

CIRQUE ÉLOIZE

SALOON: A MUSICAL ACROBATIC ADVENTURE



 **STATE** | THEATRE
NEW JERSEY

KEYNOTES



Picture this: Gold has been discovered in California. The intercontinental railroad is under construction. The American West is booming. In the middle of the desert, a town comes to life. A saloon opens its doors. A place to gather and share tales, it quickly becomes a setting for stories of all kinds.

In *Saloon: A Musical Acrobatic Adventure*, these colorful characters come together in a Wild West spectacle of music, dance, acrobatics, and comedy.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Based in Montreal, Canada, Cirque Éloize (pronounced el-WAHZ) has been a leader in contemporary circus arts since 1993. They have produced ten original productions, with nearly 4,000 performances in over 440 cities and 40 countries. The company has won many awards and honors in both circus and theater, including four Drama Desk Award nominations for their Off-Broadway productions, *Typo* and *Rain*.

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State Theatre New Jersey—creating extraordinary experiences through the power of live performance.

ABOUT THE SHOW

Saloon: A Musical Acrobatic Adventure is a lively, entertaining show set in the Wild West. A colorful cast of characters tell a story of love and rivalry, as the men seek to win the favor of the pretty saloon girl, Belle. But instead of fighting it out with guns, they try to outdo each other by showing off their circus skills: juggling, pole climbing, and acrobatics. In addition to a variety of circus arts, the production incorporates music, dance, puppetry, mime, and lighting and sound effects...everything except dialogue!

THE CAST



The Lover
ALASTAIR DAVIES



The Player
JÉRÔME HUGO



Belle
JUSTINE MÉTHÉ
CROZAT



The Stranger
FÉLIX POULIOT



The Cowboy
JOHAN PRYTZ



The Sheriff
JÉRÉMY SAINT-JEAN
PICARD



The Owner
JULES TRUPIN



The Kid
SHENA TSCHOFEN

THE VULTURES (THE BAND):



SOPHIE BEAUDET



BEN NESRALLAH



TREVOR POOL



CREATIVE TEAM

Creative Director
JEANNOT PAINCHAUD

Director
EMMANUEL GUILLAUME

Music Director, Composer, and Arranger
ÉLOI PAINCHAUD

Acrobatic Designer and Head Trainer
NICOLAS BOIVIN-GRAVEL

Choreographer
ANNIE ST-PIERRE

Set and Props Designer
FRANCIS FARLEY

Costume Designer
SARAH BALLEUX

Makeup Designer
VIRGINIE BACHAND

Lighting Designer
FRANCIS HAMEL

Soundscape Designer
COLIN GAGNÉ

Associate Producer
PASCAL AUGER

The Wild West (also known as the Old West) refers to the events, people, and culture of the U.S. west of the Mississippi River during a time of rapid settlement by non-native people. It covers a time period from the end of the Civil War up until the end of the 19th century.

When we hear the name “Wild West,” most of us think of cowboys, outlaws, gunfights, and lawlessness. In truth, the Wild West was populated with strangers from many backgrounds, countries, and nationalities who came in search of opportunity. Several significant events contributed to what became one of the greatest migrations in human history.



SALOONS

The Wild West saloon was a bar—a gathering place for fur trappers, lumberjacks, cowboys, soldiers, gold prospectors, businessmen, and gamblers. In addition to alcohol, some saloons might offer food, lodging, gambling, or live entertainment, such as dancing girls, piano players, and theatrical skits.

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

The discovery of gold in California in 1848 set off a wild Gold Rush the following year. Arriving in covered wagons, clipper ships, and on horseback, some 300,000 migrants, known as “forty-niners”

(for the year 1849) staked claims to land around the river, where they used pans to extract gold from silt deposits. They came not just from the U.S., but also from Asia, Latin America, Europe, and Australia, dramatically reshaping the demographics of California.

AT THE SHOW:
Look for the gold miners.



White and Chinese prospectors at Auburn Ravine in the Sierra Nevada foothills in California, c. 1852

TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

In 1862, Congress passed the Pacific Railway Act, authorizing the building of railroad that would extend the existing railway network in the eastern U.S. all the way to the west coast. Making travel faster, safer, and cheaper, the transcontinental railway opened up vast areas of the region to settlement and economic development.

Building the 1,912-mile railway across vast plains and through high mountains required enormous feats of engineering and thousands of laborers, many from China. The project was completed at Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 1869, when the last spike (made of gold) was driven in at a grand ceremony.



The “Last Spike” celebration at Promontory Summit, UT, May 10, 1869.

photo: A.J. Russell

AT THE SHOW:
Look for the railroad workers.

THE HOMESTEAD ACT

Through the Homestead Act of 1862, the federal government gave away millions of acres of land (about 10% of the country’s entire landmass), bringing about the rapid settlement of territories in the West and Midwest. All U.S. citizens, including women, African Americans, freed slaves, and immigrants, were eligible to apply for a homestead of 160 acres of land. Homesteaders were required to settle and farm the land for at least five years.



Homesteaders, Dunn County, ND



AERIALS

In aerials, the circus artist performs acrobatic moves on an object suspended in the air. They pose, hang, fall, swing, and spiral their bodies into and out of various positions.

In *Saloon*, you will see two types of aerials: a large hoop called an **AERIAL RING**, and long pieces of cotton or nylon ribbons called **AERIAL STRAPS**.



ACROBATICS

Several types of acrobatic techniques are used in *Saloon*. In **TOSS THE GIRL**, two or three performers throw and catch a female acrobat as if she were a doll. **HAND TO HAND** features two acrobats; the flyer, who does handstands on the hands of the other performer, called the base.



CYR WHEEL

One of the circus arts featured in *Saloon* is the **CYR WHEEL** (pronounced SEER), a metal ring that looks like a giant hula-hoop. The performer stands inside the wheel, grasping the rim, then does acrobatic stunts on the wheel as it rolls and

spins. It looks as if the performer and the wheel are dancing with each other. The Cyr wheel is named after Daniel Cyr, one of the founders of Cirque Éloize. Daniel designed the apparatus around 1996 and won a prize for his performance on the wheel at a Canadian circus festival in 2003. Since then, his invention has become a feature of most circus shows.

TEETERBOARD

A teeterboard looks a lot like a seesaw, and works the same way. A performer stands on one end; when another performer jumps on the other end, it launches the first performer into the air. Up in the air, they can do tricks such as flips, twists, and somersaults.



CHINESE POLE

The Chinese pole is a vertical pole on which the performer climbs, slides down, and holds poses.



OBJECT MANIPULATION

In *Saloon*, you will see several types of object manipulation: circus skills that involve tossing, spinning, or balancing objects in creative ways.



JUGGLING

Objects—such as balls, bean bags, rings, etc.—are thrown or tossed into the air and caught. Skilled jugglers can manipulate many objects at once, and toss them in complex patterns.



Many circus arts grew out of everyday objects that people used in their work. Two acts in *Saloon* feature familiar tools used by cowboys to control animals, such as cattle.

TRICK ROPING

The lasso is a long rope that is tied into a loop and thrown around the animal's neck. Cowboys developed fancy tricks to show off their roping skills; eventually roping grew into a competitive sport and a popular entertainment.



HAT MANIPULATION

The performer does tricks such as rolling the hat up and down different parts of the body, spinning it, or throwing and catching it in amusing ways.

WHIPCRACKING

Another cowboy tool, the bullwhip, is used in whipcracking exhibitions. The performer holds the long leather whip by the handle and lashes it using strong arm motions. During its arc through the air, a section of the whip moves faster than the speed of sound, creating a small sonic boom—a sharp “cracking” sound.



THE MUSIC

Live music is an important part of *Saloon*, and is played non-stop throughout the performance. You will hear traditional folk songs as well as original music composed for the show.

The roots of American folk music are in the Appalachian Mountains, with music brought to this country by Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and English immigrants. African-American music—blues, spirituals, and work songs—are another important influence. Originally, folk songs weren't written down, but were shared by passing them down from musician to musician, generation to generation. For this reason, the creators of many folk songs are unknown. It also means the songs have evolved over time, changing with each person who plays or sings them.

Listen for these three songs in *Saloon*:

"In the Pines" ("Where Did You Sleep Last Night?")

This traditional American folk song dates back to at least the 1870s, and is believed to be Southern Appalachian in origin. There are many versions, with different lyrics. It has been recorded by musicians in many genres, including blues, rock, country, pop, bluegrass, and folk.

LISTEN: Nirvana performs "In the Pines"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpFuH8vcXbw

"Take This Hammer"

This is an example of a work song, used by prisoners (mostly African American) who were forced to perform manual labor in the mines, railroad camps, brickyards, farms, and road-building crews of the American South. The prisoners would sing these songs as they worked, with the beat of the music helping them keep the rhythm with their hammers.

LISTEN: Leadbelly performs "Take This Hammer"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCCuQqj8zi0

"Misirlou"

Immigrants came to the American West from all over the world. This traditional song is believed to have its origins in the Eastern Mediterranean region. The title translates as "Egyptian Girl."

LISTEN: A 1927 Greek version of "Misirlou"
www.youtube.com/watch?v=LW6qGy3RtwY



INSTRUMENTS IN THE SHOW

The band in *Saloon* plays a variety of instruments that help create the feel of the Wild West. In addition to the ones described below, some of the other instruments you'll hear include **PIANO, DRUM, HARMONICA, and SPOONS.**

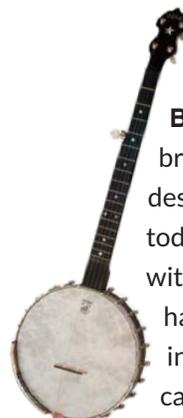


GUITAR - One of the main instrument in American folk music. Its origins date back to the Renaissance. The hole in the middle helps give it a fuller, louder sound.

VIOLIN or FIDDLE - The smallest and highest member of the symphony orchestra's string family, it is also used in jazz and traditional music. Fiddlers from Scotland, Ireland, and England have had a strong influence on American folk music.



» **VIOLIN and FIDDLE** are different names for the same instrument. In folk, country, and other traditional music, it's called a fiddle.



BANJO - The banjo was invented by Africans brought to this country as slaves. It is similar in design to instruments still found in Africa today. In its simplest form, it is basically a drum with strings stretched across the top and a handle attached. The banjo is most often used in country, folk, Irish, and bluegrass music. It can have four, five, or six strings.



GET IN CHARACTER!

In *Saloon*, there is singing, but no speaking. What would the characters tell us if they could speak?

Choose one of the characters from the list below. Do some research to find out a little about what life would have been like for this person. Then create a **MONOLOGUE** (a solo speech) for this character. Have your character tell us: Where did they come from? Why did they come out West? What is their life like here in the West? Write your monologue in the voice of the person, so that he or she is speaking directly to the audience.

Perform your monologue for your class. Then let your classmates ask your character questions. When you answer the questions, continue to speak in the character's own voice.

Cowboy/Cowgirl
Piano Player
Railroad Worker

Sheriff
Saloon Owner
Barber

Saloon Girl
Gold Miner

EXTRA CREDIT: perform your monologue in costume!

FACT CHECKING

The American western frontier has inspired books, movies, musicals, games—even ballets! But how much of what we think we know about the Old West is really true? How much of it is myth? Find out whether these common beliefs about the Old West are fact or fiction.

1. The first gold rush in America was in California.
2. Cowboys originated in America.
3. Most cowboys were white and born in America.
4. All cowboys wore cowboy hats and carried guns.
5. Settlers were constantly being attacked by Native Americans.
6. The western frontier was a violent, lawless place, with lots of shootouts and bank robberies.

WRITE A REVIEW

Imagine you are a critic for the school newspaper. Write a review of *Saloon: A Musical Acrobatic Adventure*. Use detailed descriptions to paint a picture with words so your readers can imagine what the show was like. Here are some questions to get you started:

- Who were the performers?
- What happened in the show?
- What did the costumes, sets, and lighting look like?
- What was the music like? What instruments did they play?

- What was your favorite part of the show? Why?
- How did the show make you feel?
- Would you recommend people go to see this show?

SHARE YOUR REVIEW WITH US!

Send it to:

State Theatre New Jersey Education Dept.
40 Livingston Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
education@StateTheatreNJ.org

THINGS TO WATCH AND LISTEN FOR

There is no dialogue in *Saloon*. Instead, it tells the story through different theater techniques that make the show really entertaining. Here are some things to watch and listen for during the performance.

CIRCUS STUNTS



MUSIC

DANCE

PUPPETRY - Look for a funny scene in the show with a large puppet. Notice how the performers work as a team, moving the different parts of the puppet to bring it to life.



SET DESIGN - Notice how the performers use parts of the set in different ways. For example: the chandelier becomes the aerial wheel.

COSTUME DESIGN

SOUND EFFECTS

LIGHTING EFFECTS

Pay attention to how each element helps the audience understand:

- when and where the story is taking place.
- who the characters are.
- what is happening.



AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Going to see a show at the theater is not

the same as going to a movie or watching TV. The performers will be right there with you and the rest of the audience, which makes it very exciting! It also means you have a special responsibility to respect the performers and the rest of the audience so everyone can enjoy the show. Make sure to follow these rules:

- If you have a phone, make sure you turn it off before the show starts. Keep it off until the show is over.
- During the show, give the performers all your attention. Stay in your seat and don't talk.
- Taking pictures or recording the show is not permitted.
- Don't eat or drink in the theater. And no chewing gum, please!



RESOURCES

WEBSITES

Cirque Éloize

www.cirque-eloize.com

Saloon promotional video, featuring comments from the creative team

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NI_GuIZSdk

The Cyr wheel

entertainment.howstuffworks.com/arts/circus-arts/cyr-wheel.htm

Daniel Cyr performs on the Cyr wheel

www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFQ33ruPI_Q

United States History for Kids: Wild West

www.american-historama.org/1881-1913-maturation-era/wild-west.htm

PBS' *American Experience: American Frontiers* explores major events in America's Westward expansion.

www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/wild-west

Westward Expansion Web Sites

besthistorysites.net/american-history/westward-expansion

BOOKS

The Old West, by Stephen G. Hyslop.

National Geographic, 2015. A comprehensive guide to all forms of dance. Includes questions for discussion.

Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier, by Ray Allen Billington and Martin Ridge. University of New Mexico Press, abridged 6th edition, 2001.

MUSIC

Cirque Éloize: *Saloon* soundtrack.

VIDEO

America's Wild West. DVD boxed set of the 2014 PBS series.



EDUCATION & OUTREACH SUPPORTERS

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