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No.225

March 2020

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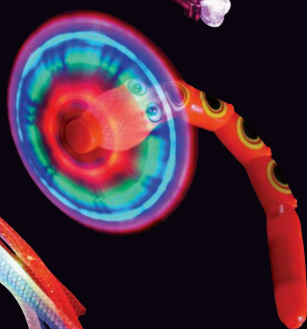
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King Pole

Published by the Circus Friends
Association of Great Britain

No. 225 March 2020

For the next issue of the **King Pole**, all contributions or enquiries about contributions should be sent to our new email address: **KingPole@mail.com**.

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King Pole is published quarterly by the Circus Friends Association (CFA) of Great Britain in March, June, September and December. If your **King Pole** has not arrived by the last day of the publication month, contact the Membership Secretary.

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Front cover photograph: Sergey Nesterov with white tigers, Monte Carlo Circus Festival 2020. Photograph courtesy of the Monte Carlo Press Office

Hello and welcome to not only a new year but a new decade of **King Pole**. With the sad closure of **World's Fair** last year, we are now the longest standing circus publication in the UK – and must be one of the oldest in the world. But, of course, to keep us going for another ten years we need new members all the time to grow and build our readership and our writer's pool. This issue we have over twenty contributors, and you'll find them all credited by name next to their articles. To balance out the voices we publish, we're always especially keen to hear from more female writers and more of our young members. Got some thoughts on circus of any sort? Send them our way and you might see them in print in one of our future editions!

Last March we published our first Circus Schools Directory, to echo our ever popular Circus Directory published each September. There doesn't appear to have been much change since last year, so we are currently planning to make this a biennial feature instead of publishing it on a yearly basis. That leaves more space for the articles, reviews and photos you email in to us, but do let us know your thoughts on this too!

Our thanks, as ever, to all the Circus Friends who volunteer their time and energy to make sure the **King Pole** magazine stays strong, and to all our members whose subscriptions keep the magazine alive.

Yours,

The King Pole Editorial Team

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Circus Survey

Can you fill in an online survey about your experience of circus? Kate Kavanagh from our editorial team (and founder of The Circus Diaries online platform) is studying for a PhD at Cardiff University, where she has created a UK-based survey to find out about people's opinions on circus performance.

You can find more details at <http://bit.ly/CircusSurvey>

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UK CIRCUS REPORTS

Circus 1903

Royal Festival Hall, London
19 December 2019 to 5 January 2020
Report by Steve Chapman
Photograph from Circus 1903

Circus 1903 returned to London for the 2019-2020 Christmas and New Year holiday. The show is held together by clear-speaking ringmaster Willy Whipsnade, played by American magician David Williamson. He plays the part well and interacts well with the children from the audience who he involves in several of his magical routines. As a start to the show, he recruits a young boy onto the stage who is promised a job in the show as chief chef. When the boy drops an egg on his shoe it is sent behind the scenes for cleaning only to reappear in a frying pan on stage. Two children take part in the magical rings routine, and another girl is brought onto the stage with her father to win a toy elephant which is positioned under one of four buckets. Every time the father makes the correct choice, a change is made to the colour, number or letter of the bucket. In a routine called the 'training of wild animals' David works with four children from the audience and a toy raccoon, leading to a card trick which appears to go wrong, until baby elephant puppet Peanut returns to the stage with the card on the sole of her foot.

The colourful opening of Circus 1903 sees all performers on stage, as the Daring Desafios (Joao Siqueira, Luan Vieira and Leonardo Louzada) from Brazil present a skillful teeterboard act with some

impressive somersaults from the teeterboard. Rola bola act, The Sensational Sozonov, is Mikhail Sozonov and Ievgeniia Fetkulova from Russia. This act sees Mikhail juggling five balls on the rola bola and balancing at six levels high. A sideshow routine introduced by Willy Whipsnade leads to the excellent contortion act of Ethiopian Senayet Asefa Amare, billed as 'the Elastic Dislocationist'. Ukrainians Dasha Shelest and Vadym Pankevych, as the 'Flying Fredonis', present a very good double aerial silks routine. Russian Mademoiselle Natalia Leontieva appears in an unusual hula hoop routine, with all manipulations of the hula hoop carried out on top of a big ball.

Following the interval, Les Incroyables from Russia present a sensational aerial cradle routine, concluding with Ivan Fomichev catching a somersaulting, blindfolded Maria Boldyreva three times. This is followed by the Cuban Great Rokardy with some skillful hand-balancing on a high pedestal at increasing height. Juggling superstar the Great Gaston is François Borie from France who is a high-speed juggler working with hats and up to seven clubs. The final act is the 'Magnificent Marvellos', two daredevil performers on the Wheel of Death with high jumps, fast skipping and a somersault on the wheel. The programme lists Colombian performers Carlos Mayorga Macias, Jerson Alexander Valencia Garcia and Ray Freddy Valencia Bocanegra as the 'Magnificent Marvellos'.

Circus 1903 is known for their elephant puppets. Adult puppet, Queenie looks extremely impressive on the stage and is joined by her baby Peanut for a routine at the end of the first half of the show. All performers are announced in the finale, which completed a very enjoyable afternoon of entertainment enthusiastically received by the packed audience. Also listed in the programme but not appearing in this performance were Icarian acrobats from Mongolia, Ganbayar Munkhbat and Andryei Batbold.

Circus 1903 Teeterboard act



Hippodrome Christmas Spectacular Circus and Water Show

Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth
7 December 2019 to 5 January 2020

Report by Don Stacey
Photographs by Andy Payne

'We Need a Little Christmas' might well have been the theme song to the end of 2019 after a year of political upheaval. Although this song did not figure in the Jay family's fourth and final production of the year, there were plenty of other festive tunes to get the audience in the Christmas spirit. Indeed, this year's show erupted in a finale of festive Christmas songs sung by all the cast and audience. This Christmas Spectacular marked the end of Peter Jay's 40th year as owner of the Hippodrome in which he has not only continued the traditions of circus but also established innovative shows like 'Pirates Live' and

'Halloween Spooktacular'.

This winter's show was produced and directed by Jack Jay, with Christine Jay as talent co-ordinator, Estelle Clifton as choreographer for the Clifton swimmers and dancers, and Ben Jay as general manager and lighting designer along with John Thurston. This winter's production was notable for the introduction of a fourth generation member of the family, Billy Jay, who is Ben's 13 year old son. Billy made his debut as percussionist alongside drummer Brandon MacPherson and in doing so followed in his granddad's footsteps, Peter Jay having been the drummer with the Jaywalkers pop group.

This Christmas production marked the return of some favourite acts from past years plus some new ones and a new comedian, Ben Langley, headlining the show. Ben Langley has a long list of theatrical and television accomplishments including five years as principal comedian in the pantomime at the Theatre Royal in Norwich and an appearance on 'Britain's Got Talent' with his 'misheard lyric' routine. His popularity in the Norwich pantomimes no doubt contributed to the sell out performances at the Hippodrome. In making his circus debut Ben Langley was greatly helped by ringmaster and straight-man Jack Jay who is a particularly generous participant in the comedy routines, always supporting but never upstaging the main comedian.

In a preamble to the show Ben Langley announced that his greatest desire was to be a circus star. This was followed by an opening sequence in which the cast performed snippets of their act, led by the show dancers and 'Greatest Showman' style ringmaster, Salvatore Sambito.

The first act was the New Revolution Troupe, two women and three men, the Hippodrome's first Cuban acrobatic troupe who were with Big Kid Circus last summer. In their first spot they combined acrobatic feats with the Russian bar in a lively display. Jack Jay then gave Ben his first circus job, sweeping up, before the show dancers and 20 children from the Estelle Clifton Dance School introduced the aerial straps routine of Salvatore Sambito, who featured in the Halloween show in October. Incidentally there are three groups of 20 children from the Dance School featured in each winter programme.

Ben Langley informed Jack that he has trouble with girls and attempted to select a woman from the audience to practice his 'chat up lines'. He eventually picked a man who was then dressed as a woman for a routine which saw Ben practice his moves, the man returning to his seat still dressed as a woman. The dancers introduced Roberto Carlos, a long time Hippodrome favourite, with his fast moving display of club juggling, mouth manipulation of ping pong balls and juggling with up to four straw hats, always a winner with the public.

Ben Langley had a disastrous date with a woman at a table set in the ring. The woman decided that she did not want to be with Ben and so his attentions turned to the man in the audience who was still dressed as a woman. This was probably the closest he came to a circus clown routine. The first half concluded with the ever popular and sensational Wheel of Death act, this time performed by Andres Daza Vanegas from Colombia and Patricio Lopez Quiroz from Chile who stood in at short notice for

the injured Bulgarian Svilen Marinov.

The second half commenced with the main act of the New Revolution Troupe, now consisting of six men and two women who presented a teeterboard acrobatic display with triple and quadruple somersaults from the board to a mattress held by members of the troupe.

Although Ben Langley's forte is mainly in verbal humour, he did excel in a short comedy juggling spot with two knives and an apple, which he attempted to eat as he manipulated the three objects. The dancers and the children from Dance Estelle introduced Salvatore Sambito's nifty diabolo juggling routine, which was followed by Ben Langley's 'misheard lyrics' routine involving the use of cue cards. For those unable to see the cards they were also displayed on three big screens.

The water finale involved the showgirls plus a central podium, on which appeared the Bionic Brothers from Ukraine who reprised their impressive hand-balancing routine seen here a number of years back. Appearing on the second ring entrance staging was Laserman (Roberto Carlos) whose laser light display was enhanced by new house laser lighting. Indeed, the whole show greatly benefited from the ever-ingenious light effects of Ben Jay, along with the customary smoke, fountains and fireworks.

Working above the water, Salvatore Sambito returned for his final appearance, this time with his cloudswing number.

The swimmers returned to the water as Jack Jay re-introduced all the performers, all sporting red and white Santa hats. The finale ended with Jack and Ben Langley leading the audience in a Christmas



Ben Langley



singalong, a new feature which everyone enjoyed and the perfect way to round off this festive production. Having finished writing this report, the last of 2019, I was able to enjoy a tippie and watch the Queen's speech on television, reflecting that this 'bumpy year' - as described by Her Majesty - had indeed been just that for many in the circus industry worldwide, but that the Jay family could claim that it had been an extremely happy and successful one.

The New Year's Eve evening performance reached a climax, not with the Christmas pop songs but with 'Auld Lang Syne', and an ensuing traditional disco-dance finale by artistes and audience, extra fireworks, hundreds of balloons floating down from the roof and the audience bedecked with party hats, coloured light-ups and streamers. It all added up to a fitting conclusion to a very special end of year performance and hopefully to a new beginning in 2020.

Winter Wonderland

Hyde Park, London

21 November 2019 to 5 January 2020

Report by David Davis

Photographs by Piet-Hein Out

Once again Hyde Park is the venue for London's Winter Wonderland and Martin Burton's MegaDome, which this year plays host to Zippos Christmas Circus, Cirque Berserk, Mr Men and Little Miss, and the Winter Wonderland Comedy Club.

Zippos Christmas Circus

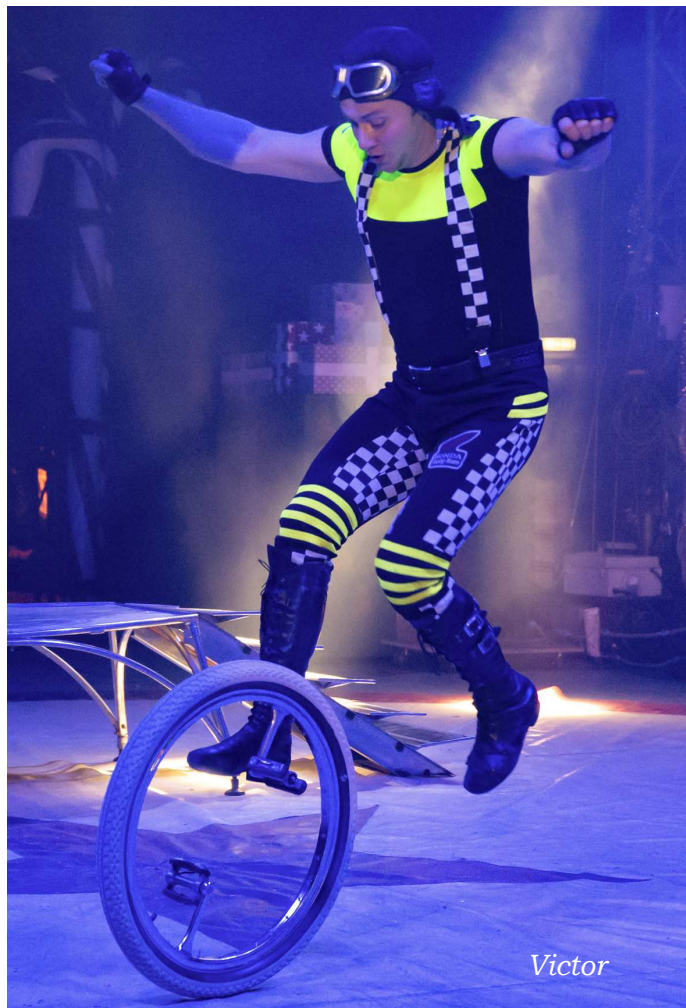
A bed is wheeled into the ring as Emilion Delbosq makes his way through the audience. Paul Winston, in his customary Christmas role as ringmaster, recites the opening lines of the poem 'Twas the

Night before Christmas' as clown Emilion hangs up his stocking (in fact a sack) and goes to sleep. (The audience know he is sleeping because he holds up a board with *zz.zz.zz* on it). When he awakes, Emilion is horrified to discover that he has not been left any presents. However, Paul tells him not to worry, as he has arranged for Emilion to receive some very special gifts. At this point the show's dancers and a couple on roller skates rush into the ring bringing presents, as well as one very large box from which emerge the Gemini Sisters to present their always impressive aerial display on the single trapeze.

Emilion wanders round the ring complaining that he can only find half of his bicycle. Paul informs him that he has lent the other half to Victor (Gorodetsky), who promptly enters on a unicycle which he rides up and down a flight of stairs, bounces up the steps and skips on it. He finishes by riding an ultimate wheel (a unicycle without a saddle) before jumping from one moving wheel to another.

It is then back into the air for the high wire exploits of the Khametov Troupe, two men and two women from Uzbekistan. Their routine includes one of the men walking across the wire with one of the women standing on his head, a man riding a unicycle, and a man crossing the wire with one of the women standing 'en pointe' on his head. They conclude with the two men walking across the wire carrying one of the women standing on a horizontal bar supported on their shoulders.

Whilst the high wire equipment is removed Emilion entertains by throwing a huge balloon into the audience for them to knock around the tent. It is then time for Emilion to receive another present. This



Victor



is a juggling club, which heralds the appearance of juggler Danny Luftman. He commences by juggling five clubs, then four and finally three which he spins at increasing speed. He then throws one, two, three, four and finally five boomerangs around the ring, out over the audience and even around the king poles.

The gift of a roller skate to Emilion marks the arrival of Revolution II (Mikael and Yani) from Cuba with their nicely choreographed roller-skating routine which ends with a fast neck to neck spin. Denis and Szulita then present a number on the Spanish web which commences with some initial solo work by Szulita, followed by the two working together with Denis in a 'flag position' at the top of the rope acting as bearer for Szulita. The costumes of the two performers are outlined in LED lights which brings a whole new dimension to the act.

Emilion presents the ever popular 'making a movie' entrée using two men and a woman from the audience. The final act is performed by Rosie Delarue with her aerial upside-down walk in the roof of the big top. On the way up she executes a one arm spin and descends whilst performing a neck spin.

The finale sees the return of all the artistes accompanied by Victor riding a tall unicycle, a huge cuddly polar bear and, of course, Father Christmas. The show, which was imaginatively directed by David Hibling, lasts 50 minutes and maintains the high standard one has come to expect from Zippos Christmas Circus.

Cirque Berserk

The first person to enter the ring is Paulo dos Santos who rides in on a hobby horse trailed by Cuban acrobat Johanner knocking together two half coconuts to make the sound of the horse. They are followed by a motor bike and a quad bike carrying the Duo Litichevski, who climb into the roof of the big top where, with the man acting as bearer, the woman

executes a series of acrobatic twists and turns. Their routine also includes a very fast one arm spin and concludes with the break-away trapeze trick, the woman's 'fall' ending inches above the ground.

The action then moves to The Globe of Death, in which one and then two riders from the Lucius Team hurtle round the Globe. The Mongolian Khadgaa Troupe, consisting of six men and two women, present a fast paced skipping routine which includes a three-high column of men jumping over the turning rope, and skipping using one of the women as the rope.

Sarah Howard and Elberel perform a short display on the aerial silks. As they descend, Liina Aunola ascends a rope where she executes a one arm spin before moving onto the cloud swing. Her wide swings with her long hair flowing behind her look particularly impressive, as did the ending in which she flew from the cloud swing to catch a vertically hanging rope.

Fire has always featured prominently in Cirque Berserk and the next sequence continues this tradition. Tony Novoltini juggles three fire clubs as well as cross juggling six fire clubs with Germaine Delbosq; Germaine and her husband Gabi spin their fire bolas; Tony throws knives and then fire knives around Sarah Howard whilst she is strapped to a spinning board; and Germaine foot juggles her fire prop. Interspersed between all this are the crossbow exploits of Martti Peltonen, during which he shoots the head off a rose and pierces a playing card with his back to the target, using a mirror to line up his shot. Finally, he lines up a series of shots with fire arrows flying back and forth across the ring (I lost count of how many times) with the final one piercing an apple above his head.

Heralded by the drumming of Germaine and Gabi, a cart carrying a globe covered by a cloth is pulled into the ring by the Khadgaa Troupe. The cloth is removed to reveal Elberel inside a bottle. Once out of the bottle she performs a short contortion routine ending with firing a fire arrow at a target board

lit up with LED lights while she was spinning them.

This brought the show up to finale time as clown Benji returned to open a final gift box, which contained a bauble filled with snow. The rest of the cast were welcomed back onto the stage with 'snow' falling from the roof of the big top.

To round off this charming Christmas show the artistes lined each of the exits to say goodbye and pose for photos with the departing audience.

Continental Circus Berlin The NEC, Birmingham

19 December 2019 to 4 January 2020

Report by Andrew Lewis

Photographs by the EEC

For the second winter season running the EEC brought their huge red big top structure to the South Car Park of this vast entertainment and exhibition complex for a festive production. The show, staged by Irina Archer, was excellent in many ways, from the lighting through to the costumes and production. Except for clown Nicolino and trapeze artiste Anna Rastova, every act (to my knowledge) was making their debut within the UK.

The show opened with a production featuring Nicolino, Veronika Polubota and several of the company all well costumed as drummers, along with the five strong Berlin Showgirls. The first act was the lively and stunning hula hoop act presented by Inga Beliaeva, which included a single hoop spun whilst in handstand position and spinning up to seven hoops, in addition to the spinning of a number of LED hoops.

The Duo Anjos presented an unusual number on the slackline in a routine similar to a bouncing rope act that included a number of back and forward somersaults, back somersault with a twist and a forward somersault to land standing on the slackline.

The five showgirls help introduce solo trapeze artiste Anna Rastova who wisely wore a safety line throughout her number, which included a standing back drop from the trapeze bar into an ankle catch, a shoot out over the bar into another ankle catch and a swinging knee hang into a pirouette to ankle catch. A strong number and extremely well presented.

The five showgirls returned to help introduce The Robles Troupe with their Globe of Death act, which concluded the first half of the show. With the girls on the inside of the globe as it arrived on stage, it was quickly set before the first two riders appeared, then another, and finally rider number four. Their routine was enhanced by flame effects and included loop the loop and criss-cross formations, concluding with the four riders riding around the globe in darkness except for their LED lights.

Following the 20 minute interval, two male members of The Robles Troupe presented a wheel of death act which featured all the usual tricks associated with this act; including jumps inside the wheel, high jumps on the outside, skipping, and with both performers walking on the outside completely blindfolded.

Four of the showgirls appeared before Veronika Polubota took to her vertical swinging pole, working at times at a good height. Veronika appeared to be fairly young and this was already a super act, including a vertical split up the pole, a leg-hold around the pole and slide down it.

The five showgirls returned to help introduce Aurelien Vaillant with his motorbike act, similar in style and content to a BMX bike act. His routine included a number of wheelies, tricks, jumps over his female partner and also jumps up, on and off a large Circus Extreme pick-up.

The final act in the show was The Robles Troupe with their excellent highwire presentation, featuring four male and three female troupe members. This was a very full routine that included the three women in splits positions on the wire whilst two of the men leapt over them, skipping, and finishing with their seven person pyramid. An excellent finish to the show



Robles Bikers

Clown Nicolino entertained between a number of the acts with his big drum, toy Scotty dog jumping through a hoop, his collapsing bike and water squirting umbrella interludes. The show closed with its 'All I Want for Christmas' themed finale, seeing the return of all the artistes for some well-earned and deserved applause.

John Lawson's Christmas Circus at Squires Garden Centre, Washington

23 November to 1 January

Report and Photographs by Andy Payne

For over 10 years, John Lawson's Circus has provided a Christmas Circus at Squire's (formerly Shoots) garden centre at Washington, near Worthing in West Sussex with the latest show called 'Help Rudolph Shine'.

The hour-long show opened with clown Pip Randelle welcoming the audience and getting them warmed up with some of his 'chairobics' exercises before introducing ringmistress Lizzy Labelle, who welcomed in the Salsky Family with their rolling globes presentation. Thomas and Collette began by each balancing on a globe to juggle rings to each other, while sons Peter and Dommy juggled rings behind them. Collette then skipped while balancing on a globe, and she and Thomas negotiate a see-saw on the globes. Further tricks included Dommy balancing on Collette's shoulders on a globe, Peter juggling clubs on a globe and Dommy performing a handstand on a frame balanced between his father and brother's shoulders. The highlight of the act saw Collette and Thomas roll the globes up a series of inclined ramps



The Salvador Brothers

one behind the other until both were at the top, high in the roof of the big top. They then had to return back down but did so backwards until all four were at the front of the stage for a round of applause.

Following them with her tightwire number was Miss Kristina from Moscow. She walked the low-wire with her fan to perform a kneel and back balance in the centre of the wire, walked the wire while spinning a hula hoop around her waist, and rounded off by walking the wire 'en pointe'.

Pip was then back for a musical interlude to try to cheer up costume character Rudolph (Raeanne Hunt) and try to make his red nose light up. As he played 'Do You Wanna Build a Snowman' on a bicycle pump the audience were impressed, but Rudolph wasn't as he did his own dance to 'Ice Ice Baby'.

The show continued up in the air with Miss Vikki on the aerial silks. Working to music by Coldplay, she performed a standout in splits, waist balance and twirled the silks into a rope while hanging in a knee hang.

Back down in the ring, a hungry Pip had marshmallows in a paper bag. Ringmistress Lizzy was also hungry but Pip was reluctant to share his marshmallows, instead stuffing them all into his mouth until he could hardly speak. Finally, he spat them all into the bag and offered it to Lizzy.

Making their debut in the ring with a brand new Risley routine were the Salvador Brothers, Peter and Dommy. With their father Thomas Salsky on hand, the boys opened the Spanish themed number with a short dance before taking to their trinka for Peter to propel Dommy from his hands up onto this feet and from his feet to his shoulders. Further tricks included spinning Dommy horizontally on his feet, and from his back to hand to hand with Peter. A very impressive routine from the brothers showing great promise.

Accompanied by Miss Kristina, the next act featured strongman Sergey from Moscow with his amazing feats of strength beginning by juggling a kettlebell from hand to hand and above his head. He then held the audience silent as he threw heavy steel balls into the air to catch them on the back of his neck. He then rolled them around his arms and juggled with three at once. For his next trick he balanced a perch with a basket on his head, throwing a steel ball up into the basket. For his final trick he balanced a kettlebell on a pole with two bowls of fire on his head while juggling with a second kettlebell.

Ringmistress, Lizzy then returned to ask Pip to sweep the ring, but his broom had a life of its own. In a clever display of mime and physical comedy, Pip tried to keep the broom under control as it rose into the air and headed towards the audience finally jumping onto it to leave the ring but left flat on his face on the floor.

The show continued with the rola bola presentation of Thomas Salsky assisted by Collette. Thomas opened by balancing on a 'T' shaped frame on a single rola and then sideways on just one foot on a single rola. Thomas then turned 360 degrees while balancing on a football and balanced on 4 different shaped objects. To close, Thomas stacked a set of 3 steps to balance.

Ringmistress Lizzy returned with Pip to tell him that she had a Christmas gift for him, so Pip had to do some quick thinking as he didn't have a gift for

Shepperton: ringmaster Attila Endresz; clowns Bumble and Pico; Miss Luna, hand-balancing; Ross Shirley, juggling and diabolos; Sergei, rola balancing; Micaela Cardona, sword and dagger balancing; Miss Lisandra, aerial silks; and Patrick Austin, motorbike carousel

Santus Circus Presents Cirque de Noel

Polhill Garden Centre, Kent

12 December 2019 to 5 January 2020

Report and photograph by David Davis

her. In another clever routine, Pip decided to wrap up a balloon which didn't quite go to plan as he kept popping the balloon and became entangled in tape. He eventually wrapped the balloon but using a stapler to secure the paper which of course popped the balloon.

The show's final act featured Miss Vikki on the aerial rope working to the song 'Into the Unknown' from Frozen 2. Vikki performed a horizontal spin in a wrist loop with a tuck, and a spin in an ankle hold. To close she performed a very fast wrist spin.

With Pip and Lizzy back in the ring they were joined by Rudolph and finally discovered what would make his red nose light up...to sing 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer', with the audience all invited into the ring to join in. After the show, the audience could visit Santa in his grotto and have photos taken in the ring with Rudolph.

After Christmas the show reverted to a traditional circus with some of the cast leaving for other Squire's shows to be replaced by Kelly Garcia and Ross Walters with their acts.

Niven Lawson writes that they presented shows with following acts at three other Squires Garden Centres.

Stanmore: ringmaster Lazlo Schlingloff; Tolly the clown; Miss Sanna, rag doll and aerial silks; Miss Kelly Garcia, gym balls and acrobatic bathing routine; Cinzia Timmis, aerial sphere; high speed juggler Ronaldo; and the Duo Estefans motorbike carousel. Badshot Lea: ringmaster Liam Millichap; Miss Claire-Marie, bubble fantasy and sword and dagger Balancing; Peppi the clown; Miss Sofia, chair balancing and cloudswing; Thomas Codanti juggler; and Keyla Rémache laser lights show.

Once again Santus Circus spent the Christmas period at Polhill Garden Centre near Sevenoaks in Kent. As has become customary, the show consisted of Santus house acts, augmented by an outside act which this year was Duo Ludvik, a husband and wife team from the Czech Republic. In talking to him after the show I discovered that in the Czech Republic his family run the small Cirkus Tony and that he is the brother of Tony Novoltini who for the past few years has been on Zippos Circus/Cirque Berserk with his knife throwing act.

In his role of ringmaster, Ernest Santus welcomed the audience and introduced a short dance routine by Megan, Ruby, Ellie and May. They were followed by clown Lucien who won £40 from Ernest Santus by spinning first a standard hula-hoop and then a very large one. In a later appearance he caught a ball, thrown by younger members of the audience, in a net, the comedy coming from the fact that it wasn't until he got an adult to throw the ball that he failed to catch it successfully. Lucien opened the second half with his slack rope routine which nicely combined comedy with tricks such as skipping, jumping through a hand-held hoop, juggling three hoops and jumping over a bar of fire. For his final appearance he presented the 'You can't dance here' gag.

Santus stalwart Aaggii performed his 'Mr Slinky' number in the second half and closed the first half with his aerial straps routine for which he was dressed as Spiderman. During the interval it was possible to have your photograph taken with Spiderman, an opportunity which proved very popular at the

Ellie and May



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performance I attended.

In addition to Aagii's strap act, there were two other aerial routines. Miss Megan presented a pleasing routine on the static trapeze, ending with a neck spin, whilst in the second half, Ellie and May performed a well-thought out routine on the aerial cube which commenced with them working together before moving on to individual performances.

Ruby Santus made two appearances, firstly with her hula-hoops and secondly with her foot juggling. The hula-hoops were all illuminated with multi-coloured LED lights which looked very effective in the darkened tent and brought an extra dimension to a familiar routine.

Making their debut with Santus were Duo Ludvik who closed the show with their rola balancing act. The routine included the man jumping over a hand held rope and building up four platforms on top of the rola board before passing two hoops over his body. He concluded by balancing on a column of five cylinders. Earlier in the show the man had performed a fire-eating routine which ended with a particularly impressive large blow of fire.

The finale saw Ernest Santus re-introduce all the artistes plus the two ring staff and Roger Santus, whose drumming had augmented the recorded music. Including a short interval, the show lasted one hour and twenty minutes and the warm cosy tent provided a welcome haven from the stresses of Christmas shopping to say nothing of the cold wet weather.

Circus of Horrors 25th Anniversary Tour

Report and Photograph by Andy Payne

The Circus of Horrors opened its 25th tour at Wookey Hole in mid-October, not far from its first ever venue when it played Glastonbury festival back in 1995. The new show begins with Doktor Haze giving the safety announcements while images are played on TV screens on the stage. Bursts of light from the 'blinders' behind a black curtain set the scene, with the curtain dropping to reveal Doktor Haze on a 'fangs' platform singing 'Step Into Your Dreams'. He is accompanied by guitarist Mike Myers with fireworks exploding from his guitar.

The opening scene also sees Hannibal Helmurto swallow his first sword and contortionist Ogeny walk backwards across the stage with his head between his legs. Sinister Sister Steph Bates in a wedding dress and veil performs a neck hang on a trapeze and the Deadly Divas Killer Courtney and Rachel Rigor Mortis (Courtney Jones and Rachel Comber) are introduced as Doktor Haze takes the audience to Sin City.

Doktor Haze then presents the Queen of Sin City, Anastasia IV, for her barefoot walk up a ladder of swords - the sharpness of the swords being demonstrated beforehand by slicing a cucumber on them. Haze is then joined by the Voodoo Warriors for some tumbling over a moving flaming staff which creates curves of fire. Hannibal Helmurto then appears on stage to place his finger through the septum of his nose and then swings a heavy piece of wood side to side suspended from a meat hook through his nose.

Watched over by Haze and the Deadly Divas, Captain Dan opens a bottle of beer by removing the metal cap with his eye socket. He then needs a female volunteer so the girls head into the audience to find one. With the woman on stage Dan has a novel way for her to have a drink of beer, through a plastic pipe from the bottle, through the septum of Hannibal's nose and his mouth, and into her mouth!

Sinister Sister Steph Bates then takes to the air on the solo trapeze for a double toe hang. She then swaps the trapeze for a rope to perform a fast wrist spin under yellow and purple lights.

The stage is then taken over by the Deadly Divas, Courtney and Rachel, with their double hula hoop routine. The girls both begin in leather corsets and jackets to spin a single hoop, with Rachel dropping into splits and performing a shoulder balance while spinning a hoop on her foot. As the girls add more hoops they gradually remove items of clothing until they are performing in skeleton-decorated underwear as they simultaneously spin four hoops each.

The girls remain on stage to drum with flaming titanium sparking drumsticks, as Doktor Haze introduces contortionist The Voodoo King (Ogeny Nkwabi) who performs on a raised platform in the centre of the stage. He bounces on his hands, tucks his legs under his arms to balance and tucks one leg under his arm and behind his head. Further moves include twisting his spine so that he faces backwards to grab his feet and balancing on one hand with his leg tucked behind his head. To close, Ogeny balances on one foot while making his body into a 'V' shape.

The show continues 'down in the lab' to the Monster Mash with Doktor Haze and Captain Dan and the Mongolian Laughing Boy as they experiment



with electricity. They light a fluorescent tube from Dan's ear and then his bottom and light a fire torch from his nose with the electricity running through him. Dan then unscrews a lit light bulb, smashing it on his forehead and eating the pieces of glass. Doktor Haze also has a 'pickled person' exhibit to show as Rachel Comber, dressed as a nurse, emerges from the bottle. Another experiment of Doktor Haze features Viktor Kochkin, who is strapped to a cross at the back of the stage. With a chainsaw, Haze appears to slice through his legs, leaving him hanging on the aerial straps.

Viktor drops down from the straps for some hand to hand work on the stage with nurse Rachel. Rachel works with Courtney on the straps with Courtney as bearer. With Courtney in splits across the straps, Viktor balances in a handstand on her shoulder then, with Rachel as bearer she holds Viktor below her. Viktor rounds off with some solo one arm planches. The last specimen in the laboratory is Sinister Sister Steph Bates, who rises dripping wet from her water tank on the aerial straps for an upside down waist balance, single knee swinging hang and her final trick of being lifted holding the straps by a mouthpiece in her teeth to demonstrate her 'iron jaw'. This brings the first half of the show to a close with all of the cast assembling on stage for a group pose.

During the interval, the merchandise stand is open in the foyer with a wide range of souvenirs including t-shirts, DVD's and a new souvenir brochure.

After an interval for '666 years' the show continues with Doktor Haze singing 'Welcome to the Freak Show' as he presents the Mongolian Laughing Boy, who threads a bath chain up his nose and down into his mouth. He then heads into the audience for a woman to pull it back out.

The Voodoo Warriors and Viktor Kochkin fill the stage with a display of tumbling and pyramid building with Viktor at times as the base of the pyramid. The routine also features some solo handstand work by Viktor on one of the podiums and a three-high head-to-head balance by Abou and Ramah. Taking things to another level, Anastasia lights their skipping rope with her flaming finger wands, then eats the fire to extinguish it. With the rope on fire, the Warriors dive over it from back to front and Ramah performs back somersaults over it.

The freak show continues as Doktor Haze introduces Horrors favourite Hannibal Helmurto, who shows off his multitude of tattoos, forked tongue, implanted mammoth ivory teeth and floating ribs before swallowing a sword with no handle to dispel the myth that the sword retracts into the handle. He then swallows a curved cutlass, bending sideways as he does so, followed by a serrated saw-type sword and finally a lit neon tube filled with mercury which lights up red in the blackout.

Next up is another favourite, Captain Dan, this time in his guise as a strongman for the strangulation illusion. For this he needs some volunteers from the audience to join him and the Voodoo Warriors on stage for a tug of war, with the thick rope tied around his neck. Going a stage further, he then stands on two ammunition boxes to swing a bowling ball from a delicate part of his anatomy and then discovers a giant bowling ball that contains his faithful Henry hoover which he drags around the stage, again

suctioned to a part of his anatomy!

Dan is soon captured by Doktor Haze and Mongolian Laughing Boy and thrown into an upright coffin, which explodes to reveal members of the Voodoo Warriors dressed as skeletons under UV light for a display of tumbling and pyramid building. They are also accompanied by a large inflatable skeleton. With Doktor Haze sitting down with Deadly Diva Courtney, he is soon disturbed by Tony Walls - as Rellik the killer clown - at the back of the auditorium as he and his band of clowns climb over the audience in their seats on the way to the stage. Once on stage they capture Sinister Sister Steph for Doktor Haze to appear to cut her throat as he sings 'The Only Sure Thing' with her slumping to the ground. The gruesome scene continues with Diva Courtney standing on the rack, where Haze appears to slice her in half with his circular saw blade leaving her legs shuddering as her body appears to be divided into two halves.

The clowns then take over the stage to place Doktor Haze in the Samurai illusion cabinet as a burning rope leads to all of the swords crashing through the sides of the cabinet. The sides are then removed to reveal that he has disappeared. To the surprise of the audience, Doktor Haze reappears at the back of the auditorium to continue the show with flying hair-hanger Anastasia IV. She flies with a red and black cloak, dropping it as she hangs only by the strength of her hair. While flying she removes her gloves, sprinkling glitter and performs splits across a set of red straps. Anastasia returns to the stage to blow fire that ignites the limbo bar for the Voodoo Warriors with Mangunda performing limbo under the bar while Ramah dives over it. The bar is lowered down and down, still on fire, until it is balanced on just two bottles with Mangunda still managing to limbo under it.

Anastasia then returns to the air like a human Catherine Wheel as she spins by her hair with fireworks exploding from her waist. The explosive fire scene continues with fire blowing and fire eating from Doktor Haze, while the Voodoo Warriors and the Deadly Divas dance with fire wands. Hannibal Helmurto then swallows a sword with fireworks streaming from its handle as red confetti showers down from the roof of the stage.

The whole cast assemble for a group pose at the front of the stage before Doktor Haze gets the audience rocking as he introduces his new band, The Interceptors from Hell, which features keyboard player Professor Mannheimer, drummer Lancaster Ewan, guitarist Mike Myers and bass player Kenny Killer.

This brings the non-stop action show to a close.

CFA Rally to Zippo's Circus

Saturday 11th April 2020

**Details will be sent to members
CFA Organiser: David Davis**



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needed at fairground stalls, but I am unsure. The final act before the interval was a juggling act, which was a little hard to follow due to the strobe lighting and seemed rather an extended time.

During a twenty-minute interval - a chance for a 'comfort visit' and an ice cream the stage crew set up two large trampolines but sadly the two performers, although quite skilful, were not very synchronised in the execution of their somersaults. My assumption is that this act related to the fairground ride of the 'Drop Tower/ Big Drop.' A juggler then came onto the stage as a distractor for a prop change, however the stage lighting was poor, so it was hard to really identify the routine and skill level of the artiste. Attention moved to a trampoline facsimile of the fairground game 'Ping-Pong Ball & Fishbowl.' The performers bounced on a trampoline covered in small colourful plastic balls, the weight of the bouncing artistes jettisoning the balls all over the stage in a rather dramatic way.

The show continued with the ensemble using large gym balls for a floor acrobatic act, which included rolling, bouncing and gliding through space on the stage floor. My assumption was the acrobats represented either the dodgems colliding into each other against the imaginary barrier i.e. the gym balls, or a replica of a 'Bouncy House Ride'. I personally found it rather light on skill and not really engaging.

The next act was an exemplar of what creative contemporary circus is about, and I loved it. This was an imaginary car, but within it was a rotating steel frame. Into the frame, three or four cast members would climb into a cradle, who would act as a form of weighted counterbalance for this once-seen-never-to-be-forgotten act. On stage came a cast member wearing the most amusing and captivating costume (no show spoiler), donning a harness and then lying flat on the floor behind the steel car frame. On the instruction of the 'loader,' a cast member positioned at the base of the car frame, the other cast members push down causing the harnessed artiste to travel at high speed underneath the car framework and then catapulted over the car framework at very high speed into an awaiting catching net. This amazing act based upon g-forces/centrifugal forces, was highly creative, daring and amusing. This, I think, replicated the fairground ride 'Screaming Swing Pendulum Ride,' the interpretation and execution was absolutely brilliant.

To calm the audience down a little, next came a Russian bar act that was a little mundane in terms of content and skill. I found it hard to relate this act to any of fairground ride category so I would welcome any reader's input.

The penultimate act was the Wheel of Death, correlated to the 'Chair-O-Plane/ Chair Swing Ride' fairground ride I would imagine. This had a rather eerie feel to it, for me it seemed to have slightly religious connotations. One of the cast members was strapped to the outside rim of the Wheel of Death and then wrapped in cling film, then a second performer acted as the standard counterweight and the two rotated. I think this was supposed to convey the spirit of the amusement park, but that is only my interpretation. Once a few rotations had been completed, both cast members acknowledge the audience's applause, and attention was moved

quickly to the left wing of the stage. In the finale the Bear re-entered the stage, mounted the 'Ride & Bell' fairground ride and was then shot into the sky, which became twinkling stars: THE END.

Now the credits: the cast of six artistes consisted of Rauli Dahlberg, founding member and trampolinist; Kalle Lehto, focusing upon juggling and acrobatics; Mikko Karhu with acrobatics, trampoline, teeterboard/springboard and Russian bar; Odilon Pindat with the wheel of death, acrobat and hand balancing; Jarno Polhuijs teeterboard/springboard, the wheel of death, and acrobatics; Hannu Abonce Muhonen with the wheel of death, Cyr wheel and acrobatics; and finally Rauli Dahlberg, acrobatics.

The 'Super Sunday' creative team was made up of Mikko Karhu, Rauli Dahlberg, Kalle Lehto, Odilon Pindal, Mikko Rinnevuori and Petri Yuominen. The artistic producer, however, was Annti Suniala. Supporting 'Super Sunday' with original music were Sami Tammela and Ben Rogers, with sound by Sami Tammela. The performance music was sadly recorded (as regular readers to King Pole will know, I prefer live circus music). The lighting was by Jere Monkkonen & Klasu Eklund, costumes by Rauli Dahlberg & Anja Muhonen.

The Race Horse Company was established in Finland in 2008 by Petri Tuominen, Rauli Kosonen and Kalle Lehto. The contemporary circus quickly established itself with previous touring productions like 'Petit' and 'Concrete Circus'. Finland has had a long circus history dating back to its first performing group in 1896. From 2009, circus was recognised by central government as an art form and therefore can receive state aid. The Race Horse Company is supported by Finnish Cultural Foundation (one of the largest private charities in Europe); Alfred Kordelin Foundation (industrial philanthropist); Kone Foundation (industrial philanthropist); Samuel Huber Foundation; New Nordic Circus Network (network to encourage contemporary circus) and Subtopia (circus school).

Ticket prices for 'Super Sunday' were around what you would expect to pay at a traditional touring circus, £15.00, £18.50, and under 16's £12.50, concession at £15.00 and finally a family (two adults two children) for £65.00. Nearly all traditional touring circus offer discount redeemable vouchers, often offering a 50% discount on the face value price, however there were no discount vouchers offered here. The commercial conundrum is why, without discount redeemable vouchers, should a contemporary circus fill almost every night a 1,700-seater auditorium for ten days, while commercial tenting circuses sometimes struggle to fill shows with seating capacities of 500?! Maybe I should leave that issue for another article in a later King Pole.

To its credit, the Race Horse Company offered a free Circus Coffee Morning session where members of the public could meet informally with members of the cast. Also during their stay at Brighton the company held a two-hour Circus Workshop, with performers present offering an induction to using a number of specific pieces of circus equipment. This was offered on a voluntary contribution basis, all excellent public relations for circus in general.

The theme of the show was a journey through an amusement park with one of the prizes from a fairground stall, namely a teddy bear (a bit of a 'spoiler'), but the teddy bear eventually dies and goes to heaven. However, this story line was not really evident, either in the pre-show publicity or through the first half of the show, which I think is a sad lapse in the marketing of the production. 'Super Sunday' is advertised as a show with non-stop phenomenal stunts, adrenaline rushes, dancing, acrobatics, and lots of comedy, and there is no doubt that was true. It also has a wonderful spark of 'out of the box thinking' (I hate that term) that contemporary circus happily has embedded in its genre, but I was frustrated with some of the poor stage lighting, which at time detracted from enjoying cast members' performances. And regular readers of King Pole know my attitude to recorded circus music: negative.

I found some of the transitions slow and frustrating. There are two fundamental approaches to transition: Either, like Circus Monti or Cirque du Soleil, cast members are integrated into the movement of props and equipment in their performance; or the other option, like Circus Arlette Gruss or Knie, is that you employ professional ringboys who execute the transition while the audience is distracted by other circus cast members. I understand that the ethos of the Company is 'chaos', but that is no excuse for organisational muddle in transition spots, which at times appeared to be the case. The Racing Horse Company fell between the two approaches and I found it frustrating. Some of the acts were simplistic, like the Russian Bar; others were repetitive (gym ball); and in other areas of the show the skill base was competent but not challenging.

The Racing Horse Company certainly has a grasp of the importance and use of non-verbal comedy, which I could imagine would engage any global audience. Contemporary circus appears to have a greater licence for originality and creativity than traditional circus, and the Racing Horse Company achieved that, creating impact, drama, and personality. Moreover, some acts *were* technically challenging, executed with precision and were a credit to the circus industry.

Having said that, live entertainment for me should be an emotional rollercoaster of highs and lows,

Advertising manager

The CFA is looking for an advertising manager
If you think you could help or would like to discuss what the job would involve please contact Steve Chapman.

CIRCUS NEWS

By Don Stacey

Demise of The World's Fair

David Davis writes that The World's Fair, the showman's weekly newspaper that covered both the fairground and circus industries folded on 2 December 2019 when it was announced that it had entered administration. Its demise was not unexpected due to the fact that all newspapers have experienced a steady decline in reader numbers due to the advent of mobile phones and the internet resulting in news passing into the public domain within seconds of an event happening. The World's Fair also encompassed other, related fields of entertainment with 'Coin Slot', 'Market Trader' and 'Park News'.

Over its long history, The World's Fair valiantly covered the British circus industry with a variety of writers such as Harry Wilding, many of whom are now long forgotten. Probably the most memorable was Edward Graves, who served as Circus Editor for many years both before and after the Second World War. He had willing help from a number of enthusiastic volunteers such as Marbell; Burnley Cyclist; Peter Featherstone, Fraser Dudgeon and David Barnes. For many years Edward Graves also organised the annual Circus Reunion, which was attended by most of the circus fraternity. A major feature of the newspaper was its annual Circus Special in January, which would gather together all the reviews of the major Christmas circuses of Great Britain with many of the circuses - and indeed artistes - placing adverts in the same issue. Edward Graves also compiled news from The Circus Fans' Association (as The Circus Friends Association was then called). Later, 'CFA News' was written by a number of other people including David Barnes, David Davis and Andrew Lewis.

Edward Graves' death in September 1965 left a void which Don Stacey, a former Bertram Mills Circus employee and one time CFA member offered to fill on a temporary basis. This rapidly became a permanent appointment with Don fulfilling the role of Circus Editor for the next 40 years during which time he served under various members of the Mellor family who ran the newspaper. Under Don Stacey's guidance the circus section blossomed from an average of two pages to, on occasions, six pages of news and reviews with more and more international circus coverage. It was under Don's stewardship that the annual World's Fair's Circus Awards were introduced.

This came to an end when managing director Michael Mellor sold his interest in the newspaper to the Whatmore family who had a long association with the publication. As circus editor, Don Stacey had been paid a regular salary and with the new management attempting to reduce costs he was informed that he would now be paid by 'column inches'. This and other proposed changes such as reducing the amount of circus coverage and eliminating international circus news left Don feeling that he had no option other than to resign.

Michael Mellor tried for a year or two to contribute two pages of circus reports, but in the end it was left

to writers such as Andrew Lewis and Andy Payne to try and keep the circus flag flying. Although the newspaper continued to devote two pages to the circus, this now consisted of reviews of shows plus Circus Calls and the occasional piece of news. Unfortunately, the reviews were often late with, for example, reviews of Christmas shows appearing long after the show had closed, reinforcing the view that the circus section had become out of date. The World's Fair was certainly no longer the place to go for circus news. With the internet providing so much news and information, the closure of The World's Fair, which had served as the voice of the fairground and circus industry for over a century, was probably inevitable.

Fredy Knie Jr. Retires

The Swiss National Circus Knie extended its 100th anniversary season by returning to its home town of Rapperswil to give performances from 20 to 24 November, 2019. Furthermore, on Sunday 24 November, Fredy Knie Jr. retired from the circus ring at the age of 73. Fredy Knie Jr. was to have shown his 30 horse carousel along with Ivan Knie's courier riding act at this year's International Circus Festival in Monte Carlo. However, it has now been announced that the horses will instead be shown by Ivan Knie along with Maycol and Wioris Errani.

Circus Circus Sold

In October 2019, it was announced that the 102 acre Circus Circus Hotel complex in Las Vegas had been sold by MGM Resorts International to Phil Ruffin for \$825million. The complex, which employs a staff of 2300 and is home to a wide variety of circus acts appearing there almost 24-hours a day, is still a very profitable undertaking as it is one of the city's more affordable family-friendly destinations. It is now over 50 years old and in need of restoration and change. It is reported that Mr Ruffin is to build a 2000 seat theatre on the front of the property, which will house a Cirque du Soleil production. Mr Ruffin also owns the Treasure Island Hotel, which has been home to Cirque du Soleil's 'Mystere' production since December 1993, making it the longest running Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas. The show still features British clown Brian Andro, who will be 88 in May 2020. 'Mystere' is the only Cirque du Soleil show in Las Vegas - of which there are several - which is not associated with the MGM hotel group.

Cirque du Soleil

Cirque du Soleil's production 'Corteo' will be in the British Isles this summer: Leeds, 18 to 21 June; The O2 London, 24 June to 5 July; and Dublin, 8 to 26 July. This will be the third Cirque du Soleil show to visit the United Kingdom in 2020. 'Luzia' was at the Royal Albert Hall in London in January and February, whilst ice-skating arena production 'Crystal' goes to Sheffield, Aberdeen, Belfast, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham in March and April.

Further afield, the first new production of Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas for six years opened in late 2019 at the Luxor Hotel Casino. The show is called R.U.N., and is a live action thriller blending stunts and special effects into a storyline written by Robert Rodriguez, director of 'Sin City'. The story follows a bride on the run through the city's underground world.

Circus Report

As reported in our December 2019 issue, the American fortnightly publication 'The Circus Report' ceased publication on 31 December 2019 after 47 years. However, its editors Jan and Bill Biggerstaff have reached an accord with The Outdoor Amusement Business Association in America to continue to produce key circus reports for the OABA's monthly publication 'Showtime'. Beginning with the January/February 2020 issue, 'Showtime' will feature two to four pages of circus content. Membership of OABA can be obtained by contacting www.oaba.org. The Outdoor Amusement Business Association's mission is to promote the preservation and growth of the outdoor amusement industry in the USA through leadership, advocacy and education.

Worst Television Shows

At the end of 2019, The Daily Telegraph newspaper contained an article commenting on the worst television shows of the past decade. Amongst them were two circus related shows. The first was 'Cirque du Celebrite' in which so-called celebrities were trained to perform a series of circus skills/acts. Does anyone remember the series? I guess I should count myself lucky that I was not accepted as a member of the judging panel, as was suggested at the time.

The other circus themed show was 'Big Top' whose cast included Amanda Holden as a circus ringmistress. The Telegraph's Michael Deacon called it "unfunny and outdated" saying "the cast weren't so much playing characters as reading aloud from a dog-eared joke book".

Auvergne Festival

The 18th annual Festival International du Cirque in Auvergne, France was held from 14 to 20 November 2019. It was reported to have been a great success with two fantastic programmes. These offered the Alexander Troupe, springboard acrobatics; Julot Cosins, mast acrobat; clowns Steve and Jones from Italy; Acrodreams, gold acrobatic duo; Florian Richter's liberty horses and jockey riding troupe; Mystery of Gentlemen, Mongolian globe acrobats; Wolf Fisher, equilibrist; Dias Brothers, Icarian acrobats; trapeze artiste Alain Alegria; Marionette's Dream, skipping number; Diaz Sisters, ladder balancers; clown Emilion Delbosq; Elisa Coussandier's parrots; Magic Unlimited, illusion act; Kevin Richter's Post riding act and his springboard acrobatic troupe; Marco Zoppi, bubble act; Katya Fedorovich, aerialiste; Johan Wellton, juggler; and Alexander Voinescu, equilibrist. The festival took place in a large ten pole big top with two rings. In 2020 festival will be held from 19 to 22 November in the larger Grenoble Sports Arena which will accommodate bigger aerial acts and have more seats.

Circus Model Exhibition

The biggest European Model Circus Exhibition will take place in Geleen-Sittard, Maastricht, The Netherlands on 18 and 19 April 2020. It is hoped that during the exhibition a Guinness Book of Records for the most miniature circuses in one place will be achieved.

Cirkus Arena

In 2020, Denmark's Cirkus Arena celebrates its 65th season of touring, with an opening in Copenhagen on 25 March. The well-known Danish television host Bubber (Niels Christian Meyer) returns as ringmaster having previously hosted Arena from 1990 to 1998 and again in 2019. The company will include the Danguir Troupe of high wire walkers and for the first time in a Danish circus a FMX performance (freestyle motocross) from a Danish team. Gone are the elephants, zebras and sea lions which have previously been shown either with Cirkus Arena or at its summer park as they have now been banned by the Danish government.

In France

Raoul Gibault, who runs France's Cirque Medrano, had 15 circuses in France this winter. He presented shows in Valenciennes, Rouen, Le Havre, Metz, Nancy, Dijon, Nantes, Lyon, Bordeaux, Nimes, Avignon, Compiègne, Angoulême, Montpellier, and Marseilles.

The Cirque Alexis Gruss has changed its format for its 2019-20 winter season in Paris, which closes on 1 March. It is presenting 'Les Folies Gruss', which consists of 75 minutes of circus acts alongside a meal.

It has been announced that the municipality of Paris has banned all wild animal acts in circuses. A number of local bans are already in place in France and it was announced in December 2019 that the French government was poised to introduce a bill in January to ban wild animals in circuses nationwide. The Cirque d'Hiver in Paris had already dropped wild animals and elephants for this winter's show which featured domestic cats, dogs and camels.

In The Netherlands

The clowns Jan Erik Brenner and Chico Rico were featured in the International Christmas Circus in Eindhoven's Park Theater from 21 to 29 December 2019. Kevin, Angelo and Enrico Chaves, plus Alex the Fireman, all well-known from appearances in Great Britain, were in the Christmas Circus in Enschede whilst Elaine Courtney and Ksenia Archer were in the Christmas show in Utrecht. The Irish contortionist Darragh Merritt was in the Hilversum Christmas Circus along with Latoya Donnert and her horses.

In 2020, the Dutch Club van Circusvrienden will be visiting the German Circus Charles Knie at the end of June in Kleef, a number of Hungarian circuses from 20 to 24 August, the International Circus Festival in Latina, Italy, and the Grande Fete Lilloise du Cirque in Lille in October/November.

Jurassic World Live

Feld Entertainment, owners of the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus which closed in 2017, launched a new arena spectacular on 8 November 2019 at Rosemont. It is called 'Jurassic World Live'

and is based on the Jurassic Park movie franchise with its prehistoric monsters. The dinosaurs are either operated by people as outsized puppets or by remote control devices. At least there should be no animal protestors outside arenas with this touring show!

Chimelong-Monaco Accord

On 23 November 2019, at the 6th International China Circus Festival, a long-term co-operation agreement was set up between the Monte Carlo International Circus Festival and the Chimelong Group to jointly promote circus art and culture around the world. During the festival Princess Stephanie of Monaco visited Chimelong Tourist Resort in Guangzhou and Zhuhai Chimelong International Ocean Tourist Resort. The Chimelong Group was founded 30 years ago and is a tourism group incorporating theme parks, resort hotels, cultural performing arts and business conventions. It owns the two big resorts in Guangzhou and Zhuhai and is currently constructing one in Qungyuan. It also aims to set up a circus college to develop circus culture.

The 6th China International Circus Festival attracted some 200 performers from 24 circus troupes from 22 countries and regions of China. For the first time it was held jointly with the Monte Carlo International Circus Festival.

Moscow Circus Festivals

As usual two major Russian circus festivals take place in September 2020. The Nikulin Moscow Circus International Festival will be staged from 3 to 6 September with the Moscow International Youth Festival Contest in Circus Art being staged on the same dates.

In Stuttgart

The annual World Christmas Circus in Stuttgart, Germany was again staged by Henk van der Meijden and his wife Monica Strotmann. The show was presented under a giant big top and once again proved to be very successful. The performance was managed by Russia's leading producer Gia Eradze. The ringmaster was Bjorn Gehrmann whilst the musical director was Markus Jaichner with Zbigniew Sliva in charge of the Circus Knie ring crew for the first time. The exceptionally strong programme featured a record-breaking Hungarian Post riding act by 18 year old Kevin Richter with 23 horses; Bello Nock as the show's star clown; a big Russian Acrobatic team, The Flying Christmas Bride; the Russian Cossack riders of Violetta Alexandrova Serzh; the Lira Girls, aerial act; the Werner Guerrero Troupe with a seven man pyramid on the high wire; a 20 person Chinese Ikarian troupe; Floria Richter's liberty horses; Secrets of my Soul, Russian aerialists; the Yarov Troupe, perch pole number from the Ukraine; Lucky Hell, a female sword swallower from the Lido nightclub in Paris; juggler Viktor Kee; Duo Balance, hand to hand acrobats from Romania; the Martinez Family, Ikarian act; jugglers Strahleemann and Son; Trio Dandys, Russian bar act; Our Story, Ukrainian mast acrobatic duo. The advertising stressed 100 circus stars in the show, which ran from 5 December 2019

to 6 January 2020. Unfortunately during rehearsals there was a serious accident to the seven-person Guerrero high wire act.

Yarmouth Hippodrome

Before the Christmas season had even finished, it was announced that Suffolk-based comic Ben Langley would be returning to the Hippodrome Circus and Water Spectacular for the winter 2020/21 season. The Circus of Horrors will also be returning to the Hippodrome for its annual two day visit as part of its 25th anniversary tour. The visit will take place on 6 and 7 March 2020. The new 'Pirates Live' production at Easter will run from 2 to 26 April; the Summer Circus and Water Spectacular from 8 July until 20 September; and the 'Halloween Spooktacular Family Spooky Show' from 22 October to 1 November. The dates for the next Christmas Circus Spectacular and Water Show are 5 December 2020 to 10 January 2021.

Elmer the Patchwork Elephant Auction success

Peter Gaskin writes, following the success of Elmer's Big Parade in Ipswich (King Pole 223), the larger elephant sculptures were sent for auction in October and managed to raise £261,000 for the local St Elizabeth's Hospice. This included £3,000 for the circus themed Elephant, 'Nellie'. The largest amount fetched for a single elephant was £10,000, going to an Ed Sheeran themed sculpture, which Ed had promised to sign after the auction.

Similar Elmer Parades and auctions also took place in Plymouth and Newcastle during 2019, with Plymouth raising an impressive £323,750 for their local St Luke's Hospice and Newcastle raising £182,000 for St Oswald's Hospice in Gosforth.

News in Brief

Clown **Henry Ayala** and slack-wire performer **Tajana Kundyk** were married during their 2019 British tour with Circus Extreme.

Clown **Mr Lorenz**, who appeared with Zippos Circus a few years back, was in Paris with Cirque Christiane Bouglione before Christmas and with the Landauer Christmas Circus in Germany from 20 December to 5 January. For the 2020 summer season he will be in Ireland with Tom Duffy and Sons' Circus.

The 11th annual **World Circus Day** takes place on Saturday 18 April 2020.

The **Swiss National Circus Knie** has issued a calendar for 2020 to celebrate its 100th year anniversary. It costs 22.50 euros and can be obtained from Becom Publishing whose address can be found in Book News.

Cirque Berserk won the Royal Park's Gold Award for Best Show at Winter Wonderland in London for the second year running in 2020.

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S TALE

Report by Cathy Cooper

In November 2019, two of my circus photographs were displayed at the Mall Galleries in London as part of the ING Discerning Eye exhibition. This is one of the highest ranking annual art shows in the UK, with thousands of entries yet only about 140 works chosen. The procedure is similar to the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition; you pay for your entries, deliver them and then a panel of six judges each pick their favourites for their own collection. The day I delivered my four photographs of performers from Zippos Circus, there was a queue of hopeful artists stretching all the way down the street.

Then there was the wait of several days to see who had been chosen. Two of my images were selected by judge Gill Button who specialises in abstract portraits of woman. Her work has featured in Vogue and Vanity Fair. I felt very honoured to be accepted and my greatest pride was seeing my photographs on the walls of the Mall Galleries, a short distance from Buckingham Palace.

This was a complete contrast to the 'tent' exhibition I had earlier in September. For the past two years, Martin Burton has allowed me to have a display on four boards lashed to poles in the big top foyer when the circus comes to Twickenham. Putting on a photography show in a circus tent is no mean

feat. Martin told me "You have to cover everything in plastic", so I went away and laminated all my photographs. It was disconcerting to see your nice prints looking like pet feeding mats. On the day of hanging, a puddle of water in the canvas overhead cascaded all over my exhibit boards. After that I had no regrets in using this protective method, especially when a few days later I found most of the horse images were covered in sticky candyfloss fingerprints.

My love affair with photographing the circus started seven years ago whilst taking a friend's dog for a walk. We came across Zippos' tent on Twickenham Green and went over to look at the horses. Yasmine Smart invited me to watch her training in the ring. She was so friendly and I was very impressed by the close bond between horse and owner.

I booked a ticket for the show and attempted to capture the fast and erratic movements with my camera while coloured beams of lights swirled in all directions. Since then I have met a wonderful array of international performers plus artists and other photographers who have the 'circus' under their skin. Seeing the big top at night with all the lights twinkling and hearing the laughter from the audience inside is the highlight of my year.



Acrobat from the Hermanisto Troupe

From Organ Pipes to Circus Ring Great Yarmouth Minster

Report by Ian McEwen
Photograph by Jeremy Freeman

Many CFA members will know Paul 'Winnie' Winston from his days at the Hippodrome in Great Yarmouth through to Zippo's Circus, but many may not know that he is also an excellent church organist.

He began at the Minster (then St Nicholas Church) as a chorister and developed a love for church organ music. Lessons followed, which were a complete success and, in 1986, he was offered the position of Assistant Organist, the youngest person to take up that position at just fourteen. He took over as Organist at eighteen, until his leaving recital in 1994.

And so, after 25 years, Paul returned on Thursday 7 November to give a thrilling recital to an audience of family, friends, music teachers and parishioners. The Minster and organ casework were beautifully lit by John Henry Thurston and I was the trusty page turner (very important). Most of the pieces played were dedicated to people close to Paul and the recital started with:

Suite Gothique Op.25, by Leon Boellmann

War March Of The Priests, by Felix Mendelssohn

Toccata and Fugue in D minor, by J.S.Bach

Toccata from 5th Symphony, by Charles Marie Widor

After the interval:

Hornpipe Humouresque, by Noel Rawsthorn

Sortie in E Flat Major, by Lefebure-Wely

Prelude on Londonerry Air, by Noel Rawthorne

This led into a question and answer time, finishing with Carillon de Westminster, by Louis Vierne.

Paul was given a well-deserved standing ovation and we all went home on that chilly Thursday evening with a feeling of great warmth.

A very nice four-page programme was produced for the evening and can be found in the CFA on-line shop

With thanks to Jane Freeman, Martyn Marshall & Paul Davies of the Minster for making the evening possible, and Martin 'Zippo' Burton for letting Paul have the time off! (Paul is box office manager for Zippos Circus as well as ringmaster at the show's Winter Wonderland venture in London.)

The recital was given in aid of The Great Yarmouth Minister Organ Restoration Project - donations can be made at www.sncpt.co.uk. Don Stacey writes that the event was hailed as superb and that Paul has already been asked back for 2020.



Left to Right Cassian Manship, Georgeta Milutin, Jack, Paul Winston, Helen Fausto, Ben Jay, Ian McEwen, Jane Freeman, Jack Jay and Martyn Marshall

For Sale

Bertram Mills Circus model 1960

Layout in 176 scale on a base 6ft x 6ft 6ins of museum quality.

The 4 trains as used by Bertram Mills Circus to transport the Show from Town to Town.

44th INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS FESTIVAL OF MONTE CARLO

Report by Don Stacey and David Davis

Photographs courtesy of the Monte Carlo Press Office

The 44th International Circus Festival of Monte Carlo took place from 16 to 26 January. Four performances were held from 16 to 19 January for the juries with the Awards Gala Show on 21 January and Winners' Shows from 22 to 26 January. The Jury, under the presidency of Princess Stephanie of Monaco and co-ordinated by Urs Pilz, consisted of Yasmine Smart, world-renowned circus artiste from Great Britain; Andrew Guild, show producer from Australia; Pierre Meyer, director of the Royal Palace of Kirmiller in France; Dale Su, vice-president of the Chimelong Group in China; Kristian Kristof, artiste and director from Hungary; Gia Eradze, artistic director of Rosgocirk in Moscow and director/creator of the Royal Circus in Russia. There was also a Junior Jury with children from Australia, Belgium, Denmark, United States, France and Marie-Galante, an island of Guadeloupe.

Petit Gougou was once again the ringmaster, with technical ring management from Enrico Caroli and Daris Huesca. Sound and lighting was co-ordinated by Alberto Caroli. Following the recent death of Reto Parolari, his orchestra was directed by Vladimir Jaggi.

First Programme

The first programme, shown on 16 and 18 January, opened with an all singing and dancing display by members of the Bingo Circus Theatre Troupe and the Kiev Municipal Academy of Circus and Variety Arts, which led into a parade by all the artistes. Also involved in the opening were Kiko and Kika, two characters/mascots from the Chimelong Group with which the International Circus Festival of Monte Carlo has signed an accord (see Circus News). This

was followed by the first appearance of Belgian clown Stephane Delvaux (aka Elastic), in which he got the audience clapping as he stepped in and out of a hoop. Sixteen women from the Acrobatic Troupe of Shandong displayed their skills at plate spinning as they formed various poses and built up human pyramids. Sandro Montez presented five dogs including a tiny Chihuahua in a routine that left us breathless, such was the speed at which the dogs worked. Elastic's second spot was followed by Ivan Frederic Knie with a beautiful liberty act comprising 14 magnificent Arabian horses. Rafal Walusz was a pick-pocket who proceeded to relieve three volunteers of their wallets, keys and mobile phones - to say nothing of a tie, a belt and a pair of glasses. Mr Walusz was undoubtedly a talented artiste but in the vastness of the big top I felt he struggled to make an impact, his act being more suitable for the intimate atmosphere of a night-club.

The male members of the Acrobatic Troupe of Shandong presented a superior skipping routine. Elastic then had some fun trying to pass through an airport security scanner without setting it off. The Dandy's were three men with a Russian bar act, the flexibility of the bar permitting the flier to achieve considerable height allowing him to execute, amongst other tricks, a triple somersault with a half pirouette and a triple piked somersault with a half pirouette. Bringing the first half to a close were The Flying Tuniziani. The large troupe of talented male and female fliers utilised two lanes, and the act culminating in a quadruple somersault by Ammed Tuniziani.

The second half opened with Sergey Nesterov's presentation of five white tigers in a full routine that





included a forward and backwards hind-legs walk, a fan, and a lay down with Mr Nesterov lying on top of his charges. The act was notable for how close the trainer went to all his animals. After the tigers had left, a white lioness entered to be cuddled by the trainer. The removal of the cage was covered as customary at Monte Carlo by the clown band 'Les Clowns en Folie'.

The Five Bingo Boys presented a fast moving potpourri of acrobatics involving two men performing hand to hand balances, two working simultaneously on two Chinese poles and the fifth member executing various break-dancing moves. For his final appearance, Elastic attempted to mouth-juggle three ping pong balls which got stuck in his mouth, the only way he could get them out was by getting a member of the audience to hit him on the head with a club. Francoise Rochais entered the ring before Elastic had

left and he was instantly smitten by her, remaining in the ring as she performed her juggling routine, which was notable for her manipulation of objects of different size and weight, such as sunshades, tennis rackets, rings and balls. She concluded by juggling six batons before leaving the ring on the arm of Elastic.

Duo Skyline comprised two women from Ukraine with a superior display on the aerial silks. Troupe Zola from Mongolia presented a teeterboard routine that culminated in one of the troupe somersaulting to the top of a six man high column, the members of which were understandably steadied by a tall pole held by the under-bearer.

The final act was the Double Hungarian Post by Ivan Frederic Knie and Wioris Errani from the Swiss National Circus Knie, each rider standing on the back of two Friesian horses and grabbing the reins of nine horses as they passed under their legs, a truly thrilling sight to bring the evening to a close. Following a brief dance routine by The Bingo Circus Theatre Troupe all the artistes returned to the ring to receive a standing ovation.

Second Programme

The second programme was presented on 17 and 19 January and had the same opening as the first programme. This was followed by Troupe Efimov with a display of firstly ground acrobatics and then using a trampoline to gain extra height. The act was themed around a wedding party made up of the bride and groom and six pageboys/guests. Clown Henry's first entrée involved a man from the audience performing a striptease as in the film 'The Full Monty'.

The dog act of Sandro Montez was followed by Vladimir and Vladimir with an excellent hand balancing routine, which concluded with the two men balancing on the tips of daggers held in their mouths. Lisa Rinne performed on the swinging trapeze where she executed, amongst other tricks, a triple spin and a somersault where she landed standing on the trapeze. To reach the trapeze she used a large rope ladder which allowed her to execute a series of balances and poses as she climbed up. Maycol Errani presented a group of Friesian horses from the stables of the Swiss National Circus Knie, the horses having illuminated harnesses which lit up when the ring lights were extinguished.



Henry presented his bell ringing entrée using five volunteers, one of whom was required to bang a pair of cymbals together. The Martinez Brothers gave a truly amazing display of Risley acrobatics, the routine being notable not only for the speed and complexity of the tricks but also for the number of somersaults performed. To finish, the two artistes used a trinka on a hydraulic platform eight metres high where, as the platform descended, they executed a series of 50 backward somersaults. The Acrobatic Troupe of Shandong, 24 in number, presented a complex hat juggling routine, the act being choreographed to the music of Michael Jackson. Whilst juggling, the group performed somersaults and built human pyramids whilst one individual managed to juggle seven hats. This act closed the first half.

The second half opened with the cage act of Sergey Nesterov, followed by Les Clowns en Folie and then the Five Bingo Boys. For his third appearance, Clown Henry performed the restaurant sketch with plenty of spaghetti flying into the audience and being thrown back. Equilibrist Maria Sarach's presentation nicely combined strength and grace. Ms Sarach was also clearly a talented contortionist as she concluded with the classic Marinelli bend. 'Flash of Splash', a man and woman duo, executed an out-standing display on the aerial straps. Maycol Errani presented the 30-horse Grand Carousel, yet another outstanding and memorable presentation from the Swiss National Circus Knie.

Before becoming a clown, Henry was a highwire performer and - especially for the Monte Carlo Festival - he joined up with three experienced Columbian highwire artistes to form Troupe Ayala and Henry the Clown. Their full routine included skipping, jumping and bike riding along the wire. Their final trick involved two artistes carrying a bar slung from their shoulders which in turn supported the other two artistes one of whom climbed onto the shoulders of his compatriot to form a two-high. This was followed by the usual grand finale.



Henry Ayala

Awards

The top awards consisted of three Gold Clowns, four Silver Clowns and four Bronze Clowns, with a total of 40 other prizes, eight of which were attributed to members of the Knie-Errani family.

The Gold Clown Awards went to: the horse acts of The Swiss National Circus Knie presented by Ivan Frederick Knie, Maycol Errani and Wioris Errani; The Martinez Brothers' Icarian act; and The Tuniziani Flying Trapeze Troupe.

The Silver Clown Awards went to: the tiger act of Sergey Nesterov; The Acrobatic Troupe of Shandong from China; The Dandys' Russian bar act; and the highwire act of Troupe Ayala and Henry the Clown.

The Bronze Clown Awards were awarded to: Flash of Splash, aerial strap act; Troupe Efimov, Russian acrobats; The Five Bingo Boys; and the teeterboard act of Troupe Zola from the Mongolian Circus.

The prizes of the Blackpool Tower Circus and the Gandey Organisation went respectively to Ivan Frederick Knie and Henry the Clown, whilst the cup presented in memory of Princess Antoinette went to Arashi Alan Kofukada from the Martinez Brothers, as the youngest participant in the Festival.



Circus Knie Horses at Liberty

COOPER'S CONTINENTAL CAPERS

By John Cooper
Photographs by Janice Fiske

Wereldkerstcircuit

Carré, Amsterdam, Netherlands

There are many circuses in the Netherlands over the Christmas period, several being in easy reach of Amsterdam. In fact, I saw three during my visit, but choose to report on just the one as I prefer to sit back and enjoy a show these days without having to worry about what I'm going to say about an act I've reviewed 20 times already. Wereldkerstcircuit (World Christmas Circus) offers many acts which have featured at the prestigious Monte Carlo Circus Festival, this year being no exception. The main attraction to a serious circus buff was artistes from the Royal Circus of Gia Eradze (from Russia) which caused a sensation at the 2019 Festival. I tried to keep my expectations fairly low, rather than risk disappointment.

The show was directed by Enrico Caroli, who is a stalwart of Switzerland's Circus Knie, as is orchestra leader Ruslan Fil. Ringmaster was Fred Butter, whom I found efficient without being particularly charismatic. The performance ran for just under three hours. I'm told that the dress rehearsal lasted a further 30 minutes or so, necessitating several cuts, and a change of intended (and printed) running order, which I saw as follows:

- The Royal Circus Ballet provided two spectacular spots (each including aerial work) as well as dressing for some of the other acts from outside that troupe. The animal acts were both from the resources of the same company, one being a Cossack riding number from six richly-costumed women, plus one man at the end, and another man keeping up the horses. The tricks performed were quite basic, other than one woman going under her mount's neck and then straight under its belly. Bags of energy. A far more sedate approach from the liberty horse number, building from a single horse to five, none being harnessed other than a simple collar on the horse which the presenter rode at times. The cues must have been very subtle as it really did seem that the horses could have worked the act without human presence. Pure circus poetry.
- The seven strong Revolution Gauchos. Drumming and bolas work. Standard fare for such an act.
- Shandong Hat Jugglers. A type of act that tends to bore me, but these folk (I counted 22) were sensational. Music and choreography paid tribute to the late Michael Jackson.
- Flying Tuniziani. Double lane. Six flyers, three women and three men, each of whom did fly. Two unannounced triple somersaults. Two passing leaps. Quadruple somersault missed twice, although I believe the success rate is high.
- Sky Angels. Male/female aerial straps duo, with lots of dental work. Brilliant.
- Steve and Ryan. American clowns with a laundry/water routine, and a spot on the stage to cover the latter part of a prop change, neither of which they did at Cirque d'Hiver in Paris last winter. Another planned appearance had been cut for reasons of time.

• Steve Eleky. The term 'comedy magician' is often used for Steve, but I think he is more of a prop comic whose props are magic related. For a Brit of a certain age (i.e. me!) it's hard not to compare him with the late Tommy Cooper, especially as he's of the same build, and moves in much the same way - but he is not a copyist.

- Anastasia Makeeva. Aerial silk number, balletic in form.
- Yves and Ambra. Golden aerial statues. Body paint, and slow moving, with Ambra doing much of the supporting.
- De Jasters. Crossbow and knife-throwing duo I never tire of seeing. On top form here.
- Duo Laos. Adagio number, described as 'poetische', with which I won't argue. They do not appear to be Asian, and their initials do not combine to give the word, so I have no idea why the name Laos is relevant.

• Michael Ferreri. Juggler working solely with balls - and brilliantly so. A flash of ten balls to conclude. Presentation matches content.

- Funkaholics. Female/male Chinese mast duo, dressed in tee-shirt and jeans to go with the rather strange name. Victoria does just as much of the strength work as partner Konstantin.

To be honest, I had expected more actual acts from the Royal Circus troupe, so was a little disappointed with what they did. That said, everything that they did do was beautifully presented, and has increased my desire to see a circus in Moscow. In general, a wonderful show.

Sadly, I have to report that on 3 January the aerial duo, Sky Angels, suffered a serious fall during the matinee performance, reportedly caused by a tooth breaking. Their act was second to last on the programme and the performance was abandoned, although the evening show went ahead as planned.

Circus Krone

First Winter Programme, Kronebau,
Munich, Germany

25 December 2019 to 31 January 2020

I saw the show on the evening of Saturday 4 January, during the period that Germans regard as being part of Christmastide still. Consequently, the overture and entracte from the excellent orchestra (lead by Oleksandr Krasyn) comprised Christmas songs. Likewise, ringmaster Nikolai Tovarich made his first entrance singing 'Let It Snow'. Make no mistake, he has a great voice. I suspect these will change later in the run. The opening sequence was Nikolai's only major appearance until the finale, announcements being made from the shadows. In addition, he acted as ring foreman, although the team didn't need much guidance.

Being Krone, the featured artistes were Jana Mandana Lacey-Krone, and husband Martin Lacey Jr. In the first half Jana presented up to 15 horses, at one point having three quintets (each matched for

colour) as if they were the spokes of a wheel. In the second half she showed just one elephant (Bara) in a full routine.

Martin's cage act (which opened the second half) had 15 beasts, including two tigers who did nothing until the end of the act. There was a five-lioness chase, which included 'the bounce', and a very theatrical finish. The cage and props were removed to musical accompaniment with an intentionally comedic ending, earning deserved applause for the ring crew.

In the only other animal act, Lars Holscher and Lelde presented six pigs in a light-hearted routine, this act being from outside Krone's resources.

Circus Theater Bingo had several spots, including the show's opening. In that position there was a female silks aerialist and a male roller-balancer working at the same time, with five energetic dancers adding to the mix. Where was I supposed to look? And it fell to them to cover the setting of a large prop by bouncing balloons around the audience, something I never thought I'd see on Krone. Then again, I've seen it happen at the Monte Carlo Festival.

Prosvirnin and Family provided the principal clowning, mainly father and son, joined by the grandson in the latter stages of one routine. There was an act featuring music (violin, banjo, saxophone, drums) and tap dance. Later, ballet dancer plus heavily mustachioed ballerina! Both routines were well structured and funny.

Clown Bilby's offering wasn't intended to be especially funny. A small car entered the ring with lights blazing. Shortly it was revealed to be a man in costume, with an LED light show, the lights being attached to his limbs as well as the inside of the car prop. Different!

Truppe Mustafa Danguir closed the first half with a double wheel of death performed by five men. The routine included a two-high walk around the outside of one cage, and side somersaults later. As Mustafa Danguir Hochseil Truppe, the five were joined by two women for a thrilling high-wire number to close the show. The regular ascent via sloping guywires was less dramatic than usual as rigging restrictions necessitated the wires being almost horizontal. The featured stunt was a seven-person pyramid, which took longer to prepare than to execute - which does build up the tension.

Glenn Folco was a tennis juggler, working with up to five racquets. The excellent reports I'd heard of him had not been exaggerated. A soaking wet 18-year old Vioris Zoppis performed on the aerial straps with contortion so that the water sprayed out from his costume and lengthy hair during spins. The skill was there, for sure, and I praise Vioris for presenting the act differently from the big top norm, in a form more usually seen in cabarets and theatrical circuses.

Many of the Saturday night audience gave the performance a standing ovation, which it deserved, even if this Englishman chose not to join in!

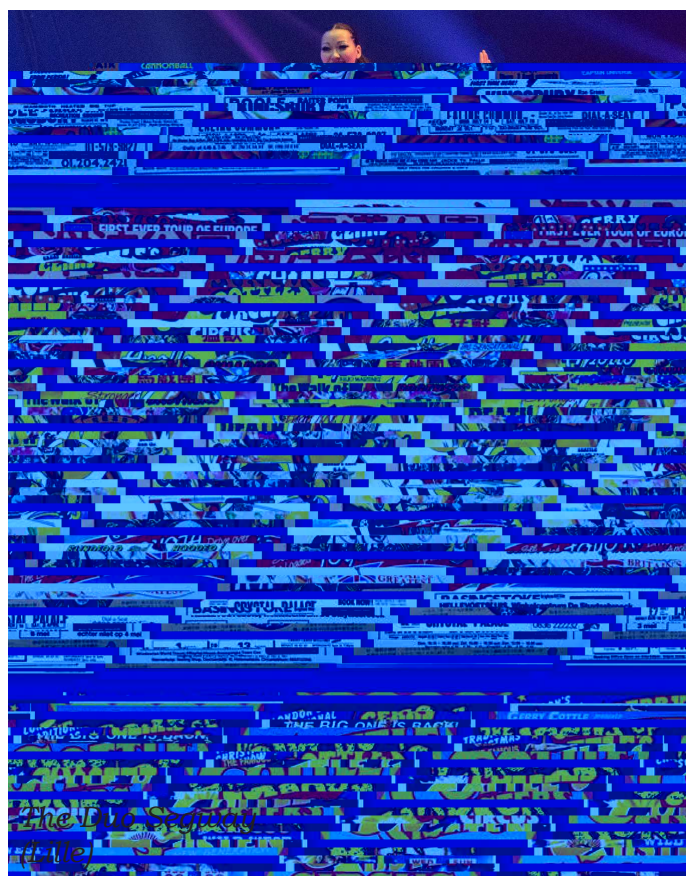
La Fete Lilloise du Cirque

19 October to 23 November 2019

Each autumn for many years, impresario Thierry Feery has presented a non-competitive festival in his home city of Lille in northern France. I have always found it a strong programme, although inevitably some years are better than others. As usual the 2019 show was

hosted by Thierry Feery as ringmaster. The excellent orchestra was directed by Kristof Majewski, another regular. The programme comprised the following:-

- Housch Ma Housch. One of my favourite clowns with three appearances, including one with audience participation.
- Jose Michel Clowns. 'Act as known' - their water entrée which I always find funny, no matter how many times I see it.
- Rosi Hochegger. Another act which I enjoy seeing. Some recent changes as Rosi has retired some of her dogs and the new trainees are not all ring-ready.
- Andrejs Fjodorov. To describe this as a dove act is accurate but an understatement. Exceptionally well trained and presented. The act is due in Great Britain in 2020.
- Scout and Andrei. Such was the billing, but at the performance I saw it was Rosi Hochegger and Hildago who is taking over the role of comedy horse (making a fool of the presenter) as Scout is being eased towards retirement from the ring. The Andrei mentioned is Rosi's boyfriend.
- Unic Magic Chic. Frederic Jidini and Company with several new illusions, so worthy of the new name.
- Duo Segway. Two young ladies with a hand-to-hand number performed on a segway, a moving platform under the control of the rider. It is the prop which is the selling point.
- Troupe Saralev. Perch act with five strutting soldiers in Nutcracker-type uniforms and false moustaches plus one woman. Very good work but I didn't feel that the presentation added anything.
- Troupe Krasnov. A high-wire number by three men and two women with little (if anything) performed without lunge. Granted though the degree of risk made their use acceptable. A three-high walk was included as well as some work on a rolling globe. The globe had a groove in it to keep it on the wire plus long stirrup-type stabilisers beneath. Certainly different.



woman. My 'spies' told me that she was recovering from injury as she normally flies too.

As you may have noticed the programme was rather thin on animal acts, although those that were there were certainly of quality. The choice was forced on Thierry Feery as there is now a restriction on the species of animal that can perform in circus in Lille. However, I am sure Thierry Feery will continue to book excellent acts and I cannot envisage him presenting an all-human show.

Feedback

John Cooper writes within Peter Shaw's review of Circus Roncalli's 'Storyteller' production (King Pole, December 2019), the editor wonders if the RoboPole act was Ulik, who presented such an act in 2018. The printed programme for 'Storyteller', which I saw at Hamburg the stand prior to Lubeck, lists the act as Ulik Robotic which suggests that it is the same act, although not necessarily the same performer. For the sake of historical record, perhaps I should add that the show also included aerial straps artiste Adele Fame and hand balancer Quincy Azzario. The orchestra was directed by Georg Pommer and Jemile Martinez was a non-speaking ringmaster.

- Troupe Heroes. Flying trapeze act by seven men and one woman with a cradle near the flyer's platform and a horizontal bar towards the catcher's swing. Thus, there were plenty of variations from the standard flying act plus an effortless triple somersault. The act did contain two surprises. The woman went up to the platform, stood there posing throughout the routine and then dropped to the net. Second surprise, she was flown from the net to a smaller, higher static bar from which she performed the head-first drop. The first time I had seen this trick performed by a

2019 Monti Faces Another Year of Change

Report by Mike Taylor

Circus Monti is a contemporary commercial styled show, which was celebrating its 35 years in the circus entertainment business in 2019. I have followed Circus Monti for fifteen years and have always been impressed with how the Muntwyler family who own Circus Monti always seem to re-invest in the business and the show production.

In 2019, money was spent on new LED arena lighting, which has, in my opinion, added greatly to the quality of the show. The new lighting allows more focused light on the performing artistes in the ring, which provides greater vision for the audience. This dynamic lighting has created an even greater contrast of a dark seated auditorium and a flood lit performance area. The show's lighting was programmed by Christoph Siegenthaler supported by two Circus Monti electricians Lucian Bangeanu and Roland Brandie.

The second addition to the production was a rather beautiful block wooden sectioned circus floor ring. Using beautifully grained wood, which is highly polished and is almost an artwork, they have produced a wooden circus ring floor beyond the norm.

With regards to road transport equipment, Monti was trialling a new rough terrain telehandler produced by Dieci Italian manufacturer. The model under test is the Agri Star 33 IO Enviro 6, with the aim of replacing their ageing but reliable Manitou's. Dieci, an Italian company, was founded in 1962 and developed a range of truck mixers, telescopic boom and dumpers in a highly competitive marketplace. The only other new addition was a new draw trailer kitted out as a bar, which is beautifully fitted out with a drinks bar and seating. This was constructed

during the winter by the Circus Monti staff at their winter quarters which can comfortably accommodate between 10 to 25 customers.

In 2019 the show opened a restaurant to the general public, offering a limited three-course menu, served between the hours of 1800hrs and the beginning of show time, which is usually at 2000hrs.

For the fifth year running Monti offered 'Varjete' - an under the big top circus cabaret show - from its winter quarters at Wohlen. The stage set and dining tables reduce the big top capacity down to 250 customers, rather than the 750 available for a standard show. This Christmas show lasts for over two hours, interspersed with a four course dining menu. The all-in price is offered at 148CHF per person (around £116.00) and has obviously proved a great pre-Christmas attraction and revenue stream to the Monti business.

This 2019 main show was called 'Tour de Fete' and celebrated 35 years of Circus Monti, based upon a fairground theme. Inspired by the hustle and bustle of a fun fair it tried to capture the buoyant energy, the exotic scents and loud sounds that make up this form of outdoor entertainment. The production tried to capture the circular movements of the merry-go-rounds, the curvy-swirling curves of the tracks, the swinging masts, the unmistakable market riders and showmen. This all takes place on the village square in the middle of the Monti tent. The set is impressive with a half a full-sized ferris wheel as a backdrop to the beautifully polished wooden circus ring.

The cast, in no particular order was as follows: Eline Guelat (Canada) - Cyr wheel, Chinese pole and clowning; Vincent Jutras (Canada) - skateboard,

Chinese pole and clowning; Lindsay Culbert-Olds (USA) – aerial straps; Pauline Baud-Guillard (France) – teeterboard; Frederic Lemieux-Cormier (Canada) – teeterboard and cyr wheel; Cameron Clarke (USA) – teeterboard and cyr wheel; Eva Diamond (USA) – vertical ropes; PJ Perry (USA) – vertical ropes; Emilie Siliau (France) – Chinese pole; Julien Siliau (France) – Chinese pole; Mario Muntwyler (Switzerland) – Diabolo; Tobis Muntwyler (Switzerland) – Diabolo; William McGowen (USA) – Diabolo; and Johannes Muntwyler (Switzerland) – illusionist.

The show flowed seamlessly between individual and group performances. This was overlaid with the entire circus company fusing the show together with dance, (choreographed by Colette Roy-Gfeller), clowning, floor acrobatics and juggling. Circus artistes weaved their skill base into depictions of traditional fairground rides like the drop tower, roller coaster, and swing ride, merry-go-round and pendulum ride. It is difficult to pick out any particular artiste(s) but the diabolo trio (Mario Muntwyler, Tobis Muntwyler and William McGowen) were just outstanding in skill, speed, and creativity. The other notable performance was Johannes Muntwyler who was the focus of a comedy illusion act, supported by PJ Perry and Eve Diamond, which the audience thought was hysterically funny. The finale was focused round

the entire circus company and Johannes Muntwyler driving a dodgem car between a number of groups juggling and carrying out acrobatics.

I just love a live circus band/orchestra, and Circus Monti's six-piece band never fails to deliver. Musical score by Thierry Epiney was led by the very talented saxophonist Piotr Gunia. Most of the musicians have been with Circus Monti for many years and are well versed in monitoring and responding to each artiste's performance.

The concept and production of the show was devised and developed by Andreas Manz and Bernard Stockii, who are a well-established Swiss/German clowning duo. Both should be congratulated for the excellent production.

This touring season Circus Monti comprised fourteen artistes, six musicians, seven managers/supervisors and thirty-eight administrative and operational staff - this is a well-oiled, and managed organisation. The family loss of Hildegard Muntwyler earlier in the year has had little obvious effect on front of house, but in such a tight knit family operation it must have had some effect internally. As you would expect from a professional outdoor touring entertainment business "the show must go on." No doubt I will return in 2020 to appreciate another excellent circus production.

OBITUARIES

By Don Stacey

Nell Gifford

Nell Gifford, whose death on Sunday 8 December 2019, at the age 46, ended an awe-inspiring battle against cancer was an inspiration for all who knew her. No matter how often the cancer returned, she fought back bravely and with great fortitude, continuing to defy the disease by running Gifford's Circus each summer. Shortly before her death at Gloucester Hospital, surrounded by her family, she had been able to visit Switzerland with close friend Yasmine Smart in order to attend the last public performance of Fredy Knie Jr. with his liberty horses before his retirement. Her funeral took place at Gloucester Cathedral on 13 January 2020.

Born Eleanor Rose Stroud in Oxford on 24 January 1973, she was one of two daughters of television film director Rick Stroud, most notable for the long running series 'Monarch of the Glen'. Her sister, Clover Stroud, became a writer. Her mother Charlotte had three children by an earlier marriage, one of whom was the celebrated pottery maker Emma Bridgewater. In November 1991, her mother was badly injured in a hunting accident which resulted in her being brain damaged and in need of round the clock care for the remaining 22 years of her life.

At the age of 18, Nell was due to go to Oxford to read English but instead took a gap year, travelling to America to join Circus Flora where her brother's brother-in-law, Gerald Balding, worked. This was her first introduction to the world of sawdust and spangles, as she moved with the show painting wagons and riding a horse. She returned to study at New College, Oxford but inspired by circus she

later joined up with Bobby Roberts' Super Circus, mucking out the horses and riding an elephant, and then Santos Circus where she undertook the role of ringmistress. In 1998 she joined equestrienne Yasmine Smart at Germany's Circus Roncalli as a groom, the show making a big impression on her.

Later that year, while in Cheltenham, she met Toti Gifford, marrying him in 1999. Together they planned their own first circus, which opened in 2000 at the Hay Festival in Hay-on-Wye. With a small second-hand garden fete tent, they lived in a renovated showman's wagon, their income supplemented by Toti's growing landscape garden architect business.



Neil Gifford

36 horses and ponies, three elephants, two camels, two llamas, sea lion, mule and three monkeys. Next Frank Sr. went into the ENSA organisation which created entertainment for the troops, whilst Frank Jr. was called up for military service, serving for five years in the 11th Royal Hussars.

By the time peace was restored and the Bertram Mills' show reopened, Frank Sr. had joined the fledgling Billy Smart's New World Circus and so Frank Foster Jr. took over his father's role as equestrian director for Bertram Mills both at Olympia and on tour. He distinguished himself in this job, having good looks, excellent diction like his father, and the poise and dignity which went with the role.

In 1948 he married Doreen Brown, a talented British trapeze artiste whose stage name was Anita and he assisted her in addition to his other duties. They had one daughter who has not followed them into show-business. The couple were divorced and Frank Jr. married Dora Rogge, who worked with her sisters in a rolling globe act at Mills in the 1950s. When the sisters' act broke up at the end of the 1957 season, Dora stayed with Frank Jr. at the Mills show while Frank's sister Juliet joined the act of the other two Rogge Sisters.

As well as being equestrian director for Mills, Frank also worked in several acts, as bareback rider and whip-cracker in the Voltacks' number and portraying the popular film character Davy Crockett. He also returned briefly to his first love of clowning, working with the show's talented dwarf clowns Little Billy Merchant and Little Nikki. From 1961 to 1963, Dora performed a new solo act, assisted by her husband, in which she balanced precariously on a high swaying ladder whilst balancing a sword on its tip from a dagger in her mouth. Dora and Frank left Mills at the end of the 1963 season, Frank having completed 17 years as ringmaster and having been associated with the show since childhood for 33 years. Billed as Rogana, Dora's act with Frank assisting her appeared thereafter in many of the world's greatest circuses including Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus in America, and at the Blackpool Tower Circus three times in 1966, 1972 and 1977, as well as in the BBC television programme 'The Paul Daniels Magic Show'. The couple established a home in Hamburg but later moved to Florida where Frank died peacefully in his sleep a few weeks after a fall in which he dislocated a hip. He leaves his wife Dora and their son Francis who lives in Singapore.

Marilyn Chipperfield

By Thomas Chipperfield

It is with great sadness that the family of Mrs. Marilyn Chipperfield, née McGuckin, announced her passing after a brief illness, on 16 December 2019, at the age of 64. Born on 6 March 1955, in Wagin, Western Australia, to a farming and fishing family, Marilyn left home at age 15 to join Ashton's Circus, where she would become a skilled aerialist and trick rider. The acts performed by her during this time included the corde lisse, single trapeze, cradle (dental), perch and flying trapeze, later featuring as a showgirl who rode elephants on Sole Brothers' Circus and in a motorbike aerial act that featured in the Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and other Royal Shows.

It was during her time with Ashton's that Marilyn

lure the animal away.

Frank Sr. left Sangers to join Bertram Mills Circus in the winter of 1930-31, becoming the show's equestrian director, ringmaster and announcer. At the age of 14, whilst on school holidays, Frank Jr. took his first steps in the sawdust ring, hastily inducted into clowning and stilt walking by the sudden walkout of the star clown Coco and his family. He also played the back half of a pantomime zebra. Coco and family returned within a few days but Frank Jr. now joined all the circus children in practice and learnt how to become a bareback rider and cowboy whip-cracker as well as the rudiments of trapeze and wire walking.

Frank Sr. remained with the Mills show until 1940 working not only at Olympia, but also with the tenting show and on the short lived theatre tour Mills embarked upon when war loomed. In the spring of 1940 Cyril and Bernard Mills gave up their attempt to continue running the show in which Frank Jr. had been a member of the clown troupe. Frank Sr. was appointed examiner in the Naval Ordnance Inspection Department of a torpedo factory in Birmingham. Returning to work one Monday morning after taking the Sunday off, he discovered that the factory had received a direct hit from a bomb. He then joined the circus run by Madame Paulo with Frank Jr. as a clown and stilt walker. Next Frank Sr. and his son joined up with the Chessington Zoo Circus in Surrey, the father as equestrian director and manager, Frank Jr. as a clown. During the winter, the show played a 16 weeks season at the Scala theatre in London, which ran despite the challenges of war-time regulations and the spasmodic bombing of London which led to some anxious moments with the show's



met Tommy Chipperfield, who took over the training and presentation of the animals. They began to present the animals together, with both riding High School, presenting and training the lions and tigers, and Marilyn taking over the liberty pony act. They were married in 1983.

The following year, with her husband, Marilyn came to England to train and present tigers for Bobby Roberts Super Circus. Following this they spent the season of 1985 in Spain showing their tiger act with Circo Mundial. With Mundial, Marilyn was among the first circus artists to enter and perform in Gibraltar from Spain following the reopening of the border in 1985, carrying the flag of Gibraltar in the finale.

Upon their return to the UK in 1986, Marilyn and Tommy, along with Tommy's brother Charles, ran Chipperfield Brothers Circus. On the show Marilyn continued her work with horses, big cats and in aerial acts, as well as handling and showing snakes, bears and a Big and Little equestrian act. During this period, Marilyn also worked with her leopard, Chaka, and snakes in night clubs and on stage, as well as for Jimmy and Mary Chipperfield in various media projects, including The Paul Daniels Show.

In early 1990, Marilyn joined Tommy on Tom Duffy's Circus in Ireland, where she continued to help train and present all of their animals including alligators, dogs and goats (with the latter act earning her an award from the Circus Association of Ireland). On a number of occasions she presented the lions and tigers by herself, most notably in 1992 when Tommy suffered a broken leg early in the year. She also worked on the wheel of death as well as acting as stable manager, a position she held for 23 years. After her son, Thomas, took over the big cat act, Marilyn would stay on the door of the ring cage.

The family left Duffy's in 2013, returning to England where they began working for Peter Jolly's Circus, reintroducing a cage act to mainland UK, where Marilyn continued to stand on the door of the ring cage for her son, Thomas. Two years later, Marilyn took up a managerial role with 'An Evening with Lions and Tigers', the last show to tour in the UK featuring big cats.

On 15 December 2019, Marilyn was admitted to New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton, where she passed away peacefully the following day, surrounded by members of her family. She is survived by her

mother, Audrey Jean Bray, her siblings, Allan, Sheryl, Tammy and Darren, her husband Tommy and her son and daughter, Thomas and Jody. In accordance with her wishes, the cremation was a private affair, with a memorial event to be announced at a later date. The Chipperfield family ask that tributes be made in the form of donations to the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity.

LILY McFADDEN (nee Duffy)

By Michael Ingoldsby

The death of Lily McFadden occurred on 5 November 2019 at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, after a very short time in the hospital. She was born on 1 April 1927 to John and Emmie Duffy of John Duffy & Sons, Ireland's National Circus. She was the younger sister to John James Duffy and Annie Duffy.

She made her debut in the ring aged seven in an aerial act with her cousin Marion Duffy (Squibs), the daughter of James and May Duffy. They worked from a torpedo-shaped prop in the roof of the tent. In 1939 she appeared performing a voltige act and in the following year in a hurricane bar act with her brother John James. Year upon year she presented a change of act – hurricane bareback rider, wire walker and also the slide for life on a wire from the roof of the big top to the ground, an aerial cradle act with her brother, and also a solo trapeze act, as well as participating in the Duffy Family riding act.

In the winter of 1948-49 she appeared in the Belle Vue Manchester Twentieth International Circus. She did a wire act and was part of the Four Costellos (Duffy family riding troupe). Her brother John James performed a courier act. Following an accident, this last act was dropped and Lily's father John Duffy brought Lily's own riding horse, named Bandon, from Ireland and Lily appeared in her hurricane act. This act won great acclaim in the Manchester newspapers. The Belle Vue visit was a sad one, as May Duffy, wife of James Duffy and mother of Marion Duffy, collapsed and died while walking through the stables.

In the 1950 John Duffy tenting season, Lily presented her bar act and later was involved in a double ballerina on horseback act with Marion (Squibs). On 15 November 1950 Lily married Edward McFadden, the fourth son of Mr and Mrs John McFadden, owners of a travelling cinema. Edward joined the circus and for part of the 1951 season, Lily was part of the Duffy family riding act. In September of that year she presented her husband with a son they named Edward John. In 1953 and 1954, Lily and Renee Hicks presented a fast riding act to open the John Duffy show and Lily and her husband Edward presented a pas de deux riding act.

Lily's father John Duffy died in November 1956. She and her husband and family decided to leave the circus and joined the McFadden road show, where Lily starred in a comedy role in the variety part of the show and then as the mother in many of the dramas in the second part of show. With the popular spread of television, the days of the road show were numbered. Lily and her husband decided that they would go into the funfair side of show business. Over the years the family built up a first-class operation, in which her sons and their families participated. With the demise of her husband, Lily remained with the funfair. About twenty years ago she decided to

he was also directing in Switzerland a fine 40-piece symphony orchestra. Reto was not only a musical director but a composer and arranger of the highest quality, creating a wealth of circus music for posterity. Circus directors and artistes have lost their finest collaborator and I have also lost a very dear friend of many years' standing. His work however will live on in the many CDs he issued over the years.

Harry Malter

The former circus proprietor Harry Malter died on 26 October 2019, aged 81. He was born in Berlin in 1938 and named Karl Heinrich Malter. During the war his family moved to Holland and Belgium where his parents toured with Circus Tiroler. In 1968 Harry founded his own circus, Circus Piste, which became the biggest show in Belgium. As well as being a circus proprietor he was a trainer of elephants and wild animals. In 1978, his circus gave its last performance in Antwerp and in 1992 he opened an animal park in Huesden.

Lotti Nock

Lotti Nock who died in December 2019 aged 90, came from the Swiss Nock circus family. She was however best known for her many years with the Swiss National Circus Knie. She and her husband Franz Robert Bock, known universally as clown Knieli, joined Knie in 1954. Lotti performed in the aerial ballet, later as a number's girl and then in the wardrobe department. In 1971 she rode high school in an act consisting of six riders. Their sons Pius, Arthur and Peter became known in America as the Nock Brothers with a sway-pole sensation act.

Lotte Arli

Lotte Arli who died on 13 October 2019 aged 81, was the matriarch of Circus Arli, Denmark's smallest touring circus, which has been travelling there for 48 years. Her husband Soren Arli Hansen was a house painter who, together with his wife Lotte August (half-sister of the award winning Danish movie director Bilie August), created a comedy juggling act

called Lott and Arli. Soren also appeared as a white-face clown and Lotte worked in a mind-reading act as Madame Zarina. With these acts they toured with various Danish shows including Arena and Moreno before launching their own show, Circus Arli, in 1971. The show used a one pole big top with the entire cast and staff consisting of themselves and their son Martin, born in 1960. Later Martin's wife Bettina and their son Alexander joined the show which grew to a two poler with 220 seats. Soren Arli Hansen died in 2011.

Sylvia Stanier

Sylvia Stanier, who died on 12 October 2019 at the age of 99, was a distinguished horsewoman who for 18 years schooled the Queen's horse, Burmese, and rode him at rehearsals for Trooping the Colour. She studied haute ecole and dressage with leading exponents of the art Einar Schmit-Hensen and Nuno Oliveira as well as circus riding with Circus Knie and with Mary Chipperfield. She was also noted for the English translation of the Dutch expert Lisjen's remarkable work on classical circus equitation.

Beat Decker

Beat Decker, a Swiss born wild animal trainer, died on 26 December 2019 at the age of 65. He was born Bernd Decker on 2 December 1954 in Zurich. In Great Britain, he worked for Mary Chipperfield on various circuses including Gandey's, and in 1990 he was featured at the Hippodrome Circus in Great Yarmouth with her African lions. He also worked extensively on the continent in a variety of leading circuses including showing a group of lions at Circus Carl Busch in 1987. He was with Cirque Pinder Jean Richard for a few years where he showed horses and a big exotic group. He also showed sea lions and his final job was in Beirut last year showing dolphins at Cirque Holiday.

Russell Mack

The CFA was sorry to hear of the death of Russell Mack, a full obituary will appear in the June King Pole.

JEAN MICHON

A Tribute by Jim Clubb

I first met Jean Michon in 1971 when he joined Chipperfield's Circus to take over the presentation of Chipperfield's tigers and also take charge of the wild animal department. His second wife, Katerina, and stepdaughter, Tina, had been working at Billy Smart's Christmas Circus at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon, with their aerial act, The Silver Stars. At the conclusion of the engagement they all came to Chipperfield's winter quarters in Oxfordshire. Dicky Chipperfield Jr. had left to join Ringling Brothers. Barnum & Bailey Circus in the USA with his mixed group of leopards and black panthers, and also his lioness act. Michon took over the four tigers from the original John Chipperfield act and added two more new tigers that Chipperfield's had bought from London Zoo.

When I joined the show in the summer he became

my teacher. He taught me how to clean the cages, cut the meat and how to move the animals around in their travelling wagons. He was in charge of seven tigers, six lions and lionesses, two polar bears, four Himalayan black bears, two chimpanzees and six rhesus monkeys. When I arrived he had no help other than Wyn Buick, who had joined the show to get work experience as he was a veterinary student at Cambridge. As you can imagine, he was very pleased that we were both there to give him a hand. I learnt a huge amount about the keeping of big cats and bears during that period. He also provided me with a priceless education in animal training from our discussions about his past experiences. He remained my friend for the rest of his life. I always called him on his birthday and then again later in the year. He often visited me and I visited him. The last time I saw

him was on Circus Renz in Holland when he came to see my new mixed group, presented by Tom Dieck Jr.

Jean Michon was born on 28 March 1923 in Maastricht, the son of a building contractor. He had some training in a bank and was later forced to be an interpreter for the Nazis during Holland's occupation. In 1946 he joined Erie Klant-Hagenbeck's Animal Training School in Valkenburg. He made his debut in 1949 at Circus Strassburger presenting five young male lions, and during the winter he appeared at Cirque Royale in Brussels with the same act. The following year he was booked with this act with Circus Williams. The act involved a trick where the lion, Caesar, jumped through a handheld hoop over the trainer. On one occasion the lion unbalanced the pedestal as he sprang forward, causing him to accidentally land on Michon. The startled animal instinctively bit his trainer in the neck. Two other lions joined in, biting him in the arm and leg. These injuries were severe. He told me the leg and arm injuries were worse than the neck injury. A young Charlie Baumann, who was working in the stables, went to his rescue and saved his life. This act of bravery earned Baumann an apprenticeship as a wild animal trainer under Klant's mentorship and the rest, of course, is history. Baumann became one of the very best tiger trainers I have ever known.

Michon took nearly a year to recover from his injuries. In 1951 he took over another one of Klant's acts, consisting of nine polar bears and one American black bear, appearing with it on Circus Franz Mikkenie. This had formally been presented by Adrien Berman. During the winter of 1951-52 he came to Scotland, where the act appeared at Waverley Market in Edinburgh for Prince Cox. After the winter engagement another polar bear was added and Michon took the act to Circus Barlay for 1952 followed by another tour of Holland with Circus Mikkenie in 1953. In the winter of 1953-54 he appeared with the Togni Circus. He was with the East German Büsch State Circus during 1954 and for the 1954-55 winter season. During this period Michon's future first wife, Carola Petzold, had started working for Erie Klant and was presenting a group of five lions with the Danish circus, Moreno. She had taken over from Fabienne Fleureau, who had been injured whilst presenting the act. Michon took the polar bear act to Circus Roland for the season of 1955. He joined Circus Apollo for the 1956 season for its Austrian tour assisted by Carola and the following year they toured Hungary.

In 1958 they were the centre ring attraction at Franz Althoff's Three Ring Circus flanked on the left by Martha La Corse with tigers and on the right by Ella Schweizer with lions. Halfway through the season he passed the bear act over to Ugen Poludniak and took over yet another Klant act featuring four lions and four tigers which he presented on Circus Willy Hagenbeck for the rest of the year as well as the 1959 season. He also assisted Hagenbeck with their large mixed group of polar, brown, Himalayan and American black bears. At the beginning of 1960 he taught Klant's new protégé, Henk Luyex, to take over a group of tigers on Circus Franz Althoff. In 1961 he took the lion and tiger act to Circus Knie but didn't present the act in the show. This was done by Knie's own trainer, August Natsch. Michon's future second wife, Katerina, was appearing in the show with an aerial act known as the Dutch Atoms.

Michon was back with Franz Althoff in 1962 and

1963, presenting a new lion and tiger act. Michon was with Circus Roland in 1964, working a group of eight lions and lionesses. He also presented Salomon, a tiger, riding a horse called Titus. Both these acts were owned by Klant. In 1965 he appeared on three different shows; Büsch Berlin, Circus Roland and Circus Willy Hagenbeck. In 1966 he started the season with Willy Hagenbeck and then went to Circus Büsch Roland. In 1967 he worked for Circus Rudy Brothers presenting seven tigers.

On 13 March 1969 he was on Circus Rancy when the Italian trainer, Amadeo Gerardi, was attacked and killed by one of his lions, Paulito. Michon then took this act over. Michon told me that the reason why the accident happened was because the lion in question had weak kidneys. During the act the trainer used to sit on the lion's back. Michon explained to Gerardi that he had to sit on the lion very carefully and gently. Apparently Gerardi jumped on the lion's back and this is why it attacked him. After this engagement Michon took the lions to Circus Enis Togni, then called Circus Heros, where due to the infamy created by Gerardi's death, audiences flocked to see the act.

In 1971 Michon joined Chipperfield's Circus and stayed for the season, including the winter engagement at the Rainbow Theatre, Finsbury Park in London. He left Chipperfield's after this engagement to take over the tigers of Gilbert Houcke on Circus Jean Richard in France. This was quite a difficult act to handle. Michon was also reunited with Erie Klant's tiger on horseback act. Michon told me that having not worked with Salomon for several years he was apprehensive about handling him. He recalled the feelings of trepidation that surged through him when he first clipped the lunge onto Salomon and led him into the ring. However, the tiger hadn't forgotten him and performed with no problems.

Michon had a disagreement with Jean Richard's management and left at the end of 1972 to join Circus Pinder for 1973 and 1974 presenting the same act. He was with Nouveau Cirque Jean Richard in 1976. In 1977 he joined John Cuneo's Hawthorn Corporation in the USA. Cuneo was then supplying wild animal acts and elephants to circuses all over



Jean Michon (right), Jim Clubb and Tom Dieck Sr., Circus Renz 2010

the USA. Michon trained a group of 11 tigers, five of which were white. He was the first man to train white tigers. He worked at various different engagements in the USA.

Michon returned to Europe in 1981 to train an act for Moira Orfei. During his time with Orfei he trained a group of 12 tigers as well as a smaller one of five Sumatran tigers. The big group was eventually ready in 1986. The reason it took so long was because Orfei wanted Michon to select only the best tigers. They purchased nearly 40 tigers in order to do this, including some I helped source. Many of these came from John Aspinall's Howlett's Zoo in Kent. I believe this was the finest act Michon ever trained. The animals worked to perfection. The big group won a gold clown at the 1987 Monte Carlo Circus Festival where it was presented by Massimiliano Nones who was the brother of Walter Nones, the co-director of Circus Moira Orfei. It was the first wild animal act to win a gold clown. Michon returned to the USA in 1988 to train three white tigers for Siegfried and Roy.

In 1993 I booked a new group of nine tigers to the newly formed The National Circus Louis Knie in Austria. Louis, who was a good friend of mine, had asked me to train a new tiger act for him to present for his first season. I was reluctant to do this because of the pressures I knew he would have running a new show. However, I agreed much to the displeasure of his father and wife. I spent two weeks on the show at the beginning of the season and left my right hand man, Michael Howes, to assist him. I had to leave to come back to the UK but I also needed Michael back here as well. I was worried about leaving Louis on his own so I asked Michon if he would be willing to help. He and his second wife, Katerina, came almost immediately and stayed with Louis for the next couple of months. This gives you an idea of how reliable Michon was and how lucky I was to have him as a friend.

This article is far from an exhaustive history of

Michon's engagements. For example, he was at Olympia during the winter of 1956-57 where his first wife, Corola, presented Klant's lionesses and he stood on the door, keeping a watchful eye on her. Incidentally, these animals were later bought by Bailey Fossett.

As mentioned before, he visited me a few times to look at tigers I had found for him. When he was with me he told me many stories. He was also there when I was training my mixed panther act. He never minced his words. He was always frank and to the point when it came to discussing animal training. He gave me loads of training tips over the years and, like my other mentor Dick Chipperfield Sr., he would watch me practise and tell me within minutes what I was doing wrong. Michon was a very quiet, unassuming man; a real gentleman. In the ring he always dressed in a blue dinner suit with light blue lapels and a bow tie. He kept this style of costume for most of his life with the exception of his early days with Klant. I remember his ritual on his way to the ring when he would walk down in front of the beast wagons with his stick and whip under one arm, grey dustcoat covering his costume and sucking a boiled sweet. Out of the ring he always wore blue jeans and a check shirt right up until the last day I saw him. I spent a marvellous afternoon with him watching some old footage of Klant's zoo in Valkenburg and of Klant acts. Michon readily identified everyone whilst we watched the films together. He got a little over excited and started hiccupping which he couldn't stop. We all got a little worried but it soon passed. He was quite frail at the time but had driven from his home to the circus on his own to see us. He died on 24 June 2019.

He was always known as Michon, but I always called him Jean. He played a big part in my life and gave me lots of guidance, knowledge and inspiration. I will never forget him.

BOOK NEWS

By Don Stacey

Jon Gresham

'Jon Gresham, the life and adventures of a sideshow showman, fire-eater and magician' was published in 2019 by the Dawes Partnership and Magic Carpet Theatre with ISBN reference 987-1-5272-3659-2. This soft-cover publication has 120 pages with many illustrations in both colour and black and white. Written by Pat Gresham, Edwin A Dawes and Jon Marshall, it is an entertaining account of the life of a showman who died in 1995. Readers will find plenty of circus references in this account of Jon Gresham's varied life in show business, with the text and pictorial material laid out in a stylish and immaculate fashion. It is a great account of an interesting performer's life which has previously never before been recorded. The book is well-worth reading and can be obtained from CFA merchandising. It costs £26 plus £2 for postage and packaging.

Joan Rosaire – Lady of the Circus

At long last a book about Joan Rosaire, one of Great Britain's favourite circus ladies. 'Joan Rosaire – Lady of the Circus' is a co-operation between Ken Porter and Joan herself. Apart from the works of Rupert Croft-Cooke back in the 1940s, when the author travelled with the show, this book is also the first major work recounting the history of the long-gone Circus Rosaire. It is a soft-cover publication of 250 pages with a veritable wealth of black and white photographs within its A5 format, my only regret being that many of them are too small and faintly reproduced. This is a shame as the majority of the photographs have previously not been seen in print. As a child growing up on Circus Rosaire, Joan could not have had a better grounding in circus arts, but it was in horse training that she excelled. With her Uncle Derrick's educated horse Tony as inspiration, Joan

created a similar act with her own 'Goldy' with which she worked in circuses, variety shows, theatres, carnivals and galas until her retirement at the age of 67. There were, of course, a series of horses which appeared under this name. Joan has become known and loved by circus enthusiasts all over the British Isles, a gracious and beautiful person as well as an excellent exponent of animal training of the highest quality. In fact I would suggest the book should have been more properly subtitled 'Great Lady of the Circus'.

The book not only traces her own life in show business but also recounts the previously uncharted history of the Circus Rosaire. There is also a short foreward by her long-time friend Norman Barrett MBE. Readers will find a wealth of information on Joan and her family in this book. It is marred only by a number of typos and errors that proof reading should have eliminated. Silly things like describing Zippos Circus owner as Martin Barrett instead of Martin Burton and even spelling my own name incorrectly three times on the same page.

The book was published in 2019 by the Littoral Press, 15 Harwood Place, Lavenham, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 9SG with the ISBN reference 978-1-912412-20-4. The book is very reasonably priced at £12.99 plus postage and can be obtained from CFA merchandising.

Charlie Cairoli – 39 Years under the Tower

Long overdue, a biography of the great clown Charlie Cairoli was published on 1 November, 2019 by Double Crown Books (www.doublecrownbooks.com). The book is produced by Entserv Projects Limited and is the joint work of circus enthusiasts Nigel Male and Steven Richley. Entitled 'Charlie Cairoli – 39 years under the Tower', the book is a limited edition of 250 copies. It has a hard cover with 266 pages of laminated quality, and costs £49 plus postage of £5.99. It can be obtained from Charlie Cairoli Appreciation Society, 26 St. Swithin Way, Andover, Hants SP10 4NU or from CFA Merchandising. There is no ISBN reference for the book.

For those readers who are unaware of Charlie Cairoli's long and distinguished career, the star clown was born in 1910 in Italy, although of French parentage, later becoming a British citizen. He worked in his father's clown act and first came to the Blackpool Tower Circus in 1939, having previously been featured on the continent in leading circuses including Cirque d'Hiver and Cirque Medrano in Paris. He starred at the Blackpool Tower for a record 39 summer seasons, hence the title of the book, but played there for only four weeks in 1979 due to ill health. He died in February 1980, aged 70. A circus lover would have to have been around 45 or more years ago to have seen him perform and remarkably neither Nigel Male nor Steven Richley saw him perform live.

One might have expected that a book about so famous a clown would have been written soon after



his death and indeed it was mooted. I intended to write one but was persuaded not to do so by Daniel Poitier, the French-born friend and clown assistant to Charlie, as he intended to write one himself. This never materialised but Poitier did write a number of articles on his friend in the 'Write Charlie' newsletter of the Charlie Cairoli Appreciation Society. It is on the content of these articles that much of today's biography is based, along with articles written in newspapers and periodicals by various persons including Charlie Cairoli himself. The book is thus at times a rather confusing amalgam of differing views and comments held together by the comments of Daniel Poitier. Instead of a biography, the book becomes an unconnected series of chapters and comments by diverse writers which never get to the heart of the man himself, contenting itself with describing the acts he performed at Blackpool for nearly four decades. This is understandable as the authors never knew the man behind the mask of clowning. In addition, the book is lacking in much information on his other engagements, particularly during the later years when he played in a variety of pantomimes and ice spectacles.

Where this volume shines is in its pictorial content for it contains a treasure trove of Cairoli memorabilia within its packed pages, photographs, reproductions of programme covers and posters, newspaper cuttings and reviews. These colour and black and white reproductions will please any circus lover wanting a pictorial account of a world class clown, the black and white photographs by Barnet Saidman are a particular delight. From a purely pictorial view, this is a superb book similar in style to the ones produced by Steven Richley on the posters of Bertram Mills and Billy Smart's and the history of Sir Robert Fossett's Circus. Unfortunately, there are numerous errors throughout the book and here I must confess that I must take some blame. I was asked to proofread the book but part-way through my first read (I would normally study a book three or four times when checking it) I suffered a heart attack and so was unable to complete the process before publication. The book was showcased on 1 November 2019 at the Blackpool Tower Circus before an invited audience that included members of the Cairoli family. This was followed by a gala dinner and auction at the nearby Imperial Hotel. The occasion was also marked by a special poster of Charlie Cairoli created by Curtis Tappenden.

Circus Photo Magazine

Issue No.60 of Circus Photo Magazine by Leendert Bedjim was published in September 2019 along with Circus Models Magazine No.28. The former, which is in English, contains within its 56 pages articles on Le Cirque de Venise, Cirque Piste d'Or, Circus Knie's train, the short-lived Circus Beat Breu, the Nikulin Moscow Circus, Circus Krone, and Britain's Big Kid Circus, which has five pages and 28 colour illustrations devoted to it. The magazine also includes the first part of a series on the history of Circus Knie (1919 to 1948). The next issue, out in January 2020, contains part two of the Knie story and articles on Circus Paul Busch, Cirque Moustache, Circus Maximum, Zirkus Charles Knie, Circus Renz International and Circus Theater Roncalli. The magazines can be obtained from CFA Merchandising.

On the High Wire

Philippe Petit's book 'On the High Wire', which was originally written by the French high wire walker in 1982, was reissued in November 2019 by W & N Publishers. It costs £9.99.

Zirkus Charles Knie

This is the third in the series 'Circus Backstage' published in the Netherlands by Becom Publishing, Postbus 80, 2200 AB Noordwijk, Netherlands. A soft-cover publication with a glossy laminate cover, it consists of 128 pages and 489 photographs illustrating the history of one of Germany's largest and best touring circuses, with which Alexander Lacey and his wild animals is a featured headline act. The book costs 26 euros and covers the period from 2007 - when Sascha Melnjak bought the show from Charles Knie - to the 2019 season. Its colour photographs include transport, big tops, animals, artistes, programme covers and poster designs. The format follows on from Becom's excellent publications on Circus Krone and Cirque Bouglione. In addition, there is a new DVD of the 2019 performance of Zirkus Charles Knie which is available from Becom and costs 20 euros.

Through the Eyes of a Clown

'Through the Eyes of a Clown' was written and published by former clown Ron Severini in late November 2019 in the United States. It consists of 50 short stories about characters in the circus ring, behind the scenes or travelling on the circus train with Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus. The paperback book is 6ins by 9ins, with 250 pages and 50 pages of photographs. This is Severini's third book and costs 29.95 US dollars. It can be ordered from <https://the.severinicompany.com>. It is also available on Amazon Kindle for 9.95 dollars.

Circus Kean

Steve Chapman writes: Frans Nauwelaerts is a Belgian writer who has just published a book containing the story of the Kean circus family. The legacy was founded in around 1850 by Mr Charles Benjamin Kean, an English drama player from the famous theatres such as Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London, who travelled to the Netherlands. He started a 'horse game' based on the art of riding and performing with horses. Grandson Albert Kean started his second career in the 1930's in England. In 1940 he went with an elephant in the city to raise money for the 'Spitfire Fighter Fund'. Albert married Audrey Viney, a dancer from the famous 'Millie Jackson's Dancers'. His son married 'Circusette' Yvonne Fielding, who performed with Paul Conner, Charlie Cairoli and Bobby & George Kludsky. Photographs from all these artists (and the whole family of circus performers) are included in the book. More than 200 never before published images from the circus world are included. The book is published by the author in three languages: Dutch, French and English and is available via www.circuskean.com.

Where the Lion Trod

Review by David Davis

This is not a book about circuses but about zoos. To be exact, British zoos that no longer exist. It was written by Clinton Keeling (1932 to 2007) in 1984

and was the first in what turned out to be a series of nine 'Where the....' books. Much has changed since these books were written, and so the Bartlett Society - which was founded by Clinton Keeling with the aim of recording zoo history - decided to reprint the books starting with 'Where the Lion Trod'. Whilst the Society has been careful to retain Clinton's distinctive writing style, it has taken the opportunity to correct the inevitable errors and add an appendix at the end of each chapter as well as an index at the end of the book. The A4 sized book has hard covers and is professionally printed and published, the original having been home published and bound with soft covers. Within its pages you can find out about long lost zoos at Hull (1840 to 1862), Cardiff (1900 to 1941), Oxford (1931 to 1937) and Halifax (1909 to 1917) to name just four of the 20 towns and cities that are discussed in this book.

If you have even only a passing interest in zoos and their history - and I know this applies to many circus enthusiasts - then this book is for you. It costs £24.95 including postage and can be obtained from the Bartlett Society, 61 Belmont Road, Portswood, Southampton, SO17 2GD. Details can also be found on the Bartlett Society web site at www.zoohistory.co.uk.

Review by Chris Barltrop

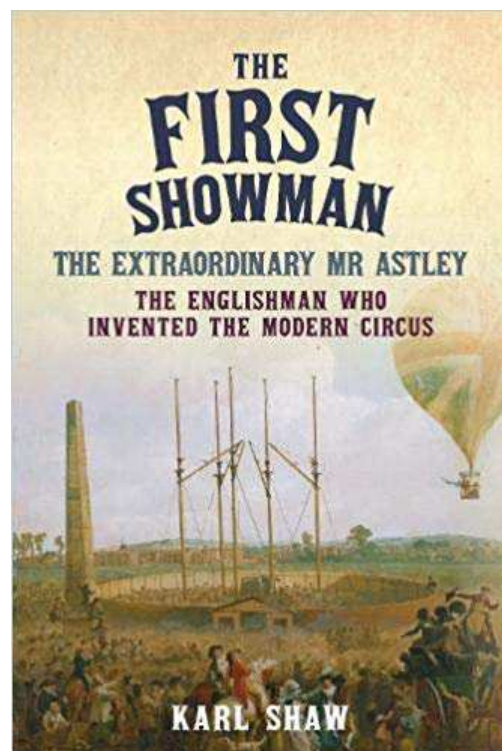
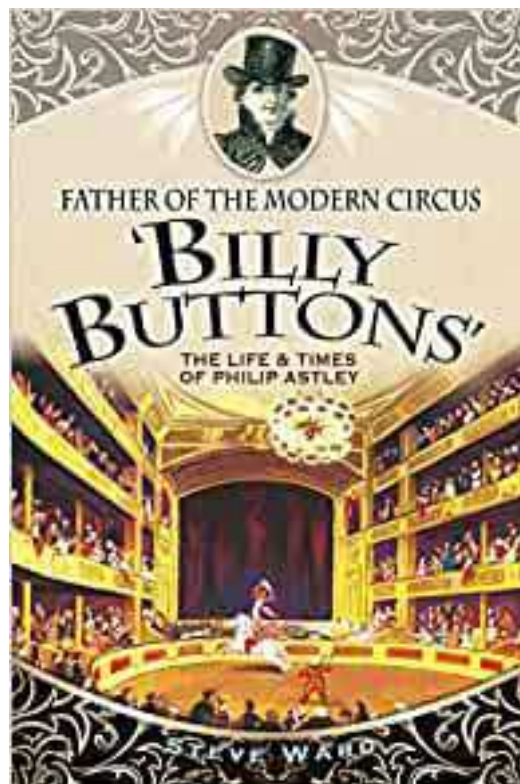
Among the wealth of material recently published for the 250th Anniversary of Phillip and Patty Astley's initial performances are two excellent histories. They are 'Billy Buttons' by Steve Ward (Pen & Sword Books, 2018. ISBN 978 1 52670 687 4) and 'The First Showman' by Karl Shaw (Amberley Publishing, 2019 ISBN 978 1 44569 549 5).

Both have benefitted enormously from access to the wealth of historical information assembled in Newcastle-Under-Lyme under the energetic initiative of Fred and Andrew Van Buren. Fred began researching and collecting in 1992, in preparation for the 250th anniversary of Astley's birth, initiating events in the town that year and also the publication of the book 'Circus Genius' by Paul Bemrose. Fred's work has been continued and expanded by Andrew; in effect, having moved away from the town in his youth, Phillip Astley has now well and truly 'arrived back' in Newcastle.

With further research by each of the two recent authors, the overall material allows a much more detailed view of the Astley story than was available in the past. Each brings the Astleys and the dawn of circus to life, though the writing styles differ. 'Billy Buttons: The Life and Times of Philip Astley' by Steve Ward was published in the Circus 250 year of 2018. In comparison with 'The First Showman' by Karl Shaw, published late in 2019, Dr Ward's style is a little less chatty and more academic - perhaps one could say it concentrates more on the 'political' history of the era, while Shaw enlivens his account with colourful emphasis on social background. Either is a good read! Both tell in fascinating - though slightly differing - detail of the circumstances surrounding father Edward Astley's move with his family to London when young Phillip was 15; of the young man's wartime heroism; and of a boom-and-bust career which, like many other aspects of the Sergeant-Major's life, character and working practices, set a pattern for all who followed him into

the world of circus promotion.

As with all histories, there are small disparities between the conclusions drawn by the authors. Steve Ward discusses whether Astley was in fact born in Newcastle-Under-Lyme; thanks to his later publication date, Karl Shaw had access to the family trees of both Phillip and Patty, seemingly dispelling those doubts. But both these books paint a picture of Mr and Mrs Astley and their lives and times, giving us a full portrait in place of the sketchy and mythologised accounts of the past. The stories are enlightening and at times surprising, but - one sincerely hopes - they both restore Amphi-Phillip to his rightful position in cultural and entertainment history, a man whose world-wide cultural impact can claim to have been as great as Shakespeare's. Huzzah for the REAL 'Greatest Showman'!



would let him know the next morning. The manager wasn't prepared to wait and insisted that he came home with me after the show which, because of my fight, I only saw the second half. When we reached home, my father refused to agree to me joining the circus. I wasn't prepared to take no as an answer and set about persuading him to change his mind. Next day the manager came back to ask my father again and this time he said yes. Thus, it was that my father signed an agreement with Fred Valarzil, the great Australian acrobat, for me to undertake a five-year apprenticeship. There were four apprentices in the troupe. I became the top mounter and was taught to do double somersaults and twisters. Mr Valarzil was the bearer. He was as strong as a lion and I had great confidence in him. I stayed with him for seven years. I enjoyed circus life very much and eventually travelled all over the world visiting such places as India, Portugal, Russia, China, Australia, France, Italy, Dutch Indies, South Africa, America, Spain, Germany and England.

Touring with Fillis's Circus

I toured South Africa with Fillis's Circus. By this time, I was doing a bare-back riding act with Clarence Wilbur Cooke. The programme also included the Zeon's flying act which consisted of four men and a woman. I shared a hotel room with one of the men from the act. He was a very talented tumbler and provided the comedy in the trampoline act which would finish with him executing one hundred somersaults at each performance. When we were at Middlesburg Cape Colony, it was very hot in the hotel and we both drank water from the bottle that was in our room. This was about 8 o'clock in the morning. By 5 o'clock that evening, we were both sick in bed with enteric fever. The next day we were taken to hospital where, three days later, my friend died. I was now alone in the hospital as the circus had moved to Deloge Bay. My temperature hovered around 105 degrees for nine days, but after this I began to recover. I had been in hospital for twelve days and I started to get restless. I thought I would never leave the place. I got friendly with the hall porter on night duty and asked him the times of the trains to Deloge Bay. It turned out that they ran twice a week and the journey took twelve hours.

On Wednesday, one hour before the train was due to leave, I slipped out of the window and walked the quarter of a mile to the station. I felt very weak by the time I reached the station. I thought I could hear someone coming up behind me and this kept me going. When I arrived at the station, the station master caught me just as I collapsed. When I came too a few minutes later, I found myself in the waiting room. As I was dressed only in my pyjamas and had left everything at the hospital, the station master wanted to send for my clothes and money. I was against this because I didn't want to go back to the hospital. The station master very generously gave me some clothes and a ticket to Deloge Bay. I was looked after by two of the passengers whilst I was on the train. When we arrived in Deloge Bay, they took me to the hotel and called the proprietor of the circus. When he came into my room, he gave me a good telling off for leaving the hospital before I had fully recovered.

A Wrestling Match

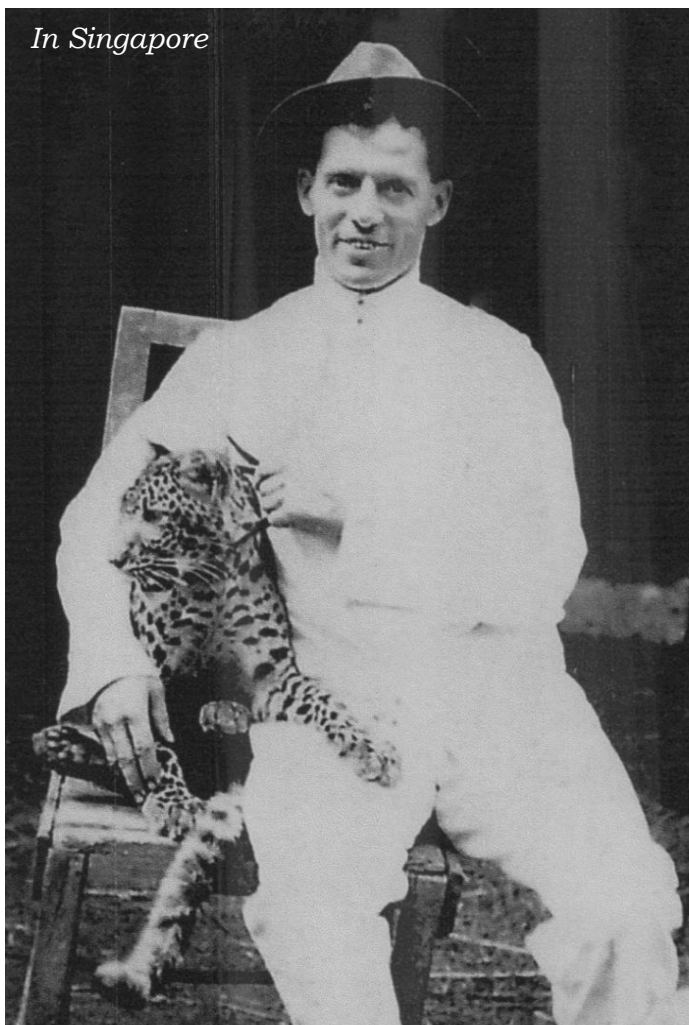
The circus stayed in Deloge Bay for nine weeks. On the fifth week, I was able to start work again doing my bare-back riding act. In this act I dressed as a young lady. Business went from good to bad so, to make ends meet between shows, I took part in wrestling matches. I would get two and a half percent of the takings if I won and nothing if I lost. I ended up black and blue from the cuts and bruises. I had to put on heavy make up to cover them in order to affect my disguise as a young lady. A week after we had fought, one of my opponents wanted a rematch. This was arranged for the following week, with the winner taking five percent of the gross takings. Several of the attendants with the show told me that I would not go home alive if I won the fight. The tent was packed on the night of the fight. It was standing room only, with hundreds turned away. The wrestling match was the last event of the evening and before I could wrestle, I had to perform my two acts; my bare-back riding and, at that time, I also worked six horses in a liberty routine. The show went very well, and everybody seemed to enjoy themselves. As the wrestling ring was set up, you could almost hear a pin drop. Everybody was silent with expectation.

The circus band struck up a march 'The Sons of the Brave' and I entered the ring. Then in came my opponent with his own band of eight people playing a march on mandolins. We wrestled on a large carpet which was laid over the sand and sawdust which made up the circus ring. Ten minutes into the fight he gave me a flying mare, which means he threw me right over his head. However, because of my acrobatic training, I was able to land without hurting myself. Five minutes later, I ducked my head between his legs, lifting him straight over my back and pinning him down until the referee called it a fall. It was difficult to fight him as he had covered his body with grease so when I got hold of him, he would slip out of my grasp. I told my seconds and they suggested that I rubbed sawdust on my hands. Ten minutes later I got my second fall, after which I took it easy until the end of the match. At the end of the fight he came over shook my hand and kissed me. Several people rushed into the ring and spoke to me. I did not understand what they were saying and could only think of what the attendants had said. However, they picked me up and carried me shoulder high around the ring. The circus completed its nine weeks stay and finished with good business.

Off to Singapore

By this time in my career, I was able to do most things in the circus. My skills included acrobatics, clowning, horizontal bars, bare-back riding, balancing, flying trapeze and training animals. After Fillis's Circus, we went to Singapore to join Circus Berroska. There were seven of us in the troupe including four apprentices. My master was a good horse and tiger trainer. In fact, he was good with most animals. One of my many tasks was to darn all our tights and take care of them. We had seven pairs each and had to change the colour each night. Every morning, at 5am, I had to get up and make a cup of tea, using a primus stove, for my master and his wife. Afterwards, I would have to hide the stove so the chambermaid did not see it otherwise I would

In Singapore



get in trouble for using a lamp in the bedroom. If my master had any horses or wild animals, I had to go down to the show immediately after I had had my cup of tea and get everything ready for his arrival at 6am. I would stay on to help with the practice. At one stage I had as many as twenty-five ponies to look after. This involved giving them a drink, feeding them

and fixing all the harnesses. If I was late, I would be smacked around the ears. I was only involved with the animals at practice and had nothing to do with them during the rest of the day. Practice lasted until 8am. It was then back to the hotel for breakfast. All our meals were eaten in the dining room at the hotel. At 9am or 10am I had to go back to the show to practice my riding or acrobatics after which it was back to the hotel for lunch. The afternoon show was at 3pm. I was involved in nine different acts at each performance. After tea, which was taken at the hotel, it was time for the night performance. After the show my first task was to rush back to the hotel and check that supper was ready in case the hotel staff had forgotten. If it wasn't laid out ready by the time my master arrived, I would receive another blow to the head. For all of this I was paid seven shillings and sixpence (75 pence) a week. By the time we reached Singapore I had been doing this for seven years.

One night on the way back to the hotel, a man stopped me and asked if I would like to join his show which was called Apollo's Circus. He further added that he would give me £15 a week plus a contract for twelve months and that I could start straight away. He had a car waiting to leave, so I rushed to the hotel, packed my trunk with my private clothes only and away we went without saying a word to anyone. We drove to Penang which was about 500 miles away. It was the last night of the circus in that city, and we left immediately for Calcutta in India. I stayed with this show for 14 months after which time I thought I would like a change. I wired Moore and Sampson's Circus in South Africa and was offered a job. I joined the show in Port Elizabeth. I had been there for three days when the Boer War broke out. Several of us decided to join up and so I joined the Cape Town Highlanders as a bandsman. I was involved in several engagements as a dispatch rider. The war lasted two years. I was lucky as I came out of the war uninjured despite having the horse, I was riding shot from under me on three occasions.

Miss Mac's Office

By Nick Barnett

You could be forgiven for wondering what on earth a 60-year old model boat, my Manager, and an MOT tester have got to do with circus... Well the story goes something like this.

Knowing that I am interested in model making, my Manager phoned me one morning and asked if I or any one I knew would be interested in restoring a large 60-year old model yacht that he had been given as a child, and which needed a new home as he was clearing out his loft. I am not into model boats, but I happened to remember seeing an MOT tester, whom I had vetted on several occasions whilst I was working with the then Vehicle Inspectorate, with his friend by a boating lake in a Northampton park whilst visiting my son one Sunday afternoon. His name was Marc and I was able to track him down and give him a call to see if he might be interested in the boat. He was no longer into model boats either, but his friend was, and he was sure they would love to take the boat from off my Manager for restoration. A few further

pleasantries were then exchanged during the call. Marc was now into vintage tractors and frequented steam fairs and the like. I casually mentioned that I build models of Billy Smarts Circus transport and that I would be exhibiting my models for the first time at the Banbury Steam Fair. 'Wow', he exclaimed,



Bristol Aviation housing tractor & trailer

visible, but the ladder was no longer there, nor was the catwalk that ran the length of the roof outside. At the front of the booking office would have been sleeping quarters for a member of staff and still present was the original gas lamp fitted to the front inside bulkhead.

I had been talking about my find with my near neighbour, Alan Wilson, and discussed the information regarding the housing trailers and the various theories about what this trailer might have been prior to circus use. From his archive, he was able to produce the World's Fair article mentioned at the start of my piece, together with photos of the booking office when in use with the circus. This information seemed to be at odds with what Carlos had discovered and so we visited Carlos once again and showed him the press cutting. During this visit we had much debate about the structure and alteration of this trailer and what it might have been used for after its original construction, but still kept returning to the fact that it appeared to have been made by the Bristol Aviation Company. By the time we had travelled home, I am sure my wife was bored to death with my constant chattering about the various theories that were going through my head and that my proposed article now had two conflicting endings.

At this frustrating point, Gary Smart kindly came to my rescue. He informed me that this booking office was one of three used by Smarts during the years the circus was on the road. This one was known as Miss Mac's (after Miss Macdonald) and was used on the advance unit as a town or city centre booking office. However, his father did not think Southern's had built it. Back to the drawing board! I now had Mr



Bristol Aviation housing tractor & trailer

Smart senior saying it was not built by Southern's, the World's Fair article clearly stated that it was, and Carlos's research was pointing to the Bristol Aviation Company. Carlos had previously mentioned that the trailer could have been originally built and used as a mobile Post Office as there was a letter box fitted on the nearside bodywork. I put this thought to Gary and his father, together with the question 'could Southern's have only converted the trailer rather than building it from scratch?'. Result! Back came the acknowledgement from Gary that this is what had happened and yes it had been a mobile post office prior to Billy Smart giving it to Southern's to convert into the booking office. I am pretty sure this conversion would have included the construction of the additional section to the rear of the axle as it was possible to see that there were different sized floor boards in this area and the bodywork frame timbers were of a different wood which had evidently been spliced in to the original framework.

When I contacted Carlos to update him about Gary Smart's information, he went on to tell me about another interesting thing he had come across. Having viewed pictures of the restoration of the Royal Windsor living trailer once owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ronnie Smart, he noticed that the chassis underneath their living trailer prior to its overhaul was the same type as that under the booking office trailer. I have been able to see online a video of this restoration and within it there is a piece where Mr. Ronnie Smart refers to a housing trailer that they had, and which was given to Southern's for the original build of this living trailer. An interesting coincidence to bring my story to an end.

A big thank you to Carlos, Alan Wilson, and Gary Smart and his father for their assistance and not forgetting of course my Manager, his yacht, and the MOT tester Marc, without whom I would not be writing this surprising history.



Rear end showing sign writing from different seasons

CFA AGM DAY 2020

Saturday 4th April
To be held at The National Fairground
and Circus Archive at the
University of Sheffield

IRISH NEWS AND REPORTS

Report by Richard McMinn (with research assistance from Rodney Redmond)

TUMBLE CIRCUS Presents 'Winter Circus'

13 December 2019 to 2 January 2020

The fourth consecutive Christmas season of the Belfast-based Tumble Circus (directed by Ken Fanning and Tina Segner) was again presented in the familiar two-pole, silver and black, striped big top, built up on the centrally-located Writers' Square, directly facing St. Anne's, Belfast's Church of Ireland (Anglican) Cathedral. Tumble Circus continues to enjoy sponsorship from both the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council. This was in fact the only Christmas Circus, as such, anywhere on the island of Ireland in 2019-20, with a running time of just over one hour. The same eight-strong company as in 2018-19 (Ken Fanning, Tina Segner, Grant Goldie, Henrik Gard, Angelique Ross, Ali Strange, Paul Taylor, plus Tina and Grant's five-year-old son, Kasper) provided a varied programme, with a considerable and commendable effort made to ring the changes from that witnessed last winter. Tumble has built up a loyal fan base and Ken reported to me that the excellent business enjoyed in 2018-19 was repeated this time. Indeed, when I saw the show on Sunday 29 December, the tent was full. Wendy Blemings, the recently appointed Project Manager and Producer with Tumble Circus, was understandably proud of its listing in ninth place by a major British newspaper in a survey of Christmas family entertainment available in 2019 to readers throughout the UK. As Ken quipped during the actual show: 'I was never so pleased in my life to come ninth!'

The set-up was very similar to that of previous years, although a new, outdoor, tented catering concession was provided by 'Coffee Angels' at the entrance to the ground, while the full licensed bar facilities inside the big top continued to be a welcome feature, along with popcorn and souvenir stands. The rows of individual, upholstered chairs, all at the same level, were set on boarded flooring on three sides around a raised stage, with red draw tabs behind. Experienced theatrical technical specialist, S.J. Williams, a newcomer to the world of circus, oversaw lighting and sound. She had at her disposal a set of LED colour change lights mounted on each of the king poles and four, floor-mounted moving heads/intelligent lights, plus a mirror ball.

English drag clown 'Captain Bucky' (Paul Taylor) in dress, wig and boots, as before, warmed the audience up, both as they queued for admission outside and then waited for the performance to begin inside. There was a running joke throughout the show about Bucky's alleged great age and delicate state of health. As always with Tumble, the programme content was presented in an anarchic and subversive style, with elements of stand-up style comedy, mixed with the demonstration of a range of circus skills and some unusual and eclectic music choices.

Opening the show was an introductory foot-stomping, clapping, Mexican wave sequence directed by Captain Bucky (before he was instructed by Ken to restrict his activity to cleaning the toilets). This was

followed by a joke introduction by Tina in her native Swedish and Ken's 'You Will Buy Our Merchandise' mirror ball hypnosis gag.

As in 2018, Ken introduced the now five-year-old 'Danger Kasper' as 'the world's youngest circus performer', all the way from the 'remote East Belfast suburb of Ballyhackamore'. In an appropriate green costume and also accompanied by the 'Danger Mouse' theme, this youthful performer worked with great enthusiasm and without a safety lunge on a miniature trapeze. The routine involved a series of holds and stands on the bar as it swung, or was hauled up and down.

Following an audience safety announcement in the form of the 'clean underwear gag', the full acrobatic company of five presented their new 'Tower of Axes' number, to the accompaniment of the music track 'Danger! High Voltage' by Electric Six. This took the form of building a human pyramid, with Ken and Henrik as the bearers and Tina as the top mounter, who then rather riskily juggled three hatchets.

Grant Goldie, working to a version of 'Only You', presented a skilful and slick manipulation sequence using a small ball attached to a piece of string, with which he created a whole range of creative moves and shapes.

Tina and Ken with their double aerial number with a comic twist – a regular staple of any Tumble Circus and as always, featuring some introductory oral humour, e.g. a threat to use traditional Swedish folk music to accompany the act and a reference to their new costumes 'having been designed by Dolce and Gabbana when they were drunk'. Working to the Alphaville track, 'Forever Young' and then 'Liberty Belle' by the Fontaines D.C., the act was performed on a fixed trapeze bar above a crash mat, with Ken as the main bearer for most of the tricks. These included a double lay-out across the bar, a foot-to-foot hang, a single ankle hang, a toe-hang from the bar by both and a spinning wrist hang. Tina as bearer held Ken upside-down with her feet around his waist, with Ken then dropping to an ankle hang. The act concluded with the duo's signature trick, a single ankle hold of Tina below him by Ken as the bearer.

Captain Bucky with the 'Many Men, Many Men, Many Men' audience vocal participation gag before he was chased off the stage.

A typically novel, satirical twist to the currently popular circus hand-balancing trick of shooting a bow and arrow with the feet was provided by the somewhat sinister figure of Henrik Gard - 'Henrik the Hunter from Nova Scotia', wearing a fake fur jacket and shorts. Using a pedestal positioned towards the rear of the seating, beside the technical control desk, he balanced on both hands while shooting a toy bow and suction-headed arrow with his feet towards first an apple on the head and then a target board held by Ali and Angelique. A pastiche of the shooting with the feet while wearing a blindfold trick also featured, as the female assistants ducked and weaved around with the target board to try and ensure the arrow found its target. The backing track was appropriately 'The Anxious Battle for Sanity' by Antonio Sanchez.

A new club juggling sequence was provided by Tina and husband Grant in black costumes. This

featured the solo juggling of three and four clubs by each, exchanges of clubs from one to the other and the cross juggling, as they moved around the stage, of first six and then to conclude, seven clubs.

Captain Bucky's allegedly dodgy pancreas and his alleged 89 years of age featured in a crosstalk interlude with Ken, now resplendent in a dazzling gold lame jacket.

Another new item for this season, as compared with last, was an aerial silks number by Tina 'Machina', introduced by a fan dance by Ali and Angelique in black costumes and manipulating matching fans. Tina's excellent routine was set to 'Bauhaus', a track by Hollow Hills, and included partial dropdowns, splits across the silks and a full roll-down to close.

The strains of the 'Habenera' from Bizet's opera 'Carmen' provided the backing for a slickly choreographed, adagio acrobatic dance number from Henrik and Ali. The acrobatic tricks included Ali hand-standing on Henrik's shoulders and then on his two hands and an impressive single hand balance by Ali on top of Henrik's head. The routine ended with Ali skilfully throwing Henrik flat on to the stage floor with a sharp thud. The audience was then assured by Ken that a 'crack team of talented medics' was on hand to treat him.

Belfast City Council sponsorship and the importance of recycling rubbish were both given a mention and the latter visually demonstrated through the five core members of the company throwing very large square plastic bags containing rubbish from one to the other. To reinforce the message, 'Don't Throw Your Rubbish Away', the team after three attempts, was able to assist bearer Henrik to build a Tower of Bags (ultimately eight-high) held in his arms. Almost inevitably, 'Trash' by The New York Dolls provided the accompaniment to this sequence.

Captain Bucky appeared in a pop star-style, silver lame jump suit to encourage the audience to wave their mobile phone flashlights in the air, to the accompaniment of 'We Are the Champions' by Queen.

A brief LED hoop manipulation sequence by Tina and Ali provided an introduction to the final act – the revival from a few years back of her solo trapeze act by Angelique 'Reckless' Ross, utilising a trapeze decorated to look like a jungle tree and working to the track 'El President' by the group Drug Store. A very full routine on both the static and the swinging bar incorporated a heel hang, a single hand hang, revolves around the bar, a drop to hock catch, a series of rising fast spins, a fast standing spin on the swinging bar, a fast spin below the bar, followed by a shower of glitter from the cupola of the tent. This was all delivered at a speedy pace and with energetic enthusiasm.

Finale with Ken individually reintroducing the members of the company of eight, followed by the now traditional invitation to children in the audience to dance with the performers on stage.

This brought to a close a very enthusiastically received show from a company which plans to expand its Irish Festival touring schedule during the summer of 2020 and intends to return to its home city for a fifth consecutive 'Winter Circus' at the end of the year.

'Circus Meets Pantomime' at Rathwood Leisure Park, Co. Carlow

For a short winter season (28 December to 4 January), Fossett's Circus was to be found not at Tallaght Stadium or one of its earlier winter venues

of recent years, but back at Rathwood Leisure Park, which it had visited a few months earlier during the summer tenting season. The Rathwood management has developed in recent times a very successful and popular Santa's Grotto Experience, located in the Park's woodland and accessed by a small-scale railway train. However, the inevitable cut-off date for this event is 24 December. The Park management, in collaboration with Fossett's Circus, decided to offer and promote, as an experiment, a post-Christmas pantomime with a circus theme over the remaining school holiday period. Accordingly, the smaller, red Fossett big top was built up in the woods, accessed again by the popular train and gravelled pathways. This provided the venue for a condensed version of the ever-green pantomime 'Cinderella', but with a distinctive circus flavour. A cast of 22 performers (actors and circus artistes) were directed by Olivia Smith and Robert Fossett. Robert's sister Marion and nephew Edward (more usually Clown Otto) had significant acting and singing roles. The first half included a choreographed circus parade sequence and a dream sequence featuring Irish artiste Claire Higgins on the aerial silks, with live singing by Marion (Fairy Godmother) of 'A Dream is a Wish' and 'Impossible'. Fossett's Cinderella coach, drawn by ponies, had been suitably refurbished for the event by Angela Huesca. Not surprisingly, the entertainment provided at the Ball in the second half turned out to be a ten minute circus sequence, featuring Owen Fossett and his diabolo display, Chinese artiste Wang Dan with a new aerial chandelier presentation, and two Polish male performers, Duo White, with a hand balancing/strength act. Because of its relatively rural location, Rathwood is very much a car day trip experience, with good parking and catering facilities. Encouragingly, booking was so heavy that an additional two performances had to be added at the end of the run to meet demand.

Winter Season in Portugal

The talented sons of Wayne and Michelle Courtney were booked this winter to provide three acts (Dylan's cloud swing, Jack's juggling number and their combined wrestling match on the trampoline) for the programme of the Portuguese Circo de Portugal (owned by the Mariani family).

Cirque du Soleil Returns to Ireland in 2020

Cirque du Soleil is offering two different productions to Irish audiences in 2020. The combined circus/ice show experience of 'Crystal' is scheduled to appear in Belfast's SSE Arena from 25 to 29 March, while 'Corteo' will play the 3Arena in Dublin from 8 to 12 July.

Irish Season 2020 Begins

The first Irish circus to commence its 2020 tour was Circus Corvenio Elysium, directed by Brandon McCormick and Shane McCormack, which played the Castletown Community Centre, County Laois, on Thursday 16 January.

At the time of writing, Wayne and Michelle Courtney's Daredevil Circus was scheduled to open in Portarlinton, County Laois, from 31 January to

2 February, with stands in Carlow and Wexford to follow. The 2020 poster heavily features the new act of four Husky dogs trained and presented by Sommer Courtney, which made its ring debut at the very end of the 2019 tour.

Tom Duffy and Son's Circus was due to open at the Marshes Shopping Centre in Dundalk, County Louth, from 5 to 9 February, with Portlaoise and Limerick City to follow. The 2020 Duffy programme, while retaining the superb, award-winning Wheel of Death act by brothers Tom and Jamie Duffy and the world-class, six person flying trapeze act of the Zuniga from Brazil (as seen in 2019), is likely to have a significant range of new attractions. These include another first for Irish circuses with the inclusion of the six-person, double wall trampoline act of the Ukrainian Adrenaline Troupe, as seen at Blackpool Tower in 2018, with troupe members also presenting a Russian swing number, certainly another novelty at the Duffy show. From March onwards, the talented Saabel family (who most recently appeared in the Cirque de Noel 2019 of Christiane Bouglione in Paris and subsequently at the winter circus in Ravensburg) will contribute four acts – their attractive dog act, Kelly Saabel's hand balancing number, Jennifer Saabel's antipodist presentation and their eight-person 'Alice in Wonderland' themed illusion act. There is a complete change on the comedy front with 'Mr Lorenz' (David Lorenzo Carnevale), who has appeared in a number of major circuses, including Charles Knie, Zippo's in Britain and most recently in the 2019 Christiane Bouglione Paris Christmas show, responsible for the clowning side of things.

The Duffy house liberty group of Appaloosa ponies returns, as do the five Athumani Kenyan Warriors with their limbo dancing spot, plus their skipping, acrobatics and pyramid building act.

Circus Gerbola, directed by Mikey and Tara Gerbola, has been advertised to open in Drogheda from 12 to 16 February, with Naas to follow. Their advertising material, including new air-brushed transport art by Kev Bamba, emphasises the programme link role of Mexican clown, Rafy (Rafael Alvarado) Marquez, formerly on the Duffy show. With his Irish partner Shauna Moore, they will also contribute their roller-skating number. The Spindler Troupe from Germany returns with their animals and Joline Kaffka's hula hoop number. Another act returning from 2019 is the double aerial straps act of Romanian couple Aurel and Denisa (Duo Insanity), who also have their quick-change presentation represented on the new poster. Andrea Vegh from Hungary, who appeared in the 2019 Tayto Park Fossett summer show, is due to contribute an aerial rope act and bounce juggling. Finally, the programme is advertised to include Globe of Death and high wire acts.

Circus Vegas was due to open at the Pavilions Shopping Centre, Swords, County Dublin, from 15 to 23 February. The programme is to include amongst others The Bulgarian Kovachev Brothers (Nikolay and George) with their Wheel of Death, Duo Alambria on the high wire, Kourtney Pavlov on the aerial chandelier, Robert Foxhall with his excellent aerial straps act and Clown Dexter (Declan Ellis).

Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses

The Campaign for Circus Cultural Heritage (CCCH) was founded by people who are determined and dedicated to keeping the culture and tradition of working animals in circuses. The first task of the CCCH is to reverse the ban brought in by the UK Government's Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This ban stops English circuses from using what are deemed, by UK Government, to be wild animals, from performances in travelling circuses. Scotland already has a similar ban, and Wales are in the process of bringing in a similar ban at the end of 2020 that has to go through the Welsh Assembly Government's legal procedure.

The English ban came into effect on the 20th January 2020. However, there is nothing to stop the circuses from owning any species as long as they have all the legal documents and the facilities and knowledge to care for them in an acceptable manner. They can also travel with any animal, including the wild animals as stated in the ban, as long as the animals are not used in performance or used to publicise the circus. On a travelling circus site, the wild animals are not to be part of the circus in any way, but grazing stock can be turned out to graze as long as the public cannot touch them and they are not used to entice the public into the circus. Other banned animals owned by the circus can be travelled and kept on a circus site as long as the public do not have access to them in any way. Circuses can, however, still use domestic animals in performances. Before the ban there were two fully licensed circuses in

England, who were licensed by DEFRA to travel with and perform with wild animals in their circuses. Both these circuses every year passed their 7 mandatory DEFRA Veterinary Inspections with no problems and were licensed by UK Government for 7 years. There was nothing wrong with the UK Circus Licensing system and the CCCH wish for it to continue.

The CCCH have been working with a top legal team and, having issued a claim against DEFRA in the High Court of Justice, have now reached the stage of being granted permission from the High Court Administrative Division to proceed further with their claim against DEFRA in the form of a Judicial Review of the ban.

To get to this position has been an exhaustive and back breaking effort, and of course very time consuming and costly. Funds for this process have so far been donated by circus people across Europe and the UK, and the CCCH are about half-way to success but need more funds to finish the court case, which will be heard in April in London. If anyone would like to know more please get in touch with Alexander Lacey (alexanderlacey@yahoo.co.uk) or Rona Brown (gov.liaison@cggb.org.uk). For all donations please get in touch with Alexander Lacey.

The CCCH mission statement is 'To keep as many species of animals in travelling circuses as can be properly cared and provided for in a circus environment'. However, it cannot be done without more funds, so the CCCH would appreciate any financial help to keep the magical heritage of animals in circuses alive.

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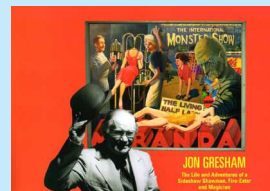
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