

Exclusive Interview with Machine de Cirque Founder Vincent Dube

Family fun will reach dizzying heights in Pittsburgh as **Machine de Cirque** lands for one-night-only at the **Pittsburgh Playhouse on Tuesday, January 24**. This award-winning circus from Quebec features dazzling acrobatics, zany comedy, and juggling that all collide in to form a mischievous tale of a visit to an art gallery gone wrong (or wonderfully right!) in a performance that will delight both children and grownups.

Pittsburgh Playhouse Managing Director, **Drew Martorella** sat down with Machine de Cirque founder, **Vincent Dube** about bringing Machine de Cirque to Pittsburgh. *This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*

Drew Martorella:

So why don't we begin with just if you could introduce yourself and tell us about yourself as an artist and what animates you and what brings you joy?

Vincent Dube:

We founded the Machine de Cirque in 2013, and the first show was presented in 2015. And since then, we've produced many touring shows. We have four touring shows and other special projects right now. And what animates me is to always rediscover every discipline, every circus discipline.

I'm someone who's seen a lot so I can get bored easily. So for me, it's fun to take a discipline and to add other artists that it's not their discipline, this one. But what they can add with their background to the scene, that's a fun thing for me. And also, with my engineering and juggling past, I'm also really interested in how we use props, how we use circus apparatus, how they are integrated to the scenery, to the sets. How we use them in a clever way or they are designed in a clever way and how we use them in a playful way.

Drew Martorella:

What sets you apart from other folks that are working in this genre?

Vincent Dube:

I would say we work very hard on storytelling and the theatrical aspect. Contemporary circus, it's a mix of different disciplines; music, dance, theater, and circus skills. I think the theater part of it takes a lot of place in the show. So we put a lot of time into acting as well as the circus.

Also, the music is really there to support what's going on. The music is more theatrical as well, it's not something you could buy that you could listen the soundtrack by yourself, it doesn't make sense. It's really made because for us sometime the acrobatic movement is the solo of the song. So we can leave a space, a silent space, and there's something going on and then it starts again. So it makes sense when everything is put together.

January 13, 2023

And also, I would say that we focus on engineering how we use objects, how we play with them, how they are integrated, and how we use day-to-day objects as circus apparatus and how we use circus apparatus as sets, part of the sets in the show, it's something we work on a lot as well.

And we have a good background of visual comedy, so we like this a lot. But we like that the comedy comes from the story. It's not just clowning...not just, "Oh, here comes the funny part." It can come from any member of the cast, and sometimes it can come out of a dramatic situation. I think it's part of our signature, of our identity.

Drew Martorella:

Tell us about *La Galerie*. What makes this show special? Who will enjoy it?

Vincent Dube:

I think everybody should come see it. I mean, there's a lot of great acrobatic skills. There's comedy. There's a nice storytelling. Also the aesthetic also is very nice. I'm very proud of it.

The inspiration for the show came from our director of the show, Olivier Lepine, who was loosely inspired by the movie, *The Square*.

It's a very distorted movie. It happens in a gallery and there's a lot of discussion about what is art. And if you forget a bag in the middle of the room and you put some fences around and a little artistic description, is it art?

We liked a lot the idea that, in a gallery, that there's so much stuff that you're not allowed to do. And in circus, we do a lot of stuff that stand out, that you could not imagine to do in an art gallery. So that contrast was really, really interesting as well.

The show basically tells the story about woman who comes to a gallery, a museum. And she tries to, instead of looking at art and trying to analyze it, she tries to feel something out of it, to get an emotion out of it. And in this gallery, everybody is more in analytic mode. So she stands out and we follow her in that journey that at one point she get through the art and then gets out of it and transform the gallery, that everybody come in with her and start to feel something about art and to be in the creative process instead of standing out of it and looking at it from an outside point of view.

So I really love the journey of this show, the change of aesthetic at the beginning. We think we understand what the show is and where it's going and it completely flips out and goes somewhere else. I like this touch. I also love the balance between poetic wow effects and comedy. I think it's very well put together and I like the fact that there's so many layers of dramatic writing in this show.

Kids will love this show. But it's also for grownups. Really everyone will appreciate the second and the third level of seeing it....it will inspire conversations and connections.

Drew Martorella:

That's terrific. Let's talk about play, which seems to be so much a part of contemporary circus.

January 13, 2023

Vincent Dube:

I think that people learn a lot and evolve a lot and live a lot through playing, and discover a lot of things through playing. And I think that it's an essential part of a human being. I think that in any job, if you can do it in a playful way, there's always something will get out of it. You will have this little rush of energy, of extra energy, will come out of it in your social interaction as well. I mean, sometimes it's one person in the group that has more of a playful attitude, makes a big difference in the total atmosphere.

So I think it's a relief, it's a stimulation, it's a rush of energy. It's everything that is... And it's the structure of who we are. We all develop ourselves through playing around with friends and that's how you develop your character as well, your personality. So I think it's deep, deep down inside our roots. So it's your inner child as well. It's a little bit everything. Ultimately I think that it is the very basis of being a human being.

Even the very intellectual, if you interact with them in a physical way and they get out of their zone of comfort, you'll feel that they are 20 or 30 years younger and you get a little spark out of it. So yeah, I think that's why it appeals so much, we need that basically, and sometimes we forget it.

Drew Martorella:

Well, thank you so much. We're almost at the end of our time. I want to leave with one final question and that is, is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would want any potential audience member to know or to hear from you before coming to see the show?

Vincent Dube:

I like people to be surprised a little bit. I think even with what I said, they will be. But I don't want to say more. I say just come and be there and you'll have a very nice journey. You'll have fun. There's a lot of warm moments, there's comedy. There's a nice storytelling. So I think it's a very, very beautiful show for everyone.

-END-

Machine de Cirque is part of the Playhouse Presents, a nationally recognized presenting series that feature the very best performing artists from around the globe.

Machine de Cirque plays for one night only on January 24 at 7:00 p.m. Visit pittsburghplayhouse.com for tickets and information.

January 13, 2023