

A support scheme
for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe

The logo for CircusNext features a stylized red acrobat silhouette performing a handstand, positioned above the letter 'C'. The word 'CircusNext' is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'Circus' in black and 'Next' in red. The 'e' in 'Next' is also red and has a diagonal slash through it.

CircusNext

Think Circus!

Introduction

European Conference *Think Circus!#2*
La Villette, Paris ■ May 17-19, 2017

Cécile Provôt

Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe Director

"It was a close call"

"It was a close call", said one of our European partners.

He was referring to the French presidential elections.

"It was a close call"

This partner is not French, he does not live in France. This "it" embodies Europe in its best: a fertile ground for cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity; a circulation space for cultures, people, art works, audiences; a place where everyone can express themselves freely, propose a singular vision of society through his or her art works, can make a living out of his or her art, can deploy his own word in complete independence, without risking his life by doing so.

We are lucky to live here, in the European Union, to be able to exchange and work together, to be able to nurture and share artistic creation.

We are fortunate to be able to defend a creation circus, an *auteur* circus, and to do it on a continental scale, and beyond, with partners from all horizons.

Contemporary circus is in essence a model of multiculturalism: all nationalities, all origins, all cultures cross each other. A company can be composed of as many cultures as of people who compose it.

The cooperation between cultural operators of various countries, with artists from all origins, with local partners, is what allowed us to develop CircusNext on a European scale, to offer circus creators a concerted, crossed, multi-form and multi-cultural journey, that is unique in its kind.

During this CircusNext 2013-2017 project, which was co-financed by the European Commission, our European cooperation reveals questions, shortcomings and even flaws in our way of doing things; but this project was also a great opportunity for partners and artists to exchange ideas, compare points of view, learn from each other and, most importantly, share: sharing authors' moments of doubt during their creative process, share the pleasure of being together for the week of selection and public presentations at the Théâtre de la Cité internationale, passionately sharing our ideas, our visions, our points of view, sharing, finally, what's probably most valuable in the world, moments of dialogue and human presence, quite simply.

CircusNext 2013-2017 has helped to promote a high quality identification and support, to build relationships that go beyond commercial relationships, to build a community.

These five years have been rich for us, rich in encounters, discoveries, exchanges, questions, experiments. These three days of conference are the result of these five years: *Think Circus!*, it is the opportunity to pull the threads of all the questions, observations, problems, but also good practices that have crossed CircusNext.

This conference is in line with all the moments of reflection conducted within CircusNext and completes the first *Think Circus!* time organized with Plateforme 2 Pôles Cirque in Normandy during the Spring 2017 festival.

This conference and this reflection, we wanted them to be disturbing, in the sense that we decided to leave our comfort zone. For this, we were accompanied throughout the project by a researcher, Agathe Dumont, who observed us, questioned, sometimes jostled in our routine; Agathe helped us to take a step aside, to distance ourselves from our practices, to take a salutary step back in our jobs; and this whole process was conducted with great kindness and great listening. For all this, I want to thank you very much, Agathe, you have been for us the external eye who is so dear to our circus creators.

It is thus together that we designed this conference. We have chosen to let the partners who carry out CircusNext with us out of the stage, and to give the floor to those less often heard: artists, researchers, thinkers.

We count on them to, once again, jostle us, push us to question ourselves, open horizons and fields of reflection and experimentation.

The purpose of this conference is not to leave with answers, but with questions and desires to act to explore possible answers, each at its level and together.

Before presenting the CircusNext 2013-2017 project and those who carry out it in more details, I want to thank all the people who were involved:

- artists who take the risk of becoming part of a scheme that is shaking up, structuring, imposing a certain pressure, involving strong questioning, and who have the generosity to share their creative process with audiences;
- the partners who carry out the project with us, who are involved in the selection process and especially in the support of identified authors, often well beyond the CircusNext scheme, with a long-term loyalty;
- the financial partners who, beyond the means they offer us, share and defend our values: the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the City of Paris, the Île-de-France region, SACD, ONDA, French Institute and, of course, the European Commission;
- the Administration Board of Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe, who accompanies and supports us with benevolence;
- finally, the teams of our European partners and, above all, the Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe team, which is doing a tremendous job of European coordination, a task that is sometimes ungrateful because it is not very visible, but so essential to the facilitation of a project of the scale and ambition of CircusNext.

For their hosting, all year long and for this conference, I want to thank Parc de la Villette and all its teams who allowed us to organize *Think Circus!* in this venue that is so dear to us.

And last but not least, I thank the interpreters who will allow us to share these 3 days in French and English.

Thank you.

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2013-2017

A project conceived and piloted by

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