
FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ISAMI@BIZJOURNALS.COM

From the L.A. Business First:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/losangeles/news/2023/03/20/cirque-du-soleil-mike-newquist-q-a.html>

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:

'A completely different experience': Cirque du Soleil's president of touring shows breaks down the circus' operations

Mar 20, 2023, 2:25pm PDT



Maja Prgomet

On tour, Cirque du Soleil visits around 40 cities per year, performing five to seven shows at each stop. In L.A., Cirque will

perform "Corteo" 42 times during its 10-week run this spring.

A year after its first show at L.A.'s Microsoft Theater, Cirque du Soleil is returning this week.

Running March 23 through the end of April, the circus company's latest performance, "Corteo," follows a new plot with the classic Cirque acrobatics and flair.

On tour, Cirque du Soleil visits around 40 cities per year, performing five to seven shows at each stop. In L.A., Cirque will put on 42 shows during its 10-week run this spring.

The company has a standing partnership with entertainment venue operator AEG, owner of L.A. Live. Cirque du Soleil has a five-year residency at Microsoft Theater, an agreement that brings an annual performance to the theater.

In each city, the company hires around 100 local employees to fill positions necessary for loading and unloading the trucks and setting up the show, including venue union workers, runners, wardrobe assistants and technicians. On the road, the touring company travels with a team of 117, including 34 technicians and 52 artists, with 25 trucks that move the team, costumes and 700 road cases full of equipment.

For a show as elaborate as "Corteo," performers are fitted for more than 175 costumes, with an estimated 2,000 pieces of clothing in the show and 200 pairs of shoes that require regular touch-ups. And yes, that does mean a lot of laundry — approximately 50 loads per week.

The cost of food and hotel rooms for artists and staff also adds up. Over five days of catering via local catering companies for two meals a day, Cirque du Soleil spends approximately \$20,000 on meals per city run.

To help promote the show in each market, the company allocates \$110,000 to advertising and promotional costs, with around \$800,000 budgeted to promote Big Top shows, under the classic circus tent.

Mike Newquist, president of Cirque du Soleil's Touring Shows Division, spoke with L.A. Business First about the business side of the circus company and its five-year residency at the Microsoft Theater.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Why did Cirque du Soleil partner with Microsoft Theater on an annual residency?

Microsoft Theater and AEG have been great partners for us. Last year was a success, and we see this year turning out to be even more of a success. We have an overall partnership with AEG around the world, where we work on shows together and we also perform at some of their other arenas and venues. The familiarity that we have with them and the central location of the Microsoft Theater and L.A. Live [also play a role]. And we work on marketing and PR programs together — they're experts in that, we're experts in that, and the combination really proved successful so far.

Have operations changed as the pandemic has faded?

Last year as we relaunched, we were very heavy on the protocol across every show. As we're creating new shows in Montreal at our headquarters, we've implemented some Covid protocols to be safe. As we moved into L.A. last year, L.A. was opening up more, and as the year has went on and we've done shows across the world, we've seen the Covid protocol lessen up again. We always follow the local government regulations, whether it's for mask-wearing or testing, but they have certainly lessened over the course of the last year since we were in L.A.

Can you walk through some of the challenges of running a show as elaborate as "Corteo"?

It can be a big logistical puzzle, from the routing of the show and when we're able to bring the show through L.A. versus any other city. We also have 117 people on this show that we're looking for rooms in every city every day, to make sure we have proper housing and feeding them three meals a day. For this tour in particular, we have 25 trucks that move this tour from city to city and 700 road cases. It's a large show for each theater and this

show is a heavy operation that moves from each arena week to week. Coming to L.A. is a nice break since we're able to stay here for a month and a half.

Are you looking for opportunities to work with local businesses in the L.A. area?

We are always looking for local staff in L.A., and we'll be hiring 100 local professionals to help our team. As we go city to city, depending on the show and the needs, we'll have at least that many. We're also hiring local security, parking and concessions. Microsoft Theater has a lot of that in place already, but we're still hiring local professionals to help us with the move in and move out across all of the operations.

From a business standpoint too, what we see at our shows around the world is the opportunity to entertain a business' employees and its best customers. We have a great group ticket program and a VIP experience program. The opportunity to entertain guests is different from going to a game where your team wins or loses. I always say at a Cirque event, everyone goes home happy and smiling and it's so much fun. We see a lot of businesses take advantage of a night out for their employees or their customers.

You've worked for companies including Ultimate Fighting Championship and an NFL team. How does Cirque differ from other companies you've worked for in terms of its business operations?

The scale of Cirque is just massive. Think of an NFL team, where there are 10 games, or UFC might have 42 events. Our Cirque touring shows alone will be nearly 3,000 shows in a year. We have 117 people out on tour, and we'll have our ninth touring show starting in April. So to have 1,000 people traveling around the world with 1,000 room nights every single night of the year — it's a massive operation, and our scale is so big. That's where I've seen the biggest difference. It's amazing and fascinating to see how much of it we do ourselves. A Cirque Big Top is all us. We're buying all of the concessions, food, merchandise. Everything is all us. We do it ourselves. It's a fascinating business and I love it.

Can Angelenos expect any different experiences as you return to Microsoft Theater?

This is a longer run, and Microsoft Theater's team and our team have been working well together. I think the audience will see a completely different show with "Corteo," which is a big beautiful show, so it's just completely different from the standpoint of what they'll see on stage.



Isabel Sami

Staff Reporter - *L.A. Business First*

[Back to Top](#) ▲

L.A. BUSINESS FIRST

[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Ad Choices](#) |  [Your Privacy Choices](#)

© 2023 American City Business Journals. All rights reserved. Use of and/or registration on any portion of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#) (updated January 24, 2023) and [Privacy Policy](#) (updated January 24, 2023). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of American City Business Journals.

