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No. 198

June 2014

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KING POLE

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Front cover: Summer's High School riding
on Zippos Circus 2014, with Salvatore
copying the horse's movements. Photo: DJ.

In 1934, when the Circus Friends
Association was founded, the world and
the circus were very different to now.
There are around 30 circuses touring in
Britain this season, more than in the
1930s or 1950s, but the average size is
more modest now, and the use of tech-
nology -- from mobile phones to comput-
er controlled lighting rigs -- is sophisti-
cated beyond the wildest dreams of previ-
ous generations.

But the essential skills of the modern
circus -- in acrobatics, comedy, horse-
manship and animal training -- remain
the same and it is these skills that are
applauded as much as how they are pre-
sented.

The September 2014 King Pole will be
No. 200 and we have plans to make it a
memorable one, coming as it does in the
CFA's 80th year.

In this issue, we cover circus shows
both in Britain and in Europe and
America, as well as the festival in
Figueres of circus talent new to Europe.

We also pay tribute to a number of
British circus people who've passed on
recently at a very early age, including
Patrick Austen and Mary Ann Tabak.

My thanks to all contributors, to Don
Stacey, David Davis, Steve Chapman and
Andrew Lewis, to Gary Henderson at
dh3digital printers, to Brian and Jane
Cadnum for packing and despatch; and
to advertising manager Janice Fiske.

David Jamieson

CFA VISIT TO THE HIPPODROME, GREAT YARMOUTH

There will be a CFA visit to the
Hippodrome Circus on Saturday 6th
September to the 7.30pm show. At
5pm, members can meet for a meal if
they wish at a venue to be arranged by
the organiser. Drinks will be available
at the bar with artistes and staff after
the show. Organiser: Steve Chapman.
Tel: 01328 853272.

2015 CIRCUS REUNION

Friday 6th February to Sunday 8th February 2015
De Vere Hotel, The Village, Chilwell, Nottingham NG9 6DL.

The Circus Friends Association (CFA)
and King Pole magazine are delighted
to announce their support for and co-
sponsorship of the 2015 Circus
Reunion.

President Andrew Lewis said, "The
CFA Council met on Sunday 11th May
and was unanimously in favour of sup-
porting the big 2015 Circus Reunion
being organised by Frazer and Sharon
Watson. It's a great opportunity for the
circus world and circus enthusiasts to
get together, and we are very pleased to
have been invited to be involved."

The CFA is planning to provide -
- A free copy of King Pole or a King Pole
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- A bumper sales stand of circus books,
DVDs, programmes and posters, and

back issues of King Pole magazine
- A free copy of the CFA's fabulous
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ing out a subscription at the Reunion.

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newspaper, with news and views
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News Round-Up

Contributor: Don Stacey (DS)

The Circus Space

The Circus Space in Hoxton Street, London, has been re-named and re-launched as the National Centre for Circus Arts. DS

The Circus of Horrors

Dr. Haze of the Circus of Horrors has pointed out that he owns the European trade mark for the Circus of Horrors title, and that in Circus Dates in March 2014 we mentioned a Circus of Horrors appearing in Berlin in May. I understand that show is now calling itself Zirkus des Horrors and is run by the Romanza circus group. Another German show, known as Horror Circus, run by Dana Fischer, was in Frankfurt for most of May. In Spain there is a Circo de Los Horrores, which I believe is run by the clown Susu, who has appeared in England with Tony Hopkins' show and at the Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth. DS

Tom Gaskin's ambition

22 year old Tom Gaskin, who has worked for some years at Great Yarmouth Hippodrome Circus as a spotlight operator and ring-boy, is now in his 3rd year degree course at the National Centre for Circus Arts (formerly Circus Space) in London. He is specialising in juggling, and hopes one day to return to the Hippodrome as a star performer. He appeared in Circus Fest SilverLining at the Roundhouse in London from April 9 to 12 and has a part as a circus performer in the forthcoming 20th Century Fox film, "Frankenstein", which stars Daniel Radcliffe and James McEvoy, due for release in January 2015. DS

Clowns International

Clowns International (CI), Britain's only organisation for clown entertainers, has been bemoaning that membership has dropped from almost 1,000 in the 1980s to little over 100 in 2014. Butlin's holiday camp in Bognor Regis did not house the annual gathering of clowns this year and members of CI are blaming a fear of clowns (colrophobia) as being a major reason clowns are no longer getting booked for children's entertainments, shopping malls and other traditional forms of entertainment, and claim the number employed in circuses has also dropped. The Daily Telegraph did not help the matter by stating that "the other clownish redoubt was the circus ring, and travelling circuses, which while popular on the continent, hardly exist in Britain". This comment was made without checking with King Pole or the ACP as to the true number of travelling circuses still touring in Great Britain, which indicates a far rosier situation than that and other newspapers are prone to publicising, thus distorting the true picture of traditional circuses still on the road in Great Britain. DS



Above: the company of Circus Tyanna 2014, led by Todd Christian and family, was happy to pose for this photo on World Circus Day, following the afternoon performance. Photo: Peter Gaskin.



Christening at Zippos Circus

Photos by Piet-Hein Out

The sun shone brilliantly on Easter Monday, April 21, 2014, for the Christening under Zippos big top at Blackheath, London, of Alessia Ottilia Rastelli, daughter of the clown Vittorio Rastelli and his wife Hajnalka Ottilia Rastelli-Beck. All the artistes of Zippos Circus attended the event in the tent, performers being in costumes, and were joined by staff and guests at the event which was generously sponsored by Martin Burton. Daniele Rastelli, one of Vittorio's two sons, was God Father, and Charlotte Faulkner was God Mother. Norman Barrett MBE supplied his ringmaster's top hat to support the font for the occasion.

The Roman Catholic ceremony was conducted by Monsignor Jerome Lloyd, OSJV, Titular Archbishop of Selsey, assisted by Father Mark Dunning and the verger, Adrian. The ceremony took place at 12 noon and was followed by champagne to toast the child and a huge Christening cake enjoyed by all. The event was held prior to the annual Press Day performance of the circus which was attended by around 300 members of the press and their families. Monsignor Jerome Lloyd was the clergyman brave enough to walk the Marinos' high wire at Hove a few years ago for a publicity stunt at Zippos Circus. DS

UK Circus Reviews and Reports

• Zippos Circus - "Unchained" • Zippos Cirque Berserk • Circus Zhair • Great Yarmouth Hippodrome "Pirates" • Russell's International Circus •



ZIPPOS CIRCUS - "Unchained"

Blackheath, London • 20 April 2014 • Review: David Jamieson. Following three years when it featured Team Lucius and their motorbikes in the globe, Martin Burton's enterprise rings the changes and has a fast-moving, well-produced show, with an emphasis on comedy. Emilion Delbosq, here for the past two years as one of Duo Delbosq, has reinvented himself as a new, bespectacled character called Emilion, with the continuity comedy and two audience participation spots; and the main clown entree comes from the legendary Rastellis with their musical clown act.

- Emilion's warm-up.
- Introducing the company and ringmaster Norman Barrett MBE.
- Tropicana Troupe from Cuba - springboard acrobatics - a lively and spectacular series of flights and somersaults, presented with the colours and enthusiasm of the culture of Cuba.
- Odka and Stephanie, Academy of Circus Arts graduates with their aerial silks presentation.
- Salvatore - Italian cloudswing star with a full routine, sold with confidence and a smiling personality.
- Summer, this year's equestrian director with Zippos, rides High School on a beautiful grey horse. The routine includes pirouetting round tailor's dummies, the Spanish walk, a very good passage, and a series of rears. Salvatore walks alongside horse and rider, copying the horse's movements, for some sequences.
- Emilion's first audience participation spot, in which he confidently finds a young lady who reacted very well to being taken for a drive and a date in his imaginary car.
- Norman and his budgies - ringmaster Norman Barrett with a revised routine, with several new tricks and props, and, as always, sold with terrific enthusiasm.
- The Rastellis are billed as the world's greatest musical clowns and they're particular clown heroes of Zippos founder and md, Martin Burton. The two augustes, Oreste and Vittorio, remain

faithful to their traditional make-up, wigs and costumes, and to the fast-moving succession of gags culminating in firing a cannon at an exploding piano - so fast-moving that the absence of logic or storyline does not seem to matter. Oreste announces a tribute to Louis Armstrong and sings "What a wonderful world" impressively and the routine comes to a stirring end with a musical march.

- Hercules, the strongman from Ukraine, returns for a second year with Zippos, with his amazing feats of strength, including juggling heavy tyres in the style of hoopjuggler Bob Bramson, and pulling a people carrier vehicle forward with his teeth, and allowing it to run over him. The act is a great talking point, sold with a modern approach and Hercules' humorous personality.
- After the interval, ringmaster Norman Barrett and the Zippos Circus Ballet provided the introduction to the second half.
- The Rastellis have a second spot, featuring juggling by Vittorio, a reminder that the great juggler Enrico Rastelli was a member of the family.
- Odka is a talented Mongolian contortionist whose routine includes the Marinelli bend, and squeezing herself into a bottle!
- Emilion - "let's rock!" - a second audience participation act from Emilion, this time with four volunteers "creating" a rock band. By simply adding a moustache, Emilion becomes Freddie Mercury of Queen, to lead the number.
- Summer and six bay and chestnut liberty horses. The horses work well in a standard routine and the da capos (short, often solo tricks) included hind leg walking, hind leg pirouettes and one jumping through a large paper hoop when it left the ring.
- Tropicana Troupe, aerial casting. It's been a long time since Zippos had an act which needed a safety net, in 2000 when the Souzas were here with their flying trapeze act. The Tropicanas' routine is aerial casting and employs several casters positioned on the rig to propel and catch the flyers. It's a spectacular climax to the show and is followed quickly by the finale to this very satisfying and entertaining production of Zippos Circus.



Opposite page: the Rastellis. This page: above, Norman and his budgies; Emilien. Above right: the Tropicana aerial casting. Below: Hercules and members of the company.



UNCLE SAM'S GREAT AMERICAN CIRCUS

Peterborough • April 2014 • Review by
Andrew Lewis

Using a large 38m round new big top which was introduced at Boston a few weeks previous, the show looked well built up on the spacious Embankment site in central Peterborough, although I felt the show wasn't laid out to its best advantage. Inside the big top is well filled with tiered bucket seats, two concession trailers, blue ring doors (soon to be replaced with a new much larger ring entrance) and the bandstand trailer complete with Keelan Mack on drums and Otto Europa on keyboards.

With banks of LED lights on each of the king poles (which for some strange reason is mostly directed to the upper reaches of the big top rather than the ring floor) and no follow spot, overall production effects are limited but with a good choice of acts and with extremely good proper circus



music, the end result is near on two hours of quality circus.

Paul Martinez returns as ringmaster and introduces the following acts: Duo Valdemar with a good opening act on the wheel of death, which includes Rosie skipping and then walking on the outside whilst blindfold and Mario with some jumps inside the wheel, juggling three clubs and with some good mounts onto the revolving prop. Mario also provides a juggling act later in the show, with a bar setting and juggling small balls which he catches in pockets around his waist and then moving onto clubs. Rosie also has a solo act, this being her solo trapeze act, which includes several drops to ankle catch and a somersault dismount from the trapeze to a vertical rope.

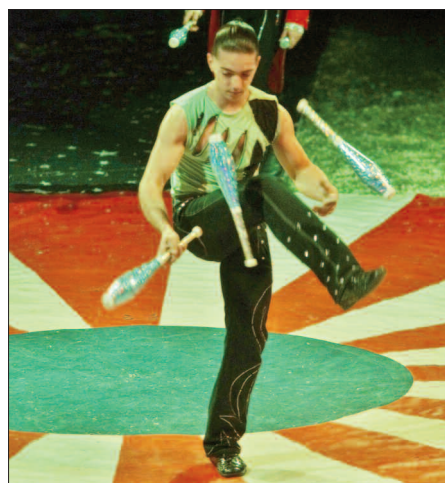
The five strong team of Zulu Warriors have a good display involving skipping, hoop diving and some acrobatics, before our attention is diverted into the roof of the big top for Sam's Angels with their excellent double aerial silks number. The Angels are Candice Taylor (England) and Cristina Juul Sørensen (Denmark) who has spent the last couple of seasons with Mr Fip's Circus.

The Duo Costache also return from last year's production with their excellent perch act. This years it's Leo and Vladislav Morondel who present the act but as the characters Venom and Captain America to fit in with the release of the new Captain America film. In the second half, they present another act, this being their new metallic cube spinning act presented in a pirate theme, that also includes some trapeze work and dental holds. This was a very good act but one that was also very different and unusual.

The Brophy Family comprising Gary, wife Caroline and daughter Jessinta close the first half with their excellent western display involving whips and some superb rope spinning skills. This is by far one of the best acts in the show and has to be the best act of its type anywhere! Gary this year also has the chance to show off his



Above left: Paul Martinez and Ossy. Above: Jessinta Brophy. Below left: Duo Costache. Below: Mario, and the Thunderball Riders.



comedy skills, as he is clowning as Ozzy and a good job he is doing too. His routines include a version of musical chairs and a routine using a telescope prop and a good volunteer from the audience.

Closing the show is the usual motorbikes in the globe act or more commonly known as the Thunderball Riders with three riders on bikes and a young lady stood in the middle.





CIRCUS ZYAIR

Hemel Hempstead • 6 April 2014

Report by David Jamieson.

For several years, the Marinos father and son high wire act has been a major attraction in top British circuses. More recently they developed an equally thrilling wheel of death number, which, following Ernesto's retirement, has been performed by son Chico and his partner Regiani. They presented both these acts in Zippos Cirque Besser in Hyde Park last winter.



They have joined forces with Adam Ingham to launch Circus Zyair. Adam has been described as Martin Burton's protégé, having learnt the ropes of running a circus as a management trainee on Zippos Circus. Circus Zyair has its Circus Headquarters in Wokingham, Berkshire, and it's presented by BCR Entertainments Limited. www.circus-zyair.co.uk

The show opened in Hemel Hempstead for a three day stand on April 4th-6th. I visited on Sunday 6th and it was encouraging to see the new show packed out at the 3pm performance. It featured an interesting collection of acts, presented in an alternative circus format - modern music (no traditional circus tunes), few announcements (the show started with an unheralded blackout), and many of the



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acts wearing street clothes instead of razzle-dazzle sparkling costumes. The audience in Hemel Hempstead gave enthusiastic applause to many of the acts and loud ovations to the best numbers.

The hand balancing of Hungarians Kriztian and Tibi really grabbed the audience. The high skill level was appreciated by the public and it was an excellent choice to have them so early in running order, as it established the quality level. And, closing the show, the Marinos wheel of death was a sensation, going as well as I've seen it go, helped by the smallish tent.

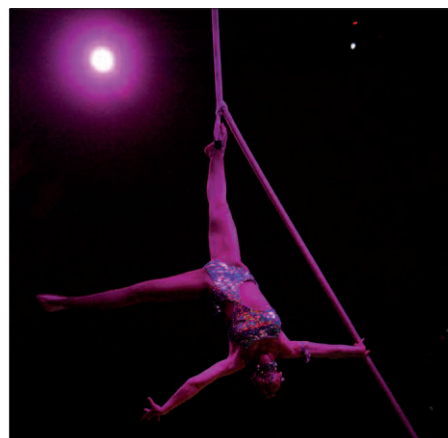
The programme ran as follows -

- Fire eating, fire juggling, grinder, etc. by members of the company: Benedict Beven, Shaun and Pippa Lee, Sam Goodburn, Regiani Singh.
- Kriztian and Tibi - hand to hand balancing - last year on Jay Miller's.
- Clown Clumbsey and Collette who sang "Clown" by Emily Sande.
- Duo Lee: Shaun and Pippa - smart illusion act.
- Aerial straps impressively performed by Aaron Darnell-Smith.
- Clumbsey - audience participation.
- Unicycling and juggling - Sam Goodburn.
- Interval.
- Kriztian - acrobatics on a mast.
- Clumbsey and Collette - spaghetti entree
- Duo Lee - accomplished diabolo act - last

year with Mr Fips' Wonder Circus.

- an excellent corde lisse presentation by Georgiana Baunuta
- Unicycling and juggling on a low, tight wire - a second lengthy number by Sam Goodburn, whose abilities and quirky personality went well with the audience.
- Clumbsey - "magic"
- Marinos - Space wheel par excellence.
- Finale

The Marinos high wire act was not included at this performance.



Below: the Marinos in the Circus Zyair big-top. Below left: Kriztian and Tibi. Above: Georgiana Baunuta



RUSSELL'S INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS

Sheringham, Cookie's Car Boot Sale Site. 07-21 April.

Review by Steve Chapman.

A sell out performance on the second Wednesday of the school Easter break made for an excellent atmosphere for the matinee performance of Russell's International Circus. The show opened in 2005 and it has gone from strength to strength in terms of quality, production and presentation. When I visited, the programme was without Lucia and Antonio Candela who were appearing at the Pirate show in Great Yarmouth.

An excellent lavish opening involves all performers with circus skills, dancing and Amanda Russell on an aerial umbrella. The first act is a very good new aerial net routine from Amanda.

Clowning duties this year are shared between Chico Rico and Alex Morley. In the first half Chico Rico does his potato catching gag and baby in a pram gag. Alex with Miss Amanda have the magic bucket routine which goes down well with the audience.

The show has a number of rising circus stars: Jaqueline Morales presents a high speed hula hoop act; Miss Kizzy has a brand new exciting corde lisse act; and Miss Sophia from the Chermond school of gymnastics in Norwich shows her good balancing routine. The first half closes with Romanian juggler, Daniel Chirita with an excellent varied routine.

Las Chicas Morales opens the second half with their sensational rolling globes including spinning fire hoops and ascending the ramps. In this packed second half, Chico Rico does a hula hoop routine and his hilarious boxing act with five volunteers from the audience. Alex Morley has a brand new cannon act taking the place of the human cannonball who has failed to appear. Kizzy and Sophia as the Gemini Sisters present a new very good double trapeze act. Miss Amanda presents her foot juggling act and there is a slinky routine. Troupe Corina close the show with their accomplished Russian bar act. A colourful finale set to the music, Don't cry for me Argentina sees all acts returning for their final bow ending a very strong, entertaining and well produced show.

PIRATES LIVE

Great Yarmouth Hippodrome • April 5th to April 21st. 2.30pm and 6.30pm daily. Review by Steve Chapman.

The Hippodrome arena was transformed for this Easter spectacular. A large pirate ship has been built by 3D Creations in Gorleston. It is placed at the back of the Hippodrome covering the rear seating, hence only half of the seating is used for this show. The ring is sunken and is called Yarmouth harbour for the duration of the show. Boards are placed around the pool to further the harbour setting.

The storyline is written by Jack Jay and Johnny Mac and follows the attempts of Captain Jack (Jack Jay) and his followers to take the key of the Great Yarmouth harbour treasure chest. The good guy is pirate Johnny played by Johnny Mac. As with all stories of this kind good wins the day. All staff and performers are appropriately dressed in pirate uniforms.

A number of excellent circus routines are woven into the storyline. The Kenyan Pirates show off their skills of limbo dancing and skipping. Sascha Williams, returning from the Christmas show, presents his rola rola act initially on the quayside and then on the bandstand for the final trick, giving extra height.

Antonio Candela from Russell's Circus plays the admiral and presents his fire routine in the Hippodrome for the first time. Lucy Ladbroke returns to the Hippodrome with her excellent cloudswinging act.

Andrei Tazluana is new to the Hippodrome and has a skilful hand balancing act in the first half of the show. He returns with his partner in the second half as the Duo Aerialistique for a double aerial straps routine.

Other circus acts include a quadruple aerial silks, aerial net and Victoria Clarke on the aerial hoop. The dancers add to the show with a number of routines between circus acts.

Overall this is a very lively, entertaining show with superb lighting and costumes. With a cast of 15 performers, this show should please anyone who visited it over the Easter break. Excellent work from the Jay family and others in the Hippodrome.

<http://www.eastlife.co.uk/norfolk/entertainment/gtyarmouth-hippodrome>



JOHN LAWSON'S CIRCUS

Green Street Green, Dartford • 9-13 April

• Review by David Davis • Photos by Janice Fiske

This year John Lawson's Circus is celebrating its 40th anniversary tour, the show having first appeared in 1974 at the YMCA Sports Centre in Hastings for the Christmas Season. Over the intervening years, John Lawson's Circus has built up a reputation for bringing good family entertainment to the smaller towns and villages of England and Wales.

This year's show is hosted by ringmaster Attila Endresz, who is now in his 8th season with John Lawson's Circus. If Attila is a familiar figure to audiences, the Tsytko Family from Ukraine (consisting of Slava, Natalia and 16 year old David) is certainly not, as they are making their debut in the United Kingdom. The first of the family to be seen is Natalia who produces an extravaganza of soap bubbles in a variety of sizes and shapes. Her personality plus the ever changing lighting ensures that the act registers strongly with the audience. The act closes the first half and during the interval there is the opportunity to have your photograph taken inside a giant bubble. The look of amazement on the children's faces as the bubbles form around them is almost an act in itself.

Another member of the family, David, opens the second half with a fast paced, intricate and skilful diabolo display using first one and then two diabolos. For his final trick David manipulates two diabolos throwing them high into the roof of the big top.

All three members of the family combine their talents for the final act, which is an impressive display of foot-juggling and balancing by Slava and David assisted by Natalia. They commence by using two trinkas of different height, foot-juggling a cylinder each as well as simultaneously passing them from one to the other. There is some solo work by Slava involving a spinning disc, barrels and cylinders whilst also balancing David on his hands and feet. For the final trick, Slava balances a series of ladders on his feet. The first is an extremely tall ladder at the top of which is a shorter ladder that juts out at right angles, which in turn has a shorter ladder at right angles to it thus restoring it to the vertical. David climbs to the top of the main ladder and then slowly edges along the second one and up the third where he performs a handstand whilst spinning a baton on his feet.

The Duo Nexus who consist of Ross Farrer and Monika Magyar are in their first touring season with John Lawson's Circus having previously toured with Jay Miller's Circus. This talented couple contribute three acts. Ross Farrer presents his James Bond themed rola-rola act, which culminates with him balancing his rola board on top of four cylinders. Monika Magyar contributes two routines. In the first half she presents a very stylish display on the aerial silks whilst in the second half she presents a hand-balancing routine which climaxes with her using her feet to shoot a bow such that the arrow bursts a balloon.

No strangers to John Lawson's Circus are Jason Hill and Claire-Marie Weight. As Miss Top Hat and Tails, Claire-Marie presents her ever elegant sword and dagger balancing act. Their Western act has been given a make-over. Dressed in leathers, and billed as the Marshalls, they roar into the ring on a motor bike before embarking on their pacey whip cracking and knife throwing routine which includes a blind-folded Jason throwing knives at his partner. The look of anxiety on Claire-Marie's face during this trick really helps sell it to the audience. At least I assume she is acting!

A young lady called Miss Ali presents two acts. She opens the show on the corde-lisse with a variety of holds and mock falls and in the second half she executes a neat routine on the aerial hoop. I understand that these two spots are usually filled by Miss



Jencia with a hoola-hoop routine and an aerial hoop number. However at the time of my visit, John Lawson's Circus had a second unit performing at nearby Ruxley Manor Garden Centre and Miss Jencia was part of that company.

Niven Lawson, as Clown Nimmo, makes a number of appearances during the show. He makes his entrance wandering through the audience creating chaos around him. When he eventually arrives in the ring he insists on introducing his new friends to Attila. Thus we get to meet those familiar characters Charlie Cheesecake, Sally Slapcabbage and Billy Swallowpudding. After some cross talk, we



learn that it is sound engineer David Devito's birthday and that Nimmo is not to touch anything when Attila leaves the ring as it will spoil the birthday surprise. Needless to say, Nimmo ignores this advice and finds a portable radio which leads to the 'you can't play that here' routine with Attila eventually throwing the radio into a dustbin which itself becomes musical when the lid is lifted.

For his second appearance, Nimmo enters the ring carrying a fully laid table, complete with cloth and four cups and saucers. He promises to remove the tablecloth with a 'whoosh' without breaking the crockery. When Nimmo successfully achieves this, Attila discovers the real trick is that the cups and saucers are attached to the table. Later in the first half Nimmo returns to walk a tightrope tied between two chairs. With the chairs continually falling over as he tries to get the rope tight, he ends up walking along the tightrope as it lies on the ground.

During the second half, Nimmo decides to take a photograph of the audience for the local paper. A request for a few volunteers from the audience results in most of the children in the audience swarming into the ring where Nimmo's ancient camera squirts them all with water as he takes the photo.

Towards the end of the show, a very worried Attila informs Nimmo that his wife has started sleepwalking but that he dare not wake her up as this can apparently be fatal. At this very moment, Attila's wife (played by Miss Ali) sleepwalks into the ring and proceeds to take Nimmo's wallet, returning for his mobile



Above left: Ross Farrar, rola-rola, assisted by Monika Magyar. Above: the Tsytko. Below left: Niven Lawson, as Clown Nimmo. Below: the Marshals.

phone and then his coat. At each occurrence, Attila tells Nimmo not to wake her but not to worry as he will bring the items back to him 'as good as new in the morning'. Finally, the sleepwalking wife walks out of the ring with Nimmo, who stops at the ring entrance, turns back to Attila and tells him not to worry as he will bring her back 'as good as new in the morning'!



I am sure Niven would be the first to agree that his comedy is based on well tried and tested routines. Yet the shrieks of laughter and delight from the audience, particularly its younger members, indicate that many people are hearing and seeing these gags and routines for the first time. As for me, it is a delight to watch a master clown at work.

Since seeing the show, I understand that Bippo the Clown (Gareth Ellis) has replaced Clown Nimmo, allowing Niven to concentrate on the many aspects of running a successful circus.

I would venture to say that this year's show is one of the strongest that John Lawson's Circus has had and is certainly a fitting way to celebrate its 40th anniversary.



CIRCUS FANTASIA

Hucknall car boot site. Wed 26th Feb to Sun 2nd March.

Review by Andrew Lewis.

Now in its second season, the outfit looked neat and tidy built up on this car boot site next to the busy Hucknall bypass, with the transport all painted blue with the show's name across and the two tone blue big top complete with small circular cupola. Inside, the big top is well filled with blocks of tiered bench seating, very smart rich red ring curtains and with the snack bar in one corner. Lighting is good and supplied by the very popular LED lights and with the effective use of a follow spot, whilst music is recorded and often well chosen. David Konyot opens the performance with the safety announcements, before the opening sequence which is a produced opening featuring many of the artistes, all costumed in black and white and with a mix of hula hoop work by Lizzy Springthorpe, juggling by Ancsa Konyot and with skipping by the Kenya Warriors.

The Stefanyuk Troupe contribute quite a bit to the programme, with Oxsana and Roman providing some humour during the first half with a comedy ballet routine and a gag featuring tequila! They also close the first half with their familiar comedy trampoline number and in the second half, they provide their big bike acrobatic comedy number. Daughter Anya provides two acts to the performance, in the first half its her unusual juggling routine with some bounce juggling with balls on a small platform before moving onto the triangular shaped Perspex prop. Later in the show, Anya presents her aerial silks routine which is particularly good and includes a splits, an upside down splits and a good drop to finish.

The small troupe of three Kenya Warriors provide some skipping in the opening and closing sequences of the show but they also open the second half of the show with their single guyed pole balancing act, which includes the troupe climbing the pole simply by using their hands and all three climbing and posing on the pole. All their routines are presented with plenty of smiles and enthusiasm.

Lizzy Springthorpe provides two acts to the

show, her hula hoop work is within the opening sequence of the show and a little later in the first half, with a ballet theme and with musical backing from David and Lilly Konyot, Lizzy presents an aerial hoop act which includes a layout across the hoop, a stomach balance and at times Lizzy lowers herself to the ring floor landing en pointe, hence the hoop is not very high in the air!

The main comedy entrée is provided by The Konyots, comprising David, wife Ancsa and daughter Lilly, joined by Roman Stefanyuk. For the greater part of the routine, it's given over to a kung fu/karate theme with Lilly as



the master and getting the better of David and Roman. Plenty of slaps, plenty of laughs and good humour, which made up a good all round entrée. Yes, I missed the music but understand the need to change and keep it fresh for the audiences.

The last part of the show is a big produced Western Bonanza and again includes all the artistes with a good mix of skipping by the Kenyans, rope spinning by Anya, Lizzy and Lilly, whip cracking by Lilly and Anya, paper tearing with whips by David and Lilly and some gun spinning by Lilly.

Finale time sees all the artistes introduced for the first time and as the public leave, they are lined up by the exit to say thanks and goodbye.

This year's production I thought was very good, much stronger than last year's show and contained a good mix of skills and some good acts. David Konyot has done a good job of producing the show for proprietor Matthew Wingate who has a good team around him.



CIRCUS MONDAO

April 5th to April 21st. 2.30pm and 6.30pm daily.

Review and photos by Andrew Lewis.

Circus Mondao once again chose Spalding as the opening venue of the season and have completely rung the changes within the show. Presented under the Miotti 32m round red/white/blue four pole big top, with good LED lighting and recorded music, the show features clowns and artistes new to both Circus Mondao and the UK.

Ringmistress Petra Jackson again hosts the show which runs around one hour and fifty minutes

The Elmousatti Troupe of four Moroccan acrobats present a lively display of traditional tumbling and pyramid building which closes the performance, Ahmed and Said from the troupe present for the very first time an act on the wheel of death which includes small jumps within the wheel and walking on the outside of the prop and the troupe also present a lively charivari to open the show. Horses play a big part in this year's programme, with Carol MacManus and her troupe of Andalusian and Appaloosa horses presented in a Spanish theme, whilst Gracie Timmis also presents horses again this year, commencing with a brief appearance of the show's Shetland ponies before the introduction of the show's new 'big and little' act trained by Carol over the winter. Circus Mondao has a large menagerie of exotic animals including camels, llamas, zebra and reindeer and some of these are used in a walk around, before the two now sizeable camels appear with riders Petra and Cinzia who perform a series of poses and balances on the backs of the camels and earlier in the show, Petra, Carol and sisters Madalane and Cinzia combine for a High School riding display, which with four horses/riders does make a good ring full and does make the display more effective.

Madalane and Cinzia also present their own individual acts, Cinzia has a new aerial net routine presented with a pirate theme and includes a splits across the net, a layout across the net and a spinning splits, whilst Madalane shows the corde lisse routine she first presented last year, which includes both wrist and ankle spins and a really fast wrist spin to finish.

Making their debut in the UK are Ukrainian couple Andrei and Nina who between them present three acts in the programme. Nina presents an unusual hand balancing act using two metal cubes, whilst Andrei presents another balancing/posing routine on the Chinese pole and they combine under the name of Duo Aspire for an excellent double trapeze act. Also from the Ukraine are the new clowns Duo Charly, Alex and Mila Manger, who have worked considerably in Europe and the Far East but until this season never in the UK. They are bright and colourful clowns, their routines include the only trained fly in the world, some juggling and a very good band entrée with volunteers from the audience, which I thought was their best routine.

Mondao regular Kristine Bennett reprises the aerial silks routine from last years production which includes a splits, a sitting position and a good flying sequence, whilst her partner Ionut Andreiescu presents his new Slinky routine, which with effective music makes for a lively routine.

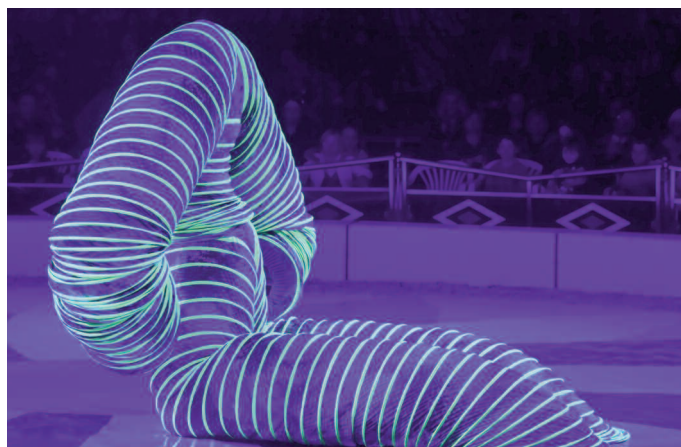
Kristine along with Madalane and Cinzia also prove effective as the Mondao Showgirls, with a couple of brief dance introductions.

Overall a very enjoyable and entertaining programme with a number of good acts, animals and two bright, colourful clowns.

This page, top to bottom: Nina's handbalancing; Ionut Andreiescu presents his new Slinky; Andrei on the Chinese pole. Opposite page: Circus Fantasia. Left, top to bottom, Roman Stefanyuk; Anya Stefanyuk, juggling; Lizzy, hula hoops. Right: the finale; Lilly Konyot, rope spinning.

PINDER'S CIRCUS 2014

Ringmaster Mike Lea, safari themed comedy car with escaping gorilla - Eddy and Erika Pinder, gorilla Edward Pinder. From Argentina, the Duo Sagittarius - crossbow act, looking very good in the smaller big top. Eddy Pinder - inflatable elephant costume, Edward Pinder - dazzling diablo, Erika Pinder - footjuggling, Eddy Pinder - inflatable strongman costume gag, Simon Deville - tightwire. Interval. Mike Lea assisted by Erika - magic and illusion. Los Gauchos - second act of crossbow couple, Edward Pinder - western act as seen on Britain's Got Talent,



Simon Deville - static trapeze act including a superb dental spin, Eddy and Erika Pinder - comedy decorators, Finale.

Figueres' Third Great Circus Festival of Spain by Don Stacey.
Photographs by Piet-Hein Out, Pierre Gautier, and Martine Simon.



Above: the Award of the Critics' Jury is seen being presented here to clown Pastelito, by Don Stacey. Photo: Martine Simon. Above right: the Pyong Yang circus troupe, one of three acts winning a Gold Elephant. Photo: Pierre Gautier.



Above: the Award of the Critics' Jury is seen being presented here to clown Pastelito, by Don Stacey. Photo: Martine Simon. Above right: the Pyong Yang circus troupe, one of three acts winning a Gold Elephant. Photo: Pierre Gautier.

After only three years, the International Circus Festival of the City of Figueres has quickly established itself as a major attraction in Catalonia and in Spain itself, and the most significant event of the year in that country. The third edition took place under the big top at the Gran Carpa Recinte Firal in Figueres from February 20 to 24, 2014, and its huge success - attracting audiences of 28,000 in five days - is solely due to the huge achievements of its founder, Genis Matabosch, his dedicated team of supporters, and the continued support of the Mayor and Municipality of Figueres, the Costa Brava tourist organisations, the Cultural Department of Catalunya, Girona Tourism department, and a veritable host of sponsors from major international firms like Coca Cola, Scania, Ford, to local hotels and restaurants, all no doubt eager not only to support this major local event but also to benefit from the huge media activity and increased business that it generates. The juries of the Festival this year were all invited to the Town Hall to meet the young, blonde and exceedingly attractive Mayor, Marta Filip i Torres, and at this function, Genis Matabosch introduced many of the sponsors to thank them for their involvement and to present them with commemorative certificates. Without doubt, the Circus Festival of Figueres has attracted civic and commercial support on a large scale while at the same time attracting the attention of circus directors, agents and artistes from around the world. May that such a festival could be repeated in Great Britain!

Acts totally new to European audiences

As for the previous two festivals the criteria has been that in opening new opportunities and challenges within the circus world, this open door for artistes from every continent to promote their arts in Europe, all the attractions must be totally new to audiences, never having been promoted in European festivals before.

Thus the festivals in Figueres offer a new window for agents and directors - as well as the general public - for previously unseen acts, and interest in it can only grow more and more each year.

Already it is noticeable that the event has prompted leading circus promoters - like Dr. Alain Frere from the International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, Cirque du Soleil, Henk Van der Meyden from Stardust Circus International - to attend, and no doubt in years to come more and more leading circus folk will attend the event with an eye to finding new and exciting talents.

Three Juries

As from the outset, the festival has had three main Juries to adjudicate the 20 acts from 14 or so countries, a total of around 75 artistes appearing in two different programmes, Blue and Red.

This year's Official Jury comprised Raoul Gibault, director of Cirque Medrano which has at times five units, Vice President of the Syndicat National des Grands Cirques Francais, and director of the Arena Entertainments company which supplied all the tents, wagons and ancilliary equipment for the second year of the festival; Dimitry Ivanov, president of the jury, Minister for Culture, Publicity and Information for the Republic of Udmurtia, and president of the International Circus Arts festival of Izhevsk, one of the leading circus festivals in Russia; Bruno Laloye, creator of the annual Circus Festivals in Saint-Paul-Les-Dax, France since 1999; Sun Lili, Artistic Director of the Acrobatic School of Pekin, vice president of the China National Acrobatic Troupe, and of the China Acrobats Association; and Thierry Outrilla, former dancer with the famous French star Zizi Jeannmaire, and now the Stage Director of the renowned Moulin Rouge cabaret in Paris.

The Critics' Jury comprised Leendert Bedijn, from Holland, publisher of many circus books and the periodical *Circus Photo Magazine* and *Circus Models Magazine*, with a book on Gerry Cottle in preparation from his publishing arm, Becom Publishers; Alexander Rybkin, a former Russian equilibrist who today works as a publicist and expert for the Rosgocirk company in Moscow; Alessandro Serena, Italian circus writer for *Circo* in Italy, producer of TV programmes for *Circo Massimo*, agent and circus expert; myself, representing *King Pole* and other publications; and Julio Revollendo from Mexico, a university professor knowledgeable about the circus world in which he was born, and like Serena a noted author of circus books.

The Photographers' Jury comprised Alvaro Castellano Villar from Spain, former official photographer for the Circo Price in Madrid, and whose 30,000 negatives of that important show were recently acquired by Genis Matabosch to form a large part of the new Circus Arts Foundation in Figueres; Bertrand Guay, a prominent French circus photographer renowned throughout the world; Patrick Jehl, another French photographer of note whose sons are also circus lovers and photographers like their father; Yvon Kervinio, another of France's most famous and talented circus photographers, who also, through his company L'Aventure Carto, produces a large number of circus books on various topics; and Holland's Piet-Hein Out, who is developing a large European network of customers for fine circus photography among whom is Martin Burton, director of Zippos Circus.

It might be interesting to know that I was the only judge invited for a third year running, although I actually did not attend last year due to air traffic problems. At least a dozen of the judges from the first two festivals were revisiting this year, among them Jasmine George; Peter Dubinsky; Rolf Knie; Christian Hamel; Dirk Kuik; Christian Sudre; Francois Deheurtevant; Joan Eric Miguel; Martine Simon; Alexander Grimailo; Arthur Hofmeester; and Christoffe Roullin.

I must say that the 15 jury members this year had a great feel-



ing of camaraderie, enjoying the convivial outings, meals and meetings arranged during their stay by jury secretary Gari Munoz and his associate Ramon Bech, who could not do enough for their guests, working 24/7 to ensure we had a good time.

Among the highlights this year for me was another visit to the fantastic Salvador Dali Theatre-Museum; a guided tour of Figueres itself; guided tour of Girona; guided tour of the city of Roses and the castle there; an international circus exchange fair; a visit to the new Circus Arts Foundation offices; and a remarkable lunch at the Figueres Catering School, served by the youthful chefs and waiters and waitresses.

From start to finish, we all had a great time, and were reluctant to leave the city at the end of the festival!

The 168 page enormous programme, hardcovered and throughout in glorious colour, feted not only the artistes, judges, etc. of the festival, but also the many volunteer workers who made such a success of the event. Among Genis Matabosch's main assistants were Manager Assistant Joan Mompert, Gari Munoz and Ramon Bech, and a dozen more, including the general ringmaster Patrick Rosseel, who worked so hard to create seamless performances throughout the week. One cannot fail to praise the excellent contribution of the French musical director Carmino d'Angelo who faultlessly directed his group of eleven musicians through both shows and each performance with his customary cool elan, a master of his chosen field.

Genis Matabosch himself, born in Figueres in 1977, was both director and presenter of the festival, his strikingly good looks, imposing presentational air, and impeccable manner matched by his ability to introduce each facet of the production - and in a variety of impressive and colourful outfits - with a style and elegance unmatched by any other circus compere today in Europe. His ability to introduce acts and the juries without any notes whatsoever denotes a most remarkable ability as a host for such an impressive show, and he is now in demand to compere other European festivals.

Included in the festivities of the week in Figueres, for the juries and the public, were exhibitions in the city, which had treasures of the Circus Arts Foundation collection displayed at the El Caestre art gallery; circus toys at the popular Toy Museum; photographs by Conxi Molons at the Civic Centre; and the astonishing multi-dimensional photos of Miquel Ribot (some of the most remarkable images I have ever seen) at the Galeria Dolores Ventos.

The presentation of six new circus books by various authors attracted a lot of interest, as did the International Circus Collectors' Fair.

Meanwhile at the circus each night the secondary big top used for reception was home to a remarkable number of merchandise items, not only the impressive, hardbacked 168 page programme (a book rather than a standard programme), but also the tee-shirts and other souvenir items of the firm Comoyoko, the beautiful items of circus offered by Venturahosta including cardboard figures of circus artistes, animals and lifesized clown carnival



Above left: the Olimpos. Photo: Pierre Gautier. Above: Beyond Destiny. Photo: Piet-Hein Out.

heads; the circus printing firm of Ricarte; and the many books, publications and programmes offered by the Circus Arts Foundation itself. In the foyer also there was a Cantina del Circ tented restaurant for the use of the public and the invited guests.

The performances were staged under Raoul Gibault's impressive cerise and pink scrolled big top and in addition to the performances of the Blue Show on February 20 and 22, and the Red Show on February 21 and 23, and the Gold Show awards gala on February 24, there were a number of additional public performances, all of which were totally sold out, indicating the huge popularity for Circus in Catalunia as well as for the festival. One's only regret is that animals have now been banned by the authorities in this region from the circus, although at the 2nd festival in 2013 the Russian Cossack riding troupe Yakov Ekk was allowed to appear in Figueres, raising hopes that dispensation may be granted in future years. Many people in Spain as well as Britain, agree that a circus without animals is not a real circus!

Although only in his thirties, Genis Matabosch, who was born in Figueres, has presented a variety of circuses in Spain, directed the International Clowns Festival at Cornelia (2002 to 2008), the International Circus Festival at Albacete (2008 to 2010), before creating Figueres' own international festival. That it is so well-established within only three years is a remarkable achievement but he is a dynamic personality, his radiant smile hiding a steely determination.

Aided in the sawdust ring by his stalwart musical director Carmino d'Angelo, and flawless technical ringmaster Patrick Rosseel, he presented both Blue and Red Shows with panache, charm and elegance.

Blue Show

The Blue Show commenced with the overture "The Greatest Show on Earth" from the Cecil B. DeMille film, and a parade of all the artistes from both programmes followed by the first act proper, the Flag Circus of China troupe of five young men in modern outfits combining dance and acrobatics with nifty diabolo work, played out to the music of "Singing in the Rain" and "Go West", a suitably fast moving opening act. Spanish audiences are not used to giving standing ovations apart from at the finale of a show, but at the gala show, Flag Circus received a spontaneous ovation after their appearance.

Trinh Tra My turned out to be an attractive 21 year old girl from Vietnam with a graceful sword and dagger balancing act, mainly presented in mid air, hanging from silks. At the first attempt she showed pluck in continuing the act after suffering the catastrophe of dropping the sword and glasses, which only proves that there was no faking of her props. She went on to win a major prize after the second viewing. Ukrainian clowns Duo Smiles, two young men, did indeed produce smiles from the audience with their cod magic act which featured a curiously elastic white rabbit which grew bigger and bigger as the act progressed.



Above left: Catalina Palma. Opposite page: Genis Matabosch. Photos: Pierre Gautier. Above right: Duo Shadows. Photo: Piet-Hein Out.

Also from Ukraine was the equilibristic act named Three's a Charm, two girls and a young man, in an artistic act with a variety of posing work. Duo Smiles returned for a second entree, this time a protracted bullfight parody, later re-enacted by members of the audience, a man and a young boy. It registered quite well (after all, some Spanish do love a bullfight) but for me one of the clowns spent far too much time telling the stooges what to do, thus spoiling any spontaneity.

Ming and Alexa were an attractive young couple from China and America respectively with a fairly standard aerial straps presentation and as so often now presented as a love story. Ming Fang, 31, and Alexa Diann Hukari, 35, worked well together but I thought I had seen several better acts of this genre, and three tender kisses during the number were two too many!

Empress was the rather strange title of an act from Rosgoscirk in Russia, which I had been looking forward to seeing for some time, having heard good things about it. Its artistic direction was by the famed Ruslan Gannev, noted for often strange or challenging choreography and concepts, and this group of three young men and a lovely blonde girl certainly produced what he wanted! Their excellent juggling act, crossjuggling a number of clubs betwixt and between the boys on the ground or on perches and the girl on a swing in the air, despite a number of drops each time we saw them, was certainly original and attractive. Their costumes were also somewhat odd, the girl in a long red gown designed with a Union Jack at the back, the young men in fanciful Scottish kilts, with bagpipes strung round their necks to contain spare clubs, and all too often "flashing" their kilts to reveal Union Jack underpants. All rather contrived and confusing; I would have far preferred to see this attractive quartet in conventional attire doing what they know best, juggling clubs with great dexterity. That they did not receive a major award is due more to the strangely disturbing presentation rather than their undoubted skills as jugglers.

The second part of the Blue Show (which incidentally sported a blue ringfence, while the red show had a red one!) started with the Russian aerial casting act called Beyond Destiny, and presented by Edgard Zapashny and the Bolshoi Moscow Circus. Two girls and three men, with a history of appearing at prestigious festivals in Russia, were impressive, with a particularly agile younger male partner in a devilish characterisation.

One of the revelations of the festival was the contortion act of Jordan McKnight, from the United States of America, who celebrated her 16th birthday three days after the event finished. A charismatic young blonde girl, appearing out of a small travelling trunk, she captivated the audiences with her varied work, a cutesy personality and pigtailed. Jasimine George-Straga from Australia introduced this new young talent to the festival. You

either like or dislike this type of act but the public seemed to love it!

An artiste whose act was created by Dmitry Chernov from Russia was Oleg Kulaev, 27, a macho young performer on aerial chains and in ripped jeans, appealing particularly to the younger and not so young ladies in the audience.

The same might be said of the following act, Duo Shadows, from Rosgoscirk, Russia, Stanislav Kotelnikov, 31, and Viascheslav Spirin, 29, two handsome young hunks with a fine parterre equilibristic act, handstand artistes par excellence, but have we not seen a spate of these, equally good, in recent years? Another duo in ripped jeans, they also had rather macabre body paint to accentuate their remarkable torsos, but the facial make-up was not alluring. I yearned to intervene and give them some tips to improve their appeal, for their work was very good indeed.

The Yunnan Acrobatic Troupe, offered by the Yunnan Acrobatic Troupe of China and Peter Dubinsky's Firebird Productions, comprising up to 17 young Chinese acrobats, greatly appealed to younger members of the audience, with a well-choreographed and lively display combining breakdancing, tumbling, and high pole balancing work, even skateboarding by an enthusiastic team of young male artistes who changed costumes several times during the act and roundly espoused the staid concept of Chinese acts. The music chosen was distinctly strange, with "Titanic" at one moment, and then, incongruously, the Christmassy "Tidings of Comfort and Joy", a balletic sequence and rap and rock music. It may have been a mish-mash of music and circus skills, but it was most certainly energising and made way for the Blue Show's finale.

The Red Show

After the overture "When the Circus Comes to Town" from the musical "Barnum", and the parade of artistes, the Red Show commenced with the lunged trapeze act of the beautiful Chilean girl, Camila Antonieta Palma Aguire, 18 years old, a charismatic performer but for me performing those virtually impossible feats that cannot be achieved without a wire.

She was followed by what was for me one of the outstanding performers of the entire festival, the Chinese male juggler Kai Cao, aged 22, from the National Acrobatic Troupe of China, and offered by Firebird Productions, a charismatic and handsome young man with a simply superb performance atop a pedestal and steps, juggling from three to nine balls. Very stylish, with a great personality, excellent costuming, in perfect step to the music, and with infectious audience appeal, Kai Cao was a consummate artiste of the highest calibre, deserving of the great response the audience gave him. A real revelation of this festival, he was one of the most charismatic performers I have seen in over 70 years of circus going.

Pastelito, a versatile circus star indeed!

And what of the performer who followed Kai Cao! Pastelito was a 37 year old clown from Chile, his full name Augustin Oscar

Maluneda Rios, and he's a relative of wild animal trainer Taba Maluneda with the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus in the USA. I understand he started his clowning career with the Circo Atayde Hermanos of Mexico but now he owns his own very successful circus in Chile, of which he is surely its star performer. For he possesses star quality in abundance, and in Figueres he was the ultimate scene-stealer, with a sympathetic personality and infectious sense of fun which everyone in Figueres simply loved. Assisted by his own ringmaster, Sergio Eliecer Parada Gonzalez, he simply captivated his audience in a half hour of joy and fun. He proved himself not only a clown of style, but also an all-round entertainer, a singer of quality, dancer and eccentric, both a sympathetic clownish personality but also a highly talented all round artiste, capable of pathos and humour, an admirable musician on saxophone, trumpet and drums, a superb singer, a performer with incredible attack and style, in short a major circus superstar who greatly endeared himself to the Hispanic audiences, and who won without any dissent the award of the Critics' Jury. Showing his astonishing versatility and vitality, he capped off a half hour's display of versatile entertainment with a series of flips and somersaults across the ring to secure his place in circus immortality. A circus star, indeed.

More down to earth, yet up in the air, was the aerial straps act of Russian aerialiste Tatiana Ozhiganova from the Bolshoi Moscow Circus. She is 24 years old and very attractive, a beautiful, graceful artiste who combined music on concertina with her display. She's now in the Moscow State Circus on tour in Britain.

Erka, four girls from the Center for Development of Mongolian Circus, presented here by Firebird Productions, gave a solid, standard display of contortionism and handbalancing on a high pedestal, smiling nicely in a well co-ordinated routine, which seemed a trifle overlong. Their costumes evoked the snakeskin routines of yesteryear.

The handsome couple, Duo Marquez from Mexico, Daniel Nazareth Marquez Martinez and Stephanie Michelle Sandoval Ayala, a good-looking couple, worked on a pedestal for their static ladder balancing act which featured a number of good routines but which had a rather repetitious feel about it. For many, however, the hunky young man and his red-haired partner, in their twenties, made a striking pair as he climbed up and down the ladder bearing his partner standing on his head by one or two feet, manipulating a hula hoop at the same time.

Six young men from the Yunnan Acrobatic Troupe of China demonstrated their skills in manipulating the traditional "Water Meteors", a happy, jolly troupe with a great routine in colourful traditional outfits.

The second part of the Red Show commenced with a fairly low high wire act from Rosgoscirk, the Troupe Karpov, three men and a girl, with funky music, poor costuming and a routine which relied entirely on safety lunge. Readers are already aware that I do not readily subscribe to acts performing the impossible by using such aids.

No trickery was used in the following delightful act, handbalancing and contortion artistry of the lovely 15 old Chilean girl, Catalina Palma, whose clean lines, lovely smile, supreme grace and quality greatly appealed to me. Charming and controlled in her work, she also displayed a remarkable "eyes, teeth and ambition" approach for her age.

The very handsome 21 year old Argentinian, Christian Gomez, slim and lithe, with a haughty air, worked to dramatic music during his technically excellent aerial straps presentation.

If he was eye-candy for the girls in the audience so, too, was the impressive equilibristic act of the Olimpo's Brothers from Brazil. Jorge, Alvaro and Aurino, in their very early 20s, got wolf whistles as they shed jackets to reveal their torsos, but did not succeed on sex appeal alone, having a really great routine in the style of the established acts of the Pellegrinis, Messoudis and Rialcris, one of the big highlights of the evening.

Gaining the only standing ovation of the evening was the final act, that of the National Circus of Pyongyang from North Korea, the sparkling Russian swing and fixed bar combination of seven young men and a single girl, a truly enervating act with a bewildering succession of dives, somersaults, multiple pirouettes and a final breathtaking five somersaults by one man from the swing to a ground mattress. Breathtaking for the artistes and even more



so for the public.

"And now the end is near"

Pastelito, in his last appearance of the night, consolidated his position as not just a clown of quality but a shining star with his rendition of Sinatra's song, "My Way", to lead into the finale parade, to end a second scintillating performance.

The programmed Velasco Brothers from the Philippines, acrobats and rollerbalancers, four young men, did not appear at the festival.

Gold Gala Show

The Gold Gala Show on February 24, with a packed house that included the star clowns Totti Alexis and David Larible, both of whom were among those presenting awards, featured the trapeze act of Camila (the older sister

of handbalancer Catalina Palma);

Jordan McKnight; juggler supreme Kai Cao; Tatiana Ozhiganova's aerial act; the diabolos manipulation of the boys from China's Flag Circus; Catalina Palma's sterling handbalance number; Trinh Tra My's sword and dagger balancing on silks; the juggling group Empress; the Yunnan Acrobatic Troupe's youth vitality on Chinese poles; the hugely popular clown Pastelito, a particular hit with the Hispanic audience; Ming and Alexa's aerial straps love duet; the strength acrobatics of the Olimpo's Brothers; and the Pyongyang Troupe of acrobats.

Dali's surrealist elephant figurines

The Spanish city of Figueres is synonymous with the famed artist Salvador Dali, whose theatre-museum dominates the place, and Genis Matabosch was very lucky to get permission for the major awards at the festivals to be modelled on Dali's surrealist elephant figurine. There were also many lesser prizes given to deserving acts. Among these were the award of the Circus of Udmurtia, to Catalina Palma; the prize of Dr. Alain Frere to Flag Circus; the Firebird Productions and Dax Circus Festival awards to Tatiana Ozhiganova; the Centre of Development of the Mongolian Circus award to Duo Marquez; Cirque Medrano prize to Olimpo's Brothers; Diamond Circus Sahka's award to Erka; the Burgos circus award to Jordan McKnight; Carlos Novales award to the Pyongyang Circus group; the Prix Toto and that of Circus Nikulin to Pastelito; China Acrobatic, Burgoscirkus and Chernov Creation awards to Jordan McKnight; the special Zapashny award to Ming and Alexa; and there were more still!

As these awards were given, artistes were showered by red, white and blue confetti, while for the major prizes, gold, silver and bronze confetti heralded the winners, an impressive touch I have seen only at the Figueres festivals.

The official Photographers' Jury award went to the exquisite handbalancer Catalina Palma, and that of the Press/Critics' Jury went to the great clown Pastelito, a very popular choice by myself and my four companions.

Uniquely, there were three Gold, three Silver and three Bronze awards this year. Bronze went to the aerial acts of Ming and Alexa; the Yunnan Acrobatic Troupe; and to Jordan McKnight.

Silver awards went to Tatiana Ozhiganova's aerial strap number; to Trinh Tra My's aerial silks equilibristic combination; and to the outstanding Olimpo's Brothers equilibristic act.

Finally, the three Gold Elephants went to the Pyongyang Circus troupe for their Russian swing/bar acrobatics; the Flag Circus of China; and the brilliant juggling of the Chinese boy Kai Cao.

So ended the 3rd International Circus Festival of Figueres, Spain, a real "high" for Genis Matabosch and his team, for the winning acts and even for those who failed to win; for it is not in the winning but in the participation in a great event that is ultimately the memories all will hold afterwards in years to come.

Circus Book and DVD News

"Dinna Forget"

CIRCUS HISTORIES FROM THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND 1237-2013

Researched by The Family La Bonche

• £12 incl. UK p&p

• Available from CFA Merchandising - see page 2

This is an interesting new book providing a different approach to British circus history. It's been developed by the youth circus Family La Bonche and published by Circus Central, the trading name of the North East Circus Development Trust in Newcastle in partnership with Tyne and Wear Archives and Discovery Museum. The Archives include the Arthur Fenwick Circus Collection and the book is "published to celebrate and share the rich circus heritage of the North East of England."

The book is a 120 page A4 paperback, highly illustrated in colour, and good value at £12 incl. postage. The contents include

- a selection of posters, photos and other items from the Fenwick collection (18 pages) and including Battys, Newsome, Chapmans, Mills, Chipperfield

- 90 profiles of circuses and performers in the North-East, presented chronologically from 1237 to 2013 (90 pages). incl. Pinder, Sir Robert Fossett, Gandey, Zippos, Planet, and community and youth circuses in the area.

DJ

FREDY KNIE JNR. "My Life - My Horses"

Published in German as "Mein Leben- Meine Pferde" and French as "Ma Vie - Mes Chevaux". The life story of circus director Fredy Knie Junior appeared in Switzerland in early 2014, and is copy-right to the Knie Brothers National Swiss Circus, with the Isbn 978-3-905289-15-2. It sells at 48 Swiss Francs per copy, at the Circus Knie box office or buffet of the circus, but can also be obtained online at www.knie.ch/shop for an additional 9 Francs for postage and packing.

The book is a hardcover edition with dustwrappers, well-printed and with 210 pages and a wealth of black and white and colour photos within the text, chosen from Fredy's own personal family album and the archives of the Circus Knie. I first met Fredy Jnr. in 1968, some 46 years ago, and owe much to a last-ing friendship with his late, great father, Fredy Knie Snr. Fredy Jnr. inherited his father's embracing love of horses and abilities to train them to perfection, both father and son having earnt the reputation of being among the very finest horsemen of all time. With his cousin Franco Knie Snr., Fredy Jnr. continues to direct the fortunes of this finest of all Swiss entertainment enterprises. Now in his 68th year, Fredy is still appearing in the ring, training his horses and influencing the seventh and eighth generations of the Knie family, as well as being artistic director of the show.

There have been many books written about the Knie circus and their families, and this "My Life - My Horses" is a magnificent addition, superbly illustrated and eloquently written. The first

123 pages are devoted to the Knie family and its history, of Fredy's parentage and his own wife, daughter and descendants, of notable friends of the family, among them Princess Stephanie of Monaco and the comic film star Chaplin.

There are sections devoted to the many notable invited guest artistes who have appeared at Circus Knie in postwar years, a veritable walkdown of famous Swiss theatre and cabaret per-formers, all beautifully illustrated from their starring roles.

The second section of the book is simply devoted to Fredy 's passion for his horses, his training techniques and his training of others in the same painstaking style. Fredy's father introduced the open training sessions at Circus Knie in 1938, and these are continued to this day for all interested parties to witness the humane methods by which the Knie animals are trained.

Even if readers are unable to read French or German, this book will be of huge interest to all circus and horse lovers for it is so wonderfully illustrated. It will surely be one of the most beautiful circus publications of 2014.

DS

Knie Illustrated

For many years now, in addition to its 76 page tour programme, Circus Knie has also sold a "Knie Illustrated" high class magazine. This year's, published in both German and French, is one of the best of all time, with a wealth of pages and beautiful photo-graphs, and selling at only 7 Swiss Francs a copy. This, and the 2014 souvenir items, which include David Larible tee-shirts, cushions and drinking mugs can be found online at www.knie.ch/shop.

DS

Rolf Knie Ungeschminkt

This is the title of a new book by Thomas Renggli to be published this year in Switzerland, with 450 pages, and selling at 46 Swiss Fsanacs, It is the latest book about the celebrated circus painter Rolf Knie, Fredy Knie Junior's brother.

DS

Circus Knie DVD

The Swiss television company TR TeleVision Suisse and Telepool and World (www.aworld.ch) have issued a double SVS concern-ing Circus Knie, and copyrighted 2008, The first dvd "Behind the scenes of Circus Knie", runs for 50 minutes and shows backstage preparations for the 2008 Swiss tour. Dvd 2 runs for 163 DVD, and is a docu-series made two weeks before the Swiss National Circus goes on tour. The language used is French.

DS

Ringling "Legends" DVD

For its latest three ring extravaganza, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in America has issued a souvenir DVD entitled "Legends", showing highlights from this new production, includ-ing the wild animal act of the British performer, Alexander Lacey. Special bonus features also are a music video We Are the Legends, Behind the Scenes, Producer's Cut, and a tour of the Ringling Center for Elephant Conservation. It can be obtained at the show's merchandising kiosks, and from Feld Consumer Products, 2001 US Highway 301, Palmetto, Florida 34221, USA.

DS

Are you interested in the Fairground?

The Fairground Mercury is the quarterly journal of the Fairground Association of Great Britain, sent free to every member. You can obtain this for a subscription of no more than £10 per year (OAPs and under 16s, £7).

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Comment: "Britain's Got Talent"

In April, 2014, Gerry Cottle was vocal in his condemnation of "Britain's Got Talent" after his cycling troupe was given only a fleeting appearance on the show (having been "booked" by talent scouts for Syco the previous year, and when Simon Cowell, leader of the programme on TV and Syco's director, openly stated that he did not like "Circus Acts"). I have for a long time noted that both Simon Cowell and Amanda Holden (who readers may remember appeared in a circus television series despite her dislike for performing animal acts) have openly disparaged circus performers on television and therefore I wondered why these people are allowed to judge such acts or, in the case of Cowell, to openly book them, knowing he will denounce them as a judge. It is basically only the singers, comedians and dance groups that can be of any value to Mr. Cowell and his company to make money out of when they win the contest, circus acts being relatively low-paid and not earning residuals from recordings. Yet he and Amanda Holden have both enthusiastically supported dog acts, despite the fact that they are trained in the same way as "Circus acts". On Monday, May 5, the Daily Telegraph revealed that last year Mr. Cowell gave £1.6 million to various charities, among them being PETA for he supports this animal rights organisation which is vehemently against circuses with performing animals. His "America's Got Talent" has also featured many American circus animal acts, one of which actually won!

In all the national versions of "Got Talent", circus acts are featured as part of the general 'variety' element of the shows, even though many of us realise that a successful pop singer is most likely to win due to the financial element of the programme. Mr. Cottle has called for a boycott of "Britain's Got Talent" by all circus artistes as a result of Cowell's open statement that he does not like circus acts. Are any circus artistes paid to appear in the shows as make-weight rather than invited to compete on an opening footing? Boy knife thrower Edward Pinder and the globe of death act from Planet Circus were shown in April on the current series of "Britain's Got Talent" and both were put through - even by Holden and Cowell - to the next stage of the contest.

As of May, "The Stage" newspaper was still carrying adverts for the programme, wanting dancers, singers, variety performers, and circus performers!

Don Stacey

Feedback

Rastelli and the Rastellis

My article on the Rastelli family, in the March 2014 issue of King Pole (no. 197), failed to record the appearances of the great juggler Enrico Rastelli at Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia, London. He first appeared there in the second show, in the winter of 1921/22, but only for a few days of the December 16 to January 21 performances since he had prior continental contracts to fulfill. That season he was billed as "The world's greatest juggler". He returned for the third season of Mills in London, December 22, 1922, to January 20, 1923, for the full run of the season, and billed as "the greatest juggler of the age". Bertram W. Mills also commented that he had been re-engaged "at enormous expense". I do not know if he had any other circus engagements in Britain.

In addition to all the engagements of the Rastellis' clown and trampoline acts in Britain, they also appeared at the Liverpool Stadium for the winter season of 1938/39. **Don Stacey**

Dr Richard H. Hunter Circus Archive

Photographs, programmes, posters, press cuttings, correspondence and other circus-related material which make up the above archive, which dates from university academic Dr Richard H. Hunter's career as a circus promoter in Belfast in the 1940s and 1950s, have now been placed for conservation and safe-keeping in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), which of course also houses other circus material, including the major pre-1914 Cooper Photographic Collection, with its evocative record of Duffy's, Buff Bill's and Hanneford's Circuses in that period. Indeed, the main staircase of PRONI's splendid new building in the Titanic Quarter of Belfast is dominated by a striking, giant-size photograph of a pyramid by six circus acrobats, taken from the Cooper Collection. The Hunter archive should be on open public access within about 12 months, following conservation and cataloguing.

Richard McMinn

Small ads • books, programmes, posters etc.

- **Circus and Other Entertainments.** Quality books, ephemera and memorabilia for sale. Send three 1st class stamps for catalogue. Anne FitzSimons, 3 Croft Park, Wetheral, Carlisle CA4 8JH
- **For Sale!** Don Stacey has for sale England's largest selection of circus material. Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for list. Don Stacey, The Old Stables, Albert Gate Road. Great Yarmouth NR30 3HN. Tel: 01493 855493.
- **Programmes etc. for sale.** - from the collection of Hank Van Den Berg. For complete list, email hj.berg@tiscali.nl
- **Programmes for sale** - from Hermann Sagemuller. For complete list, email Jongleur-Archiv@web.de

Advance Information

THE POSTERS OF BERTRAM MILLS CIRCUS

Over the past decade, London-based circus fan Steve Richley has built up a major collection of circus posters, notably of Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia from 1920 to 1967, and on tour from 1930 to 1964.

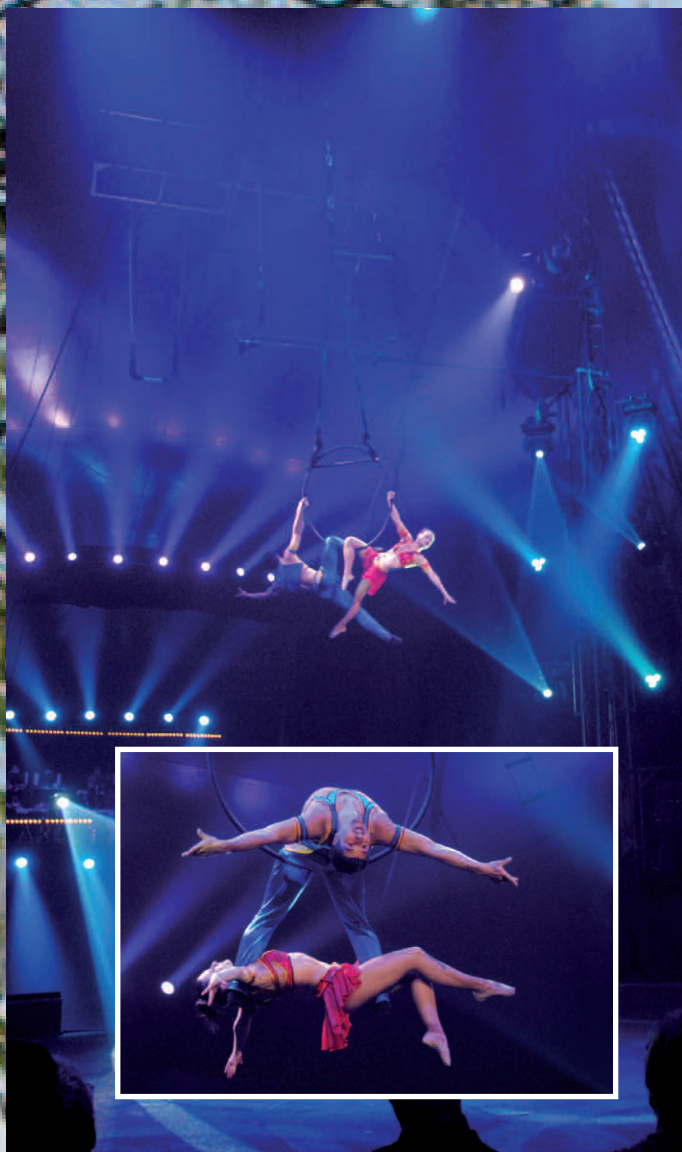
In November, Steve will publish his first book, containing over 300 posters, hanging cards and other ephemera related to the Mills show. The website of DoubleCrown Books (www.doublecrownbooks.com) contains details of a special pre-publication offer; see also the advert on page 3 of this issue of King Pole.

The book is visually stunning, bringing together for the first time so many different posters of such varied styles and great quality. Using a semi-scrapbook page design, the text captions and use of photographs of some of the acts and personalities combine to tell the story of the Mills enterprise. Publication of *The Posters of Bertram Mills Circus* promises to be an exciting event for circus enthusiasts the world over. **David Jamieson**

Below: Manzano the High School rider (1932); the Wallendas high wire act (1932); Patricia Bourne and her lions (1933); and the Mills Circus Supershow (1964).



Cirque Arlette Gruss 2014 - "History"



This is the 29th year of Cirque Arlette Gruss. The new production by Gilbert Gruss is entitled "History", and, as usual, it will visit 29 cities and towns in France, from Bordeaux in February to Paris in December. The show has an enormous cast, 40 artistes, 11 musicians and 12 ring staff, and its running costs must be staggering but then so is its success, as it plays to excellent houses.

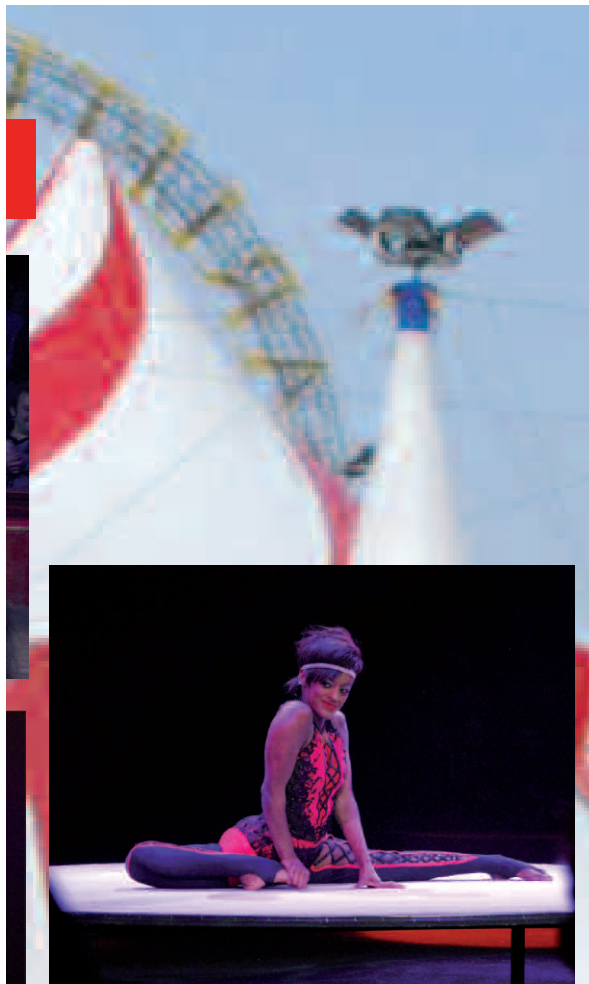
I paid my regular visit to Dunkerque at Easter to see the show, and thought it was one of the most satisfying and enjoyable Arlette Gruss productions of recent years. The comedy in particular was very good, with Swiss clown Andre returning to the show with new and novel routines, and Gregory Bellini providing some comic magic and illusions as well as a musical bells solo. There were two displays by a Chinese troupe of nine, a double-lane flying trapeze act also nine strong, four animal acts, and several accomplished solo and duo performances.

- Introductions - led by Kevin Sagau as an alternative ringmaster, a singing and guitar-strumming character wearing a Thunderbirds hat and outfit.
- Chinese Troupe Jinan, with a fast moving lasso number.
- Farmyard act - cattle, goats, pigs and geese - a brief and novel display presented by John Vernuccio
- Gregory Bellini - the comic character's 'audition' ends in an explosive disaster
- Juggling - in the air and on the table - Nathalie and Zedenek Supka
- *La Cavalerie* - three black horses, then two chestnuts and a

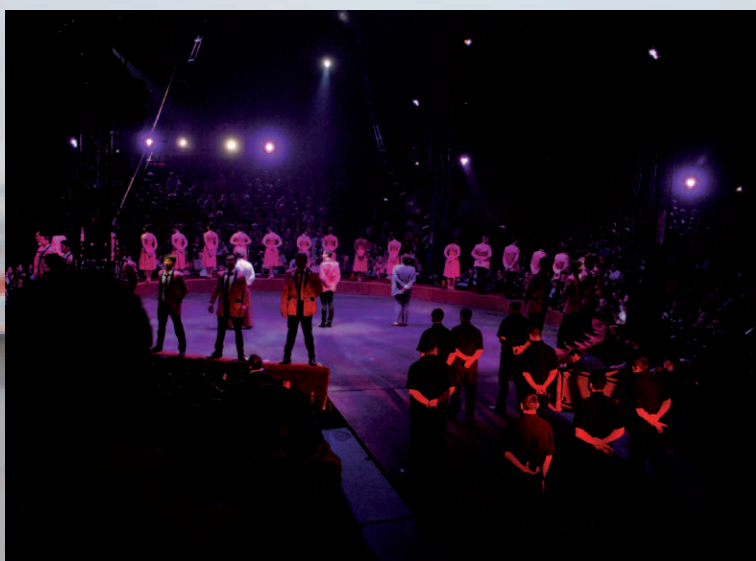
piebald pony, presented by Laura Maria Gruss

- Andre - "Toast" - odd set-up, perfect timing and explosive end.
- Liss Mery and Merien, marvellous circus-style pole dancers
- Covering the build-up of the very big safety net, Gregory Bellini with some clever patter and producing items from thin air, including Heinz ketchup.
- Flying Regio, featured here last year, now present a double lane flying act, with seven flyers and two catchers.
- Bellini's musical bells
- Andre: another novel and simple comic routine, with a hoop and a battery-operated toy dog, leading to the interval.
- Five tigers from Flavio Togni - presented by the very experienced Alfredo Beattour
- Andre - love affair with a concertina
- Liss Mery and Merien, cycling duo, of a similar high standard to their pole act in the first half.
- Julia Friedrich and Kevin Gruss, aerial hoop, dramatically set to the haunting "Hooded Man", Clannad's Robin Hood theme.
- four Asian elephants + riders, presented by John Vernuccio.
- sexy contortionist Rich Metiku - Bronze Elephant winner at the first Figueres festival in 2012.
- Hoop jumping of staggering complexities as the hoops go higher and higher - Troupe Jinan - followed by the finale. DJ.

Photos: top to bottom, from the left; this page, Julia Friedrich and Kevin Gruss; Bellini; Andre; Laura and her da capo pony; Liss Mery and Merien in their cycling number.



This page: left, top to bottom: contortionist Rich Metiku, the farmyard act, and the company in the finale. Right: ringmaster Kevin Sagau and the orchestra; Alfredo Beautour and the tigers.





Visiting the zoo of Cirque Arlette Gruss around 11 o'clock on the morning of Easter Saturday, I was surprised when, five minutes later, the four elephants left their stable tent and walked off the site towards the centre of Dunkerque.

There was quite a crowd to witness the elephants' breakfast, including local press and media. The elephants were very relaxed in the close presence of the general public. Everyone seemed to enjoy the event - adults and children, trainers and handlers, and the four elephants.

David Jamieson

Elephant photos: Cirque Arlette Gruss.
www.cirque-gruss.com



Obituaries by John Exton and Don Stacey



PATRICK AUSTEN

Circus transport expert and all-round artiste

Hazel and I were very sad to hear of the sudden death of our dear friend Patrick on February 19th at the age of 59. Although we have known his wife Julie for much longer from when she worked with her sisters on James Brothers Circus and their annual visits to Lincolnshire, we became close friends of Patrick and Julie when they married in 1982 and when they subsequently toured with Cottle and Austen, Austen Brothers' Circus and Sir Robert Fossett's Circus working their Professor Wotnot clowning routine and the superb solo trapeze act of Julie.

Patrick was a very talented man and I always remember Gerry Cottle telling me that he was the "Man with the Golden Hands" as he could fabricate, repair or fix most things mechanical. He was always in much demand by circus and fairground proprietors who appreciated his skills at keeping the show on the road and moving.

In later years Patrick settled to life in Cricklade and was well known and liked by the local community. His popularity was rightly recognised by the huge attendance at his funeral service. To Julie and their family we send our love and condolences.

John and Hazel Exton

Above: Julie and Patrick Austen and family. Photo: Terry Willard.

MARJORIE REID of the Reid Twins

Marjorie passed away peacefully while in the care of her cousin Gordon, his wife Winnie and their daughter Janice at their home in Swinton, Manchester within a mile from where she was born. Marjorie together with her identical twin sister Connie, who married world famous circus clown Jacko Fossett, were celebrated for the music hall and theatre act they developed with guidance from their ambitious father, and known during their career as the Mirror Fantasy.

Born in Manchester on May 30th 1923, Marjorie and Connie were part of triplets but sadly their brother died from complications during birth. They were always destined to become performers and, after success with acrobatic dancing and gymnastic routines, developed their signature act, which imitated reflections of a mirror, ideally suited to their identical twin status. From their debut in 1936 when only 13 years old they continued to appear as a double act for some 25 years in all the top theatres of the UK and also some bookings abroad.

In 1960, her sister Connie married Jacko Fossett, who was always referred to by them as John, and joined him in his clown act. Marjorie moved to Skegness to pursue a career in holiday camp entertainment. John, Connie and Marjorie eventually bought a large detached house in Skegness which was to be their base and home for many years and into their eventual retirement. Marjorie looked after the property, which all three had jointly



Above: The Reid Twins' famous mirror act, "Mirror Fantasy".

bought, whilst her sister was on tour with John, with Marjorie being a frequent visitor to her sister whilst on tour. One of John's frequently quoted sayings to his friends was when he married Connie he "got two for the price of one".

However, Marjorie, always a person who needed to keep busy, then embarked on a career as a Butlin Red Coat and then into various supervisory roles in the holiday industry before ending her working life together with Connie, by now a widow, following the death of John in 2004, working at the Embassy Theatre, Skegness, as dressers and in various administration roles. The sisters also frequently provided accommodation for the numerous entertainers appearing at the Embassy Theatre and the wall in their lounge displayed a wonderful collection of signed photographs from the stars who had enjoyed their hospitality.

Remaining in Skegness after the death of Connie in 2005 until some two and a half years before her own death, Marjorie passed away on 7th March 2014 aged 90 whilst in the care of Gordon and Winnie's daughter Janice and her daughters Laura and Samantha. The funeral took place at Peel Green Crematorium, Eccles on April 21st. Her ashes are to be interred with those of Connie and John at Skegness on what would have been the twins' 91st birthday - 30th May 2014.

John Exton

MICHAEL BRIGGS

Michael Briggs, elder brother of Phillip Gandey, and elder son of the late Joe and Mary Gandey of Gandey's Circus fame, died on March 13, 2014, from a heart attack, at the age of 69. Although he worked for the Gandey Circus in his early years, he decided not to remain in the circus industry, and when Joe Gandey died, his much younger brother Philip developed the family circus into one of Britain's leading entertainment companies. DS

JEAN GEBREURS

Circus owner Jean Gebreurs, born in 1936, died on March 14, 2014, aged 78. He was the husband of Rosemarie Malter and they ran, together, the Circus Rosemarie Malter in Belgium, which continues to tour. They had four children. DS



Above: Mary Ann Fossett, juggling on Sir Robert Fossett's Circus

MARY ANN TABAK nee Fossett

Mary Ann Fossett, who died on February 27, 2014, was married to the versatile Hungarian circus artiste and human can-noball, Ocsi Tabak. She and her brother Robert were the children of Robert Fossett of the Henley in Arden branch of the Fossetts.

They joined Sir Robert Fossett's Circus, providing a juggling routine as Duo Mariano in the 1970s, and, after her marriage to Ocsi Tabak, they formed a quartet with Mary Ann, Ocsi, Robert and his wife Leah, as the Comancheros wild west routine which appeared with Roberts Brothers' Super Circus and at the Blackpool Tower Circus in 1990, the final year of animals at the Tower. The Comancheros were also with Martin Lacey's Circus.

In more recent years, the families were with the European Entertainment Corporation's Moscow State Circus on tour, with Mary Ann as front of house manager, Ocsi as technical manager and Robert as transport manager. DS

JACQUES NICOLET

Jacques Nicolet, for many years the catcher of the French flying trapeze act, the Alizes, died in Munich on March 27, aged 92.

He was born on January 2, 1922 at Boirs in Belgium and was the son of the aerial acrobats the Nicoletos. When he joined their act, it became Trio Flore. Later he was to work with Pierre Bouvet (Pierre Alize) in the Flying Alizes trapeze act, which was at Blackpool Tower Circus for its summer season in 1948 and again in 1950, when the act, comprising Pierre, Jacques and the latter's wife Maryse Tanz,

was billed as "The Continent's Greatest Stars of the FlyingTrapeze".

The Alizes also appeared at Olympia, London, for Bertram Mills Circus in the winter of 1946/47, returning there in 1961/62. By the latter season, the act appeared dated, and surprisingly the three male performers were dressed only in trunks, barelegged and espousing the more conventional leotards used by other flying trapeze performers.

Mills often employed acts which had been featured the previous summer season at Blackpool Tower, both due to their obvious quality and to the fact that expensive transport costs could be amortised into the contract. Fans were, therefore, rather surprised that Cyril Mills brought in the Alizes rather than the sensational Mexican troupe, the Four Palacios, who were at Blackpool in 1961, and who were at that time reckoned to be the best flying trapeze act available. Cyril Mills claimed to me that he considered Irma Palacios far too 'busty' to present before Londoners, although a more likely reason was that the Palacios were far more expensive!

At Olympia in 1961/62, Pierre Alize was aged 65 and retired at the Mills show, with Cyril Mills entering the ring on the final night to present him with an embossed copy of the programme. As I was working for Mills at that time, I often watched the act, and one night Pierre's toupee floated down into the safety net...

The Flying Alizes had many top bookings, with appearances at the Cirque d'Hiver in Paris, the Wintergarten in Berlin, Cirque Royale in Brussels, Cirque Knie, Cirque Amar, Cirque Bouglione, Circus Apollo and Germany's Circus Krone. After Pierre's retirement Jacques worked with other fliers, among them Gerhard Stapper, Tony Steele and Carol and Roger Mirelles. The Alizes won a Silver Clown at the first International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo in 1974.

After serving as an artiste for Circus Krone for some years, Jacques Nicolet became a technician for Krone and in latter years retired in his caravan at the Krone plot in Munich, where he died peacefully in March 2014. The funeral took place in Munich on March 31 and the reception was staged by Christel Sembach-Krone. He was buried alongside his wife and he is survived by their son, also Jacques. DS

ALFRED BEAUTOUR

Celebrated wild animal trainer, Alfred Beabout died on February 18, 2014, at the age of 89. He was born on September 23, 1924, in Rouen, France, the son of Henri Beabout who ran circuses under the names of Continental, Britannic and Cirque Beabout.

Alfred was an equilibrist, acrobat and trapeze artiste, working for Cirque Britannic from 1944 to 1950. Under the pseudonym of Fred Jackson, and wearing a loin cloth like Tarzan, he trained and presented lions en ferocite. On November 10th, 1951, he married Yolande Prin, from a well-known circus dynasty, the marriage taking place in the lions' cage.

Alfred Beabout trained a group of leop-

ards in 1955 and presented a leopard act in circuses in Spain, France, Switzerland Germany and Austria, until he retired aged 65 in 1989 when he was appearing in Circus Holiday in the Netherlands.

Alfred's brothers were also animal trainers - Lucien presented Luc & Bella's chimpanzees, Emilien showed tigers disguised as Taras Boulba. Emilien's son, Alfredo Beabout is again with Cirque Arlette Gruss in France this year with Flavio Togni's tigers. DS

HERBERT BENGTTSSON

Swedish circus director Herbert Bengtsson died on April 20, 2014, aged 67. Born in 1947, he and his wife Henrika Herbert established Circus Olympia in 1985 and subsequently it grew to become one of Sweden's leading touring shows. It is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. He was also the trainer of Olympia's animal acts, horses, ponies, llamas and camels, while Henrika continues to show her poodle dog act. They also had their animals booked out to other European circuses. Due to his ill health, Herbert had in recent years relied on his wife and children Jessica and Niklas to take over the daily operation of Cirkus Olympia, and they are continuing the show's traditions now. As the show grew, in recent years among the more famous acts featured by Cirkus Olympia were the Harizanov clowns; Denis Remnev; Jan Navratil; the Tsytko Family; Richard and Claudio Zavatta; Limpopo African Acrobats; Pedro Rivelinos; Yakubov Troupe; Kenny Quinn; Duo Peris; the Malevolti Troupe; Munoz wire act; Aleshin Troupe; Duo Axt; the Balder clowns; Duo Goncalves; and the Wolf Brothers. DS

FRANCO MEDINI

Franco Medini, the well known Italian born artistes' booking agent, died in Paris on Tuesday, February, 25th, 2014, at the age of 91.

He was the son of Italian circus performer Carlo Medini, an aerialist, acrobat and clown, and Anna Perier, the daughter of a French circus owner, Pierre Perier. Carlo and Anna married in 1920, and their twin sons Franco and Italo made their circus ring debuts at the age of three. As a youngster, Franco studied music and worked in the family acts, while Italo early on showed an aptitude for juggling.

In 1935, Carlo Medini started a musical clown act, partnered by the famous Little Walter, and Franco, who made his debut as an auguste at the age of thirteen. Enrico, the younger brother of the twins was born in London in 1935 while the family was performing in a circus. I know that Franco and Italo both appeared at the London Pavilion Theatre much later on, while their father Carlo worked as a white face clown with the Cavalinis clowns at Bertram Mills Circus in London, 1952/53 (including a Royal performance before Queen Elizabeth II) and on tour here in 1953.

During the Second World War, Franco's sister Adriana became a big star of the Folies Bergere in Las Vegas, under the artiste's name of Audrey Arno I can recall

seeing her very entertaining singing/musical act at the Sporting Club in Monaco, along with Dr. Frere and Franco Medini, during one of the annual Circus Festivals of Monte-Carlo.

During the war years, Italo and Franco created a combined acrobatic, dance and musical act as Fratelli Medini, working for the allied troops based in Europe. In 1948, they reformed with Enrico as a trio.

During a tour of France with the Cirque Jerome Medrano, Franco met Elena, a member of the Trio Carletti which worked in circuses and music halls, and they were married in Paris in 1952. At that time, Italo left to pursue a very successful career as a solo juggler, and when he retired from performing, he took on the training of pupils at some of France's leading circus schools. Franco, Elena and Enrico then teamed up in an act known as the Trio Frank Medini-Ellington. After several successful tours in Europe, Enrico left them in 1963, to become artistic director for Frederic Aparc's "Vive les Girls" show at the Dunes Hotel, Las Vegas.

The birth of their son Martial steered Franco and Elena Medini into a more sedentary life in Paris. He formed the artistic agency Medini serving circuses and the Parisian cabarets, today still run

by son Martial, and which quickly became one of Europe's most important circus booking agencies.

In 1964 he became the impresario for the television shows from the Cirque d'Hiver-Paris, "Le Piste aux Etoiles", a long-running series that brought the best of the world's circus acts to the screen. In 1974 he began booking acts for the 1st International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, staged by Prince Rainier and booked acts exclusively for the screen star Jean Richard for his circuses Pinder and Jean Richard. He booked acts in the circus festivals like Les Olympiades du Cirque (Liege), the Circus World Championships (London), Golden Circus Festival (Rome), and others in Moscow, Budapest and elsewhere, as well as for all the great European circuses like Krone, Knie, Althoff, Americano (Togni), Lidia Togni, Benneweis, Mundial, and for the "Greatest Show on Earth", the Ringling Bros, and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Fifth generation circus performer and agent Franco Medini is survived by his son Martial, Elena having predeceased him by a few months. In Britain he will be remembered for booking many acts into our circuses, often in conjunction with his compatriot, Roberto Germaines.

DS

Israel Circus School

• By Arthur Pedlar aka Clown Vercoe

In 2002, through the Council for Christians and Jews, I learnt of a small group of adults in Israel who felt they had to do something about the way Jewish and Palestinian children were brought up to treat each other as enemies. They started gathering children of any nationality off the streets and taught them street theatre and acrobatics and to have fun together. They were joined by a retired Russian Olympic gymnast, and this led to further circus skills. Usually they worked and played in the open air and occasionally in a sympathetic school's gymnasium. They had no funds and very little equipment, however the children's skills had developed so far that they were considering raising funds to acquire an old London bus and tour a Children's Circus throughout the villages of Israel.

Having acquired his e-mail address I had some correspondence with David Berry, their leader, which really interested me and I felt this was a project in which I should become involved. It was immediately apparent that funds were urgently needed for equipment. I was fortunate in having contacts whose interest was aroused and wanted to know more i.e. my Rotary Club's International Committee, the World Clown Association (based in the USA, of which I was then President Elect) and two elderly nuns who were committee members of the local C.C.J. - their order was about to celebrate the 'X' hundredth anniversary of its order and they asked for all the information I could get so that they could forward it to a friend who was the order's treasurer; they were looking for an unusual cause to sponsor as part of their 'outreach' celebration.

With all this at stake I had to go out there and come back with first hand information. David met me at Tel Aviv airport at 3a.m. in his very ancient Renault van and we drove north to his home within the shadow of Mount Carmel. He had come across a derelict Bauhaus Arts Centre, although a listed building, the consortium who owned it couldn't afford to keep it going and it had been left abandoned for 13 years and been horrendously vandalised. David had this pipe-dream that if it could be restored it would make a wonderful headquarters for a circus school. He had been badgering the owners for months to let him have a shot at restoring it: the day before I arrived they granted him a three-year rent-free lease plus a promise of some cash to help make it weather-proof, but this was way down on their financial priorities. David took me to see this sorry sight, nearly all windows broken, doors off hinges, ceiling collapsed through the weight of pigeon dung on top, squatters' disgusting refuse everywhere, bits of everything had been dumped in its extensive grounds where a few large rose bushes still managed to bloom! Fortunately it was built on sloping ground and at the back was an entrance to a large rehearsal room under the stage, it was isolated by a locked door from the rest of the building; all it needed was new windows and a bit of plumping to restore the tiny kitchen and cloakroom

area. I told David to get that done and I'd cover the cost.

When the owners saw that this group of 'penniless do-gooders' had three national institutions backing them, they coughed up their donation, which, when added to the nuns' £5,000 and the £7,000 I raised from various sources, enabled the building to be made weather-proof. My Rotary Club raised £600 which paid for two unicycles, two walking globes, juggling clubs, diabolos, some clown costumes and make-up etc. to be sent out. Now they had a 'home' the number of children quickly doubled to 70, and when the parents from both sides saw the beneficial effect this was having on their children they joined in clearing the grounds etc. David, although a former dancer with the Australian ballet, is an excellent carpenter, his family's trade, he cleared out the rotting stage covered with dung, I funded the timber necessary for a super new stage with a dressing room, plus an apron extension.

In less than a year those children's skills had reached such a level that a British institution funded them to go to Cyprus to join a similar school catering for Turkish and Greek children, then those children came to David's school. Alan and I went out to perform with youngsters for the grand opening of the restored Centre, all parents were invited free of charge - most of them had done their courting there when it was fully operative! Since then there have been two two-way exchanges with a circus school in Berlin!! I have been out four times - twice with Alan.

David has now retired to his native Australia after 29 exhausting years creating classes and running the school, there are now 200 children attending and a new management team is in charge. The two excellent leaders I met when they visited relatives in the U.K. together with a good friend of mine who joins me in sponsorship. Staff are now paid a living wage: on my second visit it was a hand-to-mouth existence with meals supplied from a sack of rice hanging from the kitchen ceiling and vegetables given by the sympathetic adjacent organic farmers!

Recently the school branched out with a 'children at risk' programme which is proving very successful, nevertheless they still need funds to cover these costs as well as replacing equipment. David opened a sterling account at the school's bank so that all we send over via a sterling cheque is reserved for capital expenditure and kept apart from the day to day running costs - they are not yet balancing the books and still need help, however, they are getting close. The quality of the restored building and the standard of achievement has reached national recognition level but until this is ratified by government recognition the school's diplomas carry little weight. The problem is that when the school gets this recognition it becomes available for government funding which is why the government is in no hurry to grant it!

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Irish News

By Richard McMinn, Michael Ingoldsby and Derek Simpson

CIRCUS VEGAS 2014 BELFAST EDITION

As reported in King Pole, No. 197, Circus Vegas (directed by John and Stephen Courtney) opened a short Irish tour in Swords, Co. Dublin, in early February, which concluded at the Titanic Quarter, Belfast, on 27th April, prior to its summer tour of Scotland, commencing in Stranraer. Apart from the twelve-day stand in Belfast, the show while in Ireland was advertised as 'Circus Vegas Goes Extreme', with contributions from the Extreme Stunt Show, such as a 'Big Foot' car crusher truck outdoors and two motorcycle stunt riders, Gary Taylor and Dave Wiggins, from the UK-FMX Freestyle Motocross team as the concluding act of the circus programme itself. The latter had also featured in the Vegas Christmas production under the big top in the car park of Coventry's Ricoh Arena. There were several programme changes during the three-month Irish tour and by the time Vegas reached Belfast, Danish illusionist and ringmaster Kim Kenneth and his Italian partner, Jessica Caveagna, had departed for a summer booking in Hungary and the Romanian springboard and skipping acts of the Andrei Troupe had taken up a prior booking with Charles and Rebecca Chipperfield in England. One UK-FMX rider however remained for the Belfast stand and Vegas regulars, Miss Mimi and her sister with their contortion in a perspex box routine and Oleg Yarlykov with his fat suit and comedy trampoline numbers, replaced the departed artistes. New acts are rumoured to be joining the show for its Scottish summer tour and certainly from Stranraer onwards, Alessandro Gillert and his wife with their slack-wire act, which includes a two-person high on the wire, were added to the programme.

Vegas was built up in Belfast for Easter on the ground used by the Moscow State Circus last autumn, located in the historic and cultural Titanic Quarter of the city. The familiar, four-mast Stars and Stripes big top (with a matching two-mast foyer tent) was surrounded by the usual array of impressive, decorated transport, including the show's iconic American tractor units on display in front of the walk-through front door/box office. This remains a non-animal show, apart from two ponies used for children's rides during the interval. No ring fence was therefore in place in front of the ringside boxes. The foyer contained the 'American Dreams' circus shop and a locally-owned hot food catering trailer. The show's excellent, raked plastic seating, with rear access, was in position, along with LED lighting, a follow spot and red-curtained ring doors.

Ringmaster Tommy Courtney, in colourful American-themed tail coat and top hat, introduced the following:

- The Vegas Showgirls - six attractively costumed dancers, who were then joined by 'The King', Stephen Courtney Jnr (in Elvis wig and white jump suit), with 'A Little Less Conversation'.
- Laci Fossett, from an English branch of the Fossett circus family, stripped to the waist apart from a bow-tie around his neck, with an aerial straps number. The tricks included an upside down handstand, a series of revolutions, an upside down crucifix position, a single arm flying sequence and a dramatic head-first descent to close.
- Dexter (Declan), a new Liverpool-based clown, in an American-themed costume, presented the hula hoop gag, assisted by two children and a male adult from the audience, concluding with the successful manipulation of a giant hula hoop.
- Four of the Showgirls then introduced the hula hoop act proper of Miss Mimi from Bulgaria, a long-standing member of the Vegas house company. Mimi was dressed in a Stars and Stripes costume and worked in uv lighting to the Gloria Estafan track, 'Conga'.
- Clown Dexter with the familiar balancing a brush on one foot, followed by attempting to catch around his neck hoops thrown by audience members, with an adult male volunteer providing assistance in the ring.
- A dance-off competition, compered by Tommy Courtney, involving three cartoon characters - Mickey, Minnie and Donald.
- Kourtney Pavlov with her new aerial perspex globe presenta-



Circus Vegas. Top: the Viva Las Vegas finale. Above: a stunt rider and Tommy Courtney. Photos: Derek Simpson.

tion, featuring various poses within the hinged globe and then with the globe open, a knee hang, a one-leg hang and a splits across the gap between the globe's two halves.

- Introduced as 'Mr Universe, the World's Strongest Man', Oleg Yarlykov presented a solo version of his well-known inflatable 'fat suit' number. The inflation of the suit enabled him to lift a set of dumb-bells, which had previously defeated him. Turning cartwheels, rotating his head above the neck of the suit, a single hand balance on a chair and exiting the ring by means of a series of single hand hops followed.

- The Vegas Showgirls, augmented to seven in number, then performed their 'Footloose' dance routine.

- Clowns Dexter and Hedgie (Stephen Courtney Jnr) presented their version of the Ghostbusters entree.

- The theme from the 'Rocky' movies heralded the entry of the veteran and very personable Hungarian strongman Hercules (Josef Pakucz), no stranger to Ireland given his season with Fossett's Circus back in the 1990s, prior to appearances at the Tower Circus and Circus Harlequin in England. He was accompanied into the ring by four of the Showgirls. The routine included lifting various weights such as a large cannonball, the spinning of a cartwheel on a pole, the bending of a steel bar on his thigh, catching a cannon ball fired across the ring at him from an impressive cannon prop and his spectacular final feat, when a pick-up truck, carrying the four Showgirls, was driven over a ramp resting on his recumbent body. Hercules was announced as

being from Canada and the act was well presented, with good music choices from Vangelis and Carl Orff's 'Oh Fortuna' from the 'Carmina Burana'.

- Interval.
- Oleg Yarlykov returned, as the timid 'Mr Smith' from the ticket office, to advise Tommy Courtney of the disappearance of the acrobat due to perform on the trampoline, which had been erected in the ring. Mr Smith was then persuaded to replace him. The usual, often painful, series of mishaps followed, including a female member of the audience apparently losing an item of underwear and then Mr Smith finally lost his trousers, as he attempted a triple somersault. As always, considerable acrobatic and trampoline skills were displayed by the hapless Mr Smith.
- Clown Declan with the popcorn gag.
- Miss Mimi and her sister demonstrated their ability to squeeze together into a small, perspex cube, which then rotated on a mirror ball.
- Six Showgirls in red, white and blue majorette uniforms introduced the talented Elaine Courtney, 'The Mistress of the Air', with her superior cloudswing number, working in blue light to 'Heaven Must Be Missing an Angel'. The tricks included forward rolls, a drop to a single knee catch while the rope was swinging, a waist balance, a back layout balance on the swinging rope and a dramatic drop to ankle catch above the heads of the audience.
- Clown Dexter with the wedding sketch, demonstrating good facial expressions and body language, as the timid suitor of a female volunteer from the audience.
- Aaron Europa built up his familiar tower of five chairs, which rested on four glass bottles sitting on an elevated pedestal. Aaron's charisma had considerable audience appeal.
- Seven Showgirls in blue and white costumes with their 'Candyman' dance number.
- Gary Taylor of the UK-FMX stunt riding team (which normally performs at outdoor events) brought the programme to a thrilling and extremely daring climax with a series of dramatic leaps above the ring on his motorcycle. A static trailer ramp was already permanently in position at the public entrance side of the ring and a second, mobile ramp, mounted on a black Mercedes truck, was driven into the ring through the ring curtains. Gary accelerated into the big top from the foyer tent to execute a series of jumps from the fixed metal ramp to the mobile one in the ring, with the gap between the two being gradually increased by reversing the truck ramp. Gary ended up on his bike behind the open ring curtains after each jump and then roared back into the ring to acknowledge well-deserved audience applause. The jumps not only increased in length but also involved letting go of the handlebars, a handstand on the handlebars, a backward lean with both feet wedged under the handlebars and an unbelievable momentary semi-handstand on the saddle. Scary stuff, especially in the confined performance space of the big top and clearly, split second timing as well as courage were required. This was truly a thrill act and possibly during the last few months being performed in a big top for the first time in the UK and Ireland. However, I am aware that Flic-Flac in Germany has previously pioneered the idea in a circus context, with up to six riders involved.
- The usual 'Viva Las Vegas' song and dance finale with 'The King' and the full company, carrying flags.

As always, with this management, very much a familiar American theme in terms of the big top itself, the decorated transport, the costumes and the production numbers, with a considerable use made of an excellent group of dancers and the booking of a very strong and novel thrill act to close the show and provide an audience talking point (even if much of the publicity material for Belfast made no mention of its continuing inclusion).

Richard McMinn

COURTNEY BROTHERS' CIRCUS 2014

I caught up with Courtney Brothers' Circus, directed by Wayne and Michelle Courtney, on Easter Saturday during a six-day stand in Drogheda over the holiday period. On what was a rather tight tober, the new, domed, white, four-mast big top, with its distinctive external decoration of red swirls, looked impressive. As previously reported, the tent is 14m high and 36m round, with 4m high walls. The inner skin is blue, with red, yellow and white trim around the dome. There are no quarter poles to

restrict the view of the ring from the recently acquired grandstand block of individual plastic seats. At Drogheda, there was also a seating trailer block to one side of the ring, ringside chairs and two shop trailers, serving hot and cold food, inside the tent. Banks of LED lights were attached to the four king poles, along with additional lighting, including two intelligent lights, on a boom facing the ring doors, plus a follow spot. Given the show's significant animal content, the actual ring doors themselves consisted of curtains, with the bandstand trailer situated to one side, to give ease of access to the ring. Music was recorded and was mainly modern rather than traditional in style. The big cage was already erected in the ring prior to the start of the programme. The running order at Drogheda was as follows:

- Overture and introduction by ringmistress Michelle Courtney.
- Courtney Brothers' Tigers, presented, as in 2013, by Jerome Kirwan. Jerome was assisted in the big cage by Wayne Courtney, who moved the props and provided a commentary on the five tigers and the various tricks. Each tiger exited individually after being patted and rewarded.
- The cage pull-down was covered by cartoon characters, Mickey and Kung Fu Panda, dancing and interacting with the audience to 'What Did the Fox Say?' by Norwegian group, Yivis.
- Eleven-year-old Jack Courtney, in a black and silver costume, with his solo juggling act, which continues to develop and has now reached a very professional level. The routine included the juggling of four hoops, three, four and then five illuminated balls in a blackout, and a sequence with three clubs when he worked on the ring fence and then moved around the ring, executing some pirouettes and a kneel-down. Jack concluded by juggling first four and then with some audience encouragement, five clubs. This sequence included foot pick-ups from the ring floor.
- Sommer Courtney then introduced 'Khalif' the Bactrian camel (with a red and gold saddle cloth) for a walk-round, during which the camel was fed treats by the audience in the ringside boxes.
- This was followed by the liberty group of five black Shetland ponies, wearing red and white plumes and harness, working to 'Viva Espana' under Sommer's smooth direction. The routine for four of the ponies included directional changes, a fan, forelegs on the ring fence at different points around the ring and some barrier jumping, with the inevitable final pony taking a short-cut to avoid the jump. A fifth pony concluded the act with a short hind leg walk, before taking a bow.
- Sommer, who is a real equine enthusiast, then presented the ex-Martin Lacey group of four black Friesian stallions at liberty. 'Regent', 'Baron', 'Kaiser' and 'Duke' are powerful horses and it is a tribute to Sommer's commitment that despite her youthful years, she was handling them so confidently. The routine included directional changes, a halt in line, working in two groups of two, a fan and halt in line, a hind leg rear by one, a slow walk by all, a waltzing sequence and a good hind leg walk by one to close.
- Clown Blakey, in a military-style red and gold costume and blowing a whistle, presented his familiar routine involving the throwing of three soft rings to and fro with audience members and, with the assistance of a male volunteer in the ring, Blakey eventually caught one of the rings around his neck. This covered the complex prop setting for the next act.
- The major new attraction for 2014, which joined the show some weeks into the season, followed. The posters had promised that: 'The crocodiles are coming'. Karah Khavak Jnr (Tommy Kocha), his wife Tina (costumed as a temple priestess) and their son presented an Indiana Jones-themed display of alligators, snakes, scorpions and live rats, with 'Indiana' first entering from the front of the ring, carrying a flaming torch, to crack his trademark whip. He also later rode a motor cycle around the ring. This act has previously worked in major European shows, such as Renz in Holland, and features elaborate costumes and a variety of props (with Ancient Egyptian motifs), burning torches and flares and even a skeleton in a coffin, upon which the rats appear to be feeding. Two appropriately costumed ring staff assisted with the management of the props. A variety of snakes, including a 6m python and a mamba were displayed, with Tina entering a perspex box with some of them, plus a number of scorpions. The reptiles included both large alligators and the smaller, faster-moving Caiman variety, as well as two large South American Tegulizards. At the conclusion of the act, Indiana and his female partner exited from the ring on the motorcycle.



Top: Courtney Brothers' riding act - Sommer, Jack and Dylan. Above: Sommer Courtney and the Friesian horses. Right: Dylan Medini - roller balancer. Photos: Derek Simpson.



- Blakey with his catching the ball in the net run-in, assisted by a female audience volunteer in the ring.
- Ivan Medini and Hevelin Corradi, in white and gold military-style costumes, assisted by son Dylan and daughter Asia, with their colourful group of six macaws and a white cockatoo. Two of the macaws added to the impact of the act by flying around the tent above the heads of the audience at specific points. This was a lively, fast-paced number, with some novel features.
- Interval - during which face painting, pony and horse rides and photographs with a macaw and a 'baby crocodile' were available.
- Young Dylan Medini, in a black, red and silver costume, opened the relatively short second half with his promising new rola-rola number, working to an Abba track and using attractive chrome props. The tricks included skipping on top of a single roller, balancing on a set of platforms four rollers high, a rotating balance three rollers high and balancing six and then seven rollers high. He was assisted by his sister, Asia, who in the early part of the season had contributed her own hula hoop presentation to the programme.
- The Courtney family riding act on skewbald ring horse, 'Pepsi', came next. In blue and black costumes, Sommer, Jack and Dylan Courtney demonstrated a range of voltige tricks, with all three riders jumping on and off and Sommer balancing on one knee on the back of the horse. These were followed by Dylan jumping forwards and backwards over a riding crop on the horse's back, Sommer and Dylan double skipping on the horse's back, Jack juggling three clubs on horseback and Dylan back somersaulting from the horse to the ring floor. To conclude, all three fork-jumped on to the horse's back and then stood up as a group. This was an attractive, nostalgic and highly creditable item, reflecting the show's emphasis on traditional circus values.
- Clown Blakey with his version of 'No Music Here', presented in his trademark manic and acrobatic style.
- The final act, retained from 2013, was the Trio Medini from Italy - Ivan, Hevelin and daughter Asia - with their fast-paced aerial cradle act. Ivan was the bearer on the cradle for a series of

hangs below him by the two ladies. These included a neck/dental spin by Asia, a single wrist and double ankle hang, a hang by the knees from the bearer's shoulders, a splits in stirrups suspended from the bearer's neck, a back layout spin suspended from the neck, a single ankle spin supported from the neck, a drop from the cradle to an ankle catch, a foot hang by Asia from her father's shoulders and a neck spin by Hevelin (waving streamers) held by one hand only by her husband, Ivan. The family wore striking pink, black and silver costumes and certainly provided a rousing finish to the show.

- Finale. Ringmistress Michelle Courtney re-introduced the small but hard-working company, led by the exuberant Blakey, in a choreographed dance routine, set to 'Waka, Waka' by Shakira.

Overall, a lively and very traditional circus programme in terms of content, with a strong emphasis on family and animal contributions. After Easter new Italian-produced posters used the title: 'The Real Russian Daredevil Circus - Jungle Spectacular'.

Richard McMinn

IRISH NEWS JUNE 2014

Fossett's Circus

Fossett's Circus, directed by Edward and Robert Fossett, opened its 2014 season in Newbridge, Co. Kildare in mid-March. The programme was substantially altered from that of 2013, and included the welcome re-introduction of two equine acts. It continued to evolve during the first few weeks of the new season.

The running order during two stands in Northern Ireland over the Easter period was as follows:

- Overture and light show.
 - 'Celebration' - opening production number by the company, led by singing ringmistress, Marion Fossett.
 - Suzanne Chipperfield with her big and little horse and pony ('Icon' and 'Timmy').
 - Elena Mascias on the aerial hoop.
 - Clown Otto (Edward Fossett Jnr) with 'the wild animal in a crate' gag - revealed to be a small dog.
 - The ring debut of 13 year-old Owen Fossett's new diabolo act.
 - Darragh Merritt with his hula hoop display.
 - Clown Otto and Danni Wang with their 'Swan Lake' ballet pastiche.
 - Miss Sarah Fossett with her dramatic new aerial silks number.
 - The Disco Jugglers - Florin Florea, Jon Florin (Ragalie), Alana Fossett and Stephano Huesca with a new group juggling display.
 - Suzanne Chipperfield with a Spanish-themed High School Riding Display on her half Arab, half Lusitano horse, 'Icon'.
 - Clown Otto - Blowing Bubbles.
 - Interval.
 - Danni Wang with her Chinese-themed chair balancing act.
 - Ragalie and Sarah Fossett with their new fire stick and fire juggling display.
 - The 'Volichi Brothers' - Clown Otto and Florin Florea with a cod hand and head balancing gag.
 - Darragh Merritt, with his impressive contortion skills.
 - Clown Otto playing a set of handbells and then creating a bell ringing group of audience volunteers.
 - Duo Alambria with their dramatic high wire act, most recently seen with Cirque Medrano in France and the Richter Circus in Hungary and previously with Fossett's in 2012.
 - Finale - a new production set to the song 'Happy' by Pharrell Williams from the movie 'Despicable Me Two'.
- By the beginning of May, Darragh Merritt, as planned, had departed following the introduction of a new, shoulder-mounted hoop perch act by Florin Florea and Danni Wang, a solo hand balancing number by Sven Jahn-Munoz and a new double aerial straps act by Sven and Nico (Nikolai) Huesca. A full review of the final version of the programme will appear in a subsequent issue.

Circus Gerbola

As previously noted in the last issue, further programme changes were anticipated at Circus Gerbola for the main season of its new production, 'Fire and Ice'. Following the planned departure of Darragh Merritt to Fossett's and of English aerialist Abigail Evans, they were replaced by Toby, an English juggler, Janika's domestic cats and dog from Holland and Romanian performer Marius on the rola-rola. The rest of the programme remains as previously reported and will be fully reviewed in due course.

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey

"Legends" - 144th Edition for 2014/15 • By Terry Willard



The first day of 2014 was also the opening night of the 144th edition (Blue Unit) of the Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus. I arrived at the Tampa Bay Times Forum to find the concourse in front of the Arena absolutely packed with people, either waiting in line to get in or in a very long line to visit the animal experience which is set up in a car park adjoining the Arena. It had been my intention to catch a brief chat with Alex Lacey but I soon realised that I would not even be able to get into the animal area. Indeed, they had to close the line such were the number of people waiting to get in.

Inside the arena, the interactive experience was in full swing with performers giving short presentations.

A change this year is that a curtained off area is set up in front of the artistes' entrance for those patrons who have paid for a premium ticket. For that, they get to see and meet the performers close up. In previous years these patrons would be sat on mobile seating on the arena floor during part of the performance. I for one am glad to see that practice ended.

Once the audience had left the arena, the Ringling Clowns presented a skipping routine before ringmaster Johnathan Lee Iverson entered to sing the National Anthem while an elephant ridden by a showgirl carrying the American flag circled the arena. LED screens around the arena also displayed the American flag and, as the show opened, the screens showed various Ringling posters and programme covers from the past. The show began with six elevated spheres covered with the logo of "The Greatest Show On Earth". The covers were removed and inside the clear globes were six aerialists who performed various holds and poses while many of the artistes and six elephants paraded around the arena floor and Johnathan Lee Iverson sang "We are

the Legends" for what was a rousing opening spectacle. Coming out of the parade and performing the first act were eight Chinese girls on bicycles standing on their saddles and circling the arena. Two more girls joined the presentation and then four men with various tricks and pyramids. The finale of their act saw 20 performers on one bicycle. A great start.

Clown Alley provided a parody of the cycling act before the Torres family showed their motorcycle globe act. Starting with four riders, the numbers were gradually increased to an amazing eight riders roaring around inside the globe. With great lighting effects, exciting music and appropriate bally from the ringmaster this act was a real hit with the near capacity audience.

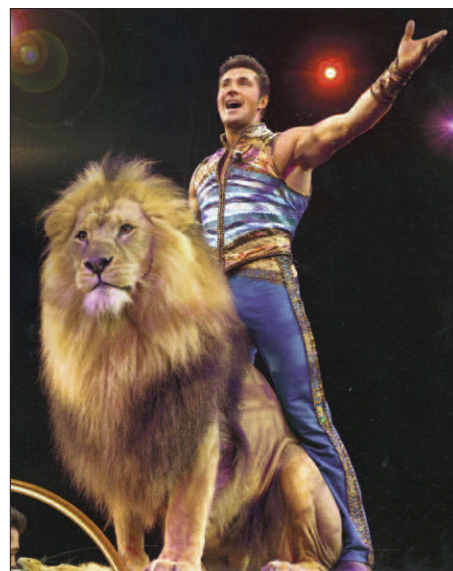
With half the arena blacked out to cover the big cage build up, attention was drawn to the other end of the arena where diminutive clown Paulo Santos and other clowns provided an aerial balloon knockabout number.

Johnathan Lee Iverson then announced "the one and only" Alexander Lacey. The lights went up and there was Alex with ten cats already in a sit up pyramid. Alex is miked up so that the audience can hear his commands and encouragement as well as being able to converse with them. The act included four tigers jumping over two others, two lionesses jumping over each other while circling the ring, an eight cat sit up. At one point he is backed against the cage with a cat pawing at him. Alex asks the audience "are you scared yet?" before sending the cat back to its place. Also included is a hind leg hop around the ring by two tigers and finally, his male lion sits on a revolving globe with Alex astride him. A wonderful, wonderful act, which went down very well with the audience. Alex is clearly endearing himself to the public and I have a feeling that Alex will become as important to the Ringling Organisation as Gunther Gebel Williams was.

Back to the other end of the arena now for an exhibition of Chinese lion dancing and pole climbing.

Time for another spec, a parade of legends. Most of the artistes in great costumes, several motorised vehicles, on one of which is Alex Lacey with a leopard. The Chinese female troupe of 12 return with an excellent and complex Diabolo routine followed by the Medeiros Troupe of eight girls in a hair hang presentation as they are raised up above the ring floor in a human chandelier formation. The first half closes with a display of Roman riding, the introduction of a unicorn and pegasus and six elephants performing.

The second half opens with a two-by-two animal display in two rings consist-



Above: Alexander Lacey and his magnificent lion on Ringling's Legends production. Photo: Ringling Brothers' Circus.

ing of dogs, ponies, llama, goats, donkeys, pigs and a kangaroo. This was followed by a walk around by a Woolly Mammoth.

Clown Alley presented a table sliding number followed by a quite excellent hoop diving exhibition by 16 members of the Chinese National Acrobatic Troupe. The height of the hoops was constantly raised until the top hoop was around ten feet off the ground. A duel aerial motorcycle act followed with performers on each side of the arena. Alex Petrov with two girls on trapeze below his bike and on the other side, Andrey Medeiros and two girls with the same set up.

The aerial theme continued with a double flying trapeze presentation. Two sets of rigging side by side with one troupe of seven and another of six. The final trick was intended to have four triple somersaults performed one after another. Unfortunately, only two of the four attempts were successful. I understand however, that they did achieve it at the dress rehearsal and will no doubt complete it more often than not. Incidentally, this act has been produced especially for the Legends tour under the direction of flying legend, Tito Gaona.

The final act of the show sees the return of Kanat Tchalabaev's Cossack Riders. Six men and four women with a wonderful and exciting display of riding and acrobatic skills performed at incredible speed around a banked ring.

The show ends with a typical Ringling rousing finale with artistes, animals, mobiles, showgirls and clowns parading around the ring and up above, aerialists.

Nicole and Alana Feld continue to create a wonderful entertainment while at the same time ensuring that the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus is

exactly that, a circus. Special mention should be made of the excellent nine piece band who helped to keep the show rolling at a great pace and as always, the super efficient ring crew.

Finally, my thanks to public relations director, Melinda Hartline for her help and for the beautiful press pack that was a great aid in producing this review.

UPDATE: On May 4th at the first of three scheduled shows, the eight girls in the hair hang number, fell 35 feet to the ring floor when the prop they were hanging from failed. One of the female

dancers was also hit by the falling girls. As I write this update on May 5th, four of the girls are in critical condition, two are serious and three are in good condition. It is reported that most are suffering from broken bones although, thankfully, none of the injuries are life threatening. The cause of the failure is still under investigation. It is at times like this that we are reminded as to how hazardous circus performing can be. Circus people are so good at what they do that it is easy to forget about the risks they take to entertain us. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the girls will be out of hospital on their way to recovery.

Circus Sarasota

“Wonderstruck” • February 6th to 23rd • Review by Terry Willard



For the 2014 edition of Circus Sarasota I was fortunate to have been given a ringside seat for the dress rehearsal where the audience is made up of mainly circus performers both past and present. To add to my good fortune, seated next to me were Rudi and Sue Lenz. The show has new LED lighting this year and the two follow spots have been moved from the king poles to the rear of the seating. As is the tradition, Pedro and Dolly welcomed everyone and then Dolly read out the names of those circus artistes who had passed in the last year. Another tradition is to open the show with a horse act. And so ringmaster, Tyron McFarlan introduced eighth generation Williams family member Caroline Williams with a splendid equestrian display with a difference. Entering first on a two colour Andalusian, she presents a cowgirl, whip cracking number before riding behind a black curtain set up in front of the ring entrance. Returning to the ring, Caroline is now dressed in a Spanish costume to present classic high school. Behind the curtain again before re-entering, dressed in a light blue outfit and riding a beautiful Lipizzaner to show further skills including stepping over four hurdles. Behind the curtain again and returning in a red, white and blue costume for a patriotic finale. This was a top class presentation that was well received by knowledgeable audience. At a later performance that I attended the number of changes had been reduced to three.

Juggling is another standard at Circus Sarasota and this year is in the capable hands of Laido Dittmar. Ring juggling is his forte. Starting with five, he gradually progresses to six then seven and finally, eight. A highly skilled performance that would look even better with a more dynamic presentation and costume. White t-shirt and jeans did not seem right.

Tradition continues with wonder aerialist, Dolly Jacobs and returning partner Rafael Palacios. What can I say that has not already been said about this circus superstar. No matter how many times I see Dolly perform, it is always a sheer joy. Either solo or with a partner, the skill, strength, poise and artistry on display is extraordinary and by adding some new moves with Rafael this year, a standing ovation was inevitable.

Clowning this year was in the hands of internationally acclaimed Tony and Jeanette Alexis - see photo above. Their first entree was the spaghetti restaurant number. Although a slick routine, not enough laughs for me. Erik Niemen followed with his low wire routine. The act included dancing and skipping on the wire, a 360 degree spin and a jump over a banner. The closing tricks

included a backward somersault and a backward layout somersault. A really top class act followed by probably one of the highlights of this year's show. From China, Miao Changwei and Lin Deng with an outstanding balletic strength act. Amazing strength and poise with the opening poses and then the ballerina stands on point on his shoulder, then arm and finally, on his head and completes a pirouette. Similar acts can be seen on YouTube but to see it live and from a front row seat, I was able to see the strength and effort required to achieve this level of performance. Truly outstanding and a well deserved standing ovation from an appreciative audience.

Dog acts are also a tradition of Circus Sarasota and one of the most entertaining opened the second half. Luciano Anastasini with his canines, all rescued from dog pounds around the country. This is a fast paced, fun act that always delights the audience. Next, from Switzerland, Cornel Tell with, as you might expect, a crossbow act and a good one at that. After the usual balloon shooting and a rose held by his partner, Julia Barreda, he fired five bolts into five balloons and through a black sheet. Emerging from behind the sheet came Julia unharmed. The final trick saw Cornel set up five crossbows, stand in front of a board with an apple on his head and fire at a target on the first bow. This set up a chain reaction with the final bolt splitting the apple.

A stunning foot juggling act from Jan Navrátil was another highlight of this year's show. Opening with four cylinders, he moved on to a table top before presenting his signature trick. He balances an aluminum pole that has six small platforms at different levels up the pole. On top of the pole is a basket. A ball is placed on the bottom platform and by bouncing the pole with his feet, the ball is bounced from one platform to the next. A "failure" at the first attempt enhances the tension in the audience who encourage Jan to try again. This time he succeeds in bouncing the ball onto each of the platforms and finally into the net. A rousing cheer erupts from the audience as Jan acknowledges a standing ovation. Great showmanship.

Tony Alexis returns with a musical entree that includes a karate skit. I guess my old age is turning me into somewhat of a curmudgeon as, like his first entree, it was disappointing.

Covering the erection of the flying act net, Chuck "Chucko" Sidlow worked hard to entertain the audience with his baseball themed sing-along before ringmaster Tyron McFarlan introduced The Flying Cortes, winners of La Piste d'Or at the 2013 International Circus Festival in Massy, France. This six person troupe, four girls and one male flyer, Alex Cortes, plus the catcher, Robinson Cortes, presented a very good act that included a double and one of the girls launching from a bar and being caught by the catcher below. At both performances I saw, Alex attempted a three and a half somersault, but failed both times. However, the dress rehearsal attempt was very close and caused some excitement as Alex landed in the vertical part of the net that is over the audience. The act finished with a passing leap.

The finale saw the performers return to the ring individually as they were announced by Tyron to receive a standing ovation.

Once again, Pedro Reis has scoured the world to bring the best in circus to Sarasota. How fortunate we are in this part of Florida to be treated every year to such talent. I would also like to mention the music. Although not a live band, sound designer, Leigh Ketchum was right on with his musical choices for each act. Leigh's work can also be heard on John Pugh's Cole Brothers Circus.

Cirque Firmin Bouglione

Liege, Belgium • Review by Chris Abbott



The red and white circus tent of Firmin Bouglione was pitched on the Esplanade Leonard, in eastern Liège but (unusually for those of us used to British circuses) within walking distance of the city centre. On a sunny Saturday evening the audience was thin, perhaps 50 at most, but performers and circus staff ensured that the experience was as good as it might have been for a full house. The small but immaculate tent had five rows of banked bench seating backed by red velvet curtains, and there were three further rows of seats ringside. Music was recorded but well-chosen and authentic, and the lighting was excellent and well-timed to respond to the small audience.

Ringmaster (and Circus Director) Pierre Paillé introduced the show, but was preceded into the ring by Samuel the Clown. Throughout the performance, Samuel surprised and delighted the audience with a range of routines that were both original and funny; no reliance on old favourites here. He began by holding up plates telling us not to use mobile phones or cameras, but then proceeded to spin them on sticks, then on the legs of a chair and finally, to the young child's great delight, on the upheld fingers of a small boy in the audience.

Pierre Paillé then appeared in his guise as Mr Loyal, as ringmasters are known in French-speaking countries, immaculate in grey tail coat and shiny black shoes. He introduced the first of two animal acts, both of them featuring domestic animals since Belgium has recently banned wild animals from the circus. The four ponies were put through their paces by Riccardo Canestrelli, with a fast-moving, confident and well-trained routine.

Samuel then appeared with his golf clubs and performed one of his set-piece acts with good use of an audience stooge as a target and a variety of trick golf clubs, and some impressive keepy-uppy with golf ball and putter.

The trinka act of Ethel Biasini followed, with a variety of foot juggling on display. Samuel returned for more interplay with

Mr Loyal, who then introduced the echelle libre (free-standing ladder) performer Harald Vassalo in another fast-moving and impressive performance. Ethel Biasini returned with the first of two aerial acts, this one a graceful and demanding tissus (silks) routine, sometimes hanging by hands alone without wrapping the silk around herself.

The second animal act followed, with trainer Riccardo Canestrelli appearing this time with an exotic group, or at least the domestic version of such an act: two camels, two llamas and two cows. Many of the children in the audience enjoyed seeing these creatures so close to them, and the act finished with the llamas jumping over the seated camels, the cows meanwhile maintaining an attitude of supreme indifference by the ring entrance.

After the interval the performance resumed with the tightwire act of Harald Vassalo, assisted by Sharon and even including a rapid adjustment to show some slack wire work as well. While the wire was quickly dismantled, Ethel Biasini performed her second aerial act, this time on a single trapeze.

Samuel's first appearance in this half was as animal trainer (dompteur) complete with unimpressive whip and tail coat. He selected another deftly-chosen stooge from the audience, whose children greatly enjoyed the discomfort he displayed when he was dressed with a small pair of cat ears and a sticking-out tiger tail. He was put through his paces with jumps and hoops and even challenged by a ring of fire at one point; when he demurred, Samuel proceeded to juggle with three flaming hoops. His juggling throughout was extremely impressive and always integrated into the particular routine.

Harald and Sharon Vassalo reappeared with a further ladder routine, this time combining foot juggling and free ladder work, with Sharon held aloft.

Samuel's last appearance was to play a tune by juggling balls on upturned frying pans, and the performance ended with a

series of large magic setpieces from Kenneth Illusions. All the major illusions were to be seen, trunk substitutions, swords through the girl in a box and a surprise ending with a second person revealed. The most original twist was to have the swords pushed through one of the boxes alight at the same time, the flames surviving their journey through the box and reappearing on the other side.

Mr Loyal introduced the whole cast for the finale and the performance ended as professionally as it had begun; one of the most impressive smaller circuses I have seen for many years.

2014 CFA/ACP PRIVILEGE CARD

During 2014 paid up CFA members can visit selected Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP) member circuses that participate in the scheme negotiated to allow members additional benefits to their CFA membership.

It must be noted that not all ACP members are able to participate and particular attention must be made to the list of circuses provided with the card when it is issued.

Apply today for your 2014 Privilege Card: Single person Card £15; Couples £20; Family Card (TWO named adults and up to TWO children under 16 from the same family. Children must be named and date of birth given with application) £25

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Please note that the position of seats and the availability are subject to the discretion of the proprietor and programmes, refreshments and other merchandise are NOT included and should not be requested unless paid for.

Following some previous problems with the use of the card, the conduct of members is expected to be of a high standard and may be monitored by circus management for future suitability and acceptance to the scheme.

Please maintain the highest standards of conduct in order that you and other members can continue to benefit from the considerable concessions provided. A CFA document entitled "Creating a Good Impression" is enclosed when cards are issued for the guidance and consideration of members.

Lola's Christening

- Memorable Christening and Family Gathering at Polebrook
- Text and photos by Andrew Lewis



Saturday 8th March was a bright and sunny day, more so in the quaint and picturesque Northamptonshire village of Polebrook, as at 3pm the christening of Lola Antonia Roberts Brenner took place.

Lola is the first child for Jan Erik Brenner and partner Carolyn Roberts and she was born on Saturday 15th June 2013 and is already a well travelled circus baby, for not only was Lola on tour with her parents' Wonder Circus until the beginning of November last year, Lola also spent the Christmas season in Germany at Circus Krone.

For the Christening at Polebrook, the Reverend Catherine Ilevins conducted the service at the beautiful All Saints Church located in the centre of the village that has been home to the Roberts families and their various circus shows for over 50 years.

Watched by a large number of invited guests, Lola was baptised, surrounded by her proud parents Carolyn and Jan Erik, equally proud grand parents John and Tonia Roberts with Karl and Jane Brenner. Lola is very lucky in having two sets of god parents, these being her 'God Fathers' Johnboy Roberts and Beau Denning, whilst her 'God Mothers' are Jana Roberts and Latoya Donnert.

After the service and customary photographs in the churchyard, the family and their invited guests headed to the Reception which was held at the Holiday Inn Hotel at nearby Peterborough.

The Reception included a superb buffet, with many of the guests staying for some time chatting and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Invited guests included Billy and Ingrid Wilson Smart, Mike and Jounita Austin, Bernie and Linda Hasler, daughter Naomi and her children, Paul and Julie Cook, George and Christine Pinder, Noel Wainman, Derrick and Valerie Rosaire, Paul Rosaire, Radu and Michaela Petre and family, Sue and Philip Royle, Colin Wright and naturally, most of the Roberts and Brenner families.

The Roberts family members attending included Bobby, Moira, Kitty with husband Pisti and children Nevis, Robert and Angel, Tom with partner Helyne, daughters Kristina and baby Zara, Beverley and husband Gabi Donnert, their children Sandor and Latoya and Tonia's sister Millie with husband Derek Masters, their daughter Sonia with partner Peter.

The Brenner family members attending included eldest son Johnathan, Jane's sister Pat, brother John and sister in law Linda and from Ireland, grandson Gary.

A superb day with all the guests thoroughly enjoying themselves and our congratulations go to not only Lola on her Christening but to her very proud parents Carolyn and Jan Erik.



CFA News

- New members • Donations
- Rally to Zippos Circus

Welcome to new members

- Richard Gadsby, Norfolk;
- Chris Kuhn-Louth, Hull
- Junior member Enzo Kuhn-Louth, Hull

Resignation

- Mario Lauterbach, Birmingham

Donations

Gerald Ibbitson, Doncaster; Neil Ashley, Nottingham; Eric Potts, Lancs; John Crane, Peterborough; Brian Barton, W. Mids; Frederick Gander, W. Sussex; Mark Turley, Glasgow; Anthony Staines, Essex; Paul Redfern, S. Yorks; Peter Norris, Middlesex; Michael Ingoldsby, Ireland; Ron Beadle, Gateshead; Allan Strong, W. Mids; Ian McEwan, Norfolk; Francis Burns, Ireland

Jodi Timms, Membership Secretary

RALLY TO ZIPPOS CIRCUS

Organised by

David Davis and Janice Fiske

The annual rally to Zippos Circus took place on Saturday April 12 and was attended by 48 members. The rally was once again held when the show was at Blackheath, London, but for the first time the CFA party attended the afternoon show, rather than the early evening performance. Despite the change of time there was still the usual after-show get together with the artistes and staff but instead of gathering in the main big top which was needed for the evening performance, everyone met up in the show's hospitality tent which luckily for the CFA is always erected for the Blackheath stand. The time between the shows simply sped by as everyone chatted, had something to drink and ate the delicious Hungarian goulash which had been prepared and cooked by two of Martin Burton's backroom staff. The CFA is extremely grateful to Martin Burton, Beau Denning and everyone on Zippos Circus for their generous hospitality and warm welcome.

GOOD FELLOWSHIP

The Good Fellowship Registrar of the CFA is Brian Cadnum, 24 Hoof Close, Littleport, Ely, Cambs. CB6 1HU. Tel: 01353 860034.

The Registrar sends cards and messages to members of the circus world and CFA • for births, weddings, anniversaries, birthdays • to those unwell or injured • to send the CFA's sympathy when a death occurs. Please phone or write to Brian with the details.