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Building Character and Community

Community Circus: A Literature Review

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Preface

This report is part of a wider research project in 2011/2012 that aims to support the development of community circus in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is funded by the Lotteries Community Sector Research Fund and involves a partnership between Circus Kumarani (www.circuskumarani.co.nz), a community circus provider based in Dargaville, and Auckland based researcher Rachael Trotman, with assistance from Alex Woodley of Point Research (www.pointresearch.co.nz).

As a partnership, this research is guided by a project team involving Jenny Huriwai (Circus Kumarani's Project Manager), Frances Kelliher and Thomas Hinz (founders of Circus Kumarani and the newly formed Auckland Community Circus, www.communitycircus.co.nz/Auckland_Community_Circus/Home.html), Rachael Trotman and Alex Woodley.

A key aim of this research is to shine a light on the thinking and practice surrounding community circus within New Zealand, and to place this within an international context. This literature review aims to provide this international context by exploring available overseas literature on community circus.

The project team would like to thank the University of Tampere in Finland's Social Circus Project for sharing its resources and all those who helped in the sourcing of the literature in this review.



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Executive Summary

"I like to think that after performing in a Circus, however small, however local, the world looks different. From now on, if you work at it, if you can be in a family or a group where people support each other, then absolutely anything is achievable"
(Bolton 1997).

This literature review explores international literature on community circus, in terms of what community circus is, its reported benefits, good practice, how to sustain and evaluate community circus activity and implications for the development of community circus in New Zealand.

Academic and research based literature on community circus is sparse. As such this review draws on diverse material including journal articles, books, websites, conference proceedings, circus related magazines and popular media. Community circus practitioner views are at least as strong in this review as those of researchers and other commentators.

Circus arts today span a spectrum from global corporations such as Cirque du Soleil, to traditional tent and ring circuses, to community based circus programmes including youth circuses, to individual street performers. The terms social circus and community circus are both used to refer to a form of 'new circus' that occurs within a range of community settings (e.g. schools and community facilities), with a wide range of groups, for personal and social development.

Community circus involves using circus skills such as balancing, trapeze, juggling and clowning, to build 'character and community'. This involves the applied teaching and learning of circus skills, to a group of people, which usually results in a public performance. Along the way individuals learn and develop and positive impacts can also take place at group, family and community level.

Key reported benefits of community circus include:

- Anyone can take part and it can offer something for everyone
- It connects people and builds bridges across social divides
- It can promote personal growth (health, fitness, emotional and mental development, self confidence, communication skills etc)
- It supports social learning (it's fun, involves trust, cooperation, teamwork, respect, leadership)
- It can build communities and lead to social change (can overcome prejudice, build a sense of pride and belonging, can connect families and communities).

Community circus most often occurs with children and young people, including school based programmes. Bolton (2004) contends that circus can respond to six key elements of children's development: learning about them self; taking risks; trust; dreams and aspiration; hard work and persistence; and having fun. Several authors (Seton 2005; Davis 2000; McCutcheon 2003; Carr no date; Woodhead 2003) highlight the value of circus in schools to promote all forms of learning and development (including mental, physical, social, emotional and kinaesthetic); provide an alternative to traditional sports and arts; appeal to reluctant exercisers and at risk youth; reduce antisocial behaviour and provide a vehicle for risk taking.

Community circus is also commonly undertaken with disabled people, for whom circus can provide something new and different, promote a sense of pride, belonging and achievement, target their ability rather than disability and improve quality of life.

Given its significant reported potential for positive outcomes, some authors ask why community circus is not more prevalent. Reasons given include often unconscious associations of circus with human fears such as a fear of heights, of looking silly, of falling, feeling exposed or ridiculed. Other perceived barriers include health and safety concerns, lack of resources and skills and the risk element of circus (which is paradoxically considered to be a key part of its appeal). Concern is also expressed that attempts to mainstream community circus might undermine the mystery and magic of circus.

Good practice regarding community circus in the literature emphasises the need for teachers and practitioners with circus skills, social skills and teaching skills; venues to learn, practice and perform; equipment and tools; funding sources and good leadership and governance of community circus organisations. Local, regional and national support structures are also desirable, such as circus development agencies, schools and circus specific venues. Some countries also have national coordinators, networks and opportunities for people in the sector to gather, share and learn.

A Finnish good practice guide to social circus has just been produced (2011), targeted to teachers and providers of community circus. Other good practice guidance tends to relate to circus provision in schools and youth circus.

Sustainability of community circus activity requires sustaining the passion, leadership and skills of key people involved; good marketing and promotion; getting the price right and staying afloat financially. Ideas to support sustainability include generating income from workshops and classes, providing professional circus development programmes, developing circus related businesses, sponsorship, contracts and offering school based programmes.

Evaluation of community circus activity tends to be based on participation levels, self reported impacts for participants, capturing before and after changes for participants and wider community impacts. Community circus is well suited to story based

evaluation methods, visual methods such as photography and DVD and participatory methods which actively involve those taking part.

This review throws up a wide range of opportunities to foster community circus in New Zealand, including networking, developing funding sources and circus related social enterprises, building its infrastructure and knowledge base, developing programmes in local areas and with sectors such as early childhood, schools, disability and migrant groups. The review affirms the importance of skilled, passionate and committed people to grow and lead community circus efforts at local, regional and national levels.



1. Introduction

"We bring you the circus — that Pied Piper whose magic tunes lead children of all ages, from 6 to 60, into a tinselled and spun-candied world of reckless beauty and mounting laughter; whirling thrills; of rhythm, excitement and grace; of daring, enflaming and dance...The Greatest Show on Earth!"¹

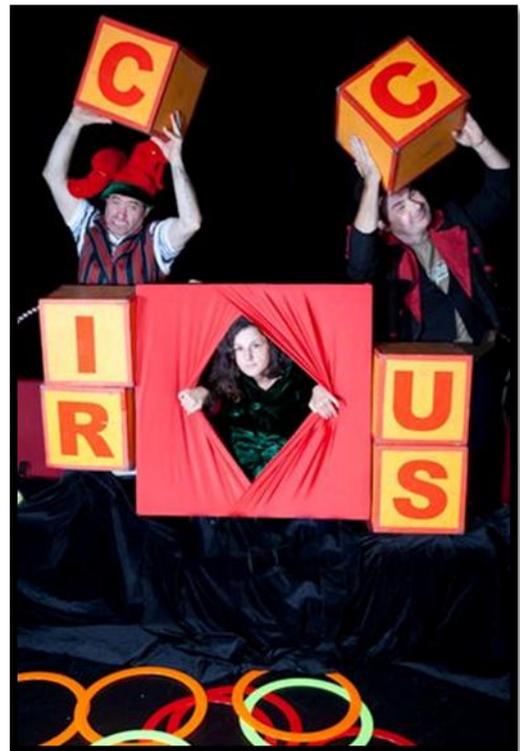
In Western culture today, 'circus' tends to evoke images of tent circus performances, or of sophisticated global circus corporations such as Cirque du Soleil. In both cases, circus is a briefly encountered spectacle performed by others, a magical world entered and left, its inner workings largely hidden.

In recent times however, new forms of circus have emerged, including what is variously called community circus or social circus (community circus in this review). Unlike traditional circus, which is performed by a small group and watched by the public, with community circus anyone can take part, learn new skills, perform for others and discover how the magic of circus acts upon themselves and others.

This report explores the circus world through the window of international literature on community circus, with particular reference to:

- What community circus is
- Its reported benefits and impacts
- Good practice
- Sustaining community circus
- Evaluating community circus.

This review is part of a wider research project called *Developing Community Circus in Aotearoa New Zealand*, which is described below. The report then discusses the range of literature included in this review, before presenting this literature in a format that reflects the areas of interest above. It ends by presenting implications of this review for community circus in New Zealand.



¹ These are the abridged opening remarks of the 1952 drama film *The Greatest Show on Earth*, set in the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus (Wikipedia).

2. Research project objectives, methods and timeframe

In December 2010, the Lotteries Community Sector Research Fund approved funding for a research project in 2011/12 to support the development of community circus in New Zealand. The project is a partnership between Circus Kumarani, a Dargaville based community circus provider (see www.circuskumarani.co.nz) and researcher Rachael Trotman, with advisory support from Alex Woodley. Frances Kelliher and Thomas Hinz from Auckland Community Circus complete the project team.

Developing community circus in Aotearoa New Zealand aims to explore the field of community circus and support its development nationwide. The core objectives of the research are as follows.

- To clearly describe community circus, including how it differs from other forms of circus.
- Identify the reported benefits of community circus.
- Uncover good practice information relevant to community circus.
- Explore the 'current state' of community circus in New Zealand, compared to overseas approaches.
- Identify ways that community circus can flourish in New Zealand.
- Provide guidance and simple tools to evaluate community circus activities.

How community circus relates to children, young people and people with disabilities is also an interest in this research, as these are the people most likely to take part in community circus at present in New Zealand and internationally.

The research methods involve a national online survey of the community circus sector²; a literature review (the subject of this report); stakeholder interviews with key players in New Zealand, plus several from overseas (20 interviews in total); evaluation of four community circus programmes and a workshop at the Auckland Circus Convention in February 2012.

The research began with the national online survey in April 2011 and will be completed by September 2012. From this review the next steps will be to undertake the stakeholder interviews and evaluate four community circus programmes.

² This was completed in September 2011 and can be downloaded from the Circus Kumarani website www.circuskumarani.co.nz or www.communitycircus.co.nz.

Each research phase is written up separately and made available along the way³, with key findings from all phases combined in an overall report, to be completed by September 2012.



³ Research findings are available at www.circuskumarani.co.nz and www.communitycircus.co.nz.

3. The literature

This literature review used the search terms 'community circus', 'social circus', 'circus and disability', 'youth circus', 'children's circus', 'benefits of circus', 'evaluation of circus', 'circus and good practice', and 'new circus'. These terms were applied to online academic databases available via the University of Auckland library catalogue, plus an online search using Google Scholar. The regional Auckland library service catalogue was searched and a general online search was undertaken.

Bolton's PhD thesis *Why Circus Works: How the Values and Structures of Circus Make it a Significant Developmental Experience for Young People*, opens by stating that despite circus being a centuries old and worldwide phenomenon, it has largely escaped academic analysis (2004:1). He notes that despite there being a body of historical and biographical literature, "...there is very little associated aesthetic, critical, theoretical, sociological, scientific or psychological work" (ibid). This however is considered part of its allure: "Much of the value and appeal of circus is that it is relatively unexplored and unexplained" (ibid).

The literature search undertaken here reinforces Bolton's assertion regarding the limited existence of academic research on circus, let alone community circus. The literature that emerged was mostly web based literature via community circus provider websites⁴ and international networks and organisations⁵. Literature types include some academic journal articles and books, evaluations of community circus programmes, conference proceedings, notes from international networking meetings, articles on websites, circus related magazines and popular media.

The New Zealand literature base on community circus is miniscule, with only one journal article⁶ found, one evaluation⁷ and very limited web based literature. New Zealand's only tertiary level circus training school⁸ (Circo Arts at Christchurch Polytechnic) was unfortunately closed after the February 2011 earthquake in

⁴ For example the Belfast Community Circus, Reg Bolton's website, the European Youth Circus Organisation and Cirque du Monde.

⁵ Network of International Circus Exchange (NICE), European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA Melbourne).

⁶ Price, Chris (2008), "Circo Arts: Activity Challenges for Children", *Journal of Physical Education New Zealand*, February 1, 2008.

⁷ Searle, Carol (2007), Seastarr Management Limited, *The Kumarani Productions Trust: Social Outcomes and Future Developments*. Unpublished report.

⁸ There are however a small number of circus training schools and providers in New Zealand that are generally charitable trusts, such as the Wellington Circus School (<http://www.circus.org.nz/>), The Performing Arts School of New Zealand (<http://www.pasnz.co.nz/>), Northland's Circus Kumarani (<http://www.circuskumarani.co.nz/>), and the New Zealand Juggling Association (<http://nzja.org.nz/>).

Christchurch, with most students going to Melbourne to complete their studies at the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA)⁹.

Much of the current literature on community circus relates to child and youth circus, as this is the most common form of community circus globally. Least literature was found relating to community circus and disability. Community circus literature sits within the social arts, has a strong relationship with the field of arts education and links to myriad other literature bases, for example arts as therapy (e.g. clown doctors), drama and education and even neuroscience (e.g. the benefits to the brain of juggling).

In this context of limited academic research on community circus, a wide range of literature is utilised in this review. Thus research findings will sometimes sit alongside the opinions of providers, performers and participants of community circus. In this review the views of practitioners are at least as strong as those of researchers.



⁹ Advice from Christchurch Polytechnic is that the school may reopen in 2013.

4. What is community circus?

4.1 The circus arts

From ancient times human beings have practiced what Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde 2008³⁰ refer to as the “five big circus families of activities: acrobatics, aerials, balance, juggling and “body expression””. Carr (no date) divides circus skills into four areas:

1. Acrobatics – tumbling, balance and contortion
2. Aerobatics – flying/static trapeze, ropes, silks, webs
3. Manipulation – juggling, diabolo, stilts, rola-bola, globe, unicycle, poi
4. Clowning – drama, comedy, mime.

Price refers to ‘circo arts’ as being a “collection of novelty physical challenges” (2008:1), with the range offered being limitless. The hybrid character of circus and its international identity allow for endless variations among different types of circus activities, and between circus and other art forms such as circus and dance, circus and theatre, circus and music, circus and sport, fine arts and so on (Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde 2008). This diversity of activity and compatibility with other art forms is seen as a huge part of its appeal in working with a wide range of groups (and especially young people), as circus can provide ‘something for everyone’:

“The great variety...of circus activities helps to involve all kind of target groups. In social circus for instance, the fun-based character of circus is essential, as it helps to reach groups in difficulties and [supports] values [such] as teambuilding, cohesion, solidarity, respect of the rules and of the others. In school projects...one of the main objectives is to reconsider the “body” of the pupils and to facilitate their socialisation” (Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde 2008).

There are many roles within circus activity which are archetypal across time and culture – for example the trickster, the jester, the fool, the magician, the ringmaster and the clown have a place in virtually all societies. Circus activities promote universal values such as collaboration and cooperation, but can also play into primal human fears and challenges – for Tetrault the wire walker challenges the fear of the abyss (2008:217), and for Ballreich the circus “...represents archetypes for overcoming gravity (acrobatics, pyramids), flexibility in dealing with objects (juggling and other hand manipulations),

³⁰ Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (2008), *The Development of Social Circus: Notes from a Meeting organized by Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde - Centre des Arts du Cirque Sud-de-Seine, Salle des Fêtes, Bagneux, France, Tuesday, 18.11.2008*, accessible at <http://www.caravancircusnetwork.eu>. Cirque du Monde is the social arm of Cirque du Soleil and focuses on supporting and providing youth circus programmes in over 80 communities world wide. Cirque du Soleil donates 1% of its revenue to Cirque du Monde.

overcoming fear in finding balance (balancing, trapeze), and the optimistic mastery of life's adversities (clowns)" (2000:2).

4.2 Emergence of 'new circus'

The literature presents community circus as a form of 'new circus', arising out of the decline of the traditional tent and family travelling circus in the twentieth century, combined with the social revolution in the West during the 1960s and 1970s, from which time circus arts came to be applied for a wide range of purposes. Burden describes this as follows (2004:94):

"Worldwide, as traditional family circus has declined, there has been a boom in new circus. This new form of entertainment and leisure participation covers a broad spectrum of modes of engagement. At one end of this range, there are giant blockbusters like Cirque du Soleil with several massive big tops and performance crews continuously touring the globe performing to packed houses. At the other end of the spectrum, there are small circus skills workshops for children in schools and community halls leading to popular performances at community festivals and school assemblies".

Mark St Leon traces the history of circus in Australia (2011). He also distinguishes between the traditional circus movement and various forms of 'new circus'. The former involves commercially operated, travelling tent circuses catering mainly for family audiences, where audience participation is usually limited to structured, predictable routines (2011:252). New circuses are divided by St Leon into the avant garde, 'new wave' companies, which constantly push the meaning of circus to new limits, and the youth focused community circus groups that have flowered in various forms and guises (2011: 253).

St Leon states that the reshaping of circus in Australia has mimicked developments in Europe and the United States – with new circus movements in all of these countries united by a rejection of animal performances and emerging from the alternative arts of the 1970s, and particularly street theatre, mime and dance (2011:254).



For Bolton (2004: 168), "Circus as a community activity, usually, but not exclusively, for young people, has a history of over sixty years, and now occurs in most developed countries, and increasingly, with social circus overtones, in the developing world".

Bolton states that community circus germinated in Paris and Amsterdam in the late 1960's with *Le Grand Magic Circus* and the *Festival of Fools* (ibid:13). However, Amsterdam's Circus Elleboog has been delivering youth and social circus classes and workshops since 1949¹¹, and the Great All American Youth Circus is billed as the oldest community circus in the world, beginning in 1929. In this latter circus every year around 300 performers of all ages from 20 months up learn circus skills, with some taking part for many years and moving on to jobs as professional entertainers, from circus performers to stunt people¹².

In terms of circus teaching, in 2004 Bolton notes that Finland, Germany, Russia and France have hundreds of community and youth circuses, while English speaking 'developed' countries have an "unofficial network of circus possibilities, from individual...teachers to university based tertiary vocational courses" (2004:149).

4.3 Describing community circus

"Social Circus is the global methodology of using circus to teach powerful social and personal tools" (Let's Circus¹³ website).

Wikipedia has no current definition for community circus, but has this to say about social circus¹⁴:

"Social circus refers to the growing movement toward the use of circus arts as mediums for social justice and social good. It uses alternative pedagogical tools to work with youth who are marginalized or at social or personal risk."

This definition reflects the tendency already noted, for community and social circus worldwide to be targeted towards young people.

A three year European Union Funded project (2009-2011) on social circus in Finland¹⁵ describes social circus as follows: "Social circus is applied circus teaching, where circus is a medium for learning. From social circus you can learn joy, celebration of difference, independence, self confidence, social skills, life skills, sense of community, tolerance.

¹¹ See <http://www.elleboog.nl/>.

¹² See <http://www.ycircus.org/> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Y_Circus.

¹³ See <http://www.letsircus.com/>. Let's Circus is a professional circus outreach company based in Newcastle Upon Tyne, England.

¹⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Circus.

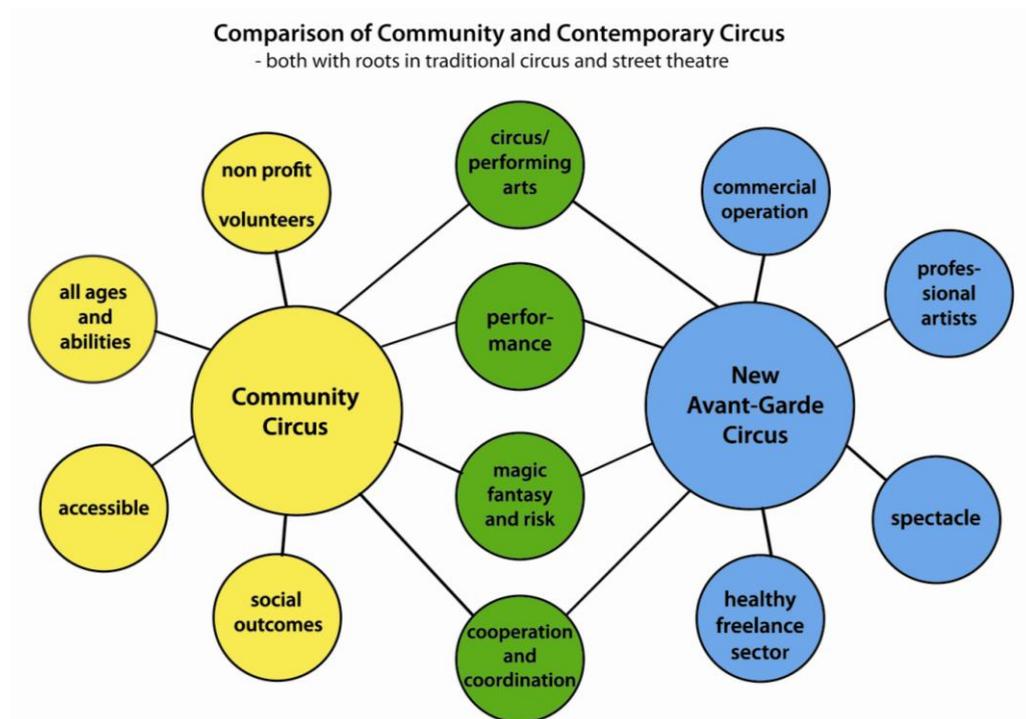
¹⁵ See <http://sosiaalinenirkus.fi/english/>. This project aims to help produce quality social circus education, promote social circus as a wellbeing service and integrate social circus within the Finnish circus scene and as part of communal wellbeing services. It piloted and evaluated seven social circus projects across Finland, held three social circus seminars and produced a social circus guidebook. Note that Thomas Hinz, a member of the *Developing Community Circus in Aotearoa New Zealand* research project team, visited and advised on this project in June 2011 (his visit was funded by the social circus project).

Social circus is for everyone and all the different disciplines of circus ensure there's a suitable talent for everyone".

The *Charter of the Creation of the United Nations of Social Circus* was developed during the First International Round Table of Circus and Social Work, held in France in 2002 (see Appendix One). This Charter notes that the American and Australian participants preferred the term social circus, while the Irish and Dutch preferred the term community circus, while the French preferred to use 'circus and social work' to maintain the identity of these two genres (Bolton 2004:xxiv).

Community circus tends to be positioned at the amateur end of the circus arts spectrum, with blurry lines and overlap among amateur circus, community circus and social circus in the literature. For ease of reference, while noting the blurry lines, in this review community circus is the term used.

Frances Kelliher, a member of the wider research project team that has assisted the preparation of this literature review, developed the following diagram comparing community circus with other contemporary forms of circus (unpublished).



The most succinct definition found of community circus is that it uses "the circus arts to build character and community" (*The White Tops Journal* 2009:62). Similarly, for Burden (2004), community circus acts on the two fronts of individual self-actualisation and community building. In essence, according to the literature community circus refers to the use of circus skills to promote personal and social development.

This is demonstrated in practice by community circus providers, for example the mission of the Belfast Community Circus is to “Transform lives and communities through the power of circus arts and street theatre” (www.belfastcircus.org/about.asp). Similarly, Cirque Nova’s¹⁶ mission statement is “To promote personal and social development and enhance the lives of disadvantaged and disabled people through the culture and spirit of circus arts.”

Given this intent of community circus, its vehicles are twofold – the applied teaching and learning of circus skills, and the culmination of these in public performance. The performing of these skills to others is key to the aims of community circus, as explained later.

A snapshot of current international community circus programmes, which demonstrates the diversity of the social aims of community circus, is as follows.

Children and young people (the most common target group)

- Escuela Nacional Circo Para Todos in Cali, Colombia, describes itself as the first professional circus school in the world specifically dedicated to street children, providing an alternative avenue to social and professional development through the teaching of circus arts.
- The Barefoot Angels Project in El Salvador helps keep street children out of gangs through child-magician collectives.
- The Afghan Mobile Mini Children’s Circus is a child-protection project in Afghanistan.
- CircEsteem in Chicago, USA aims to unite youth from diverse racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds and help them build self-esteem and mutual respect through the practice of circus arts.
- The Zip Zap Circus School¹⁷ in Cape Town, South Africa, is a Social Circus School which brings together children from all different walks of life, working with youth at risk, children with HIV/Aids and any child who wants to learn circus.
- Jessica Hentoff is the Director of Circus Harmony, whose mission is to teach the art of life through circus education¹⁸. Circus Harmony is St Louis’ (USA) only circus school and social circus programme. She describes her mission as being to help children “defy gravity, soar with confidence and leap over social barriers, all at the same time” (The White Tops 2009:62).

¹⁶ Cirque Nova is a London based not for profit Contemporary Circus and Street Arts Organisation, see <http://www.cirquenova.com/>.

¹⁷ See <http://www.zip-zap.co.za>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.clownlink.com/2009/03/jessica-hentoff-circus-harmony/>.

Disabled people of all ages

- The Espoo school of performing arts in Finland organises a three year circus lessons programme for a group of disabled children in Järvenperä School, Espoo. The students have personal assistants and the programme aims to help the students understand their body better and to give them new meaningful experiences.
- Circus Fantasia is a project of "Behinderten Alternative Freizeit e.V" or the "Disabled Peoples Alternative Freetime Trust". It has been running integrative circus workshops since 1991 in the city of Rostock, Germany. In their circus tent they host weekly workshops for people of all ages and abilities, festivals, events, circus pedagogy for people working with disabled as well as tri-national cultural exchanges with France and Poland.
- Cirque Nova is a Not-for Profit Contemporary Circus and Street Arts Organisation called Circus For Everyone. Their mission is to promote personal and social development and enhance the lives of disadvantaged and disabled people through the culture and spirit of circus arts.

Families

- Pii Poo, the cultural centre for children and youth in Lempäälä, Finland organises Small Circus, where families who rely on social care gather together to do circus. A social worker attends these circus lessons as well, and the aim is to help families interact better through positive activity. All the families have small children and the whole family participates in the lessons.

Indigenous communities

- The Leapin Lurp Lurps in Australia, Flipside Circus, and the Far West Performance Youth Project, offer three projects for indigenous youth in Australia, and Circosis Circus offers social circus outreach programmes to indigenous communities in Central Australia.

Abuse survivors

- The Vulcana Women's Circus¹⁹ in Brisbane uses circus as a recovery tool for survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, which involves "helping...women reconnect with their bodies instead of living outside them" (VicHealth Letter 2004:7).

Older people

- The Fruit Acrobats is an offshoot of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus in Victoria, Australia, with most participants aged between 45 and 73 (in 2004). The Performing Older Women's Circus (POW) began as a six week project in 1995 out of Melbourne's

¹⁹ See <http://www.vulcana.org.au/index.htm>.

Women's Circus. It became permanently established and provides a means for women over 40 to meet and participate in physical activity (Leber et al 2004:130).

Other groups in the community

- The Circus Dehub Nigat in Ethiopia, formed in 2003, focuses on HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation prevention, alcohol and drug abuse and refugee repatriation.

The key message from the literature is that community circus really is for everyone and that programmes can be developed to suit any group, of any age, ability, mobility and circumstance. However it is also clear from the literature that community circus is most commonly developed for and practiced with children and young people, and for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Networks of Community Circus Providers

International networks set up to professionalise community circus approaches include:

- The American Youth Circus Organisation (AYCO, at www.AYCO), which aims to connect, assist and advocate for youth circus organisations, educators, performers and professionals across the United States.
- CARAVAN Circus Network – nine youth and social circus schools from nine European countries. CARAVAN's specific objective is to professionalise pedagogic, social, artistic and administrative skills of teachers and schools in terms of circus education. See www.caravancircusnetwork.eu.
- The European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO) was formed in 2009 and has just published a European Volunteer Service Guide for youth circuses, who want to send or host a volunteer to or from another European country. See www.EYCO.org.
- FEDEC is the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools. It was founded in 1998 to support the development and evolution of pedagogy and creation in the field of circus arts education. See www.FEDEC.eu.

National circus networks exist in many countries, for example:

- The Australia Circus and Physical Theatre Association (ACAPTA) www.acapta.org.au.
- The Circus Development Agency in the United Kingdom (www.circusarts.org.uk).
- Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Zirkuspädagogik e.V (BAG Circus Pedagogy Association) in Germany, see www.bag-zirkus.de.

4.4 Purpose and key drivers

Common themes in the literature to describe the purpose of community circus are as follows.

Purpose of community circus	Description/examples
Promote personal transformation	Circus works at all the human levels - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (see the next section)
Promote social change	For example by challenging attitudes towards disability, highlighting injustice, promoting public health messages such as HIV/AIDS awareness or falls prevention ²⁰ and raising sensitive topics such as prejudice, sexuality and inclusion
Provide alternatives to traditional sports, arts and recreation	Circus can appeal for example to children and young people who aren't attracted by traditional sports and arts options or who are 'reluctant exercisers' (Carr)
Social connection, team work and inclusion: "Circus is the acceptance of the others, of their strangeness" (Cirque du Monde website)	Circus builds bridges among diverse groups and breaks down barriers (for example the Belfast Community Circus School aims to break down religious barriers). It also provides a 'family' and community for people who otherwise feel excluded
Create a safe, fun, respectful, non competitive environment where people can try new things and take 'safe' risks	Competition is replaced by being watched, assessed and appreciated by others – instead of competing, individuals have an audience (even of one) to gain compliments, applause and feedback from. This impels them to do better, not competition (Bolton 2004:158, citing Leper and Maele 2001). Circus promotes trust, collaboration and cooperation and promotes risk taking in secure conditions
Open and accessible to all	Community circus lacks barriers to entry – you do not have to read and write, it can operate visually (without words if need be), there is an activity that will appeal to everyone and 'anyone can circus' -

²⁰ In 1998, a unique collaboration between the Performing Older Women's Circus (POW), older residents of the municipality of Maribyrnong, and the Maribyrnong City Council culminated in the circus show *The Art of Falling is Never Landing*. The show combines a positive ageing message with the message that falls amongst older people are preventable in a way that crosses linguistic and cultural barriers (Leber et al 2001).

Community circus tends to be driven by one or several individuals who develop a passion for circus, understand what it can do and see a need and opportunity to apply it. In *New Circus* (1987:33), Bolton notes that a common factor he discovered in many children's circuses around the world was the presence of one charismatic individual with an equal passion for children and circus (see also Searle in relation to Circus Kumarani 2007:13). This is a common theme – that community circus is driven by individuals and small groups who have a love and understanding for circus and the group/s they work with, whether they be children, disabled people, marginalised youth, refugees and migrants or the general public.

Reg Bolton is a classic example of this kind of charismatic individual²¹. His description of doing community circus with Australian Aboriginal children in remote central desert communities demonstrates how community circus can transcend cultural and language barriers (1997).

"Verbal communication is almost irrelevant. Faced with a unicycle, stilts or a mini-tramp, the local children and I are speaking the same unspoken language - "How do you do it?"

They learn fast - really fast. Their bodies are tougher, and though I can't talk about a higher pain threshold, there is certainly a higher whingeing threshold. If a child had a spectacular fall, the first response is laughter. Concern only comes in if the victim doesn't laugh quite as much as the others. But most impressive is the instinctive mode of learning by copying. There's no written tradition for making a boomerang. Young man watches old man. It's the same with juggling. There's no point in me talking ad nauseam about trajectory, rhythm, synchronicity, patterns. Instead, I juggle, we both laugh a lot, then they juggle.

When it comes to performing, there are cultural obligations of who should and should not 'show-off' or star in public. I can't begin to understand their subtleties of male/female and young/elder status. However, what we are doing with Suitcase Circus is so different - so funny - so odd, that the normal rules are suspended. All sorts of people take part in our show, and anyone can be applauded or laughed at. It sometimes seems to me that during our stay with them, we all seem to be living in a parallel universe".

Another example of how community circus tends to emerge from a combination of charismatic leadership and a perceived need is the Belfast Community Circus School

²¹ Reg Bolton (1945-2006) was an Australian community or social circus pioneer, who set up child and youth circuses in Edinburgh, Scotland in the 1970s and travelled with his Suitcase Circus around Australia doing community circus programmes. He was interested in the theory and practice of circus and completed his PhD on circus and child and youth development in 2004 at Murdoch University in Australia. See his website at <http://www.regbolton.org/>.

(BCCS), which was established in 1985 by Donal McKendry and Mike Moloney. They found themselves introducing community circus to Northern Ireland during a time when there was a “desperate need for positive shared experiences for young people from different communities” (BCCS website). In 1999 purpose built premises were attained, and many thousands of children and adults have participated in BCCS (with 200,000 estimated back in 1995, Dempsey 1995:30).

The BCCS has been awarded the highest arts award in Northern Ireland, the Bass Ireland Arts Award for its work in pioneering circus theatre in Ireland. In 1999, the Belfast Community Circus was also a recipient of the Guardian Jerwood Award for Excellence in The Community - a UK wide award.



5. Why community circus?

"...the arts can be a great tool in the right hands..." (BCCS:16).

"Circus is essentially generous, it's giving, it's caring and it's co-operative" (Bolton 2001).

5.1 Benefits and impacts

The considerable benefits of community circus identified in the literature are grouped into core types and their key elements below. Then a brief outline of each theme is provided. Note that many of the benefits below are interconnected and that impacts on individuals can ripple out to others – particularly friends, peers, families and communities.

Type of benefit/impact	Key elements
Accessible, appealing and engaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone can take part and it can offer something for everyone Can appeal to hard to reach and disengaged groups Promotes high engagement and participation, especially for marginalised groups, for example youth at risk, disabled people and those with mental health and/or behavioural issues
Provides a place to belong – it's inclusive and connects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-competitive Non-threatening Brings outsiders in, provides an alternative 'family' or community and a sense of belonging Builds trust and empathy Breaks down barriers Challenges prejudice
Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and fitness, motor skills Emotional intelligence Mental agility and concentration Communication skills Self esteem and confidence Self discipline and self motivation

	<p>Sense of achievement, pride and perseverance</p> <p>'Safe' risk taking</p>
Social learning	<p>Fun, humour, enjoyment</p> <p>Trust and cooperation</p> <p>Leadership and responsibility</p> <p>Participation</p> <p>Empathy and supporting others</p> <p>Assessing other peoples level of skill, needs and feelings</p> <p>Teamwork</p> <p>Respect</p> <p>Performing in front of others</p>
Community building and social change	<p>Connects families, especially parents/caregivers with children</p> <p>Brings communities together</p> <p>Builds sense of pride and belonging</p> <p>Can change attitudes</p>
Open and accessible to all	<p>Community circus lacks barriers to entry – you do not have to read and write, it can operate visually (without words if need be), there is an activity that will appeal to everyone and 'anyone can circus' - regardless of ability and mobility</p>

Accessible, appealing and engaging

Above all, circus is fun, open to all and can appeal to and engage a wide range of people. In her international tour of six child and youth circus schools, the most consistent aspect Carr found was the high engagement level of the children and young people. She also found that circus provided something for all of the participants to engage with.

In McCutcheon's evaluation of five in-school circus programmes, she found that in one school 60 boys reported coming to school just to do the programme, alongside a drop in truancy rates. In another school, some students travelled for up to three hours to get to after-school circus programmes (2003:87). In all of the schools participation rates grew steadily.

In his study of 23 youth circuses, Woodhead noted that children and adults join circus as it is seen as cool and/or fun and for its different and eclectic nature (2003). People are also attracted to the opportunity to learn new skills, the sense of family and belonging circus provides and the opportunity to perform for family, friends and the public. All programmes visited reported consistent and strong indications of positive personal, group and social development in their participants (ibid).

Community circus can also hold strong appeal to children and youth for its risk aspects. The Belfast Community Circus School (BCCS) noted that circus was 'cool' for many of its young people who "are challenged and challenging, because circus has an element of danger that really appeals to and challenges them" (2005:19).

A place to belong – inclusive and connects

"[Community circus] cuts through barriers and unites young people in a non-competitive pursuit that gives them bonds of friendship" (BCCS 2005:61).

"There is no competition in the circus ring. The challenge is not defeating an opponent, but finding one's own perfection" (Tetrault 2008:215).

Community circus provides a place for those who are made to feel different or who feel excluded: "We had a lot of misfits who used to come together and thoroughly enjoy a community in its real sense within the circus" (BCCS 2005:19). Community circus can provide a 'family' or sense of family and community, especially for children and young people from difficult backgrounds: "Circus can be a family to those who want one or maybe another one" (Belfast Community Circus 2005:16).

Michelle Carr teaches at a public high school in New South Wales, Australia. She describes in her article on circus as an alternative to conventional physical education for reluctant exercisers, that since beginning a circus troupe in her school every Tuesday afternoon, she noticed that children who were normally reluctant to participate in physical education were more than willing to take part in the circus activities: "These non-competitive and non-threatening activities provided the children with different choices and therefore they didn't seem to notice that they were involved in physical activity" (no date). This is especially relevant when seeking to combat obesity in children.



Circus is also sometimes used in areas experiencing conflict (Belfast, Sarajevo, Afghanistan) as it has an international language and can transport people into “other happier worlds” (BCCS 2005:21). Community circus has the potential to connect people and break down barriers of ignorance and antagonism, for example racial divides (eg Cali in Colombia) and religious divides (eg Belfast Community Circus) (Bolton 2004:167).

Carr notes that many big cities have few playgrounds and even less green space for children to play in, including apartment blocks with no back yards, so people seek “healthy ways to entertain their children and allow them to exercise within the confines of limited space” (no date). Circus reportedly works well in these contexts.

Personal growth

“Circus training has given me discipline and focus that carries through all aspects of life” (clown student cited by Carr, no date).

“The demands and necessities of the circus arts give rise to personal transformation. Self-discipline is an absolute requisite with the constant practices, daily difficulties, and physical risks that characterize the social circus. Youth learn to push through these challenges, with their own efforts, and in doing so discover that they are capable and valuable beings...Upon discovering that they are capable and intelligent beings, they start to deconstruct paradigms that they originally thought to be true. For example, Brazilian youth reevaluate the commonly held beliefs that everyone who lives in the favela is stupid, that every street child does not have a purpose or future, etc. These beliefs end up becoming a barrier to the self-development of the youth, and circus activities let them break such paradigms” (Cirque du Monde²²).

In his 2004 Phd thesis Bolton correlates six key elements of children’s development with the values and structure of circus. The core of his thesis is that circus activity contains much of what is needed for a growing child. These six elements are identified as follows (19) – alongside a summary of how circus responds to each element.



²² This reference relates to social circus in Brazil, which is organized under the Rede Circo do Mundo Brasil, which supports 25 different projects throughout Brazil. It is a collective of organisations that believe arts education is integral to social development and is an effective process for the development of underprivileged children and youth.

Element of learning	How circus responds
Self (individuality, identity, image)	People learn how to present themselves or an alter ego and they can experiment with their identity on a spectrum from clown to ringmaster.
Risk (adventure, courage, defiance)	Circus provides opportunities to take 'safe risks' and to be challenged mentally and physically: "Circus activities can provide the risk and adventure that is necessary to childhood, in a way that is not antisocial or deadly" (Bolton 2004:162). "The whole thing of teendom, acting out, going for thrills and risks, experimenting with sex and drugs; circus arts can channel that energy in healthy ways" (Bolton citing Davis 2004:159). See also McCutcheon, who found that the risk element of circus was a key attractor for 'at risk' students 2003:88.
Trust (touch, cooperation, sharing)	Through circus children can learn to trust oneself, their environment and their peers. Circus provides a context for consensual, positive touch, which "may in some cases make good a deficit in a child's tactile experience" (Bolton 2004:38).
Dreams (aspiration, imagination, symbolism)	Imagination and creativity are core to circus skills, and aspiring to accomplish something new.
Work (persistence, resilience, process)	Learning circus skills requires persistence, the ability to get back up again and involves work. Training is not always easy or pleasant, with a lot of sweat and/or tears to achieve sophisticated results (Ballreich 2000:2). Circus can however prove that hard work can be fun and the performance element also pushes people to achieve, as "Nothing motivates like performance (Price 2008).
Fun (humour, happiness, laughter)	The foundation of circus is humour and fun.

Social learning

"The circus helps us to remember how play looks and feels...something adults have largely forgotten how to do" (Tetrault 2008:216).

"In circus projects there are multiple areas which offer the opportunity to experience and learn from social processes. Important social skills can be cultivated in the training, in the organizing of performances, and in the appearance before an audience" (Ballreich 2000:2).

Circus involves learning through doing. Price cites Gardner's theory of seven main types of intelligence: academic ability (which is privileged in our schools), musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal and bodily kinaesthetic (2008:2). The latter is about learning or expressing oneself through physical activities involving the use of motor skills and coordination. He cites Maude, who proposes that children should be guided towards physical literacy that encompasses all of Gardner's intelligences (ibid). Similarly, for Jancovich, "Engagement in participatory youth circus activity is seen to have benefits across all learning styles, combining the physical dexterity of sport and the creative expression of the arts"(2007:4).

Price outlines how 'circo arts' tick the physical education boxes in schools, by providing extension of locomotion, balance, fitness, eye-hand and eye-foot coordination, body rhythm, memory skills, confidence, problem solving, language and concept development and physical education skills (2008:3). "The curriculum should challenge the emerging physical, intellectual, aesthetic and emotional abilities of the child" (Price citing Maude 2008:3).

Ballreich sets out some of the values and norms pertaining to social learning that the circus provides as follows (2000:3-6).

Constant improvement and development – circus disciplines provide the challenge of staying in a constant process of improvement as you learn new skills and enhance each skill, as well as performances providing opportunities for debriefs and feedback: "What was good? What was not so good? Can we think of specific suggestions for improvement?" In this way an "attitude of improvement becomes a habit...[and a] capacity to be present and able to act spontaneously in the critical moment".

Motivation and self-motivation – endurance comes through training; validation and reward come through success at learning skills and audience applause.

Taking on (leadership) responsibility – as older students work with younger ones and those more skilled help those less skilled. Those who train and help others must also develop leadership skills, gauge where others are at and their capabilities and develop their social skills to help others.

Self organisation and reliability – to deal with distributing roles, turning up to training and rehearsal, being punctual and keeping promises, forming the performance programme and agreeing all these things as a group. In this process leader personalities and traits emerge and “those who prefer to follow will reveal themselves”. Group pecking order emerges and leaders and followers may swap roles depending on the task. Self organisation takes place within groups.

The challenge of performance is also said to push people to strive for individual performance but also support that of the group. Individuals learn to see themselves as part of a whole, which “fosters modesty while at the same time creating an experience of the groups’ energy as one’s own” (2000:6). Performing also nurtures courage, overcoming fears and self-confidence in individuals and empathy and support from the group.

Ballreich (2000:7-18) goes on to describe how several circus activities foster different social experiences and skills as follows.

Positional acrobatics and the building of human pyramids teach people about support, pre-empting danger, safe and appropriate physical contact, social responses to issues such as body odour, carrying and endurance, trust, reliability, balancing group weight and energy and self discipline.

Juggling involves eye hand coordination, active thinking, timing, balancing, trusting, catching and release and perceiving and thinking in group or partner juggling.

With improvisation and clowning people learn to experience and express feelings, communicate, be spontaneous, be emotionally ‘real’, discover and release emotional blocks: “Clowning is very much concerned with creating space for feeling” (15). For Ballreich, clowning can reportedly be extremely valuable for people, as in our culture it is not customary to honestly express feelings; children’s socialisation often involves deep emotional wounding and a desensitisation of feeling occurs as a protection mechanism; and children and adolescents often have few real examples of people who are emotionally present and ‘in the flow’ (15-16).

Finally, circus can create a sense of celebration as people are pleased for others when they learn a new trick and there’s a sense of wanting other people to succeed (BCCS 2005:52).

Community building and social change

With larger circus performances families and community members often become involved to make it happen, which helps to create a sense of community, involve parents in their children’s lives and connect people who may not normally come together (Ballreich 2000:18). For Ballreich, “lifelong ideals of conduct and working together” can come out of circus participation and performance. He even claims that the social and emotional competence gained through circus participation is crucial for our collective future wellbeing: “the quality of our human association and co-operation

in the future depends on whether such learning processes [ie through circus training] can be put in motion on a large scale!"

While McCutcheon (2003: 7-8) notes that although relatively little written research has been done on community circus, there are a number of practical examples of the circus process evoking change in individuals, their culture and thus community. In her study of five schools she found that the circus programmes raised the profile of the schools and the local areas concerned through positive media coverage; families engaged more with the school; schools troupes were invited to perform in shopping centres, fetes, community spaces and corporate functions; participants train together instead of fighting each other; and performances are promoted and celebrated by the local media (2003:92).

Community circus can affect family dynamics - BCCS tell a story in which one parent came up after a performance and said it was the first time they had been proud of their boy: "That was a big thing for that kid that his mother said I'm proud of you. That's one of the magic things circus can do" (2005:19).

Burden (2004) describes how a women's community circus performance builds community:

"Collaboration is a fundamental part of the process of community circus and it is clear from the women's comments that they had been challenged both in terms of their own skill development and their capacity to work with others. Our sense of achievement and exhilaration came from both a sense of personal empowerment and a feeling that we had been part of a collaborative process that had resulted in a worthwhile end product. It is this dual sense of engagement that is fundamental to community building. Working collaboratively to create a community circus performance enables both personal action and collective meaning making. Communities emerge from the identification of a shared vision rather than simply responding to the view from a theatre seat or a park bench."(101).

Community circus can help to change attitudes and prejudice and promote public health and other messages. Circus can also give people a different, positive perception of their community, such as when youth circuses were created and performed in disadvantaged communities in Edinburgh and Brewarrina (Australia), as cited by Bolton (2004:161). They created positive media coverage in areas which usually had a bad reputation, plus a new sense of pride, belonging and attachment for residents to their local communities.

Circus can be used to help heal and shine a light in troubled communities and in troubled times. The Amazing Grace Circus²³ for example was formed as a healing

²³ See <http://www.amazinggracecircus.org/>.

response to the events of September 11 2001. One participant described his experience of this youth circus as follows²⁴.

"I went with the flow in the beginning and...I'm still hanging in there to my surprise as well as the shocked surprise of others. We balance our lives to meet the demands of endless, hectic rehearsals that leave one completely drained by night but hearing the audience laugh and find tranquility from a hectic week or month, knowing that the money raised is going to give food to the starving homeless, makes the circus almost seem like a ministry in disguise. The newspapers we've done interviews for, the people we each have encountered while caught up in this ancient ritual of bringing the down spirit to new heights, seemed more amazed that us teenagers can shed our identities to take on the role of clowns than by the circus itself. They don't seem to realize that teenagers are looking for the same kind of inspiration that everyone else is. The difference between our group and most other teens, is that we found that in the most unlikely place, the circus. We're reaching out to make an offering that the world is in dire need of."

5.2 Child and youth circus

"...kids create faster than adults can dream and construct... We need to make every school a fun place where neither art nor life is ordinary... Circuses open up school spaces, moves, and moods, revealing playgrounds where classes used to be" (Szekely 1995:45).

Much of the literature on community circus focuses on children and young people. A study of the youth circus sector in the UK (Jancovich 2007), found that benefits to young people of youth circus were identified by study participants as providing accessible and popular social activity and skills training which suits all learning styles and has the ability to develop:

- social and communication skills, self esteem and team work
- physical and mental agility
- problem solving and creative thinking
- learning in art form-specific skills
- ability to concentrate.

Seton presents the benefits of teaching juggling in schools (2005), which could also be extended to apply to circus activity in general. The benefits include being:

²⁴ A youth group at the Grace Church in Nyack, New York decided to do a community service project as a healing response to the events of September 11th.

- an accessible, affordable, safe and practical options for schools
- open to students of all ages and abilities
- intellectual benefits through cognitive capacities such as critical analysis, spatial awareness, understanding of rhythm and sequencing, concentration, patience, goal management and perseverance
- resilience
- enhancement of fine motor skills and of overall academic learning
- physical benefits including coordination, ambidexterity, physical fitness, balance, reflexes and psychomotor skills
- stimulating left and right brain activity and anatomical development in specific regions in the brain
- agility, cardiovascular and pulmonary workout
- timing
- interpersonal benefits by developing trust, respect, communication and group stability
- emotional benefits include confidence, self-worth through achievement
- feedback from skill play success, in the form of praise, applause and internal gratification for sustained effort.

For Seton, “these benefits provide a strong case for the inclusion of skill-play as a curricular and extracurricular activity over the existing long queue of physical education and classroom options” (2005:5).

Carr (no date) notes that setting up a circus programme is achievable in any school - all



you need is committed staff, a long term plan and a budget for resources, although most circus resources can be home made (e.g. stilts, juggling equipment, spinning plates, music, poi and clowning costumes).

McCutcheon perceives a climate where the factors pushing young people to participate in “risky activities” are on the rise and where youth culture is rapidly transforming. She contends that school climates are not keeping up with developments in youth culture and that innovative programmes are needed to help “arm” young people against the increasing pressures facing adolescents.

Jackie Davis (2000) compiled this list of benefits of circus learning as perceived by several Waldorf movement education teachers:

- improves the abilities to focus and concentrate
- improves fine motor skills
- boosts self-confidence
- develops balance, rhythm, and reflexes
- stimulates imagination and higher order problem solving
- helps students develop patience and persistence
- provides a model for cooperative learning
- reminds us that challenges can be fun.

In 2003/2003 Paul Woodhead visited 23 in-school circus programmes to study their management and teaching programmes and their impact on the students participating. He concluded that participants benefitted in the following ways:

- Intrinsic value growth – self confidence, self belief/worth, self image/esteem and self knowledge
- Intrinsic virtue growth – perseverance, trust, responsibility, resilience, tolerance and courage
- Society level growth – life skills, socio-cultural consciousness, respect for others, self, gear and communication skills
- Group level growth – co-operative skills, friendships, teamwork and belonging to circus/school
- Personal level growth – performance interest/experience, attitude to school and results and creative skills.

McCutcheon’s 2003 Masters Thesis examined five in-school circus programmes in Australia. Key themes found were (p2):

- An increase in the physical fitness of participating students
- Individual and community pride as dominant reactions of students, parents and staff
- An alignment between students actual and projected selves
- The development of peer tutoring systems and new ways of learning
- A new public face of the participating schools which creates a new climate within the schools, including a decrease in violent and anti-social behaviour in the school, the home and the community.

McCutcheon (p100) also describes key qualities needed for those teaching or doing circus with young people:

- A relaxed, friendly teaching atmosphere where safety is always stressed and maintained
- Enthusiasm, passion and reverence for circus
- Genuine respect and a real “liking” of young people
- The desire and ability to treat each student as an individual with the right to autonomy
- Commitment to the circus program and its participants
- An understanding of the risk factors associated with circus and its essence
- Experience in professional and community circus
- The desire to help people and their communities realize their potential
- Comfortable with the knowledge that the student may quickly become more skilled than the tutor
- The ability to break any activity into safe and accessible steps.

5.3 Circus and disability

Disabled people of all ages, but particularly children and young people, also commonly participate in community circus programmes. Cirque Nova²⁵ in London for example works specifically with disabled people (though not exclusively).

The German Salto Youth Centre promotes a Youth Exchange programme as good practice, whereby disabled and able bodied people aged between 13 and 23 from Germany and Spain come together for a week to learn skills as clowns and acrobats,

²⁵ See <http://www.cirquenova.com/>.

and put on a one hour public performance at the end of it. Not only did they develop their motor skills and circus abilities²⁶:

- They learnt about boundaries in terms of supporting someone and helping them to achieve their own goals.
- The able bodied people learnt about needs and requirements of people with disabilities and the difficulties they face and the disabled people learnt new ways of tackling obstacles.
- They gained in confidence and independence.



Interact Disability Festival, 2011, Auckland

Jancovich's 2007 study of the youth circus sector in the UK found that "the sector reaches a diverse range of social, cultural and ethnic groups and in particular demonstrates strength in working with learning disabled young people, developing concentration skills and manual dexterity."

Circus teaches children how to learn to accept differences by providing an equal playing field and is suitable for students with disabilities, behavioural problems and those not interested in team

sports (Seton 2005:4). Seton notes that "...skill-play activities [such as juggling] have been linked to improvements in learning disorders such as ADHD and Dyslexia" (ibid²⁷).

An evaluation of Circus Kumarani in New Zealand in 2007 found that disabled people who took part gained a new sense of belonging and grew in self confidence, fitness and skills (Searle:12-14). Families became more involved in their child's life through the circus, attitudes in the community towards disabled people were challenged and the focus came to be on ability rather than disability (ibid).

Roberts and Seton (2004) undertook a 6 month study involving 42 developmentally disabled adults on the effects of circus arts skills training on their cognitive ability

²⁶ Salto-Youth.net is a network of eight Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field. It provides youth work and training resources and organises training and contact-making activities to support organisations and National Agencies within the frame of the European Commission's [Youth in Action programme](http://www.youthinaction.eu) and beyond. See <http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-2328/YOU%20EX2p%20ogood%20opract%20osheets1.pdf>.

²⁷ *Special Populations*, <http://www.icanjuggle.com/specialpopulations2.html>.

(attentiveness, focus and perceptual awareness), balance, stamina and physical coordination and quality of life indicators. Disabilities included Down's Syndrome, mental retardation and dementias of the Alzheimer's type.

Overall, observation indicated that students improved with regard to such social factors as interacting with friends and staff, extending friendly greetings to staff and visitors, beginning conversations with others, responding when staff or others addressed the student, and ability to follow directions. Marked improvement in the students' perceptions of the quality of their lives also occurred and 75% enthusiastically endorsed their circus arts experience.

Key themes in terms of circus and disability include:

- The ability of circus to provide something different and positive
- Provide new ways of experiencing the world, to move and feel
- The ability of circus to enhance quality of life for disabled people
- A greater sense of belonging, pride and achievement can be gained
- The ability to break down barriers, change perceptions of disability and place the focus on ability.



6. Why not community circus?

*"...the world often sees circus through a haze of ignorance disguised by bigotry"
(Bolton 2004:126).*

*"Circus takes us into our worst dreams, yet act after act gives us a happy ending"
(Bolton 2001).*

Several authors on community circus ask why, if circus is so beneficial, is it not more widespread, especially in schools (Bolton 2004, Price 2007, McCutcheon 2003)? One underlying reason suggested is a complex and often unconscious association of circus with deep human fears:

"The psychic significance of circus lies in its very associations with just those elements which most occur in human phobias, ancient and modern. Consider the things circus artists face: heights, unstable ground, crowds, isolation, wild animals, knives, fire, bullying, wrong clothes, exposure and so on. All these are classic phobic triggers, and we see them faced and resolved one by one in the ring. All this goes towards explaining the attraction/repulsion that the public has for circuses" (Bolton 2002:2).

At an Australian National Circus Festival in 1999 Bolton undertook an informal survey of artists and asked them "What was preventing circus in schools"? The response from each person was almost always different, with answers including that it's too marginal, too much fun, and that school will spoil it (these last two from children). Others considered logistics like an unachievable teacher/student ratio, or health and safety and insurance issues. Some compared it with other school subjects, pointing out the lack of resources, accreditation and career path for teachers or students. There is no clear model of success and several artists believed there are too many prejudices against circus, with its associations with "gypsies, freaks, animals [and] clowns" (Bolton 1999).

Writing five years later in relation to resistance to circus in schools, Bolton (2004: 154-155) cites further barriers being resentment if circus is more successful than existing activities; concerns about safety and potential parent reaction and litigation (eg compulsory helmet wearing taking the appeal out of unicycling); and children risking credibility with peers as they leave the mainstream to take part in circus activity and risk being labelled 'a clown'.

Another significant barrier to community circus is perceived to be the element of risk that is fundamental to circus. McCutcheon notes that circus is based on elements of risk, personal and communal (2003:21). For Stoddart (2000: 4):

"Circus is, above all, a vehicle for the demonstration and taunting of danger and this remains its most telling and defining feature. Physical risk taking has always been at its heart; the recognition that to explore the limitations of the human body

is to walk a line between triumphant exhilaration and, on the other side of this limit, pain, injury or death."

This element of risk is ironically considered to be one of the greatest appeals of circus, particularly for young people: "Circus works well with young people because they are allowed to take risks and in our society, risk taking is now discouraged. But at the same time as learning to take risks you are taught to recognise the limits" (Hoban quoting Andrea Ousely, 2004:7).

McCutcheon notes the barriers to circus in schools as including:

- Circus can be equipment intensive
- PE teachers losing "free rein" on "their" gymnasium/ hall
- PE teachers losing their "star" footballers to the circus program
- Trivialisation of the importance belonging to the troupe has on students
- A realistic understanding of the risk factors associated with circus and risk management
- Insurance for conducting in-school and community circus workshops/performances
- Circus being misinterpreted and performed or taught without understanding and/or respect.

A concern exists in relation to undertaking circus with people with disabilities, that its performance element might expose those people to ridicule or that disabled people may be exploited in some way (Searle 2007:20). In reality the general sense is that the opposite occurs – that community perceptions of disabled people and disability are roundly challenged and potentially altered by seeing people with disabilities perform circus arts (ibid).

An issue that came up in the national online survey of the community circus sector in New Zealand, undertaken as part of this wider research project, also arises in the literature (Trotman 2011). Bolton notes concern that any attempt to 'mainstream' community circus, for example in schools, uses caution and respects the mysterious and eccentric character of circus. "The perceived low status of circus in our community, our press, and our intelligentsia makes it an uphill struggle to gain acceptance in schools. Ultimately, the answer is in perceptions. Those who would like to see Circus Arts closer to the mainstream of our culture, and Circus Education achieve a real presence in schools, must work to alter the traditional misconceptions. However, this must be done with caution, with respect, remembering that Circus thrives on mystery and hyperbole, and would be reduced if all its processes were laid open to the public gaze" (ibid).

Australia has incorporated circus skills within several state education systems (St Leon 2011:253). St Leon notes that this and the establishment of the National Institute of Circus Arts (NICA) in 2001 have raised the level of intelligent debate surrounding the future role, direction and shape of circus in Australia, despite entrenched perceptions of “vagabondism and outlawry” which “still taint the reputation of circus” (ibid).



7. Good practice

This section canvasses available literature on good practice, in terms of community circus infrastructure, general guidance and circus in schools.

7.1 Infrastructure

While on one level, all that is needed to practice, perform and teach community circus is one individual and a 'box of tricks' (cf Reg Bolton's Suitcase Circus), as a sector the literature implies that the following elements are required for community circus to flourish and grow.

- Individuals with strong circus skills, social skills and teaching skills – this is not as simple as it seems as having all of these skills in the right proportion can be rare and quality teacher training opportunities can also be limited
- Organisations that teach community circus and/or train community circus tutors
- Venues to learn, practice and perform community circus
- Good practice guidance, for example around health and safety (especially when working with children)
- Quality equipment and tools
- Funding sources
- Good leadership and governance of community circus organisations.

Ideally, this infrastructure includes regional and national support structures in the form of circus development agencies (such as the UK's Circus Development Agency²⁸), circus schools (such as Melbourne's National Institute of Circus Arts or NICA) and circus specific venues (such as that housing the Belfast Community Circus School). Both NICA (via St Leon 2011) and the BCCS (on its website) note the significant strides made through having a purpose built venue for community circus activities.

Community circus also needs advocates, for example youth circus needs to be driven by "someone who likes kids and is passionate about circus as a tool for change and empowerment" (McCutcheon 2003:48).

²⁸ See <http://www.circusarts.org.uk/>.

7.2 Good practice guidance

There are no internationally accepted standards for circus provision, or for community circus provision, and as noted earlier many would be loathe to see any compulsory 'rule setting' around circus occur.

In late 2011 Tampere University's Centre for Practise as Research in Theatre produced a document called *Social Circus – A Guide to Good Practices*²⁹ (Hyttinen 2011). This guide was one result of a 2009-2011 research project which aimed to embed social circus in the Finnish circus scene (see footnote 15). The guide provides advice on how to begin a social circus activity, how to teach social circus and run circus classes, advice for circus instructors and general good practice in designing and undertaking social circus programmes and classes. The focus is on those teaching social circus, including desirable characteristics for circus instructors and how they can evaluate their work.

Further examples of general good practice guidance listed below are a haphazard set. The opportunity exists to develop good practice guidance for the New Zealand context, drawing on international guides.

- The UK's Circus Development Agency has a range of advice for circus practitioners at <http://www.circusarts.org.uk/advice/index.php>, including insurance and health and safety advice. This agency also completed a Good Practice Handbook for youth circus, dealing with issues such as child protection, health and safety and best practice case studies.
- Basic Circus Arts Instruction Manual <http://www.fedec.eu/resources.1637.html> (European Federation of Professional Circus Schools).
- UN Habitat best practices database contains an example of social circus good practice from Argentina, at <http://www.unhabitat.org/bestpractices/2010/mainview.asp?BPID=2362>
- Jacqueline Davis suggests core competencies for youth circus workers in this document setting out best practices in youth worker training for developmental circus arts programmes, at <http://www.americanyouthcircus.org/Resources/Documents/Member%20Communications/Pyramid/Pyramid%20January%202011.pdf>.
- The Flipside Circus Code of Conduct deals mainly with discrimination, harassment and the conduct of trainers, see <http://www.flipsidecircus.org.au/Downloads/CodeofConduct.aspx>.

²⁹ See http://sosaalinensirkus.fi/english/uploads/images/social_circus_handbook_2011.pdf.

- Cirque du Soleil have just published “The Community Workers Guide” and is currently asking social circus groups to comment on their “Basic Techniques in Circus Arts”, which is due for publication later in 2012.

7.3 Circus in schools

Dubbo West Public School in New South Wales established a circus programme in 1991, with Circus West established in 1994, both driven by Paul Woodhead. They have comprehensive documentation of the programme provided as well as a Risk Management Plan, trainer knowledge tests, organisation and procedures records and programme evaluation forms. This programme provides a robust model of a school based circus programme that others can imitate. See www.dubbowest-p.schools.nsw.edu.au.

In 2003/2003 Woodhead visited 23 in-school circus programmes to study their management and teaching programmes and their impact on the students participating. He found that key issues in the teaching and management of youth circus programmes relate to the quality of staffing and staff development, the assessment and management of risk, the accessibility of the programme to youth at risk, the short and long term management of the venue and programme, the appropriateness of the pedagogy (teachers/trainers) employed, and succession planning. He notes that most if not all the 23 programmes he visited rely on the charisma and magnetism of the Director for their life energy, and several programmes had ended due to Director burnout. He found little evidence of succession planning. Risk assessment and management was a major issue for all programmes, with the most advanced on paper being the Code of Practice by the National American Youth Circus. Getting the right trainers with the right mix of skills and rapport with youth was a major ongoing issue for all programmes.

In 1998 Paul Woodhead and Deborah Duffy published a book “Circus in Schools” to promote the programme at their own school and provide a practical document for the implementation of circus programmes in other schools. The book contains useful information needed to run an in-school circus programme; from learning how to juggle and stilt walk, through to costuming and performance. The book explains the school’s level system and how the students can progress through to the performance troupe. It also contains a number of templates for performance contracts and contracts for students and parents (McCutcheon 2003:51).

McCutcheon also published a Circus in Schools Handbook in 2004 (see www.circusstuff.com.au/).

8. Survival and sustainability

This section summarises key issues affecting the sustainability of community circus and ideas from the literature on how to sustain community circus efforts.

St Leon documents key challenges for smaller contemporary circus groups in Australia: “lack of resources and management skills, lack of a permanent home or performance venue, the constraints of limited time and of isolation, and the excessive costs of insurance and transport” (2011:256). Some of these issues were echoed in the national online survey of the community circus sector in New Zealand undertaken as part of this research project (Trotman 2011). Key needs identified in this survey were for funding and resources; sector development (for example teacher training); codes of practice and research; a stronger profile of community circus and stronger links among the community circus sector.

Communication of community circus is not generally a strong point internationally, as it has “not learned the art of self-advertisement. It’s happening all over the world but the world doesn’t know” (Bolton 1987:7).

Community circus can struggle for funding as it is an integrated activity, thus is partly arts, partly health, sport and recreation, part drama and performing arts and part therapy; thus it can straddle narrow funding categories or fall between them. Searle’s evaluation of Circus Kumarani highlighted this issue but noted that several funders decided to fund the organisation for pilot programmes despite it not fitting their funding criteria (2007:15). Many funders see the value of community circus but are not prepared to be a core funder or to fund it in an ongoing way, or can see funding community circus as being the responsibility of ‘other funders’ (ibid:16).

Will Chamberlain from the Belfast Community Circus School identified major management issues for community circus organisations as being recruiting trainers with an understanding of circus and youth work, managing resources and finding a balance between the needs of creative staff and administration.

In 2006, the Arts Council of England commissioned Leila Jancovich to research youth circus activity across the UK and make recommendations on the development of the sector. Priorities identified by youth circus practitioners were for networking (virtual and via an annual convention or festival), advisory services (eg around legal requirements/issues), training and professional development to ensure high standards, eg via teaching qualifications or codes of practice and best practice guides, and advocacy and partnership work, including with other arts and sports sectors.

The resulting report made three recommendations for how the youth circus sector should be supported in the future: 1) the development of a Youth Coordinator post with a national remit; 2) support for regional networks and partnership working; and 3) the

development of a directory of youth circus in order to identify and promote what was available.

The youth circus coordinator would be tasked with:

- Building partnerships with other youth providers to learn from their experiences and build opportunities (eg youth dance, youth theatre, youth arts, sport, education and international links)
- Advocating, overseeing and nurturing the development of an annual network and showcase event for youth circus
- Signposting youth circus groups towards best practice models and identifying gaps in advice or training
- Identifying partners to work on accreditation and career pathways
- Identifying research partners to provide longitudinal impact studies for the sector.

Core elements of survival and sustainability for community circus include sustaining the passion, leadership and skills of the key people involved, marketing and promotion, getting the price right for community circus activities and staying afloat financially.

One key strategy for community circus organisations internationally is to have a commercial arm or set of operations that subsidise its community circus activities, which tend to be low or no cost, depending on the target group and their ability to pay. This commercial arm provides circus to paying organisations and groups, from birthday parties to big corporate events. Cirque du Soleil does this the other way around – it is a profit making professional circus that donates 1% of its revenue to Cirque du Monde, its social circus operation.

As an example of a commercial 'arm', in 2005 the Belfast Community Circus School developed an agency called Premiere Circus whose sole purpose is to market their performers (2005:50). Premiere Circus operates as a social economy trading wing, taking commission for securing work for circus artists based in Belfast who work across Ireland.

Income can also be gained from teaching circus classes and workshops, with payment sometimes on a sliding scale. The BCCS has an adult training class every Wednesday night in which they teach a circus skill, plus an Itty Bitty Circus for 2-7 year olds broken into 3 age groups, plus a Saturday youth class, all of which are full, according to their website. They also offer outreach circus training from a one off session to long term intensive training culminating in a performance.



England's Newcastle Upon Tyne's Let's Circus³⁰ is a professional circus training outreach company that offers five key services: 1) interactive and participatory circus events; 2) a range of circus acts and artists for hire; 3) community and social circus programmes (they use both terms); 4) school and education based circus programmes; and 5) team building. They also run Circonnection, a professional circus

development programme for circus professionals by circus professionals. One of the master classes offered via Circonnection is called Circus as a Business. This is a very active, community circus focused organisation that offers a wide range of activity and is funded by a diverse range of sources, from philanthropic organisations to the local Council to private businesses and class/workshop participants.

Those who become trained in circus can go into business for themselves, as sole traders or in association with other circus performers and teachers. The opportunities are endless to provide circus programmes and experiences to any target group, from merchant bankers to toddlers.

Simply Circus provides a guide to letter writing to support circus³¹. Other sustainability ideas from the literature to support community circus are as follows.

- Training circus teachers and professionals who can make a living from circus
- International collaborations and exchanges
- Sponsorship
- Scholarships for low income and disadvantaged children to attend workshops and camps
- Festivals (eg Belfast's Festival of Fools³²) and performances
- Public service contracts
- Benefactors and philanthropic funders
- Circus arts for team building in the education and private sectors
- Circus arts consultants can design and create circus schools and performance venues.

³⁰ See <http://www.letscircus.com/>.

³¹ See http://circusnews.com/?page_id=1355.

³² This is a national five day street theatre festival playing to more than 30,000 people in the centre of Belfast.

9. Evaluation

"The thing about circus is that it works wherever you apply it" (Will Chamberlain, Director of BCCS 2005: 27).

The quote above reflects a commonly held view from the literature – that circus is powerful and positive wherever it occurs – that it simply 'works'. The evidence for this predominantly lies in stories of what happens for circus participants, which are mostly anecdotal and informal. Rigorous independent evaluation of community circus programmes is rare. On the other hand, stories are everywhere in the literature of transformative experiences for individuals, groups and communities through taking part in community circus.

Based on the literature in this review, evaluation of community circus activity tends to be either of specific community circus programmes (and particularly school based programmes), or needs analyses for the sector (and especially the youth circus sector). These evaluations tend to be qualitative (based on people's views and perceptions) and to focus on the experiences of participants of community circus and/or the views of community circus providers and practitioners.

Key evaluation methods for community circus programmes include interviews with participants and key stakeholders, participant or non-participant observation and review of documentation (eg Woodhead 2003, McCutcheon 2003, Carr 2005).

In terms of community circus programmes, evaluation tends to focus on the benefits and impacts for participants (Woodhead 2003, McCutcheon 2003). In all cases, quantifying the impact of community circus is a challenge, as it can be hard to gauge before and after effects, some impacts are long term and it can be difficult to 'prove' that the circus programme was the key factor in any particular change or effect:

"...none of us should underestimate the impact we can have on a child or young person [and] sometimes the things young people learn through circus are not always realised in the short term - it might be years before they understand the importance of self awareness or of sharing" (BCCS:16).

The very nature of community circus also resists traditional forms of measurement and documentation: "One's achievement in circus is fleeting, usually un-recorded and non-statistical. Its success is most deeply recorded by the artist herself, needing no external value judgement" (Bolton 2004:185). The impacts of taking part in community circus can be profound yet may not be consciously registered by the participant for some time, if at all.

On the other hand, some evaluation studies have demonstrated a high level of self-awareness by the community circus participants of the changes that occurred, not only for themselves but for their wider communities (McCutcheon 2003).

Numerous relevant evaluation toolkits exist that can support the evaluation of community circus activities, eg Jackson's evaluation toolkit for arts organisations to evaluate their work³³, Trotman's *Promoting (Good)ness: A guide to evaluating programmes and projects* (2008)³⁴ and Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI's) *Prove and Improve: A self-evaluation resource for community organisations* (2008)³⁵. Overall, the nature of community circus lends itself to story based evaluation techniques, visual methods such as Photovoice³⁶ and longitudinal studies that can show 'downstream' and longer term impacts.

The measures of success for community circus will vary depending on the programme, its audience and its goals. In McCutcheon's 2003 study of five schools providing circus programmes, for example, success was measured by popularity of the programmes, both within the school and its wider community, and in the decrease of various anti-social and identified destructive behaviours. From the evaluation studies reviewed key generic areas of measurement for community circus include:

- Participation levels (who, how often, for how long etc)
- Self reported benefits for participants (at individual and group levels)
- Capturing before and after changes for participants
- Wider community impacts
- Audience feedback.

This literature review indicates considerable scope to provide guidance to the sector on how to evaluate its activities, in ways that capture its essence and the complexity of effects. Story based and visual methods such as photo and DVD, plus participatory methods which involve participants and capture their voices, are not only likely to best capture the richness of the impact of community circus, but could also enrich the experience and increase the benefits for participants by supporting them to reflect on their experiences.

³³ See <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/departs/all/report/VoluntaryCommunityArtsEvalToolkit.pdf>.

³⁴ See <http://www.arc.govt.nz/albany/fms/main/Documents/Auckland/Volunteers/Promoting%20Goodness.pdf>.

³⁵ See <http://www.ceni.org/publications/ProveandImprove.pdf>.

³⁶ See <http://www.photovoice.org/>.

10. Implications for New Zealand

The key implications of this literature review for community circus in New Zealand are as follows.

Limitless opportunities to 'grow' community circus

Community circus in New Zealand does not have a long history and is characterised by small pockets of activity in local areas nationwide (Trotman 2011). It is a field that is ripe for development and for experimentation, if the passion and commitment exists.

Key opportunities from this review to try in New Zealand include the following.

- Increase local, regional and national networking within the community circus sector and between this sector and others (eg theatre, music, arts therapy, community arts)
- Seek to build a Pacific wide community circus network and international connections with New Zealand practitioners
- Develop mentoring programmes, internships and scholarship opportunities to grow the pool of community circus teachers and trainers
- Work with funders and the philanthropic sector to identify and develop funding sources
- Seek funding for a national coordinator and a national network³⁷
- Independently evaluate existing community circus programmes - especially child, youth and disability programmes³⁸, using experienced evaluators
- Try community circus in different contexts, for example with Maori and Pacific children and young people
- Seek to build a 'home' for community circus training in New Zealand, or build a network of trainers
- Create community circus venues in regional areas as a form of local economic and social development.

Develop community circus as a form of social enterprise

³⁷ Note that Circus Kumarani has led the development of a national community circus network to date, with four national conventions held so far. A fifth convention will depend on securing appropriate funding.

³⁸ Note that the wider research project will evaluate four community circus programmes in 2012, including child/youth programmes and a disability programme.

Community circus is uniquely suited to social entrepreneurship, in that it can offer a wide range of activities and have a wide range of funding sources, including self-generated revenue streams through classes, workshops, events, team building and so on. Community circus can be offered as an alternative form of fitness and recreation in local neighbourhoods to the general public, or targeted towards children and young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Key opportunities for developing community circus programmes exist with the following sectors (for example):

- Early childhood education
- Schools and out of school care and holiday programmes
- Retirement villages
- Disability sector
- Refugee and migrant groups
- People with mental health and/or behavioural issues

Community circus can also be developed to promote public health messages or address difficult or sensitive issues in any context.

Build the knowledge base

As so little is known about community circus in New Zealand, ample opportunity exists to build the research and evaluation base here. But not just any research and evaluation – as Bolton warns, the magic, mystery, complexity and multilayered nature of community circus requires careful handling. Key opportunities for research and evaluation include:

- Good practice design and implementation of community circus
- How to get community circus initiatives off the ground in New Zealand
- Building the infrastructure to support community circus – what is needed where
- Impact of community circus on people with disabilities and other groups
- Create good practice guidance for the New Zealand context, building on overseas guidance, especially in terms of health and safety
- Evaluate community circus in ways that capture its richness and enhance the experience for participants.

11. Conclusion

"With a little bit of circus magic anything is possible" (Zip Zap Circus School website, South Africa).

This foray into the world of community circus reveals a fringe social art form operating largely under the public radar. According to this literature however, community circus has unique powers and limitless potential to support individual, group and community transformation.

New Zealand has predominantly experienced circus as a touring phenomena brought in from overseas, and the circus arts are not a strong part of the cultural tapestry here at present (Searle 2007:12). Whether this will change depends largely on the ability of community circus proponents to build the momentum and commitment to grow its presence in New Zealand. This will require bringing to light what community circus has to offer, enlisting funding support and building circus infrastructure, including quality community circus providers and trainers.

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Note that many of the references in this review are from websites and are presented within footnotes throughout this report.

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Appendix One

Charter of the Creation of the United Nations of Social Circus (translated from French by Reg Bolton)

We, individuals and institutions representing twelve countries (Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Spain, Guinea, Ireland, Morocco, Holland) united on the occasion of the 'First International Round Table of Circus and Social Work' held at La Seyne-Sur-Mer on 28-31 January 2002, are committed to unanimity and to a confederation of social circus. This confederation is committed to cooperating to produce social transformations using circus arts as a tool.

The members of this confederation are moved by the conviction that circus is an educational instrument of emancipation and economic development. We also believe is also a particularly efficient means of communication. It operates as a magnet for disadvantaged groups and clearly demonstrates its potential for social change.

This confederation is naturally open to all people and institutions and following the same objectives, once accredited by the group. We recognise that the Australian and American participants are happy with the expression 'social circus', the Irish and Dutch prefer the expression 'community circus' while the French prefer to evoke a meeting of 'circus and social work' to maintain the specific identity of these two genres. The following people and associations witnessed this Charter:

Name	Organisation	Country
Geraldo Miranda	Rally Circo Social	Brazil
Rima Abdul-Malaka	Clownes Sans Frontieres	France
Fabian Hoyes	Circo para todos	Colombia
Brigitte Bailly	Independent	France
Reg Bolton	Suitcase Circus	Australia
Jean-Michel Brayere	La Fabrik	Senegal
Alejandra Jiminex Castro	El Circo Del Mundo – Chile	Chile
Sarah Cathcart	Women's Circus	Australia
Will Chamberlain	Belfast Community Circus School	Ireland
Rosine Feferman	Larue and Company	France

Laurent Gachet	Shems'y	Morocco
Paul Laporte	Cirque du Monde	Canada
Adrienne Larue	Larue and Company	France
Kathryn Montgomery	Independent	Ireland
Andrea Ouseley	Women's Circus	Australia
Tortrel Portrona	Payasos Sin Fronteras	Spain
Jacques Portokalopoulos	La Saltimbinques de l'Impossible	France
Marianna Luna Rofolo	Circo Social Del Sur	Argentina
Padre Silva	Los Muchachos	Spain
Felicity Simpson	Cirque Pour Tous	France
Isabelle Sage	Circo Baobab	Guinea Conakry
Adrienne Van Hiltern	Elleboog	Netherlands
Alain Velleux	Independent	Canada