

# CIRCUS SMIRKUS®

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THE LIMELIGHT



★ **1987** ★ Circus Smirkus founded in 200-year-old farmhouse in Greensboro, VT. "First Vermont-based traveling circus in over 100 years" (*Boston Globe*). Tour: one week! Media coverage in *The New York Times*. Vermont cows bemused by all the commotion in the field.

★ **1988** ★ Smirkus grows to statewide summer tour: 28 shows in 11 towns in 3 weeks. Coverage in *USA Today*. Smirkus coaches begin 12-year stint creating a state fair outdoor circus in Connecticut every fall. Winter school residencies begin.

★ **1989** ★ "Running Home to the Circus" tour reaches Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. First collaboration with Project Harmony; guest troupe from Tblisi, Georgia, USSR. Media coverage in *Yankee* and *People* magazines.

★ **1990** ★ "The Magician's Apprentice" tours 4 weeks. Historic collaboration with Moscow Circus School leads to Soviet/American Youth Circus joint tours (spring: 3 weeks in Russia; fall: 3 weeks in New England), with tour

winning awards at International Festival on the Black Sea, USSR. Performances in Yaroslavl and Moscow circus buildings. Coverage in *Scholastic News* and *Sesame Street's Kid City* magazines, and on network TV. First year of Smirkus Summer Circus Camp.

★ **1991** ★ "The Toy Circus" tour is first circus ever on Nantucket Island. Latvian Youth Circus and Moscow Circus members join Smirkus summer tour. Smirkus co-produces Soviet/American Youth Circus-on-Ice in winter. Russian and American coaches begin long collaboration.

★ **1992** ★ "East Meets West Meets East," with guest performers from Russia, Moldova and Kazakhstan, plus 12 teens from California's Great Y Circus — all joining Smirkus troupers in Vermont. Smirkus receives Vermont Arts Council Award of Excellence.

★ **1993** ★ "The Princess Who Wouldn't Laugh" is Smirkus' first "story circus," featuring classical music, Russian artists and 10 Native American performers (in collaboration with Ringling Bros.). The Vermont Chamber of Commerce names Smirkus a "Top Ten Summer Event." Cover story in the *Boston Globe Sunday Magazine*.

★ **1994** ★ "Houdini Lives!" features guest artists from Russia and Mongolia. Smirkus featured in *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. Smirkus 1993 show video receives Dove Foundation Award for Family Values. Smirkus named one of "America's

Best Circuses" by *FamilyFun* magazine. Actor Michael J. Fox visits the tour.

★ **1995** ★

"Class Clowns" includes guest performers from Russia, Mongolia and Hungary. First exchange with Budapest Circus School. Smirkus Founder Rob Mermin appointed Director of Ringling Bros. Clown College. Two Smirkos graduate Clown College and win contracts with Ringling Bros.



★ **1996** ★ "Lights, Action, Circus!" '20s-style silent movie tour. Smirkus again named "Top 10 Summer Event." First troupers go pro with Ringling, Cirque du Soleil and European circuses. First Smirko Rhodes Scholar. Writer David Mamet visits the tour.

★ **1997** ★ "Tenth Anniversary Birthday Party Tour!" plays 60 shows in 44 days in 18 towns throughout New England. *Circus Smirkus: A True Story of High Adventure and Low Comedy* published, with foreword by Marcel Marceau.

Smirkus wins "Bessie Award" for excellence in our field. Smirkus founder and coaches perform in "Festival of Circus" at the Kennedy Center in D.C.

★ **1998** ★ "'50s Rock n' Roll" Tour rocks our new, 750-seat European Big Top! Troupers from the USA, Russia, Israel, Mongolia and China experience first exchange with the Wuqiau School and Chinese Acrobatic Arts Association. Troupers win "People's Choice" Award at Swedish International Circus Festival. Smirkos perform with Vermont Symphony Orchestra.



★ **1999** ★ “The Adventures of Robin Hood” rollicks New England villages and Martha’s Vineyard. Entire summer filmed for the Disney Channel. Alberto Zoppe family from Italy joins the tour with Percheron horses. Marcel Marceau gives smashing benefit performance in the Smirkus tent. Smirko high wire walker wins place in Guinness Book of World Records. Hollywood producer Norman Lear brings friend Dom DeLuise to visit the tour.



at first festival of American Youth Circus Organization (AYCO). Smirkus invited back to the International Children’s Festival at Wolf Trap.

kids. Smirkus Camp celebrates 15 years of allowing kids to run away and join the circus . . . one week at a time.

★ **2000** ★ “Voyage of the Pirate Queen” storms New England with troupers from 5 countries and 7 states. IndoKids from Indonesia join the tour. Smirkus performs with Sesame Street’s Bob McGrath. Smirkus acclaimed “The United Nations of the Youth Circus World” at the International Children’s Festival at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, outside Washington, D.C. The Disney Channel broadcasts “Totally Circus,” a 15-part Smirkus TV documentary, around the world. Vermont Chamber of Commerce names Smirkus one of “Mom’s Top Picks for Kids.”

★ **2002** ★ “Legends of the Wild West” rides into town with a live six-member bluegrass band (The Route Seven Ramblers), “First Nation” dancers and cowboy rope spinners from the Southwest. Smirkus Advance Camp creates a road show to tour hospitals and nursing homes. Smirkus alumni span the globe performing and teaching.

★ **2006** ★ Smirkus kicks back on a “Tropical Vacation” as Tour Director Troy Wunderle makes his debut. Circus Smirkus Camp welcomes kids from the Big Apple Circus after school programs in a first-ever collaboration between the downtown and hometown circus camps.

★ **2007** ★ Audiences thrill with the swinging and spying escapade, “The Zoot Suit Caper.” Four international troupers join the tour, from Colombia, France and Mongolia. Smirkus wins grants to provide over 20 free school residences throughout Vermont.



★ **2003** ★ “The Legion of Laughter: Superheroes of Smirkopolis” soars into action with directors of The Midnight Circus and performers from Sweden’s Youth Circus troupe “Cirkus and Variete.” Circus School Residency programs expand to 4 artists-in-residence; Summer Camp adds Smirking Camp and Family Camp sessions. Tour Photo Booklet published. Year-round staff grows to 15, seasonal staff to 100.

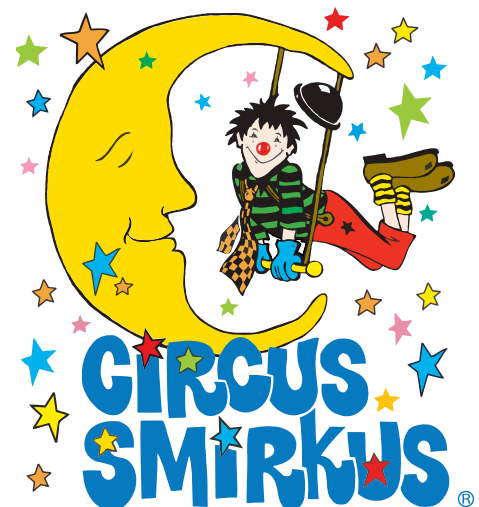
★ **2008** ★ EthioCircus and CirColumbia form new bonds with Smirkus for “Smirkusology: A Spectacle of Circus Science.” Big Apple Circus’ “Grandma” Barry Lubin joins the Smirkus Honorary Board and three Smirkos jump aboard the Ringling Bros Red Unit. Smirkus enjoys worldwide coverage from the AP, Fox, NPR and Reuters. Author Yvonne M. Vissing lauds Smirkus Camp as a “model of safety” in, “How to Keep Your Children Safe: A Guide to Parents.”

★ **2001** ★ “Sci-Fi Smirkus: A Space Idiocy” lands in 15 towns with 72 shows in 7 weeks. First appearance of the Chicago Boyz, and full collaboration with Chicago’s Midnight Circus. First Arab-Israeli circus kids from Jerusalem perform in the Smirkus tent; part of a joint peace program. Julia Child joins Honorary Smirkus Board of Directors after visit to Smirkus chuck wagon. Smirkos stand out

★ **2004** ★ “Smirkus Through the Looking Glass” slides down the rabbit hole. Smirkus featured on “The Martha Stewart Show.” Volunteers for Peace join Smirkus with students from Spain, France, England and Poland. Smirkus alumni gather for first professional gig -- at Sea World in San Antonio, TX -- as the feature “Summer Nights” stage show. Smirkus founder Rob Mermin receives Vermont Arts Council Award of Merit.



★ **2005** ★ “Pinocchio” explores the pinnacles and pratfalls of becoming human, as Smirkus collaborates with the master puppeteers of Sandglass Theater. Miniature donkeys, Jiminy and Figaro, steal the hearts of ringside



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