



Artisans de L'Imaginaire

30 ans du Cirque du Soleil



"Walking a Tight Rope"

PART SIX: 2009 - 2014





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Following the explosion of content throughout 2009, and seeing the company falter on more than one occasion, many wondered if Cirque du Soleil had lost its creative edge, if it had "sold out" and produced not because it believed in the art but rather in the money, and whether it could find a balance between continuously reinventing the circus and branching out into new mediums and forms of expression again. When *The Beatles LOVE* was launched in 2006, many were skeptical but found Cirque du Soleil could re-invent itself as the show became a rousing success. We scratched our heads at *Viva Elvis'* opening in 2008 but when *Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour* was launched a mere two years later thoughts began to flourish on how many times Cirque could or would dip into that particular well. Wasn't two "musical revue" type shows enough? Rather, many had hoped that Cirque du Soleil would get back to its roots and produce circus again.

Alas we'd have to wait for Guy Laliberté to get his head out of the clouds first – quite literally – as in September 2009, Laliberté became the first Canadian private space explorer. His self-appointed mission in taking on this endeavor was dedicated to raising awareness on water issues facing humankind on planet earth. Under the theme "Moving Stars" and "Earth for Water", this first Poetic Social Mission in space aimed at touching people through an artistic approach: a special 120-minute web-cast program featuring various artistic performances unfolding in 14 cities on five continents, including the International Space Station.

Hardcore and contemporary fans alike would be placated with *TOTEM* in 2010 and *Amaluna* in 2012 – new touring productions, but it seemed nothing could stop the Cirque du Soleil resident show juggernaut: both *ZARKANA* and *IRIS* would debut in 2011 (after the latter's one-year delay), and *Michael Jackson ONE* would follow its arena touring sibling (*Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour*) as a third "musical revue" type show to headline a theater in Las Vegas, this time a theater at Mandalay Bay. And although it would be during this time that the aforementioned *ZAIA*, *ZED*, and *VIVA ELVIS* would have their final curtain calls, Cirque du Soleil did seem to learn from its past mistakes, comprehend that it needed to take things a little more slowly, and get back to its roots... at least for a little while.

In addition to launching fewer shows during this period, Cirque also attempted to branch out. In this section we will cover *TOTEM*, *Zarkana*, *IRIS*, *Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour*, *Amaluna*, *World's Away 3D*, *Michael Jackson ONE* and *KURIOS: The Cabinet of Curiosities* (Cirque's 2014 tour).

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®



Somewhere between science and legend, exploring the fascinating journey of the Human species.



Throughout the 1990's, Cirque du Soleil produced on average one new touring production every two years. There was 1990's *Nouvelle Experience*, 1992's *Salimbanco*, 1994's *Alegría* and 1996's *Quidam*. Following that pattern there should have been a fifth to premiere under the big top in 1998, but there wasn't. Instead, Cirque was working on two brand-new resident productions for that year: "O" at the Bellagio, Las Vegas and *La Nouba* at the Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando. Following their successful debuts, however, those in the business began to wonder if Cirque would ever tour again, especially when its highly successful creative team, lead by Franco Dragone, announced they were going to take a leave of absence due to exhaustion.

In order to quell those concerns, Guy Laliberté first turned to French director Philippe Decoufflé, then later to old friend Guy Caron to stage a production for touring throughout 1999 and beyond. *Dralion* was later born out of this fusion of Chinese circus and the avant garde of Cirque du Soleil. However, this period was also a transitory one for Cirque. And it caused Cirque du Soleil to scale back their big top productions from one every two years to one every three years

– 2002's *Varekai* and 2005's *Corteo* were produced during this time. While during the same period a plethora of resident show concepts were also on the table, such as: 2003's *Zumanity* and 2004's *KÀ*. With the announcement of 2007's *Koozå* and 2009's *OVO* fans and friends alike were certain Cirque du Soleil was back on track for one new big top show every two years.

Then the announcement surfaced that another big top show was on the way, preparing to tour under the big top beginning in 2010 and changed the game. Would this become the Asian-only touring production that had been oft-rumored since *ZAIA* premiered? Not exactly.

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	April 22, 2010
Type:	Touring / Bigtop
Director:	Robert Lepage
Composer:	Bob & Bill
Status:	Currently Touring

Creative Team

Guide	Choreographer
Guy Laliberté	Jeff Hall
Guide	Lighting Designer
Gilles Ste-Croix	Étienne Boucher
Director	Image Content
Robert Lepage	Pedro Pires
Creation	Sound Designer
Nelson Vignola	Jacques Boucher
Costume Designer	Equipment & Rigging
Kym Barrett	Pierre Masse
Composer	Acrobatics
Bob & Bill	Florence Pot
Set & Props	Makeup Designer
Carl Fillion	Nathalie J. Simard

/// ON THE PRODUCTION SLATE?

The name of Cirque's 2009 touring show, which ultimately became OVO, had not yet been released, and yet the company had already begun work on a touring show for 2010. On October 18, 2008, we heard our first news of this potential new show. According to the *Globe and Mail*, which has taken their cue from Montreal's *La Presse*, it seemed KÀ director Robert Lepage had "signed on to create and direct a new traveling show for Cirque that would hit the road in 2010." However, Cirque spokeswoman Chantal Côté refused to confirm or deny the report. "We have not yet announced our projects for 2010," she said in a brief-email to *The Globe and Mail*. "And we do not confirm this one. When the project will be confirmed, we will announce it."



Whether this would be the oft rumored Asian-themed Asia-Pacific only tour, or whether it would premiere in Montreal and tour North America like all previous productions remained to be seen. By November 21, 2008, unbeknownst to us, Cirque appointed three key players to the production: Neilson Vignola as Director of Creation, Serge Côté as Technical Director, and Gabriel Pinkstone as Production Manager.

More than a year went by before any further news regarding the concept was released. In fact, true to form, Cirque put advance tickets up for sale before anyone even knew what it could even be about. Speculation ran rampant that the show was themed to the evolution of humans, but beyond that very little was known until the *Fascination Newsletter* (and *Cirque Tribune*) published what both thought might be the name of the show.

Cirque made it official on April 8, 2010 – TOTEM.

/// A MAGICAL BUBBLING CAULDRON...

Like a magical cauldron bubbling, with scenes from the story of human evolution linked together in a chain, Cirque du Soleil's TOTEM (pronounced Toe-TEM) traces the fantastic journey of the human species from the beginnings of organic life, to its original amphibian state in Earth's primordial soup, to the foundations of science, to the realization of Man's dream of defying Earth's gravity and taking flight.

The themes of evolution and the search for balance are closely woven together throughout the show and illustrate – in a multidimensional visual and acrobatic language – the evolutionary journey of species, encompassing all of the potential we carry within ourselves. Creation myths from all walks of life act as a springboard for exploring the birth and evolution of Man – like an echo of the great questions of life – through various esoteric interpretations. Somewhere between science and legend, they say, TOTEM is about life, exploring the ties that bind Man to other species, his dreams and is infinite potential. Thus, this show pays tribute to the infinite imagination of Man and the beauty of the world in balance between reason and excess.

TOTEM depicts a world peopled by archetypal characters, all of who witness and act out in their own way the perennial existential questions of life. Neanderthals, Cro-Magnons, primates and men in suits set out on their evolutionary quest for knowledge.

This interpretation of evolution is the line that runs through the show. In the course of his journey, Man aspires to reach the stars.



Closely related to the notions of lineage and belonging to a group, the word TOTEM suggests that we all share the same roots, the idea of the order of species. We carry within our bodies the potential of all species, all the way to our desire to fly – like the thunderbird at the top of the totem pole. And in that way “Totemism” refers to the animal in Man. It

contains the very idea of evolution; our bodies are living exemplars of it, because our species carry traces of all species. Is it coincidence that this word, with the same spelling in many languages, sounds exactly like the Latin “Totum”, which means “all” or “the whole?”

But it works, it really does.

The cast of TOTEM, comprising 52 performing artists from 19 countries, takes us through Cirque du Soleil’s concept of “Totemism” from the edge of a reed lined-marshland on what appears at first glance to be nothing more than a quaint little island. But this island (the stage) is an organic visual environment that can become a spring, a swamp, a volcano, a lake, a lava flow, a mountain range, an ocean and even a star-filled sky all through the magic of projection (it has to be seen to be believed!) The reeds conceal the set elements as well as some of the artists before they enter. To save weight and facilitate storage on tour, the reeds are inflatable. (TOTEM is considered a “hybrid show” - the first Cirque du Soleil Big Top show to be created in such a way that it can be adapted to the reality of arenas and other venues from the very outset.)

Some of the projections on the marsh interact with the movements of the artists in real time. Infrared cameras positioned above the stage and around the marsh detect their movement and produce kinetic effects such as ripples, splashes and reflections in the water and the flames. The images in the projections are drawn from nature and were shot for the production in various parts of the world, including Iceland, Hawaii and Guatemala. Even the images of boiling lava were filmed by Image Content Designer Pedro Pires.

The island upon which the show’s characters inhabit evokes the shape of a giant turtle – an animal that, in many creation myths still prevalent in legends and oral traditions today (particularly in the Far East, Africa and North America), carries the weight of the world on its shoulder. The turtle is a symbol of stability, embodying the virtues of security, perseverance and self-confidence we nurture most. In nearly every ancient civilization the world over, the turtle has been a symbol of wisdom and longevity. And thus it is a perfect stage upon which to showcase the tales of human evolution.

OPENING

As TOTEM begins, life is brought to the primordial soups of the developing planet Earth, seeded by a dazzling ball of energy from the starry sky. Personified by “The Crystal Man”, the show’s poster character who symbolizes the universal force of life; he is the harbinger of said existence, sparking the evolution of Human life on Earth. His is a character tough to miss – his dazzling costume is literally covered in thousands of small mirrors and crystals (about 4,500 reflective components in all) to create that proverbial fireball that seeded our world, giving way to twelve acts and performances that exemplify the evolution of mankind.

BARS (CARAPACE)

In the opening scene, the life-less dried-up turtle shell (weighing 2,700 pounds) is whisked away to reveal the world of primordial beings, an effervescent community of amphibians and fish that live beneath its carapace. As a new world is revealed to them, they burst into play – launching themselves into a parallel bars/fast-track number reminiscent in many ways to Tournik from Corteo. With artists embodying frogs launching themselves into the air from the power-track and leaping from one bar to the next, they crisscross in mid-air with just inches to spare!

The acrobatic number is quite pleasing and technically adept; however, the artist’s costumes here steal the show. Their patterns and colors come from real fish and amphibian species found on Earth today, including the most poisonous frog in the Amazon jungle, the Dart Frog. Textures of the fabrics are also a close match to the skin of these animals making the metamorphosis complete and a real eye catching experience from which to begin the show.

HOOPS DANCER (PART 1)

Using hoops to create static and dynamic shapes evoking various animal forms (such as a crocodile and a falcon) and other intrinsic images, an Amerindian artist performs a narrative ritual dance evoking the endless circle of life. Inspired by traditional ceremonial clothing of a number of North American Indian tribes (rather than an accurate portrayal of any one culture), the artist is able to incorporate all Native American tribes and then by extension the entirety of Humanity within that Circle of Life. Unfortunately his pleasing rhythmic dance is all too short; he’ll make a return in the second-half of the show though.

RINGS TRIO

Bollywood-inspired music accompanies two men in this number as they compete against each other on two sets of gymnastic rings with the hopes of impressing a pretty woman lounging nearby with their sheer physical strength and superb physiques. That is until she shows them how it’s done! Through a routine of pikes, flying dislocates, flanges and flying crosses typically found in a gymnastics competition, they take to the skies above the island, now a summer beach (complete with projected sand and waves), to showcase just how strong the Human body has become.

UNICYCLES AND BOWLS

The abundance of autumn falls upon us next, represented by the warm browns of harvest. Five unicyclists come to the island to juggle metal bowls in an astounding display of agility, balance, synchronized control and physical grace – atop 7-foot unicycles! They toss the bowls with their feet – sometimes over their shoulders – and catch them on their heads without using their hands! Details in the costumes of the five unicyclists help show this change. Although their stylized tutus transform them into flirty ballerinas, each unicyclist has her own look. The base costumes are printed in earth tones featuring seed pods, flowers, trees and leaves with small details sewn onto them, such as bolts, screws, feathers, and insects in an array of patterns to keep the spark of individualism.

FOOT JUGGLING (CRYSTAL LADIES)

Two Crystal Ladies emerge from the fiery bowels of the earth to evoke the creation of the world and the beauty of minerals. Wearing sparkling costumes that mirror the Crystal Man (each is adorned with 3,500 crystals and the two headdresses are each encrusted with a further 1,000), the artists spin squares of glittering material on their hands and feet before coming together to create a dazzling display of coordinated high-speed motion. Foot juggling, like the unicyclists that came before, takes its cue from the Chinese circus. The discipline has been presented in past Cirque creations, most notably in Nouvelle Expérience and Dralion, to great success; however, the presentation here is quite unique. A high-powered blue laser beam accompanies the performance, bouncing off the over 4,000 reflective surfaces of “The Crystal Man” (who hangs expectantly over the two ladies throughout their routine) and the ladies themselves as they juggle and toss their carpets from one to the other.

We get our real first good glimpse of the “Scorpion Bridge” during their routine. The “Scorpion Bridge,” which serves as a mobile platform connecting the marsh to the scenes features variable geometry allowing it to adapt to each tableau. Built of steel and weighing 10,000 pounds, its eight powerful mineral oil hydraulic motors allow it to rise, descend, extend, retract and curl in on itself like a scorpion’s tail (hence its name). Its reflective surfaces, which shine like mirrors, are made of stainless steel plates. It’s truly an impressive piece of stage equipment.

PERCHES

An image of the evolution of man – from primates to Neanderthals to Cro-Magnons to modern man – comes to glorious life before it’s suddenly thrown topsy-turvy. Ten businessmen trying to reach the highest peaks execute a number that requires extreme strength and flawless teamwork. The porters on the ground hold long metal perches while the agile acrobats climb almost to the cupola of the big top to spin, tumble and flip about trying fitfully to reach the heavens. The perch poles are made of duralumin, an alloy used in aeronautics. The tallest pole is about 33 feet (10 meters) high!

DEVIL STICKS

The Tracker, an environmentally conscious friend of the animals, appears now as a virile toreador spinning his Devil Sticks to a sizzling flamenco-inspired beat. Although he's normally seen guiding "The Scientist" in his explorations of discovery, he becomes angered by the thoughtless, polluting actions of a clown and transforms before our eyes to enact a certain instinctive punishment, nature style. Devil Sticks, for those unawares, are made up of three pieces – the baton and two control sticks. The baton is usually about 60-120 centimeters (2 to 4 feet) long and the control sticks generally 30-50 centimeters (or about 1 – 2 feet) long. One uses the control sticks to manipulate (or juggle) the baton and do so without dropping any of the pieces. It's an interesting, if only a juvenile equilibristic display.

FIXED TRAPEZE DUO

Like two lovebirds, a young man and woman tease, play and sulk in an innocent game of seduction accompanied by the soft rolls of ocean waves. After spilling onto the island in an inflatable raft, they eventually intertwine their bodies in a lighthearted vertical dance of fresh, unusual movements and lifts using nothing but a trapeze bar, a hand, and their feet. The presentation is simple, the music light, and the costuming fair, but the image and scene that follows is simply one of joy. Kudos to Cirque du Soleil for having the gumption to include a "not so serious act" minus the chickens (re: Corteo) that works on all levels of emotions. For me, this number is easily one the finest of the entire show in terms of content (the unicycle girls have to be the best overall).

MANIPULATION

In this number: "The Scientist", a Darwineque explorer who tottles throughout the various scenes, returns to his advanced laboratory to begin experimenting on new theories he's discovered. He represents reason and the quest to understand the universe in ways that can be quantified, measured and put into tiny little boxes. As such his "laboratory" features an orchestra of glass containers filled with mysterious fluorescent fluids, a number of shiny bowls, and boxes beyond number. Aided by his assistants and a monkey, he steps into a transparent cone and dazzles us with his amazing physics experiments: manipulating bowls, folding boxes in on each other and juggling with luminous balls that might represent planets or molecules – or both – making them chase after each other in spiral orbits creating a maelstrom of molecules and celestial bodies. It's a mind-boggling presentation that will ensnare your senses!

HOOP DANCER (PART 2) & ROLLER SKATES

The "Scorpion Bridge" gets a workout after the Scientist departs, becoming the prow of a boat for our set of clowns, as they ski the open waters. The boat later rises to become a plane in flight, then finally a rocket taking off for the stars above. Then, surrounded by members of numerous Human tribes, the Amerindian artist from earlier makes a gallant return to create new figures for us with his five hoop-rings. "Ney, nah-nah, ney-nah ney-nah" they chant, as the dancer concludes his routine with a globe that he raises high above his head. The dancer is replaced by the soft sailing of a Native American canoe, traversing the high waters of a mountain stream.

In a scene that evokes a wedding ceremony amongst the snow-filled mountains of winter, a pair of roller skaters spins and whirl at heart-stopping speeds atop a tiny platform – just 1.8 meters in diameter – shaped like a ceremonial drum.

RUSSIAN BARS

Humanity has finally reached the stars, as The Cosmonauts show us upon taking the stage in the show's grand finale. Wearing colorful costumes inspired by the lost Mayan, Inca and Aztec civilizations of South America, ten artists perform feats of strength, balance and acrobatic movements on the Russian Bar. The jumpers are launched into the air and fly weightlessly across the sky like cosmonauts, leaping from one bar to the next with astonishing agility in a thrilling evocation of Man's desire to escape the Earth's gravity and constantly go above and beyond their design.

Walking on stage like a group of soldiers, I couldn't help but think of them as Lego Space Men with their helmets illuminated and their costumes glowing in the black light. In fact, the Cosmonauts (aptly named) are wearing two costumes in one: when they first appear (under black light) their body-hugging Lycra suits glow dramatically but as soon as the stage lights kick in, their look is completely transformed. Some wear printed motifs that recall Mayan drawings and each of the artists is wearing an individual variation on that theme. The costuming is definitely not something you'd expect – I certainly didn't – but it does fit within the confines of the number's presentation. And in case you weren't sure the performance was taking place on the moon: a lunarscape is projected on the "island" and a rising Earth and star-field projected behind them.

The show ends on a very high note, culminating with a fantastic dance number featuring all of the cast and characters. I've come to understand the choreography is actually a Native American dance performed to call forth the positive energies that surround the dancer. It works because you'll definitely clap and sing along!

/// EVOLUTION ON TOUR

Totem premiered in Montreal on April 22, 2010 as a rousing success, but it was clear from the beginning TOTEM would not follow the normal touring route, which up to that time had been Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, then select cities throughout the western United States. Following Montreal, TOTEM set up stakes in Ottawa, Ontario then jumped the pond to Amsterdam, NL and London, UK before returning to North America in early 2011, where it landed at a number of North American markets not normally seen until much later in a North American run. It then returned to London for the 2011 Christmas season and back to the North American market throughout 2012 and 2013, but its future tour pattern is still very much uncertain.

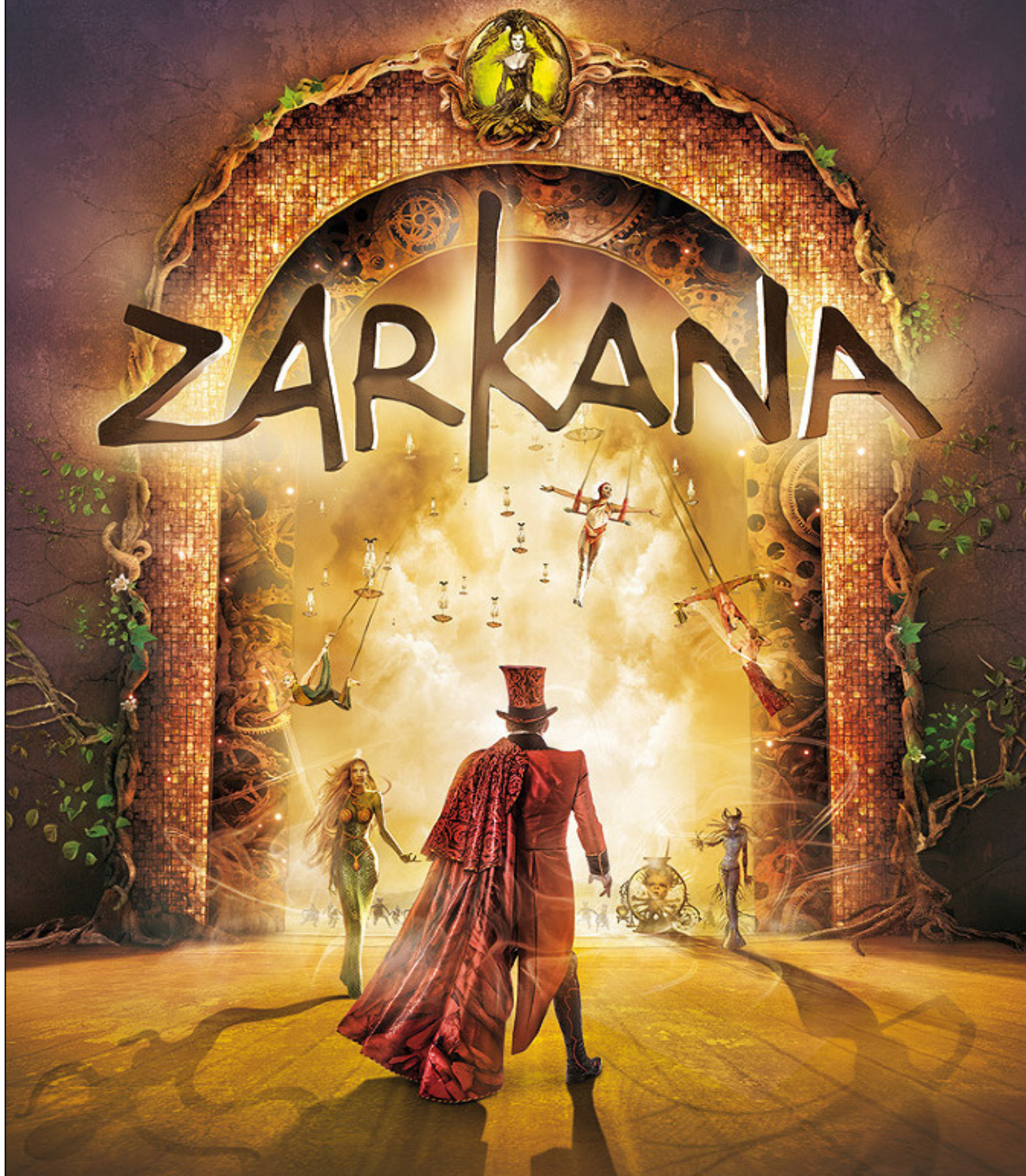
The show can be so mobile because it was designed to be a hybrid – easily converted to an arena setting (and therefore much lighter and portable), thereby ensuring at this early stage TOTEM would continue playing arenas world-wide after it had exhausted markets capable of supporting only the big top.

In 2013, as Cirque du Soleil faced its ever-growing financial crisis, all touring shows faced a reduction in running time: from 120 minutes to 90 minutes, with an intermission. This meant some acts needed to be sped up whilst others were cut from the show. For TOTEM, the Perches ensemble – a ten-man act – was let go. They were replaced with a hand-balancing act (as an act in rotation), which is described thusly: “With astounding strength, the agile performer contorts his body in different positions while balancing on his hands atop a platform shaped as an hourglass. The act explores a man’s struggle outside of his contacts with other human beings. The strength that he gets from this journey refers to all challenges one must face in order to grow.”

And the show continues its evolution...

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®

ZARKANA



ZARKANA

After planting the first of many flowers in the desert surrounding Las Vegas, Cirque worked diligently to expand beyond that gambling Mecca by attempting resident shows in cities like Orlando, London, Miami, Singapore, Berlin, and Shanghai. Although many of those ideas failed to materialize, Cirque did manage to break into the Asian market (with 2008's ZAIA in Macau and 2008's ZED in Tokyo) and later into the New York City market, by forming a partnership with Madison Square Garden Entertainment (MSG), as announced on November 20, 2006. 2007's Wintuk, went on to garner a certain level of success before its final season, which led to further discussions between the two companies.

On April 29, 2009, the New York Times ran a story reporting that Cirque and MSG had come to another agreement: "In February 2010, Cirque plans to bring a new show to the Beacon Theater in Manhattan for a multiple-month run that it hopes will become an annual institution. And in 2011 Cirque is to establish a four-month summer extravaganza in Radio City Music Hall as a warm-weather counterweight to the 'Christmas Spectacular' – sans Rockettes, but populated with acrobats and clowns."

The February 2010 production became the ill-fated BANANA SHPEEL, of course. The 2011 production became ZARKANA. Rumors regarding the show's director began to crop up soon after the initial announcement, settling early on with François Girard who had just come off of a hugely successful opening of ZED in Tokyo. But would he do it? When we next heard from Cirque and MSG (on September 14, 2010) he was confirmed to direct. By November 9, 2010, Cirque announced the show and its theme to the world...

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	June 9, 2011
Type:	Resident / Theater
Director:	François Girard
Composer:	Nick Littlemore
Location:	ARIA, Las Vegas

Creative Team

Guide	Choreographer
Guy Laliberté	Jean-Jacques Pilet
Guide	Lighting Designer
Gilles Ste-Croix	Alain Lortie
Director	Image Content
François Girard	Raymond St-Jean
Creation	Sound Designer
Line Tremblay	Steven Dubuc
Costume Designer	Equipment & Rigging
Alan Hranitelj	Danny Zen
Composer	Acrobatics
Nick Littlemore	Florence Pot
Set & Props	Makeup Designer
Stéphane Roy	Eleni Uranis
Choreographer	
Debra Brown	

/// A SUMMER EXTRAVAGANZA

What happens after the curtain falls for the very last time? What happens when a theater is abandoned, reduced to little more than dust and faded memories? Where do its secrets, its creatures and its machinations go? With ZARKANA, Cirque du Soleil ventures into this bizarre, surreal world – sometimes muffled, sometimes explosive, and punctuated by astounding acrobatic feats – shrouded in mystery. One part acrobatics and one part rock opera with a penchant for the macabre, ZARKANA becomes a visual vortex set in a slightly twisted musical and acrobatic fantasy universe where physical virtuosity rubs shoulders with the strange, and little by little, chaos and craziness give way to festivity and love regained.

In the grand tradition of the truly spectacular, ZARKANA takes you on a quest full of twists and turns in search of a return to life, love and magic, as Zark (a magician) returns to the abandoned theater where he was successful several years earlier. His friends, the White Clowns, come out of hiding to try and help him put a show together, but nothing works the way he wants: His magic powers are out of control because Lia is missing. Lia was Zark's assistant, but above all, she was the love of his life. Without her, there can be no magic! As he cries and begs for her return, Zark becomes locked in time and plunges into world that springs to life within the walls of the abandoned theater.

A motley collection of mesmerizing and off-the-wall creatures emerges from deep within to populate this delightfully twisted realm, including: The ORACLE, who communicates with the past and the future; TI-BOS, a spoiled little girl who has a whip and behaves like a veritable "clown tamer"; the JOVIANS, extraterrestrials who live on another planet; and the MAD SCIENTIST, who is dedicated to experiments that are strange, to say the least.

In the lyrical, fantastic world of Zarkana, the setting is a character in its own right. The walls breathe, move and sing. The main set elements consist of three sweeping arches – all sculpted by hand – representing the three MUTANTS who are determined to seduce Zark, diverting him from his quest. The first arch represents KUNDALINI, the Snake Lady, whose world is populated by dozens of slithering snakes. It's the largest of the three arches and is decorated with more than 150ft of hand painted resin "snakes" which started out as Styrofoam sculptures that were used to create molds for the liquid resin.

The second arch, which also serves as a video screen, harbors MANDRAGORA, a plant-like creature that comes to life with "arms" extending out like scissors nearly 100 feet. The complex video content of the show was developed with a cinematic approach and plays an integral role in the storytelling. The goal was to bring maximum credibility to this strange parallel world through lifelike moving images on an enormous LED wall at the rear of the set, and projections on the second of three arches that react to the movements of the performers. There are more than three million pixels of LEDs on the 90ft by 40ft light wall upstage and the LED arch made of 118 separate panels. This setup allows for the larger-than-life cinematic tableaux that lend the surreal world of Zarkana a heightened sense of reality.

The third represents TARANTULA, the spider woman in her web. More determined than her predecessors, she will be the last to try to win the heart of Zark. From the audience's point of view, the divisions between live action, stage effects, lighting and projections are seamless. The Zarkana stage consists of a sliding platform that retracts like a huge drawer to allow for rapid set and equipment changes, and the lighting is designed to make these transitions practically unnoticeable, almost invisible.

The characters in Zarkana inhabit a surreal world inspired by the American circus sideshows that flourished in the 1930s and the spirit of the golden age of Coney Island. The overall visual aesthetic of their costumes – 250 in all – is a modern take on the look of the Art Nouveau movement of the last century, as well as the works of Gaudí and Klimt, while many of the organic shapes in the set elements are a nod to the master French glassmaker and jeweler René Lalique. In addition to his own vast experience, intuition and knowledge, Alan Hranitelj (Costume Designer) drew inspiration from various sources and artists of that era, including Catalan artist Joan Miró and Russian/French designer Erté. These references provided a departure point for his far-ranging and resolutely modernist approach to the look of the show's characters. More perceptive observers will notice these influences in the design of the acrobatic equipment – especially in the lines at their extremities. Upon this setting a number of acrobatic feats are staged, they are:

JUGGLING

While the White Clowns keeps the beat and the whole theatre comes to life, a juggler tosses balls in the air and bounces them off the ground and a variety of surfaces to create sounds – which she even accompanies with tap-dancing steps!

LADDER TRIO

A cry rings out: Sleepy Child is imprisoned on her perch. The White Clowns, aided by three ladder specialists with a confusing mastery of balance, come to her rescue. But it's too late... Sleepy Child turns into the Pickled Lady in front of our eyes! There are more than three million pixels of LEDs on the 90ft by 40ft light wall upstage and the LED arch made of 118 separate panels.

ROPE DUET

Two artists perform a graceful duet of fantastic moves on Spanish Ropes whilst Mandragora sings from the top of the arch to attract Zark's attention, in order to snatch him away from Lia. The mutant Mandragora borrows her visual identity from the pistil – the reproductive organ – of the mysterious and magical mandrake plant, long associated with erotic love and physical desire.

FLAGS

Witnessing Zark's distress, the Latin Lovers juggle flamboyantly colored flags and toss them high in the air in an attempt to attract Lia's attention and signal to her that her lover has returned.

RUSSIAN BAR

The White Clowns come charging back on stage while the Russian Bar performers show off their skills. Projected high into the air from a single bar supported on the shoulders of powerful porters, the vaulters perform complex acrobatic movements with multiple somersaults and twists before landing back on the bar to spring into their next takeoff. Kundalini, the dangerous snake-woman mutant, meshes religious symbolism with her sinuous serpentine character and costume. Because she performs close to fire-eaters her costume had to be made fireproof.

HIGH WIRE

While Kundalini sings, accompanied by a chorus of fire-breathers, a quartet of high wire artists - with amazing balance and precision - move at high speed on their wire, running, performing breathtaking somersaults and creating column formations. Sometimes perched on a pole held by two partners, sometimes skipping or dancing on one foot, the tightrope walkers execute their routines one by one. During the high wire act the video arch is gradually invaded by writhing snakes that pay close attention and react to the artists' movements. This effect is created with infrared cameras. Flames shooting up from the stage are reflected on the undulating forms of the snakes using the same technique.

CYR WHEEL & CERCEAUX

Pokus is being chased through a strange world by the extraterrestrial Jovians! Seven artists perform a group number on Cyr wheels while others hang in the air, twisting and turning through hoops to create a dizzying tableau that fills the stage. The Jovian's costumes were inspired by a fictitious tribe that lived off the bounty of the sea. When they went fishing, they wore costumes that made them look like fish to fool their prey. The Jovians' costumes are made of double-laminated Lycra and decorated with bubbles that represent the foam excreted by the fish.

SAND PAINTING

The Oracle, an accomplished sand painter, summarizes the events of the first half of the show in beautiful artistic pictures, and gives a brief preview of the story that is about to unfold next through her art of manipulating sand. The Oracle's costume was directly inspired by Erté, the Russian/French artist and designer who created evening gowns made with exotic fabrics.

FLYING TRAPEZE

When Tarantula appears in the middle of her enormous web, clowns emerge from cocoons to invade it. Acrobats launch themselves off platforms in acrobatic flight formations and are then caught by the skillful hands of the porters. This unique number with a classical aesthetic involves 12 performers in three aligned corridors, allowing simultaneous criss-crossing flights to create an incredible visual effect. The cradle stations used in the flying trapeze act do not employ steel cables to keep them in position. They rely entirely on "hanger tubes" for their rigidity. The structure of the high wire number installed on the floor of the theatre's orchestra pit is freestanding, without any anchor points.

WHEEL OF DEATH

The Mad Scientist wants to test his quantum machine, but his experiment will yield unexpected results. Two Wheel of Death artists, one of them wearing a full head mask at one point, leap into action on their apparatus to perform jumps with amazing speed, control and teamwork. The wheel at the front of the stage is powered solely by their physical strength.

HAND BALANCING

In a moment of poetry and grace, an artist performs a series of elegant figures, seemingly effortlessly transferring his weight from one arm to another as he smoothly twists and swirls on a slippery surface.

BANQUINE

In a number that showcases the amazing agility of the human body, 15 artists perform acrobatics and create human pyramids in a spectacular sequence of perfectly synchronized aerial crossovers.

Zarkana would go on to have its official press release on May 24, 2011, begin preview performances on June 9th and end its fantastic run in New York City on September 4, 2011, but before the curtain fell for the show's inaugural run in the city, Cirque du Soleil already had a plan in place for its next stop...

/// AT THE KREMLIN?

When Cirque announced on December 2, 2008 its intention to expand into the Russian market, fans wondered what that might mean for the company and its future productions. The press release regarding the Russian expansion mentioned that Cirque was looking at developing many forms of entertainment in the Russian Federation, which could include "big top and arena touring shows, special events, media partnerships and eventually a permanent show."

"We are excited about the Russian market." said Daniel Lamarre, President and CEO of Cirque du Soleil. "Russians are some of the world's most sophisticated cultural citizens. The opportunities are limitless to create and provide high quality entertainment throughout Russia. We are seeing a bold cultural renaissance in Russia and we are committed to helping take this renaissance to the next level. From small and intimate special events to multi-million dollar permanent shows, we are interested in finding ways to bring world class entertainment to many Russians."

Cirque du Soleil partnered with George and Craig Cohon to create Cirque du Soleil Rus., a Russian LLC company having exclusive rights to the Russian territory. George is the Founder of McDonald's in Canada and Russia and Craig built Coca-Cola's first operations in Russia in the early 1990s. Cirque du Soleil Rus is a Russian Company and will be lead by Russians for Russians.

"We see a fantastic opportunity to partner with many organizations throughout Russia," said George. "Cirque is an international company that just happens to be headquartered in Canada. The international appeal of this one-of-kind brand is sensational. It is at the forefront of the entertainment scene and building the business with Russians in Russia will help take Cirque du Soleil to the next level."

Gilles Ste-Croix, Senior Vice-President of Creative Content at Cirque du Soleil explained: "We began working with the artistic and circus community of Russia as early as 1989. At that time we were just a very young company and we had just one production touring in North America only and we were creating a new production for 1990. We had noticed the great talent of both acrobatic and circus artists from Russia at a festival in Paris and we wanted to integrate and show case this unique talent in our upcoming show. That is how it all began. Today, we have 400 artists from Russia and many others contributing throughout the company."

The company's first step was to bring Varekai to Moscow in 2009, which premiered to great fanfare. Cirque du Soleil followed up Varekai's visit with Corteo in 2010 and Saltimbanco in 2011. Zarkana, which would play in New York City for only a few months out of the year, needed other cities to visit, and Moscow in early 2012 seemed the most logical choice. On February 11, 2011, Cirque du Soleil Rus and Kremlin Palace announced the arrival of Zarkana for February 2012:

"Creating this brand new show Cirque du Soleil has taken an unprecedented move to design its full magnitude to suit only two venues in the world – Radio City Music Hall in New York and Kremlin Palace in Moscow", – said Craig Cohon, Vice-Chairman Cirque du Soleil Rus. "The creative thinking of Cirque du Soleil to embody in the scale of this production together with the significance of the theater will make this a cultural event for entire Russia and beyond".

Zarkana would also visit Spain (November 12 to December 31, 2011) before its Moscow engagement (February 4 to April 8, 2012); however, following its return to New York City (June 6 to September 2, 2012), Zarkana would chart a new path...

/// VIVA LAS VEGAS

On November 24, 2011, shocking news from the Las Vegas Sun reverberated throughout the Cirque du Soleil community: Citing poor ticket sales, MGM Resorts International was exercising its three-year contract clause and asked Cirque to replace Viva Elvis at Aria by the end of 2012. "As attendance levels have not been meeting expectations, we have asked our partners at Cirque du Soleil to replace the show," a company statement said. "We will work closely with Cirque as we explore future entertainment options." This was the first time that Cirque, which has come to dominate the big-production showrooms on the Strip, had been asked to close a show since arriving in Las Vegas in 1993 with "Mystere", but it would not be the only show the company had been asked to close.

Four months later, on March 7, 2012, Cirque du Soleil and MGM Resorts International announced - citing that with more than 1.2 million guests being awed by the show and it being touted by the press as "Aah-Inspiring" (The New York Times) and "Truly spectacular, awe-inspiring, gorgeous and stunning" (New York Post) - they had found their replacement for Viva Elvis: ZARKANA.

"Zarkana is a production of the perfect size and scope for the beautiful theater at ARIA. With a high level of acrobatic performance, the show has garnered public appeal around the world. We are pleased that visitors to Las Vegas will be able to experience the show and feel that Zarkana is a perfect complement to the portfolio of Cirque du Soleil shows on The Strip," says Cirque du Soleil President and CEO Daniel Lamarre.

Bill McBeath, ARIA's President and COO, said, "We look forward to welcoming the cast and crew of Zarkana later this year. We're certain they will love their new home and we're equally certain that audiences from around the world will be wowed by this incredible production."

But why Zarkana? Mike Weatherford of the Las Vegas Review-Journal found out:

"We have the luxury today with 'Zarkana' to bring a sure bet," said Daniel Lamarre, Cirque's President and Chief Executive Officer. "We know this show is working, we know this show is successful and we owe it to our partner to bring a sure bet. People are not going to compare it to (the other [Las Vegas] shows)," Lamarre added. "I guess that was the first criteria."

"Zarkana" was chosen over "Zed," which Cirque had to close in Tokyo because of the ravaged tourist economy, or the third option of creating a new show from scratch. "Zed" was deemed "a little bit too traditional and not distinctive enough for this market," Lamarre said. "Zarkana" uses video more prominently than most Cirque productions and is a love story framed around English-language songs by Nick Littlemore.

Beyond that, when CityCenter CEO Bobby Baldwin saw it in New York, "he was probably ready to start talking contract by intermission," MGM Mirage spokesman Alan Feldman said Wednesday, the day after the board of directors signed off on the deal.

Elvis sang his rock-and-roll farewell on August 18, 2012. The first preview performances of ZARKANA began November 1, 2012 with a gala premiere on November 15, 2012, but what we'd see in Vegas would be a slightly different show. Sachi Fujimori from NewJersey.com described the changes:

The revamped version of the high-flying rock opera is sung entirely in "Cirquish," the imaginary language of Cirque du Soleil. After the show debuted in English last year, producers realized that their tale of a magician searching for his lost love was better told in their peculiar patois. "There's a freedom in an invented language," said art director Ann-Marie Corbeil. "It lightens the show so much. It brought it much better life and optimism."

The second change is in timing. The new version is an uninterrupted 90-minute thrill ride, as if a circus from Mars and Tim Burton's dreams were shaken together in a snow globe. Removing the intermission, said Corbeil, allows audiences to get lost in the story more easily. "You can go into that adventure non-stop, and when it's done you can say, 'I was really brought somewhere else,' " she said.

"No intermission is mostly driven by business," said Francois Girard, the show's director, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal. "I like the no intermission version. It's high energy theater, you don't want your audience to stop and eat popcorn because the energy gets lost. Some artists have been replaced and there's normal, natural improvement. You'll see a tighter show, a better show."

Would Zarkana be successful at ARIA?

Yes and no.

/// REVAMPED... AGAIN.

Early on Zarkana at ARIA was indeed doing great box office. Both Cirque and MGM Resorts executives were thrilled with ticket-sale numbers that were ahead of projections. The show was tighter, and better than its previous performances. But after the honeymoon period wore off, the show's attendance numbers began to wane. Just how much Cirque du Soleil hasn't made public; however, the slide was enough for the company to announce the show would temporarily close in January 2013 for a minor revamp.

"Cirque du Soleil recently celebrated the first anniversary of 'Zarkana's' residency in Las Vegas. A historic aspect of the Cirque artistic philosophy is to constantly renew and refresh productions. For 'Zarkana,' we will combine this with routine maintenance, which will result in the show remaining dark for the month of January. On its return in February, guests will find an invigorated 'Zarkana' with many of the same features that have made it so popular, along with new enhancements, making it even more exciting and vibrant."

What's changed? Plenty...

First, the character of Zark is no longer, and without him, a new storyline has been developed: *"Zarkana is a spirited journey through an abandoned theater where an extraordinary circus comes back to life. Populated by a motley collection of off-the-wall characters and incomparable acrobats, Zarkana is a visual vortex set in a twisted acrobatic fantasy universe where, little by little, chaos and craziness give way to a true celebration. Zarkana is a quintessential Cirque du Soleil spectacular featuring an international cast of 70 world class acrobats, aerialists, jugglers, high wire and trapeze artists set on a grand stage at ARIA Resort & Casino."*

Secondly, the characters have been revamped:

The singer oversees the action perched high above the stage taking on various incarnations from Mandragora to Kundalini, the snake woman, to Tarantula, the spider lady, before finally coming to life as Lia, the beautiful rose woman. She gathers her strength for this transformation through the power of the acts in the show.

The Movers are a collection of eclectic spirits that inhabit the new world of Zarkana, including:

- The Mad Scientist, assisted by his apprentice, is dedicated to outlandish experiments. His pickle jar traps Sleepy Clown, his cannon sends Pocus on a flight to another planet. And then there's his quantum machine...
- TI-BOSS, a veritable "clown tamer," cracks her whip, keeping our mischievous clowns in line.
- The Ballerina commands the respect she deserved from her career in days long past although her dancing talents have waned causing our bitter ballerina to stir up some trouble.
- The Convict is a chameleon, melding and disappearing into the set. Always in a state of panic, feeling pursued and afraid of being captured, he keeps his distance.

And third, a new addition in the Atherton Twins (Aerial Straps) is made. All of these modifications have now changed the context of the show's acts...

Opening — After a hiatus of many years, clowns Hocus and Pocus, emerge in an abandoned theater to awaken the Movers, white-clad spirits of the theater. Hocus and Pocus lead the reunion together with the Movers, bringing to life an extraordinary circus. Hocus and Pocus bungle their way through an eye-popping acrobatic extravaganza of high energy acts reminiscent of the golden age of circus and side shows.

Juggling — Making a surprise entrance from a prop box, our juggler is assisted by a host of Movers, entertaining with skills that defy gravity and space as balls dance rhythmically under and over long-forgotten props and set pieces.

Ladder Duo — Our ladder duo exhibits a mastery of balance while climbing higher and higher to reach Sleepy Clown, who is trapped in the theater rafters more than 30' above the stage.

Aerial Straps — Emerging from the depths of the theater, identical twin brothers attach themselves to straps and fly high into the air and over the seats of the theater, immersing the audience in the beauty of their movements. Accompanied by the captivating melody of Mandragora, their graceful maneuvers leave one and all breathless with their aerial prowess and ethereal fluidity.

Flags — Our flag artists trigger a rhythmic, almost hypnotic energy as they manipulate oversized, vibrantly colored flags, filling the stage to the beat of approaching drums.

Russian Bar — In a joyous reunion reminiscent of a day at the park, our Movers enchant with childlike enthusiasm as they take part in a celebration of our Russian Bar artists — one who is launched high above the narrow and flexible bar doing twists and multiple somersaults before landing expertly back on the bar with the aid of her powerful porters.

High Wire — Under the spell of Kundalini, the snake lady, and accompanied by a chorus of lithe fire breathers, our high wire artists exude amazing balance, control and precision as they speed across their wire performing jaw-dropping stunts — all while avoiding the ball of fire that taunts them.

Cyr Wheels and Cerceaux — Chasing Pocus into a strange world seemingly on a planet far from home, the extraterrestrial Jovians perform outlandish stunts on giant wheels, while others fly through the air twisting through suspended aerial hoops creating a dizzying tableau which reflects the kookiness of this foreign land.

Sand Painting — The Oracle, an accomplished visual artist, interprets and summarizes the events that have been uncovered and those still to come as she creates temporary masterpieces made of sand.

Flying Trapeze — Caught in the web and under the spell of Tarantula, the spider lady, flying acrobats crisscross high above the stage with meticulous timing as they are launched off platforms and bars, creating an effect of visual symmetry and tight choreography.

Wheel of Death — Testing the quantum machine, an experiment led by the Mad Scientist, leads to the unveiling of an outlandish dual caged apparatus with two artists who leap into place resulting in an act of high speed and daring movements, powered by pure physical strength.

Hand Balancing — Illustrating a moment of quiet poetry and refined grace, complemented by an enchanting and haunting score, a solo artist takes center stage effortlessly balancing his weight with the fluidity of ballet and the strength of an athlete.

Banquine — Human pyramids engulf the stage in an act of amazing power and agility. As our group of acrobats defies gravity and space, they race across the stage with precise movements and playful choreography. Using only their bodies to suspend and propel each other, the acrobats astonish with their strength.

But will these changes bring success to Zarkana? We'll have to wait and see.

In the meantime the adventure continues...

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



IRIS

A JOURNEY THROUGH
THE WORLD OF CINEMA



IRIS

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORLD OF CINEMA

With the plethora of announcements steaming full speed ahead in 2007 - a show at Madison Square Garden ("Wintuk"), a rumor about a show in Shanghai (which didn't pan out), Cirque pulling out of the Jackie Gleason Theater deal in Miami (which might have seen a South-Beach version of "Zumanity"), announcing Dubai (which has also failed to pan out), partnering with Criss Angel in an attempt to re-invent the magic show ("BELIEVE") and launching a new touring show ("Koozâ") - it's little wonder the fan-community was blindsided by an announcement that Cirque would open a resident show in Hollywood, California by 2010. From the November 19, 2007 release:

The unnamed show will focus on Hollywood's role in the history of film. Seventy-five performers will put on the show 368 times a year as part of a 10-year agreement between Cirque du Soleil and the CIM Group, which owns the Hollywood & Highland Center where the Kodak Theatre is located. The \$100 million project includes modifications to the showroom's configuration costing about \$60 million. The show will be directed by France's Philippe Decouflé, who directed the Albertville Olympic Games opening and closing ceremonies in 1992. By way of inspiration, the creation team will be able to draw on a treasure trove of film archives.

According to founder Guy Laliberté, the number of seats in the hall will be cut from 3,400 to about 2,500 to provide Cirque with the space it needs to create "an imposing show," making extensive use of new technologies. "We may include archive images in the show," he says, "but they will be reworked. We're not here to cut and paste. Over the last 10 years, Philippe Decouflé has developed his own signature style when it comes to using multimedia."

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	September 25, 2011
Type:	Resident / Theater
Director:	Philippe Decouflé
Composer:	Danny Elfman
Location:	Dolby Theater, Hollywood

Creative Team

Guide	Lighting Designer
Guy Laliberté	Patrice Besombes
Guide	Props Designer
Gilles Ste-Croix	Anne-Séguin
Director	Poirier
Philippe Decouflé	Projection
Creation	Oliver Simola
Jean-Francois Bouchard	Projection
Composer	Christophe Waksman
Danny Elfman	Sound Designer
Associate Director	Francois Bergeron
Pascale Henrot	Acrobatics
Set Designer	Boris Verkhovsky
Jean Rabasse	Acrobatics
Costumes	Shana Carroll
Philippe Guillotel	Rigging & Equipment
Choreographer	Pierre Masse
Daphné Mauger	Makeup Designer
	Nathalie Gagné

/// CIRQUE GOES HOLLYWOOD?

After the initial announcement regarding the show concept, information became lost in the shuffle of the debuts of *CRISS ANGEL BELIEVE* at the Luxor in Las Vegas, *ZAIA* at the Venetian in Macao, China, and *ZED* at Tokyo Disneyland in Japan. That is until news of a delay began to circulate in early 2009 (pushing the show from its originally announced 2010 premiere into some time in 2011). The reason for the delay was not widely known until a June 29, 2009 article in the Los Angeles Business Journal shed some light on the matter:

The Los Angeles city government is stepping in to help save plans for a reconstruction of the Kodak Theatre so the home of the Oscars can accommodate Cirque du Soleil's 10-year Hollywood-themed show. L.A. developer CIM Group, which co-owns and operates the Kodak at Hollywood & Highland, is seeking a \$30 million loan from the city to replace a private financing deal that collapsed in the capital market meltdown.

Under the deal, the city essentially would borrow \$30 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and then loan that money to CIM for the project. It carries some risk to the city. If the Cirque show tanks or otherwise is unable to pay, then CIM is obligated to pay. But if it can't, the city would lose up to \$30 million.

Already, design changes have forced a delay of at least nine months in the project's opening, pushing it back to summer 2011 from the September 2010 opening date originally announced. The major change has involved fitting an on-site training center for Cirque performers into the existing complex.

A month later the loan situation would be resolved. The Los Angeles City Council's five-member committee voted to move ahead with the \$30 million loan. The Council's Housing, Community and Economic Development Committee unanimously forwarded the loan proposal to the full council for a vote, saying the deal would boost the economy by drawing tourists to the Hollywood & Highland shopping mall, where the theater is located. Under the proposed loan agreement, TheatreDreams LA/CHI (a joint venture with CIM/H&H Retail, LP, which operates the Kodak Theater and the Legendary Chicago Theater) would promise to create no fewer than 858 jobs and stage the acrobatic show 368 times per year.

With the loan situation behind Cirque and its partners, attention began to turn toward the question of bringing the company to Los Angeles in the first place. Considering that Cirque celebrated its 25th Anniversary in June 2009 and had plans to open *VIVA ELVIS* in Las Vegas by the end of that year, the LA Times pondered, "Hasn't everyone seen at least one Cirque show by now?"

"It doesn't matter," says James Hadley, senior artistic director for Cirque's North American shows. "Our biggest challenge is not about diluting the brand," Hadley said as he stood in the shade watching his performers go onstage at the Grove. "It's letting people know each show is different. People see Cirque du Soleil once and think, 'Well, I can cross that off my list.' One of the reasons we came to the Grove is to show how different each show is."

On Sunday afternoon, performers from each of the six Vegas shows performed an excerpt from their shows. The Kodak Theatre show would be new and centered on a history of the movies -- as befits the Hollywood location. And referring to the legendary story of Laliberté's gamble on Los Angeles in 1987, he said: "now to come back to Los Angeles is just a wonderful way to complete the circle."

And how was the show fairing?

"It's coming along," Gilles Ste-Croix, Cirque du Soleil's SVP of Creative Content said in Quebecois-accented English, confirming that Cirque Hollywood was on track to launch sometime after the annual Oscars show in 2011. "[We] want to have the possibility of [installing a] lift and all that, to have scenery changes, new rigging points and all that. So they have to transform the theater." Ste-Croix suggested that Cirque also will reconfigure the seating arrangement of the vast Kodak space to make it feel a bit more intimate. Although Cirque's new Hollywood production will be performed year-round, for something on the order of 368 shows annually, it probably won't be able to fill a 3,400-seat house for that many performances. After all, as tourist Mecca's go, Hollywood isn't quite on the order of Las Vegas.

On September 22, 2010, Cirque du Soleil officially announced IRIS to the world...

/// IRIS: THE EVOLUTION OF CINEMA

The name of the show, IRIS, taken directly from a camera diaphragm as well as the colored iris of the human eye, presents an imaginary journey through the evolution of cinema - from the foundations of the art form to the bustle of the soundstage. When the two young heroes – Buster and Scarlett – find themselves plunged into the joyful chaos of a film set, their escapades transport the spectator into a kaleidoscope of movement, moods and images supported by an orchestral score. Buster is a melancholy composer in search of true love. Somewhere between reality and make-believe, he spots the girl of his dreams: Scarlett, a naïve actress who longs to become a movie star. But will Buster and Scarlett find each other in the real world? In a brilliant tribute to cinema, IRIS is the result of a visual exploration of a broad range of themes connected with the invention of cinema: the taking of pictures and the recording and transmitting of sound and light. To create the cinematic world of IRIS a great many elements have to come together, play off each other and create a coherent environment of sights and sounds on the 9,600 sq. ft. stage of the majestic Kodak Theatre.

Costumes

Designer Philippe Guillotel conducted extensive research into the history of cinema to devise concepts which some 250 artisans brought to life in the costume workshop at Cirque du Soleil. It took him three years of intensive research to complete the project. He searched the *Musée des arts et métiers* in Paris – where you can find everything from the first chrono-photographic gun to the earliest sound projector – from top to bottom.

He also screened innumerable films including the works of Alfred Hitchcock, Charlie Chaplin and Georges Méliès, as well as the first films made with Thomas Edison's pioneering cinema inventions. The costumes he designed let IRIS follow the major stages in the evolution of color in film, from black and white and sepia, through Technicolor and colorization to the deliberately saturated colors of films like Dick Tracy. The symbiosis between the costumes and the technical inventions of cinema is particularly striking in the half-human/half machine 'hybrid' characters.

- "Camera Men" whose costumes include a camera mounted on their head or chest.
- "Sound Man" wearing a large carbon fiber cone.
- "Screen Man" whose costume conceals a 135 sq. ft. screen.
- "Praxinoscope" wears a skirt reminiscent of one of the first animation devices. Based on the stroboscopic effect, this costume illustrates the decomposition of movement. The circular structure reveals – through slots as it rotates – two boxers in action.

Some of these costumes have a useful function in the show, such as the two hybrids fitted with cameras that capture the action on stage. "I'm a devoted fan of Jules Verne's universe with all its mechanical gears and rivets," says Philippe Guillotel. "When I see an old wood and brass camera I immediately want to make a costume. And I want everyone who sees the IRIS costumes to immediately think of one word: cinema."

Philippe Guillotel usually singles out five or six materials per show which he uses in every possible way. For IRIS, these included soft Lycra which can be made to look woolly or glossy, silk stretch nylon, which drapes well and can be printed with reflective designs, and natural cottons and linens. For Philippe, the fabric is less important than the body of the artist. "You can imagine the best costume of the world, but if the dancer or acrobat doesn't wear it well, the effect will be lost," he says. "The IRIS dancers have magnificent bodies, and it is this beauty that I have tried to emphasize." That is certainly the case with the acrobats whose costumes were inspired by corsets that were fashionable in the early 20th century, plus a little nod to Roman times. Even though he used a lot of leather for the corsets, Philippe relied mainly on modern fabrics and high-tech materials such as carbon fiber for their protrusions – for reasons of flexibility, comfort and lightness.

The influence of Dick Tracy is front and center in the number that pays tribute to gangster movies. The artists who leap up and down the buildings from trampolines hidden in the stage floor are wearing bright red, yellow and blue tartan suits. In the Aerial Ballet number the costumes of the bungee-jumping "diamond women" are studded with nearly one million Swarovski crystals. In the air, the artists themselves are not as visible as the brilliance of the stones, which give their bodies a smooth and bright look.

The costumes worn by the Icarian Games "Kiriki" characters are an evocation of costumes in the films of Georges Méliès. The hybrid Furniture Characters are artists whose costumes make them look exactly like pieces of living room furniture: two chairs, a lamp, a table and a moose head on the wall. At one point, as part of a movie, they all come to life and unfold in a matter of seconds. And some costumes pay tribute to various professions and crafts associated with cinema, including screenwriters, makeup artists, cinematographers, carpenters, decorators, painters, electricians and lighting designers.

Set

The set design by Jean Rabasse provides the physical framework for the action and effects of the show. The sets' infrastructure occupies a space that spans 122 ft. from the high grid to the bottom of the pit, and conceals a lift with a capacity of 20,000 lbs that rises and descends 34 ft. below the stage at a rate of one foot per second. His first decision was to avoid direct references to specific films, actors or directors, and to take a playful, universally accessible approach to creating a world of cinema. The set also had to provide a meeting place for acrobatics, circus arts, dance and projections. And it had to do so in such a way that cinema techniques and live performances could blend together. What Jean wanted to express was a love, not just of cinema, but of the whole process of film-making, from the technicians to the sound stage, to the nuts and bolts of the machinery and equipment. The set suggests a fairground attraction inspired by Coney Island where movies were screened to an audience for the first time.

Jean Rabasse's concepts go beyond simple references to the paraphernalia of the film set. They complement performances by artists whose goal is to connect with the emotions of the audience. For Jean, the shadows on prehistoric cave walls were the beginnings of what would eventually be called cinema. The stories they told engaged the intelligence and the emotions as much as they appealed to the eyes. And so it is with IRIS. The show starts with shadows before bursting into color. The elements of positive and negative are essential components of film; they are also the names of the two giant figures flanking the stage. Above, the motto "In Motion We Trust" sums up not only the theme of moving pictures, but also the constant action of the show.

The second act plunges into a rapid-fire succession of familiar film genres, and the set transforms just as rapidly to supply each number with a backdrop that supports the story elements through distinctive visual references such as costumes, hairstyles and the outlines of figures silhouetted in windows – as well as providing all the structures and anchor points needed for each act. Some sequences, such as the Rooftops trampoline number vibrate with bright saturated colors and the sharp contrasts of shadows and silhouettes. However, the show's overall color palette leans more toward earth tones – muted oranges and yellows. It has to be, to ensure that the vitally important projections are clearly visible from every seat in the vast Kodak Theatre.

Props

The result of extensive research and an exploration of the effects of scale, some of the IRIS props have taken on a life of their own. Resembling the contents of a cabinet of curiosities, they are variations on the themes of sound, optics, light and smoke. These little devices represent the beginnings of cinema and the mechanical inventions that made its development as an art form possible. Light sources and ingenious machines, as well as panels, ladders, beams and chairs, take on personality traits, transforming them into characters that give life to the artists who operate them.

Visual delight abound in IRIS, not least among them are 360 unusual props, many automated and motion-controlled, all crafted specifically for this production. A quirky, vintage-looking camera dolly, for example, keeps with the unique interpretation of the world of early cinema that IRIS provides. But there's a catch: It is topped with a working camera that projects live video. The

piece serves as an acrobatic apparatus, too: artists wheel the seat to spin on their heads, and they flip through its tripod base. “Props used in Cirque du Soleil shows tend to be a little different,” says Jared Peter, head of props. The versatile camera dolly is one of three “baby machines” created for IRIS by Anne-Séguin Poirier, the company's Montreal-based props designer. Others include a roving spotlight and a trumpet-shaped gramophone speaker on tricycle wheels.

In development for three years, “They're our prize props, little creatures that roam about the stage in the first part as kind of an ode to the beginnings of cinema,” Peter says. “They interact with the artists and other costume and prop elements of the show. We went through many, many revisions. It's amazing how much time and how many people it took to make those pieces work.” Every prop in IRIS is “a designer creation,” he adds “Nothing is off the shelf. Everything has been meticulously designed by Anne or has evolved via the builders and Anne collaborating together.”

Projections

Projection Designers Olivier Simola and Christophe Waksman used a wide variety of unconventional materials in their concepts, including stretch plastic and micro-perforated tulle. The stage, the set elements and, in one comic sequence, even the artists' bodies and costumes are used as projection surfaces. The content of the projections is largely driven by movements of the live performers, and much of the time it is impossible to tell what is real and what is artificial. Early in the show, real-time projections of acrobats' performances capture their movements as trails of still images – in very much the same way that frames of film create the persistence of vision effect that we see as motion pictures. The result is a living decomposition of movement that takes on a luminous life of its own as an ever-changing abstract kaleidoscope above the action.

The IRIS projections are widely varied in both technical approach and content. Early in the show, a performer appears in a costume reminiscent of the praxinoscope, one of the first animation devices. Based on the stroboscopic effect, this costume illustrates the decomposition of movement. The circular structure of the skirt reveals – through slots as it rotates – two boxers in action. The virtual traveling scene seamlessly mixes live performance captured on camera with a succession of projected make-believe sets and props that take the artists from the streets of LA to outer space. And the Pursuit Race sequence recreates the menacing atmosphere of a classic 1940s Hollywood gangster flick as a set-up for the Rooftops number that is the closest the show comes to presenting an actual film to the IRIS audience. To achieve all this, and more, Olivier and Christophe used eight large 15,000-lumen video projectors for the main projections, six for the rear projections and four installed high above the stage to throw images onto set elements on either side of the stage.

On Stage

The team comprises of six full-time staff, four on-call staff and two artists. Each evening, they film live footage, process the images at light speed and project shadows. Tom, Head of Projections, explains what's special about IRIS. “Other Cirque shows, such as LOVE, Mystère or KÀ, mainly project pre-recorded images. On IRIS, in addition to a few pre-recorded passages

and real-time taping, we use infrared technology and projection mapping, which allow us to present the audience a full immersive experience!” The result — for the deconstructed images that enhance the hand-to-hand act or the kaleidoscopic effect that highlights the contortionists’ performance — is stunning. In addition to accompanying some acts, projections are also used to provide the set with volume and relief.

In the first minutes of the show, the patterns on one of the stage curtains start moving during a big “charivari” act. The characters seem to come to life. The same is true for the “castelets” on each side of the stage — a wink here, a slight head movement there . . . Just enough to make you think your eyes are deceiving you. The projections are much more than a decorative element — they are an actual character in the show. In the Filmstrip act, the artists record—in front of the audience — a short video clip, which is then projected repeatedly in the frames of a giant filmstrip, allowing them to interact . . . with themselves! “The projection reacts to the onstage action,” adds Tom, “and not the reverse, like many spectators think.”

Backstage

In a show about cinema, it is not surprising to sometimes see cameras and technicians onstage. “It’s part of the show’s very essence,” adds Tom. “We provide a behind-the-scenes look at how movies are made by playing with light. It is therefore perfectly natural to incorporate the technical aspects into the story.”

Projections team members come from a variety of backgrounds. Susan Diamond, who also does TV work, is thrilled to have participated in the creation process. “In television, deadlines are very tight. You do a few rehearsals, and then when you’re live, you look for the best shot. Shows are broadcast very quickly. Once a show has aired, it’s over. It doesn’t change anymore.” Dallas Nichols adds: “With IRIS, we’ve created magnificent concepts and explored various options. And every evening, we have a chance to do better. The projections are continuously evolving, at the same rate as the show. It’s a big plus with interactive projections.” Kevin Anema, who also works for a well-known TV quiz show, says: “For a technician, working on IRIS is a great learning opportunity. The technology we’re using is awesome — particularly the projection mapping. It’s spectacular! We’re doing things here that I’ve never seen anywhere else.”

Incredible, spectacular, never-before-seen — all terms that apply to both the show and the work of this dedicated team.

Music

Danny Elfman’s music for IRIS is primarily orchestral, combining both large and small ensembles throughout the show. Its melodies contain references to many genres of film – at times grandiose and stirring, at times playful and light, sometimes surrealistic, frequently action-packed and often humorous and surprising. The choice of the orchestral approach reflects the fact that over 95 per cent of film music since the 1930s has been scored for full orchestras, and this imparts to the Cirque du Soleil show a sonic connection between circus and film, via strings, brass, harps, flutes, clarinets, bassoons and so on, as opposed to the sounds of a jazz or rock ensemble.

/// THE WORLD OF CINEMA

Cirque du Soleil's IRIS conjurers up a place between motion and picture, between light and sound, that shifts constantly between reality and make-believe, presenting an imaginary journey through the evolution of cinema – through optical effects and film genres, transposing into a language of dance and acrobatics all of cinema's splendor, inventiveness and, above all, its sense of wonder. IRIS draws much of its inspiration from the golden age of Hollywood, sparked by Cirque's performance at the 74th Academy Awards, held at the Kodak Theater on March 24, 2002 – more than a decade ago. That night, for five minutes, Cirque du Soleil was the focus of the awards ceremony. It took the company four months to create the special show seen that night, which featured eleven acts from some of their most popular productions at the time (Dralion, La Nouba, Quidam, Mystère, "O" and Alegría), all set to the electro-urban sound of the La Nouba soundtrack. It was so well received that it set Cirque's creative wheels in motion. Thus by combining dance, acrobatics, live video, film footage and interactive projections, the show illustrates both the mechanics of cinema and its extraordinary power to deceive the eye. The result: a poetic phantasmagoria inspired by the world of cinema.

AERIAL STRAPS DUO

In an atmosphere of light and shade, two acrobats soar through the air suspended from single or double straps. They take off high above the stage and land with grace and fluidity, delivering a performance that makes one think of an aerial hand-to-hand number.

SHADOWS & CONTORTION

In an evocation of shadow stories played out on prehistoric cave walls - the very beginnings of what eventually would become cinema - four contortionists adopt striking poses and undulate like dancing flames. The flexibility of their movements is amazing as they are transformed into living sculptures.

HAND TO HAND

Two porters launch their partners into the air to perform stunning feats requiring absolute mastery and control. Generated live by their every move, the kaleidoscopic projections above the acrobats decompose motion to add a poetic dimension to their number.

FILM STRIP

In a choreography that calls for high-speed precision, performers advance from one frame of film to the next to create the illusion of continuous movement.

KIKIRI (ICARIAN GAMES)

The principle of Icarian games - one of the oldest circus arts disciplines - calls for a porter lying on his back spinning an acrobat with his feet. This dazzling number features eight acrobats who literally blur the lines between reality and the impossible as they push the act far beyond its traditional boundaries with cool daring.

MOVIE SET

Controlled chaos reigns over a succession of highly visual numbers and audacious plunges as a bold allusion to various aspects of filmmaking. The choreography brings the circus disciplines of teeterboard, Spanish web, Russian bars, and aerial silk to floor gymnastics and original choreography.

TRAPEZE & BROOM MANIPULATION

An artist on stage manipulates his broom while above him a trapeze artist - the embodiment of his dream - performs with fantastic artistry. Their interaction turns into a gentle complicity.

TRAMPOLINE (THE ROOFTOPS)

In a tribute to gangster movies and to the work of stunt actors, trampolinists deliver a number packed with thrills on the roofs of buildings, multiplying their astounding leaps, flips and glides in a non-stop action movie atmosphere.

HAND BALANCING

Playing the part of the show's heroine Scarlett, a young woman balancing on canes performs a number infused with romanticism, subtlety and sinuous strength that captures the already conquered heart of Buster. Before it's over, they will share a tender kiss.

AERIAL BALL

In an aerial bungee ballet that pays tribute to 3D movies, women in costumes studded with crystal dive and soar in unison from the ceiling above the audience in a thrilling, swirling flight.

/// THAT'S A WRAP!

The show got off to a great start; however, by the time IRIS was celebrating its second anniversary, ripples of change were abound. Not only did the theater change hands (from Kodak to Dolby), but as early as summer 2012 (and unbeknownst to most) Hand Balancing and Hand-to-Hand acts had been cut from the show and the intermission removed. Other remaining acts were shortened so the run-time matched other resident productions: 90 minutes. Commercials were run and tickets pushed, but it wasn't working. And then shocking and sad news reached the fandom on the evening of November 30, 2012 – due to low ticket sales IRIS would have its final performance on Saturday, January 19, 2013. From IRIS's Facebook page (where the news first broke):

After close to 500 well-received shows at the world renowned Dolby Theatre, the last performance of IRIS by Cirque du Soleil will be January 19, 2013. Despite phenomenal reviews and enthusiastic audience response, demand has not met projections. We have been honored to work with both the City of Los Angeles and the CIM Group to launch IRIS at this iconic location. It has been a joy to stage IRIS in the beautiful state-of-the-art Dolby Theatre and we appreciate the wonderful relationships we have built in Los Angeles. For the time being, we will redeploy as many as our artists and employees to other Cirque du Soleil projects.

Performances of IRIS from 20 January through 26 January have been canceled. Any customer who has purchased tickets for these performances, please return to your point of sale for a refund or exchange into another performance.

Indeed the LA Times asked in the wake of the shocking news: *why did the show fail?* Their answer: IRIS just failed to ignite the passions and imagination of the Los Angeles populace.

Despite promises that "Iris" would run for 10 years, the consensus is that the show never captured the public's imagination, confounded by a low level of excitement in Los Angeles and high ticket prices, which rose to as much as \$253 for certain VIP packages. "It didn't capture the fancy of Angelenos like 'Wicked' or 'The Lion King,' which became must-see events," said Leron Gubler, president of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. "I did not hear a lot of people say you have to see 'Iris.'"

Danny Elfman, who composed the music for "Iris," said in an interview that he had expected the show to run "at least to the summer," after which Cirque would make a decision whether or not to continue. "Everyone knew that the attendance was not up," Elfman said. The Oscar-nominated composer, who lives in Los Angeles, said he was extremely happy with the show from an artistic point of view, but said that he was disappointed by the lack of general public awareness. "After a year of advertising, the fact that most people I ran in to had no knowledge of it being there says it all. It wasn't able to get into the general consciousness," Elfman said.

Cirque officials declined requests for comment. They also declined to provide box-office figures. At one point the top ticket price of \$253 was a record high in Los Angeles. Company officials said that they expected Southern California residents to drive attendance in the first two years of the shows run, and that then tourist interest would pick up, according to Gubler. But that obviously has not happened. Michael Ritchie, the head of Center Theatre Group, said that tourists who come to L.A. don't usually put theater-going on their itineraries.

It is unfortunate that IRIS did not have the opportunity to work out the kinks in its cog and mature into one of the Cirque's classic productions. But in amongst the uncertainty, the cast kept their head up: celebrating their 500th performance on December 9, 2012 in style. Will IRIS surface again in the future? Only time will tell. All that we know is that artists who did wish to continue their careers with Cirque du Soleil were offered all available spaces in other productions, and those who didn't lined up new opportunities elsewhere.

THE LEGEND LIVES ON



**MICHAEL
JACKSON**
**THE
IMMORTAL**
WORLD TOUR
BY
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

Written and Directed by JAMIE KING

MICHAEL JACKSON

THE IMMORTAL

WORLD TOUR

In the summer of 2009, amidst reported delays with Cirque's Hollywood-themed show for Los Angeles, and news came that the company had signed an agreement with Madison Square Garden Entertainment to stage not one, but two new shows in New York City: one at the Beacon Theater (which became BANANA SHPEEL) and a second at Radio City Music Hall (which became ZARKANA), another rumor surfaced: of a third musical-revue type show similar to LOVE and VIVA ELVIS, this time with regards to the recently departed Michael Jackson.

Although there had been rumors of a mash-up – Jackson himself was a fan, and the success Cirque found with LOVE suggested the format might be viable – nothing concrete between the two parties had ever been released. Until the morning of August 15, 2009 when the Calgary Sun reported that MJ and Cirque discussed the possibilities of collaborating the previous year.

Renee-Claude Menard, a Cirque spokeswoman [said] representatives for Jackson and the circus met about doing a show that would star Jackson. Rumors of the collaboration resurfaced amid U.S. media reports there were plans to move the Neverland Ranch to Las Vegas where a museum and theatre would be built in the singer's memory. American media report that Jackson considered mounting a show similar to the Cirque tribute to the Beatles. "But the idea didn't go anywhere," Menard added. Or did it?

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	December 25, 1993
Type:	Resident / Theater
Director:	Franco Dragone
Composer:	René Dupéré & Benoît Jutras
Location:	Treasure Island, Las Vegas

Creative Team

Guide	Rigging
Guy Laliberté	Scott Osgood
Director	Choreographer
Jamie King	Debra Brown
Creation	Choreographer
Chantal Tremblay	Travis Payne
Musical Designer	Choreographer
Kevin Antunes	Rich Talauega
Musical Director	Choreographer
Greg Phillinganes	Tone Talauega
Set Designer	Choreographer
Mark Fisher	Napoleon Dumo
Props and Scenic	Choreographer
Michael Curry	Tabitha Dumo
Costumes	Choreographer
Zaldy Goco	Jamal Simms
Acro Performance	Choreographer
Germain Guillemot	Daniel Campos
Sound Design	Choreographer
François Desjardins	Tamara Levinson
Projection	Choreographer
Oliver Goulet	Mandy Moore
Lighting	Make-up Designer
Martin Labrecque	Florence Corne

/// WANNA BE STARTIN' SOMETHIN'

At the time Cirque suggested nothing was in the works between it and the King of Pop's estate; however, just three months later another rumor was published (by The Examiner on November 12, 2009) that suggested otherwise. According to Roger Friedman of the blog Showbiz411.com, "Once Viva Elvis launched, Cirque du Soleil [planned] to ramp up their negotiations with the Jackson estate. Their offer [was] said to be 'astronomical,'" according to Friedman. It was clear Cirque du Soleil wanna be startin' somethin' with the Jackson Estate. And we didn't have to wait too long for a more official announcement.

On April 20, 2010, the much-rumored Cirque show featuring Michael Jackson's music and inspiration was announced by Cirque to be touring U.S. arenas in 2011 and permanently to Las Vegas in 2012:

Two great forces in entertainment have combined with the announcement of an unprecedented arrangement between The Estate of Michael Jackson, represented by Executors John Branca and John McLain, and Cirque du Soleil for the creation, development, production and promotion of Michael Jackson projects, featuring touring and permanent shows, based on the music and songs of Michael Jackson. Special lifestyle projects, including a nightclub to open with the Las Vegas production, will also be developed.

The first of these projects would be an arena-touring show in which fans will experience the excitement of a Michael Jackson concert, expected to debut in late Fall 2011. That arena show is anticipated to enjoy an extended run in Las Vegas in conjunction with longtime Cirque du Soleil partner MGM MIRAGE. The Las Vegas permanent show, also in partnership with MGM MIRAGE, is expected to open in late 2012.

John Branca, Co-Executor for The Estate of Michael Jackson, commented in the release, "This will not just be a tribute to Michael's musical genius, but a live entertainment experience that uses the most advanced technology to push every creative boundary as Michael always did. Having attended Cirque du Soleil performances with Michael, I know he was a huge fan. We are excited to be partners with Cirque du Soleil to give Michael's fans a truly unique way to hear, see and feel Michael's music."

Guy Laliberté, Founder of Cirque du Soleil, added, "Michael Jackson is the King of Pop and an all-time phenomenal artist, both timeless and contemporary. As a creative challenge, this project is the ultimate. Through the use of cutting edge technology, we will produce a Cirque du Soleil experience not only worthy of Michael but unlike any other we have created before. We are also so pleased that our longtime partner MGM MIRAGE has once again joined us in presenting another unique creative experience in Las Vegas. "

John McClain, Co-Executor for The Estate of Michael Jackson, commented, "There will never be a multi-faceted entrepreneur, humanitarian and innovator like Michael and it is only befitting that this partnership be with Cirque du Soleil. No artist electrified the stage more than Michael did. We expect that his fans will come away from these Cirque

du Soleil performances feeling the exhilaration of a Michael Jackson experience and with an even greater appreciation of his legacy." Daniel Lamarre, President and CEO of Cirque du Soleil added "We are honored and thrilled to be in partnership with the ultimate and most important record selling artist of all time. This association between two international entertainment brands promises to deliver to fans of both Michael and Cirque du Soleil unique artistic experiences"

Bill Hornbuckle, Chief Marketing Officer of MGM MIRAGE said "Las Vegas is known worldwide for its unparalleled entertainment offerings, many of which have been developed by the creative geniuses at Cirque du Soleil. We have been honored to call Cirque our partner for many years and are humbled now by the opportunity to work with them to create a show that will commemorate one of the most legendary forces in entertainment in our lifetime."

Katherine Jackson, mother of Michael Jackson commented as well: "Our family is thrilled that Cirque du Soleil will pay tribute to my son in such an important way."

The Estate of Michael Jackson and Cirque du Soleil would each own 50 percent of each Michael Jackson project, sharing equally in the cost of creating, developing, building and producing the projects and in the profits from each project. The Estate of Michael Jackson would also receive royalty payments on various aspects of its intellectual property used in the Michael Jackson projects. The announcement advised further information was forthcoming, but it took quite a while before we knew what the first of these Michael Jackson projects would be. Then, on November 3, 2012, the Estate of Michael Jackson and Cirque du Soleil announced the official international launch of Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour, written and directed by Jamie King:

This once-in-a-lifetime electrifying production is a riveting fusion of visuals, dance, music, and fantasy that combines Michael Jackson's music and choreography with Cirque du Soleil's creativity to give fans worldwide a unique view into the spirit, passion and heart of the artistic genius who forever transformed global pop culture. Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour immerses audiences in Michael's creative world and literally turns his signature moves upside down, before the eyes of the audience! Aimed at lifelong fans as well as those experiencing Michael's creative genius for the first time, the show captures the essence, soul and inspiration of the King of Pop, celebrating a legacy that continues to transcend generations.

THE IMMORTAL World Tour takes place in a fantastical realm where we discover Michael's inspirational Giving Tree – the wellspring of his creativity. The secrets of Michael's inner world are unlocked – his love of music and dance, fairy tale and magic, and the fragile beauty of nature. The underpinnings of THE IMMORTAL World Tour are Michael Jackson's powerful, inspirational music and lyrics – the driving force behind the show – brought to life with extraordinary power and breathless intensity. Through unforgettable performances Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour underscores Michael's global messages of love, peace and unity.

In selecting Jamie King as Writer and Director for Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour – which will feature 60 international performers –, The Estate of Michael Jackson and Cirque du Soleil chose a director Variety called one of the most influential “movers and shakers” in the music industry, and the “Jerry Bruckheimer of tent-pole concert tours”. A multiple Emmy Award and MTV Video Music Award nominee, and greatly influenced by his early years working for both Prince and Michael Jackson, he has choreographed some of the most popular music videos and directed some of the highest grossing concert tours of all time. For the past 12 years, he has served as Madonna's creative director, having most recently directed her 2008 Sticky & Sweet world tour, as well as her 2006 record-breaking Confessions world tour and hit music video, Sorry.

He most recently directed Rihanna's Last Girl On Earth world tour, Celine Dion's Taking Chances world tour, The Return of the Spice Girls reunion tour, Britney Spears' Circus tour and Avril Lavigne's Best Damn tour. He previously directed and choreographed world tours for Madonna (Re-Invention and Drowned World); Asian superstar Rain (Rain's Coming); Ricky Martin (Black & White and La Vida Loca); Pink (Try This); Christina Aguilera (Back to Basics and Stripped); and his first collaboration with Britney Spears (Oops! I Did It Again). He has worked with an array of superstars including Mariah Carey, Shakira, George Michael, Elton John, Diana Ross, Jennifer Lopez and even Ellen DeGeneres. This is Jamie's first show with Cirque du Soleil.

/// CREATING THE IMMORTAL

Neverland was the venue chosen to hold the first meeting of the show's creative team. “I remember going to Neverland with the creative team and meeting the grounds people who have remained faithful to Michael,” Director Jamie King reminisces. “I recall seeing the Giving Tree where he wrote among other things most of the Dangerous tour that I danced on, and I truly felt that I was at the right place creating this show.”

Few stage performers have created iconic looks that are directly related to specific songs. Say Billie Jean, and the black sequin jacket, black and white-striped tuxedo pants and fedora hat immediately come to mind. As for Thriller, one unmistakably sees the red leather jacket with the two black diagonal stripes. In THE IMMORTAL World Tour, there are references galore to Michael Jackson's legendary outfits.

“Michael is our narrator, leading us on a journey through his lyrics, his poetry, his visuals, his moves and, of course, how he dressed,” explains Director Jamie King. Michael's world was the wellspring of Costume Designer Zaldy Goco's creativity. “My approach has been to draw upon and respect Michael's iconic style while creating something new and fresh. I placed subtle references throughout the costumes in the show,” says Zaldy, who was also Michael Jackson's exclusive designer for the THIS IS IT concert series. For Zaldy, playing a role in THE IMMORTAL World Tour had a special emotional resonance. “The prospect of working on this show,” he points out, “was not so much a second chance with regard to THIS IS IT as much as an opportunity to honor Michael and keep his legacy alive with new ideas.”

The color palette in THE IMMORTAL is rich and lively. Michael loved gold and all things ornate and shiny. He was fond of Swarovski crystals – aurora borealis in particular. The show's costumes are a rainbow of colors and called for innovative materials and techniques. "In particular, we explored techniques such as 3D printing and LED, pushing the limits just as Michael would," says Zaldy.

The production brims with more than 250 imaginative costumes and outfits - more than 1,200 pieces in total - including accessories, shoes, hats, and head pieces. Gangster types have surreal guns that seem to be tucked in their pockets but are only shapes; The ghoulish Thriller characters wear pure white, shiny outfits; the bloody innards that show behind the wrappings reflect Michael's love for horror movies. The straps duo artists appear as magnificent swans; covered in Swarovski crystals, their costumes are corseted and laced in reference to Michael's corseted wrist in his Black or White video. The bat costumes are made of ultra lightweight paper used for shipping parcels; The huge, lifelike gold wings create a stunning effect. And more than 90 pieces in three different acts use unique LED light technology!

THE IMMORTAL's versatile stage is highly technical with multiple lifts for scene changes. A large, multi-purpose LED screen was developed: it starts flat on the stage, stands up to act as a projection surface and turns into a ramp. In the middle of the stage, there are large drawers that serve as steps for artists to perform on. "Working on a rock show without a live artist can be challenging," Set Designer Mark Fisher explains. "In this case, the set design takes on a whole new meaning. Its role is to fill the shadows as it were, and to evoke the artist's presence."

Props and Scenic Designer Michael Curry, who was one of the designers on the THIS IS IT concert tour, has developed props that serve as storytelling devices. For example, a huge book of tales and Michael's famed glove and shoes become giant props inhabited by nimble dancers. Curry's goal was to tap into and trigger the fans' memories of Michael, and to focus attention on the performance. Many of the props are subtext for the songs or support the narrative. As do the projections. The video projections not only act as storytelling devices, they play a key role in making Michael's presence palpable. Projection Designer Olivier Goulet integrated video content such as footage of Michael's performances and real-time projections of the performances on stage. The total video projection surface in the show is more than 5,300 square feet, larger than a basketball court.

Hard-wired into Michael Jackson's inspirational music and lyrics, THE IMMORTAL World Tour conjures up the extraordinary power and emotional intensity of Jackson's unforgettable concert performances. THE IMMORTAL World Tour features more than 35 of Michael's songs, in addition to numerous bits and pieces of songs that have been used for the soundscapes and transitions. "It starts with the music," says Director Jamie King. "Michael's voice is what drives the show. I have the opportunity to carry on Michael's legacy, to take all that energy – all that he was and was going to be – and build it into this production."

To weave together the all-important musical components of the show, Jamie King called upon Musical Designer Kevin Antunes, who was given unprecedented access to the master recordings, and Musical Director Greg Phillinganes, who has worked with Michael for more than 25 years, providing an unparalleled depth of knowledge of his music and live performances.

“Our goal is not to simply cover Michael, but to take his music to a whole new level,” King explains. The Director wanted to integrate as many songs into the production as possible, so this meant mash-ups, remixes and new arrangements. It also meant moving them forward emotionally, weaving songs together in new ways so that the music feels new and fresh all the while respecting Michael’s essence and his voice. To say Michael’s voice drives the show is somewhat of an understatement. “In some of his songs,” Antunes says, “Michael would let the grooves breathe and he would tuck his voice underneath the music. In this show, the world is going to hear Michael’s voice like they’ve never heard it before.” The audience can even hear Michael snap his fingers or stomp his feet in some audio segments.

To showcase Michael’s voice and support the huge cast, Musical Director Greg Phillinganes has rounded up a stellar group of musicians, including Jonathan “Sugarfoot” Moffett, who played drums for Michael for 30 years. “I wanted to handpick everybody on the band,” he explains. “I knew exactly whom I wanted. We have a full band, including horns and an electric cello. I wanted to have as many players as possible with a direct, personal history with Michael Jackson. We are all doing this because of the love we have for Michael. His spirit will live in this show.”

And so it does. Transposed in the theatrical and acrobatic language of Cirque du Soleil, Michael Jackson's music and his messages have taken on a life of their own through a number of fantastic scenes:

WORKING DAY AND NIGHT

Five super fans praise the King of Pop and create a giant mural of Michael Jackson.

CHILDHOOD

In front of the gilded gates of Neverland, the Mime awakens the bronze statues that inhabit this magical place.

WANNA BE STARTING SOMETHING

In a wild, high-powered number, the gates of Neverland open to introduce the IMMORTAL band while dancers and acrobats in tribal costumes celebrate around the band.

SHAKE YOUR BODY DOWN TO THE GROUND

In a playful atmosphere, five "fanatics" take pictures of members of the audience jump on stage to groove to Michael's music booming from a jukebox and dance. When they arrive in front of the gates to Neverland, their only hope is to slip inside, but the doors remain closed.

DANCING MACHINE

In a scene that evokes an ironworks factory, a group of welders fly and swing on motorized cables. They perform on various “dancing machines,” paying tribute to different dance styles. The copper-colored “welder” costumes with zippers in Dancing Machine directly reference Michael’s red, silver- meshed, zipper-clad jacket in Beat It.

BEN

A tableau that celebrates Michael's love of animals.

THIS PLACE HOTEL

Suspended in the air, artists perform a sensual aerial tango as if they were in an anti-gravity nightclub.

SMOOTH CRIMINAL

Fleet of foot, dancers perform a choreography that showcases Michael Jackson's iconic moves, including his famous leaning motion. Transposed in the theatrical and acrobatic language of Cirque du Soleil, Michael Jackson's music and his messages have taken on a life of their own. The shoulder pads on the gangster costumes for Smooth Criminal and Dangerous are made using 3D printing.

DANGEROUS

Surrounded by gangsters, a female acrobat performs a "dangerous" pole-dancing act.

FANATICS MEDLEY

In front of Neverland, the Fanatics take part in a friendly competition as they lip-sync and perform to the sounds of a Jackson 5 medley, which finally lets them in to Neverland.

MIME

Suddenly inhabited by Michael Jackson's spirit, the Mime is completely transformed and infused with Michael's talents as he performs a funky beatbox number.

HUMAN NATURE

While a 3D version of the Neverland logo (Michael as a boy sitting on the crescent moon) is suspended above the stage, artists representing the constellations wearing multicolored LED costumes swoop, soar and float in the air. Each costume in the Celestial/Human Nature scene is equipped with 275 blinking LED lights specially designed for the show. They change color during the song to mimic constellations.

IS IT SCARY?

Like a mind-bending storyteller, a contortionist comes out of a giant Book of Tales. As beautiful as she is strange, she turns the pages in the most unusual positions.

BATS - THREATENED

Suspended upside down at first, artists wearing striking winged bat costumes perform a dramatic choreography. The bat costumes are made of ultra lightweight paper used for shipping parcels. The huge, lifelike gold wings create a stunning effect.

THRILLER

This scene re-imagines Michael Jackson's original choreography and showcases his iconic moves. Acrobats and dancers dressed as mummies perform among coffins and tombstones in a cavalcade of jumps, leaps and bounds.

SWANS – I JUST CAN'T STOP LOVING YOU

Appearing as a black and a white swan, two artists emerge from a lake to perform a graceful straps duo. An aerial ballet of strength and emotions.

BEAT IT

Embodied and manipulated by the Fanatics, Michael Jackson's signature accessories – his famous glove and penny loafers – are brought to life. In the final moments of the scene, an electric guitar and an electric cello engage in a rock-infused duel on center-stage. The giant shoes directly reference Michael Jackson's famous penny loafers. They are eight feet long and created from orthopedic foam with a vinyl skin. The six-foot tall glove is a soft sculpture that allows the dancer inside to create various hand positions using their full body.

JAM

Inspired by the video Michael Jackson made with basketball superstar Michael Jordan, artists play with basketballs and perform a hip-hop inspired choreography.

EARTH SONG

In a menacing atmosphere, the Mime dances with Mother Earth.

SCREAM

Acrobats execute a perfectly synchronized tumbling act, flinging themselves in the air and belly-flopping onto the stage as Ninja-style aerial dancers suspended above interact with the Anime-inspired sequences projected on the screens. The scene evokes the destruction of the world: a planet in peril.

GONE TOO SOON

With images of a merry-go-round filling the screens in the background to the sounds of this moving ballad, four animal heads, each carrying an artist, are gently cradled by the Mime.

THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT US

In a reenactment of the number that was designed for the THIS IS IT concert tour, artists dressed like soldiers wearing robot suits with LED breastplates line up to perform a powerful choreography in unison. The soldiers' costumes here are essentially made of Mytex (foil transfer) on a polyester frame with padding. The music features a previously unreleased choir that Michael recorded.

HEAL THE WORLD - WILL YOU BE THERE

As the soldiers' breastplates begin to glow, artists come down from the audience onto the stage holding red glowing hearts in a scene that evokes rebirth and conjures up Michael's spirit on stage, as his image appears on the Giving Tree.

MEGA MIX

This sequence is a fusion of music, dance and acrobatics. During Can You Feel It, acrobats execute a Swiss rings act moving from stage to sky. This scene segues into a riveting dance number on Don't Stop Till You Get Enough. Michael's famed choreographic style is showcased once more during the Billie Jean sequence; his silhouette is revealed by the dancers' LED costumes. For Black or White, performers manipulate flags in a tribute to the nations and dance styles of the world, including African, Spanish, Thai and Georgian dances

MAN IN THE MIRROR

The show's finale culminates with the song Man in the Mirror – a song Michael often chose to end his concerts – in a celebration of the legacy of an immortal.

* * *

Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour launched on October 2, 2011 in Montreal to a sold-out crowd. And while reviews of the show have been mixed since that time, it is more than clear the show has been a great success (earning millions and reaching the top of the tour charts since its debut). In fact, the show could be found atop earnings lists throughout its Canadian and United States tour (through August 22, 2012), and when it jumped the pond for an October 12th debut in London. As the show wound its way across Europe throughout 2012 and 2013, it continued its earning success. Even in Japan, the Middle East and other Asian markets, THE IMMORTAL found great success. Now, in 2014, the show has returned to the North American market to hit up secondary cities and locations the show did not visit the first time round. How long will Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL continue its World Tour? Only Cirque du Soleil knows, but we have a feeling the show will end its run in 2015, allowing full glory to reach Michael Jackson ONE – a resident show – at Mandalay Bay Las Vegas.



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.

Amaluna™

DIRECTED BY DIANE PAULUS

An adventure on a mysterious island governed by Goddesses and guided by the cycles of the moon.

Amaluna

For the first time in Cirque du Soleil's history, over 70% of the cast is female (and with an all-female band), as a result Amaluna features strong women characters plucked from history and literature alike, from the Amazons of Greek Mythology to the wily pages of Shakespeare (both "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Tempest" were inspirations). "Amaluna is a tribute to the work and voice of women," explained Director of Creation Fernand Rainville at the press conference. "The show is a reflection on balance from a woman's perspective," he added. Show Director Diane Paulus says: "Amaluna is less about feminism and more about reconnecting to our world in a different way."

In Amaluna, we're invited to a mysterious island governed by Goddesses and guided by the cycles of the moon. Their queen, Prospera (played by Cellist-Saxophonist Julie McInnes; she also sings!), directs her daughter's coming-of-age ceremony in a rite that honors femininity, renewal, rebirth and balance that marks the passing of these insights and values from one generation to the next. The show's name draws its inspiration from the fusion of the words "ama", which refers to "mother" in many languages, and "luna", which refers to the "moon". It is at once both a symbol of femininity that evokes the mother-daughter relationship between Prospera and Miranda and the idea of a goddess and protector of the planet.

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	April 19, 2012
Type:	Touring / Big Top
Director:	Diane Paulus
Composer:	Bob & Bill
Status:	Currently Touring

Creative Team

Guide	Choreographer
Guy Laliberté	Karole Armitage
Director	Acro Choreographer
Diane Paulus	Debra Brown
Creation	Acro Choreographer
Fernand Rainville	Caitlan Maggs
Costume Designer	Acro Performance
Méridith Caron	Rob Bollinger
Composer	Equipment
Bob & Bill	Fred Gérard
Set & Props	Dramaturge
Scott Pask	Randy Weiner
Sound Design	Makeup Designer
Jacques Boucher	Eleni Uranis
Lighting	
Matthieu Larrivée	

/// CREATING THE ISLAND HABITAT...

Entering a Grand Chapiteau is always a treat; when you step foot inside the big top the first time, for a brand new show, expectations run rampant, which only serves to heighten the excitement even more. When the flimsy doors of Amaluna's big top parted, my eyes were immediately drawn to Scott Pask's set, a "mysterious, verdant, enchanted island" set amongst a tangle of bamboo-like branches. Taking his cues from the natural world, especially from forests and plant life, Pask has created an environment that is both immersive and open, with plenty of space for dramatic rituals and ceremonies as well as acrobatic performances.

The branches and limbs of the canopy are unmistakably engineered constructions, and the visual references to bamboo are quite evident. It was important to Scott that the forest should be seen to be hand-crafted, however there was no attempt to disguise its components as anything actually found in nature – nothing has been given a patina to look like wood, for example. Yet the feeling of being in a real forest is palpable.

The "trees" thrust upward from the circumference of the stage and the Big Top's tent poles to form an airy canopy. Upstage, the vegetation grows closer to the ground, forming a tunnel-like grotto. (There are 174 branches in 534 sections – 90 in the canopy and 84 upstage – making a total of 1.7 km or 1.05 miles.) Although meant to invoke the outline of a peacock feather, the set also evokes the various curves, lines, swoops and folds of the female sex – an anatomically correct outline I might add – which, coupled with the two side wings of the set, (that bare a close resemblance to fallopian tubes) helps bring the audience into this female-dominated world.

The peacock feather decoration that occupies much of the middle of the Amaluna stage is a significant emblematic motif that is echoed in some of Mérédith Caron's iridescent costumes. For Mérédith, the character and the costume are inseparable. "One calls out to the other. It is a communion, a symbiotic relationship," she says. "But above all, it is the artist that I dress." The peacock images in the show are inspired by the magnificent bird that accompanies Hera, the Greek goddess of women, marriage and fertility. Legend tells us that the protective "eyes" in its tail watch over women in all the stages of their lives.

To dress the artists, Mérédith has created "progressive" costumes with multiple configurations. Some of them put on a parade uniform for the more theatrical moments in the show, and performance costumes when they perform their act. Many of the garments are equipped with pads and other removable parts – the wearers might, for example, remove the sleeves and keep their doublets on, or remove the doublets altogether and perform in their shirts. Amaluna recreates a fabulous female mythology on stage. Inspired by Asia Minor, the corseted costumes of the Amazon warriors are augmented with ponytails and high-heeled black and red leather boots in a look that is more fantasy than historical reality. The world of Amaluna is also populated by a layer of unruly half-human, half-animal characters, freely inspired by the world of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Lizards, peacocks and fairies rub shoulders with each other.

The choice of materials is as important to Mérédith Caron as the lines of the garments. She has given denim doublets worn by the Boys who land on the island of Amaluna a distinctly Renaissance look: The sleeves are slashed to reveal the lining, and the garments are embellished

with 18th century velvet flocking to create the impression of a contemporary jean jacket. Queen Prospera's daughter Miranda, who is about to move into adulthood in this remote environment, wears linen, cambric and distressed velvet – a selection that is highly reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance. Her costume expresses her enthusiasm and thirst for discovery.

And amongst these trappings sits the water-bowl, a soothing pale-blue.

Scott, who initially trained as an architect, regards the entire space as more of an art installation than a stage set, and he has used light to activate it and take the audience to other places and evoke different emotional responses. There are relatively few moving parts in the set design, and that was a deliberate choice intended to add certain elegance to the performances by concentrating the audience's attention on the human performance. There are no visual effects in the Amaluna set, and the automated mechanical elements are designed to be inconspicuous – almost invisible – even though they are in plain view. Circular sections of the stage revolve to ensure that the entire audience can see each act from every angle, and that movement is matched by a circular scenic element above the stage: the Carousel – a custom-made ring that houses downward-facing lighting clusters as well as anchor points for flying acrobatic performers. At times stationary, at times moving, the Carousel can revolve in sync with the stage, or counter-rotate in the opposite direction to give both the artists and the lighting maximum flexibility and range of vertical and horizontal motion.

The musicians in Queen Prospera's entourage are creatures of the night who wear costumes that underline their strong personalities and their rock star aura with a really current look. M  r  dith was inspired by the clothing styles of major figures in the worlds of music, fashion and film such as k.d. lang , Roy Orbison, John Galliano, Tim Burton and even a rock version of the Village People. "You might well see girls in these kinds of clothes among the heterogeneous fauna of a bar in avant- garde Berlin, for example," says M  r  dith, "hence the link between the costumes, the music and the decidedly rock sensibility of a show that celebrates beauty in all its guises."

Composers by Bob & Bill (Guy Dubuc (Gee Doo-BOOK) and Marc Lessard (Mark Less-ARD)) are known for their ability to blur the lines between genres and styles to create an intricately woven visual style (think Kooz  ). Their mission here was to create a "unique, raw sound; to surprise by means of the unexpected" and they've done just that. Guitars are very present and the overall sound is resolutely contemporary. Bass, drums, cello, vocals, keyboards, and percussion support the guitars in delivering the music directly without embellishment. "We wanted to unleash the power in the raw state that artists and musicians bring to the stage," explain Bob & Bill. The musicians share the stage with acrobats at times, which combines perfectly with the energy of the score. Amaluna is the first Cirque show with an all-female group of musicians.

"We wanted to reflect the guts and intense attitude of these musicians through the music itself," they add. Although their choice in accompaniments might be polarizing (the all-female band gives the music that Joan Jet "rock on!" feeling, which is just fine with me), the comparison at times to "game music" might be a turn-off to some. "We created a sound for the show that would follow the emotional line of the acrobatic numbers," they say. "Each act has its own respiration and rhythm, its own arc – and the music should reflect this. The music is an extension of the soul of a character and an expression in sound of the show's narrative."

/// IN THE STORM'S WAKE...

“In the wake of a storm caused by Prospera,” Cirque du Soleil explains, “a group of young men land on the island, triggering an epic, emotional story of love between Prospera’s daughter Miranda (played by Water-bowl/Hand-balancing artist Iulia Mykhailova), who is on the brink of womanhood, and a brave young suitor, Romeo (played by Chinese Pole artist Édouard Doye). But theirs is a love that will be put to the test as jealous Cali (a pet, played by juggler Viktor Kee) attempts to thwart their union. The couple must face numerous demanding trials and overcome daunting setbacks before they can achieve mutual trust, faith and harmony.

ANIMATION

Animation, or pre-show, can take the form of characters milling through the crowd crying over their dead friend (a la Corteo), a delivery man in search of his charge (as in Koozâ), mysterious characters guarding their mystifying void (as in KÀ), bugs from the microcosm swarming the big top (OVO), or clowns pointing unwitting attendees to their seats (as in Mystère, La Nouba, and a variety of other shows). For AMALUNA, while the percussionist and guitarist strum and pound a tribal beat, a number of plumed peacocks, leathery-lizard lizards and various warriors of the island make their appearance and slink, strut and sashay about: There is Deeda, a clown dressed in yellow (she’s Miranda’s Nurse, played by Pepa Plana from Spain), who runs about wondering why people aren’t taking their seats. Another, lizard-bound Cali, meanders his way through the crowd, flicking his tail here and there before climbing a mast and proceeding to dump popcorn on select guests beneath him. Other androgynous Peacock characters strut about tickling unsuspecting guests with their feathers in hand.

Suddenly Deeda walks on stage; all eyes are drawn to her as she welcomes us to the show - “Ladies à ladies, mesdames et mesdames, señoritas y señoras” - then takes us through the rules of the house: should there be a “petit problème”? “NO PANIC!” Should there be a bigger problem... well, whatever! Also “no foto, no texto, no facebook, no youtube, no, no, no, no, no!” (You know the drill). When a cell phone rings out in the audience, Deeda frowns and taps her foot, then goes to fetch it. After Deeda answers the call and speaks to the caller, she places the confiscated phone in a plastic bag then stuffs the entire kit-and-caboodle in a pouch along her waist. We’ve been warned!

MAGIC PAGEANT (OPENING)

As the first few chords of electric guitar ring out, the lights gently rise and wash over a “shimmering, ethereal cloud of diaphanous red gossamer” as it dances in the air at Prospera’s command. Prospera, the island’s matriarch, comes toward the diaphanous filament as it glides and twirls before us like an expectant flame filled with desire, allowing its fingers to caress her, spill over her, and envelop her with its warmth. (You can’t miss Prospera: she wears a large golden mantle composed of four rectangles on which are printed in sublimation the cover of GAIA, the book of photographs taken in space by Cirque founder Guy Laliberté. It shows a majestic cloud system captured at a distance of 350 kilometers above the earth’s surface.)

Prospera accepts its gifts readily, wrapping the ethereal flame about her as those in her charge – Amazonians, Peacocks, Fairies, and Valkyries – encircle her and move about in a slow ritualistic tribal dance; then come alive as Miranda, Prospera’s daughter, joins them. This pageant is Prospera’s gift to Miranda, to mark her passage into womanhood. The peacocks strut their stuff, fanning their magnificent feathers for all the world to see; the Amazonians flex their muscles, holding up their spears in defiance ready to attack; the Water Fairies flit about, ready to play; the Valkryes fly in, prepared to defend the island from outsiders, and the Moon Goddess (played by Marie-Michelle Faber) descends from her crescent throne from above, ready to bless the ceremony to come.

The peacock costumes are made up of 14 layers of heat-pleated materials trimmed in leather and stretch metallic fabric, according to materials provided by Cirque. The tails open out to a “fan” of eight feet with hydraulic pistons that compensate for their weight. Made in the same proportion to the performers’ bodies as the bird’s fans have to theirs, the tails are attached to the artists with belts that hide the mechanisms under embroidered feathers. The skeleton and leaves of the fans are made of the same Fiberglass material used in the manufacture of fishing rods, and screen-printed metallic paper is glued to the leaves to recreate the iridescent look of peacock plumage, which shimmers in the spotlights. Prospera’s flame is created with nothing more than strategically placed fans – one built into the center of the stage floor and others placed around it - to create a swirling vortex of wind that keeps the scarf floating without effort (most of the time).

UNICYCLES

Fast and furiously two young Arielles from Japan (Satomi and Yuka Sakaino) peddle their way across the stage in quick form, weaving in and out of each other’s paths like the wind as they joyfully pirouette, dance and thrill the pageant participants. Their infectious smiles and quick-on-their-seat movements continue the energy of the show’s opening, not to mention a number of fast-paced spins, walks and rubberized twists that make watching this duo spin about the stage a pleasure. The costumes of the two unicyclists are fitted with cages that hide their legs, in a reference to the aesthetics of the Spanish Golden Age. The cages (with a diameter of five feet and a height of two-and-a-half feet) are made of perforated material (which includes Kevlar – a thermoplastic polymer – and gold leaf) to allow the artists to see the unicycle seats. However, for better visual reference, the cages are like the hoop skirt of Alegría’s White Singer. During their act the cages break into two pieces, announcing the start of the storm after which the budding love between Miranda and her suitor will be tested.

WATER METEORS & ICARIAN GAMES

Combine the cuteness of Varekai’s Water Meteor trio with the acrobatic dedication of the same show’s Icarian Games troupe and you get this amazing number. Here the female body becomes catapult and catcher in an elaborate, explosive and highly choreographed presentation of strength, balance and agility, all while keeping their water meteors (not filled with water, sadly) whirling through the air with impressive agility. Towers? No problem. Leaping from porter to porter? No problem. Taking off from platforms of upturned feet? No problem. How about leaping through someone else’s legs? Sure! It all comes to a surreal close as the lights dim and the water meteors glow!

THE STORM (AERIAL STRAPS)

While Miranda plays catch with Cali (who later steals her ball and transforms it into a red balloon that floats away), Prospera begins directing the heavens around her. She's about to summon the storm that will bring men to her island from lands far away; ascending the heavens via the Moon Goddesses crescent throne to do so. As the storm rages around us, the God and Goddess of the Wind perform an intense midair ballet on straps, "coming together and parting, intertwining their bodies and gliding through space in vigorous, frenetic movements." Shades of blue and green mix with shades of sky and sea to compose a soothing palette of sophistication belling the harshness to come, as their muscular bodies crash together in an erotic clash of raw power and sexuality. As the storm subsides, Prospera and Deeda (Miranda's nurse), look over the gaggle of men who – captured by a net – wash ashore. At first the two chuckle as the men bumble and fumble over one another in a futile attempt to extricate themselves from their imprisonment; however, when one particularly striking young man (Romeo) catches the eye of Miranda, time seems to stand still; Prospera's enigmatic expression betrays little and Miranda is whisked away...

SUSPENDED POLES & PEON DANCE

Undaunted by the turn of events, Romeo leaves his clan in search of Miranda. His path becomes treacherous as he enters an enchanted forest of strangely shaped trees (poles), some of which seem to descend from the heavens without form. As creatures of various dimension twist and twirl on these Chinese-pole inspired apparatuses, Romeo attempts to push through. Just when he thinks all hope is lost he comes upon the white Peacock Goddess (Amy McClendon), dancing gracefully in her dazzling white dress. For a moment Romeo stands mesmerized and though he is tempted by her seductive dance, he turns and leaves... his heart yearning for another. The white dress worn by the artist performing the Peacock Dance comprises a bustier and a skirt. The bustier is made of stretch nylon tulle covered with white beaded lace and Swarovski crystals. The skirt is made of 65 yards of white non-stretch nylon tulle covered with silver lace and Swarovski crystals. The dress has a total of 6,500 Swarovski crystals and 325 silver lace additions. The tail features 12 two-meter pleated polyester voile panels with sunray pleats (bias-cut knife pleats, narrower at the top than at the bottom, producing a flared effect), printed with white peacock feather designs.

JEEVES AND DEEDA

Jeeves, the Captain of the rag-tag crew of men (although according to Cirque he's Romeo's "manservant"), pushes through a clearing in search of Romeo but finds little clue of him. In the process he runs into a small band of creatures that scare him, but are equally curious of the newcomer; they follow him wherever he goes. Frightened, he attempts to escape by climbing a nearby tree but can barely muster the strength to pull up his girth. The forest creatures help him, but this only elicits a yelp of surprise – which attracts the attention of Deeda, who just so happened to be walking nearby. She spots the Sea-Captain and attempts to help. When he cries out at her and she tells him "NO PANIC" the two regard one another honestly for the first time. Deeda is enamored as Jeeves introduces himself and the two become lost in a tickle-fest (fantasy sex scene), which ends rather hilariously when Jeeves falls asleep.

HOOPS & WATERBOWL

As shooting stars rain down from above, the Waterbowl is pushed to center-stage and the Moon Goddess – clinging to a simple steel hoop – descends from above. The Waterbowl resembles a giant, clear gemstone set in a ring of stylized organic shapes that evokes a vortex captured in time. As it interacts with the lighting, this “jewel” changes its appearance and aura, much like a precious stone. As the Moon Goddess sings to Miranda, who is watching from the cover of darkness (bestowing her blessing with her haunting song), she soars around the water bowl in this fantastic Aerial Hoop number. Later, as she tires, the Goddess calls for Miranda to join her and the two rise into the heavens as one, before Miranda drops into the water bowl in a gleeful splash of happiness. She cavorts about the waters cheerfully, rising to the surface to balance herself on the bowl’s edge (and on specially designed canes) in a fantastic display of strength, flexibility, equilibrium and sensuality. Her energetic and joy-filled display of sinuous sexuality catches Romeo’s eye. And later when he joins her in the water, she kisses him and the two seemingly become one.

AMAZONS (UNEVEN BARS)

Cali, who is jealous of this new suitor, has seen their tentative kiss and slinks away to plot Romeo’s downfall. Meanwhile, the men are now found to be the captives of the island’s native Amazons, who pounce around and shout battle cries to ward off any who might interfere (or attempt to attack). Although the men think they’re in heaven – and will show up the girls with their skills – these fighters are preparing the ultimate display of agility, skill and flair through the use of Uneven Bars. As they fly about their encumbered home, the men get their come-uppance and find they aren’t the strongest creatures on this island. Inspired by Asia Minor, the corseted costumes of the Amazon warriors (High Bars) are augmented with ponytails and high-heeled black leather boots in a look that is more fantasy than historical reality, although they don’t perform with their tails on.

INTERMISSION.

TEETERBOARD

The boys, in their Renaissance-style denim doublets, find themselves fenced in and launch themselves high into the air, twisting and turning in a playful high-speed attempt to escape. Starting out like a traditional Korean Plank number, these boys fly, flip, twist and turn head-over-heels before landing on the wooden plank beneath them. However, as their desperation to be free grows, so do the risks they take – such as landing in a handstand on another performer’s upturned palms, leaping onto a nearby platform set askew, and onto the shoulders of their peers through this showcase of power and energy. Truly an action packed and highly skilled act presented as never before!

MANIPULATION

In “Sanddorn Balance” (sand and thorn), a truly breathtaking experience unfolds. Lara Jacobs Rigolo, Balance Goddess, uses thirteen palm leaf ribs to build a fragile, giant mobile – a sculpture consisting of a number of rods, from which weighted objects or further rods hang. The objects hanging from these ribs demonstrate the Greek mathematical Principle of the Lever, balancing each other so that the rods remain more or less horizontal, but never falling (or so we hope!) Presented in a slow, suspenseful build, we can only sit and watch in awe as Lara grabs each rib with her toes and gently balances her growing sculpture upon it, her head, and later a stand above her head! (Her mobile serves as inspiration for the hanging lamps throughout the big top). An ode to balance, her movements are slow, deliberate and almost meditative as she concentrates all her attention on this literally breathtaking structure. And when she removes the smallest piece everything disintegrates and the young couple’s trials begin: will Romeo fight for Miranda?

THOUSAND ARMS & CHINESE POLE

While Prospera retires following the intense balancing act, Miranda stays with Romeo; however, the island works hard to keep the two apart by forming a highly impenetrable wall of moving bodies. Inspired by an Indonesian ritual dance, an ominous company of dancers dressed in black and silver performs a choreography that creates an indelible image of one woman with a thousand arms. Through much perseverance, the two unite. But their moment is short-lived as The Peacock Goddess reappears in an ominous guise and steals Miranda away, sending her into the skies while a forest of sticks inspired by Vietnamese circus tradition springs up to create a portal to the Underworld through which Romeo must pass. Undaunted, but tiring of the chase, Romeo climbs upward (using a single Chinese Pole) in a continuing search for his love. Édouard Doye’s single pole act is half dance, half traditional Chinese Pole; he cavorts around the pole seductively, using his strength and agility to climb after his beloved. After a number of setbacks (precariously falling to the stage before stopping himself mere centimeters from the stage floor), he escapes.

JEEVES AND DEEDA DEUX

When we were last graced with their presence, Jeeves was attempting to woo Deeda with his relatively poor singing and instrument playing abilities. Although she showed him up with a little Spanish flair, Jeeves succeeded to court Deeda. Here she shows up happy and pregnant! When her time to deliver comes - “Ay! ... Ay!Ay!” – they become giddy. So happy in fact they celebrate with a belly bump that serves to break Deeda’s water (which they simulate rather humorously). With the baby now on the way hilarity ensues: Jeeves rushes off simulating the cries of an ambulance in transit and brings a gurney upon which to carry Deeda. And after putting up rubbery legs (to help simulate stirrups but not taking the reality of the process too far), out pops the child – an American football with a little clown nose. The two, happy with their new progeny, begin to play... tossing her into the air and back and forth to each other... getting further and further away until the baby falls to the stage; but she’s okay. Then - “Ay! ... Ay!Ay!” – Deeda goes back into labor and another baby pops out, this one with a long stylized moustache like his father.

Before the new parents can enjoy their second child Deeda's labor continues on and on and on! Now overwhelmed by a crying hoard of children, the clown pair take to the audience in an attempt to elicit their assistance with keeping them quiet (by singing "Rock-a-bye baby" to them)! It doesn't work...

TIGHTWIRE

Returning to the action, we find four artists representing lost lovers in Purgatory. These fil-de-fer specialists take action and walk across their precarious ropes with comfort and ease. In what appears to be homage to the roaring twenties, two men and two women take to the ropes displaying an escalating array of balancing and maneuvering skills: some flips, some leaps, bounces and even walking the ropes in high heels and en-pointe in ballet shoes! By the end of the performance both Romeo and Miranda find one another, but on opposite sides of the mountain top. They attempt to reach each other by crossing a rope but Cali, who is waiting in the wings, grabs Romeo and sends him back down to Earth!

JUGGLING

Miranda's pool once again takes center stage, becoming both Romeo's watery prison and Cali's stage upon which he will celebrate his victory over his rival by displaying his manipulation prowess. Cali also shows us to what lengths he will go to keep Miranda for himself: he transforms into a human by ripping off his tail and shedding his reptilian-like hide! Here Viktor Kee juggles his charges with amazing speed and skill, showcasing a variety of imaginative ways in which to juggle any number of balls. Although Kee re-uses a number of moves from his act as it appeared in 1999's Dralion, there are a number of new manipulations and twists upon older maneuvers that will simply mesmerize you. (How about juggling a fireball? YES!) By the end of this awesome display Cali is sure he has succeeded in thwarting his rival, as Romeo has found his way out of the waterbowl, lying lifeless before it. But Miranda does not accept this fate. She uses the power of the gemstone the Moon Goddess had given her and revives her suitor, while taking the will and power away from Cali at the same time.

CELEBRATION (AERIAL STRAPS)

With Cali now under Romeo's restraint, a quartet of Valkyries fly in and take Cali away, leaping and flying through the air with glee. Keeping in tight formation, these women show us not only how hard it is to soar through the big top without a care in the world, but equally how easy it is to do so... if we only tried. With all trials and tribulations passed, Prospera welcomes the union of Romeo and Miranda with open arms, blesses their wedding, and allows all the personages of the island (and the audience) to celebrate right along with them. As soon as the celebration settles and the lights softly rise our attention is once again drawn to Prospera, standing alone at the center of the stage where we first found her and the dancing flame. She steps into a swirling vortex of wind that at first gently raises the scarf about her, then more forcefully until it becomes parted from her. Prospera steps back, allowing the scarf to once again flit its mesmerizing dance before her...

The lights dim...

/// ON TOUR

Today, Amaluna continues its journey across not only the North American continent, but eventually the world. Alas not without a few modifications, however. In 2013, as Cirque du Soleil tackled its ever-growing financial crisis, all touring shows faced a reduction in running time: from 120 minutes to 90 minutes, with an intermission. This meant some acts needed to be sped up whilst others were cut from the show entirely.

For Amaluna, two of the show's main acts were affected by this decision. First, the Unicycle girl's duo, seen at the opening of the show, was let go (following a reduction in their presentation). And later, the Tightrope ensemble – a two-man, two-woman team – had their final performance in the show.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL WORLDS AWAY



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL WORLDS AWAY 3D

"Experience a Journey Like Never Before..."

From the big top to the big screen, Academy Award-nominated director Andrew Adamson and visionary filmmaker James Cameron invite audiences on an all-new 3D adventure — Cirque du Soleil Worlds Away. Two young people journey through the astonishing and dreamlike worlds of Cirque du Soleil to find each other as audiences experience the immersive 3D technology that allows them to leap, soar, swim and dance with the performers.

Unique in scope, this immersive experience melds acts from seven live Cirque du Soleil shows in Las Vegas — “O,” KÀ, Mystère, Viva ELVIS, CRISS ANGEL Believe, Zumanity and The Beatles LOVE — into a circus love story produced, written and directed by Academy Award nominee Andrew Adamson (Shrek, The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe). The film stars Cirque du Soleil strap aerialists Igor Zaripov (The Aerialist) and former artist Erica Kathleen Linz (Mia) as the young couple.

ESSENTIALS

Premiere: December 21, 2012

Type: IMAX Film

Director: James Cameron

Composer: Benoît Jutras



/// ABOUT THE FILM

For writer/director/producer Andrew Adamson, tying a love knot around some of the best elements of seven Cirque du Soleil live shows that play in Las Vegas was a journey into magical realism. Executive producer Cary Granat and Reel FX Inc. had been discussing the possibility of collaborating with Cirque du Soleil on a project for quite awhile when he approached Adamson about the idea of crafting and directing a Cirque-based feature film. Granat is the former CEO of Walden Media, which collaborated with Adamson on the first two films of C.S. Lewis' beloved *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. Adamson is also a producer on the third film, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. "We had to find a natural, cinematic way into the world of Cirque du Soleil," says Adamson. "I started thinking about the way Cirque du Soleil live shows work. There is a very dreamlike quality about them. A thin thread of narrative that weaves in and out of each but allows these acts to exist within the worlds that are created. I thought this movie could do the same thing. I could find a narrative that threads these completely different shows together.



"I came to the idea of these two people who meet in a real-world circus. She's a young girl looking to escape her life. She sees this aerialist and instantly falls in love with him, but when their eyes meet he slips and falls. He drops right through the circus ring into another world and drags her with him. They spend the rest of the film looking for each other in these worlds that exist in a limbo state, kind of a space between life and death, a world between worlds. Ultimately they come together in a dream fulfilling aerial ballet - an act that hangs in the balance between beauty and danger." Like the live shows, the film eschews dialogue, using music and the marvelous expressions of the performers to move the narrative forward. But it was never the filmmakers' intention to simply capture the live shows. "What I wanted to do" says Adamson, "is take the audience to see these shows in a way that they hadn't seen them before, to get the camera in close and give a different perspective of what these artists do and show that perspective in high speed, slow motion 3D."

Executive producer Cameron, whose company shot the film with his FUSION 3D camera system, says the film feels "as if you strayed into a circus in a dream. From the beginning Andrew had a fairly clear vision of what he wanted to do and it continued to evolve. As a producer, I kind of acted as his sounding board. The goal was to really celebrate the physical artistry of everything Cirque du Soleil is about, the design, the beauty and grace of those performances. "Andrew had to walk a fine line working with such diverse elements from these shows. It was never meant to be about effects but to showcase the raw, pure physical human talent and their amazing ability. While it starts in this sort of run down circus, it plays out as discovery of this other dimensional circus world they fall into, but it is still very much a circus. There are wires, harnesses and you see it all, no effects hiding it. In seeing it, you experience the ingenuity of staging, costume design, the strength and agility of their talent that seem so

effortless, so fluid. But the preparation and work that goes into it is anything but effortless. What you see is pure Cirque du Soleil.”

Adamson drew inspiration from such classics as Walt Disney’s *Fantasia*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Peter Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* ballet and his own personal experiences from watching a traveling circus show in Mexico in 2000. “It was a Fred Flintstone themed traveling circus. I remember the ringleader had a lot of years on him, the lion had no teeth and one of the trapeze artists was a large woman wearing a star-spangled bikini. It was almost an empty house and had definitely seen better days,” he recalls. “But there was this sort of sad yet beautiful element to it bittersweet one of my favorite emotions. That was in the back of my mind. So I set the opening of this film in a circus that was connected to no time or place. I really wanted it to feel like a traveling neighborhood circus that could be anywhere.” At first Adamson wanted to use actors in the key roles, “but I also knew that I wanted to end with some kind of beautiful romantic straps aerial act.”

“To teach a normal person to do (aerial) straps, to perform at this level takes years,” says executive producer Jacques Méthé of Cirque du Soleil. “The way to go was to take Cirque du Soleil performers and teach them to play the part. At the end of this film, they are both flying in each others’ arms. They need the skills and training of a real Cirque du Soleil performer. Igor and Erica have worked on several of our shows for years. They are not only wonderful acrobats, but because of their Cirque du Soleil training, they have learned to become characters. In any Cirque du Soleil show, everybody is a character and plays some part. So we knew these two had the acting skills because of their years with Cirque du Soleil.”

Erica Kathleen Linz was 19 when she joined Cirque du Soleil shortly after graduating from high school. “I grew up as a gymnast and a singer, which led to theater, so I have flip-flopped between acting and acrobatic roles, and recently I’ve been doing an aerial straps duet which fits into this whole theme,” Linz says. Landing the film role gave her an opportunity within Cirque du Soleil that she had never known before. “There’s never really been an opportunity for anybody to kind of float through the shows, participate in what they do every night and get a feel for each show’s culture. Every show is sort of like its own family, has its own vibe, its own set of nationalities and sense of humor. Personally, it’s been unbelievable for me.”

Although she and co-star Igor Zaripov have performed in the show *KÀ*, neither performed a duet together before Cirque du Soleil *Worlds Away*. Zaripov, who joined Cirque du Soleil in 2002, grew up in a Russian circus family that had been in the business for more than a century. He has been an aerial acts acrobat from his first stage appearance at 11 for the Moscow Circus. He traveled with other circuses around the world honing his skills. When he joined Cirque du Soleil, he performed in *KÀ* for five years as the Firefly boy and in Cirque du Soleil’s adult-themed *Zumanity* for several years. “I had never worked closely with Erica before but we had to get into it really quick (the first time for the love scene of the final act) and it was really nice,” he says. What they do, although an outgrowth of *KÀ*, was created specifically for the film — a romantic aerial straps ballet which captures the ascendancy of love. “What you see is how these two learn to trust each other so completely. Her life is literally in his hands an act of total surrender,” notes Cameron. “The acting is inferred by the physicality of the moment. And the grace with which it is done is simply beautiful.”

/// UNDER THE BIG TOP

When Adamson chose acts from the seven live Cirque du Soleil shows to use in the film, he picked those that would lend themselves to the storyline of Mia searching for the Aerialist from tent to tent. Each time she peels back the curtain and steps inside, another Cirque du Soleil world opens to her. These worlds are:

“O” — “Water represents life and the unconscious, the dream state and illusion because of its reflection,” says Pierre Parisien, Cirque du Soleil senior artistic director. “It’s sort of the unseen realm of spirits, of ghosts, and the flying boat is like The Flying Dutchman. They are trying to lure Mia aboard but she won’t go.” It is the first tent Mia visits after she falls into an alternate desert wasteland populated by six big tops, “six kinds of limbos,” says Linz. [You’ll see Synchronized Swimming, Duo Trapeze, Bateau, Fire, Contortion and Aerial Hoops from “O” in glorious 3D].



KÀ — To Adamson KÀ was about spectacle, with a stage a quarter of the size of a football field that lifts vertically, spins around and changes. “What I wanted to capture wasn’t just the act and the performers but the ingenuity. Part of what Cirque du Soleil does so well is combine art and technology and present you with this completely different imagery you’ve never seen before.” [Wheel of Death, The Final Battle, Pursuit, and the Flying Bird from KÀ are shown here. The film also ends here as the two main characters perform an aerial ballet in the Forest scene.]

MYSTÈRE — “Mystère is highly acrobatic, the most acrobatic show we have,” says James Hadley, Cirque du Soleil’s senior artistic director for resident shows in North America. It is also the longest running Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas. Hanging from a cube in mid-air, an aerialist performs a ballet with seemingly effortless maneuvers, foreshadowing what is to come for the star-crossed lovers. [Only the Aerial Cube is shown, much to our dismay.]

VIVA ELVIS — In the film, a mysterious self-propelled tricycle leads Mia to the Viva ELVIS tent, where performers dressed as super heroes fly off trampolines to the music of Elvis. [Only the Trampoline - Got a Lot of Livin' To Do - number is shown.]

CRISS ANGEL BELIEVE — Mia travels through six Cirque du Soleil tents that occupy a limbo state between life and death in search of love lost. The seventh element is not a tent but Cirque du Soleil’s very own peculiar White Rabbit, a dancing disembodied bunny head from CRISS ANGEL Believe, who makes a timely appearance, beckoning her to follow.[And thankfully this is the ONLY appearance of anything related to BELIEVE in the film.]

ZUMANITY — “The act that we’re using from Zumanity is very small and contained, but it fits thematically well where we’ve placed it,” says Adamson. What first appears to be water on the moon transforms into a water-filled glass container from which a seductive contortionist entices the Aerialist to join her. [Only the waterbowl act was performed for the film to “Nostalgie” from “O”.]

THE BEATLES LOVE — The act built around the song Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite is “a circus-based theme,” says Adamson, “so it tied us back into the beginning of our opening circus.” Hadley adds, “Actually Mr. Kite, of all the acts that we filmed, probably has the biggest number of artists in one act.” [A number of scenes from LOVE appear, such as Blackbird, Octopus’ Garden, Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, For the Benefit of Mr. Kite, Get Back/Glass Onion, and While my Guitar Gently Weeps.]

/// THE MUSIC

Composer Benoit Jutras wrote the score and transitional music between the Cirque du Soleil shows used in the film. Barton had previously teamed with Adamson on the Shrek and Narnia films, but the director felt it important to have Jutras, who had written scores for some of the Cirque du Soleil shows used, to adapt and refine some of that music specifically for Cirque du Soleil Worlds Away. “The music was really the dialogue of this film,” says Jutras. “You see, Cirque du Soleil developed it as a language for its shows, to tell a story with the music and without words. It becomes the universal language.” It was an element that Cameron and Adamson wanted to retain for the film. “When it came to inspiration for this film’s score,” Jutras continues, “it was about the passage through life and a young woman who falls in love, about how love makes you go through all of these emotions, the colors of love, so to speak. What I wanted to do with the opening act was to make it a very separate experience, to make it as little like Cirque du Soleil as possible to show the contrast of the old circus and the worlds of Cirque du Soleil. In the final act, since it was part of KÀ, Stephen Barton used that show to inspire the music (of the final act).”



/// THE POWER OF 3D

For Cameron, Cirque du Soleil Worlds Away “was a dream come true. I had been talking to them for some time about doing something in 3D because it’s never been done. How lucky to be working with the Cirque du Soleil family, to have that talent creates such an emotional performance for this film. Because their death-defying acts require such incredible skill and nerve, we felt it was so important to show the cabling, everything supporting that human ability.

“We were working with a different stage crew every four days. We did use the live shows and shot both during the live performances and on their dark days. It was cost effective to shoot during the live shows, but we did get the best stuff on dark days because we were able to come in from different angles. We dropped in with our 10 3D cameras and started shooting. But it’s a lot different than just standing back with a ring of cameras and shooting a live show. We were getting in there with the Steadicam, shooting close-ups — in their faces as close as possible — getting into the action because it’s much better for 3D. I lobbied for high camera positions so when you are shooting down you get that sense of vertigo. At times we were shooting from 50 to 100 feet in the air, and you feel the height of these amazing artists performing 90 feet above the floor. You also realize the jeopardy they are in all the time. “The live experience of these shows is incredible. But in the movie theater, what we can give you is the experience of being right in the middle of a show where you will really get to see the detailed work that’s gone into the characters, the costumes and the choreography. There is pageantry to the live experience, but there is an intimacy to the 3D experience.”

One of the challenges for the filmmakers of Cirque du Soleil Worlds Away was that 3D involves more complicated cameras and technology and thus more time to set up the equipment. Prep also meant meeting strict safety parameters with underwater cameras (avoiding the lethal mix of electricity and water) and camera cranes (out of harm’s way of aerialists and flying objects.) “There was a lot of hurry up and wait,” notes producer Martin Bolduc, “which is difficult for Cirque du Soleil performers as their bodies are cooling off and they need a minimum of time to warm up their muscles after a certain period of inactivity.” Still, the shooting schedule was relatively short — 37 days over three time periods: October-November 2010 in Las Vegas, December 2011 in New Zealand and February 2011 again in Vegas. The only CGI used in the film are scenes in the desert when Mia and the Aerialist travel between the tents.



“Twice a day, five days a week the performers do their work,” says Cameron. “When we told them we would make a 3D film that would really capture their commitment to their art, I don’t think these artists really knew what to expect. They were a bit jaded because they do it day after day, year after year. But when it was over and they saw what they do through our eyes they were awestruck. It rejuvenated them.” The drive to expand and constantly transform from the circus norm is what separates Cirque du Soleil from the pack. Always positioning itself as “nouveau Cirque du Soleil,” it remains theatrical, character-driven entertainment sans animals. From its humble roots on the streets in the early 1980s to an arty version of the big top to the showbiz behemoth it is today with 20 shows around the world, certain elements of the Cirque du Soleil experience will forever remain. “You will always need your ‘wow,’ your tender moments, your humor,” says Cirque du Soleil owner and co-founder Guy Laliberté, much like the narrative of any great screenplay. But he reminds that Cirque du Soleil’s conventions are all about hinting at the plot and teasing at the themes. It is there, he says, on the edge of imaginative interpretation that Cirque du Soleil invites audiences to suspend disbelief and step through the looking glass.

/// HOW WELL DID IT DO?

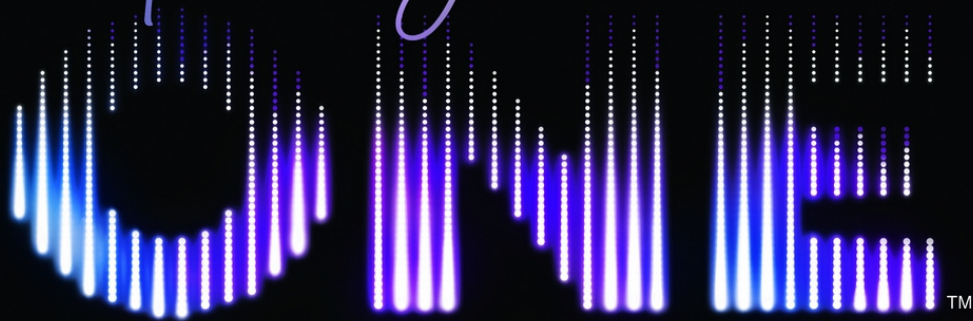
Much like Cirque du Soleil's previous foray into the cinematic realm (Journey of Man), Worlds Away 3D was not a huge money-maker. Using the chart to the right, you can see that the film barely cracked \$10 million domestically (USA & Canada), earning most of its gross in over-seas markets (broken out below):

Domestic:	\$12,512,862	36.6%
+ Foreign:	\$21,640,239	63.4%
= Worldwide: \$34,153,101		

Country (click to view weekend breakdown)	Release Date	Opening Wknd	Total Gross / As Of	
FOREIGN TOTAL	11/10/12	\$1,390,323	\$21,640,239	6/9/13
Argentina	2/28/13	\$233,999	\$461,732	4/28/13
Australia	2/21/13	\$471,195	\$1,136,233	3/10/13
Bolivia	5/2/13	\$16,471	\$52,450	5/19/13
Brazil	2/22/13	\$191,297	\$454,918	3/17/13
Chile	2/21/13	\$23,682	\$40,190	3/3/13
Colombia	2/22/13	\$174,941	\$301,636	3/10/13
Germany	2/7/13	\$164,412	\$534,052	3/3/13
Hong Kong	2/28/13	\$11,918	\$20,881	3/17/13
Italy	2/7/13	\$204,305	\$385,648	2/17/13
Japan	11/9/12	\$1,098,180	\$5,667,435	12/2/12
Lebanon	12/27/12	\$26,538	\$38,470	1/6/13
Mexico	3/1/13	\$549,168	\$1,083,397	3/10/13
New Zealand	2/21/13	\$60,311	\$198,767	3/17/13
Peru	3/14/13	\$76,901	\$127,072	4/21/13
Russia - CIS	12/27/12	-	\$7,991,585	3/10/13
Singapore	1/10/13	\$22,012	\$49,917	1/27/13
South Africa (Entire Region)	3/1/13	\$9,848	\$16,231	3/10/13
Spain	1/4/13	\$104,148	\$345,837	6/9/13
Thailand	3/7/13	\$17,131	\$54,664	3/24/13
Ukraine	12/27/12	\$47,326	\$292,922	1/13/13
United Arab Emirates	12/27/12	\$68,415	\$116,170	1/6/13
United Kingdom	2/1/13	\$123,606	\$180,992	2/10/13
Uruguay	4/19/13	\$12,920	\$37,653	5/12/13
Venezuela	4/5/13	\$95,871	\$267,221	4/21/13



Michael Jackson :-



TM

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL®



Recall that back in the summer of 2009, amidst reported delays with IRIS in California and news that not just one, but two new shows would be coming to New York City (Banana Shpeel and Zarkana), another rumor surfaced: of a third musical-revue type show similar to THE BEALTES LOVE and VIVA ELVIS, this time with regards to the then recently departed Michael Jackson. Although there had been rumors of a mash-up between the two artists before – Jackson himself was a fan – spokespeople for Cirque du Soleil said both parties met about doing a show but the idea didn't go much of anywhere. But it was clear that Cirque du Soleil and the Michael Jackson Estate “wanna be startin’ somethin’...”

Almost a year later, on April 20, 2010, the much-rumored alliance between the Michael Jackson Estate and Cirque du Soleil was confirmed, announcing the creation, development, production and promotion of projects – featuring touring and permanent shows – all based on the music and songs of Michael Jackson. The first of these projects would be an arena-based touring show in which fans would experience the excitement of a Michael Jackson concert (this became “Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour”) with a second show, a more theatrical-based resident show, to debut in Las Vegas sometime in late 2012.

With the roadmap now set, Cirque launched THE IMMORTAL to great success, but little was heard about the resident offering... at first.

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	May 23, 2013 (Previews) June 29, 2013 (Gala)
Type:	Resident / Theater
Director:	Jamie King
Composer:	Michael Jackson
Location:	Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas

Creative Team

Guide	Acro Choreographer
Guy Laliberté	Andrea Ziegler
Creative Content	Projections
Jean-F. Bouchard	Raymond St-Jean
Writer & Director	Projections
Jamie King	Jimmy Lakatos
Director of Creation	Lighting
Welby Altidor	David Finn
Associate Director	Sound
Carla Kama	Jonathan Deans
Musical Director	Equipment & Rigging
Kevin Antunes	Pierre Masse
Set & Props	Makeup
François Séguin	Nathalie Gagné
Costumes	Dramaturge
Zaldy Goco	Brian Drader
Choreographer	Characters
Travis Payne	Manon Beaudoin
Acro Performance	Illustrator
Rob Bollinger	Henry Fong
Acro Performance	Image Content
Germain Guillemot	Dago Gonzalez
Acro Choreographer	
Ben Potvin	

/// YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Initially most of the news about Cirque's Michael Jackson projects was about THE IMMORTAL. And why not? According to Pollstar, by late 2011 Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour had become the highest-grossing live show in the country, with nearly \$2 million in tickets sold for each night of its run - accumulating nearly \$100 million in ticket sales up to that point. And it was only getting better. "We'd marked London for six dates, but they sold out immediately just to Cirque Club Members," said Daniel Lamarre. "We're looking to add at least three more shows there. It's a stampede in Asia with the promoters there, so we're now putting that part of the plan into place. A show of this kind would normally run two years, and now we're looking at three, maybe four years. Many cities here in North America were sold out, so we would like the show to come back for repeat dates — but not on this side of the country (West Coast) because we don't want to cannibalize the new Mandalay show."

Wait... the *new* Mandalay show?

That's right. By March 2012, the show – now set to debut May 13, 2013 at Mandalay Bay – was "on schedule and on target." Construction on the newly designed theater had begun the moment the theater's previous occupant departed (The Lion King, which had been in residence there for two and a half years.) "We are in full construction mode now," Daniel [Lamarre, COO of Cirque du Soleil] said. [...] It is all set for Mandalay Bay — there's no chance of the show going anywhere else in Vegas. We are on target and on schedule for the May 13th opening. Touring show author, chief choreographer and Director Jamie King has been signed to a new contract to mastermind the residency production. Extraordinary costume director Zaldy Goco, who designed the "Immortal" wardrobe, also will repeat his genius for the new show [but] it will definitely be far more of a theatrical experience than our Michael Jackson touring rock concert show," he added.

Later in the year, as Cirque held its gala premiere of ZARKANA at Aria (and reveling in its light), Mr. Lamarre let a few more things slip about the new Michael Jackson show:

"We are talking May 23 for the first-night of previews, with the grand gala opening June 21. [...] Cirque has still not decided on the show's title, and the creative team is working on the visuals. [...] We have already learned from the touring show that people want to listen and see his complete hits. They don't want a medley of songs; they want the full song. So it won't be 23 songs in the theatrical version. We will probably have fewer, but we will play it full blast. [...] And, none of the acts in the touring show will be used in the theatrical show. They will all be brand new - nothing will have been seen before."

Although Cirque didn't have a name it was announcing at the time, we fans found out it was to be called "MICHAEL JACKSON ONE". Just a few short months after discovering the show's name, and after much anticipation, Cirque made the official announcement: "Guided and inspired by his music, [MICHAEL JACKSON ONE is about] four misfits [setting] out on a transformative adventure. By journey's end, they will personify Michael's agility, courage, playfulness and love."

"This is our second project with the Estate of Michael Jackson which confirms how stimulating this creative partnership was meant to be," said Daniel Lamarre. "Michael Jackson is an all-time phenomenal artist, both timeless and contemporary. As a creative challenge, this project is the ultimate. Through the use of cutting-edge technology, we will produce a new Cirque du Soleil theatrical experience not only respectful of Michael's legacy but also very distinctive from Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour."

"We are guided by Michael's own philosophy in all that we do. In preparing for this production, Michael's message to the cast and crew for his This Is It concerts was foremost in our minds. He counseled them on what the audience experience should be: 'They want wonderful experiences. We want to take them places that they've never been before. We want to show them talent like they've never seen before. We're putting love back into the world to remind the world that love is important. WE'RE ALL ONE. That is the message.' We feel the same, and that is what we are delivering both to lifelong fans and those just discovering his artistic genius with Michael Jackson ONE," stated John Branca and John McClain, Co-Executors of the Estate of Michael Jackson.

Chuck Bowling, Mandalay Bay's president and COO, said, "The partnership with Cirque and The Estate of Michael Jackson represents an extraordinary moment for Mandalay Bay. We are in the midst of a major transformation at this resort, introducing a new set of experiences for our guests. Michael Jackson ONE is truly the crown jewel in that transformation and we cannot wait to share this very special production with the world."

And so the creatives went into hiding to try and craft another production with Michael Jackson's hits. But just what did they have in mind? The Las Vegas Review-Journal got a scoop when they stumbled upon plans suggesting the show would tap into the pop star's years of being hounded by tabloid journalists, a concept pushed further when the show was unveiled to journalists. Welby Altidor, Cirque's director of creation, said: "We wanted to do a tongue-in-cheek" reference to add a darker force that "talks about his relationship with the media." Another group of singers, described by Altidor as "our Greek chorus," will represent all the different energies and influences of Jackson, "and we will recognize that through their costumes."

"It is in no way a chronological biopic story of Michael Jackson," admitted Director Jamie King. "It is a complete new fairytale in a Cirque way. We have created a new story, something that people may or may not get all the way, but we certainly do. And we think it is a great fairytale and journey to go on using Michael's music. The running theme by the end of the show [is] that we're just all the same, because we are all the same," says King. "It doesn't matter if you're black or white, we're all the same. It's that oneness that I want people to leave with, because that was Michael's message 'til the end." The 63 artists representing 17 nationalities would include acrobats from all over the world and three dance crews: the Art Farmers from Korea, a girl group known as ReQuest from New Zealand and 787 Crew from Puerto Rico. Dancers called the MJ Warriors will "create the first line of defense for Michael," Altidor said. Another act he is convinced will be a crowd pleaser will be the slack-line artists. "It's a completely new discipline that's been emerging on the urban front. Imagine an elastic line attached to poles. The artists bounce and do acrobatics on it, really cool tricks. It's really popular with youngsters around the word."

And the show was becoming popular with Michael's fans around the world, even before it made its debut. Ticket sales were skyrocketing. With three months to go until the first previews of the show were to even be seen, Mandalay Bay and Cirque du Soleil had already sold \$500,000 in tickets in just the first few hours of the spectacle going on sale. It's a number that didn't escape Jamie King's notice... "It's going to be a blockbuster. That's a staggering first-day sale," Jamie told Robin Leach in an interview.

King says that it's one of the longest pre-production schedules in Cirque's history, if not the longest. The casting and Montreal training – particularly of acrobatics never seen before in any production – began in October.

"We are literally just in technical rehearsals now. I just spent the last four months living in Montreal in production rehearsals. Now we are in tech rehearsals here for the next few weeks, and then we go into all production rehearsals here. It's a long run before the premiere," Jamie said. "Starting in March, I am here every day. It needs to be a long set of work. It's ambitious, but for a great show, you need to have that much work put into it."

ONE was definitely becoming one of Cirque du Soleil's most ambitious endeavors to date, as no production had ever had so many acrobatic performances in a single show. To avoid recycling routines from *The Immortal*, choreographers take advantage of the intimate theater setting and spotlight Jackson's iconic moves at new heights. Cirque is also working with dance crews for the first time, having found new inspiration in groups from South Korea, New Zealand and Puerto Rico. All stage performers are dressed by Zaldy Goco, Jackson's longtime designer, who also outfitted Lady Gaga's first North American Monster Ball tour and joined with Gwen Stefani for her L.A.M.B. label.

The high level of ambition for originality in *One* is familiar to choreographer Travis Payne, who has worked with Beyonce, Shakira, Usher and Jennifer Lopez, and collaborated with Jackson on and off for more than 15 years. "Michael was always very, very clear that he just wanted to get to the best idea – it did not always have to come from him, the only thing he asked is that it's something he'd never seen before," Payne told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "If it was anything that felt similar to anything else that'd come before it, he didn't want any part of it. That's what made him so innovative in all of his music and visuals ... a lot of times, he was just inspired and motivated by things around him in everyday life. He might come into rehearsal with a drawing he did on a napkin the evening before because he just got a great idea, and then it becomes the set for 'The Way You Make Me Feel' in *This Is It*. ... You left exhausted because he always pulled everything out of you and wouldn't allow you to settle, because he wasn't gonna settle."

Many steps of *One* draw from Jackson's creative process and attention to detail, which King witnessed firsthand during his first gig in showbiz as a dancer on Jackson's *Dangerous* tour in 1992. He recalls watching Jackson backstage as he prepared for arena shows that had yet to use enhancements like video screens. "You could see the attention to detail: every light mattered, where he was positioned so that he could get the right silhouette mattered," says King. "To watch that level of interest and detail and to really care about every aspect of the stage so that it matches his movement and really goes along to the music so that every accent is hit with the lights, it was something I'll never forget."

/// OFF THE WALL – CREATING MJ ONE

Michael Jackson ONE is a sonic, tonic fusion of acrobatics, dance and visuals that takes the audience on an immersive journey through the music and spirit of Michael Jackson. Driven by Michael's powerful, multi-layered music – heard like never before in a riveting, state-of-the-art surround-sound environment – ONE takes the audience through a series of seamless visual and musical tableaux, at the heart of a world that is in turn majestic, playful, magical and heart-warming. In Michael Jackson ONE, Michael's artistry and spirit are expressed through the vibrant energy of the cast of 63 dancers and performers, underscored by aerial performance, driving acrobatics, and vivid choreographies that use the urban/hip hop idiom as a springboard for exploration. ONE is heartfelt tribute to the work, innovative spirit, and legacy of Michael Jackson – the King of Pop, the genius, the visionary, the One.

Michael Jackson believed that all people are unique and equal, regardless of race or culture. His message was one of unity, harmony and hope for a better world. At once evocative and enigmatic, the name Michael Jackson ONE also presents a paradox: Michael was a multifaceted artist who strove to fuse together various musical styles and art forms. It is a fitting title for a unifying journey into the world of the King of Pop, the genius, the visionary, the One.

Costumes

Michael Jackson's visual iconography is firmly entrenched in the minds of his fans. In fact, some of these visual icons - Michael's white glove, penny loafers, fedora hat and shades - are at the very core of the storyline of Michael Jackson ONE and are charged with symbolism and have the force of talismans. "My creations are all rooted in Michael's world and his songs, and radiate his spirit," says Zaldy Goco, who designed the wardrobe for Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour. "My goal was to find ways to make an impression and surprise Michael's fans with my costume designs."

The storyline of Michael Jackson ONE inspired Zaldy to group the characters' costumes into two families each with its own distinct look and esthetic: one represents light, Michael's world, while the other represents dark and the world of the character Mephisto, the hero's nemesis. The former is represented by the color white, rainbow colors and light tones, while the latter features black, navy and red. The color red is associated with Mephisto and his minions, including the "Smooth Criminals", the Paparazzi, the Tabloid Junkies and Dirty Diana. Michael Jackson loved gold, crystals and things that glitter and shine. He was fond of Swarovski crystals, and the use of this material in the show was self-evident. In itself, the "Dirty Diana" costume contains over 7,000 Swarovski crystals. The material of the trench coats worn by the "Smooth Criminal" characters looks like silk. It is made of a high-end French fabric woven from a plastic material that gives the costume a liquid shine. When the rhythmic gymnasts do cart-wheels, their coat seem to hang in the air, emphasizing their graceful, swirling motions.

Zaldy also wanted the costumes to have a graphic, Manga-style illustration look and feel. To bring his vision to life, he needed a material with which he could create stiff shapes, yet that was stretchable and flexible in order to free up the artists' movement. He found the perfect material in neoprene, which he used for most of the show's costumes.

Neoprene is a synthetic rubber used for a wide range of applications, including sportswear, wetsuits, laptop-computer sleeves, drum practice pads and other waterproof products.

All 1,150 costumes in Michael Jackson ONE brim with visual effects and illusions of all kinds. For example, the shape-shifting gangster-type characters in the "Smooth Criminal" scene remove their navy blue trench coats, revealing their pinstriped suits underneath. The artists' backside is all white, but when the lights go out, the black light reveals UV drawings all over the artists' backs and faces. The drawings represent dragon tattoos inspired by the real, full-body tattoos traditionally worn by the yakuza, members of Japanese organized crime.

Inflatables were used in the costumes of the characters in the "Tabloid Junkies" scene. During their act, the artists trip a switch in their costume that causes a CO₂ (carbon dioxide) explosion in their tiny backpacks. A hood in the shape of a dog's head pops out of the packs and over the artists' head, instantly turning them into dog-like characters. The capes of the "Tabloid Junkies" characters are lined with tabloid headlines about Michael Jackson in several languages.

The artists' costumes in the "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Billie Jean" scenes are equipped with hundreds of LED lights. The costumes are designed in such a way that the performers disappear completely and the only thing the audience sees is the movement and changing colors of the LED lights.

Sound Environment

Michael Jackson's music spans many genres and has a radiating force that emanated from his focusing power, his unique voice as well as his charisma and energy on stage - a combination that would leave concertgoers breathless. Often described as epic in breadth and scope, Michael's dynamic, multi-layered music lends itself perfectly to the controlled environment of a theatre. The sound system created exclusively for the Michael Jackson ONE Theatre immerses the audience in a concert ambience. Working with the multi-track master recordings alongside Musical Director Kevin Antunes, Sound Designer Jonathan Deans explains: "When Michael recorded albums, he actually performed in the studio, dancing, singing with the choir. You can hear him at work. The recordings literally explode with his high vocal and physical energy." The audience will experience this vividly when hearing the music in the Michael Jackson ONE Theatre; Michael's essence is right there, all around.

Michael Jackson ONE features hits that have been rearranged yet remain close to the album versions and are treated in a cinematic fashion. Kevin Antunes, who was also the Musical Designer on Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL World Tour, took the multi-track master recordings and ornamented them in surround sound. Some of the sound feels like it surrounds the spectators or comes from above or behind, literally sending chills down their necks. Jonathan Deans took all the musical layers and literally placed them strategically inside the volume of the theatre on separate groups of speakers. The sound comes at the audience from different angles, and it makes the experience very realistic, as if one were standing on stage in the middle of an orchestra and the sounds of the instruments were coming from different directions.

And the sound systems has the whole room covered: helicopters fly in surround sound above the audience while Vincent Price's laugh at the end of "Thriller" begins in the main speakers, moves around the room and ends in the speakers in each seat. Because of the technology that went into the seat design, the audience can in fact hear certain sounds that have never been heard before with a unique, surround sound feel. Antunes added layers and instruments to the music, and brought certain unnoticed elements of the songs to the fore. He added a lot of power to the guitar solos, including the pick slides, whammy bar and other 1980s dive sounds. Included in cast of 61 dancers and acrobats, are one vocalist and one guitarist performing live on stage.

Music

With full access from John Branca and the Michael Jackson Estate to the musician's library of master recordings, musical director Kevin Antunes made sure to showcase the intricate layers that often get lost in a song's final cut. For example, the theater's front speakers play Jackson's lead vocals, while the headrest's speakers in each seat swoon with his background vocals, giving attendees the experience of being in the recording studio with Jackson himself.

"You're not listening to a CD or an MP3, you're listening to the raw audio of these master recordings in their full complete embodiment – you're hearing it in a way that only Michael and his engineers had heard it when they had done [it]," says Antunes, who has also overseen the music for Justin Timberlake, Rihanna and Madonna, including her Super Bowl halftime gig.

"What is true mastery is when you listen to his background vocals while his lead vocal is singing. If he was in the studio and he had his headphones on and he's recording layer after layer of background vocals, it's the things that he's doing while he's listening to his lead on his background track: he's snapping, and he might ghost some of the lyrics, he could whisper some of the lyrics. Hearing that stuff, that's the kind of stuff that I'd want the fans to get a chance to hear, and I contour some of the arrangements so that some of those things can be highlighted, because it gives you a true look into the artistry of this incredible entertainer. And nobody gets to really hear that except in this theater."

Scenic Environment

Michael Jackson was a multi-faceted artist who liked to fuse musical styles and art forms, but he never made forays in the world of theater per se, with the exception of the musical adventure film *The Wiz*. *Michael Jackson ONE* is the first large-scale production developed for the theater about the world and music of the King of pop. With its large moving towers, the dynamic and versatile decor created by Set Designer François Séguin for *Michael Jackson ONE* is loosely inspired by the *Dangerous* album cover. The TV screens and statuettes are resolutely baroque in style, as are the rosettes painted on the proscenium.

The set design concept, which comes to life under the lights and through the video projections, may also recall the scalable architecture of the theater sets created by Arthur Miller and Bob Fosse. The world of the printed press and other vehicles for tabloid news also permeates the set concept.

And then there's Mephisto. Mephisto is both a key part of the set and a "character" in the show. Mephisto is a malevolent machine flanked by his minions. The sprawling mechanical monster is composed of TVs, cameras, flashes, microphones, tungsten bulbs, surveillance equipment and various other objects. Mephisto appears at the start of the show in a huge vortex when TV monitors, newsreels and newspapers are sucked inside the lens of a camera.

In Michael Jackson ONE, video content is an integral part of the storyline and helps to create atmospheres and to move the story along during each of the different tableaux. The video images on the proscenium, the audiovisual walls, the tulle screen and other projection surfaces help to create the show's vibrant, immersive atmospheres, as does the video content projected onto the four moving towers on stage and the LED screen upstage. The images also have a rhythmic function, blending seamlessly with the music and the performances. Thanks to a GPS tracking system equipped with sensors, video content can be projected on the artists as they move about on stage. For example, images are projected on a dozen shields held by dancers during the They Don't Care About Us scene.

Technical elements under the spotlight

- On stage, four large towers used as projection surfaces, move from side to side and go up and down, even turning into platforms for the dancers and acrobats.
- The stage has 66 winches with speeds of up to 12 ft per second.
- Hanging from the ceiling, two 96-ft overhead tracks have two acrobatic trolleys each for moving artists, some of whom fly over the audience from the back of the house.
- The rocket in the Tabloid Junkies scene is a nod to the Michael Jackson video Leave Me Alone.
- Each of the theatre's 1,804 seats has three speakers - left, right and center - for a total of 5,412 seat speakers.
- Apart from the 587 lighting fixtures, there are 295 custom LED fixtures built into the show's various set pieces.
- For the projections, the stage is equipped with 1 LED track with 8 trolleys, each trolley supporting 8 LED panels.
- 26 projectors display video content on the stage and around the proscenium.
- In addition to the projectors, there are 11 TV monitors and a 40-ft-wide, 30-ft-high LED wall made up of 8 separate columns.

/// THIS IS IT: THE TABLEUX

Michael Jackson - A living presence in the show through video, whispers, laughter, urging, spoken and projected narrative, screaming, silhouettes, elemental forces, etc. Michael's spirit is guiding the performers and the audience on the journey, culminating with the release from the grip of Mephisto, which leads everyone to reconnect with Michael's spirit and his child-like heart. Michael is also represented through certain of his visual iconography - his iconic glove, hat, shoes and glasses - which are transformed into talismans meant to represent certain qualities possessed by Michael. He is the primary protagonist, our Guide. And through his music, lyrics and words, he is also our narrator.

THE VORTEX

The four misfits, who are referred to as the Heroes - Clumsy (slack-liner), Shy (martial artist), Smarty Pants (juggler), and Sneaky (manipulation specialist) - get sucked into a Vortex after sneaking into the show. The vortex is inspired by the first four verses of Beat It.

TIME TRIPPING (BEAT IT)

Time goes crazy as we cross the metaphoric threshold into a magical world inspired by Michael's imagination. High above the audience, rotating bungees churn to the funk-infused, drum and guitar-driven rhythms of Beat It.

HIDE & SEEK (LEAVE ME ALONE/TABLOID JUNKIE/TOO BAD)

Mephisto, a malevolent machine made of radios, microphones, tungsten bulbs, televisions, cameras, and surveillance equipment, makes his first appearance along with the Tabloid Junkies, his dance corps and guards.

LOST AND ALONE (STRANGER IN MOSCOW)

This scene is the Spanish web lament to loneliness of the Beggar Boy, a character in the song "Stranger in Moscow", while Ngame, the Mother Moon character, watches over.

CLUMSY AND THE SHOES (BAD)

The sweet but awkward Clumsy learns how to live in his body with the help of Michael's magical shoes. Living up to his nickname at first, his bumbling routine eventually turns into a masterful double slackline act.

THE SMOOTH CRIMINALS (SMOOTH CRIMINALS)

Mephisto sends in his elite force, the Smooth Criminals (rhythmic gymnasts), to do battle with the MJ Warriors, Michael's dance corps. The Warriors get down to business - the yin to the Criminals' yang.

MICHAEL'S MAGIC TRUNK (I'LL BE THERE/HUMAN NATURE/NEVER CAN SAY GOODBYE)

Memories of Michael surface as the Heroes discover why they're there - the love they share for Michael - as a magical song is set free in physical form through the performance of a fleet-footed, free-styling dancer and contortionist named Wink who literally glides on the stage.

SHY AND THE GLASSES (2000 WATTS/JAM)

As she senses Michael's spirit around her, Shy, an introverted young lady, dons Michael's sunglasses, and finds her inner courage. Shy battles Mephisto in a fearless display of martial arts prowess.

THE WARRIORS OF PEACE (THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT US)

The MJ Warriors perform a striking choreography in unison in a tableau that conveys one of the messages dear to Michael. In the face of war, violence, poverty and strife, we must dare to hope, comfort, dream, and believe.

NGAME GIVES BIRTH (PLANET EARTH/EARTH SONG)

Ngame, the Mother Moon Goddess, ushers in a new beginning. During a stunning shadow play act, Michael's poignant vocal performance delivers a raging lament against what the world stands to lose.

OUR HEROES REGROUP (SMILE)

The self-appointed leader of the ragtag group of Heroes, Smarty Pants finds the magical hat and rediscovers her childlike heart.

SMARTY PANTS & THE HAT (WANNA BE STARTIN' SOMETHIN')

One of Michael's qualities, gracefulness, is learned by Smarty Pants as she joins in a towering hat juggling act as images of giant hats float and bob everywhere on the screen and on the stage.

MJ'S GIRLS (THE WAY YOU MAKE ME FEEL)

The MJ Girls' homage to Michael, and the MJ Boys' homage to the Girls... The dancers all knock each other off their feet in a swagger-meets-sass rivalry that is a nod to the iconic The Way You Make Me Feel short film.

DIRTY DIANA (DIRTY DIANA)

Dirty Diana - Mephisto's Siren - and the Muse - a conduit for Michael's music - go head to head, leading to a staggering, one-of-a-kind pole dancing act.

SNEAKY & THE GLOVE (THIS PLACE HOTEL/WORKING DAY & NIGHT)

Sneaky, the little trouble maker, has his glove go rogue in a dazzling display of "hand in glove" manipulation.

THE BILLIE JEANS (BILLIE JEAN)

Michael's virtuoso moves, and his Warriors dressed in stunning, glowing LED costumes to the driving, electrifying beat of the iconic song.

MEPHISTO'S TRAP (SCREAM)

Mephisto's primary force and dance corps, the Tabloid Junkies, shape shift into the Werewolf Dogs while the Heroes and the talismans are captured.

MEPHISTO TRIUMPHANT (THRILLER)

Evil forces in the underbelly of Mephisto's world, the Thrillers (dance corps) and the Ghouls (trampoline artists and rhythmic gymnasts) celebrate Mephisto's victory. They are in full thrall, leaping and flipping in a gravity-defying performance that uniquely combines inverted trampoline and trampo-wall.

SNEAKY & MEPHISTO TRANSFORM (SPEECHLESS)

The Talismans are reclaimed, and Sneaky lets love into his heart. Mephisto is vanquished at last.

NGAME'S TRIBUTE (I JUST CAN'T STOP LOVING YOU)

Ngame performs her duet with the Star.

MICHAEL'S SPIRIT (MAN IN THE MIRROR)

Michael's energy and spirit are shared with the cast and audience through an illusion that occurs during the moving, scintillating "Man in the Mirror".

ELECTRIC LOVE PARADE (BLACK OR WHITE)

Two sides become One. In a group acrobatic and choreographic tableau, the whole cast reunites on the stage, including the Heroes who return in the "Leave Me Alone" rocket.

WALK OUT (DON'T STOP 'TILL YOU GET ENOUGH/REMEMBER THE TIME/MEDLEY)

A final message from Michael - "We're putting love back into the world. To remind the world that love is important. To love each other. We are ONE."

* * *

As of this writing, Michael Jackson ONE is the newest Cirque du Soleil resident production, and the newest Cirque show in Las Vegas, therefore, its journey is just now beginning to take shape. Will Michael Jackson ONE be another hit for Cirque in Vegas? Or will it go the way of VIVA ELVIS? Time will tell of course, but if earnings are any indication of the show's future, then I'd say it's bright. It grossed over \$100 million in 2013, making it one of the highest earning resident shows in America – and third on a top-ten list of highest earning Cirque shows (only "O" and Michael Jackson THE IMMORTAL out earned ONE). Quite telling, isn't it?

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

KUARIOS

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES



"I am the chairman of dreams! Take me to a new realm of the imagination. The cradle of a new civilization perhaps. So many years building it, so much time refining. I am ready now. I shall be an inter-stellar pioneer. All systems go!"

There's an existential question we've all asked ourselves at one time or another, for one reason or another – there must be something more, beyond all this; there can't just be this, can there? But what if you could alter reality at will? In an alternate yet familiar past, in a place where wonders abound for those who trust their imagination, a Seeker (Le Chercheur) is convinced that there exists a hidden, invisible world – a place where the craziest ideas and the grandest dreams lay waiting, and in order to glimpse the marvels that lie just below the surface, he reckons we must first learn to close our eyes.

Very inquisitive about these possibilities – curious even – the Seeker builds towering gadgets and powerful gizmos, bringing to life automatons of all shapes, sizes and functions in order to fuel his lofty investigations. And after hours and hours of labor, he's come up with a few tantalizing answers to his questions: Yes! There is more to behold! In the narrative, as told by Laprise, Le Chercheur, a scientist, is on a quest. He creates a machine to travel into another dimension to find the place where the possible and the impossible meet. Only his plan backfires. "The reverse happens," Laprise explains, "And we have people from the other dimension who come into his world and they transform his world into poetry."

ESSENTIALS

Premiere:	April 24, 2014 (Previews) May 1, 2014 (Gala)
Type:	Touring / Big Top
Director:	Michel Laprise
Composer:	Raphaël Beau and Bob & Bill
Location:	Currently Touring

Creative Team

Guide	Choreographer
Guy Laliberté	Sidi Cherkaoui
Guide	Choreographer
Jean-Francois Bouchard	Susan Gaudreau
Director	Sound Designer
Michel Laprise	Jacques Boucher
Creation	Sound Designer
Chantal Tremblay	Jean-Michel Caron
Costumes	Lighting Designer
Philippe Guillotel	Martin Labrecque
Composer	Acro Performance
Raphaël Beau	Rob Bollinger
Composer	Acro Performance
Bob & Bill	Germain Guillemot
Set & Props	Acro Performance
Stéphane Roy	Boris Verkhovsky
Choreographer	Rigging
Yaman Okur	Danny Zen
Choreographer	Makeup Designer
Ben Potvin	Eleni Uranis

/// 11:06... THE CIRQUE MEETS STEAMPUNK

In his larger-than-life curio cabinet, a collection of otherworldly characters suddenly steps into his makeshift mechanical world. When the outlandish, benevolent characters turn his world upside down with a touch of poetry and humor in an attempt to ignite the Seeker's imagination, his curios jump to life one by one before his very eyes. What if by engaging our imagination and opening our minds we could unlock the door to a world of wonders, a bridge to a new dimension, a magnetic portal to an invisible world? KURIOS immerses you in this mysterious and fascinating realm that disorients your senses and challenges your perceptions, leaving you to wonder: "Is it real, or just a figment of my imagination?" Step into the curio cabinet of an ambitious inventor who defies the laws of time, space and dimension in order to reinvent everything around him! And suddenly, the visible becomes invisible, perspectives are transformed, and the world is literally turned upside down in a place that's as beautiful as it is mysterious!

From the moment Cirque du Soleil began to tease KURIOS - CABINET DES CURIOSITÉS we could feel the new creation would be something different. Just how different we wouldn't know until the Montreal Gazette commented that "things are getting curious and curiouser at the Cirque," the morning Cirque du Soleil revealed the unusual moniker and scenic elements for its newest touring production. The unveiling only compounded the teasing "glimpses" we were offered via YouTube in the days leading up to and after that reveal. And through them we understood the show existed in a world heavily influenced by Steampunk, but little did we know just how much of an influence the genre would have on the show's overall aesthetic. And that's not a bad thing!

Steampunk is defined as a sub-genre of science fiction that typically features steam-powered machinery, especially in a setting inspired by industrialized Western civilization during the 19th century. Works in this genre are often set in an alternative history of the British Victorian era or American "Wild West", in a post-apocalyptic future during which steam power has regained mainstream use, or in a fantasy world that similarly employs steam power. Steampunk perhaps most recognizably features anachronistic technologies or retro-futuristic inventions as people in the 19th century might have envisioned them, and is likewise rooted in the era's perspective on fashion, culture, architectural style, and art. Such technology may include fictional machines like those found in the printed works of H. G. Wells ("The Time Machine", "War of the Worlds", "The Island of Doctor Moreau"), Jules Verne ("Journey to the Center of the Earth", "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea", and "Around the World in Eighty Days"), and Mary Shelley ("Frankenstein"), the modern authors Philip Pullman, Scott Westerfeld, Stephen Hunt and China Miéville, or filmed works of Fritz Lang ("Metropolis").

Although many works now considered seminal to the genre were published in the 1960s and 1970s, the term steampunk originated in the late 1980s as a tongue in cheek variant of cyberpunk. It seems to have been coined by science fiction author K. W. Jeter, who was trying to find a general term for works by Tim Powers (*The Anubis Gates*, 1983); James Blaylock (*Homunculus*, 1986); and himself (*Morlock Night*, 1979, and *Infernal Devices*, 1987) — all of which took place in a 19th-century (usually Victorian) setting and imitated conventions of such actual Victorian speculative fiction as H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*.

Other examples of Steampunk contain alternative history-style presentations of such technology as lighter-than-air airships, analog computers, or such digital mechanical computers as Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. Steampunk may also incorporate additional elements from the genres of fantasy, horror, historical fiction, alternate history, or other branches of speculative fiction, making it often a hybrid genre.

Michele Laprise, the show's Writer and Director, chose this period and genre for inspiration because "it was a phenomenal time for humanity. People were travelling, they were dreaming of other worlds." And their lives were changing too, he pointed out, through the use of electricity, distances were shrinking as rail travel expanded and became faster, and people were able to communicate with each other quickly through the invention of the telegraph. "People were enthusiastic and they had the feeling that everything was possible," he said. "If people take that from our show, that everything in life, with your imagination, can become more interesting, can bring you close to another person, then I think we'll have succeeded."

All systems go! Let the journey begin!

/// 11:07... THE SET & STAGE

"Are you ready to visit the Valley of the Possible Impossibles? Where dreams are on standby, waiting to be ushered into the now? Abandoned dreams... collective dreams... mad, mad, mad utopian dreams? The unconscious into the conscious? Duality? Oneness?" - KURIOS Programme Book.

The journey begins the moment you step onto the cobblestone-lined pathways of the Jacques Cartier Pier in the Vieux Port of Montreal, where Cirque du Soleil has staked its creations since the dawn of its recorded time (except for 1999's Dralion, which was set up on the lawn of their headquarters building in the City). Surrounded on all sides by either water or history the striped big top calls out to fans and friends alike. An archway with the show's image a few paces in – a new feature this year - beckons us forward.

An interesting looking contraption between the two entrance doorways summons us in even further. It's a bicycle-like contrivance upon second glance, with its mechanics firmly attached to a whirligig of some creation. Activating it with your own power sets the gears affixed into rotational motion, awarding the curios rider with a green clown nose courtesy of DES JARDINS, one of Cirque du Soleil's principle sponsors, from a chute just to the rider's left.

Further inside, a little spheroid item cordoned off just to the right of Door #2, catches our attention. From a distance it appears to be a representation of the porthole shown to us in one of the "Glimpse of KURIOS" videos the creators circulated across its social media platforms. Upon closer inspection, it was much, much more than that: it was a house – in miniature! Included in this miniature house is an armchair, a chandelier as well as other essentials of a Victorian home. Whose house is it I wonder? Why it's Mini Lili, and she's at home! (We'll learn more about her, and the house, a little later on...)

The set design of KURIOS puts the spectator in a well-defined place: the curio cabinet of a Seeker filled with unusual objects collected on his travels. Set in what could be called a retro-future, in this parallel reality it is the steam engine and not the internal combustion engine that reigns supreme, evoking the start of the industrialization era, but as if science and technology had evolved differently and progress had taken on a more human dimension. "It's like Jules Verne meets [Nicola Tesla] in an alternate reality, out of time," explains Set Designer Stéphane Roy.

Roy, now working on his sixth Cirque du Soleil show, mentioned in an interview with the Montreal Gazette that Fellini's La Strada was an influence for his "copper-toned clockwork set, with its startling steam engine and quirky props." The 1900 Paris Exhibition, which honored the achievements of the 19th century, was important, too, because "it was when everything was invented for new communication and transportation," Roy said. "Trains, planes, electricity, telegrams. It was a moment in the history of mankind when communication just went bang, everything was exploding." Kurios differs from other Cirque du Soleil shows, he said, because "in this one you're somewhere, you're in a house, you're in a room, in a space where things are happening." This home is packed with curios. When the numbers appear, "it's as if a jewel box is being opened," he added.

The performance space is dominated by two structures, referred to as "cabinets". One explores the topic of sound and the other the topic of electricity. Built by the Seeker using scraps and pieces collected over time, the two large towers also serve as "wave sensors" made from miscellaneous components such as gramophones, old typewriters, electrical bulbs and turbines. The two cabinets are attached to the main arch – another "wave sensor" – that dominates the stage. The opening at the center, at the back of the stage, evokes the mouth of a railroad tunnel through a mountain; it is mainly through this opening that artists move in and out of the spotlight and that equipment and props are taken on and off the stage. Above it sit the musicians.

For greater emphasis on the performance, every act in the show is presented on an independent structure – a module or a promontory – integrated into the set design. The stage itself was lowered 35 cm and a bank was installed all around its lip (the bank is a 60-cm-wide raised walkway on which two rails are installed for transporting various props). Presented on their separate, distinct structures, the acts in the show represent the curios that jump to life inside the Seeker's workshop. "It's not only a stage," Roy said. "You're inside somebody's mind. It's kind of crazy!" Production manager Gabriel Pinkstone, another Cirque veteran, described Kurios as a complex show. "Michel is a director who enjoys a lot of detail, a lot of subtext," she said. "We have a lot of elements that are mechanical because of the Steampunk inspiration. It's complex dramaturgically as well because there are a lot of ideas that are difficult to express without words, like the idea of travelling to another reality."

/// 11:08... COSTUMES & CHARACTERS

*"What wonderfully strange collection of creatures! It is as if I have awakened in the middle of a dream. They speak a strange language. Some kind of code. Gibberish. Gobbledygook. Must investigate further..." --
The Seeker*

A fitting tribute to the power of the human imagination, the costumes of KURIOS – Cabinet of Curiosities are the result of a visual exploration of the beginnings of science, of the discoveries and inventions that led to the industrial revolution of the 19th Century – from the steam locomotive to electrical power to electromagnetic waves. They embody and celebrate the advancements of science, but in an imaginary, parallel world. While the visual references may seem self-evident, the show's curious yet familiar characters and costumes transport the audience to a time suspended somewhere between past and future, in an alternate reality, as if science had evolved without the internal combustion engine and as if the golden age of the steam engine had continued on, uninterrupted.

The costumes of KURIOS - Cabinet of Curiosities are the result of unusual blends and odd associations: e.g. the attire of the Seeker's Assistants (the Kurios) – oddball half-human, half-mechanical characters built from scraps and recycled parts by their ingenuous and ingenious creator. Costume Designer Philippe Guillotel explored unusual shapes that have affinities with the costumes of the Bauhaus or of Alfred Jarry's Father Ubu to create startling and often amusing characters (a.k.a "The Visitors").

- Mr. Microcosmos --- The “bigger is better” ethos that drives the retro-futuristic aesthetic of the show is on the opposite side of the spectrum of the miniaturization that characterizes the electronic era. A case in point is the costume of the potbellied Mr. Microcosmos. “He’s like a mechanical Obelix [from the cartoon characters Asterix & Obelix], but instead of holding a tiny dog in his arms, he lugs around a small lady in his belly wherever he goes, and he’s hardly aware of it,” says Guillotel.
- Mr. Microcosmos carries Mini Lili, his intuitive counterpart, inside his costume using a sling not unlike a baby carrier. Antanina Satsura, the artist who plays Mini Lili, is one-meter tall and weighs 18 kg. She lives inside her host’s overcoat. Through the door in Mr. Microcosmos’ belly, we can see the furnished interior of Mini Lili’s quarters, which include an armchair, a chandelier as well as other essentials of a Victorian home.
- Nico the Accordion Man --- He is called NICO, short of Nick 'o Time, as he always appears confused or late and out of place. Is he a man, or an accordion? He's curious, clumsy, but endearing. What's the big picture here? Nico’s accordion costume allows him to bend way down or stand way up so he can be at eye level with absolutely everyone. His pants are folded like a piece of origami from an unwoven textile (like the material normally used in shoe lining) and are inspired by the darkrooms that were part of early cameras.
- Klara the telegraph of the invisible --- She is called Klara, as in clear reception. She's half-woman, half-antenna, and appears to have built-in radar - perhaps to receive messages from other worlds, life systems? A transmitter of the invisible. Her shoes make odd Morse code-like sounds... are these messages from the other side? Klara wears an antenna skirt made of hula-hoop-type rings. By swiveling round and pointing her apparatus in various directions, she can receive invisible electromagnetic waves. Her hoop skirt is inspired by Fritz Lang’s Metropolis and is shaped like early parabolic antennas. The print on her leotard evokes electrical circuits and connections.

/// 11:09... STORY & THEME

"I am the chairman of dreams! Take me to a new realm of the imagination. The cradle of a new civilization perhaps. So many years building it, so much time refining. I am ready now. I shall be an inter-stellar pioneer. All systems go!" -- The Seeker

There's an existential question we've all asked ourselves at one time or another, for one reason or another - *there must be something more, beyond all this; there can't just be this, can there?* But what if you *could* alter reality at will? In an alternate yet familiar past, in a place where wonders abound for those who trust their imagination, a Seeker (Le Chercheur) is convinced that there exists a hidden, invisible world – a place where the craziest ideas and the grandest dreams lay waiting, and in order to glimpse the marvels that lie just below the surface, he reckons we must first learn to close our eyes.

Very inquisitive about these possibilities - curious even – the Seeker builds towering gadgets and powerful gizmos, bringing to life automatons of all shapes, sizes and functions in order to fuel his lofty investigations. And after hours and hours and hours of labor, he's come up with a few tantalizing answers to his questions: Yes! There is more to behold! In the narrative, as told by Laprise, Le Chercheur, a scientist, is on a quest. He creates a machine to travel into another dimension to find the place where the possible and the impossible meet. Only his plan backfires. "The reverse happens," Laprise explains, "And we have people from the other dimension who come into his world and they transform his world into poetry."

In his larger-than-life curio cabinet, a collection of otherworldly characters suddenly steps into his makeshift mechanical world. When the outlandish, benevolent characters turn his world upside down with a touch of poetry and humor in an attempt to ignite the Seeker's imagination, his curios jump to life one by one before his very eyes. What if by engaging our imagination and opening our minds we could unlock the door to a world of wonders, a bridge to a new dimension, a magnetic portal to an invisible world? KURIOS immerses you in this mysterious and fascinating realm that disorients your senses and challenges your perceptions, leaving you to wonder: "Is it real, or just a figment of my imagination?" Step into the curio cabinet of an ambitious inventor who defies the laws of time, space and dimension in order to reinvent everything around him! And suddenly, the visible becomes invisible, perspectives are transformed, and the world is literally turned upside down in a place that's as beautiful as it is mysterious!

/// 11:10... EXPERIENCE (ACTS)

"What utter strangeness. Down is up. Up is down. Gravity ceases to exist. Antigravity. Antimatter. They hang from the ceiling as if it were nothing. As if they were giant bats. Everything I have ever scientifically understood has been turned on its head. What a sheer expandable delight!" -- The Seeker.

Having settled in our seats now, and taken in the elaborately-themed, yet simply-constructed set, we begin to notice the goings-on on the stage and surrounding space.

At 11:10, as the lights dim, you can sense the tension in the air - a shock of electric excitement permeates as any previous vociferations at the announcement the show is about to begin comes to a sharp end. Then a gentleman, using a rather interesting hybrid accordion-keyboarded contraption (with no less than three phonograph speakers attached to it), steps to the front of the stage, and through the manipulation of his contraption, announces the name of the spectacle...
KURIOS – CABINET DES CURIOSITÉS!

The sound of a train whistle off in the distance pierces the darkness next, immediately followed by the powerful beam of a bright, white light – the train’s headlight! As music begins to play (a funky fusion of jazz and electro-swing), the train peeks over the hill, and in an opening reminiscent of La Noubia's Festival of Characters, Alegría's "Milonga" Opening, and Varekai's Musician's Walk, artists spill into the big top. These are “The Travelers” (a miniature train atop their heads); they are accompanied by the show’s musicians: Marc Sohier (Canada) - bandleader, bass, double bass; Michael Levin (USA) - cello, keyboards, Guitar; Paul Lazar (France) – Violins; Lidia Kaminska (Poland) - Accordion, Keyboard; Christopher "Kit" Chatham (USA) – Drums; Antoine Berthiaume (Canada) – Guitar; Christa Mercey (Canada) – Percussion), and Singer Eirini Tornesaki (Greece).

Just where we'll have to wait and see!

505

He hops out of his chair in shock, as the items in his workshop begin to spring into motion, taking on a life of their own. Twin manikins, which had up until then been standing off to the side lifeless, dance and flit about as if touched by madness.

The Seeker's robots begin to swirl and twirl in confusion while electricity sparks through the lab's wave sensors, opening a portal high above them. Through this wormhole descends the portly Mr. Microcosmos (played by Karl L'Ecuyer, from Canada – previously a Cricket of OVO), Klara (Ekaterina Pirogovskaya, Russia – fans might remember her as “Violet” from IRIS) and Nico (played by Nico Baixas from Spain) - a.k.a. "The Visitors" - wearing intra-dimensional masks.

They remove their masks (discarding them into the belly of Mr. Microcosmos) and then turn their attention aft as Mr. Microcosmo's belly and coat unfolds into a locomotive (the very same from earlier; its structure, which extends out over a distance of 19-meters, is all aluminum. The outer shell is made out of mostly vinyl canvas with fiberglass mosquito screen used for windows.), which pulls right into the Seeker's Workshop, out of which emerges a swarm of travelers from the 19th Century...

CHARIVARI (“CHAOS SYNCHRO”)

Percussionist Christa Mercey, a graduate of the University of Toronto (in percussion performance), plays the role of Bella Donna (complete with a side-angled Victorian hat that makes it look as if she's stepped out of “My Fair Lady”) in this group act that combines drumming (on various objects, like suitcases, chairs and tables) with juggling. She's accompanied by Kit Chatam, the show's drummer, and Gabriel Beaudoin, an accomplished juggler who spent nine years training for his craft, five at the École de Cirque de Québec in Quebec City, then four at the École Nationale de Cirque in Montreal. Together with help of “The Travelers”, a mélange of movement nothing less than a feast for the senses takes place before us. Everything is in continuous motion as Christa walks over chairs placed in her path, suitcases and tables become beat-boxes for both she and Kit, and all the while Gabriel juggles an ever increasing number of clubs. And when he flies up into the air – still juggling his clubs – we realize there's no stopping this train!

RUSSIAN CRADLE DUO

A giant leather chest is left behind as the Travelers bid us an enthusiastic adieu. It opens to reveal, encased in sumptuous Moroccan cushions, two characters that emerge from the box like Fabergé jewels, evoking a pair of wax dolls. (The cut of their costumes is inspired by early sportswear and vintage circus attire, and they seem almost out of place in this steampunky world until the doll context is understood. The materials, however, are quite modern and highly sophisticated - velour effects and imitation leather cuts in gold.) The dolls (Ukrainian performers Roman and Lena Tereshchenko) then spring to life before our eyes to perform a rousing and dangerous Russian Cradle routine.

The cradle (also known as aerial cradle or casting cradle) is an apparatus composed of one or two gantries equipped with platforms grounded at variable heights facing forward, upon which stands a carrier attached to the platform at the waist.

The aerialist being propelled is referred to as a flyer, while the one doing the tossing and catching is referred to as a carrier (or catcher). The flyer usually starts and ends standing on the frame above the catcher. The flyer swings holding on to the catcher's hands, performs releases at the top of the swing, and is re-caught in mid-air. In addition to the technical aspects of their performance, the Tereshchenko's sprinkle a bit of lovers flair to the mix, making theirs a touching performance.

AERIAL BICYCLE

In a performance similar to Aerial Hoops (as seen in various Cirque du Soleil productions), the "Chandelier Lady" – Anne Weissbecker (France) – takes to the skies in her two-wheeled cycle to perform a wonderful routine of strength and movement.

INVISIBLE CIRCUS

KURIOS's resident clown – David-Alexandre Després from Canada – takes the stage, literally, with a routine some have come to love to hate: the Invisible Circus. The routine itself is rather pedantic – four invisible artists take the stage to perform a high-wire with unicycle act, a trapeze routine, teeterboard jumping (Rita & Cheetah), a high-dive into a bowl of water (Giuseppe), and leaping through a hoop set afire (Felippe, the lion), but it is humorous enough, and sure to please the kids in the audience.

CONTORTION

A huge mechanical hand, weighing 340 kilograms and measuring 4.6-meters by 2.1-meters crawls upstage next. Operated by two artists using a pedal and gear mechanism, the all-fiberglass hand is an automaton built from various parts that look like wood, metal, marble and iron. Atop the structure four bendable ladies from, uhm, Russia (Ayagma Tsybenova, Lillia Zhambalova, Bayarma Zodbueva, Imin Tsydendambaeva), practice the extreme physical discipline known as Contortion. Clothed to appear as Eels, they fold and contort their bodies into various mind-bending poses. Appearing in their third Cirque du Soleil show - having first appeared in Banana Shpeel and later IRIS - these ladies perform a stimulating routine fans of these two previous shows will undoubtedly remember.

Consequently, in the Set Designer's mind, the Seeker built the hand with rare objects collected on his travels: a wooden finger found in Sienna during the Renaissance, a nail picked up in a Greek temple, and so on. And the mechanical hand represents a paragon of the do-it-yourself ethos and evokes the richness and the materials from the era of the greatest scientific discoveries.

BALANCING ON CHAIRS

The metal hand is replaced with a dinner table, set with all the finery, replete with guests taking in a meal and conversation. Although what they are conversing about is unknown to us, it quickly becomes apparent that one of the dinner guests is boasting about his ability to catch the chandelier one of the magicians has set aloft by balancing the chairs around the dinner table. Fans of Cirque du Soleil will recognize this equilibrist as none other than Cuban-born Carlos Rokardy, formerly of La Nouba and Viva Elvis.

His routine here is similar to his performance in both shows, building chairs ever higher to catch the floating chandelier. Only – look up – he’s not alone!

This number is referred to as the “upside-down dinner scene” for a reason, for above Rokardy, another dinner is taking place with another balancer stacking chairs – only in reverse! Counterweights were attached to parts of the costume worn by the artist hanging from the chandelier to create the impression that gravity has been reversed. These counterweights work like roly-poly toys – tilting dolls that have a weight inside the bottom and wobble back to an upright position when pushed. It’s a fantastic twist to what’s become a Cirque du Soleil staple performance.

ROLA BOLA

Rola Bola is one of this production's centerpieces. "It's the only act of rola bola aerial of its kind in the world," said Michel Laprise in an interview with the Montreal Gazette. "When I was presented that act by Casting I said: 'we do everything to get this guy.'" And so they did. The "guy" is James Eulises Gonzalez Correa, a native of Colombia who has performed all over the world. And his act is simply breathtaking.

Gonzalez personifies The Aviator (you can spot him throughout various scenes wearing a gold-lined, translucent aqua-colored overcoat, aviator goggles and appropriate leather head-gear. And in the opening of the show, flinging far-traveling paper airplanes into the crowd), man’s dream and ambition of achieving mechanical flight; he makes his approach upstage (quite literally) in a boxy winged aircraft of his own design. As he lands, he transforms his aircraft into a performance space where he first balances upon a bowling ball, then ever-increasing (and rotating) cylinders. And just when you think he couldn’t up the difficulty, he returns to the air, all the while balancing on his rolas...

Invented in 1898 by Vasque, a Frenchman, the Rola Bola discipline consists of standing and balancing on an unstable assembly of boards supported by cylinders roughly 25 centimeters in diameter. The system is a lever similar to a see-saw that the performer stands on, usually with the left and right foot at opposite ends of the board. The performer must then stay balanced enough to keep the board's edges from touching the stage and to keep from falling off the apparatus.

INTERMISSION

The Seeker joins us briefly once again, riding a rocket-fueled version of his chair into the higher elevations. Where he (and we) will end up next is for discovery after Intermission!

ACRO NET

Now up high above the ground, the Seeker (and by extension us) catch a glimpse of the mischievous behaviors that occur in the heavens of this retro-futuristic realm. On a sea of clouds, friendly rainbows cast fishing lines into a sea stocked with spirited fry. The “fish” creatures utilize specialized trampoline techniques, and double-bouncing skills to send members of their “school” sailing high.

A play on the dynamics of a typical backyard trampoline, requiring two people-one person jumping, the other person(s) standing near the outer springs, ready to initiate the double bounce at the appropriate moment. At a certain point in the air (timing is crucial, but relative to the individuals taking part), the person standing off to the side stomps down near the landing area of the trampoline just as the jumper comes in. The initial stomp and landing results in more force being applied downward than the jumper is able to initiate on his/her own. When successful, the jumper will be propelled significantly higher than usual.

Exuberant, fun-filled leaps ensue, delighting the audience as these “fish” dance atop the cloud-waves. With a humorous nudge to modern technology, a few performers grab wakeboarding handles and leap into the air, appearing as if they are speeding through the surf behind a speedboat, flailing and kicking. Yet, as all fun beach days must, this winds down to an end, and the net begins to sag to the stage surface, and our new friends return to their other form as fish, flopping on dry land. Consequently, the costumes are an illusion to the way film director Georges Méliès imagined Martians; hence you’ll find a number of these performers - Victor Degtyarev (Russia), Arnaud Gaizergues (France), Nathan Dennis (Australia), Karl L’Ecuyer (Canada), Mathieu Hubener (France), Ryan Murray (USA) - with the scales as well as fin and fishtail grafts.

CLOWN ACT – ANIMAL MIME

While the Acro Net is being secured away by a handful of stage-hands (which are quite noticeable Cirque, fix that), our intrepid comedian/mime is working the stands looking for an unsuspecting audience member to be his date for the evening. Once selected, he ushers her to the front of the stage, dropping her at his “front door”, and waits inside on his two-seater couch for her to ring his doorbell. Once welcomed inside and seated on the couch, he becomes “smitten” and nervous as if he’s a young man on his first date. He fidgets helplessly, and then remembers dancing is the popular thing and goes to turn on his radio. It shocks him as he does so, sending him into a whirlwind of electronica-induced dance moves and Velociraptor impersonations (he really sells those Velociraptor stomps!) After a few moments the odd behavior wears off and he returns to her side on the couch, unawares anything is wrong. A moment or two passes and he then remembers that he has yet to offer her a beverage, so he rises once again to get one.

While he is “out of the room”, she is “visited” by his “pet bird” – played by him. While the bird is busy head bobbing, whistles and attempts to woo her, the “cat” catches the bird, turning it into nothing more than a handful of feathers. The cat then takes what he feels his is rightful place on the couch, preening and kneading – generally making the audience member slightly uncomfortable. What follows is a predictable, but hilarious, exhibit of cat behavior from ignoring its owner to using the litter box, but when he “coughs up a furball” the entire big top dissolves into sheer hysteria! The icing on the cake is a laser pointer’s light pointed at the chest of the already uncomfortable audience member with a cat ready to pounce! The routine ends when the cat, stretched out on the back of the couch, falls off the back, heralding the return of our now human mime with drinks in hand.

HAND PUPPETRY

The tempo slows following the energetic Acro Net performance with a scene denoted as “Hands Continent”. The mechanical hand seen earlier returns accompanied by a hot-air balloon reminiscent of The Cloud from Varekai. The hot-air balloon used in this scene is made of fabric and has a built-in blower system. The gondola is made of metal and tulle. It serves as a projection screen 4.3-meters in diameter, which Nico the Accordion Man uses to show us his fantastic finger puppetry. Using his fingers as the puppets legs for walking, Nico takes us along a smaller-scale (literally and figuratively) journey of friendship and success. Our small puppet companion begins to travel, meeting a partner along the way. The two travel together, overcoming small obstacles, reminiscent of the first half of the show.

As the puppet show progresses, our “two-legged” protagonist portrays another type of journey, presumably held very close to the hearts of all Cirque du Soleil performers - a journey from humble beginnings within their respective specialist (in this case, dance), through trials, and resulting in a coveted role in a circus show. From then on, the puppet act extends into the audience via a small hot-air balloon carrying our protagonist. The camera, now hand-held, leads the balloon into the audience, where our puppet friend settles into a relaxing life in a beach setting - atop the (un?)fortunate head of a probably-balding audience member. Complete with beach towel, umbrella, and his long-traveled companion, arm-in-arm, our small character interacts with the audience in what very much resembles something you would expect from Blue Man Group- quirky, and successfully breaking the 4th wall in a way only a stage show can.

AERIAL STRAPS

In a performance that would have most definitely been The Atherton Twins’ had they stuck with the show, two brothers (Roman and Vitali Tomanov, from the US) perform an amazing new Aerial Straps routine in their stead. Consisting of two thin parallel straps several meters in length, along which the acrobat rolls and unrolls using the wrists and arms to execute rises, falls and acrobatics, all the while suspended. The aerial straps artists perform on a gigantic “drop of mercury” made entirely of fiberglass and covered in silver leaf.

This character, made of two conjoined twins, is named Jean-Claude (presumably, “Jean” and “Claude”), have been visible throughout the entire show so far, joined at the hips. Their gait is well-practiced, almost an optical illusion, as their legs swing in opposing, yet, synchronous patterns. They move fluidly about the stage, adept and elegant; however, during the aerial act, the two brothers part, sailing in opposing directions from each other, separate entities for the first time in their lives. They land, and stop to admire their legs, being able to see the other side of their bodies as never before. The act continues as a celebration of freedom, but soon evidence of unrest becomes apparent. A hint of competition or disagreement begins between the two brothers - perhaps they worked better as a team after all. More flying follows, fantastic acrobatic feats of strength and coordination, until both brothers land, side-by-side again, back on the mercury drop, their own small “Microcosmos”. Wrapping their arms around each other’s backs, they seem to choose to become conjoined again, returning to their state of teamwork and agreement.

BANQUINE

Last, but certainly not least, is one of Cirque du Soleil's best acrobatic numbers in my opinion, the Banquine! For those unawares, Banquine is an acrobatic discipline normally executed at ground level by two carriers who, using their arms, catapult a flyer to stand on the interlaced hands of the carriers, a position called banquette. The impetus allows the flyer to perform acrobatic leaps and return to the starting point, the ground, or the banquette of a second team of carriers. It seems simple enough but Cirque du Soleil has elevated this discipline into an art form, as seen in *Quidam* and *Journey of Man*; Banquine returned to the Cirque fold in *ZED* and *Viva Elvis*, and can currently be seen in *ZARKANA* at *Aria* in Las Vegas.

Fans of Cirque du Soleil will recognize the names of many of the performers here - Nikolay Astashkin (Russia), Andrii Bondarenko (Ukraine), Ekaterina Evdokimova (Russia), Roman Kenzhayev (Kazakhstan), Elena Kolesnikova (Russia), Sergey Kudryavstev (Russia), Anton Lyapunov (Ukraine), Andrey Nikitin (Russia), Serguei Okhai (Ukraine), Roman Polishchuk (Ukraine), Alexy Starodubtsev (Russia) and Igor Strizhanov (Russia) – as the team that performed in *ZED* and later *Viva Elvis*. And perhaps that is why the music and choreography accompanying this act has a somewhat Elvis-slant to it. In either case you can't go wrong with Banquine no matter what form it's presented in. It's a wonderful way to end the show!

/// 11:12... ALL ABOARD!

KURIOS comes to a rousing end with the Seeker returning to his own realm, accompanied by all the Travelers and other-worldly characters he's met along his journey. Then they, like in the picnic table in *OVO*, break away to come forward to take their final bows. Once they do, then like in *Totem*, they return to formation for one last group hoopla before the last note is played and the clock turns over to 11:12.

As for the show, well, what can we say? We really liked it a lot!

We certainly had our doubts before arriving, and even as we entered the Big Top, but the moment we saw the set and stage many of those doubts were set aside, and were definitely squashed when KURIOS' train pulled into station at the beginning of the show. Michel Laprise has certainly outdone himself; Guy Laliberté, and all of Cirque du Soleil even, should be proud. And being a home-grown director (the first who's risen in the organization to direct), I'm sure it means even more to him that this show is the success it is, from all accounts. We'll definitely be following KURIOS's path in the future, hoping to catch another ride on that train again soon!



Artisans de L'Imaginaire

30 ans du Cirque du Soleil



"Conception to Perception"

EPILOGUE



"From Conception to Perception"

EPILOGUE

After suffering a number of setbacks, show closings, and layoffs of 400+ of its creative staff in recent years, where does Cirque go from here? Anywhere it pleases, it seems, and without delay. From the launch of KURIOS: CABINET OF CURIOSITIES (the company's 35th production) to the numerous partnership announcements it's already made, the Cirque has a number of opportunities already lined up:

First, Saban Brands and Cirque Du Soleil Media entered into a pact to develop a children's-entertainment property based on elements from the live-entertainment company's long-running productions. The deal includes a new television series, web content, interactive content, and merchandise, the two companies said. The Cirque Du Soleil live show "takes you to somewhere else. It's consistent across the entire experience," said Dekel. "We believe those elements, those aspects of color, of music, of physical movement, of imagination – those are the most important ingredients in kids' entertainment, and in our view, no one does that better than Cirque. We are working to shape that into a kids' format." The property would likely be appropriate for children at the pre-school level or older, the two executives said.

Next, Cirque announces the creation of a new division - Cirque du Soleil Theatrical – which will develop unique theatrical opportunities for the Cirque. Based on traditional theatrical practices, these new productions will be created using the Cirque du Soleil signature style and aesthetic but will provide a very different experience for Cirque du Soleil audiences. This new division will be based in New York City and will continue to promote Cirque du Soleil's on-going strategy of diversifying its content and live-entertainment activities worldwide.

Then, Cirque du Soleil and Grupo Vidanta (a leading developer of world-class resorts and tourism infrastructure in Mexico) announces plans to introduce a new brand of cultural and culinary entertainment to Mexico and Latin America: a brand-new show. JOYÀ, the 70-minute show will be performed eight times a week year-round in the custom-built, 600-seat Vidanta Theater currently under construction across the street from Grupo Vidanta's complex of four resorts (Grand Luxxe, Grand Bliss, Grand Mayan and Mayan Palace) in the Riviera Maya between Cancun and Playa del Carmen.



And most recently, a partnership agreement with Academy Award-winning filmmaker James Cameron to develop an arena-touring show inspired by the world of AVATAR. This "live experience", announced during the international business C2MTL- Commerce + Creativity Conference in Montreal, is slated to debut sometime late 2015, featuring the creative signature drive of Cirque du Soleil in association with Cameron's and Jon Landau's Lightstorm Entertainment. Although nobody knows what we're in store for, the show is expected to debut before the first of three upcoming AVATAR sequels.

Where Cirque du Soleil will go next is anyone's guess!

* * *

The international success story known as Cirque du Soleil is, above all, the story of a remarkable bond between performers and spectators the world over. For at the end of the day, it is the spectators who spark the creative passions of Cirque du Soleil. So long as we keep our sense of excitement at discovering new paths, we'll never lose our determination to share that excitement with every audience, at every performance.

Today, we have our place in the sun and a roof over our heads, but once upon a time the street was our home. I would say we took a little dusty carpet and shook it out pretty well we've shown the world that under the dust, something exceptional is coming out of contemporary circus. My mission has not yet been accomplished. I still have a lot of entertaining to do. As the future approaches, Cirque prepares to embark on new projects and connect with new audiences everywhere. Dreams never die. Come along as they take on new forms! (Guy Laliberte)



And the magic continues...

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

