource envelopes.
- Raise awareness about the importance of supporting projects at all stages of development, taking into account the timing and requirements for these stages.
- Help develop suitable funding initiatives: micro-credit, venture capital, funding for experimental creations, etc.
- Support the creation of a support program for young artists (in the early years of their professional career).

B) Administration, entrepreneurship and management
The circus arts community wants to increase and improve support for sector organizations at the administrative, entrepreneurial and management levels. Independent artists and small companies (emerging or otherwise) are more likely to need this type of funding, which is primarily for management and organizational or project development.

Possible solutions:

- Provide support services specifically designed for the circus arts: business and project start-up, support for preparing funding applications, etc.
- Develop sponsorship and mentorship programs in the community.

C) Infrastructure and equipment
The circus arts community would like to increase and facilitate access to existing infrastructure and specialized equipment.

Possible solutions:

- Set up “circus poles” in Quebec and in Canada, meaning sites for training and residencies in creation and production.
- Promote the pooling and sharing of circus equipment.
- Adapt existing equipment so that it meets the circus arts sector’s standards and requirements.
INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF CIRCUS ARTS
AT THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

A) At the regional and national level
Given the difficulty of presenting works in Quebec and in Canada, the circus arts sector intends to raise its profile with presenters and get involved in the development of presenter networks. It also wants to educate presenters about the technical and stage requirements of circus shows.

Possible solutions:

- Introduce special initiatives for presentation funding adapted to different methods of presentation:
  - For producers;
  - For presenters (e.g., the theatre-dance-music-song ratio that presenters must respect and that could have a “new artistic practices” component, which would include the circus, i.e., La danse sur les routes du Québec).

- Encourage presenters to present more circus works.

- Create a major circus arts event in Quebec (year of the circus, circus festival, etc.).

B) At the international level
In order to maintain its leadership at a time when the international market is booming, the circus arts sector intends to acquire tools so that it can strengthen its position and reputation on the international stage. In particular, it wants to consolidate and develop relationships with international presenter and cultural networks.

Possible solutions:

- Increase support for market development and the presentation of works.

Ensure a circus presence in suitable cultural and trade fairs and missions.
ISSUE 4

IMPROVING THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF CIRCUS ARTISTS

This issue seeks to provide better working conditions for circus artists. It should be remembered that these artists are in a precarious position, particularly when they are working on research and creation, when they are in career transition, and when their health prevents them from practicing their art.

Possible solutions:

- Develop adapted assistance programs for the circus workforce: group insurance, social benefits, etc.
- Provide circus artists with support for career transition.

ISSUE 5

DEVELOPING FUTURE CIRCUS ARTISTS

The sector will focus more of its efforts on developing the next generation of circus artists by increasing access to professional, preparatory and recreational training in circus arts.

Possible solutions:

- Develop assistance programs for emerging artists.
- Develop sponsorship and mentorship initiatives for young artists.
- Increase access to management and career development training.
- Provide training for instructors and coaches.
- Educate municipalities about the importance of offering recreational activities in the circus arts and help them develop these programs.
- Increase assistance to existing training schools, particularly preparatory schools.
- Improve existing training.
STRENGTHENING THE CIRCUS ARTS ORGANIZATION

The circus community would like to maintain and build on its activities for organization and sharing around common issues and policies, which would strengthen its position and ensure its development.

Possible solutions:

- Obtain from political and decision-making authorities full and tangible recognition of En Piste as the primary national representative of the circus arts, and obtain proper funding for the association so that it can:
  - Increase membership and provide more services at the national level;
  - Promote networking between the various players in the industry;
  - Develop mechanisms to help preserve and share the collective memory of the circus arts community in Quebec and in Canada;
  - Create banks of specialized resources;
  - Create programs to help circus artists develop management skills;
  - Promote the training of managers who specialize in the circus arts, or help managers from other industries develop skills and knowledge in circus arts management.
7. IN CONCLUSION: A VISION OF FUTURE FOR THE CIRCUS ARTS IN CANADA

The community brought together under En Piste, particularly at 2007 Estates General on Circus Arts, has spoken in a united voice about the urgent need to address the critical problem, of a lack of full recognition of the discipline, with the goal of meeting the challenges of developing the sector in order to ensure its diversity, vitality, growth and sustainability.

The future of the circus arts will depend on all the efforts made to ensure its balanced development by all stakeholders. This paper, which outlines the current state of affairs in the circus arts in Quebec and in Canada, is a step in that direction. It sets out some key findings about the circus, its major strengths and weaknesses, the development opportunities and constraints in this industry and the major challenges it is facing; it also proposes some possible solutions. These points will help lay the foundations for initiating or continuing a fruitful and constructive dialogue with all key players.

The circus community has already engaged in some collective soul-searching in order to give shape and colour to its hopes for the future. It is united in its vision of what the sector wants to be and achieve.

Accordingly, once the misconceptions about the circus arts are corrected and dispelled and once there is full recognition of the circus as a distinct discipline, in the medium term the circus plans to:

- Receive a fair share of its benefits for society.
- Continue to renew itself, innovate and be open to other influences, in order to promote the emergence of plural circus writings.
- Receive funding that reflects the unique characteristics:
  - of the practice, in order to create and produce a variety of original works;
  - of methods of production: small or large companies, collectives, independent artists, etc.
- Have the appropriate tools to support business and project start-up, market development, fundraising (e.g., grants, sponsorships, bursaries), etc.
- Establish a tradition of philanthropy in this sector.
- Be true to its grassroots origins and appeal to a large and diverse audience that is educated about the circus arts.
- Increase its visibility and influence, benefitting from widespread dissemination throughout Quebec and Canada through circus centres where its operations will be based, the first link in a network of presenters able to tour a variety of large-scale productions at the regional, national and international levels.
- Secure Montreal's place as an important circus arts capital, making it the starting point for North American tours by international circus artists and companies.
- Provide training for its artists and nurture the next generation of circus artists through:
  - A network of schools with different educational approaches, promoting the development and diversity of artistic works;
  - A network of sites of creation, productions and presentation for performances by young artists and emerging companies;
  - A network of mentorship resources.
- Be used as a tool for personal and social development by including circus arts in recreational activities offered in the communities and working with specific groups.
- Consolidate the association and networking between its stakeholders by sharing and promoting common values and a shared vision, particularly through En Piste.
- Continue to be a key ambassador for Quebecois and Canadian culture, so that this can be a source of pride for our citizens.
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