



CIRQUE MECHANICS

42FT - A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels

PROGRAM

There will be an intermission.

Sunday, February 17 @ 2 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

PROGRAM NOTES

Opening

Justin Finds the Circus

Matinee Finale

The Suitcase

Circus Parade

Charivari

Juggling with Rosebud

Duo Trapeze

Zombie Cape

Strong Man Bowling Balls

Bravado Brothers

Juggle Go Round

INTERMISSION

Poster Wall

Revolving Ladder

Rosebud Returns

Animal Trainer

Knife Throwing Wheel

Sword Swallowing

Slack Wire

Strong Man Log

Russian Swing

Justin Joins the Circus

Finale

A diameter of 42ft has been the measure of the circus ring for 250 years. Englishman Philip Astley discovered that horses galloping inside this ring provide the ideal platform for acrobatic feats. These equestrian acrobatics, along with clowns and flyers are a large part of what we've all come to know as the circus.

This 250th anniversary of Astley's circus inspired Cirque Mechanics to produce a one-ring traditional circus show in their own modern mechanical way. *42FT - A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels* follows the story of a down and out roustabout filled with wanderlust and enamored with the circus, willing to persevere in order to reach his dream of performing under the big top. *42FT* displays life in a tent show by exposing the glamour inside the ring and the vitality of the back lot.

To capture the authenticity of the traditional, Cirque Mechanics has assembled a veritable menagerie of circus acts worthy of the ring, including the strong man, the Russian swing, the trapeze, the ladder, slack wire and juggling. And, to celebrate the important role animals played in circus throughout its history, *42FT* features a captivating performer riding on a stunningly life-like mechanical horse.

In *42FT*, Cirque Mechanics dares you to let your imagination run away and jump inside this remarkable ring full of the lore, the beauty, the grit and the thrill of the circus.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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

Company founder, Chris Lashua, hails from Boston, Massachusetts, where he spent most of his youth riding on a BMX bike. He was discovered by Cirque du Soleil and created/performed a BMX bike act that was entirely his own. He was then commissioned to build a "German Wheel" act for the company, which performed for several years in Cirque du Soleil's production of *Quidam*, cementing his reputation as a visionary of circus gadgetry. His engineering chops and creative energy led him to 'run away' with his own circus company, Cirque Mechanics.

Lashua believes that innovative mechanical apparatus and the relationship between

performer and machine sets his company apart, and is the heart of what makes Cirque Mechanics unique. Lashua has delivered on this unique approach in the company's theatrical productions. His innovative machines interacted with acrobats, dancers, jugglers and contortionists on a 1920's factory floor in *Birdhouse Factory*, in a gold rush era town in *Boom Town* and in a bicycle shop in *Pedal Punk*, and also accompanied world-renowned symphonies in the *Orchestra Project*.

Now, in *42FT - A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels*, Lashua continues to build on the might of his engineering mind, his passion for the circus and all things mechanical by designing a veritable menagerie of mechanical devices worthy of the generations of circus shows and acts the production aims to honor.

When Lashua is not developing material for a theatrical show, he is building other wacky performance devices for events, most recently the Paddleship, a portable stage that not only floats, but also can be navigated by pedal-powered paddle wheels. Lashua is a producing partner of the Vegas International Variety Arts Festival (VIVAFest). He was also recently featured as a guest lecturer at the annual Association for Theater in Higher Education Conference.

CREATIVE DESIGN TEAM

Aloysia Gavre (Co-Director Choreographer)

Aloysia Gavre co-founded both Cirque School and Troupe Vertigo in Los Angeles in 2009 after 22 years of touring internationally with the Pickle Family Circus, Cirque du Soleil and symphonies around the globe including those at Sydney Opera House and the Kennedy Center. Her passion and knowledge for the circus arts has led her to a career as a director, choreographer and educator including *Cirque Cracker* (Phoenix Symphony), *Cirque Broadway* (Baltimore Symphony) and *Cirque Cinema* (Indianapolis Symphony) as well as her own creations including *Tableaux*. She has coached and choreographed for film and television for *Water for Elephants*, *Pitch Perfect 2*, Bravo, NBC and BuzzFeed. She has been recognized in *Dance Teacher Magazine* and *Dance Informa*, and done speaking engagements with TED-X, Center Theater Group, Directors Lab, Chicago Circus Festival, AYCO and VIVA Fest Las Vegas. Gavre has been a long-time artistic collaborator with Cirque Mechanics for over four shows since 2004, after having met Chris Lashua while performing in Cirque du Soleil.

Sean Riley (Set Designer, Artistic Rigger)

Sean Riley has a 20-year career combining suspension, kinetic movement and design with performance. Through scenic, rigging and mechanical design, often in concert with each other, he creates unique performance environments. Concentrating his design for performance on site-specific and non-traditional work, Riley has created installations in collaboration with a wide spectrum of accomplished artists and collaborators. Known for his bold and often surprising use of space and large-scale movement, Riley's installations commonly reflect his lifelong obsession with gravity and Newtonian physics. His works have been installed from backyards to Broadway, many continuing to tour internationally. He is a founding member of Cirque Mechanics and his company Gravity Design, through which he has developed an arsenal of specialized tools, pushing the bounds of performance as well as industrial safety. Riley is also the host of the National Geographic Television series *World's Toughest Fixes*. visiblegravity.com, gravitydesign.org

Michael Picton (Composer)

Michael Picton is an award-winning composer whose eclectic career spans film, television, advertising, theatre and circus. Picton has scored four Cirque Mechanics productions: *Boom Town*, *Orchestral Project*, *Pedal Punk* and *42FT*. His circus career began as a performer, touring as keyboardist with Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*. He has written songs and scores for six editions of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus: *Bellobration*, *Funundrum*, *Dragons*, *Built to Amaze*, *Circus Xtreme*, and the final edition, *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*, currently touring the U.S.

The winner of the Turner Classic Movies (TCM) 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.

Steven Ragatz (Writer)

An original *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town* and *Orchestra Project* cast member and collaborator, and lead writer for *Pedal Punk*, Steven Ragatz has been entertaining audiences with his juggling, physical comedy, stilt walking and general antics for the past three decades. As a ten-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 and 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. You can find Ragatz on stage in the tour of his one-man show *Under the Umbrella, Life is a Circus*, an evening with a juggling virtuoso and stories from worldwide circus adventures. Ragatz holds a BA in variety theatre and an MS in computer science from Indiana 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 Indiana, where they have perfected the art of making the perfect margarita.

Anthony Powers (Lighting Designer)

Anthony Powers is a lighting designer and production manager that has worked on a wide array of shows across four continents. He has been working with Cirque Mechanics since 2010 and is excited to be designing his third show with them. Powers has had a hand in all of the Cirque Mechanics touring shows, as either the lighting designer or the lighting and technical director on tour. Outside of Cirque Mechanics, Powers has been the designer or production manager for concerts, festivals and events across the U.S. He currently has the honor of being the General Manager for the San Francisco office of Felix Lighting. If he wasn't working in the lighting world, he would want to be a cheesemonger or an editor for Marvel Comics (if Joe Quesada or C.B. Cebulski are reading this – feel free to call him). Powers currently lives in Oakland, CA with his wife Jody and their dog Lemmy in an apartment way too small for his 11,000 comic books.

Caroline Rogers (Costume Designer)

Caroline Rogers started as a ballerina at a young age, and by the age of 16 and for the next decade, she was a professional aerialist traveling all over the world performing for private gala events. This is how she met her husband, fellow cast member Kevin Rogers. Learning to sew as a young girl and with her experience on stage wearing costumes she had the perfect background to move into costume design and building. She has now designed for almost a decade for various companies at live gala events, award shows, theme parks and tours including Disney, DreamWorks and Cirque Mechanics. She is so excited to present her vision of a 1930's circus in *42FT!* Follow her work and crazy life on Instagram @ninesdesigns.

Nata Ibragimov (Artist, Illustrator, Poster and Headpiece Designer)

Originally from Baku, Azerbaijan, Ibragimov currently resides in Los Angeles. She was a national level rhythmic gymnast for 11 years. After retiring from the sport at the age of 16, she pursued her other passions, visual and performing arts. Circus was a perfect outlet for her creativity, giving her freedom to experiment and improve her skills. Ibragimov was an original cast member in Cirque Mechanics' *Pedal Punk*, performing a solo hula-hoop act. She toured with *Pedal Punk* all four seasons. Ibragimov is currently a member of Troupe Vertigo and a coach at Cirque School LA. Ibragimov is grateful that circus has given her the opportunity to meet some incredibly talented people that inspire her art every day. Ibragimov is also a professional illustrator. Her paintings have been included in private collections and displayed in galleries around the world. nataillustration.com

Aida Lashua (Co-Producer, Collaborator)

Aida Lashua has been Chris Lashua's co-producer and creative partner in life and work for over 20 years. Their partnership includes nearly a decade of touring and work experience with Cirque du Soleil (CDS) as well as over a decade running their own company, Cirque Mechanics. Lashua worked for CDS sponsor AT&T, implementing their multi-million dollar sponsorship agreement on tour, which included product placement, sales staff training and

supervision of special sales promotions. She also worked as a box office supervisor and house manager for CDS, where she trained and managed a staff of sixty and implemented customer service policies, helped develop and revise training manuals and VIP package tests.

Thanks to her experience with CDS, Lashua has an appreciation for the business and a passion for the circus arts. She currently manages the day-to-day operations of Cirque Mechanics and family with poise; she is a creative force and stabilizing influence. Lashua's education and background in direct marketing allows her to use a targeted approach in the development of the company's website and social media presence. As a mother of three boys, Lashua is an avid supporter of the educational component and community outreach programs offered by Cirque Mechanics. She has written the educational outreach support materials and study guides, as well as developed the structure of the educational workshops. A native of Puerto Rico, Lashua feels most at home near the ocean. She hopes to one day become a published writer.

Janeen Johnson (Creative Team Liaison, Director of Production)

Johnson has served in stage management for dance, theatre and special events for over 15 years. Her training in the discipline was cultivated through her service in arts management and her own personal dance training and stage performances in community and regional theatres throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. She has also worked with organizations in both the public and private sectors as a freelance agent, upholding roles as production and company manager, managing director and producer, where she gained insight into the art of stage management. As a multi-faceted professional, Johnson has stage managed the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, the San Francisco International Hip Hop Dance Fest, Black Choreographer's Festival, India Jazz Suites World Premiere, *A Musical Memoir-Be Bop Baby*, and the multi-media docu-dance theatre, *Kongo Odyssey*. Johnson has also worked with celebrated arts organizations such as Kongo SQ West Kinship Society, Urban Bush Women, Fua Dia Congo and the Chitresh Das Dance Company.

In 2008, Johnson made her maiden voyage into circus with the tour of Cirque Mechanics' *Birdhouse Factory* and toured with the company's succeeding productions *Boomtown* and *Pedal Punk*. She is excited to get back on the saddle and tour with its latest production, *42FT - A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels*. Johnson continues to provide onsite event management, project-planning strategies and producing community arts events in between tours. janeenellajohnson.com

Joe D'Emilio (Lighting Designer)

Joe D'Emilio is a New York City-based lighting designer with over a decade of experience in theatre, opera, dance and special events. He joined the Cirque Mechanics family in 2015 on *Birdhouse Factory* and continued on to tour with *Pedal Punk*. Additionally, D'Emilio has designed for Circus Juventas in St. Paul, MN and Circus Sarasota. His SF Bay area designs include work with Ray of Light Theatre, Broadway By the Bay, Aurora Theatre and Contra Costa Musical Theatre. When not out on the road, D'Emilio works at the NYC venues National Sawdust, The Box and the Met Museum. He is a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829. jodemilio.com

Kevin Rogers (Technical Lead, Performer)

Rogers has been involved in the entertainment industry for as long as he can remember. He has been an actor, acrobat, stunt performer, special effects makeup artist, prop builder and more. Rogers has been at least a small part of all of Cirque Mechanics touring shows, sometimes on stage and sometimes not, but he has always had a great experience! When not touring with *42FT*, he can be found throwing robots around for Walt Disney Imagineering. Interesting fact: he cannot remember a day in his adult life that has not included some sort of chocolate!

CAST

Wes Hatfield (Captain, Coach, Acrobat)

Hatfield has been a competitive trampolinist for over 10 years. He got his start in Germany, where he spent his early years in gymnastics. At age 10, he joined trampoline and tumbling when he moved to Colorado. In the world of trampoline competition, his resume includes several state and national championship titles. At 19, he quit competition and became a circus performer, traveling around the world wowing audiences with

his technical prowess and zany comedic antics. Hatfield was a cast member in Cirque Mechanics' *Birdhouse Factory* and *Boom Town*, performing trampoline and Chinese poles. Hatfield now lives in Los Angeles, where he is a coach at Cirque School Los Angeles and has been expanding his discipline repertoire, developing a duo trapeze act and training in Cyr wheel. Hatfield is a fan of avocados and coffee (not together though).

Justin Therrien (Clown)

Therrien has been working as a circus performer for a decade. He started his path in a tiny, run down building doing vaudeville shows to eager audiences once a month, then moved on to adapt his skills to street performing, cabarets, festivals, ensemble shows and operas. In recent years, he's worked in a traditional, touring, tent circus as a clown, which has given him insight coming into his new role in *42FT*. Along with sword swallowing, juggling, dancing and magic, Therrien is obsessed with getting into the woods and hunting mushrooms (for food!).

Ariel Mosier (Acrobat, Roue Cyr)

Mosier is a Colorado girl who grew up above a gym, and spent most of her younger days jumping on trampolines and making up dance moves. Along with many years in competitive artistic gymnastics, trampoline and tumbling, she branched out into dance, diving, pole-vaulting and martial arts. As a lifelong flipper, circus was a natural career choice, as it gave her a productive outlet for being a show-off. Mosier is primarily a high-flying acrobat in *42FT*, but she has performed on many aerial apparatuses, as well as Chinese pole and Cyr wheel. She has been training duo Cyr wheel with her wonderful partner Gregory McElroy since January 2016, and they have been a part of many great shows including Circus Couture, Kwerk and Zippos Circus. She has an awesome dog named Keaton, accurately named after the actor Buster Keaton due to his stunts and inherent performance ability. In her spare time, Mosier loves to read, create and go on adventures.

Gregory McElroy (Acrobat, Roue Cyr)

Originally from the southwest, and born in the small town of Battle Mountain, Nevada, Gregory McElroy spent his childhood traveling and living in South America and Mexico with his family studying falcons and hawks. As adulthood approached, McElroy discovered his love for circus and has toured the globe performing as an acrobat and aerialist with cirque companies and shows including Zippos Circus, Circus Couture and Kwerk. He is currently an artist at David Goldrake's *Imaginarium* at the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. McElroy has competed and medaled in numerous festivals and competitions, most recently earning a medal with his duo roue Cyr partner and fellow cast member, Ariel Mosier, at the 2018 Vegas International Variety Acts Festival "Viva Fest". Constantly fascinated by supernatural folklore, McElroy loves to absorb the history and origins of these myths and tales.

Kae Henning (Acrobat, Trapeze Artist)

Kae Henning grew up in the gymnastics gym. After wandering off to college and getting lost in theatre and visual arts for a few years, she found her way back to the gym trading in her competition leotards for circus rhinestones and frills. Henning most recently toured Europe performing on a cruise ship and is now based in Las Vegas. She specializes in aerial straps and pretending that other circus apparatus are just weirdly shaped straps. Henning's diet is composed of 75% chocolate, 10% vegetables, 10% tea, and 5% vegan protein powder. She frequently walks into walls and refuses to let her feet touch the floor while riding in an elevator.

Esther de Monteflores (Slackwire Performer, Juggler)

Esther de Monteflores is one of a tiny handful of circus performers in the U.S. specializing in slack-wire walking. She is the recipient of a 2017 Fellowship in Performing Arts from Artist Trust (Seattle, WA) and co-founder of Deathbench Productions. In her work, de Monteflores seeks a balance between technical skill and expressive movement, and her unique take on circus has been seen across North America. Recently, she has toured her solo show, *Tiny Cities*, in venues including the Luminaria Contemporary Arts Festival and Art on the Atlanta Beltline. She has been an Artist in Residence in Anchorage, AK developing and premiering a new duo piece, *A System of Strings*, and has been seen performing slack-wire with Wise Fool in her new home of Santa Fe, NM. She eagerly awaits the publishing of the Harper's Magazine Findings section each month.

Brooke Neilson (Acrobat)

Neilson has been a gymnast most of her life. She majored in dance performance at Valencia College in Orlando, FL where she was born and raised. After college, she performed at Universal Studios Orlando in the Superstar Parade, Terminator 2:3D experience, The 8th Voyage of Sinbad stunt show, the Macy's Holiday Parade and Mardi Gras Parade. Neilson got her first break into the circus world at Sea World San Diego's summer show *Cirque De La Mer*. There, she performed Chinese pole and tramp wall with aquatic dismounts. She continued to develop her circus skills on the Carnival Dream cruise ship, performing hand to hand, Chinese pole, tumbling and dancing acts. She recently moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. Neilson spent last summer bouncing on tramp wall at the San Diego Zoo. She is obsessed with traveling and horses, and spends her all her money on both travel adventures and her horse, Echo.

Chase Jarvis (Acrobat)

Chase Jarvis was born in Chicago, but it was after a move to Phoenix, Arizona in his early teens, that he started training in acrobatics. Trained in parkour, tricking and tumbling, he began performing for local entertainment companies at 15 years old. Jarvis continued his acrobatic training in power tumbling and trampoline specifically for competition, but an offer of a training spot with the world renowned Cirque du Soleil changed the course of his career. Jarvis has performed around the world with multiple companies and was excited to join the cast of *Cirque Mechanics 42FT*. He specializes in bullwhip, Russian swing, power track, trampwall, trampoline and diving. Fun fact about Jarvis: he once qualified for a national pole dance competition.

Tatiana Vasilenko (Juggler)

Tatiana Vasilenko was born to a circus family in a small city in Russia, where she always dreamt about performing on a circus stage. She began circus skills training by practicing tricks with her dad (who is a juggler); she also learned hula-hooping and general acrobatics. Inspired by a bounce-juggling act she first saw on video, she decided to pursue it. Following in her dad's footsteps, Vasilenko became a juggler. She graduated from the Moscow Circus School and, before moving to Las Vegas in 2014, Vasilenko worked in Moscow, Paris, Singapore and Vietnam. She has been a featured act in *Rose.Rabbit.Lie* at the Cosmopolitan Hotel and Casino and in *Tommy Wind Magic Show* and *Streetmosphere* at the Venetian Hotel and Casino. Vasilenko is a fan of football (soccer) and astronomy. You may find her looking up at the sky and dreaming about flying to the moon or playing soccer, hopefully with Leo Messi someday.

Tulga – Battulga Battogtokh (Strongman)

Hailing from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, where circus art thrives, Battulga Battogtokh, better known as The Titanic Tulga, is a descendent of the legendary dynasty of Genghis Khan. In a showcase of unbelievable strength, this strongman demonstrates a herculean display of human dexterity as he juggles bowling balls, car tires and kettle bells, lifts large cumbersome telephone poles, and performs unbelievable displays. Born and raised in the Gobi desert in Mongolia, Battulga Battogtokh trained in traditional warrior wrestling and sport competition.

Javen Mungun Ulambayar – Mooj (Acrobat, Trapeze Artist)

Javen Mungun Ulambayar (Mooj) is delighted to be on stage with the production of *42FT*. Mungun Ulambayar is a Chicago-based circus performer, specializing in aerial straps. He learned circus skills at the reputable youth circus school, Circus Juventas, in Saint Paul, Minnesota and continued to grow his artistic work as a coach and collaborator there. He is grateful to have been the head coach at the Actors Gymnasium, Evanston, IL, fostering skills for aspiring students, and has worked on their show productions for many seasons. He has worked with Midnight Circus and in Looking Glass Theatre's *Moby Dick*, refreshing and broadening his interest in theatre and passion for the infusion of circus arts in theatre. He also devotes his free time to home brewing where he enjoys experimenting with the craft of delicious beers.

Cirque Mechanics

Cirque Mechanics was founded in 2004 by Boston native and German Wheel artist, Chris Lashua, after the success of his collaborative project with the Circus Center of San Francisco, *Birdhouse Factory*. Cirque Mechanics quickly established itself as a premier

American circus, with its unique approach to performance, inspiring storytelling and innovative mechanical staging. *Spectacle Magazine* hailed it as “the greatest contribution to the American circus since Cirque du Soleil”.

Cirque Mechanics, although inspired by modern circus, finds its roots in the mechanical and its heart in the stories of American ingenuity. The shows, rooted in realism, display a raw quality rarely found in modern circus, which makes their message timeless and relevant. The stories are wrapped in circus acrobatics, mechanical wonders and a bit of clowning around. The troupe has created four extraordinary productions: *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boomtown*, *Pedal Punk* and new for the 18-19 season, *42FT - A Menagerie of Mechanics Marvels*.

A Note of Thanks from the Producers

We want to thank: Our family, our three wonderful sons, Zion, Quinn and Iago, for their unconditional love and support, their enthusiasm, their imagination and for adopting the spirit of a true circus family by discussing act ideas, narrative and plot points at the dinner table and helping in the shop with painting, building and clean up! Our parents for taking us to the circus as children and allowing us to dream. Our cast and crew for their tireless efforts and their collaborative energy. Marc Baylin and his team at Baylin Artists Management for believing in our company and setting us on a new path. Lori Pullen and the University of Las Vegas for their sponsorship. Armand Thomas for his continuing support of us, our family and our projects. Bo Bogatin and Kurt Nelson for keeping us honest and legal. Andy Espo for his friendship, clear head and objectivity. Bryan Schuette and the boys at United Machine, for fabricating and creating and trusting us with their equipment. Terry Pittman at The Bike Shop in Henderson for helping to make the mechanical horse go, Don Seiersen at Vishnu Creative for his great graphic support, Maike Schulz Photography for her wonderful and stunning images, Renee Clinton for being a champion of our work and our friends and family at Cirque du Soleil for continuing to set the bar higher.

The creation process was long and arduous, but extremely rewarding. We had so much fun designing and exploring, training and rehearsing. Our goal is that you are entertained and our hope is that you are moved. Finally, thank you to our audiences for your loyalty and your faith in our company, for the laughs, the applause and the appreciation for the circus arts.