

A support scheme
for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe



Think Circus!

ROUND-TABLE

**Exchanges of knowledge and know-how:
circulations and borders**

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CIRCULATIONS

There are currently many European circus cooperation projects which undoubtedly reflect a strong will to share knowledge and know-how, despite very different economic, political and cultural contexts. Could a project like CircusNext break the lines and build the bases for the promotion and the legitimacy of contemporary circus in Europe? This third theme invites us to question real, possible and imagined artistic and cultural circulations. Isn't it necessary today to reflect on the issues of borders, space, and distance? What are the effects of mobility on artistic work and cultural operators' practices, and how to accompany these circulations?

Presentation of the speakers

Antonia Kuzmanić

Antonia Kuzmanić is the director of the company ROOM 100 (Croatia). She was a Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe laureate in 2009-2010, jury member in 2012-2013 and co-president in 2013-2014. ROOM 100 works on different projects to display contemporary circus, its history and its importance to wider audiences in Croatia through HALA 100, a residency place for contemporary circus (first of its kind in Croatia and ex-Yougoslavia, created in June 2015). This place hosts international circus artists, offers circus movie screenings and thematic exhibitions.

Roman Müller

Roman Müller has been living with, in, and for circus for more than 20 years. In his artistic works, he explores the relationship man-object-machine and gives life to dry theories by creating images that are exciting, surprising, and full of humour. The starting point of his stage research is the diabolo. With this instrument, Roman Müller and his company Tr'espace set new standards and built an international reputation in traditional but also contemporary circus fields. Roman graduated from Scuola Teatro Dimitri (CH) in 1999. He worked in diverse circus productions and founded his own company in 2002. He teaches in ESAC (École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque) in Brussels and more and more often is he asked by young artists to give an "outside eye" on their ideas and creations. Roman Müller himself was a Jeunes Talents Cirque laureate in 2004 and CircusNext jury member in 2015-2016.

Veronika Štefanová

Veronika Štefanová is a member of Cirqueon team (Praha, Czech Republic), and is head of the documentation and research centre. Researcher and PhD in Theater studies at the University of Praha, she is specialised in new circus and leads alongside several activities as a journalist, critic and translator.

Stéphane Segreto-Aguilar

After a Bachelor's degree in Foreign languages, Stéphane Segreto-Aguilar obtained a Master's degree in Politics and Cultural Management in Europe between Paris (Institute of European Studies) and Montreal (Concordia University). He contributed successively to the Italian cultural influence in France (Institut Culturel Italien de Marseille) and to the French cultural influence abroad (French Embassy in Cuba and Institut Français d'Espagne in Valencia). He participated in the management of a European cooperation project dedicated to contemporary art with Apollonia (Strasbourg) and ArtOS Foundation (Nicosia). He then coordinated international relations at iDANS, an international festival of contemporary dance and performance (Istanbul). Back in France, he administered a musical ensemble in residence in Yonne, La Fenice. Since 2016, he is responsible for international relations at ARTCENA, the National Centre for Circus Arts, Street and Theatre, and coordinates the European network Circostrada.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: It is really important to say it again, this is a safe space. We are not going to be judging or be judged. The idea of this roundtable is to explore the relationships between circulations and the exchange of knowledge and knowhow. This is the main object but there are going to be some secondary objectives. The first one is that even though we are going to try to be as much conceptual as we can, each time we are going to bring very practical concrete examples of our personal and professional stories and backgrounds. We are not going to try to look pretty because I think that circulation is messy and ,confusing, and it is not a problem. So if by the end of the session you feel dizzy, we are going to be happy with it.

Of course the conversation started yesterday already because we met last night. I don't know the results of this conversation right now, it is going to be a little bit different. The idea is to go through 5 chapters. The first two chapters are about before and during the circulation, which are less interesting than the three others, that is why we are going to try to go a bit faster with these chapters. The other three chapters are as soon as you are transformed by the circulation, and how you can share this and advocate for further mobility. The order I just gave you is purely a construction, it is artificial: it is a tool to give us a rhythm for the conversation.

The first chapter is very humble: "To go or not to go". What I am asking to you is to close your eyes and go to your memory lane to tell me how you did loose your mobility virginity.

V. Štefanová: There is nothing I could feel shy for concerning this question because it feels like it was not a question for me to wonder wether to go or not. Now, it feels like there is no way to not go. But maybe one day I will have to ask myself "Should I go or should I stay?". When I lost my mobility virginity, it was at the University when I started to study my Bachelor. I felt like my dream came true because I always wanted to travel to learn. It feels like if I wanted to learn something about life, about the subject I am studying, I had to travel.

I don't want to look unthankful for my country but it still feels like I can't learn everything I want in my country. So it happened in 2004-2005: I went to France to study. There, I realized there was something called contemporary circus and I thought it would be nice to study more. So when I started my Master, I decided to go to France again, to Paris. It happened here, in this place in La Villette in 2008 when the first edition of *Fresh Circus* happened: I met Sarka Marsikova, the director of CIRQUEON. Our friendship started here in France, during our circulation. We were searching for information about circus, for new contacts. It began here in 2008, that is how it happened.

A. Kuzmanić: I come from and I am still living in Croatia. The idea of having to move came very quickly. Me and my colleague discovered circus alone. We did not go to a circus school, we were self-educated. We were first working as street artists. After the touristic season in Croatia, if we wanted to survive, we had to move. We went to Italy, Germany, Austria, just to perform. During this period, we were talking about not being happy as being only street artists, feeling like animals in a cage. We started to speak about a contemporary circus performance in an indoor venue. Then, I discovered CircusNext, which was at that time Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe. I knew that we needed visibility because being contemporary circus artists in 2009 in Croatia did not mean anything to anybody. We needed visibility and funding. A friend of mine, Ivan from Novog Cirkusa festival in Zagreb, sent me a link with this call for applications. In two months, we applied with a project which was already written in our minds. 2009 and 2010 were the years where I really knew and decided that if we wanted to continue working as circus artists based in Croatia, we had to move and explore Europe.

R. Müller: I never had so much the question of "Should I go?". It was more a question of being crazy or something! Traveling was a kind of a consequence. Traveling is also a question of where you are from. Basically, I was born in a small village

I had absolutely no connection with circus, or arts or cultural milieu. Somehow, you start to go somewhere but you don't know where it leads. Sometimes I am also wondering where leads the way from the first step I took without knowing where it would bring me (like sitting here). The first "going away" was actually not related to arts or circus. It was just when I was 18, I met somebody and half a year later I was for half a year in Africa. Just completely away. When I came back I was really lost. That was a step where something opened.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: Your three examples are talking about geographical circulations. Circulations the way we started discussing yesterday is also going from one state or one stage to another. It can be geographical, symbolical, emotional, intellectual... Do you also have a recollection of these types of mobility? This is a tricky question, but as we saw with the previous presentation from Elena Kreuzsch, who just sent a video, the digital mobility is a very visible example. It is linked to transformation: how can you change without necessarily going abroad? Did it happen to you? Yesterday, we talked about two Swiss writers: there is Nicolas Bouvier, who travels the world and writes these amazing books, and there is Charles-Albert Cingria, who is more a musician but who also writes about traveling as he is just using his bike around the neighbourhood. Both of them are describing the world. One is taking his Fiat Topolino from Genève to Tabriz and the other one is just biking around the block. Both of them are the same.

V. Štefanová: For me, it is hard to write about something that I did not experience myself, by my own body. I usually use this term of "embodiment" that Erika Fischer-Lichte, the German theater theorist, used: I have to have embodied experiences myself. For me, it is hard to write, talk, teach about something I have not experienced myself in that place or with that person, with that idea. So I would like to really embody, to feel the ideas by the person, by myself. That is why I try to force myself to always travel.

Sometimes, it is exhausting, this is not easy, but I am more for that. Digital circulation for example, as we saw few minutes ago, is possible, but is not 100% for me. I would always try (I am saying this now but I don't know how about in 20 years!) to go personally when it is possible.

R. Müller: Being around is somehow being everywhere and nowhere. There is also the inside travel. One time in my life I did the Scuola Teatro Dimitri. It was a really small place, a bit in the mountains. It was the opposite of traveling and meeting other people, but it was the kind of place to meet yourself, like traveling inside, and this is also a kind of travel. I think that was a really important moment, also as an artist. Sometimes I think it is a bit struggling to be too far away from yourself, with all these travels, to lose this connection. This is linked to the presentation of Elena Kreuzsch who talked about always being in transition. Sometimes nothing is stable inside. Finding this point of stability is difficult.

A. Kuzmanić: This is a question that I often discuss with Croatian circus artists because I do not think they travel enough. There are not many circus artists in Croatia but those who like to remain in Croatia sometimes feel they are very important in their little village in a way. I always tell them that having this opportunity today to look on YouTube how to band yourself, how to do a one arm handstand is not the same sensation as going to a workshop and meeting alive people, talking with them and exchanging in a venue and not on Instagram or Facebook. What we saw during the previous lecture of Elena Kreuzsch is what I am trying to tell them: there are many nice opportunities for Croatian circus artists to travel and exchange, even if I know that it is not easy to travel in Europe when you are coming from Croatia, because of the economical situation of the country. I think that traveling is going to impact much more your work than if you stay in your own town and country and exchange through digital communication means.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: I am wondering whether we have this kind of reasoning because all of us are born before the digital shift, considering that people who are born within the digital shift have a different way of analyzing what is happening? In my case, I started to play with Lego before starting to play with my Nintendo, I was not born with all these items.

Let's assume that you go, that you are there (physically or not). Who are you when you are there? Marie Lesourd raised the same point when she was talking about Niger which is such a diverse country, asking how and who you can represent a country which is so diverse. Which part of you do you bring when you are abroad, when you are using a language which is not your own (as we are currently speaking this broken international English)? What do you bring when you try to connect with fellow colleagues, with fellow artists in order to have a new relationship, to create projects?

V. Štefanová: I don't want to use this cliché word, but first they must give you excitement, that is what has always worked for me. When I am excited for a topic, it is easier to meet the people. But you were asking how we connect with them and who we represent: it is always a big responsibility for me. I feel I am responsible once I am going abroad, that I represent not only myself (that would be quite selfish) but whole community (of circus arts, for example). I must always be aware of that, even when I don't like some of the shows, or some of the research projects. I always must be very responsible when I am meeting other people, other projects. It is hard to explain it, but I feel a difference when I am speaking about something in French or in English. So I need to have this sort of awareness (of what you do, of what you say using a foreign language). I need to be responsible, aware of what I am representing, and be excited when I am abroad, to have the knowledge that you are bringing from your place, from your community to another.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: What about you two? You wear two hats, you are both artist and cultural operator. Can you specify if you are talking from one perspective in particular, or do you shift from one to the other? How does it work?

A. Kuzmanić: I am both an artist and a cultural operator, and I want to be both in any kind of situation: I am an artist, still performing, and I am also a "professional" because I am building a residency place in Split and inviting international artists, trying to educate students, audiences, cultural operators and policy makers. I always try to remain in both personalities. I think being a professional with an artist background gives me something extra. I think it is easier for the artists to speak with me when they know that I am also an artist. That is why I am always trying to keep this posture, especially in France or abroad. I am saying this because we do not have a lot of opportunities in Croatia, so only a few people already saw me on stage in Croatia, even my friends. So people mostly know me as a professional working in the cultural field. Unfortunately, when I speak to the policy makers, I only remain a professional because being an artist in Croatia is not well considered (we are seen like hippies, etc.).

S. Segreto-Aguilar: So we can say that it is better for you to be on both sides to share knowledge, know-how, information with the people: it is much easier, much successful if you play both your roles at the same time.

A. Kuzmanić: Yes, I am always playing two roles. That is only when I am with policy makers that I only am a professional, because they value more my opinion than if I approached them as an artist.

R. Müller: I find quite difficult to be on both sides. It feels very different from one to another perspective. As an artist, it is like for me somehow being closed, and not taking everything from outside or watching everywhere around, and also not having much knowledge.

On the opposite, as a festival director, I go around, and see and also have a kind of judging. You can fall into this thing. Coming back as an artist or creating is like trying to take your head off and put it aside.

A. Kuzmanić: Sometimes it is hard to go from one role to the other, or staying in one role only. When you are creating, you need to forget everything that you saw, like visiting different festivals, etc.. You just want to be in your creative state of mind. It can be difficult sometimes just to forget all the administrative tasks I need to do, and just create and be on stage.

R. Müller: There is also the question of how much we adapt to the different circumstances. To create the festival, I had to talk with the people with different backgrounds. Sometimes when you live in the contemporary circus field, you are like in a bubble, and you need to meet people from very different sectors who have other knowledge, other understandings, other objectives. In these situations, I need to adapt what I have to say or which information I give. As an artist, I do not adapt. For instance, when my company was a *Jeunes Talents Cirque laureate*, we created *Le Cercle*, a one hour piece with a diabolo duo and a double-bass player. At the same time, we created a 7 minutes act. A couple of years later, we traveled to perform the act in Monte-Carlo in a very traditional context, and a few days later, we performed *Le Cercle* not far from there in La Seyne-sur-Mer. Somehow, from the outside, it looks very different, but my inside feeling about how I had to work did not change because of the circumstances or the audiences. I did not care of what people wanted to see: the work was there and what cared was the connection. So I was absolutely not adapting. That is why being an artist or being more from the outside is so different.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: There is also a question of the frontier between the public space and the private space, which is very thin in this kind of circumstances. Personally, I have a tendency to engage with people who are similar to me, who

value system, who have the same references. It is much easier and much immediate. It is much harder to do it with somebody who is completely off the grid. How can we share if it is complicated to find a common ground to actually meet? It is a frustration that I often have.

R. Müller: I created my festival in the place where I, more or less, come from. This experience made me start to realize what it meant to be everywhere and nowhere during 20 years. I also had the goal to not work with the people I had already worked with in the past, because it was geographically exploded. So I tried to find the people on place to work with them. They obviously have another point of view and they see things differently. I think this is very important. Naturally, it takes more time to reach a common view, to have a vision together. It really was a chance for me. Now I think it was a good decision to not be surrounded by always the same opinions.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: We can use the metaphor expressing that mobility and circulation are such a flitting moment, and happen so fast and so often that it is basically just dust running around yourself. How can we grasp all this dust and transform it into a stone, that we could carry within ourselves? I have the impression that, like Elena Kreuzsch was saying, that you are going from an airport to a creation center, you perform, you get out, you perform 200 times, then you are exhausted, you don't know where you are, you rent your own apartment on Airbnb because that is the only way you can pay because you don't actually live there... How do you actually hold on to it? Can you do it? Is it more organic for you, keeping moving around this dust?

A. Kuzmanić: This is a hard question. For me, all the things that I experience during the traveling and the travel itself recharge my batteries. When I come back to Croatia, I have a lot of energy and it reinforces my will to work there and try to change things for the next generations of circus artists to give them better conditions than the ones I had myself when I was beginning 8 years ago. a

Most of the time, I cannot transfer to Croatia what I hear and what I experience abroad. There are not the same conditions to work on a similar project regarding contemporary circus. In a way, I try to be influenced by what I see. I try to find a way to put it in my daily routine and in the activities of my students. I try to find a way to fund contemporary circus in Croatia, where the political situation is difficult and where the right-wings ideas are getting stronger. Considering this context, I think I need to find other ways to fund contemporary circus, maybe with an approach as a creative hub (contemporary circus is becoming more popular in Croatia today). I try to use everything I hear here to give me energy enough to trick Croatian policy makers and be able to fund contemporary circus in my country. Of course, when you speak about European projects to policy makers, there is a better interest because of the European money that can be invested in Croatia.

V. Štefanová: If I am going abroad, that is because I know that I will come back home. Elena Kreuzsch was talking about artists who don't even know if they have a home or where their home is. I know where is my home; I am not an artist, I am a researcher who is traveling to go back and bring back what I experienced and embodied abroad. How do this embodiment translate in another one? I have the chance to do it maybe easily because I write and spread information. Being a journalist gives me the chance to talk about circus and write about it, to do reports for the radios, to spread the knowledge in a funny or interesting way so that more people than the academic world can understand it. This is the reason why I circulate: to come back. This is the difference between being a researcher and a journalist and being an artist. I hope and I believe that those articles maybe in another 5 or 10 years will still be there so that people could inspire from that or can feel the transformation of the situations based in the articles. This is the way I translate or transform the embodiment into the message.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: And you share knowledge because you create resources.

R. Müller: Yes, it is like finding a balance, or getting used to the sensation, how it feels to be in one place.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: Once you are transformed, how do you share this with your local context, whatever it may be? The three of you are representatives of your own contexts for contemporary circus. Because you are connected and because of your mobility and circulation, as geographical, symbolical, etc. How can you have your team, your context, positively and constructively profiting from your experience? As Veronika spoke about articles, I have an example: the Circostrada Network organized a research trip in Japan in December 2016, and it took me 5 months to write an article and I was very frustrated. When I read the article, I was again very much frustrated because the energy and the quality of the experience that we shared during the journey was so high but incomparable with the article (even if it is interesting to read it). I feel that I am lacking sometimes the means, not only the time, to actually share the experience.

V. Štefanová: Concerning the time, the time of transformation and the time when you get your first feedback after what you did, you build up the library from nothing... That's what we did in Cirqueon. You try to invite people to read books, articles, just to spend time and get more knowledge you brought from abroad. Actually I started to wonder whether I should really feel like a satisfaction. Sometimes it is enough for me that somebody writes me an e-mail asking to come to the library and study our documents. It does not need to be necessarily a hundred of students or a hundred of young artists coming into our library or research center to get some knowledge or to ask me questions about what to do to work on a topic for example. Sometimes it is two or three people and it is enough for me because I still believe it will be five next year and maybe fifteen another year. So I believe that step by step, that is what I realize, by traveling and circulating and meeting other researchers and librarians and journalists, it takes time but it worth it because I started in 2008

and in 2012 we had our library. Maybe 4 years is the time needed, and maybe next time it will be 2 years. We have to be patient, that's what I say. It is difficult. I am not patient, I am learning to be: I am this kind of person very dynamic that needs everything now, but this circulation told me to be patient.

A. Kuzmanić: I think the local community's benefits from me being abroad and performing and circulating around as a professional is the residency place. We made a decision ourselves that if we were going to stay in Croatia and live there, we were going to give something to the community and try to build a new contemporary circus generation of artists in Split in Croatia. Split is a small city so we have like 20 students. I think it is a huge number of people are interested in contemporary circus. In a way, how we transform everything to them is that we are speaking a lot. We are really trying to explain them, and maybe it is funny for you to hear this, but to be a professional circus artist in Croatia is really strange. Most of the people don't know that there is a possibility to be there. There is also a huge difference between Croatia and France for example: we don't have yet a developed contemporary dance scene. So you can imagine how far we are with the contemporary circus. We are trying to speak with them, even when I was leaving for this conference, I didn't say that I was going to Paris, I said that I was going to Paris and I explained what this conference was about (because I was postponing their classes and in a way, they needed to know). I really want to give them all the knowledge I have about performing arts when they are still in Croatia and not being able to go abroad, and maybe to tour and everything. Then I am bringing international artists in Split in Croatia and the artists are there for them: speaking with them, hanging out, having formal and informal kinds of meetings. I really want to create an atmosphere about being contemporary circus artists as a normal decision in life and as a possible career. Then we have different kinds of project activities: we have work-in-progress presentations, how to speak with

the audience of course (because I am trying to build an audience). The audience in Croatia is not used to contemporary arts at all because of all the programming and the producing done by National theaters. We also have movie nights with projections of circus movies and where we watch footages of performances because they are not going to have the opportunity to see these performances in Croatia, so they are at least watching it on big screens. I am really trying to speak about it and what is interesting is that media in Croatia really like us. They are following us and there are a lot of articles and video footages done about our work. The media are really helping us to spread the word where I am going away, telling where I am going and for how much time, what I am going to do there, etc.

V. Štefanová: Concerning this, talking and meeting people is a great tool to motivate people maybe to start circulating. The transformation I went through by traveling, circulating, transforming, changed me. When I am teaching for example my students at the Academy of Performing Arts where I teach about contemporary circus history and theory, it seems that this very young generation of artists, dancers, physical theatre actors, maybe future artists, does not feel like to travel. They say: "We have social media, we have all these digital tools, why would we travel? We have everything here in Prague." I answer "No, this is international art, you have to travel, you have to embody and then please come back and bring your knowledge and your experience back".

S. Segreto-Aguilar: How do you convince them?

V. Štefanová: Well, I excite it! I tell them my experience from abroad, from Montreal, from France, where I studied and I saw festivals, went to conferences, met and interviewed artists. I give them real examples, showing them pictures, videos. I can see their faces, thinking "Wow, she is so excited about it!". All these things that I did not know before, maybe that could be interesting. But I always tell them "Please, come back, because we need you back."

We need your generation's experience back so we can transform it into a Czech experience, making a fusion of it".

R. Müller: From the transformation or what we can bring back, how to tell things? I think it is quite hard. Acting is somehow easier. Also, the advantage of often being away for a long time is not knowing exactly how things work in your place, so you are not limited in this box. This is a perfect example for us who were creating the festival: the people from the cultural field in the region told us that it was ridiculous and that our project was too big, because there was no money in Switzerland. But from the point of view from outside, Switzerland has a lot of money. Traveling abroad, being in other contexts sometimes makes you think a bit bigger, and also makes you dream, and allows you to not see the reality.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: You were mentioning formal and non-formal moments to actually share knowledge and know-how, why is it useful to have these both types of times, according to you? Do you have other examples to share with us?

A. Kuzmanić: For example, last year, I brought a group of different acrobats. One of them was Valia Beauvieux (he was a CircusNext laureate in 2012-2013), Johnatan Moss from the UK and Ethan Law, who lives in Prague and is from the US. They had a residency in Split for about 2 weeks and they had this formal kind of presentation with a work-in-progress in the Performance Institute. They provided an acrobatic workshop. For most of my students, they had regular questions for them. They were really interested in their backgrounds, about what they studied and where, how the school was, how much money it costed, how the life of a circus artist looked like, how the nomadic way of life was, etc. My colleagues and I are not touring so much. It is a kind of relationship as what we have at home. Jakov has a wife and a child, he is the guardian of his brother, so he is not able to be on the road for a long time. This is why we are a not a proper example for them of what to be a circus artist on the road is like.

They had these questions they do not want to hear from me only, because I do not have all the possible experiences. I just invite them to have a drink or to go to the beach and swim together in order to just speak like a sort of friends, in a horizontal relationship, having a normal and informal way of communicating, spending time so that they can connect and maybe sometimes collaborate in some kind of projects. I see on the social media that they are still in connection, they are liking each other's profiles on Facebook, and I am glad that they are still in touch.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: You were mentioning before that you were happy (and I understand, I completely agree with you) that even if only one person writes you an e-mail, you are satisfied. It is not about the quantity but about the quality. Saying this provocatively, since we are mostly funded by institutions, often public ones, but also private ones, how do you evaluate and how do you highlight what you do to your stakeholders, which are not only the funders, you have different types of stakeholders, like the media, etc.? If you only had one student coming, would the media in Croatia really follow you? How do you make them like you in this idea of circulation and knowledge?

V. Štefanová: This is a huge question. CIRQUEON, its library and research center, is a big organization in Czech Republic. It has a lot of activities, such as residencies, workshops, classes, video projection evenings, and also works as a research center, also having its own online magazine about circus with articles from all across Europe. The research center and the library, to be honest, are not sexy at all for the media, even for the public funders who support us financially. It is interesting because it is unique but in general, research and studies in Czech Republic still do not have a huge value, and especially when they focus on circus arts. The first question that our funders could ask us would be: "Why do you have a research center and a library? Is circus a such huge topic to need a library and a research center? Are there people interested in this topic?"

We could answer that there are not much people yet, but there are more and more interested in it, and that it is our work to promote it and inform them, finding ways to do it. There are tools, like articles, videos, television. It is not easy, you are right, and the satisfaction is not big enough at the moment.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: Does European/international circulation or connection help you to have a leverage on your national context?

V. Štefanová: It helps to be known and recognized at an international level. I have sometimes more e-mails from abroad than from Czech Republic asking me about the documents we have. This is interesting because we are well connected with other research centers and libraries and even in Czech Republic, we are in contact with SIBMAS, the International Association of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Documentation Centres of the Performing Arts. But we still need to promote the idea of doing research on circus arts. We will organize maybe next year a big conference focused on circus, in partnership with the Canadian University of Concordia. Hopefully, it will help to have a better connection with the media and the academic field.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: As an example, there will be next week a big conference in Portugal about street arts and the fact that such an event comes to a country where street arts are booming but still in process of structuration comparing with other countries, accelerated all the discussions with policy makers, especially with the Ministry. They become suddenly interested, they talk about it and act. It makes us realize that a local festival, which is constantly fighting, when connected with an international context through mobility, helps the local context.

V. Štefanová: Until now, CIRQUEON was focused on creation, classes, residencies, meetings with artists who go abroad to bring the knowledge, and we realize now that it is the time to focus more on research.

The experience that we bring from abroad is that artistic research is a big deal and we are now able to connect with other partners from abroad to start something strong in our country. A big conference in Czech Republic could help to bring the attention of the Ministry of Culture, City of Prague, etc. on our activities.

A. Kuzmanić: Croatia has a lack of visionary scene amongst stakeholders and policy makers. For example our performance, which was awarded by Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe, did not get any money from the Ministry of Culture, nor the City or Regional Councils. The last selection week of the JTCE edition being in Zagreb, operators from European institutions and artists had been informed of this event. When we were selected, the Ministry of Culture sent us a letter and the news was published by all the media congratulating us as Croatian representatives. But when we needed money to prepare this selection week, there was no support from these public institutions. This situation is still the same, so without any recognition it is very hard to work in Croatia. It is always like that, you need first to be recognized at a European level and then by your own country. This is terrible because you do not have any kind of support and in a way it is hard to be recognized by Europe if you are not recognized in your own country. If somebody is reading your European application and you cannot say that you are funded by the Ministry of Culture, they are not going to take you for serious. This is happening to us again. Because of the political situation, they are trying to break down the independent scene in Croatia and the civil organizations. We are fighting back because there are a lot of independent artists in Croatia, we will see what will happen. We have local elections in 2 days so next week is going to be interesting. It will be very helpful for us if Jeunes Talents Cirque Europe receives funds for the CircusNext platform project because we are now platform members. I think being part of a European platform funded by the European Commission can bring a good branding to us.

We could answer that there are not much people yet, but there are more and more interested in it, and that it is our work to promote it and inform them, finding ways to do it. There are tools, like articles, videos, television. It is not easy, you are right, and the satisfaction is not big enough at the moment.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: Does European/international circulation or connection help you to have a leverage on your national context?

V. Štefanová: It helps to be known and recognized at an international level. I have sometimes more e-mails from abroad than from Czech Republic asking me about the documents we have. This is interesting because we are well connected with other research centers and libraries and even in Czech Republic, we are in contact with SIBMAS, the International Association of Libraries, Museums, Archives and Documentation Centres of the Performing Arts. But we still need to promote the idea of doing research on circus arts. We will organize maybe next year a big conference focused on circus, in partnership with the Canadian University of Concordia. Hopefully, it will help to have a better connection with the media and the academic field.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: As an example, there will be next week a big conference in Portugal about street arts and the fact that such an event comes to a country where street arts are booming but still in process of structuration comparing with other countries, accelerated all the discussions with policy makers, especially with the Ministry. They become suddenly interested, they talk about it and act. It makes us realize that a local festival, which is constantly fighting, when connected with an international context through mobility, helps the local context.

V. Štefanová: Until now, CIRQUEON was focused on creation, classes, residencies, meetings with artists who go abroad to bring the knowledge, and we realize now that it is the time to focus more on research.

S. Segreto-Aguilar: Do you think the new generation will benefit from all the funds that you received?

A. Kuzmanić: We are funded by the Government Foundation for Contemporary Arts. It is a big funding, it will end in 2020. This is strange, but it is easier for us to get recognized by the most important contemporary art fund of Croatia than by the City Council of Split.

R. Müller: Somehow, it is quite easy for us in the frame of the festival, because there are visible results. 2 weeks ago, it was quite funny, I met the president of the Kuratorium, which is the professional support organization for arts in the region. He had seen the program and was asking just one question: "Did you see all these shows?!?". Then you can see the different realities and sometimes also how it is. But in a certain way, I do not have to feel I have to convince for this. I take it just as I do it like this, so...

Questions & Answers

M. Le Sourd: I find the examples of Czech Republic and Croatia particularly interesting, about how mobility experiences can also bring some argumentation to advocate for more support from the sector in your home country. It is also a way to tackle this question of hyper-mobility of the artists, who need to go abroad to make a living, who will stay in their own country if their conditions of life are better at home.

A question for Antonia: through one example, when you talk to funders or policy makers, how do you refer to good case practices in other countries in order to try to convince them to eventually implement that in Croatia, maybe not now but in a long-term process? As I said in my previous speech, during a meeting I mentioned in Charleroi, people said that sometimes, referring to other examples of support can be a bit counter-productive. For instance, using the example of France, which is the dream country from the outside, because of the public funding and what so ever, so the answer is that France is so different that this case is not applicable in the country in question. As you said, the idea is not to apply everything but to maybe take some of the ingredients that can eventually be implemented in a new policy or a new organization that could support the sector.

A. Kuzmanić: I did a bit of magic! I found a trick: there is a Youth Council of the City of Split and I am the president, so they have to speak with me. Then, I speak about art, I talk with them about different possibilities and how little changes can have a huge impact on the situation. For instance, they did not have any grants on a city level for international travels. I just told them that a not so big budget was needed to tell the artists that it was easier now to go abroad. Now, there are 30 000 euros a year dedicated to applications for grants for international travels, which are usually accepted.

I am also very involved in the independent arts scene in Split and in Croatia. We are trying and using every possible way to speak with stakeholders to change things. Even this foundation for contemporary arts at a government level is a bottom-up project that started 6 years ago. There are these kinds of different projects lobbying and advocating for change. Of course it is hard to speak about contemporary circus, I mostly speak about contemporary art, because there is too few circus in Croatia to have a big voice, but we are really making a difference for contemporary arts in Croatia in general. We are really loud and boring when things are going bad.

For instance, last year we had a fascist minister of Culture (maybe you heard about it because it was in the media and we asked for international help) and they tried to cut the fundings for arts. We were really loud, we were in the streets, protesting about this person elected as a ministry of Culture and in the end, we won: he is not the ministry of Culture anymore. He is not even an important person in this right-wing party anymore, so it is a win for us. I am trying to work with the Ministry of Culture so that circus arts are recognized as an art form in Croatia, and not an "immature skill" anymore. I argued with them (and I also won) saying that I did not want to be seen as leading a project in "immature arts" so they put me in the "innovative performing arts". All the circus projects are now part of this "innovative performing arts" category. It is also just a way to put circus arts in a better position than an immature skill. So there are different kinds of advocating, protesting and speaking as a Youth Council president.

V. Štefanová: Czech Republic is in a different situation: circus is recognized as an art form and became very popular. Now, the Ministry of Culture, the City of Prague, which have a lot of money to support culture, recognize contemporary circus. The thing is that to advocate for it, we realized and we learnt abroad to join with other institutions and organizations. Sometimes it is hard to explain to all the Czech institutions and companies that doing it together makes us stronger.

A big help comes from the Theatre Institute in Prague that advocates some cases very well with the Ministry of Culture. It is also good to do it with other festivals. When the Ministry of Culture and the City of Prague, where lots of things are happening, see that people like it and that the politicians and the policy makers could have been seen as supporters of these activities, this helps. Working and advocating together is the tool that works.



A support scheme
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2013-2017

A project conceived and piloted by

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