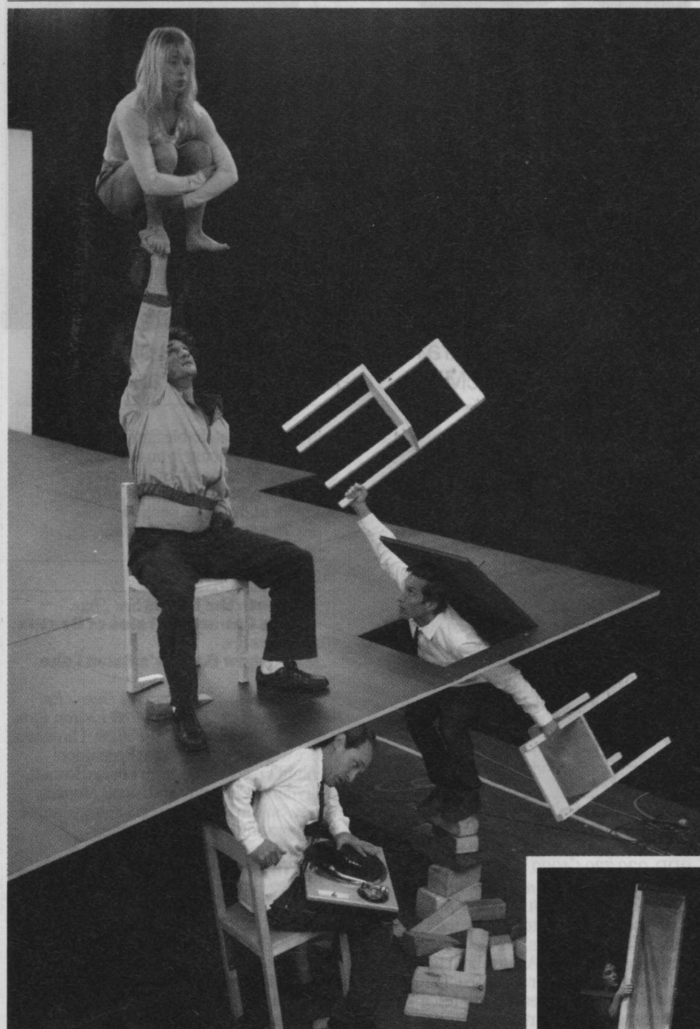


# Dance

# Time Out London

## The circus comes to town!



**Balancing act** Things get precarious in 'Oper Opus'

Circus theatre is set to be a big trend for 2010, and the Brits are now producing shows to rival those of continental Europe, reveals **Lyndsey Winship**

'We've noticed a particular trend in the last few years, and that's a gradual drift towards the art of circus theatre,' says Helen Lannaghan, co-director of the London International Mime Festival (LIMF), which starts this week. In fact, Lannaghan and her partner in mime, Joseph Seelig, have been programming circus artists since they first mounted the festival 32 years ago.

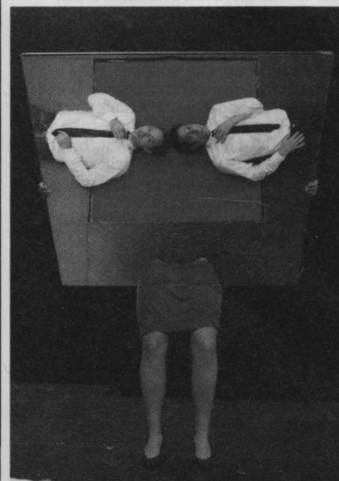
In that time, the kind of work they've championed has become serious blockbuster entertainment—think Cirque du Soleil—and bookers from those big shows can be seen scouting for talent at LIMF, which provides a platform for emerging artists and the more experimental end of the scene.

Impressive circus skills alone are not enough to make it on to Lannaghan and Seelig's shortlist. Shows like Swiss duo Zimmermann and de Perrot's 'Oper Opus' (pictured), which opens the festival, combine brain-zinging technical feats with big ideas and a theatrical sensibility. Or as Seelig puts

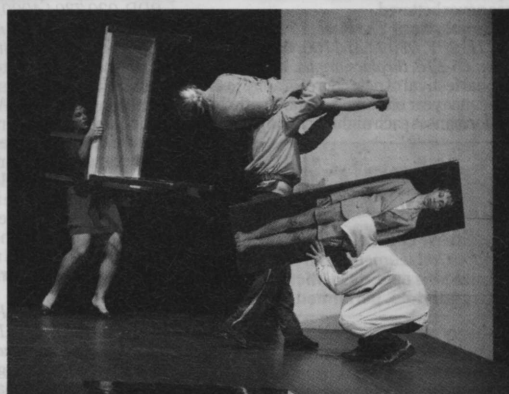
it: 'This is absolutely a treat for the eyes. But it does have brains.'

'Oper Opus' is performed by a cast of acrobats, contortionists and a strongman, with live scratched soundscore from DJ Dimitri de Perrot. The set is a hydraulic platform that tilts as the performers move, 'so it makes everything very precarious,' says Seelig.

This year's festival also sees a strong British contingent among the predominantly European artists—female trio Membre and aerialists Ockham's Razor. 'It's a new wave of



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British circus theatre,' says Lannaghan. 'Ockham's Razor are the biggest stars who've come out of British circus schools and I think they'll encourage and lead the way for a lot more. Now there is a role model there where previously we've been looking rather enviously at France.' *London International Mime Festival opens with 'Oper Opus' on Wed Jan 13 at the Barbican. [www.mimefest.co.uk](http://www.mimefest.co.uk)*

[www.timeout.com/dance](http://www.timeout.com/dance)

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