



FROGS, unicycles and dazzling performances – gymnast and cast member Jonathan Buese takes us behind the scenes of Cirque du Soleil’s latest mind-blowing show, Totem...



### WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

“I see Totem as a show about the Earth and about life,” explains Jonathan, who started training in gymnastics when he was just five years old. “We have a lot of acts where our characters are animals, and there’s a big emphasis on indigenous people and cultures, from native American music and characters to a few songs featuring a didgeridoo. The Earth’s creation and the evolution of life are big parts of the narrative of the show as well.”

### SUPER SHOW

Since its Montreal world premiere on 22 April, 2010, Totem has been performed more than 2,800 times in more than 45 cities.

### CRAZY CHARACTERS

“My role in Totem is a frog, which does the act that opens the show,” explains Jonathan. “This act features two gymnastics horizontal bars with a trampoline that runs along the floor. I also do some acts in the show as a monkey, which is much less acrobatic, with a little bit of climbing around on a large tripod-like structure.”



### DID YOU KNOW?

Cirque du Soleil was formed by a group of 20 street performers in 1984.



### BEHIND-THE-SCENES SECRETS

“Backstage at Totem you see a lot of people stretching and training,” reveals Jonathan. “For a five-minute act on stage, people are training and preparing for hours, either technically or doing rehab, warming up, cooling down and stretching.”

### COOL COSTUMES

There are an incredible 750 costume pieces seen on stage in Totem (and the exact same amount of back-up pieces travel with the show).

### SHOW-STOPPING STUNTS

“The biggest challenge for me in this show is to work on the same bar being released to the other with another person,” explains Jonathan. “Our timing has to be pretty locked-in to do it well, which is why we practise. Making small adjustments can make a big difference when doing these sequences. Besides that technical challenge, to stay sharp for ten shows a week is a challenge for focus and concentration.”

### DID YOU KNOW?

The unicycles used in the show are a whopping 2m tall.



Cirque du Soleil’s Totem will be on at London’s Royal Albert Hall from 12 January – 26 February  
Tickets can be bought on [cirquedusoleil.com](http://cirquedusoleil.com)