



CIRCUS MENTORING PROGRAMME

mentoring of the amateur, self-organizing
circus communities in Hungary

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BEGINNINGS

The **Circus Mentoring Programme** which launched by the *National Circus Arts Centre* has started in September 2023, and our main task was to gather the Hungarian amateur, self-organizing communities, organize them into a network, and support their work. Since no one in the world – in relation of the circus art – has started to create such a large-scale and completely free mentoring program, it was quite a challenge to develop it. The evolution of the program was a special curiosity, the first reactions of the approached mentees and how the future operation of the mentoring program was outlined day by day.

Although I have been a fan and practitioner of circus arts since years, the compilation of circus genres also held surprises for me. I listed this for the first time and was surprised to find that the range within which I can search for amateur clubs is very wide. Imagine, there is even an ax throwing association in Hungary.



ZSÁNER

GENRE

ZSÁNER

GENRE

LEVEGŐAKROBATIKA

tissue

hammock

karika

trapéz

lengőrúd

gurtni

kötél

egyéb levegőakrobatika

RÚD

rúdfitnessz

rúdtánc

TALAJAKROBATIKA

kötélugrás

gumiasztal

parkour

akrobatika

fast track/air track

cheerleading

akrobatikus táncok

erőművészet/erőemelők

fitnessz

sport akrobatika

EGYENSÚLY

slackline/highline/waterline

rola bola

művészi kerékpár

AIR ACROBATICS

tissue

hammock

aerial hoop

trapeze

sway bar

lifting belt

rope

other

POLE

pole fitness

pole dance

GROUND ACROBATICS

jumping rope

trampoline

parkour

acrobatics

fast track/air track

cheerleading

acrobatic dances

strenght art/powerlifters

fitness

sport acrobatics

BALANCE

slackline/highline/waterline

rola bola

exercise bike

bmx (flatland, park, dirt, street)

ZSONGLŐR

jojó

labda

buzogány

karika

diaboló

ördögbot

baltadobálás

tűzszonglőr

bartender

KORCSOLYA

görkorcsolya

jégtánc

ÁLLATOK

lovasakrobatika

lovasfjászat

solymászat (hungaricum)

agility

EGYÉB

bűvész

akrobatikus motoros

kaszkadőr

bohóc

kardnyelő

fakír

bmx (flatland, park, dirt, street)

JUGGLER

yoyo

ball

mace

circle

diabolo

devil stick

axe throwing

fire juggler

bartender

SKATES

roller skates

ice skates

ANIMALS

voltige

horseback archery

falconry (hungaricum)

agility

OTHER

magician

acrobatic biker

stuntman

clown

sword swallower

fakir

STATISTICS

Within two weeks, I found more than 150 clubs, but this number is constantly increasing, which means that, based on the entire population of Hungary, approximately every 400th person practices some form of circus art, even if they are infants or just retired. The number of amateur aerial gymnasts alone is converging towards 6,000 people in Hungary.

The first reactions were very interesting, because they were extremely suspicious of the offered partner help. What do we have to give in return? How much does this mentoring cost? - was the most frequently asked question.

After clarifying that this programme was dreamed up by the Director General as a free and unilateral support, the next question came up, what exactly does this mentoring program consist of. I soon realized that it would have to come together in my head as well, what this partnership would actually look like. I had to constantly improvise and figure out, without additional financial resources, how we could build and operate partnership relationships most effectively with our existing resources.



COLLABORATION

It was seen that the clubs have completely different needs, requirements, and problems to be solved, not only by genre, but also by landscape unit. That is why it soon became clear that we will develop this mentoring program together with our mentees, adapting it to their needs.

In most cases, data reconciliations lasting a few minutes turned into conversations suitable for ten minutes of psychotherapy, so I practically flowed into the life of most of the mentored clubs like a fairy godmother. On the one hand, the openness and trust with which they showed me, which I obviously owed to the Circus, was very honorable, and on the other hand, it placed a great responsibility on me.



MENTORING MEETING

After the first data reconciliations, we held a mentoring meeting with the Director General in the framework of a conversation combined with a viewing of a circus performance, where the leaders of the mentored clubs came from all over the country, and after the performance, we had a pleasant and constructive discussion with the attendees.

After the first personal conversation, specific requests and ideas began to arrive. It was interesting that our mentees asked for absolutely achievable things and we received many ideas from them for future cooperation.



SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

To mention specifics; there is an acrobat club that expands its activities with aerial gymnastics. They asked for our help in rig assembly and also requested safety training regarding the suspensions. We were happy to receive the invitation, as tragic accidents resulting from suspensions have also occurred recently, even in professional circuses, so we have decided that in the future we will also provide free training in this direction to our mentees at the Baross Imre Artist Training Vocational School or the Budapest Academy of Circus Arts and Contemporary Dance.



MENTOR TABLES

Based on the idea of the Director General, we also prepared our mentor certificate tables, which we handed over to our mentees. In addition to the fact that they considered it a huge honor and proudly communicated on their social media platforms the fact that they had indeed become the official partners of the National Circus Arts Center and the Capital Grand Circus, this relationship also gave absolute legitimacy in some sports.



LEGITIMATION

For example, the case of highline sportsmen is special in Hungary. The vast majority of our forests are highly protected, and the local foresters are "terrible" guardians of them. These athletes take a long time to install and secure their equipment. Then, when the experience, the training, the adrenaline could finally come, the local forester appears and distracts them from the scene like criminals.

Our partnership gave them real legitimacy. As the leader of the mentoring programme, I officially contacted the forestry companies, we started a dialogue regarding which forests and where our mentees are allowed to train. At the same time, we provided highliners with the opportunity to practice in the winter at our own Circus training camp.



FREE CIRCUS TICKETS

Since we launched our mentoring programme before Christmas, several leaders asked to reward their best competitors with circus tickets. There were cases where the unexpected gift brought tears to the children's eyes. It was specifically experienced as an honor.



RELATIONSHIP WITH MENTEES

One of our equestrian acrobatic team asked us for a voltige harness for their new horse as mentoring help and for me to voltige with them again after many years... Well, this included the fact that the little bastards wanted to laugh at me and therefore I will ask for a dangerousness allowance from the Director General, but proudly I mean, I didn't bring shame to the Circus.

This also characterizes the relationship that I unintentionally established as a mentor programme leader with the leaders and members of the mentored clubs. If we want to give real help to our mentees, we have to get to know them closely and sometimes take part in their everyday life, difficulties and successes. We become close to each other unintentionally, which makes objective thinking very difficult. Although the zero point of the program was barely 4 months ago, I am slowly getting to know the members of the clubs one by one, not just their leaders. I meet them, I love them. I know their family background, their opportunities, their goals, their desires, the obstacles and opportunities they face. As we progress from partner to partner, the mentoring program becomes more difficult, as each club has faces, stories, and experiences and it is very difficult to remain objective.





ENTRY OF THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT INTO THE PROGRAMME

At the same time, our mentoring programme was included in the Regional Cultural Program of the National Cultural Institute under the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Innovation, so we had the opportunity to implement part of our mentoring program with the support of the Hungarian Government.

In addition to all of this, we also provide all our mentees with the opportunity for their leaders to take part in further training at the Baross Imre Artist Training Vocational High School or the Budapest Academy of Circus Arts and Contemporary Dance, to learn from highly qualified teachers and former circus artists, and thereby train the circus artists of the future even more efficiently and professionally.

We also had to dispel the misconception that only students with special abilities or only the offspring of old circus families are admitted to the artist academy. Thanks to the mentoring programme, more and more people in Hungary now know that with some talent, but above all with perseverance, courage and diligence, almost anyone can become an outstanding circus artist. We believe that values that our young people can experience through circus art, such as interdependence in a good sense, trust, togetherness, humility, respect and creative art will represent an ever greater value again. This is what we are working on and we are also learning by teaching our mentees this. Because helping is a privilege.

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