

Developing a circus classification system

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German wheel, clown

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Lyra, sling, rope, silks

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Agenda

- Why organize circus?
- Extant major circus organizational systems
- Questions to guide use of circus organizational systems
- Case study Gatewood System

Why organize circus?

- Create a comprehensive list
- Record physical cultural practices
- Encourage novel combinations and developments
- Provide common language and concepts
- Describe steps necessary to learn a skill
- As school curriculum, book organization, exhibit or show curation

Extant systems

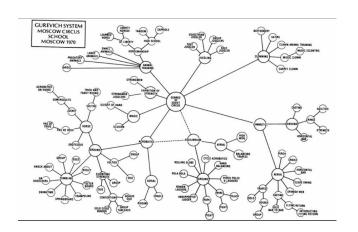
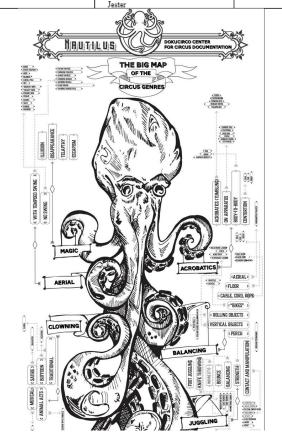
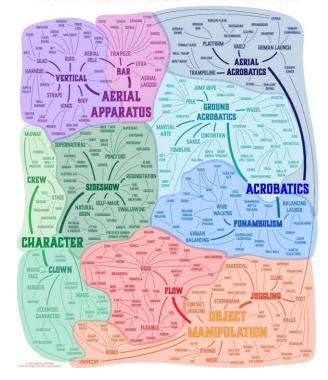


Table acrobutics Acrobatics on horses Balancing ladder On objects Acrobatics Trampoline Trampoline
Acrial cube Class Object Manipulation Washington State Washington Washington State Acrial cube Choice Acrial cube Chine Chin
Showman / Clowning Suite Contention Globe of Iron jaw Lang Clown Lang Clown Lang Clown Lang Clown Lang Clown Lang Clown Lang Language Lan
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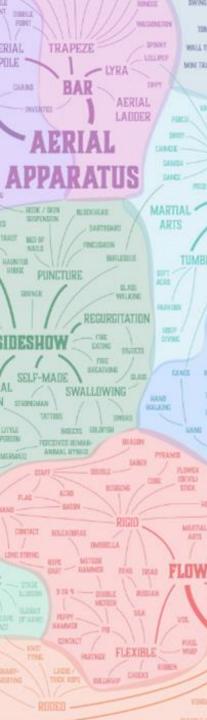
CIRCUS TECHNIQUE					
Equilibrium	Aerial activities	Aerobatie/Stunt			
Without accessories	Silks: split, sling	On the ground:			
Hand-to-hand (static)	Trampoline	Contortion			
With accessories	Perch	Dynamic handstand			
Bola	Rope: corde lisse (single, double, triple,	With accessories:			
Chairs	cloudswing)	Hoop			
Stilts	Flying trapeze	Chairs			
Unicycle	Static trapeze	Ladder			
Ladder	Washington trapeze	Russian bar			
Perch	Rings	Russian swing			
Rola bola	Straps	Chinese pole or mast			
High wire	Hoop	Teeterboard			
Tight rope		Springboard			
Manipulation	Circus actor	Trampoline			
Juggling	Clown	Bicycle "Corredores elasticos"			
Lasso	Theatrical:	Corredores elasticos			
Devil stick	Dance				
Diabolo	Mime				
Whip	Mask				
	Commedia dell'arte				



Category	Preliminary	Essential	Diversified
Juggling	Balancing objects	Toss juggling: balls, rings clubs	Gyroscopic Juggling: Devil sticks, Diablo, plate spinning, etc
Equilibristics	Headstands and hand balancing	Balancing: on rolling objects (unicycle, rolla bolla, etc), on "stilting" objects (stilts, unsuported ladder, etc) and human columns.	Rigging: Trapeze, horizontal bar, slackwire, tight wire, etc
Vaulting	Jumping	Turning the body along its long, medium and short axes	Catapults



System	Origin	Year	Goal(s)	Type of system
Gurevich System	Soviet Union	1950s-1970s	Basis for curriculum for Russian Circus School in 1950s-1970s	Pedagogical
CNAC System	France	1980s	Curriculum and basis of school pedagogy	Pedagogical
Circus school curriculum	International	N/A	Describe a school's pedagogy, interests, or organizational structure	Pedagogical
Hovey Burgess System	United States	1974	Uncover the "essence of circus" and a basis for teaching through analysis of movements that are universal to all circus performers (including animals)	Academic- practitioner
Bortoleto	Brazil	2017	Pedogogical for practitioners	Academic- practitioner
Dokucirco	Mexico	2016	Broadly categorize modern circus areas	Academic- practitioner
Gatewood	United States	2020-2023	Serve as a reference of all modern circus apparatus and skills; To aid circus practitioners in diversifying their skills	Academic- practitioner
Circus books	International	N/A	To organize the contents in the book	Implicit or explicit



Each system, so far:

- Developed in isolation
- Available only in language of origin / bound by national and cultural borders
- Authors were not aware of other systems at the time of development
- Reflects author bias and temporal and geographic perception of circus

- Opaque theoretical aims, undefined methodological practices
- Do not depict circus skill lineage
- Non-standard naming practices
- Western-centric (does not properly acknowledge contributions from Asia and Global South)

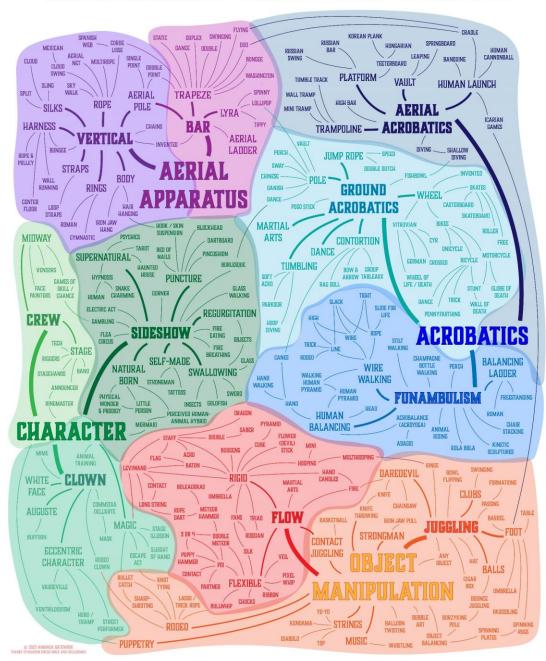
Questions to guide a reader

- What is the purpose of the system?
- How are groups classified?
- What is included or excluded by a classification?
- How are relationships represented?
- Is the system flexible?

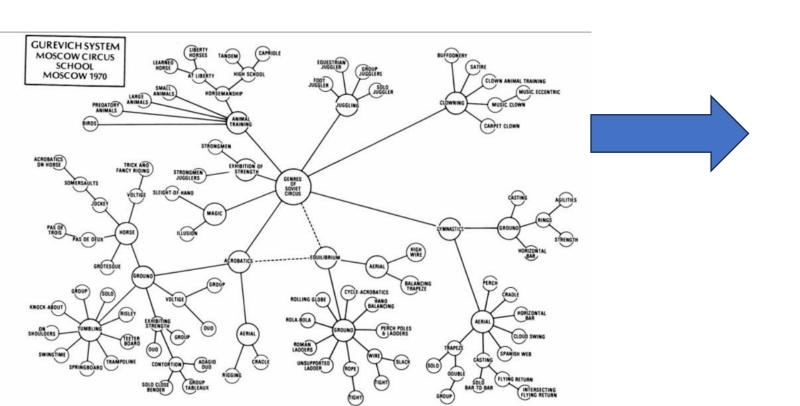
"All models are wrong, but some are useful."

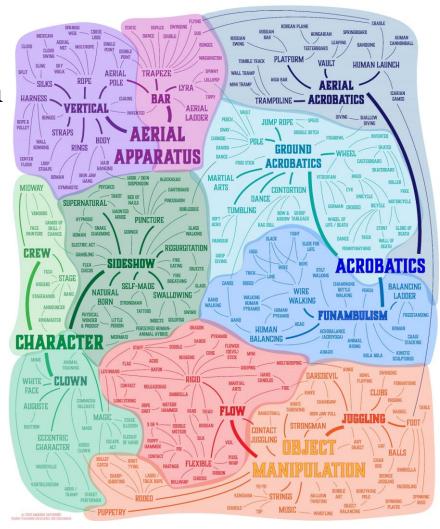
- George Box, statistician

Case study



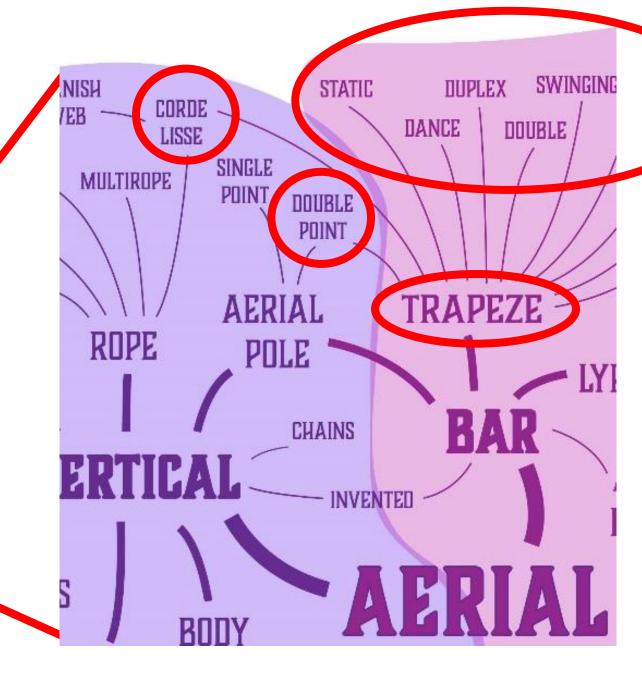
- What is the purpose of the system?
 - Usability & recreational circus student education
 - Update Gurevich system





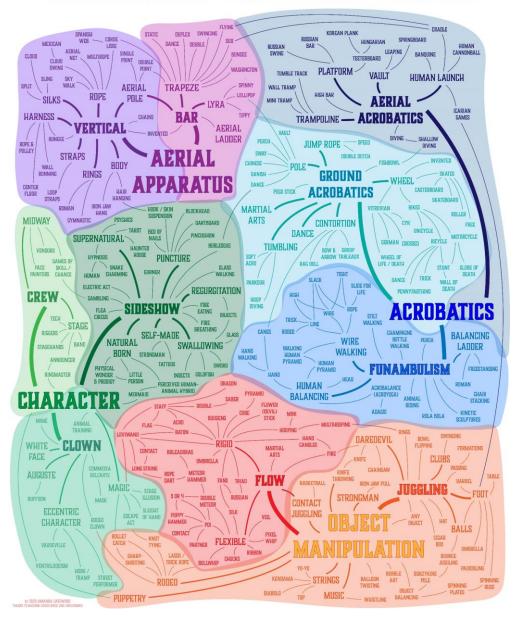
- How are groups classified?
 - Visual similarity of apparatus
 - Common movement vocabulary



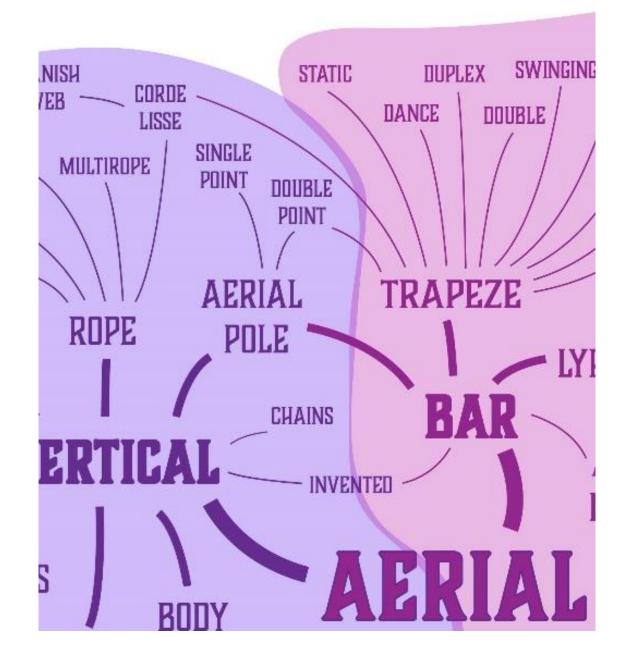


- What is included in a classification?
 - Comprehensive (>300)
 - Major areas:
 - Aerial apparatus
 - Vertical apparatus
 - Bar apparatus
 - Acrobatics
 - Aerial acrobatics
 - Ground acrobatics
 - Funambulism

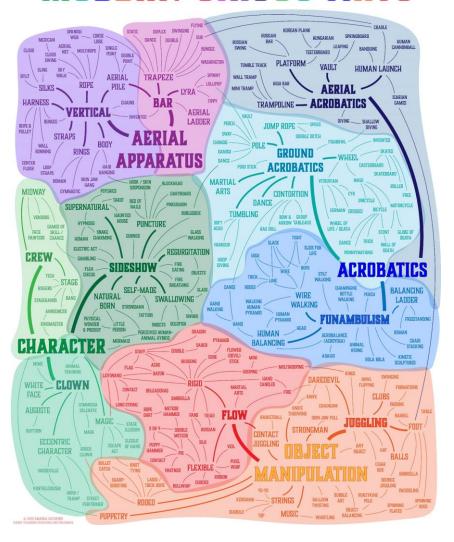
- Object manipulation
 - Juggling
 - Flow
- Character
 - Clown
 - Sideshow
 - Crew

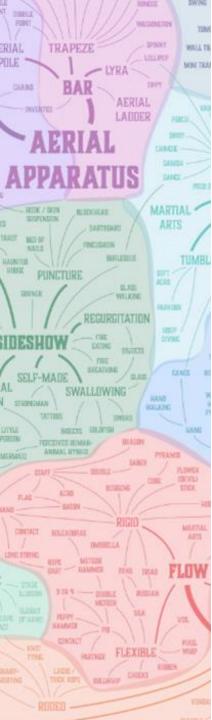


- How are relationships represented?
 - Parent child
 - Spatial
 - Multiple relationships represented
 - Font sizing



- Is the system flexible?
 - Evolved between 2020-2023
 - Developed through
 - Other circus systems
 - Websites (such as FlowToys)
 - Crowd-sourced (Circademics, Madison Circus Space)
 - Maintained by a single researcher
 - Printing and distribution
 - Already quite cluttered





Questions to guide circus research

- What is the purpose of the system?
- How are groups classified?
- What is included in a classification? (and what is missing?)
- How are relationships represented?
- Is the system flexible?

Critical examination of our purposes and uses of circus classification help them to be used in meaningful ways



Citations

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