Circus Smirkus
Executive Artistic Director

Organization
Circus Smirkus (Smirkus) is a world-renowned, nonprofit circus arts organization that inspires kids of all ages to develop artistic, athletic, and life skills through the power of performance. Its three programs—Residencies, Smirkus Camp, and Big Top Tour—blend the best of circus tradition and contemporary practice to create immersive experiences that challenge kids to perform and live to the very best of their abilities. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in a 150-year-old farmhouse on a 38-acre parcel in Greensboro, Vermont, Smirkus has united circus artists from 32 countries and raised more than $2 million for other community organizations.

The Smirkus Big Top Tour is the only youth circus in the United States that tours and performs in its own big top tent, entertaining and inspiring more than 42,000 people each year pre-pandemic. Smirkus Camp welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels to discover and explore circus arts in a summer camp setting. Smirkus School Residencies are designed for K-12 students to learn the circus arts throughout the year in school and after-school programs.

Historically, the summer months have seen an auditioned company of 10- to 18-year-old Troupers take their show on the road for a two-month performance tour of New England. While the Big Top Tour was cancelled in 2020, Smirkus ran a successful five-week camp session observing stringent safety protocols. In 2021, Smirkus invited 31 Troupers to participate in an eight-week IN-TENTsive, re-imagining the Big Top Tour with virtual performances. Smirkus Camp ran three full sessions for more than 400 campers ranging from circus novices to advanced performers. During the pandemic, there was a swift pivot to offer online classes for circus enthusiasts of all skill levels and ages to develop and hone their talents. These journeys of learning ranged from beginner to advanced juggling, hula hooping, clowning & performance, handstands & contortion, and training & conditioning.

While the Circus Smirkus year-round staff is small (typically fewer than 10 people), the organization employs more than 100 coaches, counselors, and other arts professionals during the summer. It is also supported by more than 1,280 volunteers. Circus Smirkus is governed by 15 board members, chaired by Board President Michele Levy. The Fiscal Year 2019 budget was $2.6 million, with $300,000 from contributions and grants.

Promise of Inclusion
Smirkus celebrates all types of peoples, cultures, and skills to showcase the multifaceted triumph of human abilities, particularly among the youth population. Joining Smirkus—as a participant, an employee, a volunteer, or an audience member—means you belong. And to all who join, Smirkus asks for them to embrace its values and to help create joy and magic for everyone who encounters a Smirkus program. Smirkus commits to providing everyone equal opportunity to shine—both in and out of the ring.

Community
With a population of approximately 700 residents that swells to more than 3,000 each summer, Greensboro is the southernmost town in Orleans County and is recognized as the 12th largest county in Vermont. Situated in the heart of the Northeast Kingdom, this scenic town was designated by National Geographic as part of its geotourism program for sustainable destinations. Orleans County is bordered to the north by Quebec and to the west by the Green Mountains. The town is off the beaten path, but still conveniently located 35 miles from the state capital, Montpelier; 70 miles from the state’s largest city, Burlington; and 130 miles from Montreal. There are several highly ranked colleges within a 90-minute drive, including Norwich University, Middlebury College, and University of Vermont.

Tucked miles away from the highway, picturesque Greensboro is a quaint community and an incredible retreat. Nature lovers can explore the 256-acre Barr Hill Natural Area and see the breathtaking natural wonders of the nearby Quechee Gorge and Rock of Ages granite quarry. Hiking and ski trails offer stunning views of the Green Mountains and the Craftsbury Outdoor Center features topnotch Nordic skiing. The town’s crown jewel is the 789-acre Caspian Lake, one of the cleanest lakes in Vermont and the perfect setting for swimming, fishing, boating, water skiing, ice fishing, and skating.

Epicureans and beer-lovers come from all over to visit Hill Farmstead Brewery (named Best Brewery in the World eight times), Jasper Hill Farm, and numerous restaurants that offer a range of exceptional farm-to-table experiences. The spirit of the community, entrepreneurship, and the arts is solid and resilient. Vermont has a long
history of environmental awareness and sustainable agriculture, consistently ranking at the top of the Locavore Index.
Sources: greensborovt.org, vermontvacations.com, centralvt.com

Position Summary
The Executive Artistic Director will guide Smirkus into its next 35 years, building financial stability, organizational strength, and creative excellence. In collaboration with a dedicated board of directors and staff, the Executive Artistic Director will enhance Smirkus’ equitable, diverse, and inclusive culture and maintain the organization’s commitment to celebrating all types of peoples, cultures, and skills to showcase the multifaceted triumph of human abilities. The Executive Artistic Director will move through the organization with grace and respect, engaging many different stakeholders, listening carefully, and honoring the past while looking toward the future. This individual will effectively leverage organizational, human, financial, and technological resources. Building on past experience, the Executive Artistic Director will be an ongoing learner who is receptive to new methodologies.

Roles and Responsibilities
Strategic and Institutional Leadership
- Ensure that Smirkus has a relevant, up-to-date long-range strategy to achieve its mission and work with the board and staff to implement that strategy.
- Nurture and build on the unique culture of Smirkus to foster an inclusive environment of excellence.
- Serve as the senior manager of the organization, with strategic and operational responsibility for the health and growth of all aspects of business operations and the success and interconnection of all programs.
- Champion the development, understanding, and evolution of Smirkus’ artistic principles, core values, and culture across the organization and beyond.
- Serve as primary spokesperson and ambassador for Smirkus.
- Cultivate deep and wide-ranging relationships with individuals and organizations throughout the circus world and, more broadly, in arts and education.
- Build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.
- Cultivate a strong and transparent relationship with the board, keeping members apprised of organizational health through the use of clear and measurable outcomes.
- Support the work of the board’s Nominating and Governance Committee to build, maintain, and support a representative and inclusive board that is highly engaged and willing to leverage and secure resources.

Artistic Vision and Leadership
- Provide strategic and artistic oversight for all programs.
- Promote an artistic environment centered on excellence, innovation, diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Elevate Smirkus’ reputation as a premier circus arts organization.
- Leverage a broad knowledge of arts management to create sought-after circus arts education and performance opportunities for program participants and the greater community.
- Model effective leadership through active involvement in all Big Top Tour, Camp, and Residency programs.
- Incorporate significant developments in the field of circus arts into Smirkus’ artistic approach.

Management and Operational Oversight
- Cultivate an organizational climate and culture that attracts, retains, and motivates a diverse top-quality staff.
- Lead and inspire the Smirkus staff, promoting staff growth, development, and education.
- Empower all staff members to work at their highest potential to realize success with organizational priorities.
- Recognize the human resource capacities of the organization, balancing ambition and mission delivery with quality offerings, sustainable workloads, and a healthy environment for artists and staff.
- Cultivate an effective senior management team with appropriate provisions for succession.
- Lead the Big Top Tour, Camp, and Residency staff in strategic program planning, informed decision making, and the development of strong cross-program partnerships.
- Manage senior staff and program leaders to ensure high standards of program delivery, quality control, program evaluation, and program profitability.
- Explore opportunities to expand the revenue stream by developing new program opportunities.
- Ensure sound risk management and legal compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.
- Oversee the financial status of the organization and provide overall budget oversight.
- Formulate and supervise a comprehensive fundraising strategy that will enhance revenue from major donors, foundations, grants, and other sources.
- Develop, in collaboration with marketing and program staff, a strategy for marketing the Big Top Tour, Camp, and Residencies.

**Traits and Characteristics**

A transformative, creative, strategic, and inspirational arts leader with developed cultural competencies, the Executive Artistic Director will have the ability to prioritize tasks and objectives while remaining sensitive and responsive to the needs of others with critical thinking. Handling difficult situations with diplomacy and ease, this individual will be a confident and business-minded decision-maker who also demonstrates humility and open-mindedness. Possessing a sense of adventure and passion for circus arts, the collegial and future-thinking Executive Artistic Director will be receptive to new ideas, opportunities, and innovation.

Other key competencies of this role include:

- **Leadership** – The capacity to organize and influence people to believe in a vision while creating a sense of purpose and direction.
- **Creativity and Innovation** – The propensity to create new approaches, designs, processes, technologies, and/or systems to achieve the desired result.
- **Influencing Others** – The ability to personally affect others’ actions, decisions, opinions, or thinking.
- **Interpersonal skills** – The aptitude to effectively communicate, build rapport, and relate well to all kinds of people.

**Qualifications**

Proven experience in artistic and executive leadership, arts management, and fundraising is required. The ideal candidate will possess a deep appreciation for the role that arts, and circus arts in particular, play in society and in youth development. Exceptional written and spoken communication skills are essential, including the ability to represent Smirkus in public speaking engagements, media events, and other public presentations. The ideal candidate will have experience in budget development and oversight, creating a diverse and supportive organizational culture, and supervising and mentoring staff throughout the organization.

**Compensation and Benefits**

Smirkus offers a salary range of $90,000 to $105,000 and a competitive benefits package, including health insurance, IRA, and a generous offering of holidays and paid time off. Onsite presence in Greensboro is required from April through September at minimum. Residence in the Northeast with reasonable access to Greensboro is required October through May. Smirkus will consider an 11-month position to allow for personal creative pursuits and ongoing connection to the broader arts world.

**Applications and Inquiries**

To submit a cover letter and resume with a summary of demonstrable accomplishments (electronic submissions preferred), please click here or visit artsconsulting.com/employment. For questions or general inquiries about this job opportunity, please contact:

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