

Thomas Vaccaro

Artistic Director – Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts [PACA]

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PROFILE

Thomas Vaccaro is the founder and Artistic Director for the non-profit Organization, The Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts. Matriculated from the National Circus School of Montreal, Thomas is trained to coach 17 different circus disciplines to all age groups in a recreational, advanced, social, or production setting. His primary loves when it comes to circus are Cyr Wheel, Aerial Acrobatics, Flow Arts, and a study and practice of movement in general. Since 2014 Thomas has been the Artist in Residence of Market Hall Performing Arts Centre in Downtown Peterborough and has used his residency to produce/direct original full length circus arts productions, host social programming for marginalized groups, and proudly coach many students. He is an avid believer that circus is an accessible art to all peoples, and takes joy from helping others find their flow within themselves. His recent work reflects interpersonal relationships of family, recently having performed alongside his non-circus artist husband at the Ontario Contemporary Circus Arts Festival in 2019 & his adopted son as part of Public Energy's Emergency #22 in 2018; His family was also the subject of a documentary by filmmaker LA Alfonso entitled Circus Boy at the Reframe Film Festival in January of 2020. In his spare time he enjoys (carefully) practicing on his skateboard, watching anime, and practicing archery.

CIRCUS COACH: 2013 - Current Curricula

- Mentorship to Protégé 16 year-old Ethan Hinshelwood since 2017. Duo performances to-date include a fire and aerial showcase for PARN's Camp Fyrefly, A Fire/Aerial/Cyr Wheel act for Market Hall Performing Arts Centre's 20th Anniversary, and an Acrobatic/Rope/Cyr Wheel Duo for Public Energy's Emergency #22 entitled Parallels. Ethan has since been accepted into The National Circus School's Summer Program for Preparatory training for future students, and been adopted unofficially adopted as Thomas' son. Their relationship was the subject of the 2020 Reframe Film Festival Documentary, Circus Boy by Canadian filmmaker, LA Alfonso.
- Coaching of the Advanced Youth Program at the Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts. The youth have since performed their first solo routines for the public in February 2nd's showcase at Market Hall, "Circus Idol," before a panel of professional judges in the circus industry. The group has also created a 20 minute showcase to go on tour in the local area at many local schools in June (Prince of Wales, Armour Heights, Peterborough Square, & the Lakefield Fairy and Dragon Festival.) Half the funds accrued from the tour go to the students for their college education. Their most recent work together was in *Circus Screamlnd, 2019*, a show sponsored by The United Way.
- Social Programming for marginalized youth and individuals on the autism scale. Awarded a grant from the City of Peterborough and the Ontario Arts Council, Thomas is Co-leading a year long social circus program with youth at risk thru Peterborough Youth Services, and concluded a research project during Covid-19 with an autistic student seeking to create circus lighting atmospheres.
- Lead Director for Creativity Circus Camp for youth ages 9-14 in Market Hall Performing Arts Centre since 2015. Has included 2 March Break Camps, and 7 Summer Camps. Students present an end of week showcase for their families, and have made circus adaptations of classic movies, such as Mary Poppins, The Jungle Book, and Nightmare Before Christmas. Students are of various skill levels and learn Acrobatics, Balance, Aerial arts, Acting, and Object Manipulation.
- Private Cyr Wheel Coach to Taryn Walsh and Private Lyra Coach to Avery Packman, both provincial first place competitive dancers with their respective circus dance routines in 2018.
- Circus Consultant to private institution, Lakefield College for their production of *Chicago* in 2019, and *The Greatest Showman* in 2018.

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR –

Paris in Ashes, 2012

- A 10 minute fire dance piece telling the story of a widowed soldier's wife in World War II, whom as the city of Paris burns down around her, finds the soul of her husband in a living statue. Makeup provided by Facesby2, Dance Choreography by DeeJay Dassylva, Fire Dance Choreography by Victoria Wood. Performed as Part of Public Energy's Emergency #20 Alley Waltz.

Circus Dreamland, 2014-2015

- Thomas Directed and starred in this original dream-themed surreal production as part of his graduation requirement from The National Circus School of Montreal, earning the highest grade in his graduating class. featuring Hoop Dance by Tegan Moss and Tessa Nasca, Breakdance by Conrad Jane, Fire and Puppets by Victoria Wood, Aerial Choreography by Opal Elchuk, Special guest performer Mark Segal on Aerial Rope, With Patricia Thorne on Lighting design, Stage Management, AND acting as a lead role. The story follows Jack thru his dreams as he goes through an existential dream crisis of identity, with phenomenal projection by Lester Alfonso. The show sold out in its debut performance at Market Hall Performing Arts Centre.

Circus Stellar, 2015-2016

- The space-themed sophomore production of the Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts, again directed by Thomas. Featured artists from recreational classes in their performing debut, as well as youth from social circus programs. Patricia Thorne, Lester Alfonso, again return with lighting and stage management, and the show also featured champion BattleRobot Designer, Jason Ribeiro, forging the remote-controlled lead starring role, The Sovereign Vagabond, as it journeys through space. Special guest headliner from the The National Circus School & Cirque Du Soleil, Justin Dale on Cyr Wheel made the finale of this show truly memorable.

Circus Fusion, 2016

- Directed by Thomas, A week in Market Hall that featured workshops in collaboration with other local community groups and organizations, with the goal of combining circus into other mediums. Groups included The Peterborough Poetry Collective, The Kawartha Artists Gallery Studio, The New Canadians Centre, and had special guest circus instructors provide lessons to the public. The week culminated in a showcase of performances for the public in Market Hall Performing Arts Centre.

Fanciful Fables and Tall Tales; A Series of Silly Circus Stories, 2017

- Co-directed with Opal Elchuk. A fairy-tale themed production, featuring a diverse age range of local performers, including the debut performances of 6 year-old Constance Thorne on Aerial Silk, 13 year-old Ethan Hinshelwood on Cyr Wheel, and recreational aerial students Lucy Lavoie, Abigail Stanton, Abby Vasey, & Lexi Mills. Adult students from recreational classes under Thomas' tutelage were able to choreograph their own routines for the very first time with minimal input.

Circus Idol, 2018

- Organized, Directed, and Produced by Thomas. Seven Youth aged 11-14 in a showcase of their first solo circus routines before a panel of judges in Market Hall Performing Arts Centre who gave public and private critiques of their performance. Students were prepared as though they were creating routines for the National Circus School of Montreal, and as such, workshop days were arranged with local special effects makeup designers Facesby2, as well as stage lighting workshops with Patricia Thorne in Market Hall Performing Arts Centre. Disciplines performed were Lyra, Aerial Silk, Cyr Wheel, Fire, and Acting. Winner was Riddick MacHart with his acting piece "Make 'em Laugh" from Singing in the Rain.

Circus Scremland, 2019

- Co-directed with Opal Elchuk, featured the youth and adult student bodies of The Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts in an original story of a girl who wanders into a haunted house. Incorporated scripts and acting for the first time in a PACA production, written by Thomas, an original aerial puppet designed by Thomas, and the first ever incorporation of Fire and Cyr Wheel together with a fire ballet.

Competitive –

Maitres Du Feu in Montréal: Placed 9th out of 45 National Fire Dance Performers, 2013

Public Performance (Non-Director)

Public Energy:

- Fire Dancer, Broken Down Circus, Emergency #19; 2011
- Aerial Acrobat, Creatures of Flight, Erring on the Mount, 2013
- Model and Bubble Dancer, Wearable Art Fashion Show, 2015
- Fire Creature, Elements, 2017-2018
- Aerial Rope & Cyr Wheel, Parallels, Emergency #22, 2018

- Fire & Trapeze, Beautiful Tango, Aer Time, 2017
- Fire and Laughing, Aerial Canoe, 2019
- Divergent Dances with Brandy Leary, 2018

EXAMPLES OF CONTRACTED PERFORMANCE – (Contracted thru The PyroFlys, Uncommon Entertainment, or The Peterborough Academy of Circus Arts)

- Aerial Performance, Justin Bieber, 2016
- Featured Fire Performer, Front Gate of Canada’s Wonderland, 2015-2016
- Stunt Performer, Universal Studios of Orlando Florida, 2013
- Fire Performance, Royal Botanical Gardens, 2014
- Fire Performance, Rogers Cup by National Bank, 2015
- Cyr Wheel, Big TO Circus, 2018
- Pyroterra Glow, Microsoft Presents Gwen Stefani, 2017
- Aerial Acrobatics, Taste of Downtown/Peterborough Pulse, 2016-2018

GRANTS & AWARDS

- Arts Education Projects, \$10,325, Ontario Arts Council, 2016 for Social Programming with the Youth Emergency Shelter, and \$8,900 for Artist in Communities Projects 2020.
- City of Peterborough Community Project and Investment Grants, total sum \$25,000 from 2016-2020 for organizational operations.
- Peterborough Economic Development, \$5,000, Business Grant for the PyroFlys, 2015
- Theatre Trent - \$1550 from 2015-2016 for Circus Dreamland and Circus Stellar.
- “Where’s Our Lunch?” People’s choice Award, Runner up, November 7th, 2016
- Appreciation Award, Peterborough Multisport Club 2016-2017
- “House of the Year,” Canada’s Wonderland, Front Gate 2016