

La Cirque du Tenebrae – a Company for In Her Majesty’s Name

Despite being eclipsed in recent times by the mercantile fleet of Great Britain, the Doges of Venice still maintain a significant trading presence in the Mediterranean, Black and Baltic seas.

Of late though they have become more interested in banking and the acquisition and trading of information. They have agents scattered across the courts of Europe but their role is the gathering of intelligence, not covert operations. For these they employ a most intriguing solution - La Cirque du Tenebrae, the circus of shadows. There are six of these small troupes of performers on the roads of Europe. A seventh remains at the Doge’s Palace where it trains the replacements for the relentless attrition amongst its agents.

They travel from town to city to palace entertaining peasant and prince alike with their acrobatics, daring knife acts, mysterious magicians and sinister clowns. As they do so they seduce officials, acquire important information both by guile and force, and perform small acts of sabotage and assassination. Only the Vatican’s secretive Cognoscenti have as fine an appreciation of the wheels and levers of power in mainland Europe. Through hundreds of often small and quickly forgotten interventions they are able to manipulate the successions of Kings and Emperors, the polices of Empires and the course of history.

The Master of a troupe is a highly trained agent of many years’ experience. It is his task to plan his troupe’s operations to the finest detail. He is a deadly opponent skilled in many mysteries, especially those related to the use of shadow. He is also the ringmaster – an eloquent showman.

The Mage is a consummate illusionist. He can bend reality to his will and make people believe in the impossible.

The Blades are the jugglers, the knife throwers and fire-eaters. They are the foot-soldiers of the troupe and will defend it to the death.

The Birds are the acrobats, those men and women who seem to be able to get into the most impossible places and out again without leaving a trace. In combat they use their bodies and extreme agility to confound and attack their foes.

The Clowns are the Cirque’s sinister saboteurs and assassins. They use fireworks, rockets and explosives to bring down the curtain on anyone who the Doges would destroy.

The Beauty can be male or female but it is they who seduce important men and strip from them their innermost secrets. Oddly the Cirque does not use blackmail as a tool as they regard it as a double-edged blade that can harm them as quickly as it does the victim.

| Figure | Pluck | FV | SV | Speed | Cost | Talents/Powers | Basic Equipment |
|------------|-------|----|----|-------|------|--|---|
| The Master | 3+ | +3 | +3 | +1 | 59 | Leadership +2, Tumbling, Erudite Wit, Path of Shadows, Zone of Shadows | Lined coat, sword |
| The Mage | 4+ | +1 | +1 | +0 | 16+ | Leadership +1, Tumbling, up to 20 points of mysterious powers | Lined coat, fighting knife |
| The Blades | 4+ | +2 | +2 | +1 | 18 | Tumbling | Throwing knives, fighting knife |
| The Birds | 4+ | +1 | +1 | +2 | 14 | Tumbling, Martial Artist | None |
| The Clowns | 4+ | +1 | +3 | +0 | 35 | Tumbling | Brigandine, fighting knife, explosive grenades x3 |
| The Beauty | 5+ | +1 | +1 | +1 | 28 | Leadership +1, Tumbling, Mesmerism | Fighting knife |

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Options

- Up to two Blades can be fire-breathers. This enables them to make flame attacks with a range of 3", an attack bonus of +1 and a Pluck penalty of -1 (+7 points each).
- Up to two Clowns can each take a Congreve Rocket Gun (+7 points) and up to 3 Rocket Grenades (+7 points per grenade).

New talent - Tumbling: All members of the troupe are skilled gymnasts. Whenever they move, no matter how far, they count as having run for the purposes of targeting them. If they use this ability, they also suffer the -4 penalty for Shooting even if they have moved less than 3". This Talent costs 3 points per figure.