



**FLYING  
FRUIT FLY  
CIRCUS**

**CIRCA**

# **NATIONAL TRAINING PROJECT**

**Meet the Trainers**

1 – 12 JULY 2024

Albury NSW



# MEET THE TRAINERS

## **ALICE MUNTZ** – *Static Trapeze, Diabolo, Hula Hoops (Circa)*

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Alice joined the Flying Fruit Fly Circus when she was eight years old. During her ten years at Fruit Flies she performed in a number of productions and was involved in workshops, teaching and a technical traineeship at the neighbouring theatre company, Hot House. These experiences took Alice all around the country, leaving her hooked.

Alice graduated in 2010 and joined Circa at the age of 18. Since then, Alice has toured the world, performing in many Circa productions, including Wunderkammer, Opus and Shaun the Sheep's Circus Show. Alice has performed with Company 2, and Gravity and Other Myths as an acrobat/flyer, specialising in static trapeze, duo trapeze, diabolo, hula hoop, clowning and dance (swing, contemporary).

Alice's passion as a performing artist is to interrogate, explore and share, experiences, stories and ideas using circus as a medium.

## **BEC NEILL** – *Acro, Tumble, Handstands*

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Bec started gymnastics at the age of five in Bendigo, receiving a scholarship to the Australian Institute of Sport at age ten. Bec began competing on the Australian Gymnastics team at the age of twelve. After ending her gymnastics career, she began to work on various circus training projects, leading her to join Cirque du Soleil performing as part of *Mystere* in Las Vegas.

Bec moved to Albury in 2018 to join the Flying Fruit Fly Circus team as a trainer in the full-time program. As a coach Bec has a focus on hand to hand, Russian cradle, tumble, acro, handstands, strength and conditioning. She is one of the Lead Trainers of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus select entry program, and NTP training coordinator for 2024.

## **BEN LEWIS** – *Hoop Diving, Straps, Teeterboard*

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Ben began his career in the circus at the age of seven with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, completing 10 years training and performing with the company before completing the 3-year Bachelor Degree at National Institute of Circus Arts.

Graduating from NICA in 2004 Ben became one of Australia's most prolific circus artists forging a successful freelance career performing all over Australia and the world. Ben has performed with many renowned Australian companies such as Circus Oz, Circa, Dislocate and La Clique / La Soiree as well as many smaller independent productions.

From 2007 – 2012 in a childhood dream come true, Ben along with other Fruit Fly alumni toured the world with the "Tom Tom Crew" (Strut and Fret Production House). The Tom Tom Crew was a huge international success wowning audiences all over the world. Post Tom Tom Crew, Ben toured and performed with cult variety show *Briefs and Briefs the Second Coming*.

Since 2011 Ben has worked as an acrobatic trainer at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, including the development of works such as *Control Alt Delete*, *Circus Under My Bed*, *JUNK*, *Back in the Big Top / Time Flies*, *Girls With Altitude and Spherical*. In 2021 Ben became a Lead Trainer at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus focused on managing the full-time circus training program and artistic development. He directed the 2021 Big Top show *Walk, Run, Flip*.

Ben is a passionate circus enthusiast and enjoys passing on his knowledge to the next generation, whilst still managing to make an appearance of his own every now and again.

## BYRON HUTTON – Juggle

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Byron is an ambitious circus performer who constantly challenges himself by learning new performance techniques. Byron created a duo full length juggling show called *Jugg Life*, which toured around Australia, was nominated for a Green Room Award 2019 and won Gasworks Circus Showdown 2015. His solo show *Bit by Bit* was nominated for Best Circus in its inaugural season at Melbourne Fringe 2018. From 2020–2022 Byron performed in After Dark Theatre's show *Barbaroi* which won the Best Circus award at Adelaide Fringe in 2020.

Byron is a co-founding artist of the Throw Catch Collective, Australia's only juggling based performance company. Their new show *Escalate* premiered in 2022 at Arts Centre Melbourne, winning the best circus award at Melbourne Fringe 2022 and went on to Edinburgh Fringe in 2023 to critical acclaim. Byron worked at the National Institute for Circus Arts (NICA) from 2018 – 2021 and now resides in Albury, coaching at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus.

Byron has dedicated his life to making juggling as beautiful and interesting as possible. He's achieved this through his unstoppable dedication to innovation and combining his high skill level in juggling, with movement, percussion and stage craft.

Byron has directed, taught, and performed juggling his whole adult life.

## DAN POWER – Aerial Hoop/Lyra, Rope, Tissu

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Daniel Power studied circus at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne, specialising in aerial ring, vertical aerials and contortion.

Career highlights include performing with Cirque du Soleil (KA Las Vegas) 2004–2007; an excellence award for his duo aerial hoop act with partner Leigh Marning in Wuhan China 2012, 2nd place in Hong Kong's Pole Paradise Aerial Performance Tournament 2013 and winner of Aerial All Stars Australia in 2014. In 2016 Australia's circus industry voted him to be Australia's leading male aerialist at the Australian Circus Festival, and in 2017 he won the professional category at the Australian Circus Championships.

Dan was an aerial specialty trainer at NICA for eight years as part of the bachelor program finishing up in 2016 he returned to WA. Dan has since opened his own circus space, Midwest Aerial and Acrobatic Studios, where he teaches circus to the people of Geraldton and creates entertainment for local events.

## CRYSTAL STACEY – Hula, Static Trapeze

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Homegrown in Broome, WA, Crystal officially ran away to join the Flying Fruit Fly Circus at the age of 16. She graduated in the class of 2013, specializing in hula hoop, static trapeze, aerial loops, and swinging triple trapeze. Best known for her Hula hoop and Aerialist roles in the award-winning political hip hop theatre show *Hot Brown Honey*, Crystal has performed across Australia and internationally in the UK, Canada, USA, Scandinavia, and Asia. She is passionate about passing on circus as an engaging form of self-expression for the next generation.

## GENAVEIVE NEAL – Hula, Foot Juggle

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Genaveive is an energetic circus performer specialising in aerial silks and foot juggle. She discovered her passion for circus at the age of 4 when she joined the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, progressing to join the main program at 9 and graduating in 2016.

As part of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Genaveive performed in tours nationally and internationally performing in the show *Circus Under My Bed* where she captivated audiences in Canberra, the Sydney Opera House, and as far away as Istanbul, Turkey.

Since 2016, Genaveive has spent her time refining her skills as a trainer, mentoring and building up other talent, both young and old, to join the circus family. Most recently returning to the stage to perform a combination of fire twirling and foot juggle, entertaining local audiences with her graceful manipulation of the fire staff.

### **MARCO PAOLETTI** – *Manipulation* (National Institute of Circus Arts)

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Marco Paoletti is a creator and performer who dedicated his early life to rugby, soccer, skiing and athletics. After studying Philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires specialising in arts and literature, Marco left to travel the world and dedicate himself to Circus Arts.

Marco has travelled to more than 60 countries performing, teaching, directing, and creating circus, audiovisual, educational and social projects for companies including Recircle Collective, Compagnia Finzi Pasca, Viktor Kee Foundation, Latin American Cyr Wheel Convention, RUNA and Ready to Fly. He has also created over 700 free video tutorials on YouTube that work to democratise the knowledge of Circus Arts, in particular juggling.

Today, Marco is a Latin American leader in Circus Art, and in 2024 joined as a trainer at the National Institute of Circus Arts in Melbourne, teaching cyr wheel, object manipulation, and coordinating external outreach projects.

### **MISHA REALE** – *Swinging Cloudswing, Active Flexibility*

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Misha began her circus career performing as an aerial artiste in the early 90s. She toured the UK and Europe with Skinning the Cat, The Circus of Horrors, Cottle & Austen's Electric Circus and her own company, Skydance.

Misha returned to Australia in 2001 and toured with Silver's Grand Magic Circus. In 2003 she became a full-time aerial trainer at NICA, as well as coaching privately.

Misha has been coaching for the National Training Project at the Flying Fruit Fly Circus in Albury since 2014. She joined the permanent training team in 2018.

Her love of aerial performance, especially swinging acts, is completely evident in her teaching and training style, with patience, adaptability, enthusiasm, encouragement and energy for all students wishing to further their skills.

### **SCOTT NEILL** – *Trampoline, Tramp Wall, Teeterboard*

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Scott is a former Canadian National Champion in both trampoline and double mini trampoline. He began coaching gymnastics and trampoline at age 14 and has coached and judged at national and international level. He was a member of Cirque du Soleil's first permanent show, *Mystere* from 1994 to 1999 as a member of the Troupe Maison. While specialising in trampoline and wing-to-wing trampoline, Scott also performed teeterboard, fast track, Chinese pole, stilts, ball walking, comedy characters and Taiko drums.

After moving to Australia in 2000 Scott returned to coaching gymnastics and trampoline at the Cheltenham Youth Club. In 2001 he began coaching at NICA, up until 2003 when he transitioned into corporate training in Australia and the USA. Scott once again returned to coaching, joining the Flying Fruit Fly Circus training team in 2018.

## **STEPHEN WILLIAMS** - *Straps, Handstands*

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Stephen Williams' acts combining balance, aerial strength and dance, together with his creative instincts have taken him back and forth continually across the globe. A Bachelor Degree in Circus Arts awarded in 2004 by the National Institute of Circus Arts provided the springboard for a spectacular international career that has seen him performing and creating work ranging from internationally televised ceremonial events, nationwide parades to some of the world's most infamous variety shows on the fringe of the arts.

Some of Stephen's great achievements are creation and performance of the resident aerial show *Airbourne* for the Australia Pavilion at the Shanghai World Expo. In addition, Stephen's impressive list of prime-time international television credits continues to grow with performances such as the Asia Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies in Doha, Qatar and the Opening Ceremony for Liverpool '08 European Capital of Culture, acrobatic co-ordinator on the 2012 Olympic torch relay and a quick guest spot supporting performances for Leona Lewis on ITV 'Black or Red' (UK), mentored and performed aerial straps with LGBT influencer and Wales rugby captain Gareth Thomas on ITV 'Get Your Act Together' (UK) and 'What Happens Live with Andy Cohen' on the Bravo network (USA) to assist Whoopee Goldberg.

## **TANYA LESTER** - *Static/Double Trapeze, Aerial Hoop/Lyra*

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As an original Fruit Fly performer, Tanya toured Australia, was invited to Paris to compete in the Cirque de domain world children's circus competition, where she won gold in the aerial section, and performed and toured to Canada three times. As a performer and circus teacher, she participated in two Nanjing International and the Russian International training projects. Credits include World Expo 88, Rock'n'Roll Circus (now Circa), Circus Oz; and then "CirFunKus".

Between 2006 & 2011 Tanya ran local circus troupes in Tallangatta and Yackandandah, teaching circus skills to people ranging from two to 70 years of age fulfilling her passion to teach people of all ages and to pass on the joy and benefits of circus to all. Today, Tanya is one of FFFC's senior trainers, specialising in aerials and acrobatics, and coordinating the Cert III and public programs.

## **VILEN MERGENOV** - *Teeterboard, Banquine*

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Vilen is the newest member of the FFFC training team, specialising in acrobatics, teeterboard and banquine.

Vilen's love of circus started with a love for aviation sports such as hand gliding and parachuting. In 1992 Vilen enrolled in the Circus School in Almaty, Kazakhstan. After graduating Vilen performed as part of Kazakhstan's National Circus before touring for 9 years internationally as part of Moscow's Bolshoy Circus. Vilen joined Cirque du Soleil's Kooza in 2009.