

ALCHEMISTS OF ILLUSION

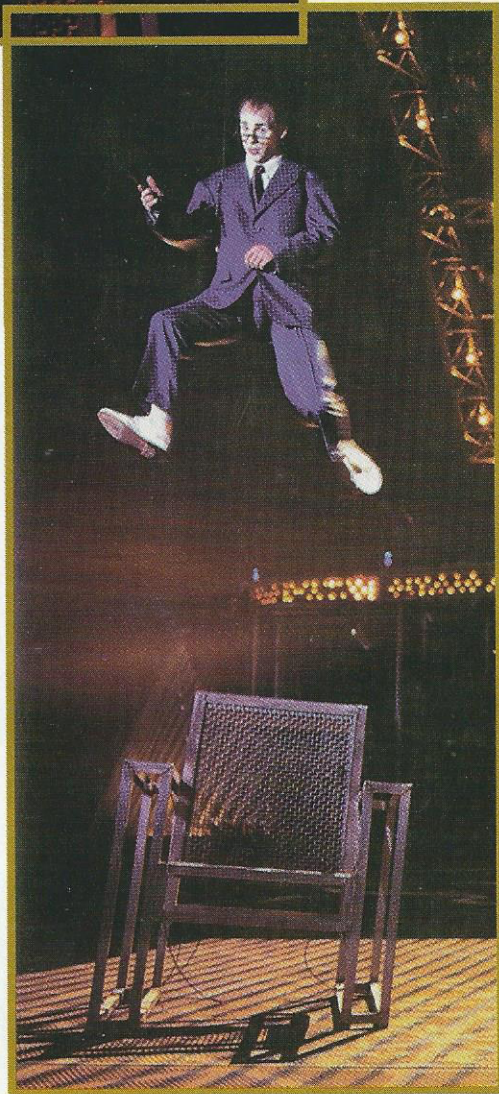


John Gilkey
Principal Character

With a jaw line and a tuft of hair that appear to have sprung from the mind of a cartoonist, Mr. Gilkey is no neophyte to the circus. After hitting the road for a decade in Europe and the United States in various theatrical troupes, he clownned around San Francisco for four and a half years with the Pickle Family Circus before he was swept away last year into the spotlight of Cirque du Soleil's latest jewel, *Quidam*. "I was a dork in high school," Gilkey says. The need to validate himself drove him to perform and the circus offered a nurturing environment, an automatic sense of community. Traveling the world and performing ten shows a week definitely took its toll on this 31-year-old's personal life. "You don't want to start something you can't finish and yet you also long for companionship." Gilkey admits that someday he'd like to settle down. "I want to buy furniture, a TV, own a dog." But, he beams, "I'm one lucky guy," because he's working at his dream job. "The circus is mysterious, and the nomadic lifestyle is part of it." Gilkey saw his first Cirque du Soleil show in 1987 and from that moment made joining the troupe his priority. He takes special pride in the fact that Cirque chooses to "celebrate people."

Daniel Touchette
Spanish Webs (soloist), Character

The Father in *Quidam* has been with Cirque du Soleil for six years. "For me the character of the Father is always a creature of his daughter's imagination." *Quidam* is unique to the series of shows created by Cirque in that Daniel and many principals play the same character from beginning to end, creating a more seamless 'theatrical' show as the scenes melt into one another. "It's cool when they pick up the chair and float you back and you get to see the whole audience. My favorite part of the show is the Spanish Web. It's very different from *Saltimbanco*, which was an extremely colorful, high energy show. *Quidam* is more drama and darkness — a totally different mood. Sometimes it plays with your moods." Daniel decided he wanted to be an acrobat at age 11 when he saw a carnival touring Canada. "I went backstage and they let me do a little audition. A few months later Daniel was training to be an acrobat. "At first my dad said, 'You can't make a life out of doing backflips.' But my mother said, 'Go for it!'"



THE SONS OF SOLEIL

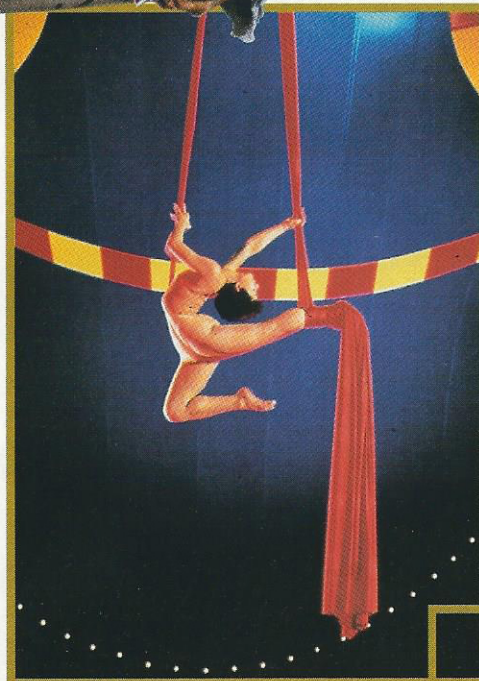
Karl Bannan
Principal Character

A former Juilliard student, Karl has been with Cirque for five years. "I was hired as a dancer and developed into a character using the dancing to create the role. My costume was the first costume designed for *Quidam*. Then Franco Dragone, our director, said to the designers, 'This is exactly what we don't want.' He wanted it more realistic: post-war, anonymous worker drone in suit and hat. But the cartoon-like movements they wanted didn't work with that look. It was too dark and sad. We went back to the original and everything changed. I became Fritz: that's what I call my character. Fritz is very impish and comedic del' arte. Fantastic."

Isabelle Vandelle

Aerial Contortion in Silk, Character

Though she has worked as a contortionist with Cirque du Soleil for eight years, this is Isabelle's first aerial act. "I love being up high. I learned the basic technique on the ropes, then changed to the fabric. First I started practicing on the white fabric. Then we ordered the red. It's much more warm and passionate; working on white was more cold and technical. Sometimes I do it for the audience, sometimes just for myself. This show is much more dramatic than the others, they took it a step further into theater. Besides the traditional circus performance, it has a deeper meaning."



André Brissou-Juras
Singer, Character

Daughter of an opera singer and the man who composed the music for this and other Cirque shows, 13-year-old André has performed this role of initiator to the journey of *Quidam* since April of 1991. This is her first time on the road without her family and she confesses to homesickness. But she is not alone. Cirque travels with its own veritable village: fleets of trailers that provide kitchens and cafeterias, offices, laundry facilities, and restaurants, as well as school rooms for the 12 children that travel with the company and three full-time employees who take care of their needs. André feels she receives an even better education on the road. "VV" (Vieille Vierge) she says, "I love being on the stage and singing for people. I'm going to be an artist of some kind."

