

Hi and welcome to a new series called **Press Pass With the Editor** on the Circus Voices Network brought to you by CircusTalk News. This is Kim Campbell, the editor of CircusTalk News and I am happy to announce this monthly news-based podcast which will revolve around the circus and performing arts industry. The idea is to provide front row access to what's happening around the performance world.

But now for some headlines!

Here is some news you might have missed this past month on CircusTalk News...

- Although it was announced in early February that Blue Man Group, an acquisition of Cirque du Soleil, would not reopen at Universal Studios in Orlando, it does appear that Cirque du Soleil plans to reopen their shows in Vegas and Orlando first, with their "most optimistic date" being July. But CEO Lamarre also says in the same interview with ArtsHub that the likely return of touring shows will be in the fall of 2022, with 2021 being the year of preparation.
- In spite of several waves of lockdown happening over the past year in Australia, Australian company Circa recently premiered their cabaret-style show *Peepshow* (along with 2 other shows *Humans 2.0* and *Sacre*.) For *Peepshow*, artistic director Yaron Lifschitz says they are using the artistic lens of contemporary circus and acrobatics to explore cabaret and burlesque. To me that sounds a bit like what *Briefs* and *Hot Brown Honey* (also from Australia) have been up to for years now, but perhaps Circa will be offering a more cis and less politically relevant approach. The show premiered at the beloved *The Chamäleon Theatre* in Berlin and is playing at the Sydney Opera house until February 14th, aka Valentine's Day.
- Some good news for US performing arts venues: US congress approved a Save Our Stages COVID-19 relief grant offers \$15 billion in grants for art and entertainment venues to help them survive this extended period of no shows?
- There's some good news for freelance artists in California. New legislation called AB5 affects how they are paid; they can no longer be misclassified as independent contractors meaning they are entitled to benefits of actual staff. Many smaller employers however say the timing is bad because their budgets have been so impacted by COVID that they can't afford to put artists on the payroll as it increases their overall costs by 30%.

Industry Insights:

In this segment we take the long view of what is happening in the circus sector.

En Piste, the National Circus Alliance of Canada, released results of their survey on the impacts of COVID-19 on the circus industry in Canada. The Canadian survey, totaling 381 respondents, was conducted by En Piste in collaboration with Simon Bastien and took place from November 23 to December 7, 2020. It is important to note that the study mainly concerns Canadian circus arts, but it is also easy to imagine that the numbers would mimic the circus sectors of other countries. En Piste admits in their report that the outlook is very bleak unless the government provides continued funding.

Amongst individuals the report says

- Circus arts revenues have dropped 65% in 2020 compared to 2019.
- More than 80% are unable to plan their professional futures and practice their craft, while 94% are considering a career transition.
- 65% suffer from depression or anxiety.
- 36% of respondents have experienced an increase in personal debt, while 5% had to resort to a food bank

Among organizations the numbers are similar

- The number of spectators reached fell by 94%, while the number of participants in educational and social circus programs fell by 77%.
- Total revenues decreased by 51%A 53% reduction in the number of employees resulted in a cutback in paid hours, loss of expertise and work overload.

You can learn more about the report in the CircusTalk News article titled ‘New Data Reveals COVID’s Devastating Impact on the Circus Sector’ or by visiting the En Piste website.

Shows

A year into the pandemic, and live theatre is still a rarity, but it seems most of the circus festivals have experience now creating digital seminars, workshops and showings. Similarly, many circus companies are offering their shows online as well as a way to keep their creativity flowing and to generate income.

I have two Digital Reviews to prove it:

The first is a preview of *The Fleecing* by Almanac Dance Circus Theatre.

This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending Almanac Dance Circus Theatre’s latest show, *The Fleecing* where capitalist pigs, bombastic leaders and the great reckoning merge into an interactive online experience which replicates the mayhem and truthiness of our polarized culture. The result was getting to mingle with a network of in-character clowns and artists delivering some tongue in cheek zingers like, “We are the fist that punches down—My privilege gives me the right to judge “

The experience itself was a bit overwhelming, even for those of us who spend many hours a day Zooming from room to room, but I think that might have been the point of the show—to replicate that frenzied feeling that separates us from reality. The audience was expected to hop from breakout bucket to breakout bucket and to pop in and out of webpage conspiracy fake news scenarios, as we were spun from one absurdist moment to the next. In the midst of these rapid tone switches there was circus, dance and performance art pieces to accompany the monologues and dialogues. The whole experience was led by the Adjudicator and the Abacus Bearer, two influencers there to guide us in a process of elimination, as we narrowed in on various competing groups with names like the evangelicals, the freaks, and the mystics.

Seeing this unique show just once will not give you the whole picture necessarily—you might miss out on the actual reckoning and not be part of the chosen group, but it does give you a fast-paced escape from the life of regimented online Zoom meetings for a change and for an hour or so, it breaks down all the walls so you can breathe with some fellow humans.

Almanac Dance Circus Theatre's run of the Fleecing is over, but you can catch more of their company and upcoming shows on their CircusTalk profile.

The second review I'd like to share with you is of juggler Filip Zahradnický's (Zahardininski-i) solo show titled *Collection of Sceptical Pleasures* which premiered via livestream as part of the ongoing Cirkopolis Fest on February 8th.

This is a rare instance of a show title being a perfect description of what to expect. Filip's skeptical pleasures tend to emerge throughout the piece with a focus on manipulation and movement, but there are also elements of neo-classical interior design aesthetics and minimalism apparent in the scenography which really makes a versatile backdrop.

Filip juxtapositions his earnest seeming presentation with slow movements as he realigns furniture/props to set the stage for his next sequence, while also allowing in some clowning moments to break through as a reminder that all is not as somber as it seems in his world. Dressed in black, his body seems to want to fade into the scenes rather than to stand out, allowing for the focus to be purely on the movement. And the movement quality is what he showcases with unique props, walking on cylinders, wearing a rotating box head for a mesmerizing dance sequence, and scarf juggling a giant piece of tulle while working with an electric fan for some buoyancy. This show has the ceremony of a classic magic show, and the playful inquiry of a children's show, yet it is entirely its own. Where the magic really happens is when Filip involves fabric, especially when he combines ball juggling and fabric which creates a lush, poignant scene. On many occasions, he makes the stage an interactive partner, as while wearing a long black skirt (silks) that billow across the entire performance space, elevating his dramatic juggling motions to a dance between these elements.

To find out more about *Collection of Sceptical Pleasures and Cirkopolis*, please visit *Cirqueon's profile page on CircusTalk*.

Mention 1: Did you know you can list your show, festival and workshops on CircusTalk? You can even sell tickets or request Pay What You Can donations for your event. Visit....

Jobs

The CircusTalk job board lists jobs of all sorts for the circus professional as well as the performing arts, from auditions to administrative. Here is a sample of what is up on the board now.

Istanbul Fringe Festival 2021 - Hybrid - Global call for artists, March 27 deadline *Istanbul, Turkey*

Circus Smirkus - the famous summer camp for circus in Vermont is looking for this summer's camp coach/counselor positions, with a May 1st deadline. Besides circus skills, what do you need to attend? Applicants are encouraged to have "Teamwork, a good attitude, and the willingness to get things done"

The American Youth Circus is planning its biannual conference AYCOfest! for youth circus and they are looking for folks to teach workshop, lead discussions, or to give presentations online.

Apply to take part in the Virtual AYCO Festival by March 15th

Mention 2: *CircusTalk PRO subscribers have access to the CircusTalk job database which is updated daily by circus and performing arts festivals, programmers and circus companies daily as they share their auditions and job information. You should visit the jobs board on CircusTalk to see the most recent offerings!*

CircusTalk in March

Next week CircusTalk will reach a new milestone, offering two panels in one week.

As part of our Wake Up Call for Inclusion series, we will have “Queering the Circus: Exploring LBGTQIA Circus Realities and Possibilities” This panel will be moderated by Professor Charles Batson and have a selection of LBGTQIA artists from around the world sharing their thoughts on where LBGTQIA life and circus intersect.

The other panel is the second offering by CircusTalk associate editor and author Madeline Hoak on the Circus Body. Tune in to her panel on the topic of Aging Circus Bodies. And now for our education spotlight...

Education segment

Hi, and welcome to our education spotlight. My name is Lydia Nord and I'm CircusTalk's journalism intern. I'm a Communication and Spanish student at Florida State University, but more importantly, I'm a member of their Flying High Circus. Let's jump in. It is application season for upcoming circus students. Remember, that due to the pandemic some schools are being flexible, so even if a due date has passed you should still check out each school's page to see if they're still accepting applicants. For example, the New England Center for Circus Arts is still taking applications even though their deadline has passed. Late applications will be reviewed if there are any open spots after auditions in March. Applications for the San Diego Circus Center, located in California, are due April 20th. Applications for the Salto International Circus School, located in Portugal, are due May 7th. Good luck everybody!

Up next, we got the opportunity to chat with Shayna Swanson about Aloft Circus' new training programs. I asked her, “With the state of the circus job market right now, what makes Aloft graduates marketable?” She replied, “Aloft has actually put our professional training programs on hold for the time being, until we have a better answer to this question. We had success over the past six months with shorter term intensives, and so we have developed two new programs that we feel will be more relevant in COVID times: Prep school, and finishing school. Prep school is a three-month audition preparation program. Finishing school is a program for people who have recently graduated from a circus program, or newer professionals.” I also asked her, “How has COVID-19 changed what you want to teach circus students?” Her answer was, “I think that resiliency and tenacity have always been crucial factors in a good circus artist. But they have become so much more important now. It's also become abundantly clear how important video has become as a part of our art form. When our 2022 professional program comes back, we will absolutely be including extensive training in video creation and editing, and social media presence.

Please note: Included in the audio version of the podcast is also an interview with Guinness Book world record holder and renowned Boleadora artist, Sarah Louis-Jean.

That's it for episode one of the **Press Pass Podcast (PPP)**, your front row access to what's happening in the performance world and a monthly circus news podcast brought you by Circus Voices and CircusTalk--**All the Circus News In Your Ear**.

Mention 3: *If you enjoyed this podcast, be sure to subscribe and consider taking a moment to give us a review on Apple podcasts so we can reach more people interested in circus and the performing arts. Also, we'd love to hear from you directly; send your podcast-worthy news to news@circustalk.com*