

KING POLE

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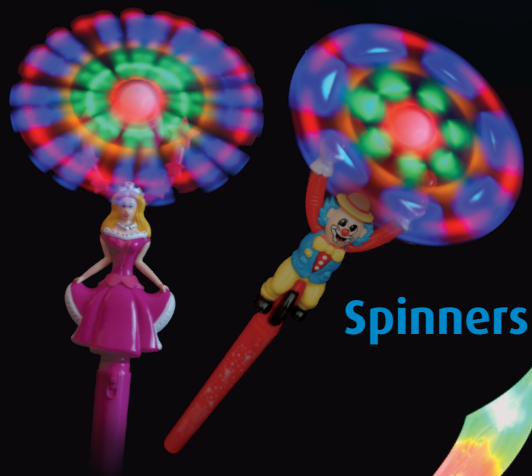
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King Pole

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

If you have any other queries you can contact David Davis via email at djanicedavid@virginmedia.com

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Front cover photograph: Sonny Caveagna, photograph by Andy Payne.

The first edition of King Pole for 2022 reports on the winter season of circus entertainment in the UK. In addition, French contributor, Jean-Marc Trichard brings us information on the 19th International Grenoble Circus Festival.

We continue with the story of the circuses of Heysham Head written by David Davis. Other featured articles include The Beautiful Lulu, Girl Aerialist and Circassian Catapultist by Alan Stockwell and Build Up and Pull Down on Zippos Circus by Cathy Cooper.

Over the last few years we have asked for people to offer their services to support the Association. Unfortunately, the response from members has been disappointing. We are particularly looking for people to help with the production of the King Pole. Whilst we are grateful to everyone who writes for the magazine or provides photographs, we still need photo-editors, proof readers, and an advertising manager. In the long term the failure to recruit more volunteers will put the publication of King Pole at risk. If you think you could offer support in any way, please get in touch through the King Pole email address. Volunteers will be teamed up initially with an existing member of the editorial team to help them become familiar with the process of preparing the King Pole for publication.

As always, we thank everyone who has contributed to this magazine. In 2022, we hope that it will be possible for CFA members to get together again at rallies and events as we move towards a more settled time. We would also like to wish everyone in the circus industry a successful 2022 season.

King Pole editorial team

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Good Fellowship

The CFA sends cards and messages to members of the circus world and CFA for births, weddings, significant anniversaries and birthdays, illnesses and deaths.

Please phone or email the CFA Secretary Hazel Exton with details of such occasions.

CIRCUSES AT HEYSHAM HEAD

PART 3 – 1954 to 1959

By David Davis

Extra Information

Mark Twitchett writes with further information on some of the artistes who were mentioned in Part 2. Ruth and Alber who were the booked-in act in 1951 were later known as the Keystowes and regularly advertised in The World's Fair for galas, fetes and carnivals. They presented performing poodles, comedy acrobatics, balancing, and cartooning plus audience participation. They were still going strong in the 1980s. Patrick MacManus who appeared in the 1952 show was the son of Henry and Grace MacManus (nee Grace Paulo) and therefore brother of Carlos MacManus. Kay Kortz and Eugene, the booked-in act in 1953, were members of the large Moxon family of jugglers and acrobats.

Mark Twitchett also points out that Ollie Gray who was part of the company in 1953 should have been Holley Gray. The reason I wrote Ollie was because that was the name used by Edward Graves in his report. Presumably he misheard when told his name.

1954: George and Lydia Gridneff are Guest Artistes

The circus company once again consisted of William and Emily Thompson; June Thompson; Billy Thompson; Holley and Madge Gray; Lizzie Proctor with Albert Proctor as ring attendant. Adding their skills to this formidable array of talent were George and Lydia Gridneff with their juggling and ladder balancing acts.

The programme was selected from the following acts:-

- Voltige riding by Madge Gray nee Proctor.
- Ponies at play presented by June Thompson.
- Clown entrée by Olly and Billy (Holley Gray and Billy Thompson) in which one ran into the ring with a number written on a board whilst the other banged cymbals together to indicate the number. If he got the number wrong then he got hit, the final number of 999 proving his downfall.
- Gilbert's dogs presented by June Thompson and Madge Gray. The dogs skipped; jumped through hoops; and rode on the back of a pony, the dogs jumping on and off the pony as it passed beneath a pedestal.
- Juggling with laughs by George and Lydia Gridneff in which George juggled with cups and balls; rings; and caught a ball thrown by members of the audience on a mouth stick. He finished by balancing a plate on the edge of a hoop which he twirled and spun round without the plate falling off.
- Ballerina on horseback by June Thompson.
- Fun on the trampoline with boys from the audience invited to have a go.
- The Arab Mounted Patrol, eight ponies with dummy riders, presented by Emily Paulo (Thompson). Emily Paulo continued to suffer from health problems and when necessary the act was presented by her daughter June.
- June Thompson and Madge Gray on two trapezes,

the two working in turn rather than performing the tricks simultaneously.

- Billy and Olly with a musical clown entrée.
- George and Lydia Gridneff with their unsupported ladder act. The routine included George balancing on the ladder and supporting Lydia whilst she executed a handstand on his shoulders. In addition George juggled hoops and clubs whilst on the ladder.
- Bimbo-Bimbo a pantomime horse shown by Lizzie Proctor with presumably the two clowns inside the 'skin'.
- Lizzie Proctor with her slack-wire act, this year billed as Elizabeth.
- The Gilbert's Riding Troupe comprising Billy Thompson, Holley Gray, June Whitney and Madge Gray.

The circus opened on Monday 7 June and closed on Saturday 18 September. This was the last time that Gilbert's Circus appeared at Heysham Head, although at the time I don't think anybody thought they would not be returning. During the winter Gilbert's Circus toured the theatres and whilst it was at the Hippodrome Theatre in Leigh, it was seen by the managing director of Chessington Zoo, H. A. Snazle, who booked them to provide the 1955 summer circus at Chessington. With the exception of 1956, the Gilberts continued to present the circus entertainment at Chessington until 1980.

1955: Gandey's Returns

With Gilberts Circus now at Chessington, the task of providing the circus was once again entrusted to Gandey's Circus which, with the death of Bob Gandey the previous year, was being run by his son, Joe. The show used a one pole tent and opened on Monday 20 June. The company included The Gerbolas (Toni, Tina and Tony) as well as Norman Barrett's parents, George and Winifred. The show was reviewed by Edward Graves who gave the running order as follows:-

- Charivari by the clowns leading into the bucket on the pole gag by Toni Gerbola.
- Joe Gandey with the pony, Tommy who picked out from the audience 'the girl who has been sending love notes', 'the naughtiest boy in school' and when asked to 'pick out the biggest fool' pointed at Joe Gandey.
- Toni and Tina with a display of hat juggling. They commenced with Tina throwing six conical hats across the ring for Toni to catch on his head. Toni then discarded three of them and left the ring juggling the remaining three in the hands to head routine.
- George Barrett with a Big and Little routine with Toni adding to the fun with a spot of clowning.
- Toni fooling Joe Gandey with his Magic Echo.
- Three geese, Jane, Mary and Arthur, presented by Joe Gandey. They marched round the ring; one went on a pedestal whilst the other two sat on either end of a see-saw; they jumped a low gate and went down a slide. At one point, Joe Gandey fed the geese some

tit-bits which they took from his mouth.

- Toni, Tina and Tony, dressed as continental clowns, with a melange of acrobatics and tumbling. They finished by each playing a violin in a variety of unorthodox positions and ways. They exited with Toni and Tina in a head to head balance, both still playing their violins.
- Joe Gandey with five ponies in a liberty routine.
- Barrett's Dogs presented by George Barrett with his wife in charge of preparations at the ring entrance.
- The full routine included a dog walking on its hind-legs; a dog skipping with one end of the rope attached to the collar of another dog; two dogs sitting on pedestals holding in their mouths a cord from which hung a hoop through which another dog jumped; a dog climbed to the top of a ladder and jumped off into Mrs Barrett's arms; another dog did the same but jumped into a sack; a dog walked across a narrow plank with a flagged stick in its mouth; a Great Dane jumped through a hand held hoop, sat up, shook hands and barked on command; a dog stood on two pedestals whilst a second dog executed a series of jumps over it and a third one weaved in and out of the pedestals; a hind-legs walking dog opened and closed a gate; another hind-legs walking dog jumped three hurdles which another dog then pushed over before jumping into a box only to be chased out by a third dog. Finally all the dogs 'caught the last bus home'.
- Joe Gandey with three young volunteers who acted out a scene before a film camera.
- Tex Del Rio assisted by Mary Gandey with whip



Joe and Mary Gandey 1955

and lariat manipulation, the act being listed in the printed programme as Tex Powell and Company. The pantomime horse Flash (Toni and Tony) presented by Tina.

- Joshua and Joan with their juggling act. They commenced by spinning plates on mouth sticks; Joan then juggled three hoops before Joshua, lying on his back, spun five plates using his feet, hands and mouth. After this Edward Graves describes the act as proceeding with 'a veritable feast of spin'. Incidentally Mr Graves gives the name of the man as Jothia whilst the printed programme gives it as Joshua.

- Toni and Tony with Joe Gandey in the sacked and undressing entr e.

- The Fire Pony Brandy presented by George Barrett. The pony commenced by jumping some ordinary fences before three jumps with arched tops were set up around the ring. These were set alright and Brandy jumped through them.

The printed programme also lists The Kuisicks aerial act but Edward Graves makes no mention of this in his report. The show closed on 10 Saturday September.

1956: Gandey's Again

The show opened on Monday 25 June for a twelve week season, finishing on Saturday 17 September. There were two shows a day at 3.15pm and 7.00pm except Sunday when there were no performances. Once again a one pole tent was used and music was provided by records on a panatrope operated by Frank Smith. Prior to the show starting there were pony rides in the ring operated by Mary Gandey and Frank Smith.

The animal acts were all from Gandey's Circus. The first to be seen was the trick horse Bessina in a routine which included kneeling; placing the forefeet on a pedestal, then turning without moving the forefeet and finally reversing to 'unwind' the feet; a camel stretch and a backwards walk round the ring. The other animal acts were at Heysham Head last year, these being Tommy the pony with the master mind, the geese Mary, Jane and Arthur and finally Gandey's group of five liberty ponies. All these were presented by Joe Gandey who also directed three young volunteers in a film sequence.

The Gerbolas (Toni, Tina and Tony) made a number of appearances. Toni and Tina showed their expertise at hat juggling whilst Toni and Tony presented the bucket on the pole gag. All three joined forces for a melange of acrobatics and tumbling combined with violin playing. They also provided the opening Charivari in which Tony played the part of a big-headed baby with an outsized appetite for milk. Towards the end of the show all three played tunes on bells attached to their hands and feet.

Mary Gandey and Tony Gerbola (Tony from Toni, Tina and Tony) joined forces, as The Kuisicks, for a trapeze act. Mary Gandey opened with a series of solo tricks. Tony then took over for a number of tricks on the swinging trapeze finishing with a somersault from the trapeze to the ground. Finally, the two combine with Tony bearing Mary for more tricks on the swinging trapeze.

Bob Del Rio and Mary Gandey, as The Montanas, gave a display of rope and whip manipulation. At

Almada Trio 1956



one point they were joined by Toni and Tony for a spot of trick- shooting with the bullet travelling in a circle round the tent before bursting a balloon which turned out to be full of water.

New to Heysham Head were The Shermans, this being Raymond Whitely with a lady assistant. Raymond along with his brothers Harold and Ben made up the original Tom, Dick and Harry clown trio. In this solo act he commenced by juggling three, then four billiard balls before substituting an apple for one of the balls and taking bites from it. Next he juggled three sticks and then three burning torches. This led into a fire-eating sequence which involved playing fire on his hands; extinguishing blazing torches by putting them in his mouth; lighting a cigarette in his assistant's mouth using a flame blown from his mouth; spinning a four point burning wheel held in his mouth and then extinguishing each point with his mouth; diving through three burning hoops, turning a somersault after each dive; eating the end of a lighted candle and swallowing lighted paper tapers. He and his partner then placed chunks of cotton wool in their mouths and then blew and blew until smoke and sparks shot out between their lips. Finally they produced multi-coloured paper streamers of considerable length from their mouths.

Also new to Heysham Head was William Beatty, the Scottish Apollo, who provided two acts. As The Almada Trio, he and his two sons, Sandy and Robert, contributed a range of excellent balancing and lifting tricks. As The Two Apollos, he and Sandy (the Young

Apollo) presented a series of feats of strength. These included William Beatty breaking a chain wrapped round him by expanding his chest; Young Apollo lifting two 56lb weights and tossing them about before lifting them above his head; Dad going one better by linking four such weights and lifting them with his teeth. Two volunteers were linked together by means of a strap and Apollo Snr lifted them by one hand above his head. For the final trick Apollo Senior balanced 11 volunteers on his feet, with them sitting on a beam.

1957: The Apollos Return

Once again the circus was provided by Joe Gandey. Retained from the previous year were William Beatty and his family who this year comprised three sons plus a daughter who between them provided three acts. William, Sandy and Robert were joined by a daughter which allowed the Almada Trio to become The Four Almadras. Once again William and Sandy Beatty performed their strongmen act as The Mighty Apollos. Finally William Beatty Jnr assisted by Robert contributed a roller balancing act as Victor and Partner. William Jnr commenced by passing two hoops over his body whilst balancing on the roller board. Next he placed on the board a small pedestal on which he knelt and picked up a handkerchief with his teeth. Still kneeling, he removed his shoes and socks, stood up on the pedestal and removed his sweater and trousers leaving him in a pair of trunks before executing a handstand. For the final part of his act, William Jnr dispensed with the rolalola and balanced on his hands on two piles of six bricks which he rebuilt brick by brick alongside their originals positions. Next he stacked the bricks into one pile and performed a one hand balance on the top. Finally he rearranged the bricks back into two piles, executed a hands balance on them and threw the bricks away one at a time.

As in previous years, Joe Gandey presented the horse acts, these being the grey horse Bessina; the pony Tommy and the group of five liberty ponies. He also directed three boys from the audience in a film sequence, for which he is listed in the printed programme as Jo-Jo, the name under which his father used to clown. The final animal act was a group of dogs presented by Ticky dressed as a white-faced clown. The dogs jumped hurdles and through hoops. One dog disobeyed Ticky's instructions and as a consequence was 'shot', the dog giving a very good impression of being dead until the word ambulance was mentioned at which point it leapt to its feet.

Ticky joined Mary Gandey and Sandy Beatty in The Kuisicks trapeze act. Mary Gandey commenced with a series of solo tricks before being interrupted by Ticky disguised as a member of the audience. When invited to take part in the act he removed a large number of waistcoats before climbing up one of the trapeze uprights, along the bar and without more ado down again. After this interruption, Sandy Beatty supported Mary Gandey in a series of tricks on the swinging trapeze. To close all three join together in an inverted linked swing.

Hampe, the tramp clown, assisted by Lolita made a number of appearances. For their main entrée the two of them got involved with a witches' cauldron, a bicycle, a couple of eggs and a balance of a bottle

on the edge of a plate. The two linked up with Ticky for the bucket on the pole gag. Hampe, Ticky, Bob Del Rio and one of the Beatty boys joined together to present Gandey's ballet.

Prior to each show, pony rides were given in the ring and after the show in an outside enclosure. It would appear that a regular at the pre-show sessions was a twelve months old Philip Gandey under the watchful care of his grandmother Mrs Bob Gandey.

The circus opened on Monday 24 June and closed on Saturday 31 August, a couple of weeks earlier than in previous years. Entrance to the circus continued to be included in the overall admission price to Heysham Head which was now two shillings for adults and one shilling for children.

1958: Ross Bros Crown Circus

Gandey's Circus did not return to Heysham Head for the 1958 season. I don't know why it was decided to make the change but my guess would be that Gandey's had become too expensive for the number of people who now visited Heysham Head. Irrespective of the reason, Heysham Head's owner Fred Wray turned to Ross Bros Crown Circus, which was run by Tommy and Honora Ross with able assistance from their children Thomas, Anthony, Derrick, Kevin, Terence and twins Michael and Melita. Before running a circus Tommy Ross had developed a breakaway ladder act which he presented at galas and fetes. However in 1953, Coronation year, he decided to launch his own circus show which with the support and participation of his growing family developed into Ross Bros Crown Circus.

The show opened for the season on 23 June with a programme which when seen by Edward Graves at the beginning of July ran as follows:-

- Introduction by ringmaster Steve McCourt.
- Honora with pony Duke ridden by Jackie the monkey. After a couple of simple tricks, the act was interrupted by clown Tommy (Tommy Ross). Once the monkey had left the ring, Tommy directed Duke in a liberty routine which included pirouettes, directional changes and forefeet on a pedestal.
- The Local Acrobats presented by clowns Tommy and Little Derrick (Derrick Ross) with son Michael as one of the volunteers.

- Steve McCourt dressed as a cowboy, with a display of whip cracking and rope spinning in which he was joined by Thomas and Kevin Ross.

- Honora with her dog revue.
- Arco with his strongman act which included lifting a 160lb barbell above his head with one hand; lifting the same barbell by his teeth whilst performing a handstand; bending a six-inch nail with his hands; lying on his back, balancing the barbell on one foot and playing a mandolin; and finally lifting eight men sitting on a board using his feet.

- Short interval.
- Tommy Ross with his 'psychic' pony Lucky in a routine which was a mixture of 'educated' and liberty tricks including Tommy and the pony going to bed together.

- The Rozanes on the low wire, the setting of the wire being covered by Tommy Ross attempting to walk a rope stretched between two chairs. The Rozanes consisted of Anthony Ross and one of his brothers whom Edward Graves failed to name. At the time of his visit Anthony was out of the act due to injury, leaving the un-named brother to perform alone.

- Some young girls were invited into the ring and given lighted candles. Each in turn, was instructed to try and set light to a large fold of newspaper attached to the back of Little Derrick who twisted and turned in an attempt to stop the paper catching alight. The paper looked a bit like giant butterfly wings, the fun ending when the paper eventually caught fire!

- Tommy Ross with the 'You can't play here' gag, the instrument in question being a bugle.

- The above act covered the setting of the revolving ladder for the act of Ross and Ross, this being Tommy Ross and his son Thomas. The act ended with the ladder revolving at great speed with one side suddenly breaking away, depositing Tommy Ross in the lap of a member of the audience.

After the show pony rides, run by the Ross family, were available to the children, this taking place on a track outside the big top. The accident to Anthony Ross meant that the show's trapeze act was missing from the performance seen by Edward Graves. Due to other commitments Edward Graves also missed the contribution of Clara Paulo to the show. Carla was the daughter of the late Harry Paulo and lived

Ross Brothers Circus 1958



with her mother in Morecambe. After work she would travel to Heysham Head to take part in the circus, although I have been unable to find out what her contribution was.

The circus gave two performances a day at 3.15pm and 7.00pm with entrance to the show included in the general admission to Heysham Head which was still two shillings for adults and one shilling for children. The weekly local paper had a column headed 'Next Week's Shows' in which it described the shows in Morecambe for the coming week. When mentioning the circus at Heysham Head it regularly stated "The circus is showing on weekdays only and has daring bareback riders; side-splitting clowns and thrilling trapeze artistes". I have no idea where the daring bareback riders came from, they certainly weren't in the show seen by Edward Graves or mentioned in the printed programme. Heysham Head own advertisement in the paper makes no mention of weekdays only which I assume means Monday to Friday. Circus performances were never given on Sunday but up to now they were always given on Saturday. I really can't believe that performances were not given on Saturdays, and the mention of weekdays only is either an error or an attempt to indicate that there were no shows on Sunday. Interestingly the same advertisement never names the circus, it just says Grand Circus. The circus closed on Saturday 4 October. However, for the last three weeks of the season shows were only given at 3.15pm.

1959: Ross Bros Crown Circus Returns

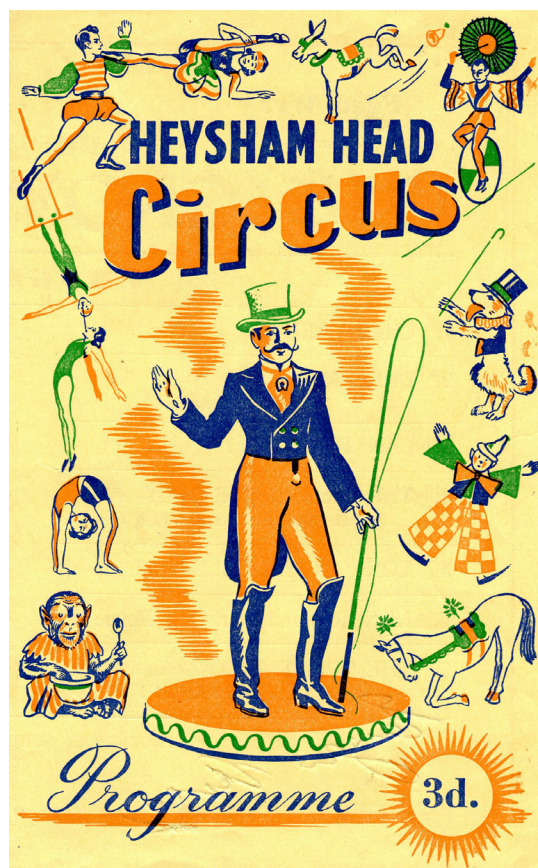
The circus season started on Monday 19 May, several weeks earlier than last year. Two shows were given daily except Sundays at 3.15pm and 7.00pm, the season finishing sometime in September. Tommy Ross had also booked in more non-family acts compared to the previous season. These included Enrico and Paula plus clowns Tickey and Tommy Bailey.

Tommy Ross showed Lucky the educated pony, whilst his wife Honora again presented her dog revue. Clown Tickey also had a dog act into which he introduced bits of comedy including a naughty dog which got shot and stayed dead until the word ambulance was mentioned. The dogs took part in a steeplechase and played football with a balloon.

Enrico and Paula contributed two acts. The first was a roller balancing act, the roller tricks included juggling; a hand stand; a hand stand with the hands on roller skates during which Enrico picked up a handkerchief in his mouth; and a two high stand juggling hoops at the same time. As The Yotaks, they presented a brisk routine of carpet tumbling and lifts during which they would occasionally be joined by Malita the youngest daughter of Tommy and Honora.

The show's main clown was of course Tommy Ross in which task he was assisted by Tommy Bailey and white face clown Tickey. Tommy Bailey had the dubious honour of being the individual who the children were invited to try and set alight and so win a prize. Tommy Ross closed the show with his revolving ladder act in which he was joined by his son Thomas (Tommy Ross Jnr).

Thomas Ross and Pauline presented a double low wire act, each working on their own separate



This programme cover design was used until 1961

wire set side by side. To begin with they executed dance steps simultaneously before performing individually. Pauline demonstrated her ability to remove a handkerchief from her ankle after which Thomas danced along the wire, sat and lay down on it before kneeling on one knee. Pauline followed up with a squatting shuffle along the wire before passing a small hoop back and forth over her body. Both walked with their feet inside a wheel rim; Pauline executed a stand 'en pointe'; Thomas put on a pair of heavy clogs and passed a hoop over his body. Both end by springing off the wire on to the ground. The act was billed as Rozane and Carmelia, Spanish Rhapsody on the Silver Thread, with Thomas Ross as Rozane and Pauline as Carmelia.

As well as partnering Thomas Ross, Pauline joined forces with someone called Ricardo in a display of knife throwing with Pauline standing in front of the board to be outlined by knives as well as holding lighted tapers in her hands and mouth which were severed by Ricardo's knives. The act closed with Ricardo throwing the knives whilst blindfolded and then surrounding Pauline with flaming knives.

Edward Graves's review listed George Fay as ringmaster. He also presented his act of fantail pigeons and a jackdaw, the latter being the clown of the group. The three pigeons, called Daz, Omo and Persil, climbed a ladder; walked along a rope; rode on a seesaw; walked a ball; and pivoted on hoops. The jackdaw's speciality was to knock back with its beak balls tossed to it by George. At this stage in his circus career George still had a day job working in menswear and so his appearances at Heysham were restricted to holidays and time away from work. In George's absence the role of ringmaster was undertaken by Tommy Ross Jnr.

UK CIRCUS REPORTS

A Christmas Circus Fairytale

Jacksons Lane Performing Arts Centre
Highgate, London

17 December 2021 to 2 January 2022

Report by David Davis

Photograph by Steve Gregson

A Christmas Circus Fairytale was the festive family offering at Jacksons Lane Performing Arts Centre. The show, directed by Kaveh Ralnama, revolved around the introduction of various characters from children's fairytales who each performed a circus act. Thus we met Sleeping Beauty (Rosie Rowlands) on the aerial silks who also sang whilst performing her routine; Prince Charming from Cinderella (Jaide Annalise) on the Cyr wheel; Little Red Riding Hood (Vee Smith) on the trapeze and the Sugar Plum Fairy (Rosie Rowlands again) on the aerial hoop. We also met the Prince (Ed Stephen) who was unable to sleep because of a pea beneath his many mattresses. I know the original fairytale involved a Princess but as we were informed no self-respecting Princess would be that pathetic and as it turned out it wasn't a pea that kept the Prince awake but three juggling clubs. This subversion of the fairytale was one of a number of liberties taken with the various characters. Thus we learn that it wasn't the Prince's kiss that awoke

Sleeping Beauty but his halitosis and in any case he shouldn't have been kissing her without permission. Prince Charming didn't fancy Cinderella, only himself and Red Riding Hood was never afraid of the wolf because she knew how to handle herself.

This information was imparted by Jessica Andrade in the role of storyteller/Fairy Queen. There was also a running gag between the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Fairy Queen with the latter trying to prevent the former from appearing in the show as she wasn't in the original script. At the end of each act the storyteller rehearsed the audience in a short dance/series of actions reflecting the character we had just seen. These were put together into one sequence for the finale when the characters returned to say their goodbyes.

This was an enjoyable performance which had enough in it to appeal to both children and adults. My only criticism would be that at just over 45 minutes the show was a bit on the short side. I fully appreciate that as two retired adults without accompanying children, my wife and I were not the target audience. However the children sitting round us all seemed enthralled by what was happening on the stage and I felt their attention would have been maintained for at least one more act. However, with or without an extra act, this was an entertaining show which successfully combined the disciplines of the theatre and the circus.

Rosie Rowlands



Circus Funtasia

Sanders Garden Centre

December 2021

Report and photograph by Andy Payne

Circus Funtasia returned to Sanders Garden Centre in Somerset from December 10 until January 2 where its new big top made its debut for the Christmas season. This year the show also had a second unit in Manchester as part of the indoor Winter Wonderland event.

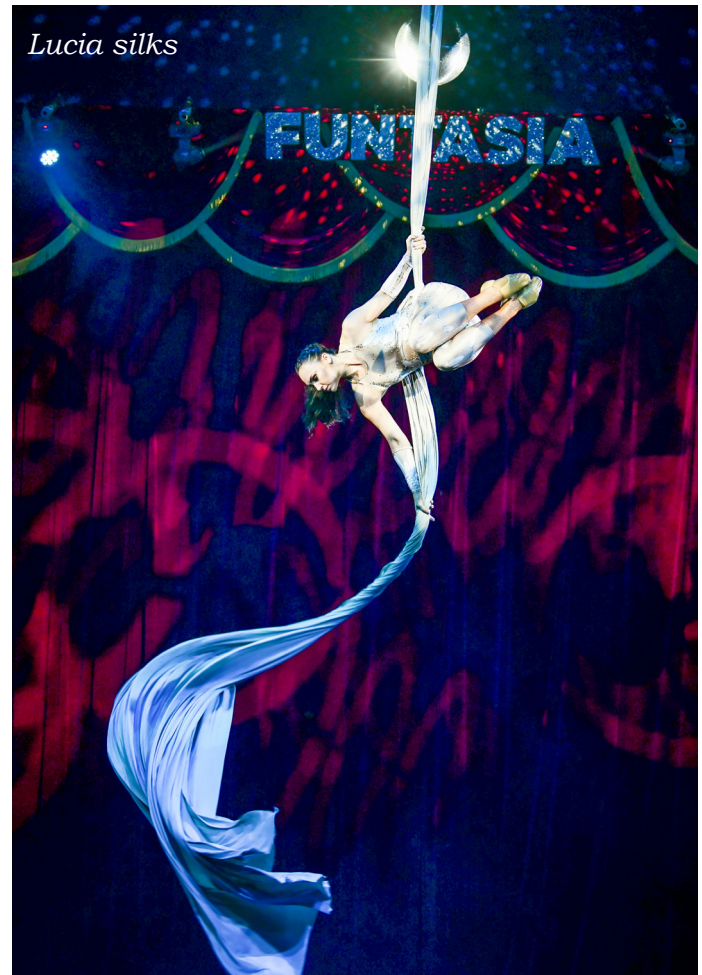
The show began with Geek character Emilion Delbosq 'Driving Home for Christmas' with his Christmas present and a series of well-known Christmas songs. He donned some antlers and a red nose as he showed off his dance moves and was joined by his son Lewis as an elf with a sack of presents. They were soon joined by the rest of the cast to fill the ring with red sequined Santa costumes and candy canes as Emilion juggled clubs with his sister Germaine and Lewis showed off his promising skills on the rola rola.

At the bottom of the sack of presents Emilion found a fairy wand which 'froze' all the cast into statues. Luckily Fairy Rosey appeared to release them from the spell before taking to the air for her skywalk presentation. After standing on Emilion's shoulders to try to reach it she climbed her rope with a fast wrist spin on the way up. From there she hung upside down for her 'skywalk' as she negotiated a set of loops using her feet until she reached the other side where she performed a fast neck spin as she was lowered back to the ground sprinkling glitter as she did so.

Roaring into the ring on her motorbike was foot juggling sensation Germaine Delbosq. Germaine began with a large cube then a cylinder and a combination of cylinder, juggling ring and juggling balls all at once. Her next tricks involved three and then four footballs cascaded between her hands and feet and then a four-pronged flaming prop spun until the fire was extinguished. Following Germaine into the ring was Emilion with his novel version of the popcorn gag.

Ringmistress Tracy Jones in her sparkly Santa outfit then asked Emilion to sweep the ring after tipping the contents of a dustbin onto the ring mat. This lead neatly into his clever routine as he filled a small dustbin with smoke from his Henry Hoover to make smoke rings filling the air. He then used a large bin to make impressive large smoke rings one of which he used to knock a polystyrene cup off a man's head with. Taking the action 'Into the Unknown' was Lucia on the cloudswing. She worked the cloudswing up to speed to perform a swinging crucifix pose turning into a forward layout, a drop to one knee and a swinging sitting sideways pose. Further tricks included a star shape pose and dramatic dive to ankles catch to close.

Lighting up the big top with his fire routine was human volcano Antonio Candela. After some large fire blows, Antonio performed some body burning and fire eating even holding one of the burning torches in his teeth. He also included the spinning of fire Poi very close to his face. He rounded off with the use of fire whips sending clouds of flame into the air with each crack. While the props were being set for



the next act Emilion had some fun with ringmistress Tracy as he attempted to sing but couldn't find his glasses. Once he had found them his singing was brought to an abrupt end as Tracy pinged him with a piece of elastic as his voice got higher and higher. Next came Indian Spirit with their rousing combination of drumming and bolas, given a Christmas touch with tall feather hats and braided jackets. They opened with Gaby and Germaine both drumming. Germaine then showed her skill with the bolas. Gaby then took over accompanied by drumming from Germaine as he spun two bolas faster and faster whipping his mane of hair all over his face. Germaine then joined him again for a display of fire bolas together and finally Gaby spun fire bolas in his teeth until the flames went out.

Emilion, Rosey and Tracy were then back for an exhausting version of the '12 Days of Christmas' with various props including a bra made to fit three and five toilet rolls. This also included a member of the audience in the ringside who was given a hat with three dangling baubles and a loudhailer who was asked to say the phrase 'three dangling baubles' through the loudhailer each time the trio got to that line of the song. Returning for her second routine this time on the silks was Lucia. She took to the air for a flying angle sequence and a tuck at the top of the silks while swirling the lower part of them. Further tricks included a swing from one side of the ring to the other with the silks wrapped around her and a roll down the whole length of the silks to close. With their Peaky Blinders themed fight scene were Emilion and Antonio but it was all done too quickly for the audience to take it all in so ringmistress Tracy asked them to repeat it but more

slowly. The duo went through it again as if in slow motion with priceless facial expressions and spitting of teeth before the bullet made its way slowly across the ring from Emilion's gun into Antonio's stomach. This was a great way to introduce the solo Wheel of Death of Ivan Mladenov again with a Peaky Blinders theme. He took off his overcoat to take to the wheel performing headfirst somersaults inside the wheel, a blindfolded walk around the outside and skipping. As the wheel spun faster and faster Ivan performed jumps high up into the cupola.

The finale saw the whole cast back in Santa hats for a for a farewell final line up high kicking dance routine with all taking their individual applause and then leaving the ring to just Tracy and Emilion who left arm in arm. Once again, this festive spectacular was produced by Alexandra Velikova in her unique style.

Gandey's Circus of Aladdin

Merry Hill Shopping Centre

December 2021

Report and Photograph by Andy Payne

With their Snow Storm Ice Spectacular up and running at the Trafford Centre in Manchester Gandey's opened their pantomime circus at Merry Hill on 26th November. The show was presented in a red and green striped big top previously used for a tour of the Chinese State Circus. The show was accompanied by live music from Alex Bozic on keyboards and saxophone and Ben Brannelly on drums.

The show began with Kakehole the clown finding a magic lamp and on rubbing it the Genie (Adam Melville) appeared to grant him his wish of having a circus show. This led into the opening production as they were joined on the stage by the six female dancers and juggler Sonny Caveagna and Mr Popol filling the stage with colour. At the end of the production Mr Popol introduced foot juggler Jessyka Jasters as the show's first act. Jessyka worked with carpets initially spinning one between her feet

and hands while changing position on her trinka. She then worked with one on her foot and one on her hand while in a splits pose. At the climax of the act Jessyka spun one on each foot and each hand and then a fiery prop until it was extinguished. The arrival of Princess Jasmine (Rosalia Morales) saw her entertained by Aladdin (Joseph Ferguson-Malik) with his sword cabinet. Mariska Gandey slipped inside as Aladdin passed 15 wooden spears through the cabinet. As they were pulled right through it the door was opened to reveal Mariska back again unscathed. Next it was time to meet Aladdin and Kakehole's mum Widow Twankey (Fred Broom) with her shopping trolley full of goodies and in true panto style she threw sweets and packets of crisps into the audience. Having discovered the magic lamp Aladdin rubbed it making the Genie appear for an energetic song and dance number with the girls to 'Friend Like Me'. The Popolinos were joined by Widow Twankey for their comedy routine with the plates as Kakehole helped his mum with washing her dishes. Mr Popol told them that he could catch an egg on a plate without breaking it and proved it. Kakehole then had a try with his attempt ending up with him breaking the plate and then getting an egg smashed on his head. The hilarious routine saw him smashing numerous plates and ending up being chased by Mr Popol as he grabbed the whole box of plates with the bottom falling out of it smashing even more plates. The return of Princess Jasmine saw Aladdin being crowned as Prince Ali leading into the 'Prince Ali' song once again sung by the Genie.

It was then on with the show as Mr Popol welcomed Alejandro Licea Pellon from Cuba with his outstanding rola rola presentation. Alejandro worked on a raised platform to skip while balancing on a single rola and perform a handstand on arm supports on a tower of three rolas. The climax of the act saw Alejandro balance on an incredible stack of five rolas while turning 360 degrees. An Arabian Nights production followed sung by Princess Jasmine accompanied by the six girl dancers in Arabian costume joined at the end by Widow Twankey in a similar but suitably outrageous belly dancer costume! Next it was time to visit the 'Old Bazaar in Cairo' with Kakehole as Sheikh Kake-Hole and Mr Popol with their pantomime camel which took a bow and produced a bottle of milk after Mr Popol had used its tail as a handle. To close the first half of the performance Princess Jasmine was reunited with Aladdin for their magic carpet ride. This stunning sequence featured the song 'A Whole New World' with beautiful live vocals from Rosalia as Jasmine and Joseph as Aladdin. As the carpet rose into the roof of the big top, the dancers brought illuminated inflatable horses onto the stage below. During the interval there was the chance for photos on stage with one of the shows cheeky monkey costume characters as well as a raffle to win a cuddly toy.

The second half opened with Widow Twankey, Aladdin, and Kakehole trapped in the creepy cave full of lasers and a scary spider which appeared every time the trio sang 'Incy Wincy Spider'. The spider firstly scared away Aladdin leaving Kakehole and Twankey with 'We'll have to sing it again then won't we woaaa'. Then Kakehole was scared away leaving the spider to face Twankey alone but that was enough to scare the spider away. All the way

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from India was the show's next circus act with Aditya Mhaskar on the Mallakhamb pole. This unusual acrobatic act saw Adi diving for the pole catching it with just his thighs or the back of his legs and headfirst drops from the top to the bottom. Further tricks included a lean back anchored by his legs and a balance on his stomach at the top of the pole. With the scene returning to the cave Mariska Gandeypresented her laser routine with all the dancers in fluorescent costumes introducing her as she made shapes and patterns with the lasers changing colours and filling the big top with beams. At the end of the routine Mariska was revealed from the darkness. The show continued with the aerial number on chains of Alejandro and Rachel from Cuba. With Alejandro upside down in the chains he held Rachel by her knee and then one foot and wrist and then just her ankle. The highlight of the routine saw him holding her by one hand suspended by her hair as she performed a fast spin under green strobing lights.

Back down on the stage Sonny Caveagna presented his high-speed juggling act assisted by partner Jessyka. He opened juggling three clubs using the whole stage sometimes juggling behind his back and under his legs and then in a back bend. He then changed from clubs to balls to juggle a total of seven balls high in the air. He concluded by juggling five clubs and fluorescent rings and then three clubs at great speed going faster and faster. It was then time for the Popolinos musical entrée with Mr Popol playing 'It's Not Unusual' on the trumpet while Kakehole interrupted him by banging his drum. This led into a version of the 'You Can't Play Here' routine with Kakehole repeatedly told off until Mr Popol gave in, and they played 'When the Saints Go Marching

In' together. On the return of Princess Jasmine, she discovered that the magic lamp was hidden out of reach but she had a solution of how to get it back. She jumped onto her rolling globe and made her way up the three inclined ramps to retrieve it. With the lamp safely back Aladdin could marry the Princess and the Christmas celebrations could go ahead with a lavish finale featuring all the dancers in sumptuous feather costumes joined by the rest of the cast to say goodbye as the audience clapped along to 'I Wish It Could Be Christmas Everyday' under a blizzard of artificial snow. This was a superb fun show full of traditional pantomime, top class circus acts and great music and comedy.

Circus Hassani Christmas Circus

Tulley's Farm

November and December 2021

Report and photograph by Andy Payne

After a busy period presenting the Circus of Horrors under their big top for the Shocktober Fest event, Circus Hassani converted the interior to a cosy festive setting with festoon lights, Christmas trees and red velvet drapes. The show began at the end of November with performances just at weekends, then shows up to eight times a day in the lead up to Christmas. The show was produced by Alex Morley with the superb lighting design by Noel Wainman.

It opened with all the cast on stage celebrating around a Christmas table with Clown Fips the Christmas Elf (Jan Erik Brenner) with a turkey, Ruan Wood juggling with sprouts and Ismail performing handstands on a tower of chairs on the table as



Fips and his Lion

Jennie Legat narrated a Christmas poem. As he came down from the tower of chairs Ismail presented Fips with a Christmas present from under the table. Fips eagerly tore off the wrapping paper to reveal a tiny bicycle which he managed to ride around the stage to the delight of the audience. Next up was another present delivered in a large red and yellow painted wooden box. Fips and Ruan looked inside to find some socks and a bra and then a rag doll (Suzy-Jo Snee). Ruan lifted the doll out over his shoulder swinging her round and placing her on the top of the box to manipulate her legs and arms in various directions before revealing Suzy-Jo from within. The stunning rag doll costume was made by Mina Hassani. In another stunning costume and cape made by Mina was Lucy Fraser for her routine on the illuminated aerial moon. As she rose into the air to the Mecano song 'Hijo De La Luna' Lucy discarded the cape to perform a shoulder balance, waist balance and a one knee hang. To close Lucy performed a neck spin in a loop from the bottom of the hoop. As she returned to the stage she was greeted by Fips who presented her with a red rose. Fips remained on stage with his large cuddly lion which he attempted to make jump through a hoop. The stubborn lion wouldn't co-operate so Fips recruited Ben, one of the ring staff who gave him a lion hat, but Ben turned it around making Fips jump through the hoop with a crack of his whip.

Taking to the stage next was Ruan Wood with his hat juggling number. He tossed a hat from his back up onto his head and then balanced it on his forehead and then juggled with three hats on and off his head making use of the whole stage. To round off he juggled with four hats and then five fluorescent rings under UV light. This brought the show towards its finale as Jennie Legat returned for her silks routine high in the roof of the big top. She

performed a flying sequence and crucifix as the rest of the cast returned to the stage below her. At the end of the routine, she performed a roll down the silks as 'snow' fell from the roof of the big top in a magical scene. This ended a super festive show with a good range of aerial and ground acts presented in a warm and cosy big top with every attention to detail in the decoration, costumes and production.

Hippodrome Christmas Spectacular Circus and Water Show

Great Yarmouth

11 December 2021 to 9 January 2022

Report by Don Stacey

Photograph courtesy of the Hippodrome Circus

Despite the many problems posed for British circuses by the ongoing Covid pandemic, the Hippodrome Circus provided its audiences with its four annual productions in 2021 staging *Pirates Live!* at Easter; its summer circus from July to September; the Halloween Spooktacular in October and its winter Christmas Spectacular Circus and Water show from 11 December 2021 to 9 January 2022. Unfortunately, like last year, the management had to omit the 30-strong teams of child dancers and singers from Dance Estelle, a staple of the Christmas spectacles since their inception.

As usual, the Hippodrome was dressed in all its seasonal finery and the show was a combination of the Jay family's talents in production and presentation led by Peter and Christine Jay, their sons Ben and Jack, and Estelle Clifton. In their hands success is assured for each show they bring to the Hippodrome. As has become customary, a fifth generation of Jays, in the form of Billy Jay, was evident in the show as he joined Brandon MacPherson in providing accompaniment to the recorded music. Like last year, the Jays gave circus fans unable to attend the New Year's Eve special performance the chance to see it on the internet, streaming a specially recorded version from Christmas Eve with the added delight of the New Year's Eve countdown and Christmas party effects recorded last year. I chose to watch it on the Italian Circus Fans' website to which the only drawback was some rather ludicrously bad captioning of dialogue and acts' names. However it did mean that a much wider audience was able to enjoy the seasonal performance, as the building enters its 119th year.

As always Jack Jay was the bearded host, suave and fully in control no matter what may occur during the performance. He makes the perfect foil to the show's comic, Ben Langley, whose impish humour has been seen here now for three consecutive Christmas shows. He is essentially a pantomime and summer show comedian rather than a circus clown, his circus talents running to his three club juggling and the episode inside a huge inflatable balloon which was reprised from last year. He also had a Christmas sing-song with Jack on the cazoo and repeated the cards with words on them routine which originally made his name on television. This year's production hinged upon the story of *The Star Catcher*, played by Daniel Rosenfeldt who manipulated illuminated globes at various points in the show, his appearances

leading up to the mysterious appearance of a large number of illuminated balls apparently being juggled with ease by the artiste. In one appearance he also displayed some close-up card wizardry which I think is a first for a circus in this building. Former owners Billy Russell and Ben Dean had a penchant for magic and the Jay family have shown a similar liking for magic and illusion but I don't think I ever saw close-up card work in the Hippodrome before.

As usual the attractive eight female dancers and swimmers linked the acts and were choreographed by Estelle Clifton both on terra firma and in the traditional water finale. The remaining acts consisted of some new and some returning performers. The returnees were the Arctic Ensemble from Finland who worked here in 2019, their only appearance in Britain. This time they comprised a smaller group of two men and three women. For their first number they showed their slick aerial casting routine, appearing right after the opening group ensemble spot. Later, Ada Forsberg reprised her lovely trapeze Washington routine and another of the women disported herself brilliantly on the aerial hoop in the water finale. Amas Lintusaari reprised his Cyr Wheel speciality from the summer 2019 programme and Orfeo and Linna displayed an intriguing combination of aerial pole acrobatics with adagio work on the ground.

Making his British performing debut was the young juggler Sage Macaggi, an Italian-Spanish performer, with a display of hat juggling utilising three to six bowler hats. For the big aerial number, the Jays presented the Flying Comets, a flying trapeze act from Great Britain, a distinct rarity, which had made its

debut with Russell's Circus last summer. Comprising three women fliers and a male catcher, they presented a simple but effective routine which augurs well for their future. This was a most enjoyable show which was held together by host Jack Jay and the Suffolk-based comedian Ben Langley who has built up a formidable fan-base in Norfolk.

Planet Circus

Lincoln County Showground

December 2021 to January 2022

Report and Photograph by Andrew Lewis

With only a few weeks off after their long tenting season, Planet Circus rolled into the Lincoln County Showground for the venues very first Christmas circus. Presented under their red and white large two pole big top, complete with its new fitted bench seating which extends all around the tent and right down to the ringside, the performance was backed by recorded music and had an LED lighting rig and additional laser effects.

Ringmistress for the Christmas season was Toni Snee who introduced the acts. Trio OMG presented their Wheel of Death act which on this occasion comprised Ronaldo Estefans and Mario Malevolti who were joined in the wheel by Emelia Pavlov. The routine included all the usual tricks including jumps inside the wheel and skipping. Both Ronaldo and Mario with blindfold walks and Mario with jumps on the outside. Emelia also went in the wheel and during the forthcoming season plans to do more tricks. Clown Mikey aka Maicol Valev from Bulgaria appeared with the first of three spots. Mikey's attempts at photographing members of the audience were thwarted by a crying baby in the pram. Next was Vlasta Faltyny with her new hula hoop act, very nicely presented and featuring Vlasta spinning one, two and four hoops, then four hoops around her body with two in one hand and another hoop with the other hand. To finish, Vlasta spun around twenty hoops. From Hungary comes Bori Picard with her attractive aerial cube act. Clown Mikey returned this time to clean the ring but finds a microphone and stand, then sings 'Save your Love' the song made famous by Rene and Renato and Mikey plays both parts to sing the song. Ronaldo Estefans returns, this time with his bounce juggling routine using a small pedestal with a set of steps. The routine includes Ronaldo juggling with LED balls, up to seven small white balls and then finishing with fire clubs. Krisztian Krizsa then takes the action back into the heights of the big top with his swinging vertical pole act. Jackie Louise followed with another aerial number, this being her aerial loops act set to Phantom of the Opera music, with various drops to be caught by her feet and Jackie in a splits position. Closing the first half with their classy juggling routine was the Faltyny Family with Vlasta, Vanessa, Adriana and young Emil. With excellent costuming and good music, this was a cracking troupe juggling act, finishing with Emil catching rings thrown to him fast by the other three. The Faltyny Family are now with Circus Vargas in the USA.

The second half opened with the Forest Fairy themed tight wire act from Bori Picard, another nicely





presented act with Bori jumping through a hoop, a splits on the wire and walking across the wire en-pointe. From Circus Mondao comes Cinzia Timmis with her aerial bubble number, with various hangs and poses both within and from the prop. Clown Mikey appeared for his last spot and depending on audience numbers it was either a balloon gag or a longer musical spot with three male volunteers and three cowbells around their waists. Krisztian Krizsa returns with his aerial straps routine. Vanessa Faltyny presents her solo contortion act which also sees Vanessa spin cloths on her foot. The talking point with Planet has always been the Globe of Death act and this winter there were only two riders featured, these being Ronaldo Estefans and Abraham Medina. The Globe act was followed by the FMX Riders, these being Brody Knibbs and Henrique Balestrim with some spectacular flights up the ramp and over the Globe on their motorbikes and including one with a full somersault. The Finale brought back all the artistes.

As can be seen this was quite a full and varied programme and a good one at that. Planet Circus is scheduled to open for their 2022 tenting season as usual at Cleethorpes 11 to 20 February, followed by Doncaster and Barnsley.

Santus Circus Cirque de Noel

Hewitt's Farm, Orpington, Kent

December 2021

Report and Photograph by Andy Payne

Santus Circus opened their 2021 Christmas season at Orpington on 16 December. The show used the large white big top with a new matching foyer tent decorated inside for Christmas. The show featured recorded music with additional live drumming throughout from Roger Santus.

To open the show ringmaster Ernest Santus welcomed in the Santus showgirls with a short dance to the Mariah Carey hit 'All I want for Christmas'

with parcels placed under the Christmas tree. This introduced the first act of Miss Iona with her hula hoops. Iona worked with a single hoop then two and then four around her arms in a back bend. Further tricks included four hoops spun around her waist and then split over her whole body as she turned 360 degrees. Keeping with the hula hoop theme clown Lucien Santus showed his own hooping skills with a normal size hoop and then a giant hoop after cheekily asking ringmaster Ernest for £20.

Following Lucien into the ring was Santus favourite Aggi with his first appearance as Mr Slinky. Miss Jennifer from Portugal was next working on a raised platform with her laser presentation. She produced a green laser beam from the table and appeared to split it to send beams all over the big top. As the tempo of the music increased, the number of beams increased with more colours filling the big top with lines and shapes.

High on the roof of the big top on the aerial cube were the Araque Sisters from Spain. They opened with both in a waist balance on the corners of the cube then a layout across the top of the cube. The routine also included solo work with an ankle hang by Ellie-Mae and a knee hang by Macy. At the climax of the routine the sisters both took to the cube with Macy draped across the cube and Ellie-Mae suspended below for a fast spin showering glitter under strobing lights. Clown Lucien was then back for a short run in with a large net on a pole and a football which he gave to members of the audience to throw into the net with varying degrees of success!

With his high-speed diabolo routine was Ross Walters assisted by Chloe Jayne. Ross opened with a single diabolo worked around his thigh and then tossed it into the air to catch it on the string around his neck. Ross then spun the diabolo with just one hand before swapping to illuminated diabolos to toss them high into the air and catch and spin them on the same string. Aggi closed the first half of the show as Spiderman for his aerial straps routine. He performed a flying sequence, horizontal layout and

splits pose across the straps. The final trick saw him perform a roll up the straps with them round his upper arms into a crucifix pose.

Opening the second half was Lucien Santus on the bouncing rope assisted by sister Ruby. After attempting to reach the rope jumping from a trampette he walked a rope diagonally up to it. Once on the rope his tricks included walking across the rope, bouncing from sitting to standing and dancing midway across. He also spun a hula hoop and juggled with rings before his final trick of jumping over the fire held aloft by Ruby to land back on the rope.

Back for her second appearance was Miss Iona this time high in the air on the aerial hoop in a graceful and elegant routine which featured a one hand one knee hang, a back balance, shoulder balance and an upside-down splits pose.

With their crossbow presentation from Portugal were Duo Silva (Sergio and Jennifer) with both taking turns to fire the crossbows. First Sergio fired at two balloons held by Jennifer and then she burst a balloon held in Sergio's mouth. Sergio then fired a crossbow over his shoulder just by looking in a mirror. The highlight of the act saw Jennifer blindfolded as she fired one crossbow which sets off a series of five others to fire an arrow into an apple above Sergio's head.

Lucien was then back for his 'You can't play here' type entrée as he showed off his breakdancing skills to the annoyance of the ringmaster. Aggi then returned with a vertical pole presentation. In traditional Mongolian costume and fur jacket, Aggi began with a dance with a spinning staff before climbing the pole to perform a sit at the top and a drop to catch the pole with his legs. He also performed a flag standout pose and a back bend anchored by just his knees. Towards the end of the number, he swung down from the top of the pole in a dental hold and was then lifted spinning into the air.

Back down in the ring was Ruby Santus from Switzerland with her foot juggling number which included the manipulation of different cylinders including balancing one on its end on one foot. She also worked with footballs juggled between her hands and feet and a flaming four-pronged prop which she spun until the fire was extinguished.

Next, from the UK with her hair hanging number was Chloe Jayne. Lifted into the air she performed turns and poses including pulling one leg behind her and sitting cross legged. After manipulating some fans, she rose into the air several times. Before returning to the ring for some body burning and fire eating holding one of the fire wands in her teeth. The highlight of the routine saw Chloe blowing huge balls of fire right in the roof of the big top with a spiralling spin to close.

While the props were set for the final act Lucien Santus returned to walk around the big top with his bucket and spray gun which delighted the youngsters in the audience who wanted to get wet. Closing the show with his solo Wheel of Death was Sergio Silva from Portugal. Working to infectious Latin music Sergio worked the wheel up to speed to then perform jumps and a laying position inside the wheel. Halfway through the routine he took to the outside of the wheel to walk around it blindfolded and then walked it without the blindfold as it spun faster and faster finally jumping to the ground from it as it was still



spinning. This brought the show up to finale time with ringmaster Ernest welcoming back all the cast one by one for a well-deserved round of applause to say goodbye and wish everyone a 'Joyeux Noel'.

Gandey's Snow Storm

Trafford Centre Manchester

November 2021

Report and Photograph by Andy Payne

Following a busy season of their Halloween Spooktacular at the Trafford Centre the ring had been removed and replaced with an ice rink ready to open on November 13 for Snow Storm, a brand-new show which was part of the Trafford Centre Christmas event Tinsel Town. The show featured a specially assembled cast of 16 ice skaters from all over the world along with circus acts performed on and above a specially installed ice rink with a backlit mountain set.

The show began with all the skaters in winter coats skating to the 'Skater's Waltz' followed by a dramatic count down from 10 to 1 with the music changed to a version of 'Winter Wonderland'. All the skaters re-appeared in red and white Santa costumes for a fast-moving skating number featuring drape lifts and a line-up of 12 skaters. The show continued with a ballet skating routine by eight female skaters each dressed in a tutu. They were then joined by four male skaters in Russian costume.

To 'A Million Dreams' from The Greatest Showman Amber Wimbledon was joined by partner Vladimir Arkhipov for a romantic routine including lifts and a back somersault by Amber over Vladimir's head. The climax of the routine saw Vladimir hold Amber



above his head in a one arm spin. This lead neatly into the Greatest Showman themed sequence with fast skating and spins under strobing lights by all of the skaters and a spin by one of the couples with the female skater held above his head. As the music changed to 'Come Alive' the skaters formed a line to introduce the aerial straps duo Aleksandr and Iryna from Ukraine.

Working to the Lewis Capaldi hit 'Someone You Loved' the couple rose into the air on the straps with Aleksandr in a wrist hold supporting Iryna between his knees. For the second trick Iryna performed splits across the straps with Aleksandr in a crucifix pose on another set of straps around Iryna's hips. They then changed the straps for bungee straps as Iryna wafted a pink scarf which Aleksandr collected with his feet as he bounced on the straps. Further tricks included Aleksandr wrapping the straps around his waist to perform a roll down. The first half of the show was brought to a close in a rousing style with all the skaters in blue and white costumes to the Mariah Carey hit 'All I want for Christmas' with a line-up of 13 skaters while the final female skater raced to catch them up to join the end of the line. With the music changing to 'Ice Ice Baby' the skaters were joined by four giant inflatable polar bears dancing at each side of the ice rink. The routine was brought to a close by all of the skaters joining to skate in a large circle. During the interval there was the opportunity for photos with one of the bears at the side of the ice rink.

The second half of the show began with a solo female skater performing to 'Walking in the Air' from The Snowman under a sparkling mirror ball. She was then joined by four other skaters with large illuminated inflatable horses which reared up at the back of the ice rink to introduce Hayley Gandey for her routine on the aerial rope. Hayley worked to the Coldplay hit 'Christmas Lights' with a drop to ankles catch and an ankle spin upside down in a loop with partner Franco as websitter. She also performed a standout with hands on hips and then a very fast wrist spin under strobing green lights to close before

sliding slowly headfirst back down the rope.

The next routine introduced all of the Snow Storm fairy tale princesses from Snow White to Rapunzel as they each tried to impress the Prince Charming (Vladimir Arkiphov). The Prince wasn't interested in any of them and ended up leaving with his male assistant (T J Kehoe). This left all the seven disappointed girls to perform to the Beyonce hit 'All the Single Ladies'. Two of the male skaters Konstantin Kalugin and Matt Grimsted followed with a comedy slosh on ice routine devised by Binky Beaumont with buckets and mops meaning that they and the audience got lots of water over them. Considering that the two skaters had not performed comedy before they did a superb job.

A romantic skate under blue lights by one of the skating couples was performed to Lindsey Stirling's 'Carol of the Bells' featuring lifts, a wrist spin, an overhead spinning lift and a dramatic 'headbanger' to close. In complete contrast the laser act which followed was introduced by six of the skaters in UV costumes with the lasers looking incredibly effective as they reflected on the ice with back lasers positioned amongst the mountain set. The full routine was performed by one of the skaters to the same programme as usually performed by Hayley Gandey on the touring circus show with green and multi-coloured lasers filling the big top and looking especially effective as they appeared to cut into the ice.

While the props were being set for the next act some of the male skaters appeared on the ice as clowns to 'Be a Clown' while others threw large balloons into the audience for them to throw back. The show continued with the Space wheel of The Gerlings featuring Carlos and Junior with jumps inside the wheel, a blindfolded walk around the outside skipping and jumps high into the cupola.

A short entr e with four of the male skaters with a large sleigh to 'Jingle Bells' came to an abrupt end as the sleigh crashed with sound effects of breaking glass and a voice over telling them 'Oh dear boys Father Christmas is going to be really really cross'

and that 'Father Christmas will never be in time for Christmas now'. With reindeer antler headbands the boys skated to 'Blue Christmas' until Franco dressed as Father Christmas roared up the inclined wire on his motorbike with presents hanging on the trapeze below it.

Franco remained above the ice rink which was filled with the male skaters in dinner suits and the girls in pink feathers and headdresses to 'I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day'. The sequence featured duo skating by two of the couples with all the circus performers being reintroduced as artificial snow blizzarded down from the roof of the big top. The final farewell to the audience then came from Amber.

This incredible feel-good festive show was devised and produced by Phillip Gandey with choreography by Daniel Donaldson Todd and Nicky Scott and lighting design by Jose Lorenzo.

Timmerman's Christmas Circus

Timmerman's Garden Centre, Woodborough,
Nottingham
December 2021

Report and photograph by Andrew Lewis

Rusty and Amanda Russell returned to this popular garden centre after a year's break due to the Covid crisis and this time brought with them their red and yellow two pole big top. The inside was well filled with tiered bench seating and chairs at ringside. With a smart ring entrance the show was backed by recorded music and a good lighting rig with LED and moving head lights. The sound and lighting were operated by Matt Cornelius. As this was a festive production the big top was well fitted out with Christmas decorations, garlands and plenty of lights all creating a very good impression and a proper festive atmosphere.

The show, staged by Amanda Russell and Alex Morley, featured a few bits from the tenting show but were new to visitors in this area of the country. It started with a produced opening featuring initially young William Russell, who was then joined by Alex and then the company. Various circus skills were displayed including some skipping from Flavius and juggling from Kevin. Ringmaster for the show was Rusty Russell. Matthew Ryan opened the hour long performance with his entertaining hula hoop number. He concluded the number with the fast spinning of around twenty hoops. Matthew returned a little later with his metal cube and sphere manipulation number, now including a rise into the air in the metal cube. In addition to spinning both cube and sphere around and up above his body and spinning the cube in the palm of his hand.

Nerina Ivasika presented the first aerial number this being on the chandelier, a good act including several hangs from the prop, a splits across it and a neck spin underneath. Alex Morley once again donned the motley to entertain and with Amanda Russell reprised the popular radio/dustbin gag, with some good laughs and equally good facial expressions. William Russell followed with a selection of costumed characters including Frosty the snowman, two gingerbread men and then Santa himself. Viktoria Murtinova then took the action back into the roof of the big top for her aerial hoop number which includes a back bend and a knee hang.

Kevin Takacs from Hungary was introduced as Prince Ali with an Aladdin style costume and music. Kevin demonstrated his juggling skills, with clubs, four white balls, up-to seven rings and finishing with fire clubs. Coco the Clown aka William Russell then entertained with a spot of snake charming. Amanda returned to present an illusion number with assistance from both Nerina and Viktoria. Three



The cast and company of the Timmerman's Christmas circus

CFA Events in 2022

It might be possible to hold CFA events in the year. If you would be interested in receiving details, please contact Steve Chapman:-
Email: SCCFANEWS@GMAIL.COM

number, together with a large polar bear character and everyone looked extremely smart. Overall, this was a very well put together festive production with a good running time length, some nicely presented acts and effective comedy. It was good to see the management also make the effort to make the setting look as festive as possible which added to the overall effect and experience.

Winter Wonderland

Hyde Park, London

19 November 2021 to 3 January 2022

Report by David Davis

Photographs by Piet-Hein Out

After an absence of one year due to the pandemic Winter Wonderland returned to Hyde Park in London with Zippos Circus and Cirque Berserk amongst its attractions. Both shows were presented three times daily in Martin Burton's Megadome, each show lasting 50 minutes.

Zippos Christmas Circus

Ringmaster Paul Winston welcomed the audience and introduced the traditional March of the Lights. This was followed by the five men and two women of The Romero Troupe from Cuba with their aerial casting act performed over a trampoline, the combined use of the two disciplines allowing the artistes to present a nice variety of tricks. The removal of the trampoline was covered by the clowns Phillip Walker and Raul Garcia (Mr N). Phillip commenced by knocking a balloon into the audience but was informed by Paul Winston that this wasn't allowed. To reinforce the point he got Raul to grab the balloon and burst

illusions were presented including the crystal cabinet with Viktoria being produced, then a small box illusion with Nerina going inside and finally a sub trunk illusion with Viktoria going inside. The trunk is locked and then rises into the air. When opened it was mysteriously empty. Viktoria then reappears from elsewhere in the big top. Clown Alex returns with Amanda and this time also Rusty for the Boxing Robot entrée, which went down really well and generated some good laughs, but in fairness it was done well. Nerina and Viktoria return to close the show with a double aerial silks number which looked well in this smaller big top, the final drop being particularly effective. The Finale saw all the artistes in the ring during the final part of the silks



it. This was repeated twice more, but on the third occasion the balloon was filled with water which went all over Raul. Such was the pace of the show and the size of the company that the two clowns had little further opportunity to showcase their talents, although in true Zippo style they did make a number of brief appearances to help introduce the various acts.

Football juggler Zhora Oganisian from Moscow entered juggling three 'Christmas puddings'. During his routine he juggled up to five footballs as well as balancing on a large football (a rolling globe) whilst juggling three and four footballs. Valentyn Lysakovsky and Sergii Malynivskyi from the Ukraine presented an impressive routine on the aerial pole. They alternated their tricks with those of Ross Travis on the fixed pole. Ross, who hails from the U.S.A., adopted a comic persona for his part of the act.

The BMX bicycle act of Denis and Anna involved Denis balancing his bike, on one and two wheels, on the arms and back of a park bench upon which Anna sat and over whom Denis jumped his bicycle. As well as being a willing obstacle for Denis to leap over, Anna also demonstrated her skills as an acrobatic break dancer. Stefan and Neli Nikolov, better known as Duo Stefaneli, were next with their dramatic routine on the aerial silks. This act was introduced by Neli and the show's three dancers wearing illuminated butterfly costumes. The three dancers, Sarah Howard, Kseniia Isaieva and Tetiana Lotiuk, made a number of other appearances throughout the show and, along with the clowns, played an important role in linking the acts.

A dance routine by four men and four women introduced the Three Merry Gentlemen (Tary Gergo Felix, Papp Tibor Geza and Gyarmathy Attila Gyula from Hungary) with a nicely choreographed acrobatic springboard routine which culminated in a triple somersault by the flier into the arms of his two colleagues. Zippos two huge dancing cuddly polar bears made a brief appearance before it was back into the air for Monduy Cabrera's exciting presentation on the cloud swing. It was then time for the finale with the company, accompanied by Father Christmas, returning to take their final bows.

Cirque Berserk

Since its inception Cirque Berserk has developed its own distinctive style which is reflected in its atmospheric lighting, moody music, non-stop action and a cast of other-worldly characters with their bizarre make-up. I am pleased to say that all the above ingredients were present in Cirque Berserk's latest offering which was entitled 'Regenerate'. The cast charged with transporting us to Berserkerland included some familiar favourites plus a few less familiar ones.

The Casablanca Kickers, three street acrobats from Morocco, made a number of short appearances throughout the show helping to ensure that the action never slowed. The Sifon Brothers presented their Wheel of Death number with Matias's high leaps producing shrieks of alarm. Paulo dos Santos was, as always, impressive on the aerial straps. He also made a number of other brief appearances which all helped contribute to the smooth running of the performance. Ebbe and Billy contributed a graceful hand-to-hand

balancing act whilst The Havana Troupe showed their expertise at springboard acrobatics. Gigi, from Mongolia, presented her routine on the aerial hoop which concluded with a toe hang. She also presented a routine on the aerial silks towards the end of the show. Ebbe returned with her elegant hula hoop presentation. Liina Aunola appeared at Winter Wonderland in 2019-20 and her cloud swing act had lost none of its impact and excitement especially at the finish when she leapt from the cloud swing to catch a vertically hanging rope. Martti Peltonen, also making a return visit, amazed the audience with his crossbow skills with everyone giving a huge sigh of relief when the final arrow safely pierced an apple above his head. Cirque Berserk without the Globe of Death is unthinkable and this year's show concluded with the four riders of the Lucius Team hurtling around the Globe which split into two with three riders in the top part and one in the lower section.

Incidentally both shows ended with the introduction of Eddie who we were informed sanitized the big top between each performance. With six shows each day Eddie was clearly a very busy man! Once again Martin Burton and his team have produced two contrasting but very enjoyable shows which greatly enhance the Winter Wonderland experience.



Denis and Anna

Wookey Hole Christmas Circus 2021

Report and Photograph by Andy Payne

The Christmas Circus at the Wookey Hole attraction in Somerset returned as part of their Winter Wonderland event. Shows were performed by the children of the resident circus school founded by Gerry Cottle.

There were shows twice a day either presented by Gerry's granddaughter Ellen or Georgina Clissold. The show began with all the youngsters on stage featuring hula hooping on rolling globes, skipping, unicycling and juggling with fire clubs plus aerial rope and three girls on one bicycle.

The show's first illusion saw presenter Georgina appear from an apparently empty stack of boxes to welcome everyone to the show. Then it was on with the show with the X Factor illusion as one of the girls disappeared inside an X shaped box through which metal triangles were passed and then it was opened to reveal that she had gone. Once they were put back together, she reappeared unscathed. The show continued with an effective juggling number with fluorescent rings, performed under UV light with all the cast juggling and then two girls juggling six clubs between them.

Up in the roof of the theatre, five girls performed simultaneously on the aerial silks with splits across the silks, a back balance and a roll down to close forming a group pose once they were back on the floor.

The next illusion 'The Eye of the Needle' featured Millie-Rose the young daughter of Willie Ramsay and Lesley Gardener who train the youngsters at the circus school. It saw Millie climb into one end of a metal barrel with a central 'block' dividing the barrel. Miraculously Millie was transported from one side to the other with the 'block' still in place. This was followed by the group unicycling number featuring

the girls working in pairs and trios with the others ducking under their outstretched arms. Also included were groups of four joined together, a line of three with girls on their shoulders and then work on giraffe unicycles. As four girls rode the giraffe unicycles, they lifted up three others from the ground between them to form a circle. The next part of the show featured some comedy acrobatics and vaulting.

Performing the 'Substitution Trunk' routine using the original trunk used by Gerry and Betty Cottle in the early days of Cottle and Austen's Circus in the 1970's were Georgina and one of the girls. With the girl handcuffed and placed inside a bag in the trunk it was tied with rope as Georgina stood on top with some of the other girls briefly covering it with a drape screen. As the screen was dropped the girl was on the top and after removing the ropes and unlocking the trunk Georgina was revealed from inside.

The next group number was on roller skates with the girls skating in pairs, jumping over a hurdle between two chairs and performing aeroplane spins. A short illusion produced one of the girls from an apparently empty armchair to take her place up in the air for a superb routine on the swinging trapeze. After working the trapeze up to speed, she performed a drop to catch the bar with her hands and then a waist balance. The final illusion of the show was the 'Million Dollar Mystery' with a cabinet towards the rear of the stage producing the whole cast one by one with the cabinet spun between each appearing to show it empty.

With all the girls on stage it was finale time as the large inflatable Santa rose high into the roof of the theatre. This concluded a very entertaining show featuring a wide range of circus skills of which Gerry would have been very proud. It is fantastic to see that the circus school is still thriving thanks to the hard work of the family keeping the tradition alive as Gerry would have wanted.



CIRCUS NEWS

By Don Stacey

Funeral of Dickie Chipperfield

By Jamie Clubb

The funeral for Dickie Chipperfield was held on 19 January 2022. The day began at Heythrop, the former Chipperfield circus winter quarters since April 1959, where Dickie's coffin was displayed inside the location of where he had trained all his acts. Half his old ring cage was erected with pedestals in place. The cage was backed by a ring fence, adorned with lights and decorated with framed posters of Chipperfield's Circus that prominently showcased Dickie's presence. His son, Graham, led this private ceremony with a showing of Dickie's lion act from one of the Thames Television productions. After a final round of applause for the recorded performance, Graham unveiled a plaque that listed most of the great trainers and presenters who had worked in the old practice venue.

The coffin was then transported to the traditional Chipperfield family church, St Giles, for the service, with his resting place being in the extended graveyard in Great Wishford next to his parents' grave. Extra circus touches included laying the coffin atop big cat pedestals during the church service and Alex Lacey's tying of a piece of bailing string on the coffin handle. Dickie's pallbearers were all wild animal trainers – Thomas Chipperfield, Jim Clubb, Emile Smith, Alex Lacey, Martin Lacey and Graham – led in by Richard. The service was conducted by Reverend Maggie Metcalfe who, in addition to leading prayers and hymns, provided brief details on Dickie's life. Chris Barltrop, dressed in full ringmaster costume, read Psalm 23. Graham delivered a very well-received eulogy/tribute. Representatives from various circus families, including Roberts, Gruss, Fossett, Krone and, of course, Chipperfields were in attendance as well as circus directors and friends.

Circus Ring of Fame

The annual induction ceremony for the Circus Ring of Fame in Sarasota, Florida took place on 5 February. For the first time, the ceremony was held in the big top of the Circus Sarasota instead of outdoors in St. Armands Circle, the move allowing the occasion to be accompanied by better professional lighting and sound. The commemorative plaques will, as always, be placed in St. Armands Circle. The 2022 awards went to aerialist Tina Winn, a seventh generation performer who works at up to 130 feet in the air; Nik Wallenda, high-wire walker and now owner of the Big Apple Circus; Missouri-based circus producer George Carden; Willie Edelman, 1941 National YMCA Ring Champion and former Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey trapeze artiste who for over 50 years has volunteered as a trainer at the local Sailor Circus; the Richter and Casselly circus families from Hungary and Germany; and The Advanced Professionals who are responsible for the business of the annual show.

Pantomime Capers

Clown **Tweedy**, a long established hit with Giffords Circus, was in the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk at the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham from 26 November 2021 to 9 January 2022. This was his 10th pantomime at the theatre. The **Popolinos Clowns** (Kriss Freear and Paul Carpenter) were in Gandey's Circus of Aladdin. A mixture of pantomime and circus, it was staged by the Gandey World Class Productions from 26 November 2021 to 3 January 2022 at Merry Hill Shopping Centre, Birmingham. **Johnny Mac**, resident comic in the summer, Easter and Halloween shows at the Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth spent the winter season in the pantomime Cinderella at the King's Theatre, Glasgow. The show ran from 27 November 2021 to 2 January 2022. **Clive Webb and Danny Adams along with Mick Potts** have been appearing in the pantomime Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle upon Tyne. It was announced some time ago that they have already been rebooked for the 2022/23 winter season. Danny and Mick are also working on the fourth series of their sketch show for CBBC television. Dates for their 2022 Cirque du Hilarious show, billed as 'Accident, Accident', have been announced on the Internet.

News from Blackpool

Recent surveys of the ceiling of Blackpool Tower Circus found that it was in need of urgent repairs if the circus was to continue in 2022. As a consequence, there was no winter panto-circus this Christmas as work began on restoring the ceiling which had been stabilised temporarily in 2020 but since which further deterioration had occurred. The estimated cost of repairs is £643,628 which will be paid by Blackpool Council borrowing the money with annual repayments over 25 years, the total cost coming to just over £1 million. This follows a series of 'ceiling woes' for Blackpool Council in recent years with the Grade II listed Winter Gardens Empress Ballroom being restored at a cost of £75,000; a refurbishment of the Tower Ballroom costing £1.1 million earlier in 2021; repairs to the council chamber ceilings in the Grade II listed Town Hall costing £13,000; and with repairs needed to the roof of the Grade II listed Central Library estimated to cost £290,000.

Blackpool's famous Illuminations which usually run to the first weekend of November and signal the end of the season were extended to 3 January 2022 due to the renewed tourist interest in the town from staycations. The extension seems to have been a success with increased income from council car parking fees, donations to the Illuminations and increased spending in the town. It is anticipated a further cash injection of £4.5 million will be made for the Illuminations this year. Due to people taking their holidays at home, Blackpool in 2021 enjoyed a bumper season, although this will not necessarily be repeated once foreign travel returns to normal.

As reported in the last King Pole the proposed new 'Showtime!' museum which will tell the history of Blackpool and the resort's role in the British entertainment scene including the circus is due to open in April 2023. The project is funded by generous sums from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Coastal Communities Fund, the Northern Cultural Fund, the Lancashire Economic Partnership Growth Deal and Blackpool Council. However, concern has been raised at the cost of renting the site for the museum which will be housed on the first floor of the new Sands Hotel on Central Promenade. The initial rent of this facility will cost £250,000 a year with incremental rises every five years which will take the cost to nearly £290,000 a year after 25 years. This works out at an astonishing £7.5 million over the term of the agreement of 30 years. A number of councillors have been quick to point out the enormity of this deal and that it would have been better value for the council to buy its own building which would then have become an ongoing asset.

News from Great Yarmouth

The South American company **Circolombia** from Bogota gave a performance of their new show *Cuidado* at the Drill Hall in Great Yarmouth on 11 December 2021 under the auspices of the Out There Arts company. Circolombia is in residence in Great Yarmouth in 2022 to develop and rehearse new productions.

Soon after its Halloween show closed the **Hippodrome** staged a day of boxing bouts, something for which the building was regularly used in the past. On 13 November the Kingfisher Amateur Boxing Club took over the building, which owner Peter Jay gave them free of charge. The Jays have applied for an alcohol and music licence for their new Café 1903 at the Hippodrome.

Circus of Horrors appeared at the Hippodrome on 17 to 19 February as part of its 2022 tour. This year there was also featured a children's version 'The Adams Family' with daily 5.00pm performances.

Gifford's Circus

Carpa! is the title of the new show for 2022 from Gifford's Circus. *Carpa* is the Spanish word for a tented structure and the show will be themed to Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s, featuring some Mexican performers. The show will once again be directed by Cal McCrystal who, following on from directing the 2021 production of Gifford's Circus, had a big hit in the West End with his version of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'HMS Pinafore' with the English National Opera at the London Colliseum. Gifford's tour opens on 14 April and the entire route can be found on the show's website.

La Clique

La Clique, the circus cabaret show, returned to London's Leicester Square for the Christmas season. Appearing in the famous Spiegeltent, the show ran from 13 November 2021 to 8 January 2022. Speciality acts included the Skating Willers III (Pierre Poissonnet and Stephanie Rijkens); sword swallower and fire-eater Heather Holliday; hand-balancer Mirko Kochenberger; Craig Reid, hula hoop artiste;

saxophonist Leo Pellingrini; Katharine Arnold, aerial hoop; LJ Marles, aerial straps and J'Aimime who ends up inside a huge balloon. The show was compered by singer Bernie Dieter.

Tony Hopkins

After the close of his season with Circus Montini and Circus of the Streets, Tony Hopkins provided tents and equipment to Gandey's Halloween show. Then during the Christmas season, he assisted the Gandey organisation by managing their Circus on Ice presentation in Manchester which I understand did exceptionally good business with a strong ice skating cast and added speciality acts.

Circus Fantasia

By the end of December, Matthew Wingate was well-organised for the coming season with virtually all his 18 trucks and trailers MOT'd while also changing bodies on lorries, refurbishing a toilet trailer plus artistes' and staff trailers. In addition, Matthew had already completed booking his acts for the new season with the Rivelinos clowns returning along with the four piece Ukrainian band. The show's route for 2022 was online in January and runs as follows: Ipswich, 19 February to 3 March; Great Yarmouth, 16 to 20 March; Colchester, 23 March to 3 April; Clacton 6 to 18 April; Orsett, 20 April to 1 May; Orpington, 4 to 22 May; Aylesbury, 25 May to 5 June; Kempton Park Racecourse, 7 to 12 June; Slough, 15 June to 3 July; Peterborough, 6 to 10 July; Hemsby, 19 July to 14 August; Rochford, 17 August to 11 September; Barkingside, 14 to 25 September; Newmarket, 28 September to 2 October; Norwich, 5 to 16 October; Saxmundham, 19 to 30 October; Ipswich 9 to 20 November.

Soleil News

Le Cirque du Soleil's production of *Ka* reopened at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas on 24 November, bringing to five the number of shows the company has in the holiday resort, the other shows being *Mystere*, *O*, *Michael Jackson ONE*, and the *Beatles Love*. The new Disney-Soleil collaboration 'Drawn to Life' opened at Disney Springs, Disney World Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Florida on 19 November 2021. At the start of January Soleil's production *Allegria* had to close in Houston, Texas due to Covid among the cast and staff. It was able to reopen in Seattle on 18 January. Le Cirque du Soleil's *Luzia* presentation was in London's Royal Albert Hall from 12 January to 27 February while its *Corteo* production will be in Antwerp from 23 June to 2 July followed by a visit to Dublin from 6 to 10 July and the O2 Arena in London from 13 to 17 July. The show will also be visiting Manchester Arena on 5 to 9 October; Glasgow on 12 to 16 October and Birmingham on 19 to 23 October.

Cirque Christiane Bouglione

The Cirque Christiane Bouglione, a regular pre-Christmas treat in Paris, ran from 20 November to 12 December 2021. Artistes featured in the show included Mr Lorenzo who toured here with *Zippos Circus* in 2016; the Diaz Brothers, Ikarian act; the Duo Frenesie, Chinese pole; and Chloe Gardiol on the aerial ring.

Circus Oz

It was announced in December 2021 that the long-established Australian Circus Oz, regarded by many as the country's national circus, was to close after 44 years during which it had toured worldwide including the United Kingdom and the United States of America. With decreasing numbers of supporters and with the Australian government withdrawing the generous amount of money it gave to Circus Oz each year, the show was faced with no other choice. It was throughout its history a non-animal show. Twenty-three permanent staff members lost their jobs as a result of the closure.

Monaco in Dubai

To celebrate Monaco's National Day, a 45 minutes version of the International Circus Festival of Monte Carlo was staged at the Expo 2020 in Dubai. The show included a large troupe of artistes from the celebrated Bingo Troupe and eight members of the Clowns En Folies. The event was presented by Hungarian impresario-juggler Kristian Kristof.

News from Scandinavia

Although not active since the coronavirus pandemic hit Europe, Sweden's **Cirkus Brazil Jack** is said to be going tenting again in 2022. Also in 2022 **Cirkus Scott** will be relaunched by Robert Bronett and will have a spring outing in Stockholm. A small version of Norway's **Cirkus Arnardo** appeared in 2021 opening on 17 July and closing 31 October. Finland's **Sirkus Finlandia** was forced to cancel its first projected Christmas season in Helsinki due to the Covid spike. The show was scheduled to run from 26 December 2021 to 8 January 2022.

News from America

In addition to the **Circus Fans' Association of America**, there is now the **National Circus Preservation Society**. Its logo in red, yellow and blue with a lady rider has been designed by French-born Dominique Jando, former director of the original Big Apple Circus company and nowadays a resident of San Francisco. **Omnium Circus** is the title of a new circus in the States. It is run by former aerialist Noe Espana who is the founder, executive director and artistic director of this new show. It was to have had a world premiere in Tysons, Washington DC from 18 November 2021 to 8 January 2022 but this had to be postponed due to a set of insurmountable problems. **The Little Prince**, a circus orientated spectacle from Canada is appearing on Broadway, New York from 4 March until August.

Stuttgart Circus Cancelled

The big top and surrounding Christmas accoutrements were in place and rehearsals had started for the World Christmas Circus of Stuttgart in Germany when on 3 December came the sad news that the event, due to start on 9 December had been cancelled due to the new coronavirus restrictions in Germany. Forty thousand tickets had already been sold for this eagerly awaited show, presented by Dutch impresario Henk van der Meijden and his daughter Elissa. Ever optimistic, the dates for the

next Christmas season have already been announced, with the show running from 8 December 2022 to 8 January 2023.

Monte Carlo Circus Festival Cancelled

The 45th International Festival of Monte Carlo, scheduled for January 2022 was cancelled on 10 December 2021 as a new wave of the coronavirus pandemic hit Europe. Earlier in the week, the Italian Circus Fans' website had listed the acts which would have featured in the show. For the record these were Alex Giona from Italy with his eight liberty horses; Alessio's parrots shown by Eliza; clowns Trio Equivokee; Bruno Togni and his 10 tigers; The Danguir Troupe, high-wire and double wheel of death act; Victoria Dziuba, equilibriste; Secret of my Soul, Ukrainian aerial hoop act; the Black Blues Brothers, acrobats; Rene Casselly Jnr and Quincy Azzario, acrobatic acts with elephants and horses; Gia Eradze's group of 73 performers from Russia's Royal Circus consisting of 35 male and female dancers plus other circus artistes in various displays; a juggling display by 14 jugglers; a water show; Kris Kremo and his son Harrison, juggling act; Amelie Bilyk, slack-wire act; and the Bingo Troupe of acrobats from Ukraine.

Christmas Circus Cancellations

Numerous European Christmas shows were cancelled due to the Covid pandemic. In the Netherlands, this included the World Christmas at the Carre Theatre in Amsterdam; the Ahoy circus in Rotterdam; and the shows planned by the Durrsma company. The three winter programmes at Circus Krone in Munich were cancelled as was the short season of Cirque Pinder in Paris at Pelouse de Reuilly.

Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus

Auditions got underway for the revived Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus in January and go on until June. They are taking place in Paris, Cape Town, Las Vegas, Buenos Aires, Moscow, Ulanbaator, and Beijing but sadly not in London, the birthplace of the circus. They are being supervised by the new Ringling supremo Giulio Scatola and cover a wide range of circus and theatrical disciplines. As reported in the last King Pole the show will be reopening in 2023 in a one ring format and without animals.

Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus is run by the Feld Entertainment Company which also tours a number of big arena shows including Disney on Ice; Monster Jam and Supercross. When the pandemic struck all the touring shows had to close resulting in nearly 3,000 performers and crew members from the various shows being laid off. In addition 800 to 1,000 shipping containers of equipment were scattered around the world and had to be brought back to Florida. It seems that all the shows are now running again and the company will be at full strength by the end of 2022. Disney on Ice recently had a run in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates after which the same unit came to Great Britain for the winter months.

Gold Medal

Genis Matabosch from Catalonia, Spain has been awarded the country's Gold Medal of Merit in Fine Arts for 2021. He was the first person to be given a doctorate in circus arts at the University of Barcelona and is the regular promoter of circus festivals in Girona as well as other circus presentations throughout each year. Last year his long awaited International Palace of Circus Arts was inaugurated at Circusland, Besalu, Catalonia. Other circus luminaries to have won the Gold Medal of Merit are the clown Tonetti; aerialists Pinito del Oro and Miss Mara; and circus impresarios Arturo Castilla and Manuel Feijoo.

News from Italy

The Italian **Alessio Fochesato** with his fine parrot act was booked to appear at the Carre Theater in Amsterdam's World Circus Festival. As reported in Circus News, the show was cancelled due the Covid situation. Luckily he managed to find a good long winter season in his native country with Circo Lidia Togni in Naples from 23 December to 13 February. Meanwhile in **Rome** circus fans were regaled over the Christmas season with no fewer than four big circuses, these being The American Circus of the Togni family; the Royal Imperial Circus; Circo Rony Roller and Circo Lidia Togni before it moved to Naples.

Cirque Phenix

Cirque Phenix, which annually brings world-class shows to Paris in the winter, now has a big new permanent show in Shanghai featuring 60 Chinese and many other performers and musicians. In addition, Cirque Phenix has already announced details of its 2022/23 presentation at the Porte de la Villette, Paris. Opening on 19 November 2022, it will be an all African show from the Zip Zap company featuring a complete company of circus artistes and a big band of 18 musicians. Phenix has previously presented individual acts from Circus Zip Zap.

Folies Gruss

As usual, Cirque Alexis Gruss opened at the Bois de Boulogne in Paris in mid-September 2021, its season lasting until 6 March 2022. For the second year running it was entitled 'Les Folies Gruss' and like last year visitors could enjoy a pre-show meal if they so wished. Le Cirque a l'Ancienne was founded by Alexis Gruss in 1974 based on traditional equestrian skills at which his family have always excelled and this tradition continues with the company now headed by the children of Alexis Gruss and Gipsy Bouglione-Gruss. Stephan Gruss is artistic director; Firmin Gruss, general director and Maud Gruss-Florees in charge of the horses. From time to time the Gruss show employs outside artistes but this year it was very much a family affair, the company comprising Alexis and Gipsy Gruss; Stephan, Firmin and Maud Gruss; Tony Florees (Maud's husband); Charles Gruss; Erica Bayley; Kaylie Griffiths; Celestine Gruss; Gloria Florees; Charles Gruss; and Venecia Florees. Candice Parise was the show's singer and Sylvain Rolland directed the six-piece orchestra. As one would expect from an Alexis Gruss production, the equestrian arts were prominently featured, a real joy for any true circus lover.

120 Years Old

Japan's largest and most famous touring show, the Kinoshita Circus, is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year. For a number of years the show has featured a top class wild animal act provided by Jim Clubb, the latest of which is a group of white lions presented by Michael Howes.

World's Fair Returns

A couple of years back, 'The World's Fair' showman's newspaper collapsed in liquidation after serving the travelling show world on a weekly basis since 1904. In January 2022 it re-emerged in a new form as a glossy monthly publication consisting of 48 pages printed on art paper and with many colour photographs. Another big difference is that it deals only with the world of funfairs with no mention of the world of circus, although circus was briefly alluded to in a report on London's Winter Wonderland. There was also a small photograph of circus enthusiast David Weeks in his role of spieler at the Loughborough Fair. Dr Whatmore, who was the last editor of the weekly World's Fair newspaper, returns as editorial director with Owen Ralph as business editor. The new publication is of a far more professional standard than the newspaper, in fact it looks more like the Park World magazine which Owen Ralph ran so well as a subsidiary of 'The World's Fair' in Michael Mellor's time. Whether or not there is still a place in a changing world for a monthly printed magazine aimed at the fairground industry and showmen community remains to be seen. It will also be interesting to see whether circus reappears in its pages. The World's Fair is available in print and digitally. A digital subscription costs £24 per year whilst a print and digital subscription costs £45 per year or £25 every six months.

News in Brief

The European Union reiterated in December that there would be no EU-wide ban on performing animals in circuses. Any ban would continue to be the decision of the individual countries.

Circus Knie extended its 2021 season into 2022 with a visit to Lugano from 6 to 16 January. Its 2022 tour of Switzerland is scheduled to begin in Rapperswil, its home town, on 11 March.

Benno Kastein was the 2021 winner of the annual Ernst Renz prize awarded by the German circus fans. Benno Kastein is a former high-wire performer who has for over 30 years been the director of the German circus Flic Flac.

The Circus Festival of St. Paul le Dax in France which is held annually in April has been cancelled for 2022.

Circus Roncalli begins its 2022 tour in Recklinghausen, Germany from 10 March to 3 April. It will also visit Cologne, Dusseldorf, Ludwigsburg, Vienna and Brema. The show's slogan title this year is 'All For Art For All'.

David Larible, ace Italian clown, returned to Russia to appear at the Ciniselli Circus in St. Petersburg from 24 December.

The European Youth Festival in Wiesbaden, Germany is scheduled to take place from 13 to 16

October 2022.

Cirque Alexandre Bouglione played in Brussels from 25 December 2021 to 9 January 2022.

The Festival du Cirque de Demain due to be held in January in Paris under the Cirque Phenix big top was cancelled due to the growing Omicron problems in France.

The TigerPalast nightclub in Frankfurt closed its door in mid-January due to the pandemic, announcing that it will not reopen until mid-September. Many circus acts have worked there including Norman Barrett and his budgerigars.

Nathalie Chabrier, one of France's most notable circus artists and a long-standing member of the French Club du Cirque has been made a venerated honorary member of the Club du Cirque. Not only is she a great painter, she is also one of the most gracious ladies I have ever met.

The Wedding of Emilion and Rosey

By Andy Payne

Circus Funtasia favourite Emilion Delbosq married his fiancée Rosey Delarue in a ceremony under the new Funtasia big top at Sanders Garden Centre in Somerset on Saturday 15 January. The couple had officially married the weekend before but the ceremony in the big top allowed them to be joined by family and friends from far and wide.

The big top had been beautifully decorated with the backstage area turned into the ceremony venue. The ceremony was conducted by Germaine Delbosq and Rosey's mum Wendy. Emilion was brought down the aisle on the back of the motorbike which Germaine uses for her foot juggling act.

Emilion's son Lewis was best man and the couples dog Pepe was the ring bearer in a heart-warming ceremony. The celebration carried on into the evening with a live band and the circus ring turned into a dance floor.



Emilion and Rosey

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OBITUARIES

By Don Stacey

Richard Joseph Chipperfield

By Jamie and Jim Clubb

Richard Joseph Chipperfield, known to all as 'Dickie' (with regular alternate spellings of 'Dicky'), died on 3 December 2021 aged 78. He will be remembered for training and presenting exciting wild animal acts and also being the last lineal Chipperfield to run the original 'Chipperfield's Circus' business.

Dickie was born in his parents' wagon at Stockport on 27 March 1943, the second of the three surviving children of Richard (Dick) and Myrtle Chipperfield. He began performing in the ring with animals at age 14, presented his first wild animal act at age 15 with Chipperfield's famed 'Bouncer Wagon' and trained his first wild animal act of 10 Himalayan bears (a year later with an added four polar bears) when aged 19.

His range of performances in the 1960s included splicing for the 'snakes and crocodiles (alligators)', a comedy role in the Maxims riding act, clowning in a comedy car routine and even a Christmas season as Chipperfield's ringmaster. However, these appear to be anomalies in a career that would mainly consist of training and presenting wild animal acts. The early acts included presenting 12 of Chipperfield's elephants as well as big cat acts. At one time, Dickie was working all three cage acts on a single show. Whilst on his family's circus in the 1960s and 1970s he toured Great Britain, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Zimbabwe. He became a central feature of every television appearance of Chipperfield's Circus during these two decades, including all the Christmas and all but one of the Easter shows.

Amongst the numerous acts he personally trained, Dickie presented a group of 18 lions in 1973. This was a year after he had toured with 10 of them and his leopards with Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1971. The act would win the Prix Des Amis at the Monte Carlo Circus Festival seven years later. It would also appear on the Hamid Morton Circus and be a special attraction at Sea World in the USA in 1981 under the presentation of Marcel Peters. From the last performances of the Purchase/Chipperfield Bouncer Wagon act through to the presentations at Ringling Brothers Barnum & Bailey Circus under his son, Graham, in the late 1990s, Dickie maintained the family tradition of lively, rousting lions. His elegant tiger acts varied in number up to 13 and then 15 under the presentation of his son, Richard.

Yet for all these achievements, Dickie's spotted and black leopard act is perhaps his most defining work. Initially trained with the assistance of Brian Boswell during the Chipperfield's tour of South Africa, the presentation would go through various incarnations and has long been admired by big cat trainers. These routines were considered pioneering feats due to the dangerous and difficult reputation held by leopards. During the 1980s Dickie took a more active role in the running of the family circus business, becoming its official heir upon his father's death in 1988. His formative years had been spent living on

Chipperfield's Circus when it reached its largest size in the country of its origin. Now, working at the helm of the family business, he saw opportunities during the 1980s to return to the glory days of the 1950s and take that experience to the Eastern Hemisphere. During that decade he partnered Gerry Cottle for two seasons at Ocean Park, Aberdeen, Hong Kong early in 1982 and later in 1982/early 1983 to packed houses followed by Macau in 1983. After a tour of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, Dickie returned Chipperfield's Circus to the Eastern Hemisphere. Partnered with Paul Lee, Dickie filled the show's big tops as well as huge stadiums on a very successful – if tremendously demanding – four-year tour. This took in Indonesia and the Philippines twice, Singapore, Thailand, a return to the previous Hong Kong venue (whilst simultaneously playing Japan), South Korea and Taiwan. The tour also included a seven-week booking in New Zealand's North Island in 1987/88.

After a return tour of Ireland that was cut short in Northern Ireland in early 1990, Chipperfield's Circus rented its name and its wild animal acts to Tony Hopkins. The show toured in this fashion from 1991 until 1996 with Richard (Dickie's son), John Chipperfield (Dickie's cousin) and Gary Ambrose



Dickie Chipperfield

presenting his lion and tiger acts at different times. The two tiger acts would win the Circus Friends Association's Best Animal Act 1992 and 1996 under Gary Ambrose and Richard respectively. Meanwhile Dickie's older son, Graham, toured France on Cirque Christiane Gruss with Dickie's lions and elephants, picking up bronze and silver awards at the Cirque Domain Festival in Massy in 1992. He then took the animals over to Ringling Brothers. Barnum and Bailey Circus to tour with them until early 1998. Richard joined him to work a 15 tiger act in late 1997 following a year's tour with Cirque Arlette Gruss in France and winning the Prix Circus Royale at the Monte Carlo Circus Festival. Richard's severe accident during a press call in January 1998 led to the two brothers retiring from wild animal training and presenting permanently.

Dickie continued to train wild animal acts for the best part of two more decades. His main work was with Frederic Edelstein of Cirque Pinder where he trained a group of 10 lions and six tigers later changed to 12 lions and four tigers. He was also instrumental in helping Martin Lacey Jnr train his own group of lions that would win four top awards at the circus festivals of Massy, Grenoble and Monte Carlo from 1999 until 2019.

Dickie Chipperfield died at his care home in Hastings leaving his second wife, Jemima, his sons, Graham and Richard and their mother, his ex-wife Janet. He also leaves a legacy of wild animal trainers who were either trained by him or directly inspired by his work. A two-part article on the career of Dickie Chipperfield will commence in the next King Pole.

Georges Jacques Kaiser-Golgojew

Georges Jacques Kaiser-Golgojew, leader of the famous Golgojews Cossack riding act, died on 30 November 2021 aged 96. With his wife Monika he had three children (Wolfgang, Michaela and Scarlett) who all joined the riding act which for 21 years was featured on Germany's Circus Busch-Roland where he was also a manager. After the death of Monika in 1986, he found a new partner in Petra Kuntz, with whom he had a son, Nicolai, in 1993 and who is now a talented solo trapeze artiste with Cirque du Soleil. I still remember vividly the first time I saw the Golgojews act. It was at Cirque Bouglione at the Porte de Versailles building in Paris. My heart leapt

at the stirring sight of the troupe thundering into the ring on their horses. In the many times I saw them thereafter, they always impressed me. His was the best non-Russian Cossack riding act of the post World War II period in Europe.

Walter Enge

Although I do not have the full details, I understand the German artiste Walter Enge died in 2021 at the age of 96. His wife Marianne Enge (known as Susan Sareen) died in 2015. The Enges were famous for their perch pole act, known as The Two Tacomas, and Susan Sareen's solo trapeze act. They worked in Great Britain at both Tom Arnold's Circus at Haringay Arena (1955/6) and Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia, London (1962/63). They were also booked to appear with the Mills tenting show but for some unknown reason they did not fulfil that engagement.

Claude Vonner

Claude Vonner, who died on 23 June 2021 aged 67, was a French executive with Cirque Pinder for 35 years. Originally a member of Gilbert Edelstein's concessions department, he rose to become the show's technical director. He was always a most welcoming ambassador on behalf of the Edelstein family whenever I met him.

Other Deaths

Frank Gasser, a former circus director, died in November 2021 in Australia. Originally from Switzerland and a famous circus family there, he established Frank Gasser's Circus as a major touring show in Australia before selling it as a going concern some years ago.

Karen Koch, who died mid-November 2021 aged 78, was partner with Lilian Daniels in a notable polar bear act which featured at the Blackpool Tower Circus in 1964. She also trained and showed chimpanzees and sea-lions.

Walter Faggioni, who died in early December 2021, came from an old-established Italian circus family that was long-domiciled in Spain and operated its own circuses there.

Luis Raluy, owner of Spain's long-established major show Circo Raluy, died on 29 December 2021.

BOOK NEWS

By Don Stacey

John Fisher's Heroes of Magic

John Fisher's magnificent new book 'John Fisher's Heroes of Magic' was published in America in late October but unfortunately my copy reached me too late for a review to be published in the December King Pole. Its publisher is Squash Publishing of Chicago, a company famed for its publication of magic subjects. It costs 75 dollars and has an ISBN reference of 978-0-982317-9-4. Details can be found at www.squashpublishing.com.

John Fisher is famous as a television producer,

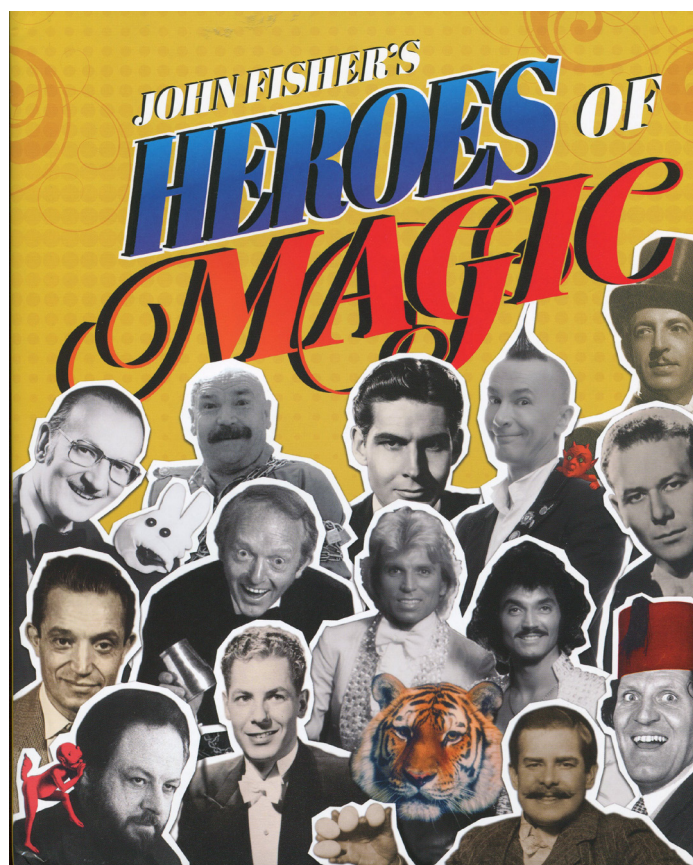
magic expert and author of 16 important works on differing subjects. He is the definitive authority on the ancient art of legerdemain through to its most sophisticated 21st century illusionary grandeur. His previous works range from The Magic of Lewis Carroll; books on George Formby, Cardini (known as The Suave Deceiver), Tony Hancock; five books on Tommy Cooper; to the masterly 'Paul Daniels and the Story of Magic'. My personal favourite is 'Funny Way to be a Hero', a 496 page tome which pays tribute to Britain's greatest comedians over the years. 'John Fisher's Heroes of Magic' is a similar

size and format to the latter with hard-covers, 424 pages and a glorious dust-wrapper depicting all his chosen heroes. It is magnificently produced with high gloss quality paper and a plethora of photographs and illustrations in both colour and black and white. John Fisher, who was born in Southampton and now resides in Winchester, spent his early life first as a young magic performer, later as a researcher and then as a producer of television shows such as 'Parkinson', 'Wogan', 'The Bob Monkhouse Show', 'Des O'Connor Tonight' and 'This is Your Life'. In the realms of magic, illusion and variety, he brought to our television screens as a BBC Producer and later as Thames Television's Head of Variety such memorable shows as 'The Paul Daniels Magic Show' (which he directed for 12 years), 'Magic Comic Strip', 'The Best of Magic' and 'Heroes of Magic'. He has been a leading member of London's famed Magic Circle for many years and was the recipient of the 'Lifetime Achievement Fellowship' from the Academy of Magic Arts in Hollywood.

With his extensive knowledge of so many personalities from the world of magic, it must have been a hard task to single out just 25 of those people who made the greatest impact on his life and career. You'll not learn any of the secrets of magic from this book. Magic is after all a world of mystery and should remain like that, an illusionary entertainment dating back centuries. You will however learn a great deal about the chosen 25; names like David Devant from Maskelyne's famous St. Georges Hall; Professor Harry Woodley, the local children's entertainer who first entranced a five year old John Fisher with his mysteries; Cardini; Slydini; Robert Harbin, an early star of British television; mind reader Maurice Fogel; John Cavert; Al Koran; Jay Marshall, billed as 'one of the better cheaper acts!'; Chan Canasta; and David Nixon, once the most popular magician on television.

More recent stars include Fred Kaps; Paul Potassy; Billy McComb; Rene Lavand; Channing Pollack, dove manipulator supreme; Richiardi Jnr; Hans Moretti; Harry Blackstone Jnr; Borra; Paul Daniels; Siegfried and Roy; Ricky Jay and Arturo Brachetti. These are the stories of stars who manifested the world of stage, screen and magic, told in an informative and lively fashion. I must confess since receiving my copy of 'Heroes of Magic' it has remained on my desk to be picked up and consulted again and again whenever the opportunity arises.

I have always said actors James Mason, Dirk Bogarde and Richard Burton were the greatest exponents of the spoken word, John Fisher is their equivalent with the written word. He brings his legends to life in his descriptions of their careers. Despite its late arrival 'John Fisher's Heroes of Magic' is my Book of the Year 2021 and as I continue to savour it again and again, it could well be my Book of the Year 2022. Whether your particular penchant is for the pickpocket wizardry of the circus star Borra, the dynamics of Hans Moretti's sensations, the cheeky chappie appeal of Paul Daniels or the sheer showmanship of Siegfried and Roy, this is an enthralling book, the style and quality of which is unequalled. I'll finish with John Fisher's explanation for writing this wondrous book "I have always claimed that the true history of a performing art has to be a chronicle of those who have presented it with the greatest flair and innovation, success and skill. My subjects represent a subjective choice. However, presented in order of their birth, their individual chapters hopefully cohere into a chronological narrative that does reflect the myriad faces of magic in performance during the last one hundred years. Here, serving as stepping stones along the path of magic's history are twenty-five members of magic's elite who have not only impressed me as skilled exponents of their art, but also impacted upon my life both as people and as showmen".



My Dogs, My Life

Some years ago, while working in America at the Big Apple Circus, British circus artiste Mike Freeman Sanger wrote a book about his life in the circus and his love of the dogs he trained for the Old Regnas dog act which has starred in circuses worldwide. The book has now reappeared in a new, updated and improved form and is published as 'My Dogs, My Life' by The Book Guild Ltd, 9 Priory Business Park, Wistow Road, Kibworth, Leicestershire, LE9 0RX. The book is a paperback and has the IBIS reference 978 1913913 786. It costs £9.99p and contains 204 pages of text with eight pages of colour and black and white photographs along with a useful Sanger family tree. My only criticism is that the illustrations are rather small. The book can also be obtained from CFA Merchandising.

It has an introduction by Eugene Chaplin, son of the famous film clown Charlie Chaplin and curator of the Charlie Chaplin Museum in Switzerland. There is also a foreword by Victoria Stilwell from the original American edition, she being an expert on dogs who emphasises Mike's inherent love and affection for his four-legged companions in the ring as well as the needy ones he took in along the way. The book tells the very human and humane story of Mike Sanger

and his wife Pascale and their love for animals. I found it very hard to put down. I recommend it to any circus lover. In the book Mike takes special care to thank Chris Barltrop for his help, advice and encouragement which led to its publication in Great Britain by The Book Guild Ltd. It is a delightful read and will sit well on your circus bookshelves.

Lido – Plumes, Strass et Emotions

Celebrating its glorious history of 75 years, a new book on the Lido nightclub of Paris was published by the company Flammarion of Paris in December 2021. Retailing at 30 euros a copy and available from Amazon, its ISBN is 978-2-08-024449-9. Its title is 'Lido – Plumes, Strass et Emotions' (Plumes, Feathers and Emotions) and is in French. In format 26cms by 23cm with hard-covers it is a high quality publication with 192 pages and a wealth of illustrations in black and white but mostly in colour with many in double page format. Written by Sonia Rachline, it details the history of this famous Parisian nightspot from its 1946 inception to the present time. Within its pages can be found details of its originators Pierre-Louis Guerin, Joseph Clerico and Rene Fraday; designer Folco; director-choreographer Donn Arden; Miss Bluebell who formed the famous Bluebell Girls; current director Franco Dragone; stars like the Kessler Twins, Marlene Charel, Dick Powell, Andre Cagnard's horses, the Rios Brothers, Siegfried and Roy plus the many notables who have appeared there or attended shows. All the Lido shows have contained a variety of speciality acts, but unfortunately there is little mention of them as the book concentrates on the colour, splendour and sheer quality of its grand productions. The Lido is second only to the Moulin Rouge in Paris as the leading house of spectacle and this book is a grand tribute to its story, told mostly in its glorious colour photographs. It is a souvenir to cherish. There is also an English version of the book entitled 'Lido – Feathers, Jewels and Thrills' which is available from Amazon at £23.75.

Circus Photo Magazine

Issue no. 67 of the quarterly illustrated 'Circus Photo Magazine' was issued in December. It can be obtained from Becom Publishers, PO Box 80, 2200 AB Noordwijk, Netherlands or from CFA Merchandising (see the back inside cover for details of cost etc). Published in English, it consists of 56 colourful pages. It contains a 14 page article with 88 illustrations on part 8 of the history of Circus Knie which covers the years 1979 to 1981. There are also features on the Belgian circuses Pipo, Barones, and Wiener; the Italian shows of Italiano, Bellucci, Lidia Togni, Circo di Mosca, and Circo Di Vienna; the Irish Courtney's Daredevil Circus; the French Cirque Lydia Zavatta; and the Circusland museum of Besalu, Spain. It also includes a wealth of information on newly-published books available from Becom. The magazine is accompanied by issue 35 of 'Circus Models Magazine' with 12 pages jammed with circus model information and photographs on Circus Herman Renz and other shows. The next issue of 'Circus Photo Magazine' promises to continue the history of Circus Knie with more on Italian circuses as well as features on France's Cirque Mondial, the Krone Farm in Germany, Circus Bossle in the Netherlands, Circ Raluy Historic in Spain and Switzerland's Circus Monti.

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LOOKING BACK TO 1993 - THE ART OF CLOWNING

By Peter Gaskin

Back in 1993, I found something in World's Fair advertising a future event to be held on the 6 December at the prestigious new £3.2 million Forefront Arts Centre in Ipswich entitled 'The Art of Clowning', featuring Clown Grimbale, aka Tommy Fossett. This would be the first time a circus artiste had appeared at the venue. Having an interest in circus, I thought it would be something which would be worthwhile seeing, not appreciating at the time just how famous Tommy was.

The evening was introduced by Richard Mainwaring with a brief talk on the history of clowning, the different types of clowns and some of the famous names associated with the clowning profession. He was then joined by a rather snooty lady, played by Tommy's wife, Elaine, who was going to sing some opera, but before she could begin, someone appeared

from the back of the auditorium, who had other ideas and this, of course, turned out to be Clown Grimbale. He immediately proceeded to win over the audience, who in a very short time, were all his friends and he began to disrupt any attempt by the lady to sing. She tried to ridicule him by saying he was useless and could not do anything, which was the cue for Grimbale to go through his repertoire.

Grimbale incorporated all his circus skills into the evening, including juggling, balancing, playing musical instruments and unicycling, all interspersed with comedy and audience participation. His act culminated with his unique famous balancing pagoda which was rewarded with no less than three standing ovations from the enthralled audience. After an interval, Tommy and Elaine returned to answer any questions on clowning and Tommy's life in the circus.

Whilst Tommy was well known for having done a lot of work in schools about clowning and circus, this was the first time he had used his skills as a presentation to promote his craft as an art form in an Arts Centre setting. He was the first to admit that he was very nervous about the idea but was encouraged by the reaction he received from the audience. I am not certain whether Tommy ever had the opportunity to repeat this presentation, maybe one of our readers would know if they had seen it elsewhere.

It was a very enjoyable evening, with Tommy performing to an audience of over 100 people made up of students, children and, of course, a few circus fans. He came across as the true professional who loved his life and his work. Some of the audience were about to start rehearsing for a local production of the hit musical, *Barnum*, to be staged in April 1994 and must have received much inspiration from Tommy, to learn the skills necessary for such a venture.

Sadly, Tommy died from a brain tumour on the 23 January 1996, aged only 58, after enduring several months of ill health. The CFA Presidents Award was given to him posthumously in recognition of his Lifetime's achievement and was presented by Sandy Davidson to his widow, Elaine, at the Circus Reunion in Blackpool in February 1997.

It was a real privilege to be able to witness Tommy in action, especially as I had never seen him perform in the circus ring.



FERNAND LÉGER: 'GO TO THE CIRCUS'

By David Barnaby

Paris was in its third year of Nazi occupation in 1943. In the summer of that year the Nazis had a bonfire at the Tuileries Gardens. The fuel for that fire consisted of several hundred original paintings. The paintings for burning were selected by a panel of 'art experts' favoured by the Nazis. These experts had picked out all the paintings that Nazi ideals considered 'degenerate'. The fire consumed paintings by artists such as Ernst, Picasso, Miró and Léger. The Nazis' own art publicity preached that art was in a healthy condition in Paris. If you were of Nazi persuasion this might be seen as true; at the Orangerie was a big exhibition of work by Arno Breker, an artist trained in France, who produced, in the words of Anne Sebba, "giant figures of supermen representing a Nazi fantasy of Aryan power in Paris". Picasso's paintings were banned from exhibition.

Fernand Léger was in the United States at the time. Clearly America was a safer place than Paris for an artist whose work was seen as anti-Nazi. It also happened to be advantageous to Léger's career. That artist was favourably impressed by certain aspects of America, and likewise America with him. While there he was offered teaching appointments in established art schools, gave public lectures and exhibited his work. Léger had spent several periods of his life in America. He did not return to France until 1945.

He was born in 1881 and so worked throughout the first half of the twentieth century. He was a generation later than the well-known French artists of the Belle Époque, such as Toulouse-Lautrec. He saw himself against a background of a machine age and this was

a major influence on his thinking and his art. He did, however, have a lifelong interest in the circus. Long lists of his works, such as are found in exhibition catalogues, are punctuated by titles such as *The Clown*, *The Acrobats*, *Les Perroquets et les Acrobats*, *Acrobats at the Circus* and *The Great Parade* as well as paintings dealing with dancers and divers.

In 1950, when Léger was 69 years old, he published a document called *Le Cirque*. The English translation I have of this document (by Peter de Francia) contains a handful of original lithographs, as in the original. It occupies nineteen pages. It reads like a young man's reflections, yet Léger, had by then led a full and many-stranded life. The document has a terse style that one has to get used to as one reads it. The first few paragraphs seem to be about bicycles but in fact they are about bicycle acts in the circuses that Léger had seen.

His thoughts about bicycles have two branches. He considers the actual dangers of riding a bike on the road: "Lightly she (the rider) brushes past a car on the road. A few centimetres to right or left and she is destroyed by the four-wheeled beast. A tiny error of judgement" (he switches to trapeze artists here) on the circus platform where the action takes place five metres above the ground and she is flat on the floor bespattered with blood". We will come back to acrobats falling from a height. The second branch of his thoughts from bicycles concern his artist's obsession with curves and rings; "Why bet on the squares? From the head of a man and the body of a woman to the form of a tree, all are enrolled in a

play of curves". "Go to the circus . . ."; he repeats this phrase several times in *Cirque*. The circus ring and the bicycle wheel fit his theories perfectly. "The dry barren right angle is ill at ease there. Go to the circus!"

Meanwhile, he takes the opportunity of remembering his early visits to the Medrano circus with Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Blaise Cendrars and other artists. His memories go back to when the Cirque Medrano was called Fernando's. He remembers Barnum's three rings in New York. Léger's artistic interests led him in many directions, including cinema.

It will be in the living memory of many readers of this article that a circus performer, a female in the incident I am thinking of, has fallen from above down into the ring, and has died as a result. Léger could not keep his thoughts away from the falling of a performer, probably a trapeze artist, from above. There is a painting of his that is a possible reference to this. I first became aware of this painting when there was a major exhibition of circus art and circus culture in Munich in the winter period of 2010-11. By chance, during this time there was a CFA rally to see Circus Krone in Munich so a bunch of us were able to go. The exhibition was called 'Faszination Circus: Manege frei für Kunst & Phantasie' (Art and Fantasy in the Ring) and it was held at the Buchheim Museum by the Starnberger Lake. The advertising posters for this exhibition were liberally displayed in the circus building, in the city and around the venue for the exhibition.

The poster displayed a section of a 1950 Fernand Léger painting called 'Cirque'. It shows three human figures and two part-figures in various positions up among the trapeze equipment; an excellent eye-catcher for such an exhibition. I took it for granted at first, then I began to study it more closely. Was Léger playing an optical trick on the viewers of the painting? Was he painting the illusion of trapezists in the air as if they were angels? The figures in the painting are fairly realistic; one can see their positions unambiguously clearly. One has his shin on the wrong side of the trapeze bar; another has her arms stretched out sideways while her legs are unsupported. None of them look secure. They all look unconcerned. It is an image of impending tragedy. In real life they would all fall. Léger knew his circus.

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Thanks to: Ross Barnaby, Christine Challinor and Bruce Walton for contributing to aspects of this article.



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Highlights of the 19th Grenoble International Circus Festival

Report and Photographs by Jean-Marc Trichard (CapturEmotion)

After a few years spent under a big top in Voiron, followed by the interruption of 2020 due to Covid 19, the Grenoble International Circus Festival made its comeback at the Palais des Sports de Grenoble with 22 world-class acts. With more than 15,500 tickets sold, this was the 19th edition of the Festival. Guy Chanal, its director and producer said, "Without the audiences and the support of public and private partners, we would never have survived." The event traditionally calls on celebrities from French television to compose its jury and animate the event. This year Julien Courbet wore the costume of Mr. Loyal and Jean-Pierre Foucault that of President of the Jury. With Alex Nicolodi as artistic agent, the cast was very rich and very international. Two performances on 18 and 19 November decided the artistes for the final on Saturday November 20 before the artists' gala on Sunday November 21.

Artistes included in the festival were:-

- French act the Crazy Dunkers combining acrobatic performances with their passion for basketball.
- From Poland, the duo Lusesita & Matteo presented an impressive act using several high poles.
- The freestyle BMX number of X-sports.
- Just Two Men is an act now well known in Europe and has competed in the biggest festivals including Monte Carlo where they got a silver clown. This time they took the podium for a bronze star.

• Pablo and Vicky Garcia were back following their superb performance in 2017 at the same festival. They presented a comic aeroplane number that brings great freshness to their number but does not detract from the technical difficulty and risks of their performance.

• Connor and Antonio Garcia presented their acrobatic hand balancing number.

• Sandro Montez presented the only animal number of the festival with his dog act. When we see Sandro with his four-legged friends, we wonder whether it is he or his dogs having the most fun.

• The Duo Romance (Alex and Adelina) presented aerial straps inspired by the story of Romeo and Juliet as well as a Chinese mast number. The two young Romanian artists who have appeared on Charles Knie made a strong impression and were truly rewarded with a gold star in the final.

• The three members of the Trio Bellissimo bring grace and skill to their balancing act. This splendid number, which has been exported to the USA goes on to win a silver star.

• Igor Komarov's I-Team double trampoline act with a series of trampoline feats synchronized on both sides of a wall. It's a display of saltos, twists, and balance.

• Sage Macaggi performed his recently awarded hat juggling act at the Latina Festival. Sage juggles up to six hats.

Igor Komarovs team



Trio Bellissimo



- The acrobats of the Wonsemble troupe who started in the streets of Marseille. They presented acrobatics incorporating the prowess of Moroccan pyramid jumpers.
- Bboy Haiper had already made a name for himself on the Algerian scene before arriving in Paris. We forget his disability; his break dance number is an example of courage and tenacity.
- Maverik Niemen, the son of Ivan Niemen and Romina Orfei, specialized in rola rola. The highlight of his act is undoubtedly when he manages to balance on eight reels.
- Clown Tonito Alexis including a routine with a small dog.

Overall, this was an impressive festival with 50 collaborators, 50 artistes from 12 different nations and 18,000 seats on sale. The 19th Grenoble International Circus Festival adapts to our time and is one of the very best Circus festivals.

- Colombians José and Angel Caycedo work simultaneously on two elastic strings performing dances and somersaults.
- Artem Lyubanevych with his aerial mast number.
- Clown duo practically unknown in France: Los Christirines. Marco Antonio Vera and his son Marco Antonio Vera Jr combined the tradition of the clown with the classic makeup for the father and the eccentricities and playfulness of the son who is the face of a modern clown. All with a talent for comedy, music, juggling and athletics.
- Jérémy and Fabien present several radio-controlled aircraft in a different act that fits well in a busy circus programme.

Tonito Alexis



Just Two Men

CORTEX IN EGYPT

Report and photograph by Paul Archer

Paul and Irina Archer's Circus Cortex spent the Christmas festive period overseas with a virtually all new cast of 27 performers. The show formed part of a Winter Festival at an entertainment park in Egypt's capital Cairo. The entrance fee to the centre was quite expensive which meant that it was only visited by wealthy Egyptians. Although it was a short notice event, some of the industry's top performers were available due to their contracts being cancelled because of Covid. Working together as a strong team, a full-length Christmas show was created practically over just two nights as rehearsals could only take place after the crowds had gone home from the park.

The show was performed on an open-air stage, with a full rig of lighting and an LED screen to enhance the performance. Christmas themed throughout, the show was full of Christmas and Winter characters such as polar bears, Christmas soldiers, Santa Claus, an angel and an elf. The performers included hand to hand acrobatics – Strakhovs Duo; aerial ring/pole –

Veronika Polubota; umbrella foot juggling – Evheniya Honcharova; tightrope – Ksenia Archer; voltige – Crazy Flight; juggling and quick change – Kristaps Pavlovs and Inna Sopova; stilt acrobatics – Jump-n-Roll; clowning – Sergey Mitrofanov; singer – Elizaveta Krivoruchko; and six dancers who complemented the overall production.

With a total of eight performances over two weekends, the cast had five days off in between enabling them to enjoy the five-star hotel accommodation and to visit Egypt's national treasure, the Great Pyramids of Giza. The international cast returned to their home countries on December 26, feeling as though they were coming back from a holiday instead of a work contract. We were lucky to have been greeted with such warmth and hospitality by our Egyptian hosts, with everything being taken care of. We were looked after very well and the turn out for the shows was equally as pleasing. We are proud to say it was a successful experience and hope to be back there again.



BUILD UP AND PULL DOWN ON ZIPPOS CIRCUS

Report and Photographs by Cathy Cooper

Build-Up? Pull-Down? Most members of the public have never heard of this, let alone experienced it. The circus appears in a town park and few days later, as if by magic, it has suddenly gone again. However, most readers of King Pole will sigh with memories of these two crucial stages of getting the show on the road. I have seen and photographed many performances at Zippos Circus but, I too was oblivious as to how the tent went up and how the tent came down. With that in mind I decided that I would like to document the building up of the circus when it next came to Twickenham. After two years' absence, the dates were finally announced and I was desperate to soak up everything about the show.

One Sunday morning in September, my contact told me that the lorries had started arriving. I rushed up to the Green and asked if I could watch and photograph the build-up. It was going to take two days so I was told to be there at 9am the following morning. When I arrived on site, I was given a Zippos Circus Hi-Viz vest which was for health and safety reasons but also made me feel part of the team.

The council had marked the ground with a white boundary line and all trucks, caravans and trailers had to stay within those limits. I watched as the site for the big top was prepared. The trailer carrying the neatly folded tent was parked in the middle. Large stakes were driven in to attach the bottom plates of each of the four poles and flags were attached to the top of each beam. The heavy sections of the poles were lifted off the truck by a Bobcat Telehandler and assembled on the ground. Smaller metal rods were driven in around the circumference of the tent outline and painted white. These would act as pegs



once the canvas was up. There was much activity and I recognised the male performers working alongside the drivers and staff. It took about two hours before the poles were up with the flags on top fluttering and the cables in situ for the strings of light bulbs.

The next day I was back on the Green at 8am for tent assembly day. It was raining and soon big puddles started forming. The smart new tent had been used in Plymouth last year but got damaged by strong winds. Repaired now, it held the same capacity as the previous tent but was much higher, so there was a lot of canvas to unroll. I watched all the men unwrap each side and lay it down in the now swampy water. It was a huge team effort. While this was going on the ticket office arrived with its new graphic wrap advertising the current acts and customers were already waiting for it to open. A representative from the council came to check the white line wasn't being crossed.

Watching the big top go up as it was winched from inside very slowly and carefully was a wonderful





sight. The new foyer tent was also being raised so it was beginning to look a lot like a circus. This had taken about an hour. There was still a lot to do including fitting all the seats, preparing the ring, putting up the barriers and entrance besides all the technical aspects like the lighting and sound. When I went to hand back my Hi-Viz jacket, I was told that I would need it for pull-down!

The Carnival show opened on the Wednesday and finished with an extra show on Sunday evening. I went to three of the sell-out shows including the last one when, straight after the interval, the foyer tent was taken down leaving the food wagon standing outside on its own. Then once the show had finished and the last member of the audience had left the tent, it was back on with the Hi-Viz vests and the pull-down started.

Immediately everyone was working in teams, each with their own tasks. The girls were removing covers from seats, stacking them and carrying them out to a truck. Feeling useless, I started carrying ringside chairs two at a time until Gigi, the Mongolian aerialist suggested we carry a stack of four between us. The Kenyans were dismantling the tiered seating whilst the Lucius Team were taking down the Globe segment by segment. Once the sides of the tent were down, the girls started folding up each section. All this was done in the dark with an almost full moon shining down. Once the women had done their bit, it was all down to the men dismantling and carrying all the heavy equipment to the trucks and stacking it inside.

I wanted to see the big top come down, but I had to wait for over two and half hours before that big moment. As it came down the sides collapsed as the stakes were taken away and it resembled a large, deflated jellyfish. Eventually it landed on the bed of the truck in a lozenge shape with everything tucked away. The precision of the whole operation was outstanding.

As I stood there watching this event, I was aware of a man who was also observing the pull-down. We

got chatting and he told me his mother and father had once been in a circus. I discovered to my delight that his father was a hero of mine, John Hinde, the well-known photographer who not only supplied the tourist trade with his postcards of Great Britain and Ireland but illustrated the 1948 book *British Circus Life*.

As I left Twickenham Green, I realised how very lucky I was to have had this experience. I am indebted to the management and performers of Zippos Circus for letting me in on the secrets of build-up and pull-down.



DON STACEY REMINISCES

Sixty Five Years Ago

2021 marked 65 years since I made my debut in show-business, walking out of a bank in London (the Irish National Bank in Whitehall, now long defunct) and turning to my lifelong heart's desire, the circus. I joined Bertram Mills Circus in London and on tour as a box office assistant, rising to become the company's Publicity Services Manager. I then moved to Holiday on Ice as Publicity and Personnel Director which had up to six touring units. For a short time in 1963/64 I combined this role with that of Publicity Manager for the European tour of the Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus. In 1978 I produced and directed for Holiday on Ice its one incursion into circus, the Brighton Centre Circus on the Sussex coast. I then became a show-business booking agent, predominantly handling circus bookings and one year producing three shows (magic, circus and ice) in the Middle East.

Along the way, starting in the early 1960s, I became Circus Editor of the now defunct showman's newspaper *The World's Fair*. I have also contributed to many books and publications on the subjects of circus, magic and ice shows although in all that time I have written only one book. There has never been time for more! In more recent years I have written regularly for the *King Pole* circus magazine and for the last three years it has been my privilege to be the President of the Circus Friends' Association. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this period

has been probably one of the most disruptive in the history of Circus!

John Fisher's Heroes of Magic

Reading John Fisher's new book 'Heroes of Magic' brought back memories of the 'Paul Daniel's Magic Show' and my involvement with it which lasted some 10 happy years. I provided many of the speciality acts which appeared on the show. In this capacity I had the privilege of working with John Fisher as well as with the two succeeding producers. I was therefore particularly interested to read the chapter on Paul's career and his performing partnership with John Fisher which was often far from harmonious. John pays due respect to Paul's ability as an entertainer and to his drawing power at the height of the BBC's days of variety supremacy. However, he does not hold back on broaching his personality defects and the strain in their relationship. It is an admirable example of tempering one's own opinion and memories with due respect to a great artiste. Incidentally, readers will know that one of my pet hates is finding grammar and spelling errors in newly published books which should have been detected by proof readers prior to publication. I am happy to report that in the case of 'John Fisher's Heroes of Magic' I did not detect a single error, although as it is an American publication there are American rather than British spellings for some words!

THE BEAUTIFUL LULU, GIRL AERIALIST AND CIRCASSIAN CATAPULTIST

By Alan Stockwell

In *King Pole* No 230 Don Stacey gave us an excellent article on the aerialist Barquette. As he rightly pointed out, transvestites were uncommon in the circus, but Barquette was not unique as preceding him in circus history was Lulu.

Paris 1870

In 1870, the latest sensation in Paris was "The Beautiful Lulu, Girl Aerialist and Circassian Catapultist". This glamorous young lady with flowing blonde curls and rich costuming captured many a young man's heart. She received love letters from men of high position, expensive gifts, and even offers of marriage. The highlight of Lulu's act was the spectacular "Lulu Leap" in which she was catapulted vertically some 25ft into the air to land on a suspended plank from which she made a somersaulting descent into the safety net below. Her ascent, appearing magical to the uninitiated, was by a spring apparatus invented by her adoptive father the Canadian William Leonard Hunt (1838–1929) known to the circus world as The Great Farini. Three years later he placed this device into a fake cannon-like prop and patented the

original "human cannonball" apparatus. The first flyer to perform that act was another Hunt protégé the fourteen-year-old Rossa Richter known as Zazel.

Farini was a high wire walker and a rival to Blondin, emulating several crossings of the Niagara Falls. In December 1862, while appearing in Havana, in the feat of carrying his wife on his back across the wire she overbalanced while waving, and plunged to her death. It was only the second year of their marriage.

In Victorian times it was quite commonplace for gymnasts to take on apprentices and train them to become performers. The star of many a gymnastic troupe was a youngster who today would still be in school. In the early 1860s Hunt took up a boy of eight years called Samuel Wasgatt. He was said to be an orphan and that Hunt had adopted him. The Wasgatts were a large and well-established family on Mount Desert Island in Maine, USA. It would seem that the young Sam would have been surrounded by ample aunts, uncles and cousins to care for him in the unfortunate early loss of parents. The likelihood is that Sam ran away from home.

However, it happened, Farini trained the boy in

gymnastics. In 1865, Farini and the nine-year-old Wasgatt faced the world as father and son, though it is to be noted that Farini was only seventeen years older than Wasgatt. Sam appeared under the professional name El Niño Farini and the two appeared as a double act “Signor Farini and son, the Flying Wonders”. Sam’s speciality was beating a drum while suspended from a trapeze by the nape of his neck. Farini ensured a safety net was placed under the boy during this feat – a rare innovation at that period. In 1866, the duo had a successful season at Cremorne Gardens followed by a 320-night run at the Royal Alhambra Palace.



El Niño Farini



Farini and son Samuel offstage



Farini and El Niño Farini

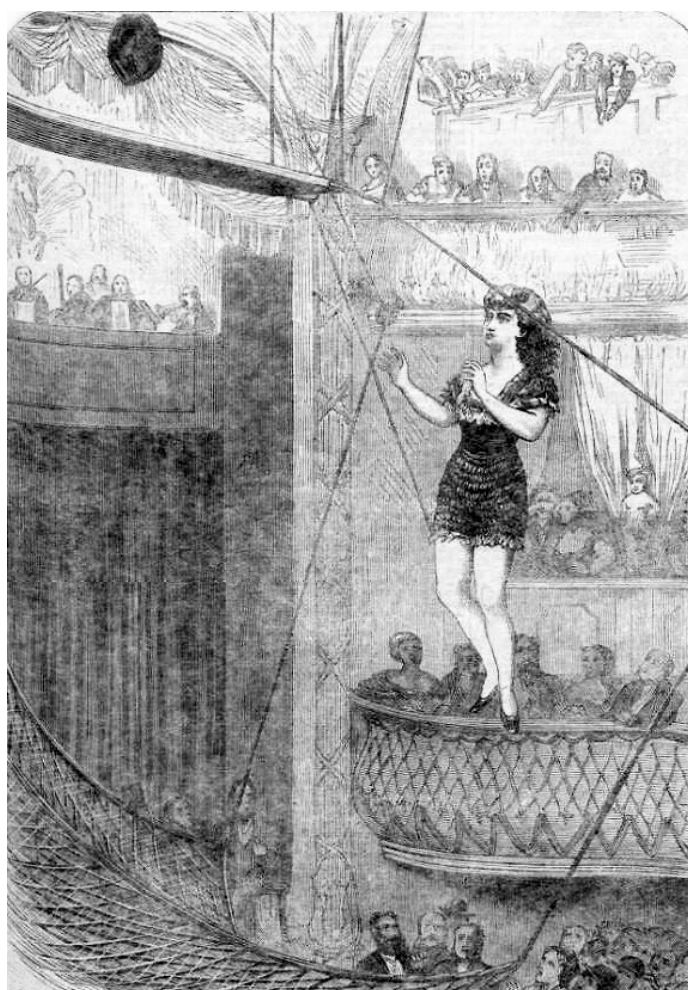
“The Beautiful Lulu”

In 1870, the pair decided that a female would have more appeal in selling the act and it was decided the now fifteen-year-old Sam should no longer be El Niño but transform himself into a glamorous girl becoming “The Beautiful Lulu”. That the impersonation was a huge success cannot be doubted though, as Farini’s son was well known in the UK, it was thought wiser to launch “her” in Paris. Lulu was rocketed into instant stardom, and after her French debut she arrived elsewhere as a major attraction, which was fortunate for Farini as he himself now feared falling and wanted to retire from performing. So managing Lulu – then soon after adding Zazel – Farini controlled two of the brightest and youngest female attractions in circusdom. The fact that one of them was actually male was not, at first, perceived and much admiration and acclamation showered upon the dainty young lady – “the Eighth Wonder of the World,” a “fearless and graceful” acrobat, “the very empress of gymnasts.” Many commentators noted her exceptional poise, captivating appearance, and beauty. Charles Coote Jr wrote the *Lulu Waltz* in her honour which she used to accompany her act. Music copies bore a coloured picture of her in full flight taken from a publicity poster.

However, we must remind ourselves that this was a period of gas lighting in theatres and circuses, and when females were swathed in more clothing than in later times. These factors would, presumably, have



Lulu Coloured poster 1871



Lulu mid-leap 1871

assisted in Sam's mystique, as existing photographs hardly convey the impression conjured up by the hyperbolic language of admirers. However, these photographs sold in quantity to engender publicity

for the performer so must have perpetrated the image the Farinis desired.

American debut

Lulu made her debut in the USA in 1873 but, as time passed and Sam developed masculinity, rumours began circulating that Lulu was, in fact, male. It would seem that Sam himself realised he could not carry on impersonating a female for much longer. During a season in New York he is reported as saying "The old man ain't got more than a year or two of the Lulu business. I'm getting a moustache and ain't near as pretty as I was, either." But even people who realised that Lulu was really a man still flocked to see him. They regarded the impersonation as part of the skill of his act. After all, in our own time, we did not stop going to see Danny La Rue when we knew he was really a man, did we?



Lulu 1875

The crunch finally came on 7 August 1876 at Hengler's Circus in Dublin. Lulu missed her trapeze, fell into the safety net and bounced out to smash into the gallery railings and thence to the arena. Gossip all round the showbusiness world spoke of injury and possible imminent death. These reports were wildly exaggerated as Lulu, writing to the press in what can only be described as a typical Yankee cocksure manner, claimed that he/she did not miss the net but, failing to grasp it, fell out. He was not alarmed at any stage, having fallen into the net many times at practice and performance. He said his father caught him on the rebound, and he was only



Lulu 1873 USA

momentarily stunned. Furthermore, he was not so foolish as to not be fully prepared with a safety net, and now, having realised that it did not fully cover a possible variance of trajectory, he would arrange that it was extended. Lulu blamed missing the bar on the fact that the springing platform's setting was slightly higher at the front than it should have been. He/she was reported to be "rusticating in Plymouth . . . under the skilful treatment of Dr Owen, Lulu is progressing with greater rapidity than could have been expected." So much so that in September, Lulu was starring in the show at the Folies Bergère in Paris. Although many had previously suspected Lulu was male, after the accident there was no doubt.

The oddest thing was that he stopped pretending to be female but kept the name Lulu and wore the same costumes while having his hair cut and sporting a waxed moustache. In his private life he married Farini's younger sister Edith Hunt in 1875 and two years later the couple produced a daughter Julia Wasgatt Farini. As an adult, Wasgatt was in charge of his own destiny and, as Farini was now more taken up with the Zazel act and other managerial enterprises, the father and son were drawing apart.

Final performance announced

In the *Era* of 30 June 1878, Lulu announced that he had done the last performance of his famous act

and was working on a new sensation that would be revealed in due course.

It must be that with losing his youthful female image, Lulu's appeal was diminishing. Otherwise it seems unnecessary in 1878 for Lulu – with a slight name change – to team up with twenty-four year-old gymnast Albert Hopkins forming a double act as Lu Lu & Ala. In this new act Lu Lu abandoned his usual vertical leap replacing it with a longer lateral flight into a net. From press descriptions this seems to have been much the same as the Zazel act with a ballista-type catapult instead of a cannon. The act played a six week season at the opening of the new Blackpool Winter Gardens in the summer of 1878. Details of the act are scanty but it appears that tightrope walking was included with Lu Lu playing a violin. The duo must have been well paid as Sam inserted column length advertisements in successive weekly issues of the *Era* including lengthy press reviews and self-penned encomiums.

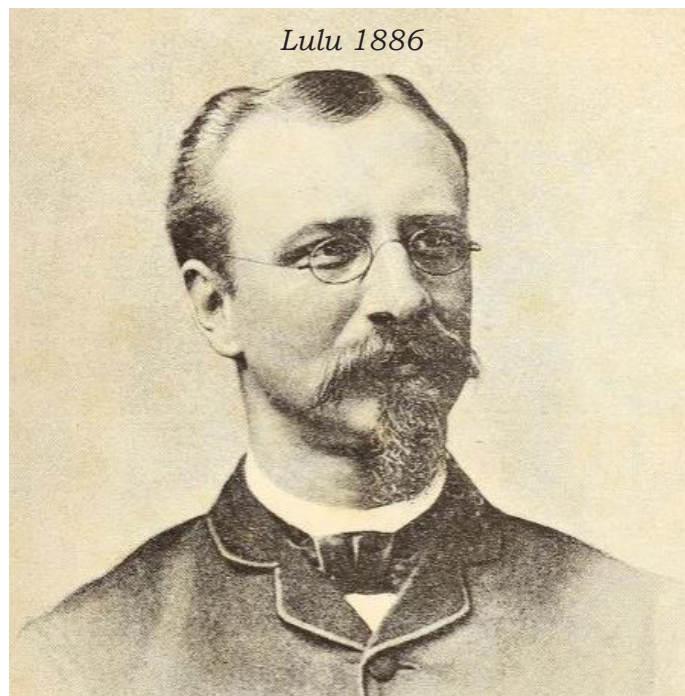
The duo appeared at Nottingham Goose Fair during October 1878, followed by Liverpool St James's Hall. They returned to Blackpool Winter Gardens for summer 1879. It may be that the act proved less successful than expectations and the gymnasts went their separate ways as Lu Lu was advertised as making his first London appearance as a male on 29 September 1879 at Westminster Aquarium. In the event because of a flaw in the ballista catapult his appearance was postponed until 6 October. Apparently when set up and tried by propelling a dummy the apparatus collapsed. His advertisement announcing the delay laid great stress on the fact that the invention was his alone, the design his creation, and the manufacture under his solo supervision. This would seem to emphasise his parting from Farini, though the latter at this time was involved with the management of the Westminster Aquarium and had a troupe of Zulus there.

When Lu Lu finally made his London masculine debut, he was clad in a close fitting black suit and was wearing spectacles as well as his moustache; he suffered from short sight. He preceded his new flight with solo swinging from trapeze to trapeze in the manner of Léotard and was not always successful. Although boosted in advertisements, the *Penny Illustrated Paper* of 10 October 1879 opined the flight was the clumsiest and most uninteresting of Lulu's feats. However, Lu Lu suffered an accident at rehearsal which put him out of action, though it was firstly announced he merely "had a cold", this was altered to resting because of "mental exhaustion". It was rumoured that it had actually "taken the pluck out of the performer".

There is no evidence of Lu Lu performing in the UK after this date, and it may well be that Sam – married with a growing child – realised that risking his neck twice daily was not a good idea. In 1881, Farini, Zazel and Lu Lu were all in America where Farini went into partnership with Coup another circus entrepreneur to create a large circus to rival Barnum's. Any former coolness between foster-father and son was now a mended fence and Lu Lu was the star attraction and the highest paid artiste even though Zazel was on the

bill too. Lu Lu presented both his former vertical leap stunt and his ballista catapult flight. The venture was an outstanding success, but for some reason at the end of the season Farini surrendering his interest in it, returned to England. In 1882, both Zazel and Lu Lu appeared in Barnum's show.

In 1883, Samuel Wasgatt retired from performing and went into a photographic business back in Maine with his brother **Lycurgus Wasgatt**. In 1885, Samuel accompanied Hunt/Farini on an expedition to the Kalahari Desert as official photographer. Wasgatt's photographs of the journey have come to be regarded as important historical documents. A book *Through the Kalahari Desert* detailing the expedition with some of Sam's pictures was published in 1886. The volume included a photograph of Samuel Wasgatt as he then was, but it was captioned "LULU", THE ARTIST. In the 1890s, Wasgatt operated a photo studio in Barnum's hometown of Bridgeport, and later moved to New York. He died in 1939.



2022 CFA / ACP PRIVILEGE CARD

During 2022 fully paid up CFA members can visit the ACP member circuses listed below for free on presentation of a current issue Privilege Card. These circuses participate in the scheme, negotiated to allow members additional benefits to their CFA membership. A current issue Privilege card must be presented to the circus box office and it must be noted that Not All ACP members are able to participate. Particular attention must be made to the list below and the up-to-date list of circuses provided with the card when it is issued.

Circus Extreme

Circus Fantasia

Circus Hilarious (Only when in a tent)

Circus of Horrors (Only when in a tent and not when at festival or theatres))

Circus Cortex

Circus Wonderland

Continental Circus Berlin (EEC Ltd)

Duffys Circus Ireland

Gifford's Circus

Circus Extreme Stunt Show

Gandeys Circus (Only when in a tent and not when in a Butlins camp)

Happy's Circus Red and Blue Units (When not a pre-sold show to schools etc.)

Hippodrome Circus Great Yarmouth

Jay Millers Circus

John Lawson's Circus

Planet Circus

Russell's International Circus

Zippos Circus (Not at Hyde Park or in theatres)

Zippos Cirque Berserk (When in a tent only)

Circus Starr

Please note that NOT all ACP members are able to participate in the Privilege Card scheme, only those listed above, and therefore all current ACP members are not listed. Seats are subject to availability and early attendance or prior contact with the box office is recommended.

Apply today for your 2022 Privilege Card: Single person Card £20; Couples £25; Family Card £30 (TWO named adults and up to TWO children under 16, children must be named and date of birth given with application)

You MUST send a stamped, self-addressed envelope, including your postcode, with your letter of application, which should give the full names of all cardholders and where appropriate date of birth. Two current passport size photographs of the main applicant should also be included each year and cash, cheque or postal order payable to CFA/ACP Privilege Account. Photographs, which should have been taken within the last 12 months, can be obtained from coin-operated kiosks in many retail and public outlets and cannot be returned.

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

Following some previous problems with the use of the card, the conduct of members is expected be of a high standard and may be monitored by circus management for future suitability and acceptance to the scheme. Please maintain the highest standards of conduct in order that you and other members can continue to benefit from the considerable concessions provided. When cards are issued, a CFA document entitled "Creating a Good Impression" is enclosed for the guidance and consideration of members.

IRISH NEWS AND REPORTS

Covid Restrictions Ease Somewhat for Christmas

By Richard McMinn

The arrival of the new Omicron variant in Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, resulted in modifications to existing Covid restrictions. With mask wearing in certain public locations, including indoor entertainment venues and the production of vaccination certificates to secure entry to such venues already in place, the Irish Government in mid-December was forced to enhance its precautions to give time for the vaccination booster roll-out to take place. Thus, it closed nightclubs, introduced a 50 per cent capacity limit for all indoor entertainments and from 19 December, an 8.00 pm mandatory closing time, which also applied to bars and restaurants. A compensation scheme for business disruption was promised. These changes were introduced with little advance warning and necessitated the rejigging of some performance times by the Irish circus industry. But at least a full Christmas lockdown was this year avoided. Three circus big tops were being used in Dublin and Cork for Christmas-themed shows – Duffy's beside Tallaght Stadium in Dublin West, the Wayne Courtney family's tent at Charlestown Shopping Centre in Dublin North and Fossett's at Blackpool on the outskirts of Cork City. Theatres were more seriously impacted by the new restrictions, given the loss of their evening performances and having tried to continue, most of the pantomimes in the end closed completely because of Covid outbreaks amongst cast members. Undoubtedly, the pantomime closures benefited all three circuses from a business perspective, albeit to a limited extent given the cap on audience numbers.

There were fewer restrictions north of the border in Northern Ireland, so the Belfast-based Tumble Circus was able to stage its fifth 'Winter Circus' in its relatively small, two-pole big top, after a lockdown absence in 2020-21, on its usual site in Writers' Square, facing St. Anne's Cathedral in the city centre. The show was, as previously, presented by the regular Tumble Company of founders/aerialists Ken Fanning and Tina Segner, plus solo juggler Grant Goldie, acrobats and ensemble jugglers Henrik Gard, Angelique 'Reckless' Ross, hula hoop artist Ali Stanger, drag clown Paul 'Bucky' Taylor and seven-year-old Kasper, possibly Ireland's youngest solo trapeze artist. The Tumble show ran for 26 performances, as planned, from 17 December to 3 January. The content reflected the usual Tumble formula of comedy and circus skills blended with a highly original and quirky modern music soundtrack. This fifth year of the Tumble Winter Circus, which had to incorporate social distancing arrangements in a limited space, was made possible by grant support from a number of funders including the Northern Ireland Arts Council.

Irish Circus Featured in Channel Four 'Short Stories' Television Season

Donegal-based, female, white-faced clown, Jessica Harkin, who in the summer of 2021 provided the clowning input to Circus Corvenio Elysium's weekend shows, was the subject of one of the above short documentaries, with some glimpses of the Elysium big top and performances intercut with coverage of her life story and extensive clown doll collection. Irish contortionist and hula hoop performer Darragh Merritt was also on the 2021 Elysium show. The programme can be accessed at the time of writing via Facebook.

Tom Duffy's Christmas Circus 2021

Report by John Whittle

Photograph by Niall Carson

"Imagine a place where panto meets award winning circus" were the enticing words which featured in the extensive promotion for Tom Duffy's first Christmas circus at Tallaght Stadium, Dublin. Despite all of the difficulties surrounding indoor activities and indeed the unfortunate closure of a number of live theatre events in Dublin over the Christmas period, the circus opened as scheduled and ran between 9 December 2021 and 9 January 2022. The following was the running order when I saw the show on 2 January.

"Let the Christmas tale begin" were the final words of the spoken introduction on the sound system and we were welcomed in person by Happy, the Christmas Elf (Joel Hatton), who played a central role in the afternoon's proceedings. He began by filling a washing machine with Santa's clothes. Joel's interaction with the audience was excellent throughout this show and he established a great rapport with them from the very beginning. When he discovered that the clothes had shrunk, he enlisted everyone to, "Help Santa to find his missing clothes" The discovery of these items in or attached to various props during the programme added greatly to the overall enjoyment and sense of fun. Add in ringmaster David Duffy and Elf's topical and festive banter and joke telling, and you get an idea of the 'panto' elements of this show. This colourful opening sequence was a potpourri of circus: Joel riding his unicycle, Romy Baeur and Leticia Silva Coelho on the silks and Anastacia Zuniga Jidkov on the trapeze Washington, who concluded this opening sequence with a head balance on the trapeze bar.

It was good to see David Marquez back at Duffys. His first appearance was a 'socially distant' version of the coin/bucket gag. After relieving some patrons of their coins and filling his 'loot' sack, he transformed himself into a dwarf before his comic exit.

Sophie Griffiths, Aisling McCarthy and Betty Bell

performed an enchanting dance sequence to the music 'Carol of the Bells' as a prelude to Romy Baeur's equally enchanting aerial globe act. The transparency of the globe defined so much of this act. High above the smoke-filled ring and to the music 'Let it Go', she performed a number of acrobatic shapes and bends both inside and outside of the globe, including a handstand, regular and inverted splits and hangs. Romy opened and closed the halves of the globe to facilitate further displays, including hanging by her two feet and one hand, followed by a toe hang. After performing the splits to prise open the two halves of the globe, she ended her act with a one hand drop down to the ground. The discovery of Santa's missing boots and a joke about a carrot also featured at this point, but that's another story.

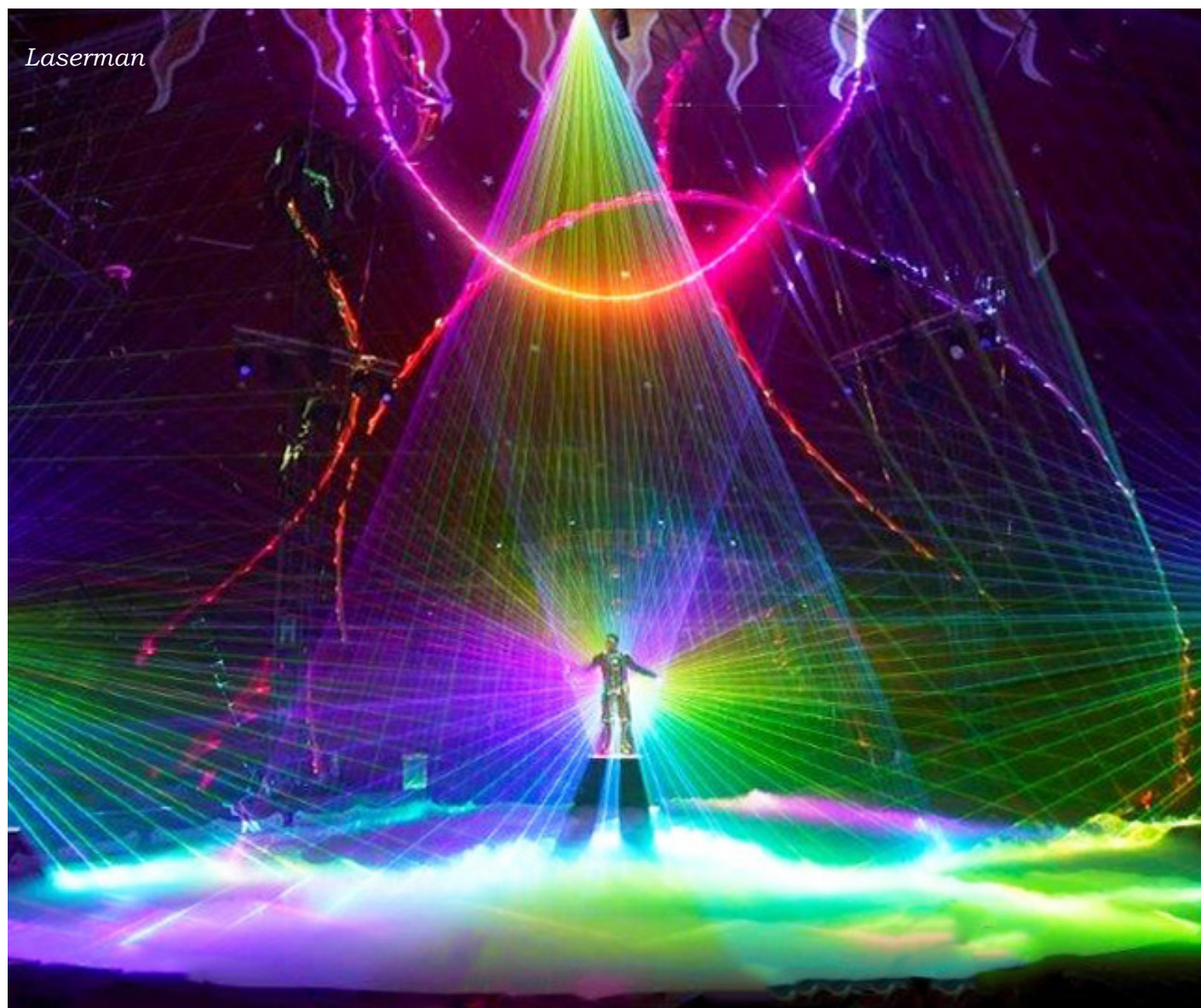
A complete blackout was the prelude to the appearance of the ever popular Laserman (Jamie Duffy). This was a really spectacular display of strobe lighting, lasers, blasts of fire and techno music and was a huge favourite with adults and children.

There was further technological wizardry, with a comic touch, when David Marquez showed off the powers of his new iPhone app. To stop ringmaster David Duffy from ordering him out, he used the app to 'freeze' him to the spot....with hilarious results. From technology to traditional Christmas: attired in red and white and each holding a candle Sophie,

Aisling and Betty gave a lovely rendition of 'Silent Night'. And then something completely different as Guilherme Sepuveda, 'The Archer', presented his crossbow act. This unusual display of skill and precision was enthusiastically received by the audience, as Guilherme's arrows hit a variety of targets which were held by his partner Evelin Zuniga, beginning with two balloons, one inside the other, with the smaller one held in Evelin's mouth. Other targets included a playing card and a pink scarf hit in mid-air. This was followed by Guilherme, with his back to the target using a small hand held mirror to guide his shot. Then, after setting and coordinating five crossbow stands, Guilherme concluded his act on a tense and dramatic note by shooting one arrow from his crossbow, thereby setting off the other five and shooting an apple which was placed above his own head.

The Christmas Penguin's attempts to lift a barbell from the centre of the ring were unsuccessful, so David Marquez in his inflatable clown costume came to the rescue and successfully lifted it. David followed this with his visually comic bounces, twists and handstands to the music 'Get ready for this'.

Tchaikovsky's 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' was the soundtrack to a charming ballet sequence performed by Sophie, Aisling and Betty. As with all of the dance numbers, this was an excellent combination



of talent, well-chosen music and superb lighting. It made a most effective introduction to Liana Marquez's aerial chandelier presentation. But first, there was still the issue of Santa's missing clothes: Liana found his hat on her chandelier and returned it to Happy the Elf, much to his delight. Up above the clouds once again and to the song 'Once Upon a December', Liana's revolves included a one arm spin, splits inside and outside the illuminated chandelier, inverted splits, stand out poses and hanging by one knee. A fast neck spin concluded this act which, in many ways, could be described as a ballerina in the air.

David Marquez and ringmaster David Duffy covered the erection of the safety net with a Christmas themed 'You can't play here' gag. The enjoyment level was heightened by the inclusion of favourite songs such as 'Merry Christmas Everybody' and by David Duffy adopting the role of 'The Grinch' with great effect.

The three talented and versatile dancers dressed in striking yellow, red and black and the popular song 'Feliz Navidad' set the scene for the next act: The Flying Zuniga from Brazil. Circus as an art form is constantly evolving but one constant in the ever expanding spectrum of circus acts is the flying trapeze and The Flying Zuniga is among the best of contemporary flying acts. Guilherme Sepuveda is the catcher and the flyers are Leticia Silva Coelho, Evelin Zuniga, Wagner Da Silva Santos and Joaquim Zuniga Sepuveda (Guilherme and Evelin's son). Their routine included Leticia performing a set split and later a plange catch and return, a double somersault by Joaquim and a double layout by Wagner. The audience required no prompts to show their appreciation: their spontaneous applause throughout said it all. The biggest cheer was for the triple somersault performed to precision by Wagner. To conclude Joaquim and Evelin executed a double passage. Duffys have presented many premier flying acts to Irish audiences over the years and this tradition is admirably continued with The Flying Zuniga.

The second half began with Happy the Christmas Elf and his fellow elves (Aisling, Sophie, Betty, Candice and Romy) having some festive fun as he sang 'I belong in Christmas town', from the movie 'Elf'. The presence of huge toy like props made for an effective lead into the next act: The Avengers Ensemble illusion presentation. This featured Captain America (Jamie Duffy), Thor (Tom Duffy), Spiderman (Juma Badi Abdurahamani), Deadpool (Morris Mungoma) and Hawkeye (Joaquim Zuniga Sepuveda). Liana Marquez, Anastacia Zuniga Jidkov and Leticia Silva Coelho combined to make this a production number as well as an act. The illusions featured were the appearance of two girls from a tall circular metal prop, the Spiker illusion (involving the vanishing and reappearance of a girl in a cabinet into which illuminated rods were inserted) and the Shadow illusion in a cabinet with flexible sides. The act had a dramatic conclusion, when Captain America was shot from a huge cannon on wheels, only to mysteriously reappear in a smaller box after it was lowered from the cupola.

Clown David Marquez entered wearing a dressing gown complete with scrubbing brush, a towel and his rubber duck, ready for his bath. In the bath, he was 'attacked' by a shark which he eventually managed to overcome and, in the process, succeeded

in locating Santa's missing pants.

The Kenya Boys (Morris Mungoma and Juma Badi Abdurahamani) presented their popular limbo dancing display to the music 'Hot Hot Hot'. They were ably assisted by the three dancers aka 'The Madagascar Crew' and Happy the Elf. The routine consisted of passing under the bar each time it was lowered, including passing under a flaming bar when it was set on two beer bottles. The Kenyans' skill, combined with the music, clapping and dancing, all combine to make this act a family favourite.

One of the delights in watching David Marquez work is his superb body language. His facial expressions are a delight. This is particularly enjoyable when he has a volunteer from the audience with him, so I was delighted to see him reprise his balloon version of the William Tell gag with a lady volunteer from the audience. As each balloon burst and things became more manic, the laughter from the audience got louder and all of this without a word being spoken. A great clown indeed.

A beautifully choreographed dance sequence featuring The Auroras (Liana Marquez, Candice Taylor, Anastacia Zuniga Jidkov and Leticia Silva Coelho) introduced their aerial sphere presentation. To the song 'All is Found', Leticia gestured to 'wake' the other three from their slumber on the ring fence and beckoned them to the centre of the ring. I found it intriguing the way that the sphere was at the centre of this act in every sense of the word. After their first ascent, the four each completed a one foot hang, followed by inverted splits. Back down to earth, a change of music to 'Beyond the Bounds of Joy' heralded a change of pace and they were up again above the cloud-like smoke. A wide range of splits, hangs and poses were performed, including a beautiful hang by Leticia from Candice and Anastacia and for the final spectacle, Leticia and Liana executed neck spins while the other girls hung from the bars of the revolving sphere. For any one of the four to perform this act on her own would be a fine act indeed: for the four of them to perform with such precision and co-ordination was poetry in motion.

Tom and Jamie Duffy's Space Wheel of Death ensured that the show ended on a high note in every sense of the word. This was as thrilling, fast and spectacular as ever, as both young men worked inside and outside the wheel, performing lay outs, walks, jumps and skips. Both performed a blindfolded walk on the outside of the drums and followed this with skipping. The act concluded with Jamie's trademark high jumps and forward somersault on the outside of the revolving drum.

But the Christmas story was not quite over. Happy the Elf returned to show us that Santa's clothes had been found and then led the cast and audience in singing Mariah Carey's 'All I want for Christmas'. Santa himself arrived and David Duffy introduced "the artists of Tom Duffy's Circus 2022", before bidding farewell.

It takes a huge amount of work, organisation and planning to put on a circus at any time of the year. To do so at Christmas 2021, and for the first time, was a huge undertaking for the Duffy family, cast and crew. It is a credit to their professionalism that this production was so very enjoyable and successful.

Courtney's Daredevil Christmas Circus 2021

Charlestown Shopping Centre Car Park, Dublin
Report by Michael Ingoldsby

Daredevil Entertainments, directed by the Wayne Courtney Family, presented its Christmas Circus at the Charlestown Shopping Centre Car Park in Dublin from 17 December 2021 to 9 January 2022.

The interior of the four-mast big top was decorated in keeping with the festive season. A new lighting system, incorporating the very latest in lighting equipment and the usage of white and multi-coloured lamps, has transformed the presentation of the programme and has all been developed by young Jack Courtney. In his very young days, he assisted his grandfather, the late Tom Courtney who dealt with the show's electrics, generators and trucks and with the benefit of Tom's tutoring, Jack now deals with the upkeep of all these areas of the show.

The Christmas show commenced with the Globe of Death by Daniel and Partner. The act which is so fast and furious on the motor bikes, leaves the audience breathless with excitement.

This is followed by Spiderman on the cloud swing. The act is executed by Dylan Courtney and can only be described as another exciting thrill act. Young Jack Courtney with Talia Hawker presents his outstandingly fast juggling act. This is followed by a complete change of tempo in the programme. The lights dim and the sound of howling dogs is heard. As the lights brighten, we see four igloos in the ring and then four husky dogs with their presenter Sommer Courtney. What follows is a lovely dog act with the happiest troupe of performing dogs I have seen in years. As the dogs depart from the ring, a lovely terrier 'Baxter' enters and after some small tricks, he gets on to the ring fence and commences running around it. By the time he reaches the entrance to the ring he takes a flying leap into the air, only to be caught by Sommer. This is followed by the Ghost Busters, aka Jack Courtney and Darren Shears. The routine was very well done and aroused much excitement and shouting by the children in the audience and many of the adults. The next act was especially aimed at the children when two of the current and most popular Transformers, Bumble Bee and Optimus Prime, were presented. The sheer excitement and the reaction of the children had to be seen to be believed. This brought the first part of the programme to a close.

The second part of the performance commenced with a lighting show by Laser Girl on to the roof of the tent. While this exhibition is relatively new in circus, audience reaction was most positive.

Next was Talia Hawker with her new presentation on the swinging solo trapeze. This type of trapeze act is seldom seen today, much is the pity. The skill of the young lady was amazing, as her trapeze swung from one side of the tent to the other, she performed drops and catches to the bar. It is many years since I saw such a splendid aerial act. (Talia from North Wales commenced her circus career on Russell's Circus and worked in Ireland on Circus Gerbola in 2019.) Two young girls (Ella and Safia) presented a short act with performing geese. Clown Darren returned with the radio gag, to the annoyance of ringmaster Dylan

Courtney, as the trampoline was set for a wrestling match by Dylan and Jack Courtney. The act comprised much great trampoline work and created much laughter and cheering. This was followed by the finale when all the artists said goodbye. The show was full of excitement and fast moving acts with lots and lots of laughter. The applause and cheering of the audience were proof indeed of how much they enjoyed the show.

Fossett's Christmas Circus 2021

Report by John Whittle
Photograph courtesy of Fossett's Circus

The announcement that Fossett's Circus would be presenting their first Christmas Circus at Blackpool Shopping Centre, Cork was indeed good news. Notwithstanding the difficulties in relation to audience capacity, as well as an 8pm curfew on all indoor activities, the show did go ahead and gave its first public performance on Saturday 18 December and completed its run on Sunday 9 January. The following was the running order when I saw the show on 29 December.

Kelly Clarkson's 'Underneath the Tree' provided a perfect soundtrack to the opening seasonal dance number featuring Sarah Fossett, Danni Wang, Kira Szabo, Owen Fossett, Stefano Huesca, Roland Pfeiffer and, of course, Otto the clown. Each took a wrapped gift box from underneath the two Christmas trees either side of the ring doors and incorporated this into the dance routine. This was followed by ringmistress Marion Fossett's warm welcome to the audience.

To the music of the Boston Pops Orchestra's version 'Sleigh Ride', Owen Fossett and Stefano Huesca then exchanged gift boxes and both discovered a set of diablo sticks and an axle in each. This was a clever and effective cue to begin their double diablo presentation. The act seems to get faster and more synchronised each time I see it, with a variety of high throws, spins and catches prominent. The interplay between both young men included throwing and passing axles from one to the other high in the roof of the tent. Both took turns at spinning an axle each, before a third one was introduced and the three were passed from one to the other in a visually impressive display. This was followed by Otto's comedy diablo entrée.

The Hungarian couple Roland Pfeiffer and Kira Szabo contributed three acts to this Christmas circus. The first of these was Roland's unsupported ladder presentation in which he was assisted by Kira. Accompanied by the music 'Bukovina', Roland completed a variety of climbs and balances as he skilfully moved up and through the ladder rungs. This was followed by a forward and backward ladder walk, before somersaulting back to the ground. He then juggled three clubs, followed by four rings, while balancing on the ladder. A hands-free balance and a backwards 'fall' from the ladder plus a kiss from Kira concluded this charming act.

It was good to see Otto repeat his 'circus app' entrée which went down so well at October's 'Celtic Voyage' at Slane Castle. After demonstrating what his new app could do in terms of controlling the lights with his iPhone, he refused to vacate the ring when



the wheel into a flat spin, resembling a coin losing speed. The applause at the end was enthusiastic. This act was as entertaining as it was skilful and it added another dimension to the variety of this Fossett programme.

It was good to see the return of audience participation, this time with Otto's vortex cannon which proved to be as popular as ever. He shot paper cups from the top of the heads of children in the ringside chairs, using both a hand held cannon and the larger cannon.

No introduction was required for the act that closed the first half, The Duo Alambria's new motorcycle on the wire act announced itself as they ascended the inclined wire from the darkness. Elena executed a number of hangs, balances and splits from the frame suspended below, while Abdelhak stood up and balanced on the bike. After she executed a horizontal balance on the frame, Abdelhak completed a handstand on the handlebars. A 360 degree revolution of the bike and frame was the climax to this bright, colourful and daring act.

We were back in the air for the start of the second half as Owen Fossett premiered his new Wheel act. Utilising one drum at present, he displayed agility and skill in a routine that included forward and backward runs, high jumps, lay downs and forward handstand flicks. This was an impressive debut all round and no doubt we shall be seeing more of this talented young artist with this act. Otto and his popcorn throwing gag was next.

Sarah Fossett's aerial hammock presentation made a welcome return to the family circus programme. The brooding song 'Sail' by AWOL Nation once again was the perfect soundtrack to this act. Three spotlight flashes in the darkness as she lay in the centre of the ring made for an effective opening before her first ascent. In the air, Sarah performed a number of hangs and splits across the hammock, which were augmented by rising and falling poses and dropdowns to the ground. A flying sequence in which she circled the ring and a spinning neck hang brought this display to a powerful conclusion amid enthusiastic applause.

Stefano Huesca reprised his skilful ball bounce juggling number which was part of the 2021 touring programme. As the act progressed, Stefano increased both the number of balls that he bounced on the pedestal and the number of turnarounds, which included bouncing balls through his legs. Fast music and UV lighting both contributed to the overall impact. The act concluded with Stefano juggling an impressive eight balls onto the pedestal. Following on from this, Otto had fun playing table tennis with some members of the audience who were seated in the ringside chairs.

Irish audiences have been fortunate to have seen some first class Hungarian artists over the years and the next act, the Duo Saffy (Kira Szabo and Roland Pfeiffer) with their Chinese Pole presentation is up there with the best of them. To the music, 'Never give up on your Dreams', the act opened with Roland's dramatic dropdown from the top of the pole to take his partner in his arms, thus establishing the chemistry between them which was at the heart of this act. Kira then executed a variety of poses and splits on the pole, which was followed by Roland's

ordered to do so by Marion. Even Stefano Huesca's attempts to remove him were in vain, as he became the hapless victim of Otto's technical wizardry by being 'frozen' to the spot. Otto then had plenty of fun as he adorned Stefano with a handbag and a wraparound floral-patterned scarf with the inevitable results when Stefano was 'unfrozen'.

Fossett's Magic Review with Alana Fossett, Danni Wang and Owen Fossett featured next. One would not think that these three young artists have been presenting this act for such a relatively short period of time. Alana was the first to vanish and reappear and she was followed by Danni, who climbed into a trapezoid cabinet. Eleven silver rods were inserted by Owen, with Alana's assistance, before Danni reappeared. These are three accomplished and versatile artists who never fail to impress.

Cyr wheel presentations have been relatively rare in Irish circuses, so the next act was a particular treat Kira Szabo's solo cyr wheel. Rotations and balances were at the heart of this display and Caitlin DeVille's 'Conquest' provided the perfect accompaniment, indeed, it was as if the music was bringing the wheel to life. Kira performed a variety of split rotations in different poses and turns, keeping the wheel moving at all times, as well as 'The Coin' where she forced

hand climb up and down the pole. The remainder of the act saw the couple perform together, where their feats included Kira hanging by her foot from her partner's hand while doing vertical splits, a hand balance on Roland's knees and Kira suspended from Roland's hands. Finally, Kira completed a one hand spin from Roland's hand and the act concluded, as it had begun, with his sudden dropdown to align himself with the kneeling Kira's face, to allow the couple the inevitable kiss. I was struck by the way the pole, like the Cyr wheel earlier, is the barest and most elemental of props and thereby serves to highlight the human skill and sheer artistry of these talented young performers.

Clown Otto's final appearance was his bell ringing entrée, which made a welcome return after an absence of some years. Four adults and one child from the audience were put through their paces by Otto with many laughs as he taught them how to play 'The Blue Danube'.

The Duo Alambria's high wire act was the perfect number to conclude this strong Christmas programme. Dressed in attractive blue and gold

costumes, both artists were already in position when the spotlight shone on them and Abdelhak began by walking up the inclined wire. After some quick runs backwards and forwards, he completed a jump over a sitting Elena in the middle of the wire. Following Abdelhak's skipping on the wire, Elena, encouraged by the clapping of the audience, completed a stand up on a chair. Abdelhak then cycled across the wire, before both artists walked to the centre and Elena bore Abdelhak's weight on her shoulders. I am always impressed by the great rapport between this couple and their audience. The act concluded with Abdelhak descending the wire and Elena standing on his shoulders. This was a thrilling finish to a great act: pure circus!

To the music of 'Fairy-tale of New York', ringmistress Marion Fossett re-introduced the cast and each artist bore a lighted candle as they walked around the ring. Marion concluded by singing 'White Christmas', the perfect note on which to end this colourful, entertaining and most festive circus experience.

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO THE CIRCUS

By Professor Ron Beadle

There has always been a vibrant circus literature, penned by journalists, circus fans, artistes and directors (often with ghost writers) and amateur historians. But you could count the number of academic contributors to the fingers of one hand until about 20 years ago. There was Canadian Paul Bouissac, who had once worked as a teacher for the Bougliones. His major outputs began with a study of Circus and Culture in the late 1970's. The Israeli sociologist Yoram Carmeli wrote about his tours with British circuses in the 1970s for the next three decades. They were joined by a small group of academic historians and very few others.

From 2000 onwards, a far larger group have joined them. There are now international academic conferences, at least one ongoing seminar series (in Montreal), websites and regular publications, of which this is the second major collection. Skip through the Bibliography and you find very little written before 2000.

Academic interest in circus is intimately linked to the intellectual aspirations of contemporary circus. The academics researching circus are overwhelmingly writing for this rebellious offspring of classical circus. That said, Dr Gillian Arrighi (Newcastle, Australia) and Dr Jim Davis (Warwick, UK) show no sectarianism here and plenty of space is devoted to classical circus. The collection comprises fourteen chapters in four parts and there are things to be learned throughout, even if the academic language will be off-putting to some. Each chapter provides both a subject matter and a theme, be it race, colonialism, gender, spectacle and so on.

Part 1 presents histories of circus in different places. Following the tale of Astley and the origins

we are off to American railroad circuses, Australian imported and home-grown circus, the Argentinian Criollo Circus, Czech Circus and the history of Chinese Acrobatics spreading West. The second part looks at different types of acts from equestrian to military re-enactments, clowning and aerial. In the third part, various species of circus are considered including circus acts in variety, the development of new circus from the 1970s, youth circus and social circus. The final part presents an unnecessarily self-congratulatory close with two chapters exalting the current circus literature.

Any collection of this type offers highlights and lowlights. Of the latter, the concluding paragraph of the chapter on Czech circus manages to be contemptuous and contemptible at the same time. Its authors write: "While traditional circus is perceived as a romantic vestige of the traditions of the past that also aspires to cultural-heritage status, contemporary circus constitutes the embodiment of a present-day challenge, with an emerging generation of artists dedicated to searching for new forms of expression and transcending boundaries between individual art forms" (page 89). It is unworthy of the rest and whilst the editors deserve praise for this collection, here they should have exemplified a traditional circus virtue and put their foot down. The editors are Arrighi, Gillian and Davis and Jim (Editors). Published in paperback in 2021 by Cambridge University Press. It has 292 pages and an ISBN 978-1-108-71922-3. The price of the publication is £20.53.

CFA INFORMATION

Membership Secretary's Report

By Jodi Timms

Welcome to New member

Ordinary member - John Moore, Antrim
Overseas member - Jacob Roach, USA
Associate members - David Henry, Ireland; Laura Ivers, Ireland
Resignation - George Bruce, Peterhead
Deaths - David Clark, Essex; Roy Sharp, Dorset; Ernie Mexter, Ashford

Donations

Wendy Barsley, London; Michael Marsh, Cheshire; Donal Dempsey, Ireland; Neil Calladine, Derbyshire; Mary Thorn, Newbury; Clive Phillipson, London; David Winters, London; Nigel Vanstone, Cornwall; Leslie Blackamore, Lincs; John Joe Joyce, Ireland; Brian Allison, West Sussex; Nick Bull, Maidenhead; John Whitehead, Dundee; Roger Cawley, Somerset; Peter Shaw, Stockport; Chris Hart, Hampshire; Richard Ratcliffe, Worthing; Jack Butterworth, Derby; Ronald Gordon, Glasgow; Graham Hunt, Suffolk; Andrew Parsons, Dorset; Richard Parsons, Newton Abbot.

The President's Message

By Don Stacey

This time Christmas came and went and was certainly more festive than last year. All the circuses opened and played their seasons, albeit with some seating restrictions. Thankfully, despite prophesies that the Prime Minister would have to introduce new anti-covid restrictions against the Omicron strain these did not materialise in England although the rest of the United Kingdom did have more draconian remedies imposed. As far as I know, all those shows which mounted winter seasons did very good business, so their efforts were well-rewarded.

However, the future is far from free from Covid and we enter another year with some trepidation, but also hope and optimism. No matter what your way of life entails, we have all been greatly affected by the pandemic and its ongoing ramifications. The circus industry is just one example of a business fighting back against all odds. British circuses did, I feel, benefit from our government's attitude and the increased safeguards afforded by our superior vaccination campaign. Unfortunately, circuses in many continental countries suffered greatly with many Christmas seasons ruined in the Netherlands, France, Germany and elsewhere. However, looking on the bright side, let's hope we can maintain a flourishing circus industry this coming season with



RALLY TO ZIPPOS CIRCUS



The CFA is pleased to announce a rally to Zippos Circus on Sunday 10 April at Blackheath Common, London, SE3 9LE.

We will attend the 4.00pm performance, followed by a get together in the ring with the artistes and staff. The cost is £13 for adults and £8 for children under 14 years.

**AFTER AN ABSENCE OF TWO YEARS
LET'S MAKE THIS A BUMPER EVENT**

lots of shows for circus fans to support.

In addition to seeing membership increase during my period as President, I would also like to see a rise in Associate Membership and would use this column to remind readers who are in the industry that associate membership is open to all circus proprietors, staff and artistes. It entitles you not only to receive the King Pole magazine with its extensive news of the circus world but also to attend the Association's other events. Although you will not be able to vote on CFA matters or attend the AGM, you have all the other rights of membership. The Association was founded at Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia, London in 1934 so it is well on its way to becoming 100 years old. Celebrate your love of the industry you work in by becoming an associate member. Details can be found by visiting www.circusfriends.co.uk or by contacting the membership secretary Jodi Timms at Flat 2, 13 Albany Road, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex TN40 1BY or by email at Joditimmscfa@aol.com. The quarterly King Pole is always full of news and photographs plus topical and historical articles. Whether you are a fan or a worker in this great entertainment environment, may I wish you all a very happy circus year.

Gordon Birch

By John Exton

Gordon was born in Wilmslow, Cheshire in 1936 and lived in the county all his life. He passed away at his home in Wilmslow on Monday 31 January.

Gordon was always interested in circus and showmen and in 1957 when he was in the army and posted to Hong Kong his father sent him a copy of the World's Fair weekly showman's newspaper. In this was an advertisement for The Circus Fans Association of Great Britain which he promptly joined via the CFA Treasurer W.C. Best and subsequently received a very small format magazine called King Pole which eventually transformed into the King Pole as we know it today.

On leaving the army his first circus visit was probably to a CFA Rally at the Belle Vue Christmas Circus Manchester and he remembered this being a large gathering with long standing members including Lindsey Temple, Edward Greaves, Mary Longden, David Strachan, Lavinia Woods, and John Riddy attending.

Soon after there was a visit to the circus at Bingley Hall, Birmingham and during the tenting seasons visits to the "Big Three", Bertram Mills, Chipperfield's and Billy Smarts as they visited his area on a three-year cycle. Sir Robert Fossett's and Joe Gandey's Circus were also regular visitors to his area and Gordon and his wife Barbara, who predeceased him had a particularly close affinity with the Gandey family and Blackpool Tower Circus.

Gordon eventually became a CFA Area Organiser arranging visits and rallies to all the shows mentioned and many more. He also enjoyed pantomime and music hall where he often also found some of his friends from circus working during the winter months.

Gordon still occasionally got to visit circuses in his later years and although now a very different style of entertainment to when his interest started, he could still appreciate the modern production methods and effects. Condolences go to his daughter Sarah and his family.

More CFA news

By Don Stacey

Merchandising Manager

I feel it is high time that the efforts of our Merchandising Manager, Ian McEwen, were highlighted in King Pole. His is a year-round task to sell all the many items of circus interest that the CFA gathers each year which includes books, programmes and posters plus a wide variety of other circus items. He deserves a big vote of thanks for his unstinting efforts, the fruits of this labour being ploughed back into the CFA coffers.

Ernie Mexter

A long-standing member of the CFA, Ernie Mexter of Ererton, Ashford, Kent died at the beginning of December 2021 aged 86. He had Scottish origins and was born on 2 March 1935. He never married and for many years dutifully looked after his long-lived mother. He had a long career in local government and was a Chief Executive in Kent for many years.

He was probably unknown to most CFA members as he chose not to attend rallies but to the close circle of friends he did have he was a man with a heart of gold. These friends included the late Fraser Dudgeon and John Morris. Ernie served in the Army for his National Service and found himself posted in Germany where he was able to regularly visit Circus Krone in its building in Munich. In later years he and Fraser Dudgeon would go each winter to Munich in order to see all three winter shows or to Paris for the Christmas shows. I think it was in Paris that I first met him, since when we became friends and kept in regular contact. After Fraser was no longer able to travel, Ernie continued each winter with trips to Munich where on occasions I would meet up with him. He also enjoyed the annual Monte Carlo Circus Festival but gave up when he could no longer enjoy a show that lasted as long as four hours. He was frequently found in Dunkerque visiting Cirque Pinder or Amar. He was also well-known to all the shows travelling in the Kent area. A very private man, he enjoyed good food and was a connoisseur of fine wines. He liked nothing more than visiting the convivial bierkellers of Munich.

In recent years he had suffered from cancer, prostate problems and other illnesses. Last summer he spent weeks in hospital with serious heart trouble. He was eventually allowed home but had to have two carers to look after him, something which did not appeal to this intensely proud and private man. Sadly, respite was not to last long. He was a great circus lover and I am proud to have known him.

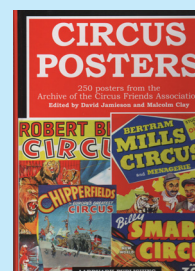
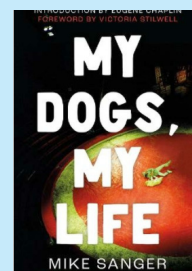
Sheila Lane

I understand that Mrs Sheila Lane, widow of long-time CFA member Ken Lane of Hove in Sussex died in December 2021. At one time Ken Lane had a thriving bookshop specialising in circus memorabilia. Over the years he had built up a huge circus collection and had a marvellous circus model at his premises in Blatchington Road in Hove.

CFA MERCHANDISING

CFA Souvenirs

Key Rings £1.50
 Enamel Badge £2.00
 Car Sticker £1.00
 Canvas Shopping Bag £6.50
 CFA Pen £1.50
 All souvenirs - P&P £1.50



Programme

Hippodrome Gt Yarmouth Christmas 2021

Summer programme with Christmas insert and poster - £5.00 + £1.50 P&P

DVD

Hippodrome Circus Gt Yarmouth - Pirates Live - running time: 1-hour 13min approximately.
 £12.50 + £2.00 P&P

Books

**Gerry Cottle`s Circus - Volume 3 1970-2020** by Andrew Payne - The Poster Art of Gerry Cottle`s Circus - £30.00 + £3.00 P&P (Limited Quantity)

My Dogs, My Life by Mike Sanger - "The life and legacy of a travelling canine comedy act"
 -£9.00 + £1.50 P&P

Circus Backstage Series No.5 - Circus Herman Renz - £23.00 + £2.50 P&P

Also, available: Backstage Series No.1 Krone - No.2 D`Hiver Bouglione - No.3 Charles Knie & No.4 Arlette Gruss - £23.00 each + £2.50 P&P

Circus Photo Magazine No.67 - Contents: The History of Circus Knie Part 8 - Circus Barones - Circus Pipo - Wiener Cirus - Circo Italiano - Circo Bellicci - Courtneys Daredevil Circus Special Italian Circus Part 3 - Circo di Mosca - Circo di Vienna - Circusland Besalu Spain - Cirque Lydia Zavatta - Paperback Magazine - 50 pages in full colour £10.00 + £1.50 P&P

Circus Transport 1991-2020 - Volume 8 By Henk van den Berg Transport Photo`s from: Arena - Americano-Faggioni - Arnardo - Barum - Belly Wien - Bouglione - Alexandre Bouglione - Fliegenpilz - Finlandia - Arlette Gruss - Charles Knie - Knie - Louis Knie - Krone - Maximum - Probst - Historic Ruluy - Herman Renz - Roncalli - Claudio Zavatta & Zippos - £30.00 + £3.00 P&P

CFA Books

Circus Posters by David Jamieson & Malcolm Clay was £20.00 Special Sale Price £15.00 + £1.50 P&P

Circus Dictionary by Geoff Stevens over 100 Circus Terms was £21.00 Special Sale Price £16.00 + £1.50 P&P

For other available items, such as posters, other books and programmes and back issues of King Poles please visit www.circusfriends.co.uk/shop

All payments must be in GB pounds sterling payable to: 'The Circus Friends Association'. Payments in other currencies cannot be accepted. Credit and debit card payments can only be accepted via PayPal.

Overseas postage

Europe and non-EU countries: 1.5 X UK rate. USA & Canada: double UK rate. Australia & New Zealand: triple UK rate. Be aware, customs duty on orders may be charged in EU Countries

Postage & Payment: Web-shop

Secure payment can be made through PayPal. This is the easiest way to pay for items from the website and will secure the item for you when there is limited availability. Postage within the UK is free and postage outside the UK will be calculated at checkout. All parcels are sent with proof of posting. Please allow plenty of time for your parcel to arrive. However, if you are concerned that it has not arrived, please contact Ian McEwen (see contact details above).

ZIPPOS CIRCUS



BON VOYAGE!

Our voyage will commence at Blackheath on the 31st of March

CFA members grab your bags.

*Zippos Circus is DELIGHTED to host a CFA rally again
on Sunday the 10th of April after 2 years of Covid restrictions!*

WWW.ZIPPOS.CO.UK - INFO@ZIPPOS.CO.UK