

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

# VOLTA™



PRESSKIT

# SHOW OVERVIEW

## ABOUT THE SHOW – Freedom is the ultimate achievement.

VOLTA is a captivating voyage of discovery. It's about finding yourself, and unveiling your personal powers. Inspired in part by the adventurous spirit that fuels the culture of street sports, the show weaves acrobatics in a visually striking world driven by a stirring melodic score.

VOLTA is a story of transformation. It is about being true to oneself, fulfilling one's true potential, and recognizing one's own power to make it possible. Ultimate freedom comes with self-acceptance, and with the liberation of the judgement of others.

WAZ, is a gameshow contestant that has lost touch with himself. He's ashamed of who he is because of his difference. He enters the show in search of fame, thinking that this will bring him love and acceptance from others. What he finds is something else. That fame is not the answer. If fame doesn't provide freedom and acceptance, then what does? Will WAZ reconnect with his true self – and stand up for all that makes him truly unique? Will he realize that his difference is what makes him extraordinary?



## THEMES AND INSPIRATIONS

**Street sports and the spirit of adventure** – The creators of VOLTA drew inspiration from the spirit of adventure that pervades the world of street sports and acrobatics. Whether they are on a bike, hopping from rooftop to rooftop, or double dutch rope skipping, urban sports enthusiasts constantly challenge themselves and defy convention.

**Authenticity as an antidote to superficiality** – VOLTA explores the themes of celebrating differences and unique qualities in a world where technology of ten isolates people from one another rather than freeing them. Using the rise of the celebrity culture and reality TV as a subtext, VOLTA teaches us that the path to fame, is not necessarily the path to freedom.

**The MR. WOW SHOW** – This is the show of all shows. The one that can catapult you from being a nobody to being a real somebody. MR. WOW, the chief judge, holds the power to make you or to break you. You never know which way he will vote.



# THE CHARACTERS OF VOLTA



**WAZ** – Once a young boy full of dreams and aspirations, WAZ has since slipped into the invisible doldrums of the GREYS. In search of love and acceptance, WAZ becomes a contestant on the MR. WOW SHOW to access the ultimate consecration. His quest becomes derailed when the part of himself that makes him unique and that he’s been trying to hide is revealed to the world. It is only upon meeting the FREESPIRITS and in returning through the memories of his childhood that he once again comes in touch with who he truly is, and has the courage to show his true self to the world.



**The GREYS** – The GREYS are the everyman, city dwellers who have accumulated the dust of inertia over time. The GREYS are out of sync with their true selves. Lost in the fog of misguided hopes, they fail to realize that happiness lies within. They live their lives permanently glued to their cell phones and screens. Mostly cut off from one another, they settle for their everyday routine, the tedium of repetition. GREYS come to the MR. WOW SHOW for a chance to bathe in instant celebrity. But what they don’t realize is they’re merely switching from one false promise to another.



**The FREESPIRITS** – The FREESPIRITS have earned their place in the world. Formerly GREYS, they have escaped the everyday. They see through the outer appearance of people and embody the glorious acceptance of everyone. They are not bound by rules or expectations. And this is not because they are lawless. It is because they are free and are driven by freedom. They strive to live in a world with no walls or barriers. Benevolent and life-loving; they truly care for others. They travel the world, collecting and sharing experiences. They are real, genuine and always seek to fulfill their potential and that of others. The FREESPIRITS and the GREYS are two sides of the same coin. To the FREESPIRIT, difference is a strength.



**ELA** – ELA is the archetypal FREESPIRIT. She sees the untapped potential in others and tries to rouse them from their apathy. She is there at the right moment for GREYS in search of a meaning in their life and to help WAZ set out on his journey.



**MR. WOW AND THE JUDGES** – They represent the collective judgement of society. MR. WOW however, as the executive producer and supreme judge, possesses the supreme veto – holding the power to make or break contestants.

# ACTS AND ACROBATIC PERFORMANCE

## ACT 1



### MR. WOW SHOW – Rope Skipping (and more)

*WAZ takes on the MR. WOW SHOW. He is here to impress the judges, wow the audiences, and take home the ultimate prize – popularity. After the rope skippers showcase their talent, WAZ proves his skills with an impressive dance number.*

In this act, rope skipping takes on a new dimension with a heightened level of acrobatic prowess. Artists perform single rope and double Dutch sequences (two ropes turning in opposite directions). With an urban, hip hop attitude, they tumble, flip, and perform handstand hops through the spinning ropes. When the act culminates in a breathtaking speed pass at full throttle, the two spinning ropes are just a blur.



### MEETING ELA – Precision Walk, Roller Skates & Hand to Hand on Unicycle

*A group of GREYS walk in the city, engulfed in their empty routine, gazing at their cellphones. ELA appears on roller skates with other FREESPIRITS, they meet WAZ, still hurt by what he just lived in the talent show. ELA is his connection to the real world – a spot of color in his bleak reality. Playfully intrigued, she approaches to touch his blue feathers, but he pulls back.*

The GREYS execute a striking group choreography, changing directions in rhythmic unison, their eyes glued to their cellphones – compasses leading nowhere. They are all the same: withdrawn, strait-jacketed into their daily routines. ELA playfully joins in followed by two fellow FREESPIRITS who perform a daring hand to hand duo while rolling on a unicycle.



### GUARDIAN ANGEL IN THE CITY – Acro Lamp

*WAZ pulls out mementos from his treasure chest, finding pleasure in reconstructing his long-forgotten past.*

In a moment of calm introspection, Waz remembers his younger self flying majestically in long sweeping arcs. Hanging on with his hands or feet, he swings and spins gracefully using the light to metaphorically illuminate the journey ahead.



### RISE & SHINE – Trampowall

*The playful and mischievous FREESPIRITS invade the city and transform the space into a playground. Not only do they invade the city, they shake up, and throw the lives of the GREYS into question.*

In the Trampowall act, The FREESPIRITS playfully climb, dive and jump off the grey building that represents the monochrome city environment of the GREYS. They move about freely and completely take charge of this drab urban universe to do their acrobatics.



# ACTS AND ACROBATIC PERFORMANCE



## DAYDREAMING – Flatland BMX & Ballet Duo

*In his Cube, WAZ turns on a home video projector and watches 8mm movies of his childhood days, reliving fond memories of riding his beloved red bicycle and playing in the backyard with his mother.*

A BMX flatland rider performs a riveting routine on his bike and engages in a pas de deux with a ballet dancer as WAZ looks on. Coming from disciplines that seem worlds apart, the two artists create mirror-like images in a mesmerizing synchronized choreography.



## INTERVENTION – Swiss Rings/Bungee

*In all their glory, the FREESPIRITS storm in to encourage WAZ to pursue his quest. He experiences sensations that he hasn't felt since he was a child.*

Suspended from the bridge, eight top-level gymnasts on four sets of Swiss-style rings twist, swivel, and sway to and from on their apparatus in a high-energy celebration of WAZ's departure from the gameshow. They are busy showing their tricks when two artists suddenly fall from the sky on bungee cords and interact with the gymnasts below in alternating patterns.

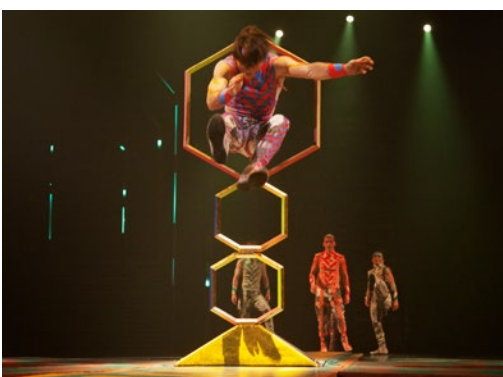
## ACT 2



## LEAVING THE CITY – Acrobatic Ladders

*WAZ is wandering in the city. As he looks for a way out, he wanders through an alleyway and encounters GREYS who, like him, aspire to genuineness and authenticity.*

Two articulated ladders attached to the edge of the stage on pivot points are the towering symbols of WAZ's escape from the fake and shallow world of MR. WOW. Artists climb, spin and execute acrobatic and artistic figures on the ladders in synchronized and alternating patterns. At certain points, the ladders swing out majestically over the audience.



## URBAN JUNGLE – Shape Diving

*After encountering the GREYS, WAZ continues on his journey and meets more fellow FREESPIRITS. WAZ's journey continues...*

In an electric, urban atmosphere, artists tumble and jump through shapes, sometimes feet first, sometimes backwards, sometimes bent in half, even adding breakdancing and hip-hop-style moves into the mix.

# ACTS AND ACROBATIC PERFORMANCE



## MIRAGE – Hair Suspension

A spellbinding artist suspended only by her hair levitates slowly from a cushion underneath her, barely touching the ground. This mysterious, sensual FREESPIRIT character then rises up above the stage, swinging back and forth or spinning like a top, all the while exercising her hypnotic power over all



## BREAKTHROUGH – Contemporary Dance

*The real WAZ emerges. WAZ has understood that the difference that he used to be ashamed of is actually the very thing that makes him unique. He embraces who he is, his true identity. Now he is ready to break free when his inspirational dance comes to an end*

WAZ's dance is the physical manifestation of his liberation, building up from simple, understated arm movements, and exploding into dramatic grand jetés. The choreography, which reveals not a dancer, but a free man, expresses WAZ's humanity, vulnerability and courage.



## MOMENTUM – BMX

*WAZ is now in control of his life and has been admitted into this community of life-loving FREESPIRITS. In a contagious spirit of celebration, they let it all out and show their mettle*

A full-blown BMX park is mounted on stage in front of the audience's very eyes for the breathtaking BMX finale as riders invade the stage to deliver a jaw-dropping, fast and furious performance of nonstop acrobatics on wheels. The riders go up the jump boxes and perform air tricks before landing and leaping off the ramps again, crisscrossing and spinning their bikes in midair in a spirit of brotherhood.



## POWERING UP VOLTA – Behind the scenes



### SET DESIGN, PROPS AND LIGHTING – A BREATHING, PULSATING WORLD OF LIGHT

VOLTA's stage has a pulse and a life its own. In a heartbeat, it can turn from a dark, stone-dead quarry into a cathedral of light.

**Stone, light and the human element** – The landscape – a granite quarry – looks like it was mined out of a gigantic rock. It is a manmade, geometrically variable environment, constantly changing and adapting to the storyline. The light breaking through the background and the stage floor and emanating from WAZ's Cube makes the stage breathe. When the characters of VOLTA invade this seemingly cold environment, the set literally comes to life.

The outer ring of the circular stage is a revolving plate with footlights that illuminate the performances. It is used to generate kinetic energy on stage as well as move props and artists. Articulated hydraulic lifts emerge from the stage floor to populate the space above the stage. Higher up, a bridge that spans two of the Big Top's four masts can move gracefully up and down to modulate the audience's focus and serve as a second stage. All of the mechanics on stage provide a showcase for the story that is about to unfold.

**The Cube, a magic box where past and present collide** – The Cube, WAZ's refuge where he keeps treasured childhood mementos, represents the duality of the main character. It is a 5,900 kg, highly versatile mechanical device – one of the iconic symbols in the world of VOLTA. The Cube can pivot and move upstage and downstage. Two of its movable panels are used for delivering video content.

## POWERING UP VOLTA – Behind the scenes

But beyond the stagecraft and the mechanics, the Cube is a pivotal element in the VOLTA narrative. A theatre décor in its own right, the Cube is the refuge where WAZ can conjure up memories from his childhood in private and out of sight.

Inside, WAZ rummages through a treasure chest of cherished mementos. At one point, the Cube metaphorically turns into a time capsule when WAZ plays family movies depicting his happy life at home; the two LED panels unfold from the sides of the Cube to deliver the cinematic content for all the audience to see. Past and present collide in this miniature world where big things happen.

**A full-blown skate park mounted on stage in real time** – Because of the limited space under the Big Top – the VOLTA stage is exceptionally deep –, the six massive ramps used in the breathtaking BMX act are of increasing size and slip one inside another, like Russian dolls, when stowed away. The ramps are made of thick, heavy-duty polycarbonate – a material used to make bulletproof glass – and are fully transparent so as not to block the view of spectators sitting in the front rows, who see riders through the ramp come at them at more than 30 km/h. And the material must be strong and resistant, because a rider landing on a ramp generates a force of 12 Gs: twelve times his weight!

### Close-ups on sets and props

- The audience has a 240-degree view of the VOLTA stage.
- The bridge that moves vertically above the stage weighs 2,268 kg.
- The wallpaper on the back wall of WAZ's Cube is perforated with tiny holes to let air through and cool down the two LED panels on its flanks.
- Red symbolizes WAZ's childhood. All of his cherished mementos, including the chest, the hourglass, the bicycle and the lamp, are red.
- The electrical components of the Cube, such as the rotating motor and the LED panels, are powered by a 200-amp electrical source like the one used in an average home.



## COSTUMES – The fabric of VOLTA

The stunning costumes of VOLTA echo the themes of alienation and self-realization. They also reflect the DIY (Do It Yourself) mentality of those who strive to “find their free.”

These stylish hand-made creations have been designed by **Zaldy Goco**, famous for his work with Lady Gaga, Michael Jackson, Britney Spears, Gwen Stefany and for TV show RuPaul’s Drag Race.

**MR. WOW** – In his TV show outfit, MR. WOW represents the ultimate level of celebrity: solid gold through and through. Gold colored dragon scales make up his hard, exterior shell. His shell is also a representation of the superficiality that is sometimes associated with fame.

**Sympathy for the common man** – In the world of VOLTA, the GREYS represent the everyman. In multiple shades of grey, the prints and patchwork-type patterns and textures of their outfits mimic the bleakness of the landscape and blend with the stage. The GREY’s costumes are held together with belting from head to toe. Some of the GREYS are in a transitional state to becoming FREESPIRITS; when they remove their coats, the backs of their shirts have colorful patterns showing their individuality.

**Judgement of society** – The JUDGES costumes are as big as the importance they want to have. Clad in metallic gold and black, the JUDGES are the anonymous, two-faced judgement that society imposes on us. Metallic glitter gives their flamboyant neo-Baroque costumes a hard shine that underscores their self-importance.

**All out DIY** – FREESPIRITS are open-minded, life-loving travelers who won’t hesitate a moment to veer off course for the sheer sake of adventure. On their travels, they collect meaningful objects and trinkets, which they attach to their costumes. The fabrics and prints call to mind extensive travel and encounters with many cultures of the world. The FREESPIRITS’ complex, richly colored outfits evoke handmade techniques such as macramé and crochet.





# COSTUMES – The fabric of VOLTA

## Costume close-ups

- The coat MR. WOW wears as the host of the MR. WOW SHOW, a golden coat – a super bling outfit truly befitting of an executive producer and supreme judge that demands to be the center of attention.
- WAZ's distinctive headdress has approximately 1,500 blue feathers.
- More than 1,200 costume elements were produced by the artisans in the costume workshop at Cirque du Soleil's international headquarters in Montreal.
- The make-up designs for the life-loving FREESPIRITS are inspired by vibrant Hindu colors such as oranges and aqua blues. The colors on the characters' bodies are applied with sponges full of holes or, in the case of the Swiss rings performers, using various paint splattering techniques.





## VIDEO CONTENT – Revealing the light within

VOLTA is a luminous world chock-full of LED-clad objects. The Cube is equipped with two panels made of 4-mm LED tiles that deliver film quality video content. The stage is ringed with LED lights and is lined with a forest of movable lampposts that focus the audience's attention on the performance.

**The video content palette** – The video content is divided into four sections: WAZ's childhood memories, filmed in warm, cinematic fashion; the superficial, computer-generated world of the MR. WOW SHOW, which has a colder, slicker look and feel; the calculated city world and its grid-like patterns; and the realm of the FREESPIRITS, with its natural and earthy atmospheres. To create a sense of cohesion, these four palettes were tied in together through an overall photorealistic approach.

**A nostalgic reverie** – The short "family movies" played on the two LED panels that flank the Cave on both sides and transport the audience into WAZ's past, evoke the main character's simple, happy childhood out in the country. To give the impression that the observer is privy to the character's innermost secrets and to create the warm, timeless look, the films were shot in a portrait-style vertical format using special vintage equipment. An ultramodern digital Alexa XT camera was paired with German-made Zeiss Vintage lenses from the 1960s like the ones used by legendary director Stanley Kubrick to create the soft, film-based textures of the movies. When light enters into these lenses, it leaves a distinct signature that creates that classic vintage look.

### **Video content at a glance**

The production's video control system is 100% interactive and can be triggered by the simple kick of a drum or the sound of a voice.



## THE MUSIC OF VOLTA – A stream of gripping musical landscapes

VOLTA is propelled by a series of atmospheric, epic and poetic musical landscapes. The vast palette glides from synth-pop to more melodic lines, from ambient shoegazing to waves of symphonic and orchestral sounds to which stirring choirs, brass and string textures were added.

Written by composer Anthony Gonzalez (M83), the highly cinematic music of VOLTA evokes a complex array of emotions and moods that ebb and flow majestically like the tide, always in sync with the acrobatic performances on stage. It is a narrative tool in its own right, echoing the different arcs in the storyline and expressing the distinct personalities of the worlds of VOLTA – the GREYS, the MEMORIES, and the FREESPIRITS.





## CIRQUE DU SOLEIL AT A GLANCE

From a group of 20 street performers at its beginnings in 1984, *Cirque du Soleil* is a major Québec-based organization providing high-quality artistic entertainment. The company has close to 4,000 employees, including 1,400 artists from more than 50 different countries.

*Cirque du Soleil* has brought wonder and delight to more than 180 million spectators in more than 450 cities in over sixty countries on six continents.

For more information about *Cirque du Soleil*, visit [www.cirquedusoleil.com](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com).

### THE MISSION

The mission of *Cirque du Soleil* is to **invoke the imagination, provoke the senses and evoke the emotions** of people around the world.

### THE CREATION OF CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

It all started in Baie-Saint-Paul, a small town near Québec City in Canada. There, in the early eighties, a band of colourful characters roamed the streets, striding on stilts, juggling, dancing, breathing fire, and playing music. They were Les Échassiers de Baie-Saint-Paul (the Baie-Saint-Paul Stiltwalkers), a street theatre group founded by Gilles Ste-Croix. Already, the townsfolk were impressed and intrigued by the young performers – including Guy Laliberté who founded *Cirque du Soleil*.

The troupe went on to found Le Club des talons hauts (the High Heels Club), and then, in 1982, organized La Fête foraine de Baie-Saint-Paul, a cultural event in which street performers from all over met to exchange ideas and enliven the streets of the town for a few days. La Fête foraine was repeated in 1983 and 1984. Le Club des talons hauts attracted notice, and Guy Laliberté, Gilles Ste-Croix and their cronies began to cherish a crazy dream: to create a Québec circus and take the troupe travelling around the world.

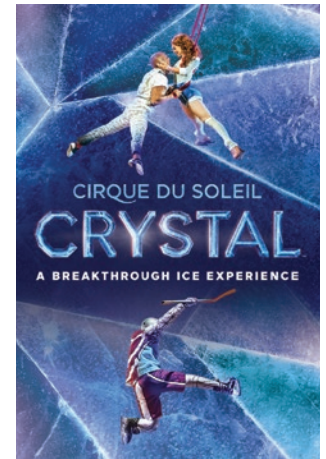
In 1984, Québec City was celebrating the 450th anniversary of Canada's discovery by Jacques Cartier, and they needed a show that would carry the festivities out across the province. Guy Laliberté presented a proposal for a show called *Cirque du Soleil* (Circus of the Sun), and succeeded in convincing the organizers. And *Cirque du Soleil* hasn't stopped since!

### A Few statistics

- In 1984, 73 people worked for *Cirque du Soleil*. Today, the company hires close to 4,000 employees worldwide, including 1,400 artists.
- At the Montreal International Headquarters alone, there are close to 1,500 employees.
- More than 100 types of occupations can be found at Cirque.
- The company's employees and artists represent more than 50 nationalities and speak 25 different languages.
- More than 180 million spectators have seen a *Cirque du Soleil* show since 1984.
- Close to 10 million have seen a *Cirque du Soleil* show in 2017.
- *Cirque du Soleil* hasn't received any grants from the public or private sectors since 1992.

IN 2018, *CIRQUE DU SOLEIL* WILL PRESENT 19 DIFFERENT SHOWS AROUND THE WORLD.

ARENA SHOWS



TOURING SHOWS UNDER THE BIG TOP







**RESIDENT SHOWS**



Riviera Maya  
Mexico



Luxor  
in Las Vegas



MGM Grand  
in Las Vegas



The Mirage  
in Las Vegas



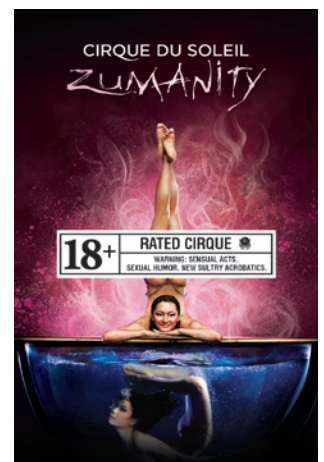
Mandalay Bay  
in Las Vegas



Treasure Island  
in Las Vegas



Bellagio  
in Las Vegas



New York-New York  
Hotel & Casino  
in Las Vegas

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