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Circus Juventas named a Cirque du Soleil NexGen training center

(Saint Paul, MN) The largest contemporary circus producer in the world, **Cirque du Soleil**, based in Montreal, Canada, has chosen the largest youth circus school in North America, **Circus Juventas** in Saint Paul, Minnesota to be one of their select talent development centers. Other circus centers on this distinguished list include: Acro Clube de Maia, Maia, Portugal; Ant Gym, Avignon, France; Balance Akrobatika & Torna Club, Budapest, Hungary; and New England Center of Circus Arts, Brattleboro, Vermont. “Our entire Circus Juventas community feels tremendously honored to be selected as a Cirque du Soleil NexGen training center. When my wife, Betty, and I started **Circus Juventas** 28 years ago, contemporary circus arts, the animal free circus entertainment, was just taking shape,” said Daniel Butler, Circus Juventas Co-founder and Executive Director. “It’s a unique art form that demands so much from a performer, both physically and mentally. We have seen repeatedly how contemporary circus arts can take a young person, including one who doesn’t fit into traditional activities, and transform them into a strong, healthy, disciplined performer.”

What does this mean for Circus Juventas

Cirque du Soleil’s talent development program, **NexGen**, started in 2017 as a collaboration between Cirque du Soleil and select talent training centers. Cirque’s stated goal is to share

expertise and best practices in the field of human performance and provide high caliber training opportunities to emerging talent.

Cirque du Soleil NexGen workshops will provide:

- **Early detection:** Training and workshops for athletes as young as 16
- **High Caliber Training:** the centers and the athletes will benefit from the expertise of Cirque du Soleil coaches.
- **Future Talent:** Identify and nurture young athletes as they prepare for a career on stage.

“We are thrilled to be selected and we anticipate fielding interest from performers across the world when we announce the first Cirque du Soleil NexGen training workshop under our big top in Saint Paul which we anticipate to be in the coming months,” said Rob Dawson, arena manager and professional program director at Circus Juventas. Dawson, who was instrumental in bringing this opportunity to Circus Juventas, along with his wife, Kristina Ivanova Dawson, have decades of performance history with Cirque du Soleil. Rob performed in Cirque productions, *Mystere* and *LaNouba*, as a flying trapeze catcher, Chinese poles acrobat and silk soloist, and eventually moved into a head coaching position for Cirque. Kristina recently retired from performing and joined the Circus Juventas coaching staff this year.

Circus Juventas’ history with developing young talent

Over the past 28 years, many alumni from Circus Juventas’ advanced youth program have gone on to professional careers with Cirque du Soleil, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, the Wallenda Family, Bello Nock, The Royal Hanneford Circus, Cirque Mechanics, Cirque Eloize and many other professional circus organizations. Internationally recognized circus director Sun Yanhong, who brings accolades from her years with China’s Flag Circus and Cirque du Soleil’s *Dralion*, will assume official co-leadership of the professional program alongside Rob Dawson. They will build on the singular goal: get students out into the professional world of circus.

About Circus Juventas

Circus Juventas is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and the largest youth performing arts circus school in North America. For more than 25 years, co-founders Dan and Betty Butler have seen their dream grow into a year-round program that serves more than 2,500 children and youth with a diverse array of circus arts training and performance opportunities in a noncompetitive setting.

Circus Juventas' mission is to inspire artistry and self-confidence through a multicultural circus arts experience that encourages leadership and life skills, teamwork, athleticism, artistry, pursuit of excellence and community service. For more information, visit <https://circusjuventas.org>.

Cirque du Soleil at a glance

From a group of 20 street performers at its beginnings in 1984, *Cirque du Soleil* has become a major Québec-based organization providing high-quality artistic entertainment. The company has close to 4,000 employees, including 1,300 artists from more than 50 different countries.

Cirque du Soleil has brought wonder and delight to more than 180 million spectators in more than 400 cities in over sixty countries on six continents.

For more information about *Cirque du Soleil*, visit www.cirquedusoleil.com.

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