

Circus Knie

Solothurn, Switzerland

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Report by Steve Chapman

Photographs courtesy of Circus Knie

Circus Knie is now run by the seventh generation of the Knie family with Géraldine Knie as artistic director, Maycol Errani as technical director and Doris Knie as administrative director. It opened its 2023 tour in March in Rapperswil and will end in Lucerne in January 2024 having taken in 24 Swiss cities and towns and given a total of 310 performances. There are 58 artistes from nine countries and around 183 employees from 16 countries. Nations represented are Switzerland, Italy, Ukraine, Russia, Colombia, Cuba, Peru, Argentina, Mongolia, Poland, USA, Morocco, Romania, France, Philippines and the Czech Republic.

The show has an orchestra made up of six musicians plus the conductor. The 10 entrance inspectors and 15 ushers ensure that there is maximum audience comfort from the minute they enter the big top. The catering facilities include a variety of food and drink offerings and a merchandising stand packed with

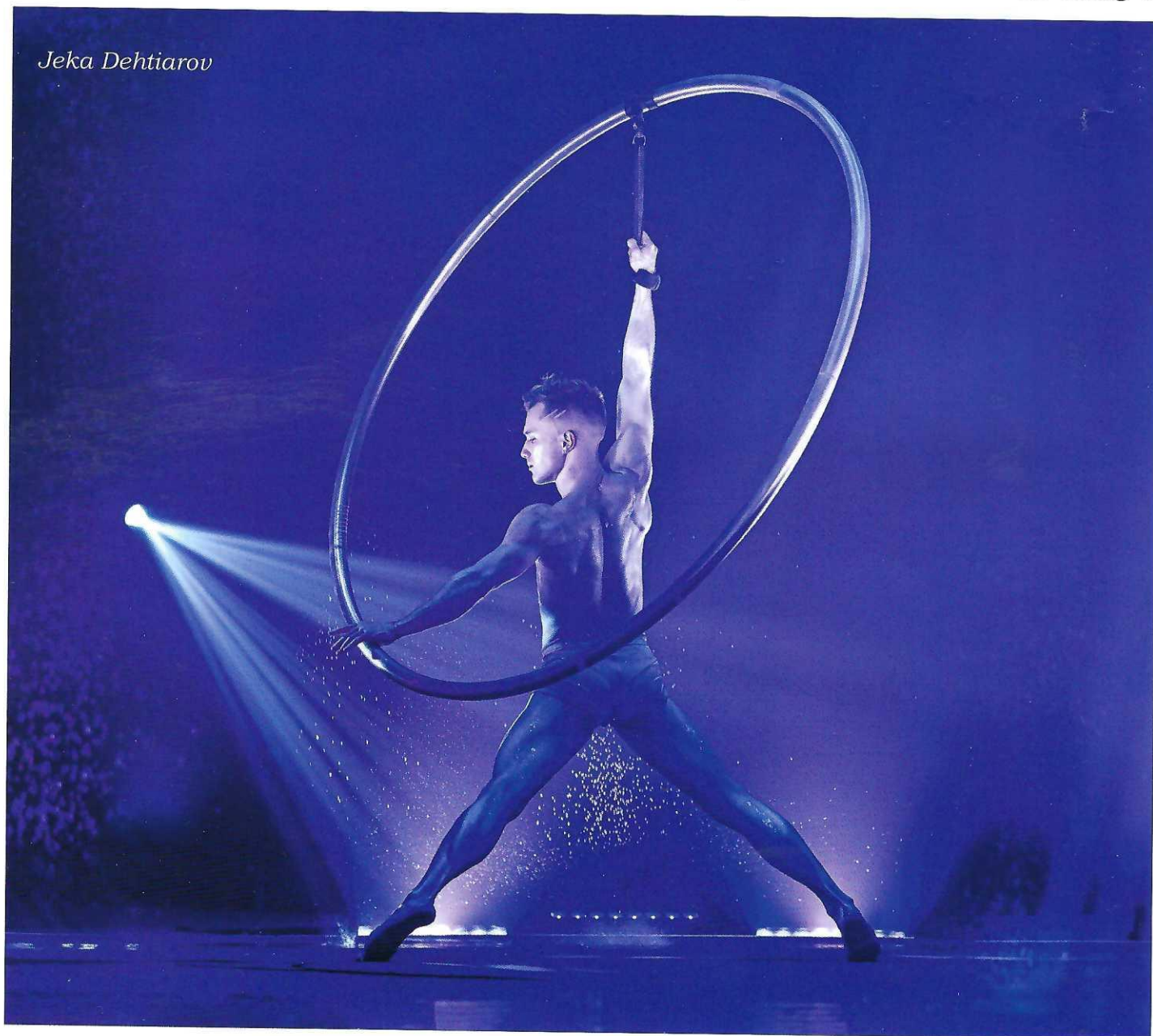
souvenirs. Backstage, the tent master and deputy are supported by 30 tent workers. There are also wardrobe workers, a carpenter, transport manager, electrician, chefs and cooks, a teacher as well as a team of staff working with the horses and ponies.

The four pole white big top with red embellishments is totally rigged from outside by two massive metal domes. Inside there is nothing to obstruct the audience's view of the performance. The audience enter the tent from the back of the big top and the individual seating goes all the way down to the ringside.

The performance opens with the removal of a cloth covering the circular staging to reveal the Circus Theatre Bingo troupe for a lively dance routine using both the circular stage and a further rectangular stage at the ring entrance. Two artistes are raised to the ceiling for a double aerial spiral routine, which takes place throughout the opening production number, which is set to an original piece of music with English lyrics welcoming the audience to Circus Knie. More and more artistes appear on the stage leading to an excellent display of acrobatic skipping by members of the Zola troupe from Mongolia.

The circular staging is part of an incredible water prop allowing fountains to fall from the ceiling to

Jeka Dehtiarov



accompany a number of acts. The first is Ukrainian Jeka Dehtiarov on the Cyr wheel in an act that sees him take his prop high into the big top, as well as rotating the wheel around the stage as 'rain' falls from the top of the tent. Four Mongolian contortionists also appear on the stage in a full routine with a range of very skilful balancing feats, the lighting and music following their acrobatic movements to perfection. The final act to use the prop in this section of the show is the aerial trio of Ekaterina Errani, Oksana Errani and Tetyana Bitkine with a display on the aerial straps, which is again enhanced by water effects choreographed to the movements of the three artistes.

Evgeniya Aknazarova who provides some vocal accompaniment to certain acts entertains the audience on the violin from the middle of the audience. Back in the ring the staging is removed for the next act, which is an intense display of laser manipulation and dancing by the Extreme Light Troupe from Ukraine who were created by Ruslan Ulubaev. Next are the 13 strong Troupe Zola from Mongolia who won a Bronze Clown at the 44th International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo. With superb choreography to accompany the act, which is set to the music 'Dreamers' by Jung Kook, I do not think the audience stopped clapping throughout the 10 minute presentation. This incredible springboard act includes a high leap from the springboard across the ring, a somersault to three high, triple and quadruple somersaults and a somersault into a high chair. In addition, there is a somersault into a high chair held by one artiste on stilts who himself is balanced on a bar held by two other artistes. The act ends with a leap from the springboard to create a six person high pyramid.

Circus Knie continues to present equestrian excellence. It is the eighth generation of the Knie family that present this year's horse acts. With music from the 'Greatest Showman', Chanel Marie Knie is accompanied by the Circus Theatre Bingo troupe for a very good high school presentation. Her younger brother, Maycol Knie Junior who was born in 2017 follows with a delightful big and little horse and pony routine. Maycol is assisted by his older brother, Ivan Frédéric Knie. Ivan then presents the main liberty horse routine. Sets of horses of different colours are introduced into the ring to create a carousel of 28 horses, which is an amazing sight. The lights are dimmed as the horses circle the ring with their harnesses illuminated. The routine culminates with some hindleg work including an impressive hindleg walk across the ring by three white horses; a very strong act to finish the first half.

Throughout the performance comedy is provided in German by 'Erwin aus der Schweiz' alias Marc Haller. Language is not really an issue as his work is very visual. His routines include magic and audience participation. He works with Maycol Knie junior for a couple of his entrées.

The audience returns to the circus auditorium after the interval to find that a large prop with two interlocking ramps has been placed in the ring. This is for the BMX show of Juan Carlos Ordoñez and his team from Colombia. The troupe of four demonstrates the skills of BMX riding with jumps on and off the ramp plus a series of impressive somersaults to finish.

The Circus Theatre Bingo troupe entertain the



Marc Haller with Maycol Knie Junior

audience in the gangways of the seating as the large circular staging is once again placed in the ring. First to use the ring are three male artistes from an act billed as Five Boys with a full display of acrobatics on the Chinese masts. Next are 'Duo Dust in the Wind' who are Vladyslav Ivashkin and Aiusha Khadz Khamed with a hand to hand act working within the fountain prop and accompanied by singer Evgeniya Aknazarova.

The stage is removed again and the massive Globe of Death is positioned for a routine, which sees three riders circling the globe, then they are joined by another two riders to make five. Finally, another five riders join to make 10 riders in the globe, which is billed as a world record.

The stage is once again positioned for an upbeat finale making full use of the water prop. Evgeniya Aknazarova and Chanel Marie Knie are raised up on a circular platform as fountains push water into the stage from the sides of the ring. Fountains from the roof of the big top create shapes including stars, horses and the Knie name. The entire cast enter either on one of the stages or in the ring as part of the finale, which sees Géraldine Knie wish the audience farewell. This ended what can only be described as a magnificent two and a half hours of live entertainment.