



Advance Program Notes

Cirque Mechanics

Pedal Punk

Friday, April 24, 2015, 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 25, 2015, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

Cirque Mechanics *Pedal Punk*

CREATIVE TEAM

Chris Lashua, *creative director and founder*
Aloysia Gavre, *co-director and choreographer*
Sean Riley, *set designer and artistic rigger*
Steven Ragatz, *writer and artist*
Michael Picton, *composer*
Lisa Ragatz, *costume designer*
Anthony Powers, *lighting designer*
Bryan Rosenbaum, *assistant to the composer*
Aida Lashua, *co-producer and collaborator*

CAST AND CREW

Jan Damm, *comedic character, Rolla Bolla*
Wes Hatfield, *acrobat, trampolinist, and cyr wheel*
Holland Lohse, *acrobat, trampolinist, and unicyclist*
Blake Hicks, *BMX artist*
Ben "Windu" Sayles, *acrobat generalist*
Lauren Stark, *aerialist*
Lindsey Covarrubias, *aerialist*
Nata Ibragimov, *hoola hoop artist*
Katie Ketchum, *acrobat*
Kevin Rogers, *artist and technician*
Janeen Johnson, *general stage manager*
Krissy Kenny, *lighting director*

About Pedal Punk

From the inventive Cirque Mechanics comes *Pedal Punk*, a Steampunk-inspired acrobatic whirlwind where cycling is the escape from technology-obsessed society. In *Pedal Punk* we experience the excitement, artistry, and thrill that occurs when a zany bike shop mechanic interacts with cyclists and bikes and repairs more than broken pieces. He creates wondrous machines that come to life and inspires the cyclist in all of us to unite with our inner *Pedal Punk*.

Creative Director Chris Lashua spent most of his career on a BMX bike and inside a German Wheel. This new production showcases his innate passion and fascination for all things bicycles and cycling. The synergy between man and machine, the hallmark of Cirque Mechanics, is magnificently exposed in *Pedal Punk*. It is that synergy that *The New York Times* called "exceptional, evocative, eye-catching and grossly entertaining...in a word, excellent."

- The Gantry Bike, the centerpiece of the show, is a pedal-driven, roving mechanical marvel, a giant playground on wheels, elegant and versatile.
- The Gantry Trampoline act, led by master trampolinist Wes Hatfield, is a daring adrenaline rush. The acrobats bounce, climb, and play, all while the Gantry spins and moves.
- Male contortionist Windu seems to disassemble his body à la urban break dancer.
- BMX rider Blake Hicks is a master of his machine. He displays flashy technical prowess as he pulls off big tricks and extreme stunts, testing his limits every time.
- Nata Ibragimov transforms playing with bike rims into a dynamic tango. She rolls and spins her hoops with rhythm and precision, across the stage and high up in the air.
- A Classic Penny Farthing turns into a strong aerial duo act when the bike is lifted by Gantry power high above the stage.
- Jan Damm is a skillful comedic juggler and clown. His hysterically funny audience participation piece, a very clever stationary bike race, will create heroes in the crowd.
- Holland Lohse and Katie Ketchum perform a romantic unicycle dance that overwhelms the senses. Their balancing and pedaling tell a tale with dexterity, strength, and passion.

Biographies

CREATIVE TEAM

CHRIS LASHUA, *creative director and founder*

Company founder Chris Lashua hails from Boston, Massachusetts, where he spent most of his youth riding on a BMX bike. He was discovered by Cirque du Soleil and created and performed a BMX bike act that was entirely his own. He was then commissioned to build a “German Wheel” piece for the company, cementing his reputation as a visionary of circus gadgetry. His engineering chops and creative energy led him to run away with his own circus company, Cirque Mechanics. Lashua believes that innovative mechanical apparatus and the relationship between performer and machine sets his company apart and is at the heart of what makes Cirque Mechanics unique. He has delivered on this unique relationship in *Birdhouse Factory* and *Boom Town*, the company’s two theatrical productions, and in *Cirque Mechanics* for the Orchestra Project, Lashua explored the performer-machine relationship with the Gantry Bike, a self-contained, pedal-driven mechanical stage, worthy of the grand classical music featured in the show. Once again, Lashua continues to build on the might of the Gantry Bike in *Pedal Punk* by adding newly designed, inventive pedal-driven devices that interact with the performers. In *Pedal Punk*, he masterfully merges his passion for cycling, circus, and all things mechanical in an exceptionally playful and artful way.

ALOYSIA GAVRE, *co-director and choreographer*

An original co-director and choreographer of *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town*, and *Cirque Mechanics* for the Orchestra Project, and also an early member of the San Francisco-based Pickle Family Circus, Aloysia Gavre has been a movement, dance, and circus enthusiast most of her life. She has studied with Pilobolus, The Tandy Beal Dance Company, and Zacho Dance Theater and perfected her circus abilities with Master Lu-Yi of the San Francisco School of Circus Arts and L’Ecole Nationale du Cirque in Montreal. Gavre was a featured act in Cirque du Soleil’s *O* in Las Vegas and *Quidam*, where she performed the aerial hoop act that earned the troupe a special prize at the Monte Carlo International Circus Festival in 2002. Gavre is also co-founder of Cirque School L.A., a place for “anybody with any body” to explore the circus arts. For more information, visit www.cirqueschoola.com.

SEAN RILEY, *set designer and artistic rigger*

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

Biographies

STEVEN RAGATZ, *writer and artist*

An original *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town*, and Orchestra Project cast member and collaborator, Steven Ragatz has been entertaining audiences with his juggling, physical comedy, stilt walking, and general antics for the past three decades. As a 10-year veteran of Cirque du Soleil, Ragatz has toured throughout North, South and Central America, Asia, and Europe performing multiple juggling, acts as well as an eclectic array of characters. His television credits include *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, and *The Today Show*. He has enjoyed seasonal appearances with the Indianapolis and Detroit Symphonies, juggling in front of live orchestras.

MICHAEL PICTON, *composer*

Michael Picton first ran off with the circus in 2000 as keyboardist with the European tour of Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*. Since then he has become one of the musical voices of the *Greatest Show on Earth*, composing songs and score for *Bellobration* and *Funundrum*, the 137th and 140th editions, respectively, of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus, and he has orchestrated the Dragone productions *Le Rêve* (Las Vegas) and *The House of Dancing Water* (Macao). As the grand prize winner of the 2004 Turner Classic Movies Young Film Composers Competition, Picton was chosen from a field of over 600 composers to compose the epic score to the 1926 Greta Garbo silent film, *The Temptress*. Other film and TV work includes scores to the Marian Davies silent film *The Red Mill*; the independent feature *Little Chenier*; the Sci Fi Network series *Flash Gordon*; and the theme to the VH1 series *I Want to Work for Diddy*, for which he was awarded a 2009 BMI Film and TV Music Award. He has scored numerous commercials, and his music has defined the sound of networks such as PBS, CNN, Comedy Central, Discovery Channel, Sprout TV, FX Network, Universal Network, and the Biography Channel. Picton studied composition at McGill University, Montreal, and he is currently based in Brooklyn, New York.

LISA RAGATZ, *costume designer*

Lisa Ragatz studied opera and ballet costuming at Indiana University and has 30 years of experience in costume design and construction for opera, dance, ice skating, and circus arts. She has worked as a costumer for Cirque du Soleil at Treasure Island, Cirque du Soleil Special Events, Bietak Productions, Busch Gardens, Indiana University School of Music, Celebration Barn Theater, The Oddfellows Theater, and Under the Umbrella, as well as for several Cirque Mechanics productions, including *Birdhouse Factory* (2004-2007), *Mechanical Action* (Philippines, 2007), the *Gantry Project* (2012), the *Symphony Project* (2014), and most recently, *Pedal Punk* (2014). Ragatz lives in Bloomington, Indiana, with her husband, Steven; son, Andrew; and her cat, Mrs. Mears.

ANTHONY POWERS, *lighting designer*

Anthony Powers has designed productions through out the U.S., Asia, South America, and Europe. For the past few years he has designed the lighting for and production managed corporate and live events, as well as national broadcast events and music festivals for a vast array of clients and talent. Powers is also the undisputed karaoke king of Nome, Alaska. He currently lives in sunny Oakland, California with his amazing, robot-designing, rocketship-building wife and the cutest little dog you will probably ever see, The Lemmy. Powers is as passionate about metal (especially old school thrash) as he is about lighting, and you can often find him by simply following the loudest music in the building. He would like to give all praises to Odin, the Allfather, King of the Nine Realms, and Lord of the Aesir. His design work can be seen at anthonypowers.virb.com.

Biographies, continued

BRYAN ROSENBAUM, *assistant to the composer*

In 1996, vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Bryan Rosenbaum launched his music career in Los Angeles, California, making a name for himself in the underground subculture of the rave and club scene. In 2000 he accompanied Michael Franti & Spearhead on an adventure around the globe. Rosenbaum has composed and/or performed with artists such as Los Lobos, Ozomatli, Perry Ferrel, and Ivan De Prume (White Zombie), and at Coachella, the Billboard Music Awards, and more. Rosenbaum has opened up for Primus, Tool, Stanley Clark, Jane's Addiction, and Sublime. He now resides in Las Vegas, Nevada, working with Down By Day, an upcoming original electro punk band. His work has been used in commercials, theatre, circus, and Broadway shows. Rosenbaum is currently teaching music production and live performance on *Ableton Live*.

AIDA LASHUA, *co-producer and collaborator*

Aida Lashua has been Chris Lashua's co-producer and creative partner in life and work for over 20 years. This partnership has led her to develop an appreciation for business and a passion for the circus arts. She manages the day-to-day operations of company and family with poise; she is a creative force and a stabilizing influence. Her background in direct marketing allows her to use a targeted message approach in the development of the company's website and social media presence. As a mother of three boys, she is an avid supporter of the educational component and community outreach programs offered by Cirque Mechanics. She has written the education outreach support materials and study guides and has developed the structure of the educational workshops. She feels most at home near the ocean and hopes to one day become a published writer.

CAST AND CREW

JAN DAMM, *comedic character, Rolla Bolla*

Jan Damm has spent countless hours on stage entertaining since a very young age. At 11, he started his professional career in his home state of Maine, juggling at children's birthday parties. Also a long-time theatre nerd, he was inspired to combine character and skill and set his sights on becoming a stage clown. To that end, he's trained with masters of the craft, such as Avner Eisenberg, John Gilkey, Fritz Grobe, Lu Yi, and Jeff Raz. He studied acrobatics and taught flying trapeze in San Francisco, California; street performed in Europe and Canada; and led the Cirque show aboard Celebrity Cruise's *Silhouette*. Other recent credits include Seattle's Moisture Festival, Montreal Complement Cirque, and Chicago's Midnight Circus. With Cirque Mechanics, Damm has previously appeared onstage in Italy and Hong Kong, as well as at numerous events in the U.S. He is thrilled to join the exciting new production of *Pedal Punk* and hopes to tour with the show far and wide! He lives in Chicago and enjoys the Sunday *New York Times* and good coffee.

WES HATFIELD, *acrobat, trampolinist, and Cyr Wheel*

Wes Hatfield has been a competitive trampolinist for over 10 years. He got his start in Germany, where he spent his early years in gymnastics. At age 10 he joined trampoline and tumbling when he and his family moved to Colorado. In the world of trampoline competition, his resume includes several state and national championship titles. At age 19 he quit competition and became a circus performer, traveling around the world and wowing audiences with his technical prowess and zany comedic antics. Hatfield was also a cast member in Cirque Mechanics' *Birdhouse Factory* and *Boom Town*, performing trampoline and Chinese poles. He now lives in Los Angeles, where he is a coach at Cirque School Los Angeles and has been expanding his discipline repertoire, developing a duo trapeze act and training in Cyr Wheel. He is a fan of avocados and coffee (not together though).

Biographies, continued

HOLLAND LOHSE, *acrobat, trampolinist, and unicyclist*

Holland Lohse is an artist dedicated to living his life on the edge as a self-described daredevil acro-spartan. His quest to become an acrobat evolved from a childhood spent hurtling down Colorado mountains on a unicycle or climbing up them with ice axes. He later became an accomplished competitive diver and national age-group champion in trampoline gymnastics. His passion for the circus arts first began after watching a Cirque du Soleil video of *Quidam* in fifth grade gym class. Since then, it has become a driving force and dedication to challenge the laws of physics and exceed his physical limits every day. Pursuing his craft has taken him from Johannesburg to the Caribbean, from New York to Las Vegas and Los Angeles working for Royal Caribbean, Le Grande Cirque, and Cirque Mechanics. Most importantly, wherever his work takes him, Lohse lives his life the way he performs: stretching the boundaries of his mind and body, finding extraordinary ways to take his art to new creative levels, and, in doing so, inspiring his audience to remember what it's like to live a life with limitless possibility.

BLAKE HICKS, *BMX artist*

Blake Hicks started his craft riding BMX on streets and parking lots in St. Louis, Missouri. While all the other kids didn't think riding BMX was as cool as traditional school sports, Hicks believed that with practice and perseverance he could turn his passion into a career. At age 20 Hicks moved to Portland, Oregon, where he joined the Wanderlust Circus and learned how to transform his specialty talent into a circus act. In 2011 he designed *TRON Bike*, a replica of his *Pedal Punk* bike, except it is covered in over 100 feet of Glow wire to mirror the look of Disney's *TRON*. His initial *TRON* YouTube video went viral worldwide. Thanks to the *TRON* bike, Hicks has performed on *America's Got Talent* and with such celebrity D.J.s as Skrillex, Paul Oakenfold, Armin Van Burren, Tiesto, and David Guetta. Recently Hicks was a featured contestant on France's number one TV show, *The Best*. When he isn't riding, he spends his time playing with his cats and chickens and designing unique costumes. A newcomer to Cirque Mechanics, he is thrilled to work with BMX flatland legend Chris Lashua. Hicks loves meeting new people and taking photos. Please be sure to say hi and get a photo!

BEN "WINDU" SAYLES, *acrobat generalist*

Ben "Windu" Sayles was born near a U.S. Army garrison in Vicenza, Italy, in 1984. He has not spent more than two years in the same place since elementary school. He graduated cum laude from California State University, Northridge in 2008. He has a diverse and extensive training background, which he only started pursuing as a hobby in his 20s, and he has studied many disciplines, including the aerial arts, break dancing, contortion, ballet, yoga, and gymnastics. His performance displays his unique multi-disciplinary expertise. Sayles began his performance career with the Los Angeles-based Diavolo dance company. He has a love for circus and dance and enjoys bringing them together. This is his first production with Cirque Mechanics, and he's enjoying the collaborative performance opportunities the company offers.

Biographies, continued

LAUREN STARK, *aerialist*

Lauren Stark, originally from Northern California, began studying and performing classical ballet and contemporary jazz as a young girl. She also has training in musical theatre and modern dance. In 2003 Stark began attending the International Boulder Jazz Dance Workshop at the University of Colorado at Boulder and became a member of the workshop's resident professional dance company, Interweave Dance Theatre. In 2006 she moved to San Francisco, California, to continue her career as a dancer while training at Alonzo Kings Lines Ballet studio and ODC Dance Theatre. She moved to Los Angeles, California, and discovered circus. She began training aerial and ground skills at Cirque School L.A. under the direction of Aloysia Gavre. Stark recently graduated from Cirque School L.A.'s professional circus program and is now an aerial coach and kids' program coordinator. She is also a resident aerialist for SBE Entertainment and performs weekly at local events in Hollywood, California. This is Stark's fourth project with Cirque Mechanics, and she could not be more excited to be traveling and working with such a talented cast. She is living her dream and feels blessed every single day. They also provide her with maple almond butter on the road, so she's here to stay!

LINDSEY COVARRUBIAS, *aerialist*

Lindsey Covarrubias is a San Francisco Bay area native who moved to Los Angeles, California, to pursue her dreams of circus. After studying dance at University of California, San Diego, she began training in the aerial arts under the direction of Aloysia Gavre. A graduate of Cirque School Los Angeles' professional program, she now works as a coach and performer in the Los Angeles area and travels to perform for both corporate and private events. She was recently featured as an aerialist in Rob Schniders' new reality show *The Real Rob* and for a Warner Brothers special event. This is her second production with Cirque Mechanics, as she is also a performer with the Orchestra Project.

NATA IBRAGIMOV, *hoola hoop artist*

Originally from Baku, Azerbaijan, Nata Ibragimov currently resides in New York City. She was a national level rhythmic gymnast for 11 years. After retiring from the sport at the age of 16, she pursued her other passions, such as visual and performing arts. Circus was a perfect outlet for her creativity, and it gave her freedom to experiment and improve her skills. Most importantly though, circus has given her the opportunity to meet some incredibly talented people, who inspire her art every day. Aside from being a performer, Ibragimov is a professional illustrator. Her paintings have been included in private collections and displayed in galleries around the world. For more information, visit www.nataillustration.com.

KATIE KETCHUM, *acrobat*

Katie Ketchum is a former competitive rollerblader from Buffalo, New York. She competed in X-Games, Asian X-Games, and LG World Championships for 10 years. Ranked number one in the world in 2005 and 2006, Ketchum retired from competition to join Cirque du Soleil's *Wintuk* in New York City in 2006. It was there she found her love for circus and began learning various circus disciplines. Currently residing in Los Angeles, California, when she isn't hanging out at the beach, you will find her traveling the world performing her hand balancing canes act, hand to hand duo, rollerblading, or climbing around on Chinese poles. Ketchum is thrilled to join the Cirque Mechanics family and is looking forward to the good times ahead with the *Pedal Punk* cast!

Biographies, continued

KEVIN ROGERS, *artist and technician*

Kevin Rogers is from Pasadena, California, and his love for performing began at age three. Since then he has worked as an actor, acrobat, and stuntman. He graduated with a bachelor of arts in theatre from California State University, Fullerton, which allowed him to learn and hone his skills on stage as well as backstage. He has been blessed to travel the U.S. and the world doing what he loves most! He loves working with Cirque Mechanics and is proud to have been part of *Birdhouse Factory* and *Boom Town* and looks forward to the new adventure of *Pedal Punk*.

JANEEN JOHNSON, *general stage manager*

Janeen Johnson's career in theatre production was cultivated through 11 years of arts and civic engagement as a student of folk arts, dancer, arts administrator, and company manager. She yields an impressive professional track, serving a multitude of projects illustrating a wide-range of artistic and theatrical expressions, which includes seven years of experience as a freelance production field technician and stage manager throughout the San Francisco Bay area. Johnson has worked with the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, San Francisco Hip Hop Fest, San Francisco International Festival of the Arts, Black Choreographer's Festival, Chitresh Das Dance Company, and Fua Dia Congo Performing Arts Company. She is now a seasoned circus stage manager with Cirque Mechanics' *Birdhouse Factory* and *Boom Town*.

KRISSY KENNY, *lighting director*

Krissy Kenny is a lighting designer, moving light technician, and production electrician hailing from the green mountains of Vermont, where she is a journeyman in the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) union, Local 919, and spent a great deal of time working as head electrician for the Hopkins Center for the Arts at Dartmouth College. Currently she resides in San Francisco, California, where she works as a union stagehand with IATSE, Local 16, frequently filling in as head electrician at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and also serving as vice chair for the Young Workers Committee. She gained an extensive background in musical theatre performance and dance for more than 10 years before becoming a technician in 2007. Most notably she was vocally trained by Bill Reed, founder of the musical theatre program at Circle in the Square Theater School in New York City. When not in the theatre, which is rare, Kenny can be found kayaking, hiking, scuba diving, fishing, figure skating, biking, or hanging out with her dog, River.

Special Thanks

Aida and our three sons, Zion, Quinn, and Iago, for their unconditional love and support, their encouragement, and for adopting my love of machines and exploration. For their neverending act ideas, narrative, and plot discussions. And for pedaling through life beside me. To Dad and Mom for making me believe anything IS possible.

Our cast and crew for their tireless efforts, incredible imagination, and collaborative spirit. Gilles Ste-Croix for discovering my potential and encouraging me through the years. Neil Benson and his team at Opus3 Artists for delivering on the vision for our company and believing in our creative process. Armand Thomas (my consigliere) for his continuing support of me, my family, and our projects. Bo Bogatin for keeping us honest and legal. Andy Espo for his friendship, clear head, and objectivity. John Henry for his dedication and work ethic. Brian Schuette and the boys at United Machine for fabricating and creating and trusting me with their equipment. Our friends and family at Cirque du Soleil for continuing to set the bar higher.

It is my life's thrill to get to "build a circus with my friends and call it work." The time spent creating this show was an invigorating, challenging, and at times a frightening journey. The days were long but encouraging, uplifting, and exhausting. But most of all, they were a blast. I hope you get half as much enjoyment watching as we had in creating. Thanks for coming!

—Chris Lashua

Engagement Activities

Friday, April 24, 2015, 10 AM

Youth Performance: Cirque Mechanics

Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre, Street and Davis Performance Hall

The Center for the Arts has arranged for a free matinee performance by Cirque Mechanics for children in grades 7-12 from Bland, Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, and Tazewell Counties and the cities of Radford and Roanoke.

In the Galleries

ICAT: Open (at the) Source

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Continues through Sunday, May 17, 2015

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-6 PM/Saturday-Sunday, 10 AM-4 PM

ICAT: Open (at the) Source enables visitors to explore and experience the research and innovation that is happening within the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology (ICAT). Visitors will become more than just viewers, but partners in exploration with the students, faculty, and staff of ICAT and its creative community.

School of Visual Arts Senior Show 2015

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery

Opens Thursday, April 30, 2015 and continues through Sunday, May 17, 2015

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 10 AM-6 PM/Saturday-Sunday, 10 AM-4 PM

In this capstone exhibition for graduating seniors, emerging artists at Virginia Tech's School of Visual Arts, in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, display a broad range of art and design practices. Incorporating new and established technologies in material and virtual realms, the exhibition demonstrates the School of Visual Arts' commitment to excellence and innovation in the practice, study, and teaching of arts.