

MEDIA RELEASE

Level 5, 10 Hickson Road The Rocks
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
Phone 61 2 8248 6500 Fax 61 2 8248 6599
sydneyfestival.org.au



Circus City Overview



Photo: iD by Valerie Remise

Running from January 12 – 22, **Circus City** is a dynamic celebration of circus across ten days in Parramatta. Riverside Theatres and Prince Alfred Square host local and international hit shows, including a world premiere performance and a circus big top aglow in festoon lighting, a ten-meter-high outdoor trapeze and circus workshops for everyone from tiny tots to seniors.

There will be a series of talks exploring the circus arts, a film program and a display of costumes and posters from Australia's traditional circus roots. A series of workshop and masterclass events for circus professionals will round out this celebration of circus. The extensive program is family friendly and proudly accessible, with a range of free and ticketed events on offer.

Australia is an international leader in circus and Sydney Festival brings together different circus practices from overseas and across the country to showcase the art form. Whilst recognising the legacy of traditional circus, the program will highlight the evolution and theatricality of contemporary circus practice.

The ten day program draws attention to the changing definition of circus and its capacity to build stronger communities as a universal force that goes beyond race, ethnicity and cultural difference.

Sydney Festival is thrilled to present exclusive seasons of internationally renowned circus from Canada's **Cirque Éloize** and the UK's **Ockham's Razor** at Riverside Theatres and in the Spaghetti Circus Big Top pitched in Prince Alfred Square.

An international sensation since 2009, Cirque Éloize's *iD* is a high-energy blend of circus arts and urban dance, featuring an inspiring soundtrack and innovative video projections. Fifteen acrobats, aerialists, hip hop and break dancers come together to create a microcosmic society where two groups celebrate everyone's distinct identity. Director **Jeannot Painchaud** presents a thrilling display of graphically staged theatre that has been seen by over one million people since its premiere.

London-based aerial theatre company **Ockham's Razor** push themselves to the limit on 5 metre-long metal poles that transform into a myriad of walkways, pillars and pendulums in a blend of circus, acrobatics, playground games and trust exercises. Set in the round with the audience drawn in close to the action, the five performers are enclosed within the circle of the stage. Together they face a series of challenges as poles are balanced on fingertips, hung from the roof, swung, lashed, climbed up and clung to, the action veering from near-catastrophe to mastery creating a richly poetic landscape of images.

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Their award-winning works have been seen in 34 countries across six continents, now **Circa** presents *Humans*, a world premiere created especially for Sydney Festival. In their edgy and refreshing take on contemporary circus, the artists of Circa regularly push the limits of the human body. Featuring an ensemble of multi-skilled circus artists under the direction of **Yaron Lifschitz**, *HUMANS* combines the stripped-back sensibility and aesthetic of contemporary dance and theatre with phenomenal acrobatic prowess.

Company 2 returns to Sydney Festival with *Kaleidoscope*, an extraordinary interpretation of a child's unique vision of the world. Audiences are invited to view life through Ethan's eyes in a joyous, poetic circus experience that explores the great beauty found in the smallest things. **Ethan Hugh** was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at four years of age. *Kaleidoscope* brings to life the colour, chaos and incredible beauty of now thirteen-year-old Ethan's every day as he performs alongside a cast of circus performers in a celebration of young people's stories and the acceptance of difference.

Alongside world-class performances Circus City will offer **free and ticketed workshops** allowing audiences to test their prowess and experience first-hand the thrill and skill that circus performer's exhibit in their craft.

Hang around with Aerialize - Circus for Everyone! includes 22 free workshops over six days focussing on trapeze, tissue and aerial hoop. There will be acrobatics, acrobalance, handstands, hula hoops and juggling, tiny tots workshops, a Seniors workshop, an identified accessible workshop, aerial and ground-based workshops for kids and adults, a two day mixed workshop for Kids and a two day mixed workshop for Adults. Participants will need to register through the Sydney Festival website to reserve places in the workshops.

All Aerialize workshops are fully accessible. Those with accessibility requirements will need to provide details when registering.

Sydney Flying Trapeze bring their ten metre high outdoor trapeze rig to Prince Alfred Square where students of all levels, beginners to intermediate, can take a two hour flying trapeze class. The workshop starts with an introduction and full body warm-up, followed by a practice turn on a low stationary trapeze bar before students are attached to their safety harness, ready to climb up and swing. All students will have an opportunity to practice 'Flying Tricks' throughout the class and the lesson will culminate with participants being caught in mid-air. Suitable for 6+.

In the **Kaleidoscope workshops**, Company 2 will provide structured and creative play opportunities for children and families to discover their imaginative potential. The workshops are led by the young performers from *Kaleidoscope*, and are supported by professional artists making it a unique arts experience. The workshop on Tuesday 17 January is an identified workshop for young people on the Autism spectrum. All Kaleidoscope workshops are fully accessible.

The **Ockham's Razor Workshop for People with Disability** will be run by the UK circus company and is an inclusive circus workshop which offers the chance to experience aerial apparatus and the theatre of circus. They will use trapezes and counterweight harnesses to allow participants to experience the height and movement of aerial circus. It is open for a wide range of participants including those with a learning or physical disability or on the autism spectrum, The structure of the workshop will be tailored to the needs of the specific group.

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Sydney Festival will present **multiple screenings** of three **feature-length international circus films**. The series will also include a selection of Australian circus short films. *The Show of Shows* takes us back to the days when the most outlandish, skilful and breathtaking acts travelled the world with rare and never-before-seen footage of 19th and 20th Century fairgrounds, freak shows, variety performance and vaudeville, sound tracked by an epic score from **Sigur Ros**. *Circus Without Borders* is a documentary about two performers, one Inuit and one West African. Seven years in the making, this tale of two circuses is a culture-crossing performance piece that offers a portal into two remote communities, and an inspiring story of resilience and joy. *Grazing the Sky* takes a revealing look at the incredible physical exploits of circus acrobats. The film follows eight acrobats from all over the world as they face the price of life in the limelight; years of study and practice, an iron discipline, an ongoing commitment to learn new skills, and constant travel far from home.

To enrich audience and industry engagement with the modern face of circus, a series of **free panel discussions** will be presented throughout the program for circus professionals and the general public. Titled *Talking Circus: Krzysztof Soroczynski, Circus Elders, Circus and Access* and *Talking Circus: Where are we heading?* These talks will feature Australian and International circus professionals and experts talking about the art form. There will also be a post-show discussion with the acrobatic designer of iD - **Krzysztof Soroczynski** – who will be in conversation with Patrick Nolan.

The 2017 program sees a new Sydney Festival initiative to foster Australian circus talent through a series of exclusive industry workshops and masterclasses led by the performers from *iD*, internationally respected trainer and acrobatic designer **Krzysztof Soroczynski** (Cirque Éloize, Cirque du Soleil) and **Charlotte Mooney** (Ockham's Razor).

The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences will also present a **display** of show memorabilia, posters and costumes from Australia's rich tradition of 19th and 20th century touring family circuses featuring two prominent families, the **Wirths** and the **Jandaschewskys**.

Where: Riverside Theatre and Prince Alfred Square, Parramatta

When: January 12 – 22

More information: sydneyfestival.org.au/2017/circus-city

For interviews and further information contact:

Jessica Keirle, Publicity Manager jessica.keirle@sydneyfestival.org.au

Julia Barnes, Publicist julia.barnes@sydneyfestival.org.au

Georgia McKay, Publicist georgia.mckay@sydneyfestival.org.au



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