

# **BIG APPLE CIRCUS TO RETURN TO NEW YORK CITY UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP IN FALL 2017**

\* \* \* \* \*

## ***BIG TOP WORKS Wins Bid To Save The Circus***

*With Plans to Revitalize the Landmark Institution, Continue its Community Enrichment Programs  
And Return to a Full Production Schedule in NYC and On Tour*

## **PROGRAMMING ANNOUNCEMENT FOR 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON TO FOLLOW**

(NEW YORK – February 14, 2016) It was announced today that **Big Top Works**, an affiliate of **Compass Partners LLC**, are the new owners of the **BIG APPLE CIRCUS** and will continue the grand tradition of presenting the beloved New York institution – and its established community outreach programs including the Circus of the Senses, Autism performances and Circus for All – in New York City and on tour in the 2017-18 Season. Founded in 1977, **BIG APPLE CIRCUS** will make its triumphant return during the holiday season in time for the landmark cultural institution’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Specific details about the production’s development, including headliners, dates, and locations, will be announced this spring.

In July 2016, **BIG APPLE CIRCUS** announced that it would be shutting down ahead of its 2016-17 season, after a last-minute fundraising attempt failed to alleviate the organization’s significant financial hardships. The news spurred **Compass Partners**, a Sarasota-based investment firm led by managing partner **Richard Perlman**, and his partners **Jim Price** and **Barry Salzman**, to assemble an eclectic team of businessmen – who share a passion for, and history with, the circus arts – to build a sustainable business plan to save and revitalize the **BIG APPLE CIRCUS**. The new partnership, **Big Top Works**, includes industry veteran **Larry Solheim**, who has a 30-plus year career working on and general managing circuses, including **BIG APPLE CIRCUS**’ 2015-16 season, and **Neil Kahanovitz**, a renowned spine surgeon, theatrical producer, and former circus performer.

“This is a dream come true for us,” says Neil Kahanovitz, Partner, **Big Top Works**. “**BIG APPLE CIRCUS** is a cultural gem in New York City and we couldn’t let this beloved American pastime just disappear. We have been working for months to assemble the finest team to ensure that the circus tent rises again this 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season, and for many years to come. We look forward to presenting the circus everyone knows and loves, and honoring the legacy that has been built over the past several decades, while crafting a thrilling experience for today’s audiences.”

Last week, **BIG APPLE CIRCUS**’ Board of Directors unanimously voted to accept the \$1.3 million bid from **Big Top Works** – made during the live auction handled by **Stampler Auctions** on Tuesday, February 7 – and today, the court approved the Board’s decision. The sale includes **THE BIG APPLES CIRCUS**’ tents, equipment, and intellectual property (including the name and brand.) The board’s decision was not only motivated by the highest bid, but by **Compass Partners**’ most compelling case to maintain both the organization’s excellent level of performance and its mission to serve the community – the **Big Apple Circus** programs “Circus of the Senses” and “Circus for All!” will continue to serve New Yorkers and communities beyond the **Big Apple**. Alison Bauer of **Tory’s LLC** was the attorney on record for **Compass Partners**.

Preliminary conversations are underway with **Lincoln Center** to keep **BIG APPLE CIRCUS** at **Damrosch Park**, which the **Big Top Tent** has called home since the 1980’s.

The BIG APPLE CIRCUS was founded in the summer of 1977 by circus performers **Paul Binder** and **Michael Christensen**, with a mission to present authentic and thrilling circus arts, in the intimacy of the one-ring Big Top, for audiences of all incomes. By 1979 the Circus was generating enough money to fund two Circus Arts Schools and in 1983, launched its first tour. Throughout its 40-year run, BIG APPLE CIRCUS distinguished themselves by offering many community outreach programs including providing free tickets to underprivileged children and underserved schools.

[www.BigAppleCircus.com](http://www.BigAppleCircus.com)

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **ABOUT COMPASS PARTNERS LLC AND BIG TOP WORKS, LLC**

Compass Partners LLC (“Compass Partners”), is a Sarasota-based merchant banking and advisory firm that specializes in middle market companies and corporate restructuring. Founded by Richard Perlman in 1995, Compass Partners has had a successful track record revitalizing and growing a number of businesses across a wide range of sectors, from food equipment to healthcare services. In addition to Perlman, Compass Partners includes Jim Price and Barry Salzman, who is the lead partner on the Big Apple Circus venture. Big Top Works, LLC (“Big Top”), is the latest affiliate of Compass Partners and is the official owner of the Big Apple Circus. In addition to Compass, Big Top is comprised of a team of investors who share a common passion for the circus arts including Neil Kahanovitz, an orthopedic surgeon, theatrical producer and former circus performer, and Larry Solheim, a 30-year circus veteran.

### **ABOUT NEIL KAHANOVITZ**

As a child, when asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, the answer never changed, “an orthopedic surgeon and a circus performer.” He achieved both dreams. While attending medical school, Kahanovitz took a leave of absence to perform in the comedy trampoline act and later as an aerialist in a large circus in the Midwest. Once he graduated, Kahanovitz went on to a distinguished career in the medical field. He has been published in over 50 articles in scientific journals, written about spinal disorders in eleven medical textbooks and published a book on the care and treatment of low back pain. He has served as President of the North American Spine Society and has received the prestigious Volvo Award for Low Back Pain Research, as well as a Commendation from The United States House Physician’s Office for his care and surgery performed on members of the United States Supreme Court and Congress. He was also awarded one of the Soviet Union’s most prestigious civilian honors, The Order of The Supreme Soviet Medal of Personal Courage, for organizing relief efforts following a devastating earthquake in Armenia. Despite the success of his medical career, his show business interests resurfaced in the late 1990’s. He has since produced plays and musicals on Broadway, in London’s West End, Chicago, Los Angeles and Off-Broadway. He is thrilled to bring the BIG APPLE CIRCUS to its rightful place among the most cherished New York City cultural icons. And for a chance to run away with the circus. Not once, but twice!

### **ABOUT LARRY SOLHEIM**

A proud veteran, Solheim has worked in the travelling entertainment field - as a performing artist, composer/arranger, conductor, educator and, most notably, a production manager – for over 35 years. Most recently, he was the Vice President and General Manager for Big Apple Circus, brought in to oversee the touring unit and identify the issues responsible for its declining financial situation. As General Manager, Solheim oversaw the circus’ 17-million-dollar operational budget, managed and optimized all elements of the touring operations, including its 150+ team members, and coordinated research and communications with all corporate departments and directors. Prior to the BIG APPLE CIRCUS, Solheim worked for TZ Productions as Musical Director and General Manager for 26 years, where he coordinated and managed performances in up to 70 cities per year (45 building venues and 25 tent venues).

###

## **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Vivacity Media Group**, 212-812-1483

Leslie Papa, [Leslie@VivacityNY.com](mailto:Leslie@VivacityNY.com)

Whitney Holden Gore, [Whitney@VivacityNY.com](mailto:Whitney@VivacityNY.com)

**Jessica Aufiero Communications (JAC)**, 212.832.7000

Jessica Aufiero, [jessica@ja-pr.com](mailto:jessica@ja-pr.com)

Erin Berger, [Erin@ja-pr.com](mailto:Erin@ja-pr.com)