

# Speech: cirque du soleil

Literature



It was a cold January evening in Las Vegas, Nevada. I was just fourteen with my eighteen year old brother and parents on vacation and celebrating the New Year. My father decided to surprise the family with tickets to a wonderful acrobatic show that was based around the legendary band The Beatles. The show was mesmerizing and absolutely stunning, it captured my heart and changed me forever. This show was called Love (CHANGE SLIDE) and was run by Cirque du Soleil. Cirque du Soleil is a Canadian entertainment company, self-described as a "dramatic mix of circus arts and street entertainment. Based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, (CHANGE SLIDE) and located in the inner-city area of Saint-Michel, it was founded in Gaspé, in 1984 by two former street performers, Guy Laliberte and Gilles Ste-Croix. Initially named Les Echassiers, (CHANGE SLIDE) they toured Quebec in 1980 as a performing troupe and encountered financial hardship. Their financial troubles were relieved by a grant from their government as part of the 450th anniversary celebrations of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Canada. (CHANGE SLIDE) "Le Grand Tour du Cirque du Soleil" was a success, and after securing a second year of funding, Laliberte hired Guy Caron from the National Circus School to re-create it as a "proper circus". Its theatrical, character-driven approach and the absence of performing animals helped define Cirque du Soleil as the contemporary circus that it remains to be today. Cirque du Soleil traveled throughout Quebec in 1984, appearing in ten cities and playing to audiences of 800 at each performance.

The following year, the troupe took its first steps outside its home province and began performing in neighboring Ontario. The audience's feedback was so positive that it gave Cirque du Soleil even more reason to begin

expanding. By 1986, the seating capacity of Cirque du Soleil's big top tent had been expanded to 1,500, and Cirque du Soleil began to receive national and international attention. The company performed at Vancouver, British Columbia's Children's Festival and at Expo '86, the World's Fair hosted by Vancouver.

Internationally, Cirque du Soleil earned nominations and awards at several competitions and festivals held. By the end of 1986, Cirque du Soleil officials were convinced of the concept's broad-based appeal. Two years after its birth in the small town of Gaspé, Cirque du Soleil's unique expression of entertainment was ready to make it large. Cirque expanded rapidly through the 1990s and 2000s, going from one show to 19 shows in over 271 cities on every continent except Antarctica. Some of these shows include (CHANGE SLIDE) "The O" in Las Vegas, (CHANGE SLIDE) "La Nouba" in Orlando, Florida and, of course, (CHANGE SLIDE) Las Vegas's "LOVE". (CHANGE SLIDE) Cirque du Soleil employs approximately 4,000 people from over 40 countries and receives estimated annual revenue of more than 810 million dollars. The multiple permanent Las Vegas shows alone play to more than 9,000 people a night, 5% of the city's visitors, adding to the 90 million people who have experienced Cirque worldwide. In 2000, Laliberte bought out Gauthier, and with 95% ownership, has continued to expand the brand. In 2008, Laliberte split 20% of his share equally between two investment groups in Dubai.

In partnership with these two groups, Cirque planned to build a residency show in the United Arab Emirates by 2012. However, since Dubai's financial problems in 2008's global recession, it has been stated by Laliberte it may be looking for another financial partner to continue the company's future

plans. Several more shows are in development around the world, along with a television deal, women's clothing line and the possible venture into other mediums such as spas, restaurants and nightclubs. Aside from Cirque du Soleil's a success story, Cirque du Soleil is far from an easy job. (CHANGE SLIDE) Although, the halls are BURSTING with art and colors that the performers create on the side, it takes a lot of time and dedication to be a performer or set technician. A day in the life of a typical Cirque du Soleil performer is a 2-hour rehearsal, 2-hours of doing make up, on your self and than 2 performances. These talented performers will do 8-12 shows 6 days a week. It gets quite repetitive but imagine how exciting it would be to perform for such a large audience every day! If you are under the age 16, you have the same schedule as the other performers but you are also privately tutored in school.

The non-performers live a similarly difficult schedule. Long hours of breaking down, setting up and readjusting props six times a week. The shoes are hand crafted and due to so much wear have to constantly be remade. The wigs are designed to fit each performers head perfectly and are fit on to molds of each of them. There is a lot of behind the scenes work that makes each second of the “ magic” in a Cirque du Soleil performance. (CHANGE SLIDE) I hope that I have educated you about Cirque du Soleil, thank you.