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## Presenter Interview プレゼンター・インタビュー

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of founder Alain Paré



Mr. Alain Paré

### CINARS (Conference Internationale des Arts de la Scene)

This international arts market is held every two years in November in Montreal, Quebec Province, Canada. CINARS primary purpose is to promote Canadian performing arts on the world market. It is composed of "Platforms" and "Forums." The Platform features about 30 showcases by artists from various countries in the fields of dance, theater, music and multidisciplinary arts. There is also an exhibition room with 150 booths (companies). The Forum includes study sessions and workshops in the performing arts areas. CINARS activities are based on networking and it's an opportunity for professionals to meet and exchange information. During the CINARS Platform, there are also independent performances known as Off-CINARS. Off-CINARS performances are shown all around the city of Montreal (approximately 30 venues) attracting many presenters from all around the world.

<http://www.cinars.org/>



### CINARS四半世紀の歩み 創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

CINARS (International Exchange for the Performing Arts) is an international arts market held every two years in the city of Montreal, province of Quebec, Canada. Founded twenty-five years ago in 1984, the initial mission was to promote Canadian artists in the development of overseas markets. Since then, CINARS has grown to become one of the world's largest scale performing arts markets, attracting over 1,000 participants from all around the world including artists, agents and presenters from about 60 countries. We spoke with the founder, Alain Paré about CINARS' development and the role it has played over the years.

(Interview: Kyoko Yoshida, Director, U.S./Japan Cultural Trade Network, Inc.)

### CINARS developing markets overseas

CINARS is now an internationally known performing arts market that was founded in Montreal, Quebec Province in 1984. Can you begin by telling us how it came to be founded originally?

At the time CINARS was founded, there was a crucial need for non-profit support and to promote artists in the performing arts in Canada. Canada is the second largest country in the world by total area, but we only have a population of 34 million habitants. USA is much more smaller but the country has a population of more than 300 million habitants, so it has enough demands to support the arts and the show business industry. With the exception of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver don't have market or funds to support such business. Even in Montreal, the audience is only large enough for example to fill six performances of Robert Lepage's newest creation. Because of this limited audience and demands, we had to find ways for our artists to survive and cultivate overseas markets.

So we have created CINARS and brought in presenters and program planners from abroad to see our artists' works. This formula was very successful and numerous companies and artists such as La La La Human Steps and Robert Lepage attracted a lot of attention and obtained invitations to perform overseas. We were very surprised to see the response exceeded our expectations.

Nowadays there is a strong demand for Canadian artists overseas, to the extent that they less perform in Canada. So now, the domestic market is like a laboratory for artists such as Robert Lepage and La La La Human Steps and other dance companies to develop works that will tour abroad.

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

Was the founding of CINARS the result of an initiative by the city of Montreal?

Creating CINARS was my own private initiative. At the time I was president of the French Association in Montreal, the initiative came out from discussions we had about the need for such a platform. Fortunately, at the time, I was very close with the Quebec Minister of Culture and he was very interested to support the artists. For example, he gave the first million-dollar grant to Cirque du Soleil because he has seen their potential and it was an important company to support. Eventually, Quebec government support CINARS as well. In the beginning, we were very small scales market. The first editions, we had about 50 people coming in from five to six countries. Then, it grows a lot and I've become so busy that I've decided to sell my company and concentrate full-time on CINARS' development.

What were you doing up until the time you started CINARS?

I went to the University of Montreal and I've studied communications and marketing. Before, I was an agent and promoter and I've represented some artists. I had my own agency and production company and at the time, I produced about 400 shows a year. I had a big team and we have done a lot of projects in Canada and abroad. But after a number of years we decided that we needed a platform like CINARS to help our company tour abroad. At the time we have created CINARS I was young and naïve and didn't know what I was getting into. I just dived into a strange adventure. (Laughs)

Quebec Province is the French-speaking part of Canada and traditionally there is a strong concern for preserving and nurturing the language and cultural heritage. Is that related to the birth of CINARS?

Yes. In the beginning of CINARS, we saw artists in the English-speaking part of Canada created works that looked mostly like copies of American artists' works. In response to that, Quebec dance choreographers, actors and playwrights were saying that they were different, their influences were primarily French and European. From that point, we decided that we couldn't be the same, we needed to be different and really original if we wanted to compete with the dominant American trends. Cirque du Soleil is a good example of company that was born of this vision. When they created the company, they said they were going to be different from conventional circuses, they were not going to feature animals, and they were going to adopt innovative choreographies. That's why Cirque du Soleil became so popular. In the field of dance, Quebec was the first to really change the trends with companies like La La La Human Steps, O VERTIGO and Compagnie Marie Chouinard. I remember, when I first saw their works, I was shocked because it was so different from the original dance model we had. I thought that no one would accept that style of dance and no presenters would try to book it. However, these dance companies ended up creating great new demands, perhaps because the younger generation was looking for that kind of new artistic expression. People were a bit tired of the conventional classical arts like Ballet and orchestra—that is not to say that the classical arts are not good—but people were more interested in new expression and creation. When presenters came to CINARS and saw these performances, the response was great. They said: "We don't have anything like this in our country. We have to have this in our festival."

Would you say that such direction created a new identity for the arts of Quebec?

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

Yes. The rest of Canada recognized that the artists from Quebec were really different, and couldn't be compared to what they were doing. Today, about 70% of our artists touring overseas are from Montreal. Of course, the provincial government of Quebec has provided tremendous financial support for the creation and production of new artistic expression and this is part of the results. Proportionately, that Quebec investment was more important than the rest of Canada provinces. The other provinces of Canada have not made a long-term investment in the arts, and that has made a big difference for the Quebec artists.

### The changes in CINARS over the course of 25 years

Can you tell us what changes have taken place in CINARS over the last 25 years?

Ten years ago we received a lot of criticism from CINARS foreign participants. They said, "We bring a lot of Quebec and Canadian artists to our countries but Canadian presenters don't invite our artists to perform in Canada." They were exactly right. Canadian presenters were also saying, "We don't need to go to CINARS because we already know about the Canadian artists." So we changed our policy and began inviting more international artists to CINARS so Canadian presenters could see them and create mutual relationship during the platform. In 2008 CINARS Platform, the ratio of artists in the showcases was 40% Quebec, 20% from the rest of Canada and 40% from abroad.

We don't want CINARS to be a Canadian platform. We want it to be considered as an international platform. We want it to be a place where presenters from all countries can come to Montreal and meet artists from many countries, not only Canada, and discover their works. CINARS is held every two years in Montreal, so, we are positioning ourselves as a central place for networking. Also, when artists from all over the world get together, they interact and stimulate each other, which is important for the artists of Quebec and Canada as well. When we created CINARS in 1984, our purpose was strictly focused on exporting Canadian artists' works abroad, but now, that has evolved into a bigger vision.

From a few years ago, I can see the progression of the new generation that is growing up in numbers, not only in Canada but everywhere. New trends are represented in all aspects of performing arts: a new generation of artists, the works, the presenters and the public. Just as the people of my generation brought in new trends 20 years ago, I can feel that this new generation is now giving birth to new trends in the same way. Right now, I think that many artists are searching for new things and experimenting a lot. Some of it is interesting and some of it isn't, and that is just fine. We must accept that and continue to support them. I think that we are going to see big change soon. It may come from Japan or Italy or other countries, and it may be influential enough change the whole picture.

We have noticed that CINARS is focusing on "training" recently. Can you talk about programs in this area?

A few years ago, I realized that almost all of the artist's agents and managers around me, and also the directors of dance, theater and circus companies are people like me who are around the age of 50 or 55, getting old. I realized that this is a problem. The older generation needs to find a way to transfer the experience and expertise to the

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

\*1 Over the last 25 years, CINARS has held over 100 workshops, round tables, training seminars in Canada and abroad to teach artist agents and managers about developing overseas markets and impart know-how to the artists about touring abroad. In December 2008 a five-day intensive seminar titled "Stakes, ingredients and strategies for international touring" was held in Montreal.

younger generation. We need to teach them how to promote their creations in order to export their work and help the artists to prepare touring abroad. Thus, in 2009, we organized a twice a "five-day training seminar."(\*1) The training seminar was designed for small groups of about 20 people. Professionals explained in detail marketing plans, strategic planning skills and fund developments (including grant research and writing) and promotional activities. In my generation, we had to learn by ourselves, by trials and errors, but we thought that it would be better to help the younger people. By teaching them what we have learned, we wanted them to be more prepared for their work. Those seminars went very well, and now, we have seminar sessions every year with new groups of people. What is also interesting to see is that during the course of this training seminar, some people realize that this is not the field they want to work in. Normally, people realize such things after a couple of years of hands-on working experiences. So, we are saving them a lot of career time for trial and error. We are also receiving requests from abroad to organize such training programs as well. Last January, we had seminars in Finland and Norway. We also received requests from Spain and South Korea, and we expect to do workshops and seminars in Japan too.

In our office, we generally are talking to two or three companies' representatives a week and they ask for advices. They might say, "We want to do a tour in Italy." So, we ask them what kind of work they do and they say, "We do theater for young people." Then, we give them a contact that we think will be appropriate.

We also tell them that rather than just sending an email or a DVD they should actually go to Italy and meet the people face to face. It is important to start from there.

One of my advices is that they should plan well to avoid wasting a lot of energy, money and time.

### Do you provide that kind of consulting year-round free of charge?

Yes. We have funding from the government to cover staff salaries, so we can provide this kind advice for free. We say to artists that if they need any support in terms of information, technical support and strategic planning or anything else, they can come to meet us anytime.

### How large is your current staff and budget?

There are five people working for CINARS and since our Platform is held every two years, our budget varies between a million Canadian dollars for the Platform year and 500 to 600 thousand dollars for the year in between. For the organizing body of an event of our scale, I think it is a rather small budget.

### The "platform" as a place where people meet and build relationships

You have been using the term "platform" instead of "arts market" in our conversation. Yes, "Platform" is certainly a keyword, and this is something we had a lot of discussion about. In a recent roundtable discussion on "arts market," I said that we should change the terminology "arts market" that does not accurately described what we are doing today. More appropriate words are "networking" or "meeting." What we are doing is getting together with people from many countries and different disciplines and we are there to share information and expertise. It is an event or a "place" where we gather with the aim of discovering new creations, new artists through this exchange

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

\*2 IETM is an international contemporary performing arts network based in Belgium. It was founded in 1981 as the Informal European Theatre Meeting. In 2005 its name was changed to the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts.

\*3 ISPA (International Society for Performing Arts) is a membership-based international non-profit organization founded in 1949 for the purpose of building a network of performing arts professionals.

network.

Besides CINARS and TPAM (Tokyo Performing Arts Market), we have congresses such as IETM (\*2) and ISPA (\*3) where performing arts representatives and art festivals gather together to exchange information about artists and works from the different regions. We don't go to these events just to "buy and sell." The purpose isn't just to secure contracts or agreements. In order to promote creations and artists, we need to honor the long-term process. We need to go back to those congresses or platforms repeatedly and get to know each other by meeting often and do the follow-up in order to build trust and human relationships. In the last few years in particular, I asked people not to call it a "market" anymore, but to call it a "platform" since those events are more like "windows" or "places" where people can meet and get to know each other and learn about their interests.

Would you say that in reality the actual finalizing of contracts and decisions on selections of artists and their works are based on trust and human relationships between the field colleagues?

Yes. In my opinion, that is precisely how it is and should be today. In the past, I think we made a mistake by thinking that we could do everything by e-mail and with the web, but that is not true anymore. We need to have real human contacts and to discuss the work, the artists and the trends. One presenter told me that he gets about 50 DVDs and promotional pamphlets every two weeks and he doesn't have time to look at most of them and finally, promotional materials pile up in the corner of his room and end-up going to the recycle bins. It is sad but I understand it. He said, "When I select artists, I first look the work of those with whom I have built up a human relationship (with an agent or a company). I actually go to see their works again." This is the way it is. The competition is tough.

In the past, we would get a DVD and find it interesting and then, approach the agent or company, but not anymore. I think that method is wrong. Now, I think of a promotional DVD or CD is like a business card. But as you do with a business card, you have to actually get in touch with the person and have a human relationship before discussing business. It's important to talk in person topics like the issues artists are facing today and the latest trends in dance, for example. We also talk about what the audience wants to see. You have to actually see and feel the works to be sure that that is what the audience must see, what we must show them.

You attend TPAM here in Japan almost every year.

Yes. It's important to network, to create contact and to maintain close relationships. It also helps ensure that we can have many people from Japan participating to the CINARS Platform. Also, I feel that it is important to see the maturation process of Japanese artists. It is important to see artists here in the Japanese context, talk to them, and share the situation and expectations at the end. In order to do that, of course, you have to come to events like TPAM repeatedly. It is a long process through but with the years, we established partnerships with other platforms.

So, if someone asks me if it is worthwhile going to TPAM only once, I say forget it. If you intend to go only one time, it will be a waste time and money. You have to go repeatedly, at least four or five times in order to understand the creative activities going there. The same thing is true for any other country. When I come to Japan, I want

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

to see works that reflect Japanese culture. I am not interested in seeing a copy of American culture in Japan. I want the Japanese people to be Japanese. We want to see artistic expression that is truly unique to Japan and that we will never see anywhere else. We want to see works that are original and professional. Over the last ten years, I have been watching many young artists here in Japan and I have seen very clearly a definitive maturation occurring among them.

### Quebec Province's support for CINARS

Please tell us about the support that the provincial government of Quebec provides for the arts, which also supported CINARS over many years.

In 1992, the Quebec government issued a 150-pages long paper titled *Quebec Cultural Policy, Our Culture, Our Future*. The vision set down in that policy paper is basically the same today and it supports what we have been doing. The policy is based on the understanding that international market is essential to the development of arts and culture in Quebec. When an artistic work is able to tour overseas, it keeps the work alive for two or three years and provides a livelihood for the artists. Still in 1992, the Quebec Ministry of Culture established CALQ (Quebec Arts Council) (\*4). Funding for performing artists touring abroad and funding for CINARS both come from CALQ. In 1995 the Ministry of Culture of Quebec also established another organization, called SODEC (\*5). SODEC specializes in supporting the industries of film, craft, recording, publishing, and so on. SODEC also provides support for the commercial sector of the arts and cultural business, while CALQ supports mainly non-profit performing arts companies and projects.

\*4 CALQ is an agency of the Quebec provincial government with a name equivalent to Quebec Arts Council in English.

\*5 SODEC is a company for the development of cultural enterprises.

### What about support from the Canadian government at the federal level?

The government of Quebec continues his investment in culture, and the federal government saw, about 15 years ago, the success of Quebec and started funding for the arts. Unfortunately, last year, we had a new government that started cutting support for the arts and culture. Due to this situation, we had a special meeting with our Minister of Culture at the federal level in Ottawa and we were able to show him statistically that for every dollar the government invests we are bringing back five dollars and 50 cents into the government. Arts and cultural business has a positive economic effect because it creates jobs and it also promotes the image of Canada abroad. We also pointed out the fact that the majority of the incomes we received for tours abroad actually comes in and stays in Canada because our artistic companies fly on Air Canada, for example. Perhaps the only part of the incomes that goes out of Canada is the accommodation and restaurant fees. The Minister was impressed with the presentation and has said he hasn't considered some of those economic benefits before. The arts and culture also attract international tourists to Canada and brings more business, and these economic returns have to be articulated and recognized.

Does CINARS engage in arts advocacy in light of the recent cuts in funding for the arts? It would seem that being able to cite a 5.5 time return on investment would be effective with policy makers.

CINARS itself has conducted the main research on the economic impact of the arts business with the help of survey professionals. Our organism has conducted the

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

survey by contacting around 500 arts companies, managers and agencies from all around Canada and we received about 35% responses. CINARS has sent the new survey results to the government at the end of March. In this survey, the negative effects of the government's cuts in arts funding came out clearly. It showed that many Canadian companies had to cancel their overseas performance tours and lost incomes as a result. The only exception was Quebec, where the provincial government did not cut funding for the arts.

I told our [federal] Minister of Culture that if he cuts support for arts programs, we will lose all that has been built up so far over time and we will have to start all over again. For example, it is meaningful for us to come to TPAM every year because we create a link, a relationship with the people and the artists from Japan. It is long-term process, as I repeatedly said, it requires long-term investment and planning. If we miss one year, the link will be broken and we will have to start over again next time. That is a difficult thing to do. The new government in Canada now has been in office for two years and we are still having a hard time making them understand.

As you know, Canada has just hosted the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, and a lot of funds were shifted from arts & culture to sports. Canadian athletes hadn't done well in the Olympics last time so the government poured millions of dollars into winter sports. Now that Olympics are over, I was hoping the government to reinvest in culture so the budget that was cut from culture programs would come back. However, this morning, I read in the newspaper that British Columbia, the province that hosted the Olympics, incurred an enormous deficit because of the Olympics so the budget for the arts and culture in British Columbia had been cut 95%! Can you believe it? It's going to take five or maybe ten years to pay back Olympics deficit. Those of us in the arts and culture sector have no choice but to take a part of the debts.

So, those of us in the nonprofit arts sector should be careful not to be so eager to agree with hosting an Olympics Games, shouldn't we?

Yes, and that reminds me, Montreal hosted in 1976 the Summer Olympics with a deficit as well, and it took more than 20 or 25 years to pay back. Olympics may be good for the visibility of our country, but I am worried that the government is going to cut the budget for the arts and culture again. We have a good relationship with the Quebec government, even if the federal government money is not there anymore, at least the Quebec government will continue to support the artists. But now, it's very bad for the arts communities of other Canadian provinces, because the funding cuts are hurting their ability to create new art works and tour, and that is likely to continue for some time. CINARS want to support and promote the artists not only from Quebec but from the other provinces as well, however, it is very difficult for us to do that if we are not receiving funding support from the other provinces.

### A new platform in Beijing

I heard that a new arts market will be starting in Beijing and that you will be one of the advisors for that. Since there is also an arts market in Shanghai, what sort of vision do you have about the Beijing platform and the relationship with Shanghai and others?

I'm surprised you have heard about that already (laughs). Chinese government asked

## Presenter Interview

CINARS, over a quarter of a century  
The vision and accomplishments of  
founder Alain Pare

CINARS四半世紀の歩み  
創設者アラン・パレの挑戦

me to be a consultant on that project. The main direction will be to make Beijing an international performing arts platform. One issue with Shanghai's current Performing Arts Fair, I believe, is that it is mainly focused on the domestic performing arts. It's also because Chinese government wants to promote Chinese artists abroad.

Other countries like Japan and South Korea also have performing arts markets and people know how to manage theaters and festivals. In China the way they work is really different. I feel that we have to re-create or build the structure, share our know-how and provide training. However, I don't want to change things unnecessarily to "our way." I would prefer to have them try to do things their own way.

### What are the major differences you see in the Chinese way, for example?

When we tried to have Quebec artists tour in China, we started to talk about fees and the Chinese organizers asked, "Why do we have to pay artist fees?" In China, performers in ballet, orchestra and opera are all paid by the government on a regular salary. They go to rehearsals on a regular schedule from Monday to Friday and whether they are doing ten performances or 200 a year, it's the same salary. Artists also have a very secure job in terms of incomes, and I don't want to see that changed. In China the performing arts have been mainly in traditional forms, but many presenters now want more contemporary and original forms of artistic expression. For example, one of the things I can propose at this time is inviting choreographers from other countries and creating new contemporary works with traditionally trained Chinese dancers. Today, younger generation in China are well-educated, have disposable incomes, travel abroad and grew up with internet, so they know what is happening in other parts of the world and want to see new things. They don't want to go and see the same ballet and opera that their parents attended. However, they don't have new contemporary performing arts in China yet. Creating a new base in China will take long times, it will be a long-term process. For example, they can invite choreographers from Japan or Korea and work together to create new collaborative dance works. Such international collaboration should work for theater and music as well, and they will be looking into such collaborations as new possibilities. Such new works will be interesting for presenters from Canada, or Japan or other countries. Presenters will think that if they go to China they might find something original and completely different from what they have already found in other countries. I always say, "First, let's talk about what is the best way for you." Then, after many discussions, then, they should take the final decisions. In 2005, I went to South Korea when they created PAMS (Performing Arts Market in Seoul) (\*6) and stayed there for two weeks and provided training sessions for their staff members. Then, they created KAMS (Korea Arts Management Service) (\*7) as an organization to promote Korean artists abroad. They used the CINARS model, I have always said to them that such format must be adapted to fit their own culture and expectations. I have been consistent in that message. It's important that in Asia, people should do business not in the American or European way, but in the Asian way.

\*6 Performing Arts Market Seoul (PAMS) is a South Korean arts market launched in 2005. It is organized by KAMS.

\*7 Korea Arts Management Service (KAMS) is a center for the support of arts management under the umbrella of the South Korean government's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.