

Dear Community,

With the news of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey today, it feels important to assert our our deep belief and understanding that the circus is alive and well.

Like all art forms, circus will evolve - and is evolving. While it does, we must be aware of the incredibly rich 2000 year history of circus disciplines and performance existing in a myriad of contexts and forms. It is important to grieve the loss of institutions that we have known and loved in our lifetime - especially the ones that have been dedicated to performing on US soil like RBB&B and Big Apple Circus. These institutions have sparked a generation of circus people and communities in our country, many of whom have laid the foundation for a new and different golden age of circus education and opportunity. This new wave is still unfurling - we have only just begun.

Currently we are experiencing new models of circus viability - in the form of educational institutions that teach circus arts at a variety of levels and circus in new performance venue contexts like proscenium theatres, cruise ships, and site specific locations. We are seeing recognition of circus as an art form for the first time from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival. Performing arts festivals in the USA are producing more circus shows than ever before. We are in the midst of conducting the first and only study about Social Circus as a tool for developing social and emotional learning skills.

The circus education community is growing in the USA - and around the world. There are over 250 circus schools in the USA at present, and we estimate 10 new programs open each year. Our organization - a network of circus schools, educators, and young artists - has grown from 40 to 400 members in the past 6 years. Circus schools teach circus arts to virtually every age group and have a variety of different missions - from using circus as a tool for social change, to encouraging fitness and healthy lifestyles, to training a next generation of circus artists, producers, and innovators who will usher the art form into the future.

Our organization is looking forward to a 2017 full of programming and impact. We will be hosting the 2017 American Youth Circus Festival in Trenton, NJ and expect hundreds of young circus artists, parents, and educators to attend. Each attendee represents dozens more individuals and groups who believe in and devote their lives to the circus.

We are in community with innovators and entrepreneurs who are moving forward with both respect to our circus history, and a sense of urgency for a viable and visible circus sector in the present and future. May the circus always grow and change with the times, and may the show go on, in its diverse and varied forms.

In the spirit of Circus,

*Amy Cohen*

Amy Cohen

Executive Director

American Youth Circus Organization

American Circus Educators Association