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CENTER
FOR THE
ARTS
AT VIRGINIA TECH

CIRQUE MECHANICS
Tilt! A Circus Thrill Ride

Tuesday, February 10, and
Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 7:30 PM

Street and Davis Performance Hall, Anne and Ellen Fife Theatre



25 26 SPRING PERFORMANCES

Fri., Feb. 20, 7:30 PM
Danish Radio Big Band
with **Cécile McLorin Salvant**
and **Miho Hazama**

Mon., Feb. 23, 7:30 PM
Broadway in Blacksburg
Chicago

Tues., March 17, 7:30 PM
Irish Baroque Orchestra
The Trials of Tenucci

Sat., March 28, 7:30 PM
Stephanie Lake Company
Manifesto

Fri., April 3, 7:30 PM
Bill Frisell
In My Dreams
Featuring **Jenny Scheinman, Eyvind Kang,**
Hank Roberts, Thomas Morgan, and Rudy Royston

Tues., April 7, 7:30 PM
National Geographic Live
Beauty Beyond the Frontlines
Muhammed Muheisen, photojournalist

Wed., April 15, 7:30 PM
The Takács Quartet
with **Jordan Bak, viola**

Thurs., April 23, 7:30 PM
Algeria Moves!
Music, Dance, and Women's Resilience

Sat., May 9, 7:30 PM
An Evening with Kelli O'Hara
Season Closer

CIRQUE MECHANICS

Tilt! A Circus Thrill Ride

Park Opens
Bounce Juggle
Swing Chair
Tight Wire
Plate Spinning
Park Closes
Teeter Board

Intermission

Park Opens Next Day
Cradle Roller Coaster
Ring Toss
Chinese Pole
Balloon Game
Ping Pong Ball
Ferris Wheel
Finale

This performance will last approximately 90 minutes
with one 20-minute intermission.

This performance is supported in part by a gift from
Dr. Mark and Connie Froggatt.

CAST

Scott Cooper, *acrobat and cradle*
Chase Culp, *main character and clown*
Will Farlow, *acrobat and teeterboard*
Jeremy Kasper, *acrobat and teeterboard*
Aubrey Lawrence, *acrobat and cradle*
Joel Malkoff, *acrobat and wire walking*
Celeste Murman, *acrobat and Chinese pole*
Lexi Powell, *aerialist and swing*
Ossy Sanchez, *acrobat and juggler*

CREATIVE TEAM

Chris Lashua, *founder, creative director, producer, and machine designer*
Aida Lashua, *producer and collaborator*
Aloysia Gavre, *co-director and choreographer*
Leonardo Hidalgo, *lighting designer*
Janeen Johnson, *production director and assistant choreographer*
Michael Picton, *composer*
Caroline Rogers, *costume designer*
Steven Ragatz, *co-director and dramaturge*
Sean Riley, *co-director, set designer, and artistic rigger*

PRODUCTION TEAM

Clint Bobzien, *artistic director*
Robert Penotti, *stagehand and truck driver*
Penelope Onofre, *costume manager*
Max Rosenfeldt, *lighting director*
Bryan Runion, *production stage manager*
Toby Stanley, *props master and master carpenter*



PROGRAM NOTES

Step right up to the dazzling world of *Tilt! A Circus Thrill Ride!*

Journey back to the 1980s and experience a high-flying homage to America's iconic amusement parks. Bursting with acrobatics, aerial feats, juggling, and a dose of nostalgic charm, this theatrical circus adventure brings the sights, sounds, and spirit of the era to life. At the heart of the spectacle is a marvel of man-powered engineering: a giant Ferris wheel, surrounded by incredible mechanical creations that reimagine classic rides and games of the time. The story follows a weary amusement park worker, worn down by the grind and long disconnected from the joy around him. When he confiscates a guest's boom box, a playful chase erupts — an exhilarating whirlwind of stunts, surprises, and laughter. By the end, the pursuit transforms into a touching moment of connection, proving that even in the unlikeliest of places, shared joy can bring us together.



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Cirque Mechanics

Founded in 2004 by Chris Lashua, Las Vegas-based Cirque Mechanics masterfully blends American storytelling with inventive mechanical staging. Inspired by traditional circus and grounded in realism, Cirque Mechanics' performances explore timeless themes of ingenuity through a captivating mix of acrobatics, mechanical artistry, and humor. Hailed by *Spectacle Magazine* as "the greatest contribution to the American circus since Cirque du Soleil," Cirque Mechanics creates unforgettable experiences for audiences worldwide, including corporate and private clients through its Events and Under Canvas divisions. Its touring repertoire features acclaimed productions such as *Birdhouse Factory*; *Boom Town*; *Pedal Punk*; *42ft*; the Drama Desk Award-nominated *Zephyr*; its inaugural holiday spectacular, *Yuletide Factory*; and *Winter Wonder Shoppe*, created in partnership with the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Its sixth touring production, *Tilt!* promises an exhilarating circus thrill ride for all ages.

Cirque Mechanics previously performed at the Center for the Arts in 2015, 2022, and 2024.

MEET THE PERFORMERS



Scott Cooper, acrobat and cradle

Scott Cooper began life on the tiny Nordic island of Iceland. Many adventures later, Cooper accidentally stumbled into the circus around 2010. At the time, he held three engineering degrees and a lucrative future in tech — but decided to toss it all aside for the glamorous life of a starving circus artist. Over the years, Cooper slowly traded desks and suits for training halls and bruises. For two years, he studied and performed with AcroSanct under the legendary Chinese acrobat Lu-Yi, later joining AcroArmy under the guidance of sports acro champion Arthur Davis III. His specialties lean toward disciplines involving other “ridiculous humans,” including Russian cradle, Russian bar, hand-to-hand, banquine, perch, duo trapeze, and ensemble acrobatics. Stage credits include *Awakening!* at the Wynn, *Cirque Dreams*, *Pippin: The Broadway Musical*, the Emmy Awards, and *A Magical Cirque Christmas*. On the side, Cooper is also the guy who’s been trying to reach you about your car’s extended warranty. Oh — and he’s forklift certified. #suckitjoel



Chase Culp, main character and clown

Chase Culp was born and raised in the suburbs of Houston, Texas, but his heart was set on adventure from the start. The grandson of a cowboy, Culp dreamed of joining the circus at just three years old, inspired by the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, as well as the clowns who passed through town with touring shows. As a teenager, he discovered Circus Smirkus, a traveling tented youth circus, where he spent three summers honing his craft. After graduating high school, he joined Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, touring for two years across the U.S. and Mexico.

MEET THE PERFORMERS, cont.

His career has since taken him to circus tents, theatres, theme parks, and festivals in more than 10 countries, with credits including Slava's Snowshow, Venardos Circus, Mr. Swindle's Traveling Peculiarium, and the Circus World Museum. Culp has also toured extensively with Cirque Mechanics productions, including *Birdhouse Factory*, *Pedal Punk*, and *Yuletide Factory*, and is thrilled to join the cast of *Tilt! Offstage*, Culp is a fan of all-you-can-eat sushi, is certified in laughter yoga, and — true to his love of showmanship — is also a licensed auctioneer.



Will Farlow, acrobat and teeterboard

Will Farlow is one flipping cool guy — literally. Farlow loves to swim, dive, and, of course, flip. An expert diver, he also enjoys coaching and bringing his fun, motivating energy to anyone eager to learn. Hailing from Myrtle Beach — the putt-putt capital of the world — Farlow grew up with a love for both water and thrills. That passion eventually carried him into the circus world, where he became part of the original cast of Cirque du Soleil's *Crystal*. Audiences saw him soaring through crisp arena air, flying off poles, and pushing his acrobatic skills to the limit. Despite having vision in only one eye, Farlow is a true thrill-seeker. For him, the challenge makes every daring move even more exhilarating. Offstage, you'll likely find him chasing rollercoasters with his buddies, slushy in hand, until the amusement park lights flicker out. Laid back by nature but fueled by adventure, Farlow brings both chill vibes and jaw-dropping talent to the stage. Whether he's coaching, flipping, or laughing with friends, he reminds us all to keep life in balance — ride the highs, embrace the thrills, and never forget that #mensmentalhealthisimportant.



Jeremy Kasper, acrobat and teeterboard

Jeremy Kasper, a Chicago native, discovered circus at just nine years old when he began training at the Actors Gymnasium. What started as an after-school activity quickly grew into a passion, expanding from aerial arts to juggling and beyond. Over the years, Kasper's curiosity and dedication shaped him into a true generalist, equally at home in a wide variety of circus disciplines. At 18, he took his training abroad, enrolling at the National Centre for Circus Arts in London. Today, he continues to hone his craft while living in Montreal, a global hub for contemporary circus. Kasper is no stranger to the world of amusement parks. His high-flying teeterboard skills have taken him to stages across North America, including Cedar Point, SeaWorld, and Silver Dollar City. Performing in these unique environments deepened his appreciation for blending live entertainment with the thrill of rides and attractions. When he's not performing, he seeks out rollercoasters of his own. His favorite is The Monster at Montreal's La Ronde — a ride he jokingly describes as "like getting a chiropractic adjustment every time." Kasper is thrilled to be making his Cirque Mechanics debut in *Tilt!*



Aubrey Lawrence, acrobat and cradle

Growing up, Aubrey Lawrence exhibited monkey tendencies early on and was steered toward dance and gymnastics as alternatives to kitchen counter parkour. Lawrence quickly fell in love with the athleticism of acrobatics and the artistry of dance, a fusion that eventually led her to aerial arts. Ironically, her first taste of circus was at the iconic amusement park Disney World, where she was captivated by Cirque du Soleil's *La Nouba* — a magic she deemed far beyond Mickey's. That experience fueled her dreams

MEET THE PERFORMERS, cont.

for years, and a decade later she went from adoring fan to first-time aerialist. Since then, Lawrence has been fortunate enough to tour the U.S., travel internationally, and appear on TV with Diavolo. She has also soared on Cirque de la Symphonie stages and vanquished evil as a “super spider” in a Marvel/Disney Jr. production. At home in Las Vegas, she brought an adagio act to *A Lady Like Show* and enjoys flying high on sway pole. She is totally stoked to join the cast of *Tilt!* performing cradle. After many childhood years living near Cedar Point and dreading the phrase “too short to ride,” Lawrence now relishes any chance to have a rollercoaster carry her away with that special brand of adrenaline.



Joel Malkoff, wire walker

Having never followed a traditional path in education, running away with the circus felt like a natural progression in Joel Malkoff's life. Drawn to the combination of acrobatic movement, music, acting, and the camaraderie of a tight-knit ensemble working toward a common goal, the circus became a home for Malkoff's many passions. Originally from Indiana and now living in Montreal, he is a self-proclaimed “hobby economist” who loves political discussion, comedy sketches, traveling, and dreaming up new ideas that connect people. His curiosity and creativity extend well beyond the stage, making him as engaged in conversation as he is in performance. Having just finished working for the summer performing at Cedar Point, his new favorite roller coaster is the infamous Steel Vengeance. Malkoff also grew up visiting Holiday World every summer, and one of his fondest childhood memories is laughing with his cousins while drifting down the lazy river, a reminder of the joy and playfulness that still fuels his work today. His current “side quests” include releasing his first album, writing and producing his first full-length circus show, and even becoming forklift certified (#mensmentalhealth). Malkoff has also taken on the noble mission of helping Celeste find a boyfriend — because in circus life, supporting your friends is part of the act.



Celeste Murman, acrobat and Chinese pole

Celeste Murman is ready to take you on the ride of a lifetime. A proud Cleveland, Ohio original (#goBrowns), Murman has been climbing poles since the age of four. While some worried she might take her talents in another direction, circus proved the safest — and most thrilling — track. A true wild card of an acrobat, Murman never fails to surprise. In 2023 she graduated from École de cirque de Québec, where she specialized in double Chinese pole, a discipline that instantly felt like home. She thrives on the adrenaline rush of leaping, flipping, and flying from one pole to the next. With a wide repertoire of skills, Murman brings both versatility and edge, keeping audiences on their toes. For her, amusement parks capture the same sense of magic and wonder that circus delivers. She gets to live that thrill every day and loves sharing it with audiences, inviting them to buckle up for the ride. Though she has already landed flips, tricks, and the unimaginable, Celeste still dreams of landing her perfect partner. Until then, please keep your hands, arms, and legs inside the ride at all times — and enjoy the show.

MEET THE PERFORMERS, cont.



Lexi Powell, aerialist and swing

Lexi Powell is a contemporary circus artist, aerialist, and movement storyteller who believes art thrives in the space between strength and play. Specializing in aerial hoop, hula hoops, and fire performance, Powell blends technical precision with heartfelt expression to create work that is both powerful and delightfully human. A lifelong entertainer, she explored everything from sports to music, art, and dance before earning a degree in kinesiology — only to joyfully run away with the circus. Since then, her career has taken her around the globe, from large-scale productions like *Marvel Universe Live* to projects with MTV and Missy Elliott, as well as cruise ships, festivals, amusement parks, and international stages. Beyond performance, Powell is a passionate coach and multidisciplinary creative. She believes movement has the power to change lives and expresses herself through painting, music, and writing — always seeking new ways to explore human connection through creativity. Inspired by astrology, crystals, and other witchy practices, she infuses her work with intention and a touch of magic. At heart, Powell is still a Disney kid, carrying the wonder and joy of childhood park days into every performance, hoping to spark light and connection with each audience she meets.



Ossy Sanchez, aerialist and swing

Ossy is a fifth-generation circus performer from Mexico City, Mexico, now calling Las Vegas home. Sanchez has been bouncing, tumbling, and juggling his way through life since age 11, with favorite acts including trampoline, gauchos,

Russian swing — and of course, juggling! Inspired by his dad, Sanchez dreams of becoming a master juggler one day... if he doesn't get distracted by the popcorn and funnel cakes first. He's performed around the world, from circus rings to theatres, including *Rouge* at the STRAT Hotel and Casino and Cirque Mechanics' *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus*. He feels happiest when at the circus and is thrilled to return to Cirque Mechanics in *Tilt!* When it comes to amusement parks, Sanchez is all about the classic wooden roller coasters — because some things never go out of style, just like his juggling tricks.

MEET THE PRODUCTION CREW

Clint Bobzien, artistic director

Clint Bobzien has been performing, coaching, and directing for more than 25 years. Bobzien's journey began in search of a "stable desk job," but instead he did what came most naturally — he ran away with the circus. Since then, countless adventures have taken him across the globe, to Broadway, and on multiple tours with Cirque Mechanics. His performance repertoire spans partner hand-to-hand, aerial straps, Chinese pole, and trampoline. A lifelong fan of theme park rides — especially those with a vertical drop — Bobzien is thrilled to serve as artistic director of *Tilt!* and can't wait to take audiences along for the ride.

Bryan Runion, production stage manager

Bryan Runion is a production and stage management leader whose work spans immersive entertainment, contemporary circus, theatrical premieres, and large-scale live events. Runion's professional credits include *Stranger Things: The Experience* (Netflix), *Winter Wonder Shoppe* (Cirque Mechanics), Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, *Duel Reality* (The 7 Fingers), *La Perle* (Franco Dragone), *Drawn to Life* (Cirque du Soleil/Disney), Mastercard Experiences, *Everybody Black* (world premiere), *Queens* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Ken Ludwig's The Gods of Comedy* (The Old Globe), TEDx Chula Vista, *The Voice of Tolerance* (UAE Ministry of Education), Mark Morris Dance Company, Joey Alexander Trio, Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain (La Jolla Music Society), and *The Bridges of Madison County* (Arkansas Rep). Runion's work has taken him across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and beyond. He has supported productions seen by more than 650,000 audience members annually and collaborated with artists and technicians from over 25 countries. His experience ranges from intimate theatres to major performing arts centers and global immersive venues. Dedicated to bringing stories to the stage with precision, care, and

deep respect for the collaborative process, he is grateful to be part of *Tilt!* and extends thanks to the cast, crew, and creative team for their artistry. Outside the theatre, Runion enjoys cooking, traveling, spending time with family, and developing tools for stage managers at BackstageOS.com.

Max Rosenfeld, lighting director

Max Rosenfeld is a New York–based lighting designer and programmer whose work spans theatre, musical productions, and live performance. Rosenfeld has designed and programmed for a range of productions, serving as assistant lighting designer for *The Garbologists* at Shadowland Stages and lighting designer for *Shrek: The Musical* at SUNY New Paltz, among many others. With a keen eye for detail and a passion for shaping atmosphere through light, they continue to build a diverse portfolio that blends artistry with technical precision. Rosenfeld fondly recalls their very first rollercoaster ride during a summer camp trip. At first, rollercoasters felt too intimidating — but thanks to a favorite counselor who encouraged them onto just the right set of rides at Six Flags, the fear turned into exhilaration. That breakthrough sparked a lifelong love of rollercoasters, and today Rosenfeld still seeks out the thrill, both in theme parks and in the excitement of live production.

Brendan Mullenix, lighting director

Brendan Mullenix is a freelancing stage manager, designer, technician, and choreographer whose work focuses on lighting and dance production. Originally from Las Vegas and now based in New Orleans, Mullenix serves as assistant lighting supervisor and programmer for the New Orleans Ballet Association and assistant lighting designer for the New Orleans Opera Association, and is a proud member of IATSE Local 39. With Cirque Mechanics, he works as both stage manager and

PRODUCTION CREW, cont.

designer. Through Local 39, he also works as an electrician for Broadway tours visiting New Orleans and recently led a team for the Super Bowl LIX Halftime Show. Mullenix has spent three seasons at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (2023-2025) as the TST light board operator and programmer, and most recently lighting supervised Camille A. Brown & Dancers' *I AM* engagement in Los Angeles. His favorite amusement park ride is Space Mountain. He holds an M.F.A. in lighting design from Tulane University (2024), and dual bachelor's degrees in theatre design/technology (with a stage management focus) and dance from the University of Nevada, Reno (2020). Mullenix also completed the SILV eight-week program in 2018.

Esmeralda Onofre, costume manager

Esmeralda Onofre, a fifth-generation circus performer from Mexico, grew up immersed in the vibrant world of circus arts. Onofre began training at age 10 with the hula hoop and discovered the challenging art of slack wire at 15. By 21, she moved to the United States, performing with prestigious circus shows across the country. Alongside her performing career, Onofre developed a passion for costume design. Mentored by her mother, a seasoned costume maker, she became a skilled wardrobe technician and designer for numerous circus productions, including Do Portugal Circus and Cirque Mechanics. Now based in Las Vegas, she continues to perform while contributing her costume expertise to the circus world. A true artist, Onofre blends performance and craftsmanship, leaving a lasting mark on every stage and wardrobe she touches.

Toby Stanley, props master and master carpenter

Toby Stanley is both a skilled carpenter and an accomplished performer, striking a balance between sawdust and spotlight. By day, Stanley continues his family's tradition of craftsmanship, working with wood to create pieces that are as strong as they are beautiful. By night, he brings the same discipline and precision to the stage, performing his favorite act — the Russian swing — where timing, nerve, and trust are everything. Woodworking has been a constant in Stanley's life, offering both comfort and a creative outlet. Over the years, that passion has grown into a career that seamlessly combines technical skill with a performer's perspective. As the show's carpenter, Stanley doesn't just build equipment — he tests it himself, ensuring every prop and apparatus is safe, functional, and ready for the demands of performance. His experience extends from restoring historic homes to designing stage elements tough enough to withstand the impact of acrobats in motion. For Stanley, carpentry and circus aren't separate callings but two sides of the same coin, each requiring creativity, adaptability, and exacting attention to detail. Whether on the workshop floor or mid-flight on the swing, Stanley is always ready for the challenge, finding ways to make things work — and making sure they hold up under pressure.

CREATIVE DESIGN TEAM

Chris Lashua, founder, creative director, producer, and machine designer

Chris Lashua, founder of Cirque Mechanics, grew up in Boston, where his passion for movement began on a BMX bike. Discovered by Cirque du Soleil, Lashua created and performed a groundbreaking BMX act before being commissioned to design a German wheel number for *Quidam*, a role he performed for several years and which established his reputation as a pioneer of circus gadgetry. His engineering ingenuity and creative vision eventually inspired him to “run away” and launch his own company, Cirque Mechanics. At the heart of Lashua’s work is a belief that the interaction between performer and machine defines Cirque Mechanics’ unique voice. His theatrical productions showcase this vision: acrobats, jugglers, dancers, and contortionists perform on and around extraordinary machines — a 1920s factory floor in *Birdhouse Factory*, a gold rush town in *Boom Town*, a bicycle shop in *Pedal Punk*, a classic circus ring in *42ft: A Menagerie of Mechanical Marvels*, a countryside windmill in *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus*, and most recently, the rides of an amusement park in *Tilt!* During the pandemic, Lashua reimaged live performance by creating *Drive-n-Dine*, an outdoor, socially distanced show staged on a Las Vegas golf course, and *Cirque Mechanics Under Canvas*, a spectacle presented inside the company’s custom orange-and-gray big top. Beyond the stage, Lashua continues to invent playful, pedal-powered creations like the Paddle Ship, a floating stage propelled by human-powered paddle wheels, as well as the Wine Trike and the Buffet Train, both of which double as whimsical hospitality devices and performance platforms. Lashua also invests in the broader circus community as a producing partner of the Vegas International Variety Arts Festival (VIVA Fest), founding board member of the American Circus Alliance (ACA), founding member of the Producers Alliance of Southern Nevada (PALS), board member of the Circus Historical Society, charter member of Black Box Collective, and guest lecturer for the Association for Theater in Higher Education.

Aida Lashua, producer and collaborator

For more than 30 years, Aida Lashua has been Chris Lashua's creative partner in life and in work, helping to shape Cirque Mechanics into one of America's most innovative circus companies. Her professional journey began with Cirque du Soleil, where she spent a decade both on tour and behind the scenes and where she worked for sponsor AT&T, managing the implementation of a multimillion-dollar sponsorship that included product placement, sales promotions, and staff training. She also served as box office supervisor and house manager, where she trained and managed a team of 60 and helped refine customer service policies, training manuals, and VIP programs. Those experiences gave Lashua a deep appreciation for the business of circus and a lasting passion for its artistry. Today, she manages the day-to-day operations of Cirque Mechanics, balancing the demands of touring productions, marketing, and family life with poise. With a background in direct marketing, she has guided the company's website and social media development with a targeted, strategic approach. She has also written the company's study guides, created educational materials, and designed workshop programs that bring circus arts into classrooms and communities. A native of Puerto Rico and mother of three boys, Lashua is both a stabilizing force and a creative driver within Cirque Mechanics. Beyond circus, she contributes as a writer for *CityLife Publications* and dreams of one day finishing her novel, ideally near the ocean, where she feels most at home. A true amusement park enthusiast, Lashua never skips the souvenir shops, and she proudly admits to being an unabashed Diet Coke fanatic.

CREATIVE DESIGN TEAM, cont.

Aloysia Gavre, director and choreographer

Aloysia Gavre is a circus creator, director, educator, and founding board member of the American Circus Alliance. Gavre co-founded both Troupe Vertigo and Cirque School in Los Angeles in 2009 with a vision to contribute to and grow a wider appreciation for the circus arts. She began her own performance career with the Pickle Family Circus in her hometown of San Francisco and then went on to perform with Cirque du Soleil, Monte Carlo Circus Festival, Teatro Zinzanni, and numerous international symphonies. Her expertise has been used in the films *Water for Elephants* and *Pitch Perfect 2*. She was featured on the cover of *Dance Teacher Magazine* for her expertise in circus arts. Speaking engagements include TEDx, Center Theater Group, Directors Lab, Chicago Circus Festival, AYCO, and VIVA Fest Las Vegas. Gavre's creative journey with Cirque Mechanics began at its inception with its premiere show, *Birdhouse Factory*, in 2004. Her expertise of integrating Cirque Mechanics trademark architectural machines with circus bodies in motion remains an integral part of the company. A vintage fun memory: in 1999 Gavre and Chris Lashua rode their bikes through Amsterdam after their performance in *Quidam* to see Lauryn Hill in concert.

Leonardo Hidalgo, lighting designer

Leonardo Hidalgo is a New York-based lighting designer, production manager, and educator specializing in theatre, circus, and dance. Hidalgo has collaborated with a wide range of companies and productions, bringing technical precision and artistic vision to every project. Recent credits include serving as lighting designer for *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus* with Cirque Mechanics, lighting designer and production manager for Circus Juventas, and lighting designer and production manager for Battery Dance Company. He also contributes to the internationally recognized Battery Dance Festival, a weeklong outdoor event showcasing artists from around the globe. In addition to

his professional work, Hidalgo is currently pursuing a master's degree in city and regional planning at Rutgers University's Bloustein School, where he explores how the arts intersect with community development and urban design. His dual interests in performance and planning reflect a commitment to creating spaces — both theatrical and civic — that inspire connection, creativity, and shared experiences. When he's not behind the console or drafting a production plan, he can often be found at the Dutchess County Fair in the Hudson Valley. For the past six years, Hidalgo and his friends have made it a tradition to watch the pig races, a favorite amusement park memory that never fails to bring joy.

Janeen Johnson, production director and assistant choreographer

Janeen Johnson is a visionary arts administrator, stagecraft specialist, and cultural strategist with more than 20 years of experience driving excellence in arts management, event operations, and theatrical production. With a foundation as a professional dancer, Johnson brings a rare artistic lens to her production leadership, earning recognition as a dynamic force across dance, theatre, and live performance. For the past 13 years, she has been at the helm of Cirque Mechanics' touring operations as principal production stage manager, directing logistics, administration, and tour leadership for six original productions — *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boomtown*, *Pedal Punk*, *42FT*, *Zephyr*, and now *Tilt!* — performed across North America, Europe, and Asia. Her progressive leadership extends beyond the stage. Through O.Y.A. Strategies, her cultural consulting and coaching agency, Johnson mentors emerging stage managers and cultural practitioners through the Cultural Powerhouse Model, blending creativity, strategy, and community impact. This season, she expands her creative contribution as assistant choreographer and production director for *Tilt!*, further weaving her creative insight into Cirque Mechanics' latest theatrical experience. Johnson also loves to travel and experience new spaces and places, finds joy in dancing wherever Spirit guides, and proudly calls California home.

CREATIVE DESIGN TEAM, cont.

Michael Picton, composer

Michael Picton is an award-winning composer whose eclectic career spans film, television, advertising, theatre, and circus. Picton has scored five Cirque Mechanics productions: *Boom Town*, *the Cirque Mechanics Orchestral Project*, *Pedal Punk*, *42ft*, and now *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus*. His circus career began as a performer, touring as keyboardist with Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam*. He has written songs and score for six editions of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus: *Bellobration*, *Funundrum*, *Dragons*, *Built to Amaze*, *Circus Xtreme*, and the final edition of *Out of this World*. Recently his live work has expanded to include superhero arena shows with Feld Entertainment's *Marvel Universe Live* and *Marvel Universe Live – Age of Heroes*. The winner of the Turner Classic Movies Young Film Composers Competition, Picton was chosen from a field of over 600 aspiring composers by a jury chaired by the legendary Elmer Bernstein. For TCM, he scored the silent films *The Temptress* and *The Red Mill*. Other film and television work includes *Mutt & Stuff* for Sid and Marty Krofft on Nickelodeon, the SyFy series *Flash Gordon*, the independent feature *Little Chenier*, and main title themes for *I Want to Work for Diddy* and *Bates Motel*. Picton has composed network themes for PBS, Amazon Originals, and CNN International, among others, as well as commercials and promos for a long list of clients.

Caroline Rogers, costume designer

By age 16, Caroline Rogers was a professional aerialist traveling the world, a journey that eventually led her to meet her husband, Kevin, a former Cirque Mechanics cast member. Rogers' dual passions for performance and sewing naturally evolved into a career as a costume designer. Over the past 20 years, she has designed hundreds of costumes for live shows, including Disney, DreamWorks, and, of course, Cirque Mechanics. One of her favorites was designing Cirque

Mechanics' 42ft, set in her beloved 1930s era. A lifelong theme park enthusiast, Rogers continues to indulge her love of Disney, visiting Epcot weekly — and occasionally braving Spaceship Earth despite her astraphobia. She has brought stories to life for millions of guests worldwide, both through costume design and performance. Recently, she contributed as scenic artist and lead for the Viking Training Camp at Universal Studios' Epic Universe. Growing up in the 1980s fueled her excitement for designing *Tilt!*, where she hopes her costumes transport audiences back to a simpler time, reigniting childhood wonder and the magic of theme parks. She is deeply grateful to Cirque Mechanics for welcoming her creativity into another production and gives glory to God for the talents and opportunities she has been given. Follow Rogers' work at @DesignsByNine.

Steven Ragatz, co-director and dramaturge

An original *Birdhouse Factory*, *Boom Town*, and *Orchestra Project* cast member collaborator, plus lead writer for *Pedal Punk*, *Zephyr: A Whirlwind of Circus*, and currently *Yuletide Factory*, 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, as well as Asia and Europe, performing multiple juggling acts and portraying an eclectic array of characters. He is on the staff of Bloomington's Stage Flight Circus Arts, where he teaches juggling and unicycle skills workshops. He recently toured his one-man show, *Under the Umbrella, Life is a Circus*, an evening with a juggling virtuoso and stories from world-wide circus adventures. Steven holds a bachelor's degree in variety theater and a master's degree in computer science from Indian University. He studied mime, stage movement, and circus arts with Fred Garbo, Tony Montanaro, George Pinney, and Michael Moschen. Ragatz and his wife, Lisa, have two children, Melissa and Andrew, and currently live in Maine, where they have mastered the art of making the perfect margarita.

CREATIVE DESIGN TEAM, cont.

Sean Riley, **co-director, set designer, and artistic rigger**

Sean Riley creates performances that merge suspension, kinetics, architecture, and narrative sculpture. Working at the intersection of production, rigging, and mechanical design, Riley develops striking environments and apparatus for time-based art. His work spans a wide range of genres, including theatre, circus, dance, opera, television, and both outdoor and gallery installations. Through his company, Gravity Projects, Riley has built a unique arsenal of specialized tools and techniques, expanding the boundaries of live performance while advancing standards of industrial safety. He is a founding member of Cirque Mechanics, host of two television series (*World's Toughest Fixes* on National Geographic and *Speed* on Curiosity Stream), and a lead collaborator on the construction of the Long Now Foundation's 10,000 Year Clock. He also serves as production designer and producer for the annual *Panto in the Presidio* holiday show. His design work has earned multiple honors, including six Izzies, TBA Awards, Bay Area Critics Circle Awards, and the Isadora Duncan Sustained Achievement Award in Scenic Design. A graduate of UC Santa Cruz, Riley now lives in British Columbia with his wife, three sons, and an abundance of bears. He is thrilled to still be creating circus with dear friends after 20 years of Cirque Mechanics. Learn more at visiblegravity.com.

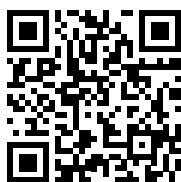
WITH GRATITUDE

The creation of *Tilt!* has been a true labor of love, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who has shared their time, talents, and heart in bringing this 1980s-inspired amusement park adventure to life. To our family — Zion, Quinn, and Iago — thank you for your boundless imagination, encouragement, and hands-on help, from brainstorming wacky ride ideas to rolling up your sleeves in the workshop. To our parents, we are forever grateful for sparking our passion for circus by taking us to carnivals, fairs, and amusement parks — memories that still fuel our imagination and inspire our work today. To our remarkable cast and crew, your artistry, dedication, and joy have transformed *Tilt!* into the thrilling ride we dreamed it could be. To Alliance Artists Management, thank you for your unwavering belief in our vision. A very special thank you to Lori Cobo and the UNLV Performing Arts Center for their generous collaboration, enabling us to premiere *Tilt!* at home. Special thanks to Bo Bogatin and Kurt Nelson for their legal guidance, Andy Espo for technical support, Bryan Schuette and Stephen Butz at United Machine for their precision craftsmanship, and Mike Levine for the fastest T-shirt turnaround ever — your speed and quality product kept our cast and crew looking totally tubular. We are indebted to Don Seiersen for his artistic contributions, which added texture and depth to this production. We are grateful to the Las Vegas Circus Center for fostering such a vibrant community of creators, and to Cirque du Soleil and circus companies worldwide for their enduring commitment to pushing this art form forward. Finally, to our audiences: your enthusiasm and joy fuel our passion. Thank you for strapping in and taking this ride with us — together we celebrate the thrills, nostalgia, and wonder of the circus, the amusement park, and the totally awesome spirit of the 1980s.

— *Chris and Aida Lashua*



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!



We'd love your feedback on this performance. If you complete the short survey, you can enter for a chance to win two tickets to Irish Baroque Orchestra, *The Trials of Tenducci*, on Tuesday, March 17, 2026.

bit.ly/cirque-mechanics-tilt-feedback

ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Center for the Arts seeks to build diverse perspectives, foster creativity, and promote collaboration. We're dedicated to giving people of all ages access to creative experiences that can transform the way they see the world and the people in it.

While at Virginia Tech, Cirque Mechanics wowed 1,000 students and educators from Botetourt, Carroll, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, and Wythe counties, as well as the cities of Radford, Roanoke, and Salem, during a free student matinee performance.

Additionally, VIP community members enjoyed a pre-show meal and complimentary tickets to tonight's performance in partnership with New River Community Action.

*Special thanks to Stephanie Bryson and Jennifer Smith,
New River Community Action*

GO DEEPER

At its heart, *Tilt!* is a celebration of simple machines. In what ways did this evening's performance demonstrate how the most ancient engineering principles (e.g., levers, fulcrums, and rotation) are capable of producing complex, thrilling human experiences?



PK-12 PROGRAMS

Each year, wildly enthusiastic students — from PK through 12th grade — fill our theatre for free matinee performances by artists from all over the world. They explore our visual arts galleries during school tours and create and learn during hands-on workshops with artists. For many students, visiting the Center for the Arts is the first time they've ever been to a performing arts facility or gallery. Why do young people need access to the arts? Engaging in artistic activities offers a wide range of skills that they will use throughout their lives.

Learn more at bit.ly/artscenteratvt-pk12.



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SUPPORT THE ARTS FOR GIVING DAY.

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A young student leans forward in their seat as the curtain rises, unveiling a world bigger and more magical than they imagined. A family gathers for an evening together, sharing a performance that becomes a moment they'll remember forever.

These are the experiences the Center for the Arts creates every day — experiences that stay with people long after they leave the building.

This Giving Day, your support helps make stories like these possible.

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All Giving Day donations to the Center for the Arts will be recognized in the 2026-2027 season performance programs.

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SPRING
EXHIBITIONS



Through Sat., April 18, 2026

Living in Brilliant Suspension: Didier William

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Didier William's solo exhibition showcases large-scale carved and painted panels that examine the relationship between the body, the land, and diasporic identity and histories.

Abigail Lucien: Molt

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71

Reception Gallery

Abigail Lucien's solo exhibition, *Molt*, brings together existing and newly commissioned works by the artist that speak to myth, permanence, and belonging through materiality.

Beyond the Frame Gallery Tours

Thurs., Feb. 12, March 12, and April 9, 12 PM

Grand Lobby

Through July 2026

Mural: Clare Grill and Margaux Ogden

Turner Street exterior wall

Through July 2028

Mural: Brian Dettmer

Memories of the Mountains

Grand Lobby

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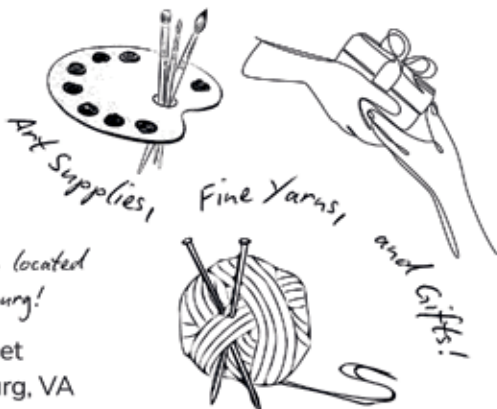
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CENTER
FOR THE
ARTS
AT VIRGINIA TECH

STEPHANIE LAKE COMPANY *Manifesto*

Saturday, March 28, 7:30 PM

With all-out dancing and electrifying sound,
Stephanie Lake Company's *Manifesto* features
nine dancers and nine drummers on nine drum kits.



YMCA AT VIRGINIA TECH



At the YMCA, our mission is rooted in three core values: Healthy Living, Youth Development, and Social Responsibility. This year, we are excited to collaborate with an outstanding group of student interns from Virginia Tech, representing a wide range of majors and specialties. From September 2025 through May 2026, these interns are bringing energy, creativity, and commitment to all of our community-based programs.

Their work is making a real difference: operating our Corner Market to provide healthy food options for families facing food insecurity; assisting with language classes that help families connect and thrive; improving our website and online shopping systems to make resources more accessible; and preparing and serving nutritious meals to local children to promote healthy habits; and so much more.

Together, these interns are helping us deliver essential services to the New River Valley while developing leadership skills that will empower them to create positive change long after graduation. This partnership reflects what the YMCA stands for—building stronger communities, nurturing future leaders, and inspiring a healthier, more connected world.

Lucy Lee Lancaster

Did You Know

Lucy Lee Lancaster (1905-1989) challenged the boundaries of higher education for women, leaving a lasting impact on Virginia Tech and the surrounding community of Blacksburg, VA. She was one of the first five women admitted as full-time students to Virginia Tech.

After her retirement, Lucy Lee became a member of the YMCA board of directors and was a member in a regular or honorary capacity, serving for a time as Secretary, until her death. Lucy Lee made Y students welcome in her home and delighted in having them hold meetings here where they could be sure of being served lemonade and homemade cookies.

Upon her death in 1989, Lucy donated her home, the Lancaster House, to the YMCA at Virginia Tech. She made this donation in memory of her parents, William Lee Lancaster and Lucy Lee Siebold Lancaster, and her younger sister, Martha. This house continues serving as the YMCA's base of operations in Blacksburg and remains a lasting symbol of Lucy Lee Lancaster's impact on the community.



www.vtymca.org
