

**Centre national des arts du cirque, Châlons-en-Champagne
September 24 & 25, 2021**

**LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE CIRCUS
WHEN CIRCUS PROFESSIONALS TALK ABOUT CIRCUS
(RADIO, PODCASTS, AUDIO-DIGITAL STORIES)**

**Second Series of
Seminars**



Picture: Lucie Bonnet

***Quand le cirque se raconte : paroles et voix plurielles du cirque.
Mémoires, histoires, archives***

Series of Seminars 2020-2022

UMR Litt&Arts - Université Grenoble Alpes

Chaire ICiMa - Centre national des arts du cirque - Châlons-en-Champagne

Quand le cirque se raconte : paroles et voix plurielles du cirque. Mémoires, histoires, archives is a series of seminars devoted to the role played in circus culture by narrative, orality, and voice. It is meant to contribute to the development of circus studies by focusing on the wide range of archives related to circus culture. The general purpose of these seminars is to study the history and culture of circus arts as well as the wide range of techniques and practices they involve by way of a transdisciplinary approach capable of doing justice to all aspects of the field. By combining various methodologies used in the humanities (in areas such as performance studies, literary studies, cultural studies, gender studies, anthropology, sociology, history, art history, information studies, psychology, etc.), the seminars will encourage research on circus arts, help identify existing sources and foster a better understanding of the cultural, artistic, and professional dimensions of circus arts. Additionally, participants will seek to develop new methodologies appropriate to the many different modes of production, practice, and archiving relevant to circus arts through ongoing exchanges between artists and scholars.

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Séance 2 - September, 24 & 25, 2021

Listening to the Voices of the Circus

When Circus Professionals Talk About Circus (Radio, Podcasts, Audio-Digital Stories)

This second series of seminars will focus on the ways in which circus culture is described and transmitted by circus professionals via **radio** shows, **podcasts**, and other audio-digital productions. From the archives of major broadcasters to the ephemeral radio stations set up during circus festivals and the latest podcasts, many radio programmes are dedicated to the circus. Journalists and podcasters invite those who bring the circus to life, asking them to confide about what is at the heart of their activities, from the most mundane to the most spectacular. The artists discuss their personal histories, share anecdotes about their tours, and describe the intimate sensations related to their circus practice, to their onstage activities, and to their sources of inspiration. Circus enthusiasts present and discuss shows during festivals. Documentary producers record the voices and sounds of circus creation. All these voices transmit a multitude of visions of the circus and shed light on the offstage realities that make the performance what it is. The purpose of these seminars will be to heed what these radio productions have to say about the circus and to consider its implications.

Radio shows dedicated to the circus are extremely varied; they involve multiple types of address and different audiences: radio documentaries, broadcasts of shows, interviews with artists, etc. In the 1950s and 1960s, radio made its appearance in the world of circus, setting up or financing troupes (Radio Circus, Pinder ORTF) and running regular broadcasts such as those hosted by Maurice Féaudierre, alias Serge (*Jeudi au cirque*, *Circoradio...*). More recently, festivals such as Circa (Auch) have adopted the practice of setting up ephemeral radio stations and broadcasting interviews with artists.

In addition, thanks to the development of digital technology, it is now possible to make audio content widely available online, on channels dedicated to the world of circus and acrobatics. Many institutions and festivals produce podcasts (Radio Caravane in Balma, Radio Circa in Auch, etc.) involving interviews and round-table discussions with artists, while less easily identifiable initiatives are developed by artists such as Marion Collé and Vimala Pons. Interviews with artists conducted by the major French radio stations and historical broadcasts are reworked and reinvested on the stage: created by Maroussia Diaz Verbèke, the show *Circus Remix* (2017) relies on a mosaic of voices and extracts. While the links between theatre and radio have been studied through the prism of radio plays and live broadcasts (a common practice ever since the invention of the *théâtrophone*), the evolution of the relationship between circus and radio remains largely unexamined and its history is still untold.

The choice of medium itself needs to be studied. Circus shapes and stages unique, deeply individual bodies. How can this be addressed by devices that transmit sound but not images of these bodies? What do such devices bring to circus that video does not? How do they participate in defining and transforming perceptions of the circus and its place in the collective imagination? These sound productions self-reflexively play a role in constructing a circus culture, alongside established modes of diffusion and teaching institutions. Before it conveys discourse or the discursive account of lived experience, broadcasting transmits sounds and thus creates a "logosphere"* in which the listeners have a place of their own. What approach to circus arts does this enable - what fantasies, what actual experiences are involved in the act of broadcasting about circus, or of listening to such a broadcast? Why and when do artists resort to this type of sharing? How do artists talk about themselves on air? What do their audio statements contain? Going on air may enrich an artist's account of themselves by allowing them to share information about aspects of their work that may not be immediately apparent on stage. Attention will also be paid to the people listening to these broadcasts, from members of the public to connoisseurs. Who listens to these podcasts? And what purpose do the podcasts serve - are they meant to inspire other artists, to stimulate the imagination, to highlight iconic figures?

* Bachelard Gaston, *Le Droit de rêver*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1973.

This seminar will be an opportunity to achieve a better understanding of the enormous oral archives represented by these radio productions, and to assess their contribution to circus history and memory. Particular attention will be paid to the means of production which made these broadcasts possible. Who produces and edits these programmes and podcasts? In what ways has the increasing availability of digital resources enabled festivals and/or individual artists to produce their own programmes and make their own voices heard? Lastly, participants will be encouraged to submit proposals dealing with the creative processes of circus artists, with the ways recorded voices and/or radio productions contribute to circus creation, and with the interviews conducted by artists themselves as part of their writing process.

Organisation of the session

All seminars within this new series will encourage methodological approaches based on dialogue between scholars and artists. Thus, we welcome contributions/proposals from both writers and academics.

The presentations will be followed by a workshop session where circus artists will seek to put to the test the hypotheses formulated in the papers by confronting them with their own practices.

Papers presented during the seminars will be published in 2023. A summary of each session will be made available online on the sites of each of the partner institutions.

How to submit

Not exceeding **2500 characters in length (spaces included)**, the communication proposals should be accompanied by a short biography, mentioning the main scientific publications and/or artistic activities.

They should be submitted before **June 25, 2021** to:

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Organisation and scientific committee

- **Marion Guyez**, Associate professor at Université Grenoble Alpes
- **Lucie Bonnet**, PhD student in Performing Arts, Université Grenoble Alpes
- **Cyril Thomas**, Head of Ressources and Research Center at Cnac et co-holder of ICiMa chair
- **Esther Friess**, Scientific Secretary ICiMa chair, Cnac

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General presentation

The seminars will build on the work done at Cnac as part of the project "Terminologie" organized by the ICiMa chair, and on research projects initiated at Université Grenoble Alpes by UMR 5316 - Litt&Arts and supported by SFR Création and Archives Plurielles de la Scène. By fostering closer exchanges between the institutions involved in these various projects - CNAC, UMR 5316 - Litt&Arts, Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès (LLA CREATIS) and EsacTO - the seminars will strengthen research networks across the country with circus arts as the focal point. We intend to conduct a systematic review of the work already being done in the relevant areas and foster a synergy between the scholars and institutions involved in them.

The starting point of these seminars is the observation that circus culture and its history have not yet achieved the recognition they deserve as worthy objects of academic study. As a consequence, artists and the genres they develop quickly fall into oblivion, along with extremely diverse manifestations of circus culture such as stage shows, festivals, writings, drawings, recordings, digital performances, etc. We therefore propose to listen to what artists say as they use the means specific to circus culture in their stage performances as well as in their visual, textual and digital creations.

- What do circus artists/professionals say about their specific areas of expertise, their practices and the artistic/cultural scene in which they are involved when they discuss them in other contexts (eg. in personal diaries, books, radio interviews, on Instagram, on Facebook, etc.)?
- What does circus culture have to say about ways of relating to the self, to the world and to others, and what narratives does it develop to deal with these matters? What fictional/imaginary worlds, what perceptions of the world to the bodies and voices involved in circus arts contribute to fashioning?

Inaugural Session - October 12, 2020

The inaugural session, entitled "Ecriture, corps et processus de création in situ," took place on October 12, 2020 at Université Grenoble Alpes. It was devoted to the dramaturgy of site-specific circus, the relationships between body and space that it favors and the narratives arising from such performances. Invited artists (Inbal Ben Haïm, Yaëlle Antoine, Charlotte Meurisse, Nathalie Veillet, Julie Tavert) were asked to discuss their work, and their exchanges with a number of scholars (Séverine Ruset, Lucie Bonnet, Marion Guyez) made it possible to identify the specific skills involved in this type of work - skills that artists often acquire on the job as they are seldom included in the formal training they receive at the outset of their careers. As a result, we were able to identify the female artists who had the most significant impact, and thus to achieve a more accurate understanding of women's contributions to circus arts, site-specific circus and street art. [See the program here](#)

1st Session - February 4 & 5, 2021

Entitled "Tous les vents qui traversent le corps et la tête": Paroles et écritures du cirque, the first session was more specifically devoted to circus writing. What do circus artists write? In what forms? How are they distributed? How does the practice of circus have an impact on the form and the way of conceiving the practice of writing? Listening to the artists' testimonies about their practices and the critical approach of the researchers allowed us to highlight the variety of writing practices related to the circus produced by the artists themselves, through various formats: diaries, poetry, notebooks and drawings, production files, etc. These writings propose narratives of the self, whether they are testimonies of the intimate or of the marked body. Writings can also be a means of exploring new dimensions of the practice. They shape fictions, imaginary worlds and worldviews. The question of writings in circus has allowed us to deepen our reflection on the notion of authorship in circus creation and the status of circus artists as authors. The importance of the process of creating and highlighting traces, whether written or drawn, is at the heart of the construction of a memory, a history of circus practices. [See the program here](#)