

EMERGENCE EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

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“**E**MERGENCE” is defined as the process of an idea, person or entity issuing forth from “concealment, obscurity or confinement.”¹ Industrial innovation, apparatus prototypes made with emerging technologies and object-oriented performance were trending in the circus world at the beginning of 2019. A growing number of inventions, re-inventions and hybrid props inspired physical performance vocabularies and discussions about a new materialism in the circus arts. Then, the global pandemic hit. Most research and development projects, new show creations and live performances either slowed or stopped completely.

From the Global North to the Global South, circus companies, organizations, schools, universities, researchers, festivals and artists had to survive emergency conditions during the economic, social and health impacts of COVID-19. These impacts are still felt today, and the struggle continues. Some community members adapted, survived, pivoted, and even thrived. Others moved to different industries. The pain, isolation and inventiveness of this historical moment influenced the circus arts in a number of ways. The concurrent Black Lives Matter movement and other social justice issues that were illuminated during this time and its political unrest sparked conversations, demonstrations and change throughout the circus industry. Other historical events have similarly influenced both circuses and the societies in which they exist.

In the Arts section of this issue, “Des circassiens périphériques aux prises avec la globalisation : Trajectoires transnationales et controverses esthétiques” (*Peripheral Circus Artists Struggling with Globalization: Transnational Trajectories and Aesthetic Controversies*) discusses the emergence of circus in post-dictatorial Chile. Through ethnographic case studies of Chilean artists who received professional training in Europe, Aurore Dupuy discusses the materialization of new artistic identities as well as the institutionalization of circus creating hierarchies

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with a preference for the “prestige” of Westernized contemporary circus over traditional street circus performance. Dupuy’s article highlights how innovation—a highly valued characteristic in circus arts—can be a double-edged sword. While innovation provides motivation for new creations, an overly narrow view of what innovation should be can create unnecessary hierarchies. Such cultural reterritorialization can lead to the erasure of traditional cultural art and marginalization of bodies that become viewed as “less than.”

The Life section begins with Erin Ball’s video essay “Disability and Aerial Dance Intensive,” which shares an emerging approach to facilitating aerial exploration within the Disability community. Her work opens the mind to new pathways of innovation. These new performance vocabularies can only be realized through the inclusion of humans with non-stereotypical circus bodies and abilities, as well as their bodyminds, which often extend to their assistive devices. The second video essay in this section is by Stephen Cadwell and discusses the *Lifeline* performance project, which culminated in 140 students and their tutors walking a tightrope over a river in Galway for thousands of spectators. Cadwell focuses on how the cultivation of trust during the training and creation of such a performance leads to the development of a sense of safety from within. This social circus project presented funambulism over a river that was known in the town as a site where many people had died by suicide. Some participants shared that they saw themselves as more capable or having greater physical ability than they had previously. And, of course, the river itself took on a new identity of hope, community, resilience and fun, in contrast to its darker past. Both of these publications highlight the continued emergence and growth of practice as an important method of embodied research. Our Life section will continue to push boundaries and increase the dissemination of such work.

The Sciences section includes the first injury surveillance study of adults practicing aerial circus arts recreationally. Tera McBlaine conducted an international survey study to explore the characteristics of injury and emerging risk factors in this understudied but consistently growing population of recreational circus artists. While there are limitations to studying injury through self-report, this study is an important first step toward expanding knowledge that will create healthier circus communities. The article suggests several important areas of focus for injury mitigation that surpass human biomechanics. While McBlaine recommends interventions aimed at improving shoulder and arm health, environmental factors, including mat usage and clothing choices for practice, are also suggested. Indeed, the whole training ecosystem is implicated in injury prevention.

This issue of *Circus: Arts, Life and Sciences* concludes with Julieta Infantino’s review of *Um Brasil de Circos: a produção da linguagem circense do século XIX aos anos de 1930* (*A Brazil of Circuses: the production of circus language from the 19th century to*

the 1930s) by Daniel de Carvalho Lopes and Erminia Silva. Infantino discusses the importance of studying the history of circus arts in the Global South and sharing stories that communicate their cultural significance over time. In resonance with Dupuy's article in the Arts section of this issue, Infantino also notes the tensions between the so-called new and traditional circus. The emergence of a hierarchy in which contemporary circus is viewed as superior to other circus traditions reinforces the misconception that innovation occurs almost exclusively in Westernized contemporary circus. Infantino's review of *Um Brasil de Circos* celebrates the fact that Latin American circus often evolved through the incorporation of various art forms and languages from across the globe. It is important to avoid the ethnocentric tendency to see one style as superior to others; this allows us to appreciate the dialogues that emerge in the social and cultural *milieus* where various circuses meet.

Circus is a resilient industry with a diverse history. It has broad implications for identity, health, culture and more at both the level of the individual practitioner and that of society as a whole. This issue showcases not only what is emerging or has emerged *within* the circus arts, but also that which emerges *from* them to influence other aspects of life. Circus is indeed a powerful medium for communication, connection, discovery and, of course, pleasure and enjoyment. When all of us, whether academics, practitioners or spectators, remain open-minded and embrace the diversity and innovation that is circus, we may be surprised to see what can emerge.

Note

1. This is the second definition of "emergence" from *The Oxford English Dictionary*. The first is the "rising (of a submerged body) out of the water."