The Cambridge Companion to the Circus provides a complete guide for students, scholars, teachers, researchers, and practitioners who are seeking perspectives on the foundations and evolution of the modern circus, the contemporary extent of circus studies, and the specialised literature available to support further enquiries. The volume brings together an international group of established and emerging scholars working across the multidisciplinary domain of circus studies to present a clear overview of the specialised histories, aesthetics, and distinctive performances of the modern circus. In sixteen commissioned essays, it covers the circus’s origins in commercial equestrian performance during the late eighteenth century through to contemporary inflections of circus arts in major international festivals, educational environments, and social justice settings.

Gillian Arrighi is Associate Professor in the School of Creative Industries at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She is a member of the Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies and the International Federation for Theatre Research. She has held visiting fellowships at the Ransom Centre for the Humanities (University of Texas at Austin), the Harvard Theatre Collection, and the National Library of Australia.

Jim Davis is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick. He is the author of Comic Acting and Portraiture in Late-Georgian and Regency England (Cambridge University Press, 2015), which won the David Bradby Prize for International Theatre Research. He is also an editor of Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film.
The Cambridge Companions to Theatre and Performance collection publishes specially commissioned volumes of new essays designed for students at universities and drama schools and their teachers. Each volume focuses on a key topic, practitioner, or form and offers a balanced and wide-ranging overview of its subject. Content includes historical and political contexts, case studies, critical and theoretical approaches, afterlives, and guidance on further reading.

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Contents

List of Figures ........................................ page ix
List of Contributors .................................... x
Acknowledgements ..................................... xviii
Timeline .................................................. xx

Introduction - The Circus: Reflecting and Mediating the World .......................... 1
  Gillian Arrighi and Jim Davis

PART I TRANSNATIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF THE MODERN CIRCUS

1 The Origins and Growth of the Modern Circus ........................................ 19
   Matthew Wittmann

2 Reconstruction, Railroads, and Race: The American Circus in the Gilded Age and
   the Progressive Era .................................... 35
   Sakina M. Hughes

3 Circus, Colonialism, and Empire: The Circus in Australasia and Asia ............. 48
   Gillian Arrighi

4 The Criollo Circus (Circus Theatre) in Argentina: The Emergence of a Unique
   Circus Form in Connection with the Consolidation of the Argentine Nation State
   ......................................................................... 63
   Julieta Infantino

5 The Past and Present of Czech Circus ..................................................... 78
   Hanuš Jordan and Veronika Štefanová

6 Catching On: Chinese Acrobatics from China to the West in the Twenty-First Century ........................................ 92
   Rosemary Farrell
## Contents

### PART II  CIRCUS ACTS AND AESTHETICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Equestrian Circus</td>
<td>Kim Baston</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Animals, Circus, and War Re-enactment: Military Action to Colonial Wars</td>
<td>Peta Tait</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Circus Clowns</td>
<td>Louise Peacock</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Aerial Performance: Aerial Aesthetics</td>
<td>Kate Holmes</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART III  CIRCUS: A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Circus and Somatic Spectacularity on Stage in the Variety Era</td>
<td>Catherine M. Young</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Becoming an Art Form: From ‘Nouveau Cirque’ to Contemporary Circus in Europe</td>
<td>Agathe Dumont</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Risky Play and the Global Rise in Youth Circus</td>
<td>Alisan Funk</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART IV  CIRCUS STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Methodologies in Circus Scholarship</td>
<td>Charles R. Batson and Karen Fricker</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Through the Looking Glass: Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Circus Studies</td>
<td>Anna-Sophie Jürgens</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Bibliography**  
**Index**  

257  
277
Figures

1.1 Jacob Bates, c. 1766
1.2 Interior of Astley’s Amphitheatre, 1777
1.3 Suite des Différents exercices d’Équitation des Sieurs Franconi, c. 1810
1.4 John Bill Ricketts, c. 1795
1.5 Levi J. North, 1845
7.1 Palmyre Annato at the Cirque des Champs-Elysées, c. 1850
7.2 Jenny de Rahden and Czardas, c. 1902
7.3 Ernst Carré on horseback and unnamed ballerina, n.d.
7.4 The Loyal-Repensky troupe, c. 1940
7.5 La Luna Caballera, La Forêt des Hespérides, 2013
8.1 Photograph of horses playing dead in the Anglo-Boer War re-enactment, St Louis Exposition, 1904
11.1 An undated poster for Sam Lockhart’s elephant orchestra, appearing every evening at 11pm at the Folies-Bergère in Paris
11.2 An undated poster for George Lockhart’s elephant clowns, appearing every evening at the Folies-Bergère in Paris
Contributors

Gillian Arrighi is Associate Professor in Creative and Performing Arts in the School of Creative Industries, University of Newcastle, Australia. She has published numerous journal articles and chapters in edited volumes on popular entertainments, child actors, and acting theory. She is co-founder and the current editor of the scholarly journal *Popular Entertainment Studies*; co-editor of the books *Entertaining Children: The Participation of Youth in the Entertainment Industry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and *A World of Popular Entertainments* (Cambridge Scholars, 2012); editor of a focus issue on circus for the journal *Early Popular Visual Culture* (2017); and author of the monograph *The FitzGerald Brothers’ Circus: Spectacle, Identity and Nationhood at the Australian Circus* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2015). Her current book project (which is nearing completion) concerns child actors performing on transnational popular stages, 1879–1910.

Charles R. Batson is Professor of French and Francophone Studies at Union College, Schenectady, New York and has served as president of the American Council for Québec Studies. His work on circus has appeared in several venues, including the volume he co-edited with Louis Patrick Leroux, *Cirque Global: Québec’s Expanding Circus Boundaries* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2016). He served as author and section editor for ‘Freak and Queer’ in the 2018 *Performance Matters* issue devoted to questions of circus and its others. He is also the author of *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-Century French Theatre* (Ashgate, 2005), co-editor of journal issues devoted to a Queer Québec appearing in *Québec Studies* and *Contemporary French Civilization*, and co-editor of a special double issue of *Contemporary French Civilization* on the legacy of Lawrence R. Schehr. He has published work on French and Francophone cultural production and performance in such journals as *SITES, Québec Studies, Gradiva, London Journal of Canadian Studies, Dance Chronicle, Nottingham French Studies, Contemporary French Civilization, and French Politics, Culture, and Society*.

Jim Davis is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Warwick. His major research interest is in nineteenth-century British theatre and his most recent books are *Comic Acting and Portraiture in Late-Georgian and Regency England* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), winner of the David Bradby Prize for international theatre research, *Theatre & Entertainment* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and volume II of a two-volume edition of nineteenth-century dramatisations of Dickens (with Jacky Bratton) for Oxford University Press (2017). He is also joint author with Victor Êmelyanow of a prize-winning study of London theatre audiences in the nineteenth century, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatre-going 1840–1880* (University of Iowa Press, 2001). He has edited a book on Victorian pantomime for Palgrave Macmillan and published several articles and book chapters on popular forms of entertainment such as pantomime and melodrama. He is an editor of *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* and is currently the principal investigator in a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project on theatre and visual culture in the long nineteenth century.

Agathe Dumont is a lecturer in dance and circus studies and an independent researcher in the field of performing arts and human and social
sciences. She holds a PhD in Performing Arts (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011) and a degree in Sport Sciences (Université de Poitiers, 2015). Following professional training in dance and engagements with several dance companies, she now teaches in different professional art schools and works on a research project with the Centre National des Artes du Cirque. She also teaches the history, sociology, and aesthetics of circus for cultural managers in Paris. For the last few years, she has been working as an author for the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools in the framework of the ‘Intents’ project and has published three pedagogical guides (2016, 2017, 2018). She also works as an associated researcher for circusnext, a platform for the support of emerging circus artists in Europe. She recently published a book on hip-hop dance, Käfig, 20 ans de danse (Somogy éditions d’art, 2016) and co-edited a book on the sociology of circus, Le cirque en transformation: Identités et dynamiques professionnelles (Presses Universitaires Reims, 2019). She frequently publishes in academic journals in the fields of arts and sociology and is a board member of the French association of circus scholars.

Rosemary Farrell is a freelance specialist academic and researcher. She is the international authority on the politics and cross-cultural history of Chinese acrobatic acts and training in China and their influence on Australian circus. She has academic publications in Australian and international peer-reviewed journals. She has been a lecturer in circus cultures and history at the National Institute of Circus Arts, Swinburne University for twelve years, as well as in theatre history at La Trobe University and the University of New England. Her expertise is sought-after and she has been involved in joint research projects relating to circus and Chinese theatre.

Karen Fricker is Associate Professor of Dramatic Arts in the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts at Brock University, Ontario, Canada and a theatre critic at the Toronto Star. With Charles R. Batson she is the co-founder of the Circus and Its Others research project and co-organiser of its three international conferences (Montréal 2016, Prague 2018, Davis 2021). A dedicated double issue of the peer-reviewed journal Performance Matters (4, no. 1–2) on the theme of circus and its others, which she co-edited with Hayley Malouin, was published in 2018. Her monograph Robert Lepage’s Original Stage Productions: Making Theatre Global was published in
2020 by Manchester University Press. Further research interests include the Eurovision Song Contest and the changing nature of theatre criticism in the digital age. Originally from Los Angeles, she earned a BA and an MA at Stanford University and holds a PhD in theatre from Trinity College, Dublin.

**Alisan Funk** is an Assistant Professor of circus and Head of the Bachelor programme in Circus at the Stockholm University of the Arts. A circus coach, performer, and creator, she earned an MA studying circus education at Concordia University. Her research and publications explore the intersections of curriculum theory, circus, gender and creativity.

**Kate Holmes**’s research into aerial performance explores audience experience from a practitioner perspective, using approaches that range from examining spatial practices and gender and comparing movement to exercise history. Her book *Female Aerialists of the 1920s and Early 1930s: Femininity, Celebrity & Glamour* will be published by Routledge in 2021.

**Sakina M. Hughes** is Assistant Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Southern Indiana. She is also the Director of Africana Studies and Associate Professor of History there. She specialises in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and comparative African American and Native American histories. She completed her doctoral degree at Michigan State University in 2012. Hughes’s research considers mobility and racial uplift. She argues that diversity was crucial in forming the Midwest and that circuses enabled African and Native Americans to sustain robust communities and build international careers. Hughes has written articles on many topics, such as African American missionaries, Black and Native American artists, conceptions of respectability among African American and Native American communities, and African American cookbooks and etiquette books. Her current book project, *Under Other Tents: African Americans and Native Americans in the Golden Age of the Circus*, will excavate for the first time the experiences that African Americans and Native Americans shared during the rise of American popular entertainment in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hughes’s research has been supported by a Newberry Library D’Arcy McNickle Center Fellowship and is featured in the PBS American Experience documentary, *The Circus*. 
Julieta Infantino is Professor in Anthropology at the University of Buenos Aires and an associate researcher of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research. She has integrated various research teams linked to the study of popular culture and cultural policies as well as the youth question and urban anthropology. She has published books, compilations, and articles in national and international academic journals and specialises in the study of relations between youth, (circus) arts, and cultural policies. Among her most recent publications are *Disputing Culture: Art and Social Transformation in the City of Buenos Aires* (RGC Books, 2019); ‘Working with Circus Artists: Reflections on a Process of Collaborative Research, Participation and Commitment’, *Conjunctions: Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation* 5, no. 1 (2018); ‘A Recent History of Circus Arts in Buenos Aires, Argentina: The Post-Dictatorial Resurgence and Revaluation of Circus as a Popular Art’, *Popular Entertainment Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): *Circus in Buenos Aires: Culture, Youth and Politics in Dispute* (National Institute of Theater, 2014).

Hanuš Jordan completed his studies in history and was granted an Advanced Masters degree at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, in Prague in 1986. He went on to teach history and subsequently worked on a range of museum and popularisation projects. He first began collaborating with the National Museum in Prague in 1994. Since 2004 he has been the curator of the Theatre Collection of the Historical Museum of the National Museum, where he created the first circus and variety show collection in the Czech Republic. He is the author of the circus section of the permanent exhibition at the Museum of Czech Puppets and Circus in Prachatice. Other exhibitions he has prepared include The Bygone Days of Caravan Life, The Circus Goes out into the World, and Clowns. He co-authored *Orbis Circus* (with Ondrej Cihlář, 2014) and contributed to a collective monograph entitled *Cirkus pictus* (Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2017). Additional publications include *The Ringmaster’s Confessions* (2015), an exploration of the contemporary face of traditional circus. He is a frequent contributor to several Czech scholarly journals (e.g. *Museum*) and other periodicals (*Theatre News, Dance Zone*). He specialises in the Czech and Czechoslovak traditional circus of the twentieth century.
Anna-Sophie Jürgens is a lecturer at the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science of the Australian National University. She was an Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the ANU and the Free University of Berlin, Germany from 2017 to 2020. She has published on circus fiction and aesthetics, the history of (violent) clowns and dancing, and comic performance and technology in culture in numerous academic journals. Anna-Sophie is guest editor of two special, themed journal issues published in 2020 with the Journal of Science & Popular Culture (on popular performance and science) and Comedy Studies (on violent clowns). Her recent books include Circus, Science and Technology: Dramatising Innovation (editor; Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and Manegenkünste: Zirkus als ästhetisches Modell (co-editor; Transcript, 2020).

Louise Peacock is Associate Professor in Drama at De Monfort University. Prior to this she worked at the University of Southern California and at the University of Hull, England. She teaches in the areas of commedia dell’arte, clowning, and stage comedy. She is the author of two books, Serious Play: Modern Clown Performance (Intellect, 2009) and Slapstick and Comic Performance (Palgrave, 2014). She co-edited Popular Performance (Bloomsbury, 2017) and edited and contributed to the Modern Age volume of Bloomsbury’s A Cultural History of Comedy. She contributed a chapter on the body in comedy to the Antiquity volume of the same series. She has written numerous peer-reviewed articles and chapters on commedia dell’arte, stand-up comedy, and clowning.

Jennifer Beth Spiegel holds a doctorate in Cultural Studies from Goldsmiths College, University of London. Currently a research fellow at Simon Fraser University, she previously taught Theatre and Performance Studies at McGill and Concordia Universities in Montréal. Dr Spiegel’s work explores the intersection of performance, public engagement, and social transformation. Her writings have appeared as chapters in various book projects as well as in such journals as Critical Inquiry, Theatre Topics, TDR: The Drama Review, Community Development, Social Movement Studies, and Performance Research among others. She is co-editor of The Art of Collectivity: Social Circus and the Cultural Politics of a ‘Post-Neoliberal’ Vision (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2019).
Veronika Štefanová holds a PhD from the Department of Theatre Studies at Charles University in Prague, where she has explored contemporary circus as a dramatic art. She occasionally teaches at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. She oversees the library, documentation, and research section at CIRQUEON, the umbrella organisation for the support and development of contemporary circus in the Czech Republic. She works as a reporter for the culture section of Czech Radio and has also published several articles, studies, and scholarly publications in journals such as Disk (Academy of the Performing Arts in Prague), Theatralia (Theatre Studies department at the Masaryk University in Brno), and Performance Matters (Simon Fraser University). She has also presented research papers at conferences, such as Circus and Space at the University of Münster. She was a principal organiser of the Circus and Its Others 2018 conference in Prague.

Peta Tait is Emeritus Professor of Theatre and Drama at La Trobe University and she is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She has written over sixty scholarly articles and chapters and her recent books include (as author) Theory for Theatre Studies: Emotion (Bloomsbury, 2021); (as editor) The Great European Stage Directors: Antoine, Stanislavski and Saint-Denis, volume 1 (Bloomsbury, 2018); (as co-editor) Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); (as author) Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows (Sydney University Press, 2016); (as co-editor) The Routledge Circus Studies Reader (Routledge, 2016). Professor Tait is also the author of Wild and Dangerous Performances (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Circus Bodies (Routledge, 2005); Performing Emotions (Routledge/Ashgate 2002), and Forms of Emotion (Routledge, forthcoming). Her most recent play, Eleanor and Mary Alice (Currency Press, 2018), is about Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Alice Evatt and human rights, art, and war.

Matthew Wittmann is Curator of the Harvard Theatre Collection and holds a doctorate from the Program in American Culture at the University of Michigan. He is the author of Circus and the City: New York 1793–2010 (Bard Graduate Center, 2012), which was the basis for a major museum exhibition at the Bard Graduate Center, and is a co-editor and contributor to The American Circus (Yale University Press, 2012). His scholarly work has focused on the cultural,
material, and transnational history of the United States during the nineteenth century and on the dynamics of popular entertainment in particular. He was a trustee of the Circus Historical Society and has consulted on a wide range of circus projects for the Smithsonian, American Public Television, and other cultural and educational organisations.

Catherine M. Young studies the politics of representation in popular US entertainments including vaudeville, circus, and musicals. She is particularly interested in how interspecies performances shaped modern racial categories and gender normativity in the early twentieth century. Her manuscript on transatlantic animal performance during the vaudeville era is currently in preparation for the University of Michigan Press. She has contributed to several edited collections including *Race and Performance after Repetition* (Duke, 2020) and *Performing Animality: Animals in Performance Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Catherine researched and co-translated the German equestrian Therese Renz’s memoir, published in *Early Popular Visual Culture* 15, no. 3 (2017). She is currently a lecturer in the Princeton Writing Program, Princeton University, where she teaches the Captivating Animals seminar.
Acknowledgements

During the early stages of planning this volume, numerous discussions took place between circus scholars and consequently there are a number of people we wish to acknowledge and thank for their generous and discerning suggestions about the scope of the book and potential chapter topics. Some of our informal meetings took place at those rare and enjoyable times when scholars and commissioning editors come together at conferences; at other times our communications criss-crossed the globe via phone and email. Professor Peta Tait and Dr Kim Baston, both from La Trobe University in Melbourne, Professor Patrick Louis Leroux from Concordia University in Montréal, and Professor Julieta Infantino from the University of Buenos Aires offered significant intellectual input during many months of scoping and planning for this volume and we wish to acknowledge and thank them. Dr Kate Brett at Cambridge University Press was an enthusiastic ‘sounding board’ and her support for this book project has been unwavering, with advice that is always prompt, practical, insightful, and (importantly) congenial. Our sincere thanks go to all the staff at Cambridge University Press who have supported this project at different phases of the book’s journey, in particular Eilidh Burrett, Emily Hockley, and Rachel Blaifeder, who have worked with us through the latter production stage.

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scholarliness, for which we commend her. We are grateful for her contribution and wish her the very best with her scholarly plans for the future.

Our thanks also go to Miranda Arrighi, who stepped in as our editorial assistant for the final six months of manuscript preparation. These have been challenging months. In Australia, unprecedented and catastrophic bushfires raged near our homes throughout the southern hemisphere’s summer, polluting the air we breathed and causing untold damage to animals, forests, ecosystems, and humans. Just when it seemed life was returning to ‘normal’, Covid-19 emerged and has altered the way academics teach and manage their institutional responsibilities for the foreseeable future. Throughout these times of great disruption, we nevertheless were bound to complete the book and we acknowledge Miranda’s editorial assistance. Her meticulous eye for detail on all points of grammar and style and her readerly good sense have been an invaluable contribution.

Lastly, we wish to acknowledge the authors who have contributed the sixteen chapters in this volume. Thank you for coming on board, for joining us on the circus train, as it were.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1537</td>
<td>A ‘rope dancer’, performing on the battlements of St Paul’s in London, appears before Edward VI as part of his coronation celebrations.</td>
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<td>1637</td>
<td>First British trade with Canton. Brass-wire walking appears in Chinese shows.</td>
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<td>1644–1911</td>
<td>Qing dynasty Chinese shows feature acts that include balancing objects on the head, feats on the horizontal bar, Guangdong lion puppet shows, juggling into each other’s hands, sporting with water, feats on bar-spinning, and suspending.</td>
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<td>1738</td>
<td>A royal decree is issued in Danish theatre legislation that public displays of theatre or artistic feats are prohibited; however, exceptions could be made for those with a local permit or royal privilege.</td>
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<td>1750s</td>
<td>Thomas Johnston, popularly known as the Irish Tartar, presents displays of horsemanship on fields adjacent to taverns and pleasure gardens in and around London.</td>
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<td>1750–1820</td>
<td>Rope walkers arrive in Argentina from Europe and perform their skills along with pantomimes, puppets, music, and dances. These artists also travelled to Brazil, Chile, and Peru.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1760s</td>
<td>Jacob Bates tours in Europe performing displays of horsemanship in open areas.</td>
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<td>1768</td>
<td>Philip Astley successfully presents trick-riding displays in London, from which emerges the modern circus. Mr Wolton and Mr Sampson present equestrian exhibitions that are similar to Astley’s.</td>
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<td>1772</td>
<td>Astley first visits Paris with his portable amphitheatre.</td>
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1779 Astley covers his equestrian ring with a roof, founding Astley’s Amphitheatre in London.

1782 Astley opens the Amphitheatre Anglais in Paris. Rivals of Astley, Hughes and Dibdin, build their Royal Circus and Equestrian Philharmonic Academy. The term ‘circus’ is adopted for this form of entertainment.

1787 Peter Prince gives circus-like performances including riding, rope dance, acrobatics, and feats of strength with his family and company in Stockholm, Sweden.

1788 An equestrian troupe led by George Jones and William Parker performs in Edinburgh. This troupe becomes the basis of the Edinburgh Equestrian Circus, the first circus established in Scotland.

1793 Establishment of the circus in north America by John Bill Ricketts.

1796–1820 Jiaqing-reign Chinese shows see the introduction of clowns, variety shows (including feats on leather straps and rope walking), and a blindfolded female gymnast.

1797–8 Rickett’s Circus heads to Albany in upstate New York and keeps moving north to Montréal, Canada. Once there, it settles for over a year in a constructed theatre, then moves to Québec City, and then back to Montréal.

1817–18 Baron Karl von Drais introduces the forerunner of the bicycle.

1820 Large foreign circus companies begin to arrive in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

1820–60 Too many travelling puppeteers in the Czech lands leads to the addition of acrobatics, rope walking, conjuring, and training of wild animals to performances. Consequently, development of the Czech circus begins.

1821 English equestrian James Hunter begins performing bare-back, rather than using saddles and pads.

1824 The first Canadian circus, the Cirque West et Blanchard, is founded in Québec City.

1825 The first American travelling circus, owned by J. Purdy Brown, is taken on the road with a tent.
1830 Chiarini’s Circus is the first ‘foreign’ circus to appear at the Parque Argentino in Buenos Aires (capacity 1,500).

1830s–50s First Czech travelling circus company travels to Central and Eastern Europe. The company of Josef Beranek and (from 1833) his son Leopold perform in Poland, Russia, Hungary, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire with their primarily equestrian circus.

1831 French animal trainer and performer Henri Martin enters a cage with a tiger in Germany.

1840 The circus tent is modified for expansion, with rectangular pieces of canvas inserted between two semicircular ends. This crucial development enables tents to be adjusted to the expected size of the audience.

1840s P. T. Barnum’s American Museum, with its exhibition of ‘freaks’, becomes popular.

1841 Equestrian Pablo Fanque (William Darby) becomes one of the first Black British circus proprietors after going into business with W. F. Wallett. One of his playbills inspired John Lennon and Paul McCartney to write ‘Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite’.

1843 The Theatre Regulation Act is introduced in Britain. Circus performances become increasingly policed as many cannot receive licences.

1846 The Hanlon-Lees debut in London as The Hanlons.

1847 The first recorded circus in the Australian colonies performs in Tasmania.

1850 The first record of a Chinese acrobat performing in a variety/circus-like show in Australia (Melbourne).

1851 Performances by equestrian James Ashton at the Royal Circus, Launceston, Tasmania. Ashton’s is the oldest circus in Australia and may be the longest running circus in the western world.

1853 Evidence of regular use of tents for circuses in Australia.

1857 Chinese acrobats perform in Ashton’s Circus (Australia).

1858 In Australia the first theatre licences for Chinese circus companies are issued, allowing Chinese circuses to perform on the goldfields of the colony of Victoria.
1859  Jules Léotard performs solo flying trapeze at the Cirque Napoléon in Paris, thereby becoming a celebrity and popularising aerial performance. He performs in a new, close-fitting bodysuit that is later called the leotard.

1860–80  Many significant metropolitan fairs in Britain close, including Bartholomew Fair and the Bow and Greenwich Fairs. This influences variety artists to pursue circus employment.

1861  Antonin Kludsky founds his travelling menagerie. The world-famous monster circus Kludsky was developed from small travelling wild-animal shows.

The Hanlon-Lees brothers perform the first flying act in the USA and subsequently invent stage machinery for gothic pantomime.

French trapeze artist Jules Léotard performs at the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties and Cremorne Pleasure Gardens in London.

1870  Barnum establishes P. T. Barnum’s Grand Traveling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan & Hippodrome (with W. C. Coup), which was to become the largest circus in history (later as Barnum & Bailey).

1870s  The ‘auguste’ costume for clowns (clothes too big or too small and ludicrous wigs and make-up) comes into vogue.

1871–81  American circuses introduce carnival stalls, exotic animals, and sideshow acts that line the path to the big top.

1872  In the USA, Coup and Costello increase the number of circus rings from one to two.

The cabaret music hall in Paris, the Folies Trévise, becomes the Folies Bergère.

Barnum’s circus commences travel via railroad (rather than horses and wagons), enabling greater distances to be covered.

1874–6  Aerialist Stuart (also Stewart) Dare, one of a number of successful late-nineteenth-century disabled circus performers, appears in a solo act.

1875  Carl Hagenbeck begins to exhibit animals in European and US cities.

1876  Centennial Exposition (Philadelphia).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>The Hanlon-Lees perform in Paris at the Folies Bergère and are lionised by the cultural luminaries of the time, including Zola and Huysmans. Exposition Universelle (Paris).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1878–9</td>
<td>Joseph Swan (1878, Britain) and Thomas Edison (1879, USA) invent early light bulbs. Howe’s London Circus, Sanger’s Royal Menagerie, and Cooper, Bailey and Company’s International Allied Shows are selected for the first public displays of electric lighting.</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Circus Renz moves into the former Berlin market hall. By 1888 it had 5,600 seats. Protective legislation for child performers is introduced in Britain thus restricting performances by children.</td>
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<td>1880</td>
<td>The advent of the three-ring circus.</td>
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<td>1880s</td>
<td>Establishment of the Wirth Brothers’ Circus in Australia. The company ceased operations in 1963.</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>In Argentina, José Podestá debuts his character Pepino 88, a clown who sings rhyming songs that feature national themes and social criticism.</td>
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<td>1883</td>
<td>Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show becomes an international phenomenon following its success in the USA. The show re-enacts conflicts between the American military, its cowboy scouts, and Indian nations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>The Berlin Conference divides colonial African territories among European powers, providing more access to territories for hunting and shipping animals bound for zoos, menageries, and circuses. In Boston, Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin Keith introduces continuous entertainment at his dime museum. This will become the model for corporatised American vaudeville.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Inventor Karl Benz patents his Benz Patent-Motorwagen, making this the birth year of the modern car. In Argentina, José Podestá premieres the spoken version of ‘Juan Moreira’ in the second part of his show. This signals the beginning of a new style of circus show, the Creole Circus, with circus skills in the first part and a theatrical drama of the gaucho genre in the second part.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Establishment of the FitzGerald Brothers’ Circus in Australia.</td>
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1889 The Moulin Rouge cabaret opens at the foot of Montmartre in Paris. Hagenbeck’s trained lions act appears, with three lions harnessed to a chariot and a lion riding on the back of a horse. The act has been made possible by the 1888 invention of the arena cage.

1893 World’s Columbian Exposition (Chicago).

1894 Edison Studios becomes the early leader in the film industry.

1895 Circus Busch moves into its own building in Berlin (Busch-Bau).

1897 Barnum & Bailey Circus begins its five-year tour of Europe. Lena Jordan performs the first (backward) triple somersault on flying trapeze to catch Lew Jordan in a flying trapeze act in Sydney, Australia. Ringling Brothers introduce the ‘Black Top’ tent, containing a cinematograph and film projector for screenings.

1899 Louis Cyr and Horace Barré found the first Canadian touring circus, the Cirque Louis Cyr–Horace Barré, which featured strong men and Cyr’s wife and daughter.

1900 Paris International (World Expo).

1907 Inspired by Paris’s Folies Bergère, American immigrant Florenz Ziegfeld produces his first Follies revue, which transforms popular entertainment by emphasising groups of white women in thematic spectacles.

1909 Ernie Clarke masters the triple somersault to a catcher for its regular performance. This mastery follows the Clarkes and the Jordans appearing in the same circus. Al G. Barnes’s Trained Wild Animal Circus is established.

1910 By this time, Black sideshow bands featured in every major touring circus in America.

1911 Chinese-Australian equestrian circus performer and star of the Hyland Vice Regal Circus, Agnes Emily Roberts, performs at the Coronation of King George V of the United Kingdom and Kaiser Wilhelm II of Prussia. She will tour Europe and the United States until 1913.

1913 The Palace Theatre, the premiere vaudeville venue in the United States, opens in New York City as part of the Keith Albee Circuit, which controls all of the northeastern United States.
1914    World War I allies boycott German businesses, disrupting the trained animal trade.
1917    The October Revolution takes place in Russia.
1918    Experiments with motorised transport for circus travel are successful in America.
1919    Ringling management merge two of the biggest and most prestigious circuses in the world to create the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Show.
1920s   Russian theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold uses circus in his theatre productions.
1921    Bertram Mills Circus takes advantage of a growing interest in circus to produce a Christmas circus at the Olympia Exhibition Hall in London.
1923    Barbette, née Vander Clyde, begins a European tour as a cross-dressing trapeze artist.
1925    The largest Czechoslovak circus, Kludsky, which consists of three manège chapiteaux, 135 circus carriages transported on 86 railway cars, and 400 trained animals, starts its European tour.
1926    Lou Jacobs, the well-known clown who invented the famous midget car trick, joins the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.
1927    The Russian government establishes the State College for Circus and Variety Arts (Moscow Circus School).
1930    Bertram Mills Circus diversifies beyond its annual Olympia circus to begin tenting throughout the United Kingdom for the first time under its own name.
1931    Lillian Leitzel, the most significant aerial celebrity of her generation, dies as a result of an equipment failure at the Valencia Music Hall in Copenhagen.
1932    Tod Browning’s film Freaks is released.
1934    Downfall of the largest Czechoslovak circus, Cirkus Kludsky.
1939–45 During this period, more than 2,000 Czech citizens were employed in German circuses and varieties as acrobats, animal trainers, and musicians.
Chipperfields, Billy Smarts, and Bertram Mills emerge as the big three circus companies to dominate UK post-war circus.

The international programme of Circus Henry (Fiala’s Family) is located in a permanent circus building in Beskyd, in Ostrava in the North Moravian Region of the Czech Republic.

‘Nationalisation’ of Czechoslovak circuses begins. Circus owners are forced to allow the takeover of their family companies by a state agency, Czechoslovak Circus Enterprises. Privately owned circuses are forbidden.

Father Jesus Silva, a Spanish Jesuit priest, creates first a circus school and later a company, as a way of funding his ‘City of Boys’ community for orphans and young people living on the streets in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

German Democratic Republic (GDR) circuses Barlay, Aeros, and Busch are brought under municipal administration after the deaths of the owners, Cliff Aeros and Fritz van der Heydt, and the relocation of Harry Barlay to Germany.

In Czechoslovakia, new state enterprises Czechoslovak Circuses, Varieties and Amusement Parks, and National Enterprise commence the centralisation of circus businesses. Several new circuses, Humberto, Slovan, Praga, and Internacional, among others, are also established. In China, Prime Minister Chou En-lai leads the nationalisation of circus and first state troupes and the development of circus schools.

Circus Aeros performs in Budapest – the first GDR circus to perform abroad.

The first GDR artist ensemble undertakes guest performances in the Soviet Union in Moscow and Stalingrad.

The Moscow Circus plays Le Cirque Royal in Brussels to ‘wild acclaim’. Clown Oleg Popov appears on this tour. The Staatliche Fachschule für Artistik (State Institute for Acrobatic Arts) is founded in Berlin. The school still exists today in association with the Staatliche Ballettschule (State Ballet School of Berlin).

The last small Czechoslovak family circuses, made up of members of one traditional family, are prohibited by law from travelling.
1959 The Circus Archive Winkler (Zirkusarchiv Winkler) is founded in Berlin. It is the largest private collection of circus materials in German-speaking countries. Gisela and Dietmar Winkler own 9,200 books on circus, variété, magic, and popular entertainments; 2,000 journals from twenty countries; 12,000 programme booklets from around fifty countries; 18,000 photos of circus companies and artistic performances; and 150 original graphics on the circus theme, in addition to other materials such as posters and films. The collection is accessible to circus scholars and enthusiasts. Manufacture of spandex, lycra, and elastine fibres and fabric is perfected.


1960 The Publicly Owned Enterprise Central Circus is formed in the GDR with nationalisation of the circuses Barlay (renamed Olympia, later Berolina) and Busch; Aeros follows in 1961. There are also private circus companies that receive their licences from the Ministry of Culture.

1964 Bertram Mills Circus closes as tenting circuses begin to struggle financially in the UK.

1965 Czechoslovak acrobats, dancers, and circus artists perform in the United States as part of The Greatest Show on Earth by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

1966 Hovey Burgess begins teaching circus skills at New York University.


1967 Irvin Feld buys Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

1968–69 Hovey Burgess and his students create Circo dell’Arte. Burgess also opens his studio, the Circus Arts Institute and Bowery Amphitheatre.


1970 Peggy Williams becomes the first female clown to graduate from the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Clown College. Peter Brook uses circus skills in his
innovative Royal Shakespeare Company production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Larry Pisoni, a student of Hovey Burgess, joins the San Francisco Mime Troupe, along with Paul Binder.

1971  
Cirque Bonjour (Jean-Baptiste Thierrié and Victoria Chaplin) are invited to the international theatre festival in Avignon by Jean Vilar.

1973  
Christian Taguet founds Les Puits aux Images, a company of street acrobats (or saltimbanques), which becomes Circus Baroque in 1987.

1974  
The New Circus (New Ensemble Circus) is founded in Adelaide, Australia. Larry Pisoni and others create the Pickle Family Jugglers, which becomes the Pickle Family Circus the following year. Paul Binder and Michael Christensen tour Europe as street performers. Alexis Gruss creates Cirque Gruss in Paris.

The first two occidental circus schools open in Paris:  
L’école au Carré (Alexis Gruss and Silvia Monfort) and l’École nationale du cirque (Annie Fratellini and Pierre Étaix). These two schools have a profound impact on the development of new circus/nouveau cirque. First International Monte Carlo Circus Festival takes place.

1975  
cirque Roncalli is founded by Bernhard Paul and André Heller. Paul Rouleau and Pierrot Pillet (Bidon) begin to tour southern France in caravans with Cirque Bidon.

1976  
Soapbox Circus is formed as a touring sideshow by the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory, Melbourne.

1977  
After returning from Europe, Binder and Christensen co-founded the Big Apple Circus (BAC), New York. The New York School of Circus Arts opens in conjunction with BAC. The first Bourses Louis Merlin circus competition takes place in France. Founding of the National Circus School ‘Yuri Mandich’ in Cuba. The Piolin Academy is founded in Brazil. London International Mime Festival is established with circus as a key component of its programme.

1978  
The Bourses Louis Merlin competition becomes the Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain. Circus Oz (Australia) is founded from combinations of New Circus and Soapbox
Circus. Over 800 artists have subsequently worked in the company’s annual productions. France recognises circus as a cultural art form and moves circus from the jurisdiction of the Minister of Agriculture to the Minister of Cultural Affairs. First European Juggling Convention is held in Brighton, United Kingdom.

1979 Flying Fruit Fly Circus is established as Australia’s leading children’s circus, it works with Chinese trainers continuously from 1986 to 2012.

1980 Circus Oz undertakes its first European tour. The Publicly Owned Enterprise Central Circus is renamed Staatszirkus der DDR (GDR State Circus). In addition to the circuses Aeros, Busch, and Berolina, the winter quarters in Dahlwitz-Hoppegarten near Berlin belong to the GDR State Circus, and include folk festival facilities and an agency that organises guest performances abroad.

1981 The Nanjing Acrobatic Troupe tour to Melbourne, Australia. During this tour, Chinese circus skills are shared with Flying Fruit Fly Circus performers. This provides the impetus for Carrillo Gantner, Australian attaché to China, to negotiate the Nanjing training project in 1983. L’école nationale de cirque de Montréal (National Circus School of Montréal) is founded by Guy Caron, inspired by his own training at the Hungarian National Circus School.

1982 Guy Laliberté creates Fête Foraine, a festival of street performance, in Baie St Paul, Canada. The National Circus School (Escola Nacional de Circo) is founded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Videla brothers, third-generation circus artists, found the Criollo Circus School, the first circus arts school in Argentina. The school continues to operate in Buenos Aires and has been the training space for many Argentine circus artists.

1983 The Argentine military dictatorship ends, and various artists emerge as the precursors of the new circus and street circus. The Nanjing Project brings Chinese acrobats to Albury-Wodonga (Australia); this is organised by Circus Oz and Flying Fruit Fly Circus. Cirque Plume is founded in France by a group of musicians and street performers.
1983–4 Chinese acrobats come to Australia to train new circus performers as part of the Nanjing Project I. Guy Laliberté, Gilles Ste-Croix, and others create Cirque du Soleil, which has its first season in Canada. The company will grow into a billion-dollars-a-year industry, especially after a rapid succession of new shows that are created in Las Vegas during the 1990s.

1984 British company Ra-Ra Zoo is established and becomes instrumental in developing British experimental circus.

1985 Guy Caron becomes the artistic director of Cirque du Soleil. The first academically accredited circus school in France, the Centre National des Arts de Cirque opens in Châlons-sur-Marne (now Châlons-en-Champagne). L’école supérieure des Arts du Cirque is founded in Brussels, Belgium.

1985–6 Chinese acrobats come to Australia to train new circus performers as part of the Nanjing Project II. These acts were adopted directly into the Australian new circus.

1986 Bidon (Pierrot Pillot) founds Archaos. Circus Flora debuts in Charleston, South Carolina. Street Arts in Brisbane (Australia) produces a show called Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus and a core company continues under this name the following year. The company will change its name to Circa in 2004. Wales-based NoFit State circus is founded. Fool Time opens in Bristol as the first UK circus school. In 1994 the school becomes Circomedia.


1987 Flying Fruit Fly Circus School established as the first circus school in Australia. Cirque du Soleil tours to the USA. Glastonbury Festival creates its first circus programme. Today it is a major event on the circus festival calendar.

1988 Influential UK aerial company, Skinning the Cat, is founded. London International Festival of New Circus, featuring Archaos and Cirque du Soleil, is held on London’s South Bank. Moscow Circus tours the Flying Cranes to the US.