

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51209/platform.2.8.2023.385-401>

UDC: 792 / 796.4

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**CIRCOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SHOW "OVO"
OF THE CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: COMPARATIVE
CHARACTERISTICS OF CIRCUS PERFORMANCE
AND ITS STAGE DEMONSTRATION (SCENARIO,
DECORATIONS, MUSIC, CIRCUS GENRES AND
CHARACTERS)**

Abstract. The article will carry out an artistic analysis in the context of circology, namely: comparative and artistic analysis of the show “OVO” of the “Cirque du Soleil”. Research in the field of circus arts, its theory and practice will be carried out in the context of circological research.

The problem of this article is that in domestic and world art criticism there are practically no serious scientific studies on the specifics of circus performances of the “Cirque du Soleil”.

It is important to note that separate publications, announcements, programs of circus performances, popular articles from modern magazines in the press of the late 20th and early 21st centuries certainly took place. However, their exclusively narrative display without specific factors should be noted, namely: lack of clear connection between practical specifics of circus art and scientific transmission of information and analytics in the field of art criticism.

The purpose of the article is to give clear and systematic analysis within circological plane, namely, to provide comparative analysis of the show “OVO” with other performances of the Cirque du Soleil circus as well as to reveal in detail the uniqueness of direction and features of the numbers of the show “OVO” in terms of circus genres, scenario and artistic design.

Comparative analysis of various circus performances of the show of the Cirque du Soleil, defines diversity and different facts of difference of show "OVO" from such circus performances of the Cirque du Soleil as “Alegría”, “Zumanity”, “Kà”, “O”. The description emphasizes and gives clear description of decoration, modern methods of circus apparatuses, pyrotechnics and innovative technologies, lighting and musical accompaniment. Music was written separately for each show, musical samples were created depending on scenario and plot.

“OVO” is considered a touring production of the Cirque du Soleil, written and directed by Deborah Kolker. This is the 25th “Cirque du Soleil” show since 1984 created to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Cirque du Soleil. The name “OVO” translated from Portuguese means “egg”. This corresponds to the theme of the series on life cycle and birth of insects. It is also the main threat of the show. Production designer Gringo Kardia was inspired by nests and colonies of various insects when creating the scene for the “OVO”. Acrobatic structure used during free throw is situated at an angle of 45°. The structure can be lifted up to 4.5 meters and weighs more than 5 tons. Costume designer Liz Vandal to create costumes for “OVO” used her signature style inspired by futuristic superheroes and a variety of armour.

Thus comparative and artistic analysis of the show “OVO” is a combination of creative and unique, at the same time

simple, but understandable plot, bright costumes and make-up that really turn artists into insects. Well-chosen numbers, the way they interconnect and an unsurpassed acting gives an excellent performance about fabulous world of insects which one can visit with the whole family and take a break from real life.

Key words: “OVO”, circology, circus genres, “Cirque du Soleil”, stage decorations, characters of circus performers, theatrical circus performance.

Introduction. The article provides a detailed analysis and comparative characteristics of various circus theatrical shows of the Canadian “Cirque du Soleil”. Particular attention is paid to the comparative analysis of some theatrical circus performances in comparison with circus theatrical show “OVO”, namely: important specific features and functional characteristics of creation of this performance, its idea, musical accompaniment in modern processing, scenography and decoration as well as description of the plot.

Problem statement. Definition of the problems of the article in the context of circology covers comparative analysis of the circus theatrical show “OVO” with other performances of the Cirque du Soleil. It is important to note that scientific research in the field of theory and practice of circus art in a diverse palette of its genres is more productive to research and study in the context of circology. ‘Circology’ in the author's understanding is a scientific approach and technique for analysing the history of circus genres, circus criticism, circus theatrical show programs as well as personalities and world examples in this field.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Circological studies in this area are very small today and concern description of the historical process of development of

individual circus performances, descriptions of circus structures, festivals, creative path of famous representatives of the circus genre as well as a few fragmentary descriptions of circus techniques in acrobatics, juggling, aerial gymnastics, illusion, pantomime, clowning contemporary. Among them: S. Dobrovolskaya [10], V. Kashevarov [7], Yu. Kashuba [8], I. Lvova [1], M. Malykhina [2], D. Oryol [9], Yu. Romanenkova [3], A. Stetsenko [10].

The purpose of the study is to give clear and systematic analysis in the circological plane, namely, to provide a comparative analysis of the show “OVO” with other performances of the Cirque du Soleil circus as well as to reveal in detail the uniqueness of the direction and features of the numbers of the show “OVO” in terms of circus genres, script and artistic design.

Presentation of the main research material. Comparative analysis of the “OVO” show with other “Cirque du Soleil” performances. Most critics and ordinary viewers will have no doubt that each performance at the “Cirque du Soleil” is unique. Each performance has its own idea, its own view of different situations, different conflicts and global problems. Each of them is unique and interesting, but what makes their “OVO” show different from others?

For example, the show “Alegría” which is the most famous show at the Cirque Du Soleil and one of the oldest performances (1994), has a giant dome mounted on top of giant stylistic columns and balustrades. The shape of the dome symbolizes many powerful institutions such as churches and government buildings. They have been used in the scenery to symbolize the theme of oppressive powers in the “Alegría”. Spiral ramps on the side of the stage leading down represent the unknown. The floor of the stage is decorated with different colors with the symbol of the salamander that lives on all the

four elements. The lighting of the show creates an autumnal atmosphere to display the 17th century ballroom of the show, more suitable for an adult audience because the plot is not as simple as the “OVO” in which the story is suitable for an audience of different ages [4].

The show “Zumanity” (2003) is generally created only for an adult audience, because it explores human sexuality and provides an opportunity to work with a riskier, more “edgy” topic. Zumanity states that “the theme reflects who we really are... We like to live new experiences. Zumanity deals with some of these new experiences.” During presentation of “Zumanity” for MGM Mirage, the concept of an older Cirque du Soleil show resembled casino. MGM Mirage wanted to make the New York-New York casino look “trendy, more Gen X, and more underground”. This show is filled with erotica, unlike “OVO” where it is not present at all [8].

“Ka” (2004) is the “Cirque du Soleil” first show with a solid storyline. “Ka” is the story of Imperial twins getting divorced in the prime of their youth and undergoing a rite of self-discovery. This is the story of their encounters with “Ka”, a fire that has dual power of destroying or illuminating.” The atmosphere of this show compared to “OVO” is more militant. It also differs in the sense that it was created with the help of special effects and its stage costing millions of dollars. It can be lifted and rotated, allowing the action to be placed in a vertical position and the audience can see the action on the stage as if from above. “OVO” stage is much simpler, it doesn't change its position and doesn't have so many hidden effects in it. “Ka” was created directly for spectators who come to the casino, so it is also designed for an older audience. Also, the stationary location of the performance made it possible to install a lot of scenery and moving elements.

“O” (1998) is a water show in which the stage is a large pool and all the numbers are connected in one way or another with it. “O” is inspired by “the infinity and elegance of the pure form of water” and honors the magic of the theatre. This show includes synchronized swimming, acrobatics, dancing with fire, and even a giant ship above the water that moves back and forth over the entire stage, on which acrobats perform an aerial act. All this stuns the audience with its scale and unusual performance of numbers, because all this takes place above the water. “OVO” is more familiar to the viewer, it looks like an ordinary theater and circus show [7 p. 12].

Unique direction and peculiarities of the circus numbers of the "OVO" show by genre. “OVO” (2009-2010) differs from all the shows also in the sense that it is the only show where artists play not people but insects, so it is suitable even for the smallest children. From my personal experience I know that the circus attracts young children more with animals, costumes and clowns. The guys cannot appreciate complexity of the tricks, genres of the numbers or plot. Therefore, this is the only show that all family members can truly appreciate.

“OVO” is a “Cirque du Soleil” touring production written and directed by Deborah Kolker. This is the 25th “Cirque du Soleil” show since 1984 and was created to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Cirque du Soleil. “OVO” premiere took place on April 23, 2009 in Montreal, Quebec. The name “OVO” means "Egg" in Portuguese. This fits in with the theme of a series on life cycle and birth of insects. It is also the main threat of the show. The “OVO” logo is made to look like an insect's head with “O” to look like eyes and “V” to look like head and antennae [4].

Set designer Gringo Kardia was extremely impressed and surprised by the place and habitat of the colonies of various insects, creating a stage solution, namely the floor, hanging

apparatus, reliefs and scenery for the circus theatrical performance “OVO”. The stage floor contains 225 panels and, except for the cobwebs, there are no straight lines on the set. The middle of the table can be lifted and rotated. The acrobatic structure used during free throw is at a 45° angle. The structure can be lifted up to 4.5 meters and weighs more than 5 tons.

The huge egg at the beginning of "OVO" is a symbol of fertility and a nod to the “Monolith” in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. The egg measures 8.5 meters by almost 7 meters and is inflatable. The biggest element of the stage for “OVO” is the tramp wall located at the back of the stage. The wall is measuring 9 by 18 meters. Performers can climb the wall and bounce off it. It is also used as a giant projection screen. Another big element used in “OVO” is the large mechanical flowers that grow during the interlude and the finale of the foot dance. These flowers are 8.5 meters high [9, p. 87].

The contrived plot of the "OVO" revolves, as it often happens in the Cirque Du Soleil shows, around a newcomer. The blue fly (François-Guillaume Leblanc) appears with an egg (Possibly stolen from a bird for food? Or his own offspring of a strangely shaped bird...? It's never explained). The egg is stolen from him by beetle boss Gerard Regitschnigg while the fly is distracted by drooling over the charms of Neiva Nascimento's ladybug. In the course of the performance the audience sees transformation of a selfish fly, rushing with its egg into a fly in love with the Ladybug, which becomes friend to other insects.

The trio are more mime than clowns, although there is naturally a certain transition and out of their antics laughter runs through the audience. Their accompanying sound effects from a live band of musicians are witty and apt. Seven musicians are dressed as cockroaches and play live music around the stage and, from their own observation, they are not very noticeable, but

from time to time they come in and out of the stage, bringing earthy percussion and electric violin to the game [5].

To create costumes for “OVO” costume designer Liz Vandal used her signature styles inspired by futuristic superheroes and a variety of armor. She was also inspired by fashion designer Pierre Cardin and the slashed sleeves of Renaissance clothing. Vandal wanted to focus on insect-like costumes rather than copy insect anatomy. Vandal used Japanese designer Issey Miyake's permanent pleating technique to create a certain amount of rigidity in the material and create an organic effect [4].

Most circus performers who have performed specific characters in a theatrical circus performance have two different versions of the same character costume. The first suit is comfortable, light and functional; it is used by circus performers for circus shows and dress rehearsals. The second costume is more detailed with specific features of the character, taking into account the theme of the insect, artists use it on stage when they play roles in a mass theatrical *mise-en-scènes* and are not involved in their circus number.

Music as well as sound design, samples and musical special effects of the “OVO” were composed by Berna Seppas. Creation of musical material, musical arrangements and samples was influenced by melodies and rhythms of Latin American contemporary music such as: bossa nova, samba, mambo, rumba, bachata, cha-cha-cha, merengue, funk, afro-jazz as well as electronic music. Seppas also sampled the sounds of various insects separately to create a mix in the music, which adds an additional sound effect and creates the necessary aura and atmosphere of insect kingdom that occurs during the theatrical circus performance [8, p. 83].

The play script looks like this:

Act one.

- *Beginning*: Master Flipo orders all the insects to wake up. After that they dance, in which they pretend to wash their faces and do their morning exercises.

- *Ants* (Risley/Icarian Games): a group of ants perform a combination of foot juggling and Icarian games. They juggle with flattened kiwi-shaped cylinders and stretched corn-shaped cylinders.

- *Orvalho* (equilibrium on a spiral reed): the original number (graduate of the Kyiv College of КМАСРА Vladimir Grinchenko from the city of Kremenchuk, Ukraine). In a dragonfly costume, he does tricks on one hand at the height of 2 meters on a reed, around which there is a spiral along which he beautifully rolls or rises [9].

- *Interlude* (Fly): the insects meet a weary fly with an egg on its back and an acquaintance between the insects and the fly begins. The fly has negative attitude towards insects and begins to tease them until he sees a ladybug, which he falls head over heels in love with. Meanwhile insects steal his egg.

- *Cocoon* (aerial gymnastics on canvas): the original number is somewhat different from usual show on canvas. The performance shows how a butterfly will gradually appear from a cocoon (into which the artist wraps his canvases) and the artist, holding the canvases with his hands, creates wings with them.

- *Butterflies* (cord de parel in two – graduates of the Kyiv College of КМАСРА Dmytro Orel and Svytlana Kashevarova): two butterflies tell us the story of their love with magnificent acrobatic double tricks on the rope and the combination of the theme of the number with a complex performance without insurance – it captivates the viewer very emotionally [9].

- *Firefly* (Diabolo): Firefly juggles multiple coils. This number is quite energetic and filled with complex juggling elements. Coils are thrown to the very dome of the circus, and not one but 4 at once. There are also acrobatic elements.

- *Clowns*: Master Flipo and the Foreigner get into a fight in which a fly tries to find out where his egg is and kills the bug with an invisible sword. Then an interactive with the audience is played out and the bug stands up in its entirety and sprays insecticide in front of the Foreigner and falls into a psychedelic trip.

- *Creature* (Slinky): The performer enters the stage and performs in a slobber costume that resembles a furry caterpillar. The room is cheerful and children like it with its unusual view.

- *Interlude*: Two very large stick insects enter the stage. The costumes are quite creepy and scare by their appearance. Made with stilts. They corner the fly, but a ladybug comes and saves it.

- *Interlude*: Musical duel: Master Flipo challenges the violinist to a musical duel. This action distracts the audience from the fact that the grid for the air act is currently being stretched over the stage.

- *Scarabs* (aerial flight with frames and a table in the middle): a group of performers dressed as scarabs perform acrobatic stunts flying from the frame to the table, where the two lower partners stand to catch the upper acrobat. From there they push him to the next frame. Costumes and music are creepy, it is not uncommon for acrobats to fail to do the trick the first time and fall into the net, which makes the audience look for the artist out of fear. By the end of the number, most of the insects fit under the net and then they all leave the stage together [10, p. 14].

Act two.

- *Vocals*: the second act begins with singing in a fictitious language. It helps viewers to re-immense themselves in the fabulous world of insects after a break.

- *Web* (rubber with equilibrium): the spider bends and twists its body on the stone, at this time other insects appear

around it and seem to get stuck in the web stretched around the stone.

– *Clowns*: the Ladybug communicates with the viewer, and the Foreigner becomes jealous. He tries to express his love to her, but he does not know how to do it and does it rudely and badly. And she kicks him out.

– *Fleas* (acrobatic trio): performers dressed as fleas perform acrobatic exercises by tossing an acrobat.

– *Interlude*: The Foreigner tries to hit the ladybug with a flower and tell her how he feels about her, but she still resents him.

– *Spider* (Free Dart): The spider performs various tricks, including a free wire unicycle. The structure with the wire rises and falls, while the acrobat walks on the wire on his hands, does somersaults and other difficult but exciting exercises.

– *Clowns*: feeling rejected by the Ladybug, Master Flipo tries to help the Foreigner find someone from the audience, where interaction with the audience begins. The fly, having learned manners, approaches the Ladybug and asks for forgiveness, and she forgives and hugs him.

– *Interlude* (foot dance): modern foot dance using holes on the stage. The legs are dressed in costumes and look like worms crawling out of the ground. A tumbling track and trampolines. A tumbling track and trampolines which are hidden under the stage are currently being open.

– *Crickets* (trampolines with wall and track): a group of acrobats dressed as crickets do acrobatic pushing exercises on trampoline and clinging to the wall push off again onto the trampoline. They also make jumps on the acrobatic track.

– *Finale*: "OVO's" artistic line-up comes out to celebrate the love of the Ladybug and the Foreigner. Each number is presented and at the end they cover the entire hall with colourful confetti in the form of butterflies [5].

Conclusions. Thus, by comparative and artistic analysis of the “OVO” show, based on the feedback from the artists who worked in it, as well as the feedback from the audience which compared it with other shows, we can evaluate this circus theatrical show as one of the many performances of the “Cirque Du Soleil” which is really suitable for all family members.

It is not as difficult to understand as “Alegria”, it is not as expensive as “Ka” where the stage alone rates like all the “OVO” shows, it is not as unusual and bright as “O”, but it captivates the audience with its costumes, its story about love. It's also important to note that “OVO” show is simple but very bright, the characters play their parts and clearly convey the artistic image through stunt combinations, even if they just help set the props for the next number and are barely visible on stage.

The combination of a simple but understandable plot, bright costumes and make-up that really turn the artists into insects, well-chosen numbers, the way they are interconnected and an unsurpassed acting game – an excellent performance and show product is presented which one can visit with the whole family and take a break from real life, as well as the amazing and fabulous world of insects to admire.

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**ЦИРКОЛОГІЧНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ШОУ «OVO»
«ЦИРКУ ДЮ СОЛЕЙ»: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНА
ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА ЦИРКОВОГО ВИДОВИЩА ТА
ЙОГО СЦЕНИЧНА ДЕМОНСТРАЦІЯ (СЦЕНАРІЙ,
ДЕКОРАЦІЇ, МУЗИКА, ЦИРКОВІ ЖАНРИ І
ПЕРСОНАЖІ)**

Анотація. У статті проведено мистецький аналіз у контексті циркології, а саме: порівняльний аналіз порівняльно-мистецького аналізу шоу «OVO» Циркаю дю Солей. Дослідження в галузі циркового мистецтва, його теорії та практики проводяться у контексті циркологічних штудій.

У вітчизняному та світовому мистецтвознавстві практично відсутні серйозні наукові дослідження, присвячені специфіці феномену «Цирку дю Солей».

Важливо відзначити, що окремі публікації, анонси, програми циркових вистав, популярні статті з сучасних журналів у пресі кінця ХХ та початку ХХІ ст., безумовно, мали місце. Проте, слід підкреслити виключно їх наративний прояв без конкретних факторів, а саме відсутність чіткого зв'язку між практичною специфікою цик-арту та науковою передачею інформації та аналітикою в галузі мистецтвознавства.

Мета статті – дати чіткий та системний аналіз у циркологічній площині, а саме дати порівняльний аналіз шоу «OVO» з іншими шоу виставами цирку «Цирку дю Солей», а також докладно розкрити унікальність спрямованості та особливостей номерів шоу «OVO» з погляду циркових жанрів, сценарію та художнього оформлення.

Порівняльний аналіз різних циркових вистав шоу «Цирку дю Солей», визначає різноманітність та різні факти відмінності шоу «OVO» від таких циркових вистав «Цирку дю Солей», як «Alegria», «Zumanity», «Ka», «O». У статті дається опис декорацій, сучасних прийомів циркових апаратів, піротехніки та інноваційних технологій, світлового та музичного супроводу. Музика писалася окремо для кожного шоу, музичні семпли створювалися залежно від сценарію та сюжету.

«OVO» вважається гастрольною виставою «Цирку дю Солей», сценарій та постановка якої поставила Дебора Колкера. Це 25-е шоу «Цирку дю Солей» з 1984 р., створене на честь 25-річчя «Цирку дю Солей». Назва «OVO» у перекладі з португальської означає «яйце». Це відповідає темі серіалу про життєвий цикл та народження комах. Це також є головною лінією шоу. Художник-постановник Грінго Кардія надихався гніздами та колоніями різних комах під час створення сцени для «OVO». Акробатична структура, яка використовується під час довільного кидка, знаходиться під кутом 45°. Конструкція може бути піднята на висоту до 4,5 метра і важить понад 5 тон. Художник по костюмах Ліз Вандал використовувала свій фірмовий стиль, натхненний футуристичними супергероями та різноманітними обладунками для створення костюмів для «OVO».

Таким чином, порівняльно-художній аналіз шоу «OVO» – це поєднання креативного та унікального і водночас простого, зрозумілого сюжету, яскравих костюмів та гриму, які справді перетворюють артистів на комах, вдало підібраних номерів, їх взаємозв'язку та неперевершеної акторської гри, чудова театралізована циркова вистава про казковий світ комах.

Ключові слова: «OVO», циркологія, циркові жанри, «Цирк дю Солей», сценічні декорації, художні образи циркових виконавців, театраль-но-циркова вистава.

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