



# Entertaining Ideas

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## Entertainment: Cirque Style

By Anthony Ferri, ESIG Head

Ira Gershwin coined the phrase the “show must go on...but not past 11pm”<sup>1</sup> This phrase, often misquoted without the end, applies to theatrical entertainment. Theatrical entertainment is now a multi-media experience. Although we live in a time of convergent technologies, live theatrical entertainment should be of interest to us. Cirque du Soleil’s KÀ in Las Vegas is an example of this type of experience.

Cirque du Soleil is a Montreal, Quebec based entertainment company founded in 1984 by a group of 20 street performing acrobats, clowns, and gymnasts, and has grown into a multi-billion dollar enterprise employing over 4000 people globally. Based in the traveling circus paradigm, the original

Cirque productions were touring shows. The first permanent Cirque production, *Mystere*, was created in 1993 at the Treasure Island Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

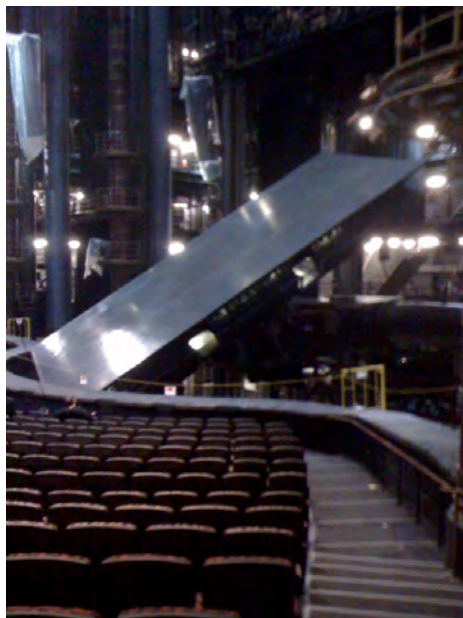
KÀ opened in 2005. The KÀ theater has no stage in the traditional sense. Instead the artists perform on an interacting system of seven moving lifts and decks. The largest of these is the Sand Cliff Deck and Gantry Lift system, 25’ by 50’ by 6’ and weighs roughly 80,000 pounds.

As indicated on their website “KÀ uses acrobatic performances, the thrills and action of martial arts techniques from all over the world, plus innovations in puppetry and multimedia to tell the epic tale of twins on a perilous journey to fulfill their shared destiny.”<sup>2</sup> For some of the battle scenes on the Sand Cliff Deck, high speed winches are used to lift performers with the capability of speeds of 14 feet per second. Performers in the show are tethered to safety lines and carefully aided by riggers.

Most people define entertainment as a function of what they have seen or experienced. The Entertainment Studies scholar is pluralistic and studies all types of entertainment. Theatrical presentations like KÀ use projected video and the latest engineering technology to entertain. Multi-media productions should be of interest to those of us interested in the study of entertainment.



Photograph: Cirque du Soleil



Photograph: Anthony Ferri

### Heads Up!

The Journalist in Popular Culture website has just been redone and for the first time the IJPC Database -- previously restricted to only IJPC Associates -- will now be available to everyone on the web. That means any ESIG member can access the database FOR NOTHING and search all 75,000 entries by year, type, title, author, reference (country, etc.) and comments (occupation, summaries, names, etc.). Check it out!

<http://www.ijpc.org/>



Cirque continued on page 2

# One-Year Position in Public Relations & Advertising



The Department of Journalism and Multimedia Arts (JMA) at Duquesne University is seeking a Visiting Instructor with primary responsibilities in teaching Public Relations and Advertising courses for the 2010-11 academic year. We are a growing and active Department looking for a person with a minimum of a Master's degree and demonstrable and relevant industry experience. A Ph.D. is preferred.

All faculty members are expected to be excellent teachers and mentors. Teaching load for this particular position will be four courses per semester. Salary and benefits are negotiable.

Applicants should send letter of application, c.v., and names and contact information for three references to Dr. Robert Bellamy at [bellamy@duq.edu](mailto:bellamy@duq.edu).

Screening of materials begins June 1 and will continue until position is filled.

Duquesne University was founded in 1878 by its sponsoring religious community, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. Duquesne University is Catholic in its mission and ecumenical in spirit. Motivated by its Catholic identity, Duquesne values equality of opportunity both as an educational institution and as an employer. ★

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Photograph: Cirque du Soleil

As you skip through your iPhone or other device viewing old films or current videos, it worth noting that entertainment venues exist outside of the handheld device. In fact, live theatrical shows should be the subject of entertainment scholarship. It's time our new discipline examine one of the roots of contemporary entertainment. The shows by Cirque du Soleil, or any other multimedia theatrical staging, bridges that gap.

1 Ira Gershwin, Lyrics on Several Occasions. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959, p. 149.

2 <http://www.mgmgrand.com/entertainment/ka-cirque-du-soleil-show.aspx> ★

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# Trending Topics: A Roundup of Research and News in Entertainment Studies

By Carole Bell, Webmaster

Trending Topics is a new feature of Entertaining Ideas Newsletter. It is intended to highlight some of the most interesting and buzzworthy recent scholarly and industry research in the field of entertainment studies, including a wide variety of popular culture including film, television, music, and their intersection with social media.

## Spotlight: Of Twitter and Television: How New/Social Media is Saving Old

One of the most discussed and often lamented outcomes of the technological innovations of the past few decades has been the fragmentation of television audiences. With the proliferation of entertainment options provided by cable television, satellite, the internet and DVR, even leading network television programs now reach vastly smaller audiences. Within this landscape, the latest research offers some surprising news. Rather than further eroding audience share, some researchers now wonder whether social media networks like Facebook and Twitter may be their savior, enhancing the experience rather than detracting from it and thereby regaining lost TV viewers and increasing their loyalty.

As a result of this symbiotic relationship, media analysts like James Poniewozick

## People report spending 3 1/2 hours a day on the computer and TV at the same time

and David Carr argue, old media, television in particular is experiencing somewhat of a resurgence. One sign -- the 2010 Super Bowl was the most watched American television show ever, with an audience that exceeded even the series finale of *M\*A\*S\*H* (Poniewozick).

### Key findings:

- Nielsen reports that the amount of time people spend multitasking involving computer and television has increased significantly recently ("TV, computer multitasking up," 2010). In fact, the company said that on average, people reported spending three and a half hours using computer and television at the same time in December 2009, just over an hour more than they did only six months earlier
- Event programming in particular may be reaping the benefits—mainstays like the Oscars, Grammys and Superbowl have historically attracted huge but often begrudging audiences frustrated with their length and slow pace. As people gain an ever-increasing number of options and attention spans shorten, these events have tended to suffer declining ratings. This year, however, these events have seen improvements in their ratings as people watch, discuss, and dish, simultaneously observing and taking part in the experience via Twitter, Facebook and on newer, specifically event oriented social networks sites like Hot Potato <http://hotpotato.com/>.

### Related--Read more about the Intersection of Social Media & Television:

- For details on the Nielsen study, visit the NielsenWire blog: <http://bit.ly/dzHKld>

### For analysis, see:

- Talking Back to Your TV, Incessantly by David Carr <http://nyti.ms/aA5EXT>
- Twitter and TV: How Social Media Is Helping Old Media by James Poniewozick <http://bit.ly/b3fvnR>

### Superbowl Advertising

The Superbowl always attracts a great deal of attention for its advertising, but the



spotlight was particularly hot this January as many observers talked about controversial social themes that seemed to be particularly prevalent among this year's commercials. In keeping with the Nielsen findings about computer and television multi-tasking, social networks played an important role in generating discussion around what some now call the "brand bowl." Time magazine compiled an online database of this year's ads and its television critic James Poniewozick provides some analysis of what it might all mean:

- Best and Worst Super Bowl Ads 2010: The Good, the Bad and the (Misogynistically) Ugly-- <http://bit.ly/d82n6x>

### Other Quick Bits of Interest to Entertainment Scholars

- As a follow-up to the article on Learning from Fiction, it seems scholars in a variety of disciplines are finding much to learn from in the HBO series *The Wire*. Slate has the story: <http://www.slate.com/id/2245788/>

### Buzz Back [or Talk Back]:

Do you have comments, suggestions or tips about new research? We need to hear from you. If you stumble on a compelling study that might be of interest to your peers, please e-mail us at [entstudies@gmail.com](mailto:entstudies@gmail.com) or send a message to @EntStudies on Twitter.

### References

TV, computer multitasking up. (2010, March 22). Chicago Sun Times.

## Congrats on your pubs & awards!

- Krakowiak, K. M., & Tsay, M. (in press). The role of moral disengagement in the enjoyment of real and fictional characters. *International Journal of Arts and Technology*.
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- Woo, C. W., Kim, J. K., Nichols, C., & Zheng, L. (2010). International sports commentary frame and entertainment: A cross-cultural analysis of commentary differences for World Series broadcasts. *International Journal of Sports Communication*, 3, 240-255.
- Yates, B. L. (2010). Healing a nation: An Analysis of Bruce Springsteen's "The Rising." *The Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 22(1), 32-49.
- **Carly McKenzie & Cynthia Nichols** won the SSCA Bostrom award for their paper "Determining Persuasive Effects Political Communication: An Analysis of Presidential Campaign Videos." This was the top student paper award at SSCA.
- **Mina Tsay** will receive a Promising Professor award at the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication's national conference in Denver. The AEJMC Mass Communication & Society Division and Graduate Education Interest Group will honor the best and brightest teachers during the annual Promising Professor Awards Panel & Workshop on Friday, August 6, where Mina Tsay will present her teaching philosophy and ways she actively incorporates it in the classroom.
- **Brad Yates** received a certificate of Merit-Potpourri Category-Public Relations Council of Alabama (2009) for Media Training Seminar-Southeast Dairy Association, Inc., Strategies, Solutions, & Logistics for Effective Media Communications with **Dr. Brigitta R. Brunner**.★

**AEJMC will be here before you know it.  
If you have a paper or panel that you want  
people to know about, e-mail us.  
We may feature it in the summer  
edition of *Entertaining Ideas*.**

**See you in Denver!**

**AEJMC**

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