

# CIRQUE MECHANICS

## TILT!

**FOUNDER, CREATIVE DIRECTOR, PRODUCER & MACHINE DESIGNER** Chris Lashua

**PRODUCER & COLLABORATOR** Aida Lashua

**ARTISTIC DIRECTOR** Clint Bobzien

**CO-DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER** Aloysia Gavre

**ACROBAT & CRADLE** Scott Cooper

**MAIN CHARACTER & CLOWN** Chase Culp

**ACROBAT & TEETERBOARD** Will Farlow

**ACROBAT & TEETERBOARD** Jeremy Kasper

**ACROBAT & CRADLE** Aubrey Lawrence

**ACROBAT & WIRE WALKING** Joel Malkoff

**ACROBAT & CHINESE POLE** Celeste Murman

**AERIALIST & SWING** Lexi Powell

**ACROBAT & JUGGLER** Ossy Sanchez

**PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER** Bryan Runion

**LIGHTING DESIGNER** Leonardo Hidalgo

**PRODUCTION DIRECTOR &**

**ASSISTANT CHOREOGRAPHER** Janeen Johnson

**COMPOSER** Michael Picton

**COSTUME DESIGNER** Caroline Rogers

**CO-DIRECTOR & DRAMATURGE** Steven Ragatz

**CO-DIRECTOR, SET DESIGNER & ARTISTIC RIGGER** Sean Riley

**STAGEHAND & TRUCK DRIVER** Kerry Kaye

**COSTUME MANAGER** Esmeralda Onofre

**LIGHTING DIRECTOR** Max Rosenfeldt

**PROPS MASTER & MASTER CARPENTER** Toby Stanley

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Zellerbach Theatre  
Saturday, February 14 @ 2 PM

There will be an intermission.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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Step right up to the dazzling world of *Tilt!*

Journey back to the 1980s and experience a high-flying homage to America's iconic amusement parks. Bursting with acrobatics, aerial feats, juggling and a dose of nostalgic charm, this theatrical circus adventure brings the sights, sounds and spirit of the era to life. At the heart of the spectacle is a marvel of man-powered engineering: a giant Ferris wheel, surrounded by incredible mechanical creations that reimagine classic rides and games of the time. The story follows a weary amusement park worker, worn down by the grind and long disconnected from the joy around him. When he confiscates a guest's boom box, a playful chase erupts—an exhilarating whirlwind of stunts, surprises and laughter. By the end, the pursuit transforms into a touching moment of connection, proving that even in the unlikelyst of places, shared joy can bring us together.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The creation of *Tilt!* has been a true labor of love, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who has shared their time, talents and heart in bringing this 1980s-inspired amusement park adventure to life. To our family—Zion, Quinn and Iago—thank you for your boundless imagination, encouragement and hands-on help, from brainstorming wacky ride ideas to rolling up your sleeves in the workshop. To our parents, we are forever grateful for sparking our passion for circus by taking us to carnivals, fairs and amusement parks—memories that still fuel our imagination and inspire our work today. To our remarkable cast and crew, your artistry, dedication and joy have transformed *Tilt!* into the thrilling ride we dreamed it could be. To Alliance Artists Management, thank you for your unwavering belief in our vision. A very special thank you to Lori Cobo and the UNLV Performing Arts Center for their generous collaboration, enabling us to premiere *Tilt!* at home. Special thanks to Bo Bogatin and Kurt Nelson for their legal guidance, Andy Espo for technical support, and Bryan Schuette and Stephen Butz at United Machine for their precision craftsmanship and Mike Levine for the fastest t-shirt turnaround ever—your speed and quality product kept our cast and crew looking totally tubular. We are indebted to Don Seiersen for his artistic contributions, which added texture and depth to this production. We are grateful to the Las Vegas Circus Center for fostering such a vibrant community of creators and to Cirque du Soleil and circus companies worldwide for their enduring commitment to pushing this art form forward. Finally, to our audiences: your enthusiasm and joy fuel our passion. Thank you for strapping in and taking this ride with us—together we celebrate the thrills, nostalgia and wonder of the circus, the amusement park and the totally awesome spirit of the 1980s.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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### **Cirque Mechanics**

Founded in 2004 by Chris Lashua, Las Vegas-based Cirque Mechanics masterfully blends American storytelling with inventive mechanical staging. Inspired by traditional circus and grounded in realism, the group's performances explore timeless themes of ingenuity through a captivating mix of acrobatics, mechanical artistry and humor. Hailed by *Spectacle Magazine* as "the greatest contribution to the American circus since Cirque du Soleil," Cirque Mechanics creates unforgettable experiences for audiences worldwide, including corporate and private clients through their Events and Under Canvas divisions. Its touring repertoire features acclaimed productions such as *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town*, *Pedal Punk*, *42ft*, the Drama Desk award-nominated *Zephyr*, its inaugural holiday spectacular *Yuletide Factory* and *Winter Wonder Shoppe*, created in partnership with the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Cirque Mechanics' sixth touring production, *Tilt!* promises an exhilarating circus thrill ride for all ages.

### **Chris Lashua** (Founder, Creative Director, Producer, Machine Designer)

Lashua, founder of Cirque Mechanics, grew up in Boston, where his passion for movement began on a BMX bike. Discovered by Cirque du Soleil, he created and performed a groundbreaking BMX act before being commissioned to design a "German Wheel" number for *Quidam*, a role he performed for several years, and which established his reputation as a pioneer of circus gadgetry. His engineering ingenuity and creative vision eventually inspired him to "run away" and launch his own company, Cirque Mechanics. At the heart of Lashua's work is a belief that the interaction between performer and machine defines Cirque Mechanics' unique voice. His theatrical productions showcase this vision: acrobats, jugglers, dancers and contortionists perform on and around extraordinary machines—a 1920s factory floor in *Birdhouse Factory*, a gold rush town in *Boom Town*, a bicycle shop in *Pedal Punk*, a classic circus ring in *42ft: A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels*, a countryside windmill in *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus* and most recently, the rides of an amusement park in *Tilt!*. During the pandemic, Lashua reimaged live performance by creating *Drive-n-Dine*, an outdoor, socially distanced show staged on a Las Vegas golf course and *Cirque Mechanics Under Canvas*, a spectacle presented inside the company's custom orange-and-gray big top. Beyond the stage, Lashua continues to invent playful, pedal-powered creations like the Paddle Ship—a floating stage propelled by human-powered paddle wheels—the Wine Trike and the Buffet Train, which double as whimsical hospitality devices and performance platforms. Lashua also invests in the broader circus community as a producing partner of the Vegas International Variety Arts Festival (VIVA Fest), founding board member of the American Circus Alliance (ACA), founding member of the Producers Alliance of Southern Nevada (PALS), board member of the Circus Historical Society, charter member of Black Box Collective and guest lecturer for the Association for Theater in Higher Education.

**Aida Lashua** (Producer, Collaborator)

For more than 30 years, Aida Lashua has been Chris Lashua's creative partner in life and in work, helping to shape Cirque Mechanics into one of America's most innovative circus companies. Her professional journey began with Cirque du Soleil (CDS), where she spent a decade both on tour and behind the scenes. While with CDS, she worked for sponsor AT&T, managing the implementation of a multi-million-dollar sponsorship that included product placement, sales promotions and staff training. She also served as Box Office Supervisor and House Manager, where she trained and managed a team of 60 and helped refine customer service policies, training manuals and VIP programs. Those experiences gave Lashua a deep appreciation for the business of circus and a lasting passion for its artistry. Today, she manages the day-to-day operations of Cirque Mechanics, balancing the demands of touring productions, marketing and family life with poise. With a background in direct marketing, she has guided the company's website and social media development with a targeted, strategic approach. She has also written the company's study guides, created educational materials and designed workshop programs that bring circus arts into classrooms and communities. A native of Puerto Rico and mother of three boys, Lashua is both a stabilizing force and a creative driver within Cirque Mechanics. Beyond circus, she contributes as a writer for CityLife Publications and dreams of one day finishing her novel, ideally near the ocean, where she feels most at home. A true amusement park enthusiast, Lashua never skips the souvenir shops, and she proudly admits to being an unabashed Diet Coke fanatic.

**Clint Bobzien** (Artistic Director)

Bobzien has been performing, coaching and directing for more than 25 years. His journey began in search of a "stable desk job," but instead he did what came most naturally—he ran away with the circus. Since then, countless adventures have taken him across the globe, to Broadway and on multiple tours with Cirque Mechanics. His performance repertoire spans partner hand-to-hand, aerial straps, Chinese pole and trampoline. A lifelong fan of theme park rides, especially those with a vertical drop, Bobzien is thrilled to serve as artistic director of *Tilt!* and can't wait to take audiences along for the ride.

**Aloysia Gavre** (Co-director & Choreographer)

Gavre is a circus creator, director, educator and founding board member of the American Circus Alliance. She co-founded both Troupe Vertigo and Cirque School in Los Angeles in 2009, with a vision to contribute and grow a wider appreciation for the circus arts. She began her own performance career with the Pickle Family Circus in her hometown of San Francisco and then went on to perform with Cirque du Soleil, Monte Carlo Circus Festival, Teatro Zinzanni and numerous international symphonies. Her expertise has been used in the films *Water for Elephants* and *Pitch Perfect 2*. She was featured on the cover of *Dance Teacher Magazine* for her expertise in circus arts. Speaking engagements include TEDx, Center Theater Group, Directors Lab, Chicago Circus Festival, AYCO and VIVA Fest Las Vegas. Gavre's creative journey with Cirque Mechanics began at its inception with its premier show, *Birdhouse Factory*, in 2004. Her expertise in integrating Cirque Mechanics trademark architectural machines with circus bodies in motion remains an integral part of the company. A vintage fun memory: in 1999, Gavre and Chris Lashua rode their bikes through Amsterdam after their performance in Quidam to see Lauryn Hill in concert.

**Scott Cooper** (Acrobat & Cradle)

Cooper began life on the tiny Nordic island of Iceland. Many adventures later, he accidentally stumbled into the circus around 2010. At the time, he held three engineering degrees and a lucrative future in tech—but decided to toss it all aside for the glamorous life of a starving circus artist. Over the years, Cooper slowly traded desks and suits for training halls and bruises. For two years, he studied and performed with AcroSanct under the legendary Chinese acrobat Lu-Yi, later joining AcroArmy under the guidance of sports acro champion Arthur Davis III. His specialties lean toward disciplines involving other “ridiculous humans,” including Russian cradle, Russian bar, hand-to-hand, banquine, perch, duo trapeze and ensemble acrobatics. Stage credits include *Awakening!* at the Wynn, *Cirque Dreams*, the Broadway musical *Pippin*, The Emmy Awards and *A Magical Cirque Christmas*. On the side, Cooper is also the guy who’s been trying to reach you about your car’s extended warranty. Oh—and he’s forklift certified.

**Chase Culp** (Main Character & Clown)

Culp was born and raised in the suburbs of Houston, Texas, but his heart was set on adventure from the start. The grandson of a cowboy, he dreamed of joining the circus at just three years old, inspired by the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, as well as the clowns who passed through town with touring shows. As a teenager, Culp discovered Circus Smirkus, a traveling tented youth circus, where he spent three summers honing his craft. After graduating high school, he joined Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, touring for two years across the U.S. and Mexico. His career has since taken him to circus tents, theatres, theme parks and festivals in more than ten countries, with credits including *Slava’s Snowshow*, *Venardos Circus*, *Mr. Swindle’s Traveling Peculiarium* and the *Circus World Museum*. Culp has also toured extensively with Cirque Mechanics productions, including *Birdhouse Factory*, *Pedal Punk* and *Yuletide Factory*, and is thrilled to join the cast of *Tilt!* Offstage, Culp is a fan of all-you-can-eat sushi, is certified in laughter yoga and—true to his love of showmanship—is also a licensed auctioneer.

**Will Farlow** (Acrobat & Teeterboard)

Farlow is one flipping cool guy—literally. He loves to swim, dive and, of course, flip. An expert diver, he also enjoys coaching and bringing his fun, motivating energy to anyone eager to learn. Hailing from Myrtle Beach—the mini golf capital of the world—Farlow grew up with a love for both water and thrills. That passion eventually carried him into the circus world, where he became part of the original cast of Cirque du Soleil’s *Crystal*. Audiences saw him soaring through crisp arena air, flying off poles and pushing his acrobatic skills to the limit. Despite having vision in only one eye, Farlow is a true thrill-seeker. For him, the challenge makes every daring move even more exhilarating. Offstage, you’ll likely find him chasing rollercoasters with his buddies, slushy in hand, until the amusement park lights flicker out. Laid-back by nature but fueled by adventure, Farlow brings both chill vibes and jaw-dropping talent to the stage. Whether he’s coaching, flipping or laughing with friends, he reminds us all to keep life in balance—ride the highs, embrace the thrills and never forget that #mensmentalhealthisimportant.

### **Jeremy Kasper** (Acrobat & Teeterboard)

Kasper, a Chicago native, discovered circus at just nine years old when he began training at The Actors Gymnasium. What started as an after-school activity quickly grew into a passion, expanding from aerial arts to juggling and beyond. Over the years, his curiosity and dedication shaped him into a true generalist, equally at home in a wide variety of circus disciplines. At 18, Kasper took his training abroad, enrolling at the National Centre for Circus Arts in London. Today, he continues to hone his craft while living in Montreal, a global hub for contemporary circus. Kasper is no stranger to the world of amusement parks. His high-flying teeter board skills have taken him to stages across North America, including Cedar Point, SeaWorld and Silver Dollar City. Performing in these unique environments deepened his appreciation for blending live entertainment with the thrill of rides and attractions. When he's not performing, Kasper seeks out rollercoasters of his own. His favorite is The Monster at Montreal's La Ronde—a ride he jokingly describes as "like getting a chiropractic adjustment every time." Kasper is thrilled to be making his *Cirque Mechanics* debut in *Tilt!*

### **Aubrey Lawrence** (Acrobat & Cradle)

Lawrence exhibited monkey tendencies at an early age and was steered toward dance and gymnastics as alternatives to kitchen counter parkour. She quickly fell in love with the athleticism of acrobatics and the artistry of dance, a fusion that eventually led her to aerial arts. Ironically, her first taste of circus was at the iconic amusement park Disney World, where she was captivated by Cirque du Soleil's *La Nouba*—a magic she deemed far beyond Mickey's. That experience fueled her dreams for years, and a decade later, she went from adoring fan to first-time aerialist. Since then, Lawrence's been fortunate enough to tour the U.S., travel internationally and appear on TV with Diavolo. She has also soared on Cirque de la Symphonie stages and vanquished evil as a "super spider" in a Marvel/Disney Jr. production. At home in Las Vegas, she brought an adagio act to A Lady Like Show and enjoys flying high on sway pole. She is totally stoked to join the cast of *Tilt!* performing cradle. After many childhood years living near Cedar Point and dreading the phrase "too short to ride," Lawrence now relishes any chance to have a rollercoaster carry her away with that special brand of adrenaline.

### **Joel Malkoff** (Acrobat & Wirewalker)

Having never followed a traditional path in education, running away with the circus felt like a natural progression in Malkoff's life. Drawn to the combination of acrobatic movement, music, acting and the camaraderie of a tight-knit ensemble working toward a common goal, the circus became a home for his many passions. Originally from Indiana and now living in Montreal, Malkoff is a self-proclaimed "hobby economist" who loves political discussion, comedy sketches, traveling and dreaming up new ideas that connect people. His curiosity and creativity extend well beyond the stage, making him as engaged in conversation as he is in performance. Having just finished working for the summer performances at Cedar Point, his new favorite roller coaster is the infamous Steel Vengeance. Malkoff also grew up visiting Holiday World every summer and one of his fondest childhood memories is laughing with his cousins while drifting down the lazy river, a reminder of the joy and playfulness that still fuels his work today. Malkoff's current "side quests" include releasing his first album, writing and producing his first full-length circus show and even becoming forklift certified (#mensmentalhealth). He's also taken on the noble mission of helping Celeste find a boyfriend—because in circus life, supporting your friends is part of the act.

### **Celeste Murman** (Acrobat & Chinese Pole)

Murman is ready to take you on the ride of a lifetime. A proud Cleveland original (#goBrowns), she's been climbing poles since the age of four. While some worried she might take her talents in another direction, circus proved the safest—and most thrilling—track. A true wildcard of an acrobat, Murman never fails to surprise. In 2023, she graduated from École de cirque de Québec, where she specialized in double Chinese pole, a discipline that instantly felt like home. She thrives on the adrenaline rush of leaping, flipping and flying from one pole to the next. With a wide repertoire of skills, Murman brings both versatility and edge, keeping audiences on their toes. For her, amusement parks capture the same sense of magic and wonder that circus delivers. She gets to live that thrill every day and loves sharing it with audiences, inviting them to buckle up for the ride. Though she has already landed flips, tricks and the unimaginable, Murman still dreams of landing her perfect partner. Until then, please keep your hands, arms and legs inside the ride at all times—and enjoy the show.

### **Lexi Powell** (Aerialist & Swing)

Powell is a contemporary circus artist, aerialist and movement storyteller who believes art thrives in the space between strength and play. Specializing in aerial hoop, hula hoops and fire performance, she blends technical precision with heartfelt expression to create work that is both powerful and delightfully human. A lifelong entertainer, Powell explored everything from sports to music to art and dance before earning a degree in kinesiology—only to joyfully run away with the circus. Since then, her career has taken her around the globe, from large-scale productions like *Marvel Universe Live* to projects with MTV and Missy Elliott, as well as cruise ships, festivals, amusement parks and international stages. Beyond performance, Powell is a passionate coach and multidisciplinary creative. She believes movement has the power to change lives and expresses herself through painting, music and writing—always seeking new ways to explore human connection through creativity. Inspired by astrology, crystals and other witchy practices, she infuses her work with intention and a touch of magic. At heart, Powell is still a Disney kid, carrying the wonder and joy of childhood park days into every performance, hoping to spark light and connection with each audience she meets.

### **Ossy Sanchez** (Juggler)

Sanchez is a fifth-generation circus performer from Mexico City, Mexico, now calling Las Vegas home. He's been bouncing, tumbling and juggling his way through life since age 11, with favorite acts including trampoline, gauchos, Russian swing and of course, juggling! Inspired by his dad, Sanchez dreams of becoming a master juggler one day... if he doesn't get distracted by the popcorn and funnel cakes first. He's performed around the world, from circus rings to theatres, including *Rouge* at the STRAT Hotel and Casino and Cirque Mechanics' *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus*. Sanchez feels happiest when at the circus and is thrilled to return to Cirque Mechanics in *Tilt!* When it comes to amusement parks, he's all about the classic wooden roller coasters—because some things never go out of style, just like his juggling tricks.

**Bryan Runion** (Production Stage Manager)

Runion is a production and stage management leader whose work spans immersive entertainment, contemporary circuses, theatrical premieres and large-scale live events. His professional credits include *Stranger Things: The Experience* (Netflix), *Winter Wonder Shoppe* (Cirque Mechanics), Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, *Duel Reality* (The 7 Fingers), *La Perle* (Franco Dragone), *Drawn to Life* (Cirque du Soleil/Disney), Mastercard Experiences, *Everybody Black* (World Premiere), *Queens* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Ken Ludwig's The Gods of Comedy* (The Old Globe), TEDx Chula Vista, *The Voice of Tolerance* (UAE Ministry of Education), Mark Morris Dance Company, Joey Alexander Trio, Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain (La Jolla Music Society) and *The Bridges of Madison County* (Arkansas Rep). Runion's work has taken him across the U.S., Europe, the Middle East and beyond. He has supported productions seen by more than 650,000 audience members annually and collaborated with artists and technicians from over 25 countries. His experience ranges from intimate theatres to major performing arts centers and global immersive venues. Dedicated to bringing stories to the stage with precision, care and deep respect for the collaborative process, Runion is grateful to be part of *Tilt!* and extends thanks to the cast, crew and creative team for their artistry. Outside the theatre, he enjoys cooking, traveling, spending time with family and developing tools for stage managers at BackstageOS.com.

**Kerry Kaye** (Stagehand & Truck Driver)

Kaye has been operating self-propelled and motored wheeled vehicles from a young age. Starting with a Big Wheel, progressing to a bicycle and then branching off to scooters, roller blades, skateboards and wheelbarrows. At the age of nine, Kaye was shifting the transmission on his Dad's Geo Metro from the passenger seat. At 16, he attained his first driver's license. Growing up in the Midwest, Kaye was accustomed to long drives and has driven across the country numerous times. In 2015, Kaye started learning how to drive trailers while on tour with Circus Smirkus. In 2023, Kaye attained his class A commercial driver's license. Kaye has also been a rigger, technician, administrator and performer for circus, theatre and dance since 2007. His favorite amusement park rides are rollercoasters with a big splash at the end. When not on tour, Kaye lives in northeastern Vermont and likes to spend time on his porch watching the hummingbirds.

**Max Rosenfeld** (Lighting Director)

Rosenfeld is a New York-based lighting designer and programmer whose work spans theatre, musical productions and live performance. They have designed and programmed for a range of productions, including serving as assistant lighting designer for *The Garbologists* at Shadowland Stages and lighting designer for *Shrek: The Musical* at SUNY New Paltz, among many others. With a keen eye for detail and a passion for shaping atmosphere through light, Rosenfeld continues to build a diverse portfolio that blends artistry with technical precision. Rosenfeld fondly recalls their very first rollercoaster ride during a summer camp trip. At first, rollercoasters felt too intimidating—but thanks to a favorite counselor who encouraged them onto just the right set of rides at Six Flags, the fear turned into exhilaration. That breakthrough sparked a lifelong love of rollercoasters, and today Rosenfeld still seeks out the thrill, both in theme parks and in the excitement of live production.

**Toby Stanley** (Props Master & Master Carpenter)

Stanley is both a skilled carpenter and an accomplished performer, striking a balance between sawdust and spotlight. By day, he continues his family's tradition of craftsmanship, working with wood to create pieces that are as strong as they are beautiful. By night, he brings the same discipline and precision to the stage, performing his favorite act—the Russian swing—where timing, nerve and trust are everything. Woodworking has been a constant in Stanley's life, offering both comfort and a creative outlet. Over the years, that passion has grown into a career that seamlessly combines technical skill with a performer's perspective. As the show's carpenter, Stanley doesn't just build equipment—he tests it himself, ensuring every prop and apparatus is safe, functional and ready for the demands of performance. His experience extends from restoring historic homes to designing stage elements tough enough to withstand the impact of acrobats in motion. For Stanley, carpentry and circus aren't separate callings but two sides of the same coin—each requiring creativity, adaptability and exacting attention to detail. Whether on the workshop floor or mid-flight on the swing, Stanley is always ready for the challenge, finding ways to make things work—and making sure they hold up under pressure.

**Leonardo Hidalgo** (Lighting Designer)

Hidalgo is a New York-based lighting designer, production manager and educator specializing in theatre, circus and dance. He has collaborated with a wide range of companies and productions, bringing technical precision and artistic vision to every project. Recent credits include serving as lighting designer for *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus* with Cirque Mechanics, lighting designer/production manager for Circus Juventas and lighting designer/production manager for Battery Dance Company. He also contributes to the internationally recognized Battery Dance Festival, a weeklong outdoor event showcasing artists from around the globe. In addition to his professional work, Hidalgo is currently pursuing a master's degree in city and regional planning at Rutgers University's Bloustein School, where he explores how arts intersect with community development and urban design. His dual interests in performance and planning reflect a commitment to creating spaces—both theatrical and civic—that inspire connection, creativity and shared experiences. When he's not behind the console or drafting a production plan, Hidalgo can often be found at the Dutchess County Fair in the Hudson Valley. For the past six years, he and his friends have made it a tradition to watch the pig races, a favorite amusement park memory that never fails to bring joy.

**Janeen Johnson** (Production Director & Assistant Choreographer)

Johnson is a visionary arts administrator, stagecraft specialist and cultural strategist with more than 20 years of experience driving excellence in arts management, event operations and theatrical production. With a foundation as a professional dancer, she brings a rare artistic lens to her production leadership, earning recognition as a dynamic force across dance, theatre and live performance. For the past 13 years, Johnson has been at the helm of Cirque Mechanics' touring operations as Principal Production Stage Manager, directing logistics, administration and tour leadership for six original productions—*Birdhouse Factory*, *Boomtown*, *Pedal Punk*, *42ft*, *Zephyr* and now *Tilt!*—performed across North America, Europe and Asia. Her progressive leadership extends beyond the stage. Through O.Y.A. Strategies, her cultural consulting and coaching agency, Johnson mentors emerging stage managers and cultural practitioners through The Cultural Powerhouse Model, blending creativity, strategy and community impact. This season, Johnson expands her creative

contribution as Assistant Choreographer and Production Director for *Tilt!*, further weaving her creative insight into Cirque Mechanics' latest theatrical experience. Johnson also loves to travel and experience new spaces and places, finds joy in dancing wherever spirit guides and proudly calls California home.

**Michael Picton** (Composer)

Picton is an award-winning composer whose eclectic career spans film, television, advertising, theatre and circus. Picton has scored five Cirque Mechanics productions: *Boom Town*, *The Cirque Mechanics Orchestral Project*, *Pedal Punk*, *42ft* and *Zephyr, A Whirlwind of Circus*. His circus career began as a performer, touring as keyboardist with Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*. He has written songs and scored six editions of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus: *Bellobration*, *Funndrum*, *Dragons*, *Built to Amaze*, *Circus Xtreme* and the final edition of *Out of this World*. Recently, his live work has expanded to include superhero arena shows with Feld Entertainment's *Marvel Universe Live* and *Marvel Universe Live - Age of Heroes*. The winner of the Turner Classic Movies Young Film Composers Competition, Picton was chosen from a field of over 600 aspiring composers by a jury chaired by the legendary Elmer Bernstein. For TCM, he scored the silent films *The Temptress* and *The Red Mill*. Other film and television work includes *Mutt & Stuff* for Sid and Marty Krofft on Nickelodeon, the SyFy series *Flash Gordon*, the independent feature *Little Chenier* and main title themes for *I Want to Work for Diddy* and *Bates Motel*. Picton has composed network themes for PBS, Amazon Originals and CNN International among others as well as commercials and promos for a long list of clients.

**Caroline Rogers** (Costume Designer)

A lifelong theme park enthusiast, Rogers continues to indulge her love of Disney, visiting Epcot weekly—and occasionally braving Spaceship Earth despite her astraphobia. She has brought stories to life for millions of guests worldwide, both through costume design and performance. Recently, she contributed as Scenic Artist and Lead for the Viking Training Camp at Universal Studios' Epic Universe. Growing up in the 1980s fueled her excitement for designing *Tilt!*, where she hopes her costumes transport audiences back to a simpler time, reigniting childhood wonder and the magic of theme parks. Rogers is deeply grateful to Cirque Mechanics for welcoming her creativity into another production and gives glory to God for the talents and opportunities she has been given. Follow her work @DesignsByNine.

**Esmeralda Onofre** (Costume Manager)

Onofre, a fifth-generation circus performer from Mexico, grew up immersed in the vibrant world of circus arts. She began training at age 10 with hula hoop and discovered the challenging art of slack wire at 15. By 21, Onofre moved to the U.S., performing with prestigious circus shows across the country. Alongside her performing career, Onofre developed a passion for costume design. Mentored by her mother, a seasoned costume maker, she became a skilled wardrobe technician and designer for numerous circus productions, including Do Portugal Circus and Cirque Mechanics. Now based in Las Vegas, Onofre continues to perform while contributing her costume expertise to the circus world. A true artist, she blends performance and craftsmanship, leaving a lasting mark on every stage and wardrobe she touches.

**Steven Ragatz** (Co-Director & Dramaturge)

An original *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town* and *Orchestra Project* cast member and collaborator, as well as lead writer for *Pedal Punk*, *Zephyr*, *A Whirlwind of Circus* and *Yuletide Factory*, Ragatz has been entertaining audiences with his juggling, physical comedy, stilt walking and general antics for the past three decades. As a 10-year veteran of Cirque du Soleil, Ragatz has toured throughout North, South and Central America as well as Asia and Europe, performing multiple juggling acts as an eclectic array of characters. Ragatz is on the staff of Bloomington's Stage Flight Circus Arts, where he teaches juggling and unicycle skills workshops. He recently toured his one-man show *Under the Umbrella, Life is a Circus*, an evening with a juggling virtuoso and stories from world-wide circus adventures. Ragatz holds a B.A. in variety theatre and an M.S. in computer science from Indian University. He studied mime, stage movement and circus arts with Fred Garbo, Tony Montanaro, George Pinney and Michael Moschen. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children, Melissa and Andrew, and currently live in Maine, where they have mastered the art of making the perfect margarita.

**Sean Riley** (Co-Director, Set Designer & Artistic Rigger)

Riley creates performances that merge suspension, kinetics, architecture and narrative sculpture. Working at the intersection of production, rigging and mechanical design, he develops striking environments and apparatus for time-based art. His work spans a wide range of genres—including theatre, circus, dance, opera, television and both outdoor and gallery installations. Through his company, Gravity Projects, Riley has built a unique arsenal of specialized tools and techniques, expanded the boundaries of live performance while advancing standards of industrial safety. He is a founding member of Cirque Mechanics, host of two television series (*World's Toughest Fixes* on National Geographic and *Speed* on Curiosity Stream) and a lead collaborator on the construction of the Long Now Foundation's 10,000 Year Clock. He also serves as production designer and producer for the annual *Panto in the Presidio* holiday show. His design work has earned multiple honors, including six Izzies, TBA Awards, Bay Area Critics Circle Awards and the Isadora Duncan Sustained Achievement Award in Scenic Design. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Riley now lives in British Columbia with his wife, three sons and an abundance of bears. He is thrilled to still be creating circus with dear friends after 20 years of Cirque Mechanics. [visiblegravity.com](http://visiblegravity.com)

# THE PEKING ACROBATS

MAR 15

The Peking Acrobats push the limits of human ability, wowing audiences with spellbinding trick-cycling, precision tumbling, juggling, somersaulting and gymnastics. With a three-decade legacy of elite talent, this world-record-setting troupe pairs artful athleticism with live music and festive pageantry.



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