

SET DESIGN

The set and décor of Corteo plunge the audience into a lyrical world, a strange area between heaven and earth.

The Stage

Set Designer Jean Rabasse has divided the Grand Chapiteau and its rotating stage in two, with each half of the audience facing the other half, so they see not only the performance, but also have a performer's-eye-view of the audience. This is a first for Cirque du Soleil.

- There are two turntables built into the stage, which is about 104 feet long ; the diameter of each turntable is about 41 feet.
- More than 9,000 images were used in the R&D phase of the set design to blend many visual styles and influences, from the baroque to the modern.

The "Patience"

The "Patience" is a massive arched technical structure made of steel which dominates the interior of the Grand Chapiteau. It is one of the most complex set elements in the show and is used to transport artists, various scenic elements and pieces of acrobatic equipment on and off stage from above.

- The Patience has two rails that traverse the Grand Chapiteau.
- Each track is fitted with four platform-like carts to carry the scenic and acrobatic elements.
- The eight carts have a lifting capacity of 1,000 lbs and a top speed of four feet per second.
- The Patience is 41 feet above the stage at its highest point. It is entirely self-supporting and could be set up anywhere.

The Curtains

It was a visit to the exhibition "The Great Parade: Portrait of the Artist as Clown" at the National Gallery of Canada that inspired Jean Rabasse to paint the Corteo Procession on the curtains. His design was influenced by the work of such painters as Willette, Picasso, Tiepolo, Pelez and Knight.

The inspiration for the show's curtains was an 1885 painting by the Parisian artist Adolphe Willette.

The two enormous baroque-style "Roll Drop" curtains (58 feet wide and almost 40 feet high), and the four sideways-opening Italian-style curtains are among the most striking scenic elements in the show. They were sewn in Canada and sent to France to be painted.

- It took more than two weeks to paint each of the central curtains in watercolors.
- The central curtains are hung from huge supports which contain winding motors to roll them.

The Labyrinth

In the center of the circular stage is a labyrinth which exactly reproduces the proportions and size of the classic design on the floor of the aisle in Chartres cathedral.

COSTUMES AND PROPS

To create the 184 costumes for *Corteo's* 60 characters, Costume Designer Dominique Lemieux set out to accentuate the natural beauty of the artists.

Note: the number of 184 costumes is used on the stage without counting back-up and extra for rotation. In total amount is around 450 costumes with 284 rotations.

- She used more than 900 different fabrics, concentrating on natural fibers such as silks, linens, cottons and lace in a subtle color palette that includes blues, pinks, fuchsia and gold with appliquéd spangles and jewels.
- Many of the fabrics were dyed and airbrushed to give them a patina of age.

The show uses some innovative stage props:

- There are two traditional "pantomime horses" in the show. Each conceals two artists.
- One artist moves around the stage on single-wheeled skates.

ACROBATIC AND RIGGING MATERIAL

Corteo features a variety of innovative acrobatic equipment elements that were invented at Cirque and designed to mesh seamlessly with the set design.

- The "Paradis" act brings together two circus skills that have never been combined before: The Korean Cradle and the Tramponet (a combination of trampoline and safety net). The artists are thrown between three Korean Cradle stations placed at an unprecedented distance from each other, and rebound off the Tramponet, which is 98 feet long.
- The "Tournik" consists of an eight-cubic-ft steel frame and twin high bars mounted on rotating platforms.
- The "Lustres" are giant chandeliers that float in mid-air above the stage. They are decorated with some 4,000 sparkling "jewels" and garlands of reflective acrylic spheres.
- There are three custom-built ladders in the show, each designed to meet a different acrobatic demand. They include a bungee ladder and a tall ladder which is almost 15 feet high.