

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR
YOUTH TECHNICAL CIRCUS
TECHNIQUES SOUTH AFRICA
5 - 12 APRIL**



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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Circus Overseas

Circus Overseas is a two year (2021-2022) project which aims to address the challenges of managing social circus activities and entities through a series of four (4) training modules for young circus trainers and staff from the circus schools' partners in the project and beyond. This capacity building will be done through a combination of circus arts and non-formal education, valuing peer exchange and experience sharing while fostering creativity, liberty, and intercultural dialogue.

Circus Overseas is a partnership project between six circus schools from around the world all members of Caravan Circus Network, project's lead applicant: Altro Circo (Italy), Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (France), Phare Ponleu Selpak (Cambodia), Sirkus Magenta (Finland), The Palestinian Circus School (Palestine), & Zip Zap Circus (South Africa). This project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

By doing so, we intend to empower and support young people with fewer opportunities by providing competence and skill development activities. Our aim is to inspire them to participate actively, become the protagonist of their own stories, and to take leading roles within their communities and be catalysts for positive change.

Ultimately, we wish to highlight the positive impact on the social inclusion of youth at local, national and international level.

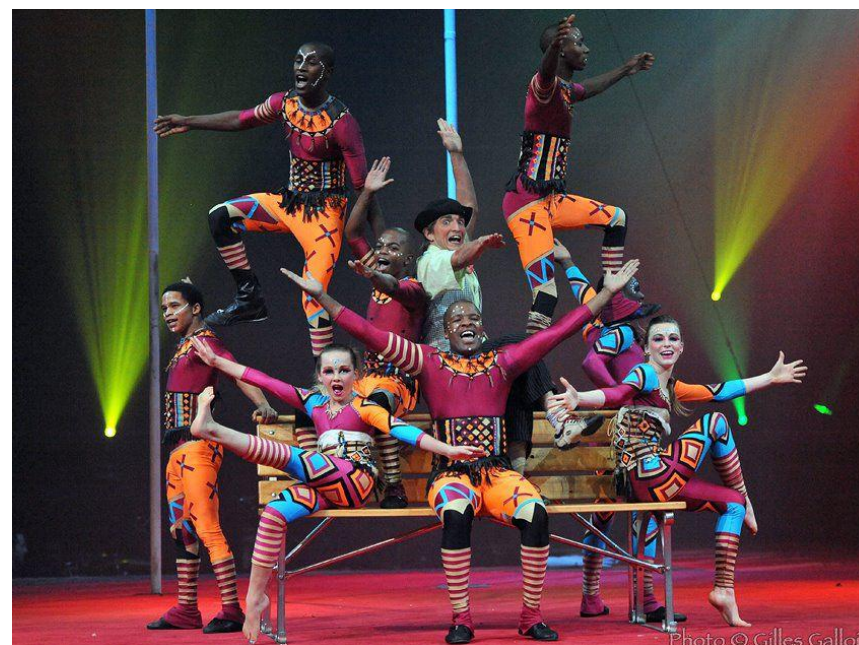


Photo © Gilles Gallois

The Training Programmes

1

Circus arts technical development | South Africa | Zip Zap | 5 - 12 April 2022

2

Managing and leading youth circus organisations | Cambodia | Phare | 24 - 31 May 2022

3

Pedagogy and act of teaching | Italy | Altro Circo | 25 July - 1 August 2022

4

Directing and staging circus | France | Le plus petit cirque du Monde | 18 - 25 September 2022

Over the course of 2022, 4 key training activities, independent from each other and focusing on 4 different relevant elements of youth circus organisations will be organised:



Training Activity 1 - Circus Arts Technical Development

Learning objectives

- Improve competence in basic circus techniques
- Develop competence in sharing techniques and artistic specificity to peers in an international and multicultural setting
- Artistic collaboration
- Develop an artistic and professional network

Methodology

- Peer-to-peer learning > the sessions were interactive with participants sharing knowledge and techniques for their speciality disciplines. This created a platform to learn new skills and techniques based on the teachings of each participant. Participants were solely responsible for managing these sessions.

Outputs

- One of the aims of the project was to create and showcase a collective circus performance by the participants. The presentation of the show was performed to a local audience wherein the various circus techniques they explored during the training was showcased.
- Throughout the training sessions and creative process the development of a tool-kit was created to document the activities of the module with the aim of capacity building for youth across the network.



THE TOOLKIT



Warm up

The goal is to create a routine that is repeated every time before training and should always be done as a group. It is important to warm up each of the muscle groups. Warm up should be no longer than 20 minutes.

- 1 Start with cardio.
- 2 Warm up core (abs & back)
- 3 Lubricate joints, focus on extremities.
- 4 Mild stretch. Ready to go!

Note: Starting the day fast and hard usually has a domino effect. Upbeat music & movement is more effective vs. talking & stretching





Cool Downs

The goal is to create a routine that is repeated every time after training and also done as a group. Focus on each of the muscle groups that were worked during that day.

- 1 Start with spinal rolls (option to make class in pairs for massage purposes)
 - 2 Stretch large muscles groups (quad, hamstring, neck, shoulders, back)
 - 3 Stretch the small muscle groups (forearms, shoulders, calves etc.)
 - 4 Relax the mind. Calm energy, soothing voice. Create a safe space for the group to wind down.
- Note:** this is an appropriate time to check in emotionally, talk about week plans/ schedule/ check in covid wise etc.



Flexibility

Combination of active and passive stretching, with the goal to improve each individual's current flexibility. Every body is different so be patient and notice personal achievements even if that individual isn't in oversplits.

Note: Keep a calm and encouraging tone when teaching. Stress contracts the body and prevents physical breakthroughs

Workout

Class will vary.

- 30min HIIT (high intensity training) combines cardio and muscular movements with no rest for 30min. (40sec on 20 sec break)
- Muscle group focus (leg day, back day, core day, cardio day etc)
- Endurance focused (maintaining / holding positions)
- Obstacle course to find motivation if lacking

*Find complementary training. For example, Straps workout class is a great way for Rope & Scarf artists to improve stretch & mobility & apply straps technique to their discipline. Handstand complimentary for Hand 2 Hand & Acro.

Note: ask the group what they need





Tumbling & Floor Acro/movement

It's important to clarify the difference between tumbling & acrobatic dance.

Acro Dance: Learning how to creatively assemble acrobatic tricks into sequences with a focus on movement quality and flow.

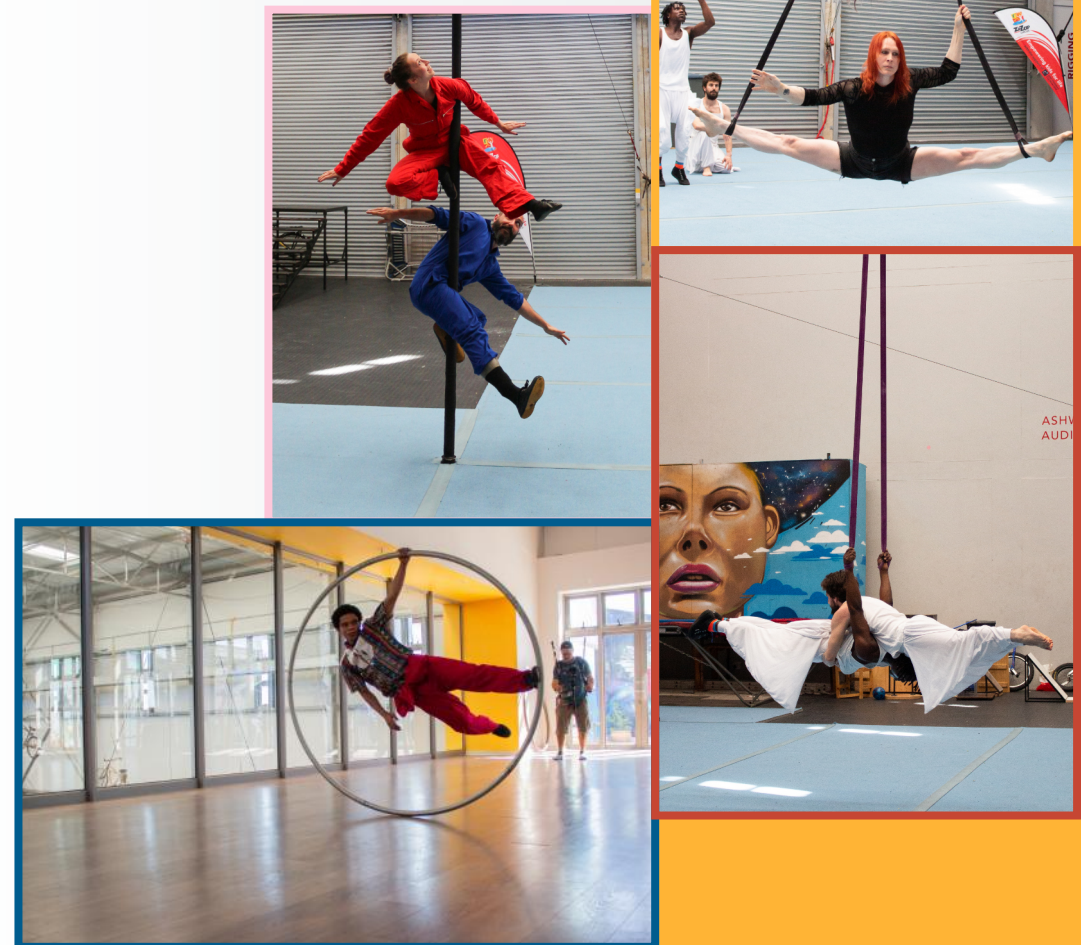
Note: Acro dance is usually less impact and adaptable to each individual body.

Tumbling: Gymnastic technique tumbling lines. Focusing on clean lines and dynamic power.

Note: You need to have a good technical base before you begin experimenting creatively with movement.

Specialty

This time is dedicated to their disciplines. The instructor will float between students. Advising & correcting & guiding them in creative directions for act construction.



Presentations & Retroaction feedback session

Retroaction is a system for learning how to give feedback and a tool of how to give and receive constructive criticism to further your work.

Aim: Encouraging the students to fast track creative processes, to present their work-in-progress even if it's at a fragile stage and to receive constructive criticism as well as encourage, support and critique their peers in a diplomatic manner.



Warm up exercise & Games

Name Game

- Everyone stands in a circle.
- One person steps forward, does a small movement and says their name.
- Everyone else in the circle steps forward does the same movement and says that persons name.
- And it goes around until everyone had a turn.(nice ice-breaker)

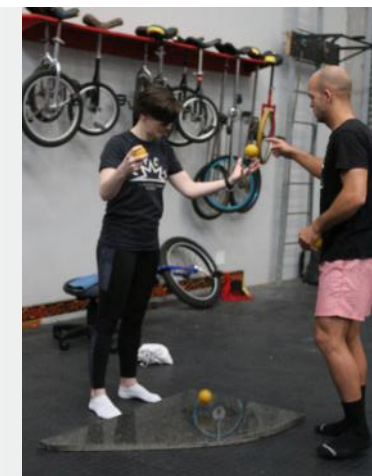


Emotion Express

- Everyone walks in the space.
- One person will lead the game and give direction.
- The leader will call out different roles and the people walking in the space has to act it out.
- The leader running the game will explain the role and say when I clap my hands you guys will act it out.
- Roles- everyone has to just start laughing, everyone has to just start crying, everyone has to walk around like an old person and the list goes on and on.

Warm Up - Bounce juggling

- Any 4 variations of sit-ups. 10 sit-ups per variation.
- Get the core active for balance and reaction.
- Start with 3 balls passive and active, and work my way up to the max I can juggle.



Hand to Hand

- 20 push-ups
- 50 Sit-ups
- 50 tucks (laying on back)
- 50 side crunches each side
- 50 squats
- Light general stretch



Swordfight warm up

The warm up has 3 phases:

1st phase

Two people stand slightly less than an arms length, facing each other.
Neither of them move their feet during the whole exercise. One person uses one hand as a rigid sword and with moderate to slow speed sweeps improvised arcs and stabs at the other person.
The other person evades the cuts and stabs by moving to the side, squatting, arching the back and so on in improvised ways.
There shouldn't be any actual hitting and the person doing the sweeps should allow the other person to always evade. The idea is to activate the movement of the spine as much as possible with the evasions and to find different improvised pattern.
The trainer can explain this and show an example.
After 1-2 minutes switch roles.



2nd phase:

Now both assign one arm as the sword and don't switch it in between. The exercise is the same, but they hit clearly one after another, not with too much speed but so that they can create fluid and interesting situations. Trainer should discourage too much wild and fast sweeping and instead encourage reacting again with the spine. After 1 minute change the hand and do another minute.

3rd phase:

Both hands are now swords and the players don't have to go one after another but can strike whenever they want as long as they remember to evade too. The game is now a bit more challenging, but the players should still try to control the speed a bit, although it's up to them as long as they can keep it fluid and use all the different directions and spine fluidly. At this point the coach can also explain that the swords are lightsabers and the participants should make loud lightsaber sounds for fun when hitting. :)

Straps specific warmups

- 4-6 laps run around the studio
- 10 pushups, 10 squats, 10 pike lifts
- Lay on your back with one leg straight and one bent. Straight leg does 10 kicks to your face foot pointed and 10 with foot flexed
- Sit in pike with straight back and arms up together. Lower your arms down to your feet and back up 10 times – a dynamic pike stretch.
- Sit in straddle and with opposite hand reach over your head dynamically to your opposite foot, both sides 10 times. Do a quick 15s middle stretch in the straddle after.
- Arm flails: flail your arms front and backwards in a circle. Also try to move one front and one back at the same time.
- Shoulder loosener: bring your palm close to your face, trace it around to the back of your head, from there raise it all the way up, then lower the straight arm to the side. Repeat movement on both hands one after another.
- Hang in the straps with both hands and do 10 shoulder raises with straight arms, feel your scapula moving. Do it slowly, not pumping fast.
- Hang with 2 straight arms, pull your head back and pull with straight arms to arch your back and pull your chest up between the straps to point to the ceiling and then come to normal hang again. 10 times.
- Hang with only 1 hand in a strap and do 6 one arm shoulder raises. Both hands.
- Leg lifts: 2 x 10 leg lifts with straight arms, both hands on straps.

**Skin the cats**

- 3-6 skin the cats with CLEAN technique.
- Arms have to be straight at all times.
- You first do a leg lift with a neutral head that stays between the shoulders all the time.
- The leg lift brings your feet into a pike in front of your face.
- When they reach your face/wrists you start lifting and pulling the feet between your arms while keeping in the pike all the time, so that you end up in a piked hand position.
- Avoid bringing your head back to assist with pulling the feet, as you want to develop the strength and mobility.
- Stay strictly in the pike. A friend can help you if needed.
- You continue over your shoulders and roll backwards to extend your pike into a german hang, feet pointing straight down to the floor instead of forward.
- Have someone help in this position if you can't hold it yourself or lift back up from it.
- From there lift and curl back into the clean pike and roll yourself back over and bring the legs down controlled.
- Preferably do this move hanging on a trapeze in the beginning so that you have to bring the feet from under the trapeze without touching it, which maximises the strength work and gains for the movement and makes for a clean pike.
- For beginners 1-2 skin the cats can be enough without rest, but you should encourage the student to complete 3, even with rest times in between.
- Help by lifting their feet from the ankles just enough that they barely manage it with a lot of strain.

2nd phase

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Clowning activity improve

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- This can be used as a warm up game for a group or one-on-one
- You choose 4 emotions -- example, sad, happy angry or confused
- The group stands in a line shoulder to shoulder and the trainer assigns numbers e.g. if you have 10 students you can split them from 1 to 5
- 1 is the lowest with 5 being the highest expression of that emotion
- If the emotion is sad and it starts at number 1, that person's emotion is sad
- The second person goes to sad emotion no 2 and is a little more sad than person 1
- The game continues to 3, 4, 5 and with each number the emotion grows
- The trainer can add whatever "setting" like a cinema and watching a movie that is a happy movie (the levels of happiness escalates with each number) and then angry emotion or at the beach or going to the bathroom etc and is acted out by the group.





General warm-up

- Start by running around in one big circle, connecting with your breath, feeling the body and its different parts, its injuries and painful regions. Gradually release tension, empty your head, accept your body in its totality.
- Run sideways, joining feet while jumping (low & high variant), crossing feet to warm up hips and lower back.
- Warm up shoulders, by swinging arms around (together), sideways (together), then bouncing them up and down (separately).
- Warm up wrists, shoulders, legs, ankles by walking on all fours, searching for different ways to distribute your weight. Then look for ways to only use three points of contact with the floor.



Game 1

- Everyone moves through the space on all fours, and explore the ways you can go through small tunnels/holes/passageways created by other bodies.
- Create temporary 'clusters' of bodies without staying too long in one place.

Game 2

- The entire group moves through the entire space and tries to keep the entire 'plateau' in balance (equal density of people everywhere in space).
- Play around with different speeds, from 1 to 5 (5 = very fast, 1 = very slow, 0 = standstill).
- Ask everyone to be as conscious as possible about the others) - make eye-contact ! - and about the space.
- The same can be done when walking on all fours.

Game 3

- Everyone disperses in the space; warm up different body parts separately first, and then combine them.
- For example: first only make circles with your shoulder, small movements and progressively bigger ones.
- Then focus respectively on the elbows, the wrists & fingers, the neck, the hips, the knees, the ankles
- Play around with combinations of these, play around with different speeds.
- Travel from one side of the space to the other
- Dynamical flexibility
- Arms spread horizontally outwards, throw up your straight leg, alternating left and right.
- Then do a line sideways, and another backwards. Finally, combine the three movements in a small equence.
- Starting on your back, roll slowly sideways while trying to keep all hands & feet in connection with the ground at all times (contemporary dance)
- Small 'clash/croco' - with elbow towards your kidneys - alternating left and right side while advancing (breakdance/capoeira)
- Play around with cartwheels, small/big, slow/fast, switch starting & landing foot etc. Two-by-two, hold one hand and travel together doing, each in turn, a cartwheel over the other's hand.
- Play around with tisga (front facing kind of cartwheel), both sides, switch feet in mid-air, one hand, backwards...
- Stretching legs (different splits, static and dynamic)
- Some series of push-ups, abs and planches

