

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.

ZARKANA™

## COSTUMES

### **A modern twist on the 1920s and 1930s**

The characters in *Zarkana* inhabit a surreal world inspired by the American circus sideshows that flourished in the 1930s and the spirit of the golden age of Coney Island. The overall visual aesthetic of their costumes – 250 in all – is a modern take on the look of the 1920s, the 1930s and the Art Deco movement.

In addition to his own vast experience, intuition and knowledge, Alan Hranitelj drew inspiration from various sources and artists of that era, including Catalan artist Joan Miró and Russian/French designer Erté. These references provided a departure point for his far-ranging and resolutely modernist approach to the look of the show's characters.

### **The color palette – an exercise in nuance and subtlety**

One of the biggest challenges Alan's team faced was to give a major emphasis to the traditional white of circus clowns in the costumes of the 15-artist house troupe – called "Movers" – and to integrate it with the wider overall color spectrum of the show.

The Movers are not in fact completely dressed in white. Their costumes incorporate a hint of color associated with one of the show's numbers, each of which has been assigned a distinct color. As each number plays out, the color associated with the *subsequent* number is subtly signaled by its nuanced presence on their costumes, creating an almost imperceptible bond that runs throughout the whole show.

### **Fabrics and printing**

To create the costumes for *Zarkana*'s quirky crew of oddball characters and acrobats, Alan worked with a wide range of synthetic fabrics such as polyester, and neoprene, and specialized color printing techniques such as sublimation, many of which were developed by the innovators in the Cirque du Soleil costume workshop.

### **Costume Closeups**

- The singer, Mandragora borrows her visual identity from the pistil – the reproductive organ – of the mysterious and magical mandrake plant, long associated with erotic love and physical desire.
- Kundalini, the dangerous snake-woman, meshes religious symbolism with her sinuous serpentine character and costume. Because she performs close to fire-eaters her costume had to be made fireproof.
- Tarantula, the spider lady's costume suggests all of the perceived danger in her arachnid identity. Her spider legs are extensions to her costume that are attached to the mechanism that allows her to descend to the stage from the ceiling.
- The costume of the Oracle, a mystical character played by a sand painting specialist, was directly inspired by Erté, the Russian/French artist and designer who created evening gowns made with exotic fabrics from India.
- The costumes of the extraterrestrial Jovians were originally inspired by a fictitious tribe that lived off the bounty of the sea. When they went fishing, they wore costumes that made them look like fish to fool their prey. The Jovians' costumes are made of double-laminated Lycra and decorated with bubbles that represent the foam excreted by the fish.
- The lead female singer had her entire body, together with the harness she wears throughout the show, scanned with 225 precise measurements. The data were used to produce a cast that minimized the need for in-person costume fittings.