



# **About the cover**

Jason and Justin Senft, American artists and identical twins, provided their award winning photograph that graces our cover. As Messrs. Senft explain, "the sights, sounds, and spectacle under the canvas big top are so amazing that even circus performers, young and old, are enticed to peek through a slit in the curtain to be part of the excitement happening within."

Photograph: © Jason & Justin Senft / senftsudio@hotmail.com





# **Welcome to the World of the Circus**

A circus is often defined as a traveling troupe of talented performers who entertain local audiences from town-to-town. But Circus is so much more. It is a universal performance art composed of highly skilled artists – trapeze flyers, high-wire walkers, acrobats, jugglers, hand balancers, contortionists, daredevils, strongmen and clowns – as well as performing animals that bring magic, joy and wonder to untold millions of circus fans worldwide. Circus also comprises a traveling community with its own culture, customs, rituals and observances that transcend nationalities and ignores ethnic and other barriers.

Each individual circus is unique and culturally specific, yet all circuses share certain common elements, and even a common language. The International Guide to the Circus features 100 of the most common Circus terms to help circus-goers enjoy, understand and appreciate the Circus. Each term is translated into English, French, German, Russian, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and Finnish for the reader's convenience.

So welcome to the Circus. Sit back, relax and expect to be amazed, amused, enthralled and awed by the skills, thrills, grace and beauty only found in the wonderful world of the Circus!



Rodney Huey, Ph.D., Editor

# Overview of the Modern Circus

The rudimentary notion of a circus-type performance can arguably be traced back to ritualistic dances involving acrobatics by indigenous peoples around the globe. In Europe, its history began as early as the seventh century B.C. when troupes of acrobats and clown-type characters performed throughout the continent, giving birth to a performance art that has endured for almost three thousand years.



Philip Astley

The modern circus as we know it today - a self-contained, fully choreographed, live production that presents aerial displays, acrobatics, juggling, wire walkers, trained animals, spectacular productions and comic relief was born out of a mideighteenth century English horse-riding exhibition that

was staged in 1768 by riding master Philip Astley (1742-1814) on the outskirts of London, England. Astley soon transformed his open-air equestrian show into a riding display within a 19-meter riding ring (later reduced to 13 meters for a optimum riding speed) and a covered grandstand area for patron viewing. Astley's riding exhibition included trick riding, acrobatic tumbling, a strongman act and a clown named Fortunelly who performed on the slack rope to offset the tension of trick riding. Knowingly or not, Astley had pulled together the three basic

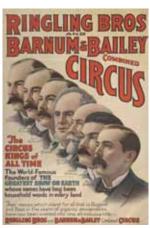


Ink and paint depiction of circus duet performed at Astley's Theatre in London by Lloyd, R. (1831), Source: Victoria & Albert Museum

elements that traditionally have defined a circus performance – acrobatics, performing animals and a clown - into a single ring.

This new form of live performance gained popularity and rapidly spread across Europe and the Atlantic Ocean to the United States, eastward into Russia, and eventually abroad to South Africa and Australia with colonial expansion. By the early 1800s, the circus had established itself as a performance art and was embedded firmly into the popular culture of countries on every continent.

The massive social, cultural and economic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution in the United States and Europe, such as railroad and technological advances, forced the circus to adapt its operating systems, performance and even culture to meet the needs of a modernizing world. Through the innovations of circus pioneers such as P.T. Barnum and the seven Ringling brothers in the United States. Englishman Bertram Mills, European showmen John and George Sanger and the Robert Fossett family, Carl Krone and Hans Stosch-Sarrasani in Germany, Ga- © John and Mable Ringling etano Ciniselli in St. Peter-



Museum of Art

sburg, Russia, Australia's James H. Ashton and Henry Burton, the Boswell's in South Africa, and the Chiarini. Pereira, Lowande, and Mange families who influenced the development of circus in Latin America, a loose confederation of traveling troupes was transformed into a full-fledged circus sector.



From left: Carl Krone, Founder, Circus Krone. 1905 Source Winkler Archive; Gaetano Ciniselli, est. Circus Ciniselli, 1877 Source Bolshoi Saint-Petersburg State Circus Museum; Hans Stosch-Sarrasani, Founder, Circus Sarrasani, 1902 Source Winkler Archive



Classical Circus Clown Routine © Monte Carlo Festivals

The circus became a primary mode of entertainment during the early 20th century, and after a serious threat caused by World War II, it rebounded in the second half of the 20th century, not only as a revival of its former self, but also the new creative hybrid of "nouveau circus". Today, many of the "grandfather" circuses and pioneering families thrive and still shape the circus sector with their classical presentation of acts of increasing technical difficulty and sophistication, woven into a single performance with music, production numbers, and costuming.



Film Strip Act IRIS. Photo Credit Matt Beard © Cirque du Soleil

Others continue to push the limits of creativity by
exploring unique mixtures of circus, street and other
performance arts as part of the contemporary circus
movement.



Circus Cabuwazi, Europe's largest Youth Circus, Berlin, Germany

Youth circus also has sprung up around the world, bringing performance opportunities and the benefits of physical activity to children.



Social Circus, Kenya © Sarakasi Trust

A more recent trend harnesses the team-building and confidence-enhancing skills of circus to contribute to positive societal objectives through "social circus."

As individual as each circus is, there are commonalities that help define the modern circus, among them aerial displays, acrobatics, balancing acts, juggling, contortion, specialty acts, clowning and trained performing animals. As one circus enthusiast observed: "Circus performers in Russia and Mexico may have more in common with each other than they do with their fellow countrymen."



Donald, Circus Harmony, USA, and Menar, Galilee Circus, Israel

© Chris Mrozewski

Without a doubt, Circus speaks a universal language.

# **The Circus Setting**



Back Lot © Circus Krone



Big Top © Zoppé, An Italian Family Circus



Circus Ring © Tobias Erber



Marquee © Stefan Nolte



Winter Ouarters © Tobias Erber



Circus Lot © Stefan Nolte



Centre and Quarter Poles © Janeric Dahlin



Menagerie © Markus Moll

# Back Yard Back Lot [US] Backdoors [UK]

The area directly behind the circus tent (or arena) where dressing and other tents are erected, and where acts are staged for their entrances.

# Big Top [US, UK] Tent [AU]

The large circular or oval canvas or vinyl tent erected specifically for circus performances.

### **Circus Ring**

The signature 13-meter ring in which circus artists perform (a 13-meter diameter provides an ideal circle for horse riding displays).

### **Foyer Tent**

The smaller tent that serves as an entrance, waiting, and/or concession area of the Big Top tent.

### **Circus Act**

A choreographed acrobatic, aerial, artistic, animal, daredevil, specialty or comic display in a circus performance.

# King or Center Pole [US] Centre Pole [UK]

The primary pole, or mast around which the tent is raised.

# Lot [US] Tober [UK]

The physical space where a travelling circus erects its tent, or area where an arena-based circus uses as a backlot.

### Marquee

The small entrance into the foyer or Big Top tent where tickets are collected and patrons directed to their seats.

### Menagerie

The collection of performing circus animals. Also a generic term for the general stable area where the animals are housed, and in some cases, displayed for public view.

### Prop

Any device that is used in support of an act (i.e., pedestal, hoops, juggling clubs, etc.).

### **Quarter Poles and Side Poles**

Shorter poles around the perimeter of the tent that support the main canvas or vinyl and side panels.

# Winter Quarters [US, UK] Winter Camp (archaic) [AU]

The physical complex where a travelling circus returns to build and rehearse a new show (usually during the winter months).



Big Top © Arul Horizon

# **The Circus Setting**

Every circus has common physical elements including rigging, lighting, music, and seating. Since its early days, the Big Top tent has been a signature of the traveling circus. In the United States, the circus expanded its tent to create the "three-ring circus", while permanent buildings house prominent circuses in Europe. Today, the use of arenas, stages and theatres for circus presentations is increasing.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Back Yard Back Lot [US] Backdoors [UK]	les coulisses le back-stage	Sattelgang	Закулисная часть, Закулисье, Задний двор		Achter de coulissen, Zadelgang		Bastidores Cochia	
Big Top [US, UK] Tent [AU]	Chapiteau	Chapiteau	Шапито, шатёр	Chapiteau	Chapiteau	Carpa, Chapitó	Lona, Empanada, Tenda, Carpa	Sirkusteltta
Circus Ring	Piste	Manege	Манеж, арена	Pista	Piste	Pista	Picadeiro	Maneesi
Foyer Tent	Foyer d'accueil, le bar du cirque	Vorzelt	Фойе	Foyer	Foyer, Restauratie tent	Dulcería	Praça de Alimentação	Etuteltta
Circus Act	Numéro	Nummer	Номер	Numero	Nummer, Act	Acto (de circo), número (de circo)	Número	
King or Center Pole [US] Centre Pole [UK]	Mât	Hauptmast		Antenna	Hoofdmast	Mástil	Mastro	
Lot [US] Tober [UK]	la place du cirque le site	Circusplatz	Площадка, точка (употреб. в цирковом обиходе)	Piazza	Circusterrein	Terreno	Terreno	
Marquee	L'entrée principale	Eingang	Проход	Tenda d'ingresso	Entree	Marquesina	Marquise	
Menagerie	Ménagerie	Tierschau	Конюшни (not for public view)	Z00	Menagerie	Zoológico	Menageria	
Prop	Le materiel	Requisiten, Geräte	Реквизит	Antenna	Rekwisiet	Aparato	Aparelho	Välineet, Sirkusvälinet, Esiintymisvälineet
Quarter Poles and Side Poles	Mât de corniche Poteaux de tour	Sturmstange, Rondellstange		Piazza	Bijmasten	Corapules [MX] Cujes [MX]	Pau de roda	
Winter Quarters [US, UK] Winter Camp (archaic) [AU]	Quartier d'hiver	Winterquartier	База	Tenda d'ingresso	Winterkwartier	Bodega [MX] Cuartel de invierno [ES]	Sede	Talvileiri

# **People and Productions**



Orchestra © Tobias Erber



Ringmaster © Feld Entertainment, Inc.



Finale © Robert Sanson



Ring Boy © Fernando Velasco



Ring Boys © Circus Krone



Groom © Markus Moll



Groom © Circus Krone

### Come-In

A short pre-show performance intended to "warm up" an audience (often performed by clowns).

### **Finale**

The final production number that allows the entire cast to take its bows.

### **General Manager**

The staff member responsible for the overall operations of a travelling or landed circus.

#### iroom

A crew member responsible for grooming and taking care of performing animals.

### Menáge (pronounced "manage")

A production number built around performing animals (usually an elephant or horse ensemble).

#### **Musical Conductor**

The conductor of the live circus band that provides musical accompaniment for each circus act and production number.

### **Opening (or Charivari)**

A themed production that introduces the show and artists, often featuring a Grand Entry Parade through or around the circus rings.

### **Performance or Artistic Director**

The staff member responsible for the artistic quality of each performance; and who orchestrates the smooth entrances and exits of performers, floats and animals.

### Performer

A highly trained artist who performs any number of circus acts or amazing feats.

### Rigger

A skilled mechanic who hangs, or "rigs" the overhead and floor-mounted mechanical rigging.

### Ringmaster

The show's announcer who introduces the acts during a circus performance (derived from the equestrian director, or the riding ring master).

# Ring Staff [US] Ring Boys [UK] Ring Waiters [AU]

Crew members responsible for setting up and moving props into and out of the circus ring.

### Spec (short for "Spectacular")

The show's largest and most spectacular production number, often built around the featured act that ends the first half of the show.

#### Stable master

Crew member responsible for the overall management of the animal stable area.

### Windjammer

Any member of the live circus band.

# **People and Productions**

A distinguishing figure in circus is the ringmaster or other central performer who directs the audience's attention to the various acts. Another defining element is the large production number in which dancers, artists, and animals parade before the audience, adding a theatrical dimension in keeping with the theme of the performance.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Come-In	Animation	Aufwärmen, Animation	Payc	Animazione	Opwarming	Animación	Animação	Sisääntulo
Finale	Finale	Finale	Эпилог	Finale	Finale	Final	Final Apoteose	Finaali
General Manager	Directeur	Direktor	Шапитмейстер	Direttore	Zakelijk Leider	Representante	Diretor	Johtaja
Groom	Garçon d'écurie (horse), les lads	Tierpfleger, Kutscher, Stallbursche	Служащий	Operaio «Galuppo»	Dierenverzorger	Empleado de zoológico	Tratador	Eläintenhoitaja
Menáge (pronounced "manage")	numéro d'animaux	Tiernummer, Dressur- nummer	Аттракцион		Dierennummer	Número con animales amaestrados	Número com animais	Maneesi
Musical Conductor	Chef d'orchestre	Kapellmeister	Дирижёр	Maestro Direttore d'orchestra	Dirigent/Orkestleider	Director de orquesta	Maestro Maestro da banda	Kapellimestari
Opening (or Charivari)	Ouverture, Charivari, Parade	Parade, Charivari	Парад-пролог	Parata	Openingsparade, Charivari	Obertura, charivari	Abertura	Charivari
Performance or Artistic Director	le directeur artistique le régisseur de piste	Regisseur, Spielleiter	Режиссёр, художественный руководитель	Direttore di pista	Regisseur	Director artístico	Diretor artístico	Taiteellinen johtaja, ohjaaja
Performer	Artiste	Artist	Артист		(Circus)artiest	Artista circense	Artista de circo Artista circense	Esiintyjä
Rigger	Chef pistard	Oberrequisiteur	Старший униформист	Capo pista	Chef rekwisiteur	Técnico	Maquinista	Riggaaja, ripustaja
Ringmaster	Monsieur Loyal le présentateur	Sprecher, Ansager, Sprechstallmeister	Инспектор манежа, шпрехшталмейстер	Presentatore	Spreekstalmeester	Jefe de pista	Mestre de pista Apresentador Locutor	Maneesimestari
Ring Staff [US] Ring Boys [UK] Ring Waiters [AU]	le garçon de piste les pistards	Requisiteure	Униформисты	Uomo di pista	Rekwisiteur	Mozos de pista [ES] Apaches [MX]	Charuto Amarra cacho- ro Casaca de Ferro	Maneesimiehet
Spec (short for "Spectacular")	Attraction principale	Attraktionsnummer	Аттракцион		Hoofdact	Atracción	Final da primeira parte	
Stable master	le chef d'écurie	Stallmeister	Служащий		Stalmeester	Jefe de zoológico	Chefe dos Tratadores	Tallimestari
Windjammer	Musicien	Musiker	Оркестрант	Orchestrale	Muzikant	Músico	Músico	Muusikko

# **Aerial Acts**



Cloud Swing © Brian Boswell's Circus



Strap Act © Stefan Nolte



Spanish Web © Joseph Ashton Circus



Sky Walking © Jessica Hentoff



Iron Jaw Act © Tobias Erber



Washington Trapeze © Andrei Suslov



Cradle Act © David Mitchell



Silk or Tissue Act © Jan Schot



Flying Trapeze © Richard Verdoni



Passing Leap © Janeric Dahlin

### Aerial Hoop (also Lyra)

A circular metal hoop suspended by a cable upon which an aerialist performs a series of graceful and/or daring manoeuvres.

### Catcher

The artist in an aerial trapeze act who catches the "flyer" while hanging upside down (a "hock hang") from a swinging trapeze bar or stationary cradle.

# Chiffon Act, Silks or Tissues [US] Silk Act [UK]

A graceful solo aerial routine performed on fabric (instead of straps) suspended from the overhead rigging.

### **Cloud Swing Act**

A "bar-less" aerial ballet performed solo on a "U"-shaped rope suspended from the overhead rigging.

#### Cradle Act

An aerial display performed by a duo or small troupe on a stationary apparatus attached to the overhead rigging.

# Flyer

An aerialist who performs a variety of mid-air somersaults, pirouettes, flips or twists before being caught by the catcher on an opposing trapeze bar.

# **Flying Trapeze**

The most popular of all trapeze acts, the flying trapeze consists of two parallel swinging trapeze bars suspended from different points on the overhead rigging that allows a "flyer" to soar through the air from one trapeze bar into the hands of a catcher hanging upside down (a "hock hang") from the second trapeze bar.

# Hair Hang Act [US, UK] Hairialist [AU]

An aerial display in which aerialists (usually female) perform a series of graceful manoeuvres while suspended from a cable only by their hair.

### Iron Jaw [US] Dental Routine [UK]

A display of agility and strength by an aerialist hanging by the mouth alone (with a fitted mouthpiece) while suspended by another aerialist or strap attached to the overhead rigging.

# **Passing Leap**

A mid-air manoeuvre whereby two flyers pass each other from one swinging bar to another.

### **Single Trapeze**

A solo act in which an aerialist performs a series of artistic and acrobatic manoeuvres from a swinging trapeze bar.

### Sky Walk [US, UK] Ceiling Walk [AU]

A daredevil aerial act in which an aerialist "walks" upside down on an apparatus with loops attached for the feet.

# Spanish Web [US, UK] Descent Rope, Rope [AU]

A cloth-covered rope with a hand loop that is suspended from the overhead rigging, and upon which female artists perform a series of graceful manoeuvres, usually within a larger aerial display or production number.

# **Static or Fixed Trapeze**

An aerial act performed on a stationary trapeze bar affixed to the overhead rigging.

# Strap Act

An aerial display of strength in which an aerialist performs a series of graceful, yet difficult manoeuvres while suspended on long woven straps hung from the overhead rigging.

# Washington Trapeze [US, UK] Head Trapeze [AU]

An aerial display in which the aerialist performs while balanced on his or her head upon a small pad mounted on the swinging trapeze bar.

# **Aerial Acts**

The circus is one of the few performance arts that presents stunning aerial displays. The grace, beauty and excitement of breath-taking aerial acts are often the most memorable of a circus performance. Among the more dynamic displays are the flying trapeze (originated in 1859 by Frenchman Jules Léotard), single trapeze, cloud swing, aerial adagio and/or ballet, strap and tissue acts, the lyra, and iron jaw.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Aerial Hoop (also Lyra)	Cerceau aérien	Luftring, Luftlyra	Воздушное кольцо	Cerchio aereo	Luchtring	Aro volante.	Lira	Ilmarengas
Catcher	Porteur		Ловитор	Porteur	Catcher / Vanger	Portor	Portô	Kätseri, Alamies
Chiffon Act, Silks or Tissues [US] Silk Act [UK]	Tissu aérien	Fänger	Воздушные полотна	Tessuto aereo	Doeken nummer	Telas	Número de tecido	Ilma-akrobatia kangas
Cloud Swing Act	Corde volante	Schwungseil	Корд-де-волан	Corda bamba	Swingend koord	Hamaca india, onda	Corda Marinha	Lenkkiköysi
Cradle Act	le cadre aérien	Haltestuhl	Рамка	Sostenuto aereo Quadrante	Cradle act	Sostenido, Castinac [MX] cuadrante aéreo [ES]	Quadrante	Kehto
Flyer	Voltigeur	Flieger	Вольтижёр	Agile	Luchtacrobaat, Vlieger	Trapecista, Volante, Agil	Volante	Lentäjä, Ylämies
Flying Trapeze	Trapèze volant	Fliegendes Trapez, Flugtrapez	Воздушный полёт	Trapezio volante	Vliegende trapeze	Trapecios volantes	Trapézio de vôos	Lentävä trapetsi
Hair Hang Act [US, UK] Hairialist [AU]	Suspension par les cheveux	Zopfhang	Воздушная гимнастка «на волосах»	(Sospensione per i) capelli	Haarhang	Fuerza capilar	Força capilar	Hiuksistariipunta
Iron Jaw [US] Dental Routine [UK]	Suspension par les dents	Zahnhang	Вис в зубнике	(Sospensione per i) denti	Tandenhang	Fuerza dental	Força dental	Hampaistariipunta
Passing Leap	Double-Passage	Passage		Passaggio	Passage	Paso de la muerte	Cruzo Cruzo da morte	
Single Trapeze	Solo trapeze	Solotrapez	Трапеция	Trapezino	Trapeze nummer	Trapecio sencillo	Trapézio em balanço	Keinutrapetsi
Sky Walk [US, UK] Ceiling Walk [AU]	Marche au plafond	Deckenlauf	Ходьба по петлям (на носках)	Uomo / donna mosca	Plafondloop	El paso, El paso de mosca		Katossa kävelijä
Spanish Web [US, UK] Descent Rope, Rope [AU]	Corde lisse, la corde verticale	Vertikalseil	«Паутина»	Corda	Verticaal koord	Cuerda española, ballet aéreo	Corda Indiana	Vertikaali
Static or Fixed Trapeze	Trapéze fixe	festes Trapez, Stehtrapez	Трапеция (в статике)	Trapezio fisso	Vaste Trapeze	Trapecio fijo	Trapézio fixo	Trapetsi, Stilli trapetsi
Strap Act	Sangles aériennes	Strapaten	Ремни	Cinghie aeree	Strapaten	Cintas	Número de faixa	Liinat, Liinanumero
Washington Trapeze [US, UK] Head Trapeze [AU]	Trapéze Washington	Washington-Trapez	Штейн-трапе	Trapezio Washington	Washington trapeze	Trapecio de cabeza	Trapézio de cabeça	Washington trapetsi

# **Acrobatic Acts**



Cvr Wheel © Monte Carlo Festivals



Chinese Pole Act © Tobias Erber



Icarian Games © Alex Zaprudsky





Slack Wire Act @ Andrei Suslov



Russian Swing Act © Tobias Erber



Russian Bar Act © Tobias Erber



Living Statues © Stefan Nolte

### **Chinese Pole Act**

An act created and devised in China where acrobats perform a number of synchronized leaps from one vertical pole to another.

### Cvr Wheel

An acrobatic display in which an acrobat performs feats of balance and agility while riding inside a singular circular metal ring.

### **German Wheel**

An acrobatic display in which an acrobat performs manoeuvres while riding inside two affixed circular rings, resembling a large wheel.

### **Icarian Games**

A specific foot-juggling acrobatic display in which an antipodist juggles his or her partner while lying back on a small bench, or trinka.

### **Hoop Diving**

A display in which a troupe of acrobats leap and somersault through a series of small vertical hoops.

### **Horizontal Bar Act**

A series of adroit manoeuvres, including loops, handstands and other feats of strength and balance, performed on parallel bars about three meters off the floor.

### **Human Pyramid**

A display (usually performed with teeterboard acts) in which acrobats are catapulted to the shoulders of other acrobats to build a pyramid as tall as five acrobats.

### **Living Statues**

A slow-paced and often lyrical display of strength and balance in which two or more

acrobats progress from one gracefully balanced pose to another, mimicking statues.

### Russian Bar Act [US, UK] Russian Pole [AU]

A display in which members of a troupe of acrobats perform a series of mid-air somersaults, pirouettes, flips or twists after being catapulted from a flexible board or fibreglass pole held on the shoulders of two under-standers.

### **Russian Swing Act**

A display in which members of an acrobatic troupe are catapulted from a large, floormounted swing onto another floor-mounted swing, a vertically-slanted net or a giant foam cushion.

### **Slack Wire Act**

A display by a solo artist balancing on a swinging "slack" rope or cable attached to two vertical platforms.

# **Teeterboard Act, Springboard Act**

A high energy display of strength, balance and agility in which a troupe of acrobats are catapulted from a teeterboard (see-saw-like apparatus) into the air and onto the shoulders of team members to form a human column, or "pyramid."

# **Trampoline Act**

A vigorous display of mid-air somersaults, pirouettes, flips or twists performed while bouncing on a trampoline.

# Vaulting Board [US, UK] Beatboard [AU]

A springboard used to propel running acrobats into the air for any number of somersaults, pirouettes, flips or twists.

# **Acrobatic Acts**

Tumbling and acrobatics date back to antiquity and may be considered a universal circus display. Acrobatic acts remain among the most popular today, including charivari, vaulting, teeterboard, trampoline, cyr or German wheels, Russian bar and swing, hoop diving, human pyramid-building and living statues.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Chinese Pole Act	Mât Chinois	Chinesischer Mast	Мачта	Palo cinese	Chinese mast	Mástil	Mastro chinês	
Cyr Wheel	Roue Cyr	Cyr-Rad	Ренское колесо	Ruota Cyr	Cyr Wheel	Rueda Cyr		Cyring
German Wheel	Roue allemande	Rhönrad	Колесо Сира		German Wheel	Rueda Alemana	Pêndulo	
Icarian Games	Jeux icariens	Ikarische Spiele	Икарийские игры	Icariani	Icarisch spelen	Icarios	Icários	Ikariset leikit
Hoop Diving	Numéro de cerceaux	Reifenspringen	Прыжки сквозь (через) обручи	Salti nei cerchi	Hoepel nummer	Aros chinos	Saltos em aros	
Horizontal Bar Act	Numéro de barres paralléles	Reckakrobatik	Турник	Barre parallele	Stangen nummer	Barras, Acto de barras	Barras paralelas	Nojapuut
Human Pyramid	Pyramide	Pyramide	Акробатическая пирамида	Colonna	Menselijke Piramide	Pirámide de cuarta o quinta altura	Piramides Pirâmides humanas	Pyramidi
Living Statues	Adagio	Posendarstellung, Lebende Statuen, Adagio-Akrobatik	«Живые скульптуры», скульптурная группа	Adagio acrobatico	Levende beelden nummer	Estatuas vivientes	Estatuário, Adágio	
Russian Bar Act [US, UK] Russian Pole [AU]	Barre russe	Wurfstange, Russischer Barren	Русская палка	Barra russa «Stanga»	Russische stangen	Barra rusa	Barra russa	Venäläinen aisa
Russian Swing Act	Balançoire russe	Russische Schaukel Schleuderschaukel	Качели	Altalena russa	Russische schommel	Columpio ruso	Maca russa	Venäläinen Keinu
Slack Wire Act	Fil mou	Schlappseil	Свободная проволока, Свободновисящая проволока	Filo molle	Slap koord	Alambre flojo, cuerda floja	Corda bamba	Löysä Noura
Teeterboard Act, Springboard Act	Bascule	Schleuderbrett	Подкидная доска	Bascula	Springplank	Báscula	Báscula	Vipulauta
Trampoline Act	Numéro de trampoline	Trampolin	Батут (батуд)	Trampolino elastico	Trampoline nummer	Batúa, trampoline, cama elástica	Número de trampolim	Trampoliininumero, trampoliiniesitys
Vaulting Board [US, UK] Beatboard [AU]	Batoude, Tremplin	Batoude, Sprungbrett	Мостик -трамплин	Battuta	Batoude	Botador, batuda	Trampolim	Volttirata

# **Animal Acts**



Big Cat Act © Ron Mikkinie



Cossack Act © Patrick Prévost



Mixed Act © Richard Molinier



Elephant Act © Stefan Nolte



High School © Monte Carlo Festivals





Liberty Act © Tobias Erber



**Elephant Long Mount** © Feld Entertainment, Inc.

### **Dressage**

A synchronized horse display with mounted riders.

### Big Cat, Cage Act

A display of non-domesticated performing felines, including trained tigers, lions, leopards, etc.

### **Cossack Act**

A stunt-riding display where acrobatic riders perform various manoeuvres atop galloping horses (often themed as Russian Cossack riders).

### **Elephant Act**

A circus display that features trained elephants performing in concert with their animal trainers.

# **High School**

A choreographed horse-riding display involving skilled riders and highly trained horses.

# **Liberty Act**

An animal display without the use of tethers, or lunge lines, where animals (most often horses and/or camels) perform "at liberty".

# **Long Mount or Grand Mount**

An animal manoeuvre, typically performed with elephants, in which one animal places its front feet on the hind quarters of the animal directly in front of it to form a continuous line. A "walking mount" occurs when the entire line of animals moves forward in unison.

### **Mixed Act**

A performing animal display that employs different species in one display, such as tigers and lions or horses and camels.

### **Roman Riding**

A horse-riding style where the rider stands astride two galloping horses with one foot on either horse.

### Rosinback [US, UK] Resin-back [AU]

A horse-riding display where circus artists perform various acrobatic manoeuvres while standing or riding atop galloping bareback horses (named after the rosin applied to the horse's back to secure footing).



Rosinback © Tobias Erber

# **Animal Acts**

In a circus performance, one witnesses humans and animals performing together in harmony. Among the more commonly presented exotic animals are elephants, tigers, lions, camels, and llamas, although almost every species has performed in a circus at one time or another. Top notch animal trainers encourage the animals to display their natural abilities and individual talents. Increasingly, animals are presented in "liberty" acts with decreased focus on the human partner. When included in circus programs, the public consistently identifies performing animal acts as the best or among the best of the program.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Dressage	le quadrille	Reitdarbietung	Дрессировка, Дрессура	Dressage	Paardennummer	Acto ecuestre, Alta Escuela	Número equestre	Eläinnumero
Big Cat, Cage Act	Numéro de fauves	Raubtierdressur	Дрессировка (дрессура) хищников	Numero di gabbia	Roofdierennummer	Acto de Felinos, Acto de fieras	Número de feras	Villieläinnumero
Cossack Act	Numéro de cosaques, les djiguites	Dshigitenreiterei	Джигитовка	Volteggio cosacco	Kozakkennummer	Número de cosacos	Número de Cossacos	Kasakkanumero
Elephant Act	Numéro d'éléphants	Elefantendressur	Дрессировка (дрессура) слонов	Numero degli elefanti	Olifantennummer	Acto de elefantes	Número de elefantes	Norsunumero
High School	Haute école	Hohe Schule	Высшая школа верховой езды	Alta scuola	Hogeschool rijden	Alta Escuela	Alta Escola	Korkea Koulu
Liberty Act	Liberté de chevaux	Freiheitsdressur	Дрессировка (дрессура) «на свободе», «Свобода»	Numero in libertà	Vrijheids dressuur	Caballos o camellos en libertad	Cavalos em liberdade	Vapaanumero
Long Mount or Grand Mount	Pyramide d'éléphants	Elefantenpyramide	Монт	Piramide	Olifanten Piramide	Pirámide de elefantes	Pirâmide de elefantes, Fila de elefantes	Pyramidi
Mixed Act	Groupe mixte d'ani- maux	Gemischte Dressur	Дрессировка (дрессура) смешанной группы животных	Numero misto	Gemengde dressuur	Acto mixto de animales	Número mixto de animais	Eläinkavalkadi
Roman Riding	Jeux Romains	Römische Reiterei	«Римские игры»	Cavalcata romana Posta	Romeins wagenrennen	Romano	Romano	Roomalainen ratsastus
Rosinback [US, UK] Resin-back [AU]	Jockeys, voltige à cheval	Jockeyreiterei, Ohne- Sattel-Reiterei	Жокеи	Volteggio Jockey	Rosinback rijden, Jockey rijden, Voltigeren	Acrobacia ecuestre, acto de jinetes	Volteio, Jóquei	Jockeyratsastus

# **Balancing Acts**



Funambulist © Stefan Nolte



Hand-to-Hand © Cirque du Soleil



Chair Pyramid Act © Tobias Erber





High-wire Act @ Andrei Suslov



Ladder Act © Jon Krueger



Head-to-Head © Tobias Erber



Perch Pole Act © Tobias Erber

### **Chair Pyramid Act**

An act in which an acrobat stacks chairs atop one another and ascends to the top.

### **Funambulist**

A wire walker or rope walker (Latin origins: "funis" (rope) and "ambulare" (to walk)).

### **Hand-to-Hand Balancing Act**

A display of balance and strength where two or more acrobats perform difficult, yet graceful, hand-to-hand balancing manoeuvres.

### **Head-to-Head Balancing Act**

A display of balance and strength in which one acrobat balances upside down on the head of another.

# **High-wire Act (see funambulist)**

A skilful act of balance and agility where a number of artists perform difficult manoeuvres while walking a tightly-strung steel cable suspended up to eight meters above the circus floor.

### **Ladder Act**

An acrobatic balancing act where one or more acrobats climb and balance atop a freestanding, unsupported ladder.

### **Perch Pole Act**

A display of strength and balance in which an under-stander balances a vertical pole on his forehead, shoulders or a socket belt while another acrobat performs balancing feats atop the pole.

### Rola Bola

A balancing act where an acrobat balances atop a flat board which is in turn balanced atop

a series of opposing cylindrical rollers, usually atop a pedestal.

# **Rolling Globe**

A display where an acrobat balances (or walks) atop a one-meter globe while performing a series of balancing feats (e.g., rolling the globe up an inclined ramp while juggling).

### Stilts (walking)

Tall stilts upon which an acrobat balances while walking around inside or outside the circus ring (often three meters or taller).

### **Unicycle Act**

An acrobatic display performed on unicycles (i.e., a basketball game).



Rolo Bola © Danka Dear

# **Balancing Acts**

Balancing acts hold a certain fascination with circus-goers, primarily because of the dual requirements of extreme balance and sheer strength. Among the more popular balancing displays are the chair pyramid, perch pole, free standing ladder, hand-to-hand or head-to-head balancing, stilt-walking, rolling globe and rola bola. Virtually synonymous with circus are death-defying feats on the high-wire.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Chair Pyramid Act	Equilibre sur chaises	Stuhlequilibristik	Эквилибр на стульях	Equilibrio sulle sedie	Stoelen pyramide	Equilibrio sobre sillas	Equilibrio sobre cadeiras	Tuolipyramidi
Funambulist	Funambule	Seilläufer	Канатоходец	Funambolo Filferrista	Koorddanser	Funambulista	Aramista Funâmbulista Equilibrista	Nourallatanssija, Nourallakävelijä
Hand-to-Hand Balancing Act	Main à main	Hand-auf-Hand, Posendarstellung	Крафт-акробатика, Силовая акробатика	Mano a mano	Krachtacrobatiek, Hand op hand balans	Pulsadas a dúo (a trío), mano a mano	Mão à mão	Pariakrobatia
Head-to-Head Balancing Act	Tête à tête	Kopf-auf-Kopf	Копфштейн голова в голову	Testa a testa	Kop op kop balans	Cabeza a cabeza	Cabeça a cabeça	
High-wire Act (see funambulist)	Fil grande hauteur; Fil de funambule ; Fil de fer=(low) wire = Drahtseil	Hochseil	Эквилибр на канате	Filo alto	Hoge draad act (zie Koorddansen)	Trepe [MX], alambre alto	Arame alto	Korkea nuora, Kireä noura
Ladder Act	Echelle libre, Echelle acrobatique	Freistehende Leiter	Вольностоящая лестница	Scala libera	Ladder nummer	Escalera libre	Escada Livre	Tikas, Tasapainotikas
Perch Pole Act	Numéro de perche	Percheakrobatik	Эквилибр на першах	Pertica	Perche evenwichtnummer	Perchas	Percha Número de percha	Pärssi
Rola Bola	Rola rola	Rola Rola	Катушки	Rullo Rola Rola	Rola Rola	Rola-rola	Rola-rola	Rola Bola
Rolling Globe	Equilibre sur boule	Kugelequilibristik	Эквилибр на шаре	Globo	Ballen evenwichtsnummer	Esferas	Bola	Tasapainopallo
Stilts (walking)	Échasses	Stelzen	Ходуля	Trampoli	Stelt lopen	Zancos (acto sobre zancos)	Perna de pau	
Unicycle Act	Monocycle	Einrad	Моноцикл	Monociclo	Eenwieler nummer	Monociclo	Monociclo	Yksipyöräinen

# **Clown Acts**

### **Agent's Suit**

The signature costume of any clown that defines and portrays his or her clown character or persona.

### Auguste Clown/Auguste

A clown type whose character is the "fool" or "buffoon", and is usually identified by fleshtoned facial makeup with exaggerated eyes, mouth and bulbous red nose, most often complimented by outlandish costuming.

### **Character Clown**

A clown type whose persona is a caricature of a recognizable cultural figure (i.e., tramp, usher, old man, police, etc.).

### **Eccentrics**

A comedy routine where clowns incorporate exaggerated parody.

### **Musical Clown**

A comedy act by an individual or group of clowns that use a variety of musical instruments in a musical spoof.

### Whiteface Clown

A clown type in which the primary facial makeup is white with subtle accents, often complimented by a sophisticated costume.



Whiteface Clowns © Monte Carlo Festivals



Auguste Clown © Roberto Ermanis



Agent's Suit shown with Ringmaster © Monte Carlo Festivals



Musical Clowns @ Monte Carlo Festivals



**Eccentric** © Richard Molinier



Risley Act © Janeric Dahlin



Diablo © Serge Fluery



Plate Spinning Act © Arul Horizon

# **Juggling Acts**

### **Antipodist**

### (see also Icarian Games or Risley Act)

An acrobat/juggler who lies face-up on a bench (trinka) to juggle a variety of inanimate objects or another performer using only his or her feet.

### Clubs, Indian Clubs

The clubs used in a juggling display (jugglers rarely pick up a dropped club by hand, opting to toss the club by the foot to the hand).

### **Devil Sticks**

A juggling-type display where one stick (baton) is passed back and forth between two control sticks.

### Diabolo

A spinning spool that is catapulted high into the air from a string attached to two hand sticks and caught again on the string.

# Plate Spinning Act

An act in which an artist spins plates atop short vertical rods attached to a table, pedestal or floor board.

### **Risley Act**

An act in which an antipodist juggles any number of inanimate objects by the feet while lying on a small bench (trinka).

# **Clown Acts**

It is hard to imagine a circus without a clown – that lovable fool who breaks our rules and wins our heart. Although each clown has his or her own individual persona created through make-up, costume and signature tricks, practically all clowns adhere to one of the three primary clowning types: auguste (buffoonish); whiteface (sophisticated, romantic and often musical); or character (extreme parody of a typical figure such as a doctor, old man, police or athlete).

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Agent's Suit	grimé	Kostüm + Maske	Маска	Maschera	Karakter kenmerk	Vestido y máscara	Figurino e máscara	
Auguste Clown Auguste	Auguste	(dummer) August	«Рыжий» (клоун)	Toni Augusto	(Domme) August	Bobito, tony, payaso, gracioso	Excêntrico Augusto	Augusti-klovni
Character Clown	Garçon d'écurie (horse), les lads	Charakterclown	Типаж	Tipo Personaggio	Type clown	Payaso personaje	Palhaço personagem	
Eccentrics	Excentriques	Exzentrik	Эксцентрика	Entrata	Parodie	Parodia	Paródia	
Musical Clown	clown musical	IVITISICATCIOWIT	Музыкальный эксцентрик	Entrata musicale	Muzikale clown	Excéntricos musicales	Excêntrico musical Palhaço musical	
Whiteface Clown	Clown blanc	Weißclown	«Белый» (клоун)	Clown bianco «Faccia bianca»	Muzikale clown	Carablanca	Clown	Valkoinen Klovni

# **Juggling Acts**

Juggling is one of the most well-known circus displays. Complicated and fast-paced routines are performed by individual jugglers or troupes who fill the air with flying objects. Juggling balls or clubs is most common, with more accomplished jugglers handling up to seven balls or clubs and some jugglers handling dangerous objects such as knives or flaming clubs. Risley is a special form of juggling whereby an artist (antipodist) juggles objects using only the feet.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Antipodist (see also Icarian Games or Risley Act)	Antipodiste	Antipodenspiele	Антиподист	Antipodista	Antipodist Voetjonglage	Animación	Antiposidsta	Jalkajonglööri
Clubs, Indian Clubs	Massues, Quilles	Keulen	Булавы	Clave	Kegels, Clubs	Final	Clavas [MX] Mazas [ES]	Keilat
Devil Sticks	Bâtons du Diable	Devilstick	«Китайские палочки»	Devilstick	Devil sticks Duivelsstokjes	Representante	Devil stick	Devilstick
Diabolo	Diabolo	Diabolo	Диаболо	Diabolo	Diabolo	Empleado de zoológico	Diabolo	Diabolo
Plate Spinning Act	Assiettes chinoises	Tellerdrehen	Игра с тарелочками	Piattini cinesi	Borden draaien	Artista circense	Pratos chineses	Lautasen pyöritys
Risley Act	Jeux icariens Antipodisme	Antipodenspiele	Антипод	Antipodismo	Antipode of voetjonglage	Director de orquesta	Tranca	Jalkajongleeraus, Ikariset Leiket

# **Specialty and Daredevil Acts**



Contortion Act © Stefan Nolte



Hula Hoop Act © Linda Himsel





Quick Change © Janeric Dahlin





Wheel of Death © Danka Dear

### **Contortion Act**

A display in which one or more contortionists move separately or in concert through a series of seemingly impossible body positions.

### **Geronimo/High Dive**

A solo display where a daredevil dives from a high platform into an air mattress or large foam pad.

### **Globe of Death**

A thrill act that features a large meshed globe (approximately eight meters in diameter) where up to seven motorcyclists careen around one another inside the globe.

### **Heel Catch**

A daredevil-type manoeuvre in which an aerialist hangs from the trapeze bar only by the heels.

### **Hula Hoop Act**

An individual performance in which an artist (usually female) gyrates up to 100 circular hoops ("hula hoops") around her body.

### **Human Cannonball**

A daredevil artist who is "fired" across the circus space from an oversized mechanical cannon, crossbow or similar catapult into a net or air bag.

### **Quick Change**

A dance routine in which the female partner changes from one costume to another in a matter of seconds, usually behind a small blind or cover.

# **Strongman or Strongwoman Act**

A display in which muscle-bound acrobats perform a series of feats such as lifting heavy objects, often including up to a dozen humans, or bending metal objects.

### Sway Pole Act

A display in which a daredevil performs a series of breath-taking stunts atop a tall (up to 20 meters) flexible pole that "sways" back and forth throughout the routine.

## Whirling Wheel, Wheel of Destiny, Wheel of Death

A large revolving counter-balanced wheel upon which daredevils perform inside and atop large circular frames attached at either end of the



Contortionist © Roberto Ermanis

# **Specialty and Daredevil Acts**

Daredevil acts are practically inseparable from the circus experience, and keep patrons on the edge of their seats. Thrill-seekers are riveted by the globe of death containing up to seven motorcycles careening around at high speed, the human cannonball who is blasted through the circus space, and the sway pole in which an acrobat performs heart-stopping feats atop a 20-meter flexible pole. Specialty acts, such as contortion, hula hoops or quick change artists also are featured in many circus performances.

English	French	German	Russian	Italian	Dutch	Spanish	Portuguese	Finnish
Contortion Act	Contorsion	Kontorsionistik	Каучук	Contorsionismo	Slangenmens Contorisme	Contorsiones, Acto de contorsionismo	Contorcionismo	Notkeusakrobaatti
Geronimo/High Dive	Saut de la mort	Todessprung	«Капля»	«Meteora umana»	Diep duiker	Clavado	Salto da Morte	
Globe of Death	Globe de la mort	Motorradkugel	«Шар смелости»	Globo della morte	Stijle wand race	Globo de la muerte	Globo da Morte	Surmanajo
Heel Catch	(Suspension par les) talons	Fersenhang	Вис на пятках	(Sospensione con i) Talloni	Hiel hangen	Suspensión de talones	Queda de calcanhar	Kantapääriipunta
Hula Hoop Act	Hula hoop	Hula Hoop	Игра с хула-хупами	Hula Hoop	Hoela Hoep	Hula-hula, hula hoops	Bambolê	Vanne
Human Cannonball	Homme canon	Kanonenschuss, men- schliche Kanonenkugel	«Человек-снаряд»	Uomo proiettile	Menselijke kanonskogel	Hombre bala	Homem-bala	Tykinkuula
Quick Change	Transformisme	Kostümillusionen, Kostümverwandlung	Трансформация	Trasformismo	Transformisme	Cambio de vestidos	Transformista	Vaatteidenvaihto
Strongman or Strongwoman Act	Homme fort	Kraftakrobatik	Kraftakrobatik	Uomo forte «Ercole»	Sterke man nummer	Hombre fuerte	Homem Forte	Voimamies
Sway Pole Act	Numéro de mât oscillant	Schwankender Mast, schwingender Mast	Качающаяся мачта	Palo oscillante	Mast nummer	Acto de mástil oscilante	Percha fixa	Taipuva tanko
Whirling Wheel, Wheel of Destiny, Wheel of Death	Roue de la mort	Riesenrad, Todesrad	«Колеса смерти»	Ruota della morte	Wiel des doods	Péndulo		Kuolemanpyörä

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Established in 2008 under the patronage of H.S.H. Princess Stephanie of Monaco, the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque seeks to promote and preserve Circus arts and culture worldwide. The need for unified Circus terminology across cultures was identified by experts at a series of meetings in connection with the Fédération's Preservation Project. Specifically, experts agreed that a Circus lexicon – organized to help the viewer identify particular skills and maneuvers, to better understand the various roles of the artists in a circus performance, and how to refer to their rigging and equipment – would improve the media's ability to report and write about Circus, as well as enhance patrons' appreciation of Circus as a performance art. For this purpose, experts indentified 100 of the most important and universal Circus terms, accompanied by translations in multiple languages.

This International Guide to the Circus is intended to provide an entrée for many into the world of Circus. But it is only a start. Significant additional work will be undertaken to identify, define and translate many more terms with the purpose of facilitating research and cataloging or archiving materials. In the future, the Fédération hopes to work with scholars to explore the language of Circus in particular geographical or other areas as a means of documenting the dynamic relations among Circus, history and culture. It is envisioned that this work will be available through searchable online databases, but also result in the publication of companion booklets.

Long live the Circus!

Laura van der Meer Executive Director





Preserving Circus Culture and Promoting the Art of Happiness



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