

A support scheme
for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe

The logo for CircusNext features a red stylized figure of a circus performer in a handstand position, integrated into the letter 'C'. The word 'CircusNext' is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'Circus' in black and 'Next' in red. Below the logo, the phrase 'Think Circus!' is written in a bold, italicized, black sans-serif font.

CircusNext

Think Circus!

Looking at circus artists' professional paths

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Emilie Salaméro

Émilie Salaméro is a lecturer in Sciences and technics of physical and sport activities department of the University of Poitiers and a member of CeReGe (Centre for research in management). She works on professional dynamics and individual careers in the fields of arts and body expertise. Most of her work focuses on circus artists and dancers. She also teaches in the Performing arts department and in the professional degree "Development of projects in dance and circus" at Jean Jaurès University in Toulouse.

Marine Cordier

Marine Cordier is a sociologist, lecturer in Social sciences and humanities in the Sciences and technics of physical and sport activities department of the University of Paris Nanterre. She also is a member of the Research Center on Sport and Movement. In continuation of her PhD thesis in Sociology (2009) about the process of professionalization of circus artists, her research focuses on the analysis of professional trajectories in circus and performing arts. Since 2014, she has been part of the program "Sorties de scènes", which studies the reconversion process of dancers and circus artists. She also contributes to a research project on the artistic, administrative and technical frameworks of performing arts. She published *Être artiste de cirque* with Émilie Salaméro (Lyon, Lieux-Dits, 2012).



A REFLECTION BASED ON TWO SOURCES

1/ Experiences from previous and current circus artists who work in the entertainments industry (“intermittents du spectacle”) on their professional and personal backgrounds

=> current studies on job transitions (S2S) and professionalization methods between “emerging” and “consolidated” companies (France/Spain).

2/ Available statistics on employment conditions for “intermittents” (circus) artists in France.

=> Great variety of situations

STATISTICS ON THE SITUATION OF “INTERMITTENT” WORKERS IN FRANCE

- Various sources of information => **figures vary** in numbers and “intermittent” workers’ situations
- Still difficult to **define the artistic community**, hence to study it
- Particular problem for circus artists: **underestimated in the population**
- Often call themselves “actors”, “choreography artists”, etc.

DIFFICULTY IN CALLING THEMSELVES “CIRCUS ARTISTS”

- Self-identification varies according to generations, learning methods, integration into “legitimate” networks, etc.

CONSEQUENCES

- in awareness raising about this community among public authorities, professionals, observers, etc.
ex: maternity allowance, ageing, career paths, etc.
- in opportunities for artists to get access to support schemes
ex: “career change” via the Professionalization and Solidarity Fund Audiens-AFDAS, covering professional fees, etc.
- in opportunities for professionals to have specific work realities recognized that are shared by most circus artists

STATISTICAL TREND

- Overall workers in the entertainment industry: **exponential growth** for the past 20 years with strong artists’ contribution
- ⇒ 153,408 “intermittents” in 2011, including 115,007 artistes (figures from French Unemployment Agency, Pôle emploi)
- ⇒ 2011: **2,929 circus artists** + 1,639 “visual artists” (illusionists, magicians, etc.) representing **3,1%** of the overall “intermittents” population = “a small community” in terms of statistics

A FEELING OF ENHANCED COMPETITION AND DETERIORATING OF INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS AMONG ARTISTS SURVEYED

A feeling **comforted by figures on “intermittent” employment in general:**

- 24% drop in annual work volume between 1990 and 2009
- 22% drop in annual remuneration between 1990 and 2009
- Stronger growth in workforce than job opportunities

GLOBAL TRENDS IMPACTING JOB PRACTICE

- Artistic and non-artistic forms of diversified work are now common practice
- Gaps in artistic jobs have a detrimental impact on a regular body practice
- Feeling the pressure of accepting even uninteresting artistic job offers
- Feeling weary of looking for new job opportunities and of not knowing if renewing right to unemployment benefit will be entitled
- Being dropped out of unemployment benefit against one's will sometimes leading to the end of an artistic career, etc.

MAJOR GENERATIONAL EFFECTS ON CAREERS AND JOB PRACTICE

- **"1st generation"** artists (born between 1957 and 1972): discovered circus late (after their 20's), were trained "on-the-job", integrated the world of work rapidly by creating their company. Long careers (more than 20 years), little job diversification, feeling pushed out due to fewer contracts (challenging economic environment).

MAJOR GENERATIONAL EFFECTS ON CAREERS AND JOB PRACTICE

- **"2nd generation"** artists (born between 1975 and 1981): earlier circus practice, varied school trainings. Diverse kinds of jobs (replacements, companies, etc.) and early job diversification. Start thinking of a "second career" early on (lack of contracts, body wear and tear, etc.)

DIFFERENT CAREERS DEPENDING ON GENDER:

- Many obstacles to overcome:
 - learning methods,
 - entering the trade,
 - maternity,
 - artistic recognition, etc.
- => **Women's careers are more difficult**

AGEING IN THE CIRCUS TRADE

A young population: 67,2% of circus artists are less than 40 (against 54,2% in the overall artistic community, but 72,2% for dancers).

A NECESSARY MANAGEMENT OF ONE'S PHYSICAL CAPITAL

- **Huge number of injuries** and/or pains in one's career (depending on sectors)
- **Few sick leaves:** perform "at all costs" to avoid cancelling performances
- **Adjusting one's level of physical performance and engagement** to offset body ageing
- **Dealing with health problems mostly individually:** going to the doctor, or seeing a physiotherapist but also using self-medication and "alternative" methods, etc.

GETTING OUT OF THE CIRCUS ARTISTS SECTOR: A COMBINATION OF FACTORS

- Addition of **body problems**: taking distance from the stage
- Difficulty in coping with **precarious work** on the long term
- Weariness in dealing with constraints of **nomadic life**
- Longing to have more time for **family life**
- **2 major fields for professional transition:**
 - Artistic or non-artistic jobs in the entertainments industry, (stage management, teaching, administration)
 - Other sectors (crafts, restoration, jobs related to the body, social work, etc.).



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CircusNext

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