

Cirque du Soleil speaks against animal circuses

Press Release via email

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>To: ar-news@envirolink.org

Subject: Cirque du Soleil speaks against animal circuses

I am happy to see this- I have been trying for a long time to find out if Cirque du Soleil is OPPOSED to animal use or they just prefer not to for artistic reasons. But here it is! they speak out, saying it is wrong and cruel to use animals,, and the article of course shows how successful they are as a non animal circus.

For those working to ban animal circuses in your town - I'd save this article for future reference/support. <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/030109/80/di7d3.html> Circus magic without animals By Paul Majendie 1/9/03

LONDON (Reuters) - Forget the tigers, elephants and dancing bears -- Cirque du Soleil will never travel the world with performing animals.

"We don't agree with the way the animals are dressed to do their tricks. We prefer to give jobs to human beings," said Pierre Parisien from the renowned Quebec troupe that has inspired a circus renaissance around the globe. "They are animals, not performers. They should be in the jungle," the artistic director of the troupe's "Saltimbanco" show told Reuters after its London opening this week. "We do not agree with the way they are trained and I'm not sure the place of an elephant or a tiger is to stand in a cage half of its life and perform all around the world," he said. "We will never have animals in our shows."

Cirque du Soleil was founded in 1984 by Quebecois accordion player and fire-eater Guy Laliberte as a mix of circus acts and street entertainment. Over the past two decades, it has developed into a giant entertainment empire and given circus a new lease of life.

Cirque du Soleil now has 2,400 employees and 500 artists from more than 40 countries. Its shows have been seen in 130 cities by close to 33 million spectators. It has permanent theatres at Walt Disney World in Florida and at two Las Vegas casinos. It is currently staging eight shows on two continents. Every weekend, 60,000 people will be watching a Cirque du Soleil show somewhere in the world. Cirque du Soleil, whose casting scouts travel the world in search of new acrobatic talent, won three Emmy Awards for a television special on its "Dralion" show and performed for a worldwide audience at the Hollywood Oscars ceremony.

But Pierre Parisien argues that the empire has not become so vast and impersonal that everything is tightly controlled from the Montreal headquarters of Cirque du Soleil. "Not at all," he said. "Each show is unique and autonomous. We have our own identity. "Saltimbanco", the longest-running show in the Cirque du Soleil repertoire, boasts 55 artists from 15 countries. But from the Chinese to the Swiss, from the Spanish to the Ukrainians, the rule is the same -- English is the common language. Children dream about leaving home to join the circus. For Parisien, it is a reality.

After nine years with Cirque du Soleil, he is far from weary of his life as a circus gypsy travelling from town to town, from continent to continent. "I am very proud to be part of this adventure -- and it still is an adventure," he said. "Circus is in a much healthier state than it was before because people need to dream and hope -- and this is what we are talking about."