THE ROYAL CIRCUS 1782-1809:
AN ANALYSIS OF EQUESTRIAN ENTERTAINMENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
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by
Paul Alexander Daum, B.F.A., M.A.

* * * * *

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Reading Committee

Dr. John C. Morrow
Dr. Roy H. Bowen
Dr. George P. Crepeau

Approved By

John C. Morrow
Adviser
Department of Theatre
VITA

March 15, 1938 . . . . . . Born, Akron, Ohio

1962 ................ B.F.A., Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia

1964 ................ M.A., The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio

1964-1966 .......... Lecturer, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio

1966-1969 .......... Instructor, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio

1968-1969 .......... Research Associate, Assistant to the Director,
                    The Ohio State University Theatre Collection,
                    Columbus, Ohio

1969- . . . . . . . . Assistant Professor, The University of Akron,
                    Akron, Ohio

PUBLICATIONS

"The Jesuit Theatre on the Continent With Particular Reference to Rome
and The Collegio and Seminario Romae." The Ohio State University

"Gabriel Pierre Martin Dumont: A Biography and Theatrical Evaluation."
The Ohio State University Theatre Collection Bulletin, 1969.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Fields: Theatre History and Technical Theatre

Theatre History. Professor John H. McDowell

Technical Theatre. Professors George Crepeau and Jon Cobes

Dramatic Literature. Professor John C. Morrow

Directing. Professor Roy H. Bowen

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to examine the development of equestrian entertainments in the late eighteenth century and of the Royal Circus in particular. Several changes took place in the eighteenth century to influence the growth of the minor theatres: (1) England was beginning to evolve from a rural to an industrial nation in which the population was moving from the countryside to the city; (2) this new emerging class witnessed and was excited by the spectacular productions produced at the minor theatres; and (3) the various licensing acts during the century influenced the type of entertainments which the minor theatres could produce.

Horsemanship and riding had always been a popular pastime of the nobility of England. From the Medieval period onward, jousts, tournaments, and riding exercises were performed regularly. Early in the eighteenth century the nobility built riding schools for instruction in horsemanship. As the nobility began to feel the pinch of the economy towards the middle of the eighteenth century, many of these riding masters struck out on their own to show their skills at equestrian feats. They first performed in open fields near an ale house, a spa, or a pleasure garden. Price and Johnson in the late 1750's and early 1760's regularly performed such feats and tricks as standing on a horse, riding backwards, balancing, and firing pistols while galloping at full speed on horseback.
The beginnings of equestrian drama can be traced to Philip Astley who opened his riding academy on a piece of ground on Blackfriars Road. Here he enclosed the ring and built a grandstand for the audience to see the performances. His pupil, Charles Hughes, opened a similar establishment in 1771. But being unlicensed, they soon were forced to close by the interdiction of the Surrey magistrates. Philip Astley quickly reopened, but Charles Hughes never was able to reopen his riding school.

In 1782, Charles Dibdin, the eminent song writer, teamed up with Charles Hughes, the equestrian performer, to build the Royal Circus. After appropriate financial backing was located, and the theatre built, they opened the Royal Circus on November 4, 1782. Dibdin's idea was to combine the ring with the stage and thus expand and make equestrian performances more versatile. Dibdin's and Hughes' temperaments did not mesh, for the two men were constantly arguing over policy and methods of operation. Since the theatre had not been licensed by the Surrey magistrates, this further added to their dissension. The final humiliation for Dibdin occurred when Hughes obtained the license in his name only. Hughes further pitted the proprietors and actors against Dibdin until he ended up in Bridewell for non-payment of debts with no help from anyone at the Circus.

The theatre had been organized with the idea of training young children, from five to ten years of age, in the arts of pantomime, equestrian feats, and acrobatics. These children would be under the complete care of the managers of the theatre. This situation produced
more strife as the children’s parents were continually complaining to Dibdin because Grimaldi, the Dancing Master, worked them too long and too hard. However, the children became excellent equestrian performers and were quite famous for the tricks they performed on horseback, on the slack and tight-rope, and on the trampoline. After one season they were replaced with adult performers in the entertainments although Charles Hughes retained young apprentices for the horsemanship stunts.

When Dibdin was incarcerated in Bridewell for a time, Grimaldi was appointed in his place. The next year, Hughes and Dibdin teamed up again and took over the Royal Circus, refusing to pay rent to the proprietors until 1788. By mid season, Dibdin had had his fill of Hughes, the proprietors, and the Royal Circus and left the establishment never to return again. The theatre faced a constant threat of litigation and lawsuits during these first years. Hughes, Dibdin, or the proprietors, it seemed, were always in Court suing one another over poorly worded contracts.

Hughes then ran the theatre himself for the next two years with the majority of entertainments being of an equestrian nature. The proprietors finally obtained the theatre again by Court decree and leased it to Hughes for the next season. Delpini, appointed manager after the death of Grimaldi in 1788, left the theatre after one season. He did produce some good pieces, but he did not have the flair for management of an English theatre and because of his extravagance, he lost a large amount of money.
Read then took over the management of the theatre for the next two seasons. He produced many new entertainments, but he too fell out of sorts with Hughes and the proprietors. He first tried to limit the number of houses Hughes could use. This proved to be an unfortunate decision for the audience loved horsemanship. The proprietors rallied to Hughes' side against Read. The second season, Palmer and another actor, Barrett, were arrested and sent to Bridewell where they remained for several months until being proven guilty of speaking dialogue without being licensed to do so. The public, being unable to see their favorite entertainments, began to go to other theatres and by mid-September the theatre was forced to close because of lack of business.

The theatre now fell on hard times. What had been the best of the minor theatres and had offered the finest equestrian drama, was now in a state of financial collapse. The proprietors, also facing hard times, began to desert their property one by one until Lady West instituted a suit to gain the entire possession of the theatre. This was granted her in 1793.

Hughes in the meantime, being an able and astute showman, fended for himself. He took a new herd of horses and what was left of his own performing horses and left for Russia as a guest of Catherine the Great. There he established a riding amphitheatre for her and proved to be a great success. Upon learning of the suit giving Lady West the theatre, he returned to England to open the Royal Circus for the modestly successful season of 1793, his fox chases and stag hunts being quite popular.

The theatre by this time had fallen into a very dilapidated state. In 1794, Lady West gave a repairing lease to George and James
Jones to rebuild the theatre which they then opened for the season of 1795. Their first two seasons were quite successful as they brought out many new entertainments and performed excellent equestrian feats. In 1796, Hughes lost his license which he had had since 1784 to James Jones. The following year Hughes died a broken hearted man.

John Cross was appointed acting manager for the season of 1797, a title which he retained until his death in 1808. During this early period of the late 1790's the theatre was to prosper and have no rivals. In 1798, Cross became a partner through marriage and the retirement of George Jones. Cross and the Royal Circus became famous for the "dumb show" nautical spectacles performed there. Since dialogue was forbidden, Cross got around this limitation by having his actors explain the situation by holding up a printed scroll periodically.

These early spectacles were of the "blood and thunder" type with a great deal of spectacular action scenes such as fires, earthquakes, avalanches, and fierce battles. Cross also turned to grand ballets of action to represent the various British victories both on land and sea. These spectacles proved to be very popular with the working class audiences of the Royal Circus. Out of the "dumb shows" and naval musical dramas of the 1790's and the grand ballets of action of the early 1800's there slowly evolved a new character type, the good-hearted, rough-hewn British Tar.

The Royal Circus was totally destroyed by fire in August, 1805, and with this building went a great deal of the theatre's former glorious tradition. The theatre was rebuilt and reopened the following year, but
Cross was never again able to prosper as he had done before the fire. His rival, Astley, won the crowds away for his equestrian dramas were far more spectacularly produced than were those of Cross. Astley used divided stages that raised and lowered and staged more realistic battle scenes. Cross died in Manchester and the theatre was leased to Robert Elliston. He made major renovations to the building, removed the ride, and renamed the theatre The Surrey. Equestrian entertainments were seriously curtailed by the new renovations of The Surrey. Because of the removal of a place for this special type of spectacle, equestrian drama went into a final eclipse.
CHAPTER I

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY:
A THEATRICAL REVIEW

South London and the Parish of Lambeth

The area south of the Thames had for centuries been a popular relaxation spot for Londoners. This area had been famous for bear-baiting gardens as early as the mid sixteenth century. Shortly thereafter, theatres were built in this area—The Hope, The Rose, The Swan, and The Globe. With the building of these numerous houses of entertainment, this area became a popular location for pleasure gardens with their mineral springs, teas, and equestrian feats. In addition to crossing the Thames by boat, Londoners travelled across London Bridge to attend these popular entertainments.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century many changes took place in historic South London. The romantic collection of buildings that stood on London Bridge were pulled down. The construction of Blackfriars Bridge and its new road caused the area to be developed. This new bridge, between London Bridge and Westminster Bridge, served to shorten considerably the distance in getting to South London.

A distinguishing feature of South London was the splendid succession of commons. Close to the river Thames were vast marshes. They were
submerged at high tide and were the home of countless birds and wild fowl. At the edge of the marshes were trees, flowers, grass, and small scattered settlements of people. Until the dawn of the nineteenth century the whole of the triangular space known as St. George's Fields (see Figure 1) situated between Westminster Bridge Road and Blackfriars Road was a marsh. "St. George's Fields were named after the adjacent church of St. George-the-Martyr."\(^1\) During the great Fire of London many of the poorer inhabitants of the city took refuge in St. George's Fields which were intersected by dirty ditches. Quartered here were travelling show vans and wooden huts on wheels. The area was also a popular place for itinerant preachers, who in the time of the Stuarts, were not allowed to hold meetings in the city of London itself.\(^2\) This was the complexion of South London until the late eighteenth century.

The parish of Lambeth is one of the largest in England, being "eighteen miles in circumference; in length, about six and one-half miles; in breadth, about two miles."\(^3\) There were nine commons, the only one which survives today is Kennington Common, now Kennington Park.\(^4\) The most important manor in the parish was Lambeth Manor. The earliest record extant in which it is mentioned was "a charter of King Edward the Confessor, dated 1062, confirming the several grants of the


\(^2\) Ibid.

\(^3\) Sir Walter Besant, *London South of the Thames* (London: Adam & Church Black, 1912), 75.

\(^4\) Ibid.
PLAN OF ST. GEORGE'S FIELDS, 1788 (p. 53)

The manor of Lambeth was granted by Goda, sister of Edward the Confessor, and wife of Eustace, Count of Boulogne, to the Bishopric of Rochester. In 1197, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave the manor of Dartford in Kent to the Bishop of Rochester in exchange for the manor in Lambeth. However, the Bishop of Rochester reserved a piece of ground on which to erect a house. Subsequently, the future Bishops of Rochester lived in the house until 1540, when it was given to the King in exchange for a house on Bankside.  

Lambeth was the last place of refuge for the large colony of Thames fishermen. They had inhabited the Strand before being finally driven away by the population moving in from the rural areas. They crossed the river into Lambeth, remaining there until 1830 when, once again, they were forced out by the rising population and effects of industrial pollution. This area became a home for the working class and resulted in vast areas of docks and tenements.  

In 1768, a committee was formed to plan a new road leading from Blackfriars Bridge. They proposed:

to construct a straight road, eighty feet wide, from the bridge to a circus, not exceeding 250 feet in diameter at its junction, with what are now Borough and Westminster Bridge Roads, and for two new roads, Lambeth and London Roads, from the circus to the Dog and Duck and Newington Butts respectively.  

5 Ibid., 77.
7 Besant, South of Thames, 78-79.
The intersection of Westminster Bridge Road and Blackfriars Road in 1790 was known as St. George's Circus. Today six broad thoroughfares meet there: Blackfriars Road, Waterloo Road, Borough Road, Westminster Bridge Road, London Road, and Lambeth Road. In the center of the Circus stood an obelisk:

erected in 1771 in honour of Brass Crosby, who during his mayoralty was imprisoned in the Tower, with John Wilks of the North Briton, then an alderman, for having released some printers of London newspapers who had been apprehended on warrants issued by the House of Commons. 9

The obelisk was railed in and four unserviceable guns were put up as posts to protect it from damage by traffic.10 The obelisk, which is of Portland stone, bears the following inscription:

North face—

ERECTED IN
X1th YEAR
OF THE REIGN
OF KING GEORGE
THE THIRD
MDCCCLXXI
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
BRASS CROSBY ESQUIRE
LORD MAYOR

East face—

ONE MILE
FROM
PALACE YARD
WESTMINSTER
HALL

South face—

ONE MILE
CCCL FEET
FROM
FLEET STREET

(City coat of arms below)

West face—

ONE MILE
XXXXXXXX FEET
FROM
LONDON BRIDGE 11

9Besant, South of Thames, 51.
10Roberts, Survey, XXV, 43.
11Ibid., 44.
The obelisk was removed to the grounds of Bethem Hospital in 1905.\textsuperscript{12}

On the west side of Blackfriars Road, near St. George's Circus, the Surrey Theatre stood until 1935. The first theatre on the site was the Royal Circus, built in 1782. It was destroyed by fire in 1805 and again in 1865, both times rebuilt within one year. The site was finally acquired for an extension of the Royal Eye Hospital and the theatre was then torn down.\textsuperscript{13}

Thus we can see that as industrial development increased, persons flocked in from the countryside to turn this South London area into one of dwellings, docks, tenements, shops, and places of amusement. In this area most of the working class lived and they began to search for places to spend their leisure time.

\textbf{The Audience}

The audience also began to mirror the changing conditions of the times. Because of the development in industry and commerce, a new social class was coming into existence, one whose position and influence were based on this expanded industrial development. Among this new class who were gathering the power into their own hands formerly held by the aristocracy, were merchants, writers, tradesmen, and conscientious

\textsuperscript{12}Clunn, \textit{Faces}, 329.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 330.
men of all kinds. The appearance in the theatre of this new class of people was an attempt to escape the oppressive realities of twelve and fourteen-hour work days, tenements, and relentless poverty. These people might enjoy, however fleetingly:

The illusory world of pasteboard beauty, of remote and imaginary lands peopled by heroic and supernatural beings, of suspenseful, action-packed adventures where virtue always triumphed and Providence often took a hand in the final dispensing of justice.\(^\text{15}\)

Leo Hughes in *The Drama's Patrons* felt that the one best term to fit the audience of that period was "mixed." Throughout the period of the mid to late eighteenth century, there are indications that all levels of the populace were represented at the theatre. Several examples will serve to illustrate the point; "During the time of the representation of a play, the quality in boxes are totally employed in finding out and beckoning to their acquaintances, male and female, . . ." That part of the audience was balanced by crowds of "the vulgar who gather from all parts and crowd the pit, slips and galleries. . . ."\(^\text{16}\)

The second illustration, three years later, provided further evidence of a mixed audience:

The playhouse at London is for all classes of the nation. The peer of the realm, the gentleman, the merchant, the citizen, the clergyman, the tradesman, and their wives,


\(^{16}\)Leo Hughes, *The Drama's Patrons* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 176. Taken from the *Theatrical Monitor*, March 19, 1768.
equally resort thither to take places, and the crowd is great.\textsuperscript{17}

Most revealing are John Burgoyne's comments on classes in the theatre of the last quarter of the century:

They who suppose an English audience, because used to plain entertainment, are incapable of relishing the most refined, are greatly mistaken. It is true, there will ever be spectators in the two extremes of the house, who are tasteless and despicable—... But the middle class and bulk of the assembly, like that of the kingdom at large, will ever be on the side of nature, truth, and sense. Let the piece be founded upon these principles and applause will follow every circumstance of elegance and decoration that can accompany them.\textsuperscript{18}

Hughes sums up his concept of the "middle class" as referring to an attitude rather than a station in the ranks of society.\textsuperscript{19} Thus the audience of this period can be characterized as large and heterogeneous. "Such in general was the nature of the mid eighteenth century theatre audience, heterogeneous in its make-up, but united in its continuing interest in its favorite amusement."\textsuperscript{20} Numerous newspaper accounts attest to the crowded houses of the period for the popularity of the theatre as a place of entertainment was persistent.\textsuperscript{21}

Persons of higher social ranks regularly occupied the boxes which lined both sides of the theatre. Many times a person chose the boxes

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 178.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 178-179.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 105.
  \item \textsuperscript{21}Lynch, \textit{Box}, 204-205.
\end{itemize}
where he could see the performance well if he chose, or because of their elevation above the pit, could be clearly seen by those above and below. Along the boxes and occupying most of the rear of the theatre were the galleries. The admission to these galleries could be had for as little as one or two shillings. The uppermost gallery was regarded by the footmen of the nobility as "their own special province." The rest of the gallery space was taken up by the lower classes. These persons were "successors to the groundlings of the sixteenth century" and an important segment of the audience. These gallery inhabitants many times expressed themselves frequently and vociferously, often with "a shower of fruit or dried peas." But yet they were equally ready to applaud, without waiting for the curtain to fall, a well delivered line or a favorite actor.

Between these two extremes of social order were the writers, merchants, and professional men who made up much of the pit audience. Evidence of the pit's merits lies in the fact that numerous "prologues and epilogues" were specifically directed at the critical audience who sat there. The managers recognized the growing influence of the middle class and gave special attention to the persons who sat there.

London audiences could and would be demonstrative; it was seldom that they remained quiet, but at times they seemed inconsistent in their

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22 Ibid., 201-204.
24 Lynch, Box, 204-205.
moments of admiration or condemnation. The sincerity of their applause was usually not doubted for they had "no fears, no inhibitions in betraying their emotions." They were loyal to a large body of "persons, performers, managers, and scene designers, who applied them with entertainment." 25

Many times complications arose in gaining admission to the pit and gallery areas if the crowd was especially large. The practice of "keeping places" or reserving space in the boxes was followed throughout the century. Those in attendance in a box could not or would not be there at the proper time for the opening of the performance. These places, by custom, could be kept for the person or persons only until the end of the first act. However, in practice, the seat had to be actually occupied from the moment the doors were opened. 26

The practice of "keeping places" was that of sending a servant to sit in the seat until its owner arrived at the theatre. The customary time for a servant to be there was about one-half hour before the general public was admitted. The procedure was as follows:

The box door keeper had already apportioned the seats in the box. When the servant came to the theatre he would declare himself and would be told where to go. . . . When his master finally arrived, he too would be told where his place was. He would then complete his payment for it, and take possession of it. 27

25 Hogan, London Stage, cxcvi-cxcvii.
26 Ibid., xxx-xxxii.
26 Ibid., xxxi.
Noise was a part of this ritual for there were spectators coming into boxes at various times, servants leaving the boxes, doors opening and closing, and spectators finally settling themselves into their seats.

Another factor governing the size of the audience was the time of year a particular entertainment was exhibited. The Christmas and Easter holidays were a most popular time for the lower classes to attend the theatre. Pantomime, extravaganza, spectacle, and comedy were the favorites during these periods. The Royal Circus opened on Easter Monday each year and part of that first presentation was a pantomime or extravaganza. The theatre for many years closed after the Christmas holidays, and the concluding entertainment was a pantomime, "especially got up" for that occasion. One of the chief attractions of pantomime suggests another variable to the audience of the time, young people, children, and families were beginning to go to the theatre. Family attendance, however, was still very much limited at the minor theatres.  

The audience of the late eighteenth century is characterized by Allardyce Nicoll by "extremely political emotions." The French Revolution had broken out in 1789 and a strong sense of national feeling was present. The Royal Circus in that year produced The Fall of the Bastile which proved to be very popular. The major theatres, licensed by the government, stayed away from subjects with political overtones.

28 Hughes, Drama's Patrons, 159-160.

We have now seen something of the type of audience which existed during the last part of the eighteenth century. The next element and a key for the style of production during this period was spectacle. A parallel can surely be developed between the popularity of spectacle and its effect upon theatrical building enterprises during this period. In 1767 there were only five theatres in London and except for a few years, there had been no more than five in active operation since the Restoration. But between 1780 and 1800, seven new theatres were built: Astley's, the Royal Circus, and the Royalty housed new companies; two replaced the houses occupied by existing companies, Drury Lane and Covent Garden; while the remaining two, the Lyric and the Pantheon, played a minor role in theatrical history during this period. There was also during this period a rapid growth of pleasure gardens.

The reason for the expansion can be seen from several factors. The growth of the city's population and the increase in the standard of living among all classes helped to account for some of the expansion. Further, the public authorities seem to have relaxed the vigilance which earlier magistrates had exercised in suppressing amusements in the poorer districts.

The popular demand for spectacle was a direct cause in the rebuilding of Drury Lane and Covent Garden to increase the size of the stage and increasing seating capacity. These facilities needed to be improved and enlarged in order to be able to stage adequately the

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spectacles which both houses had made popular and famous. Astley's and
the Royal Circus were located in poorer districts of the city and from
the beginning they showed interest in only offering variety programs of
spectacles such as pantomimes, burlettas, and horsemanship which were
attractive to the neighborhood population. For the most part, the two
houses relied on neighborhood trade for they received very little news-
paper publicity other than paid advertisement. The minor theatres did
not develop new forms of spectacle, but relied on those other than
horsemanship which had been perfected at the major houses. 31

This new rising social class developed a strong interest in
attending theatrical productions at the minor theatres. They gladly
applauded a piece well done; conversely, a piece poorly done was hissed
and booted. Spectacle had a great appeal for them and a large audience
could be counted on when a piece was spectacularly staged. Because of
the various restrictions placed on the type of entertainment, the minor
theatres developed along the lines of pantomime, non-dialogue spectacles
and equestrian entertainments. Horsemanship continued to be the major
feature for during the eighteenth century horsemanship was perfected from
the simple riding exercises at the pleasure gardens to a complicated
series of spectacular manoeuvres as part of a theatrical production.
Astley's, the Royal Circus, and the other minor theatres were built to
cater to this rising population who flocked there to witness spectacular
performances of pantomime, dancing, and horsemanship.

31 Ibid., 122-124.
Horsemanship

The introduction of horses to the stage cannot be claimed as a nineteenth century innovation. Probably the most famous of the pre-circus horses was the celebrated Morrocco during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. He was a bay owned by a man named Banks (see Figure 2). Morrocco was certainly one of the marvels of his age.

He would restore a glove to the due owner after the master had whispered the man's name in his ear; and would tell the just number of pence in any piece of silver coin newly showed to him by his master. 32

In 1608, Banks and Morrocco traveled to France. So mystified were his audiences that it was rumored that Morrocco "had a devil" for surely no mere horse could possess such intelligence. This unfortunate rumor nearly brought Banks to the stake, but his wits saved him. At Orleans he was accused of being a sorcerer. He accepted the challenge and triumphantly vindicated himself with the following results. He ordered Morrocco to choose a man from the spectators who was wearing a crucifix:

'Now,' said Banks, 'kneel down before the holy cross.' Obediently Morrocco knelt. 'Now rise and kiss the cross.' Morrocco rose, and stretching out his glossy neck, mumbled the crucifix with soft lips. The spectators were completely satisfied, for no devil has power to come near the cross. 33

From Orleans, the two went to Frankfort, and there they vanished from history. Tradition has it the authorities of the Church, to be on the safe side, apprehended both horse and owner, and made one bonfire of them.
Figure 2. Banks and Morocco. Ruth Manning-Sanders, The English Circus, 24.
Whether this story is true or not is open to question; however, Ben Johnson referred to it:

Old Banks, the juggler, our Pythagoras, Grave tutor to the learned horse; both which Being, beyond the sea, burned for one witch. 34

Whether Banks or Morocco suffered martyrdom or not, they set the fashion in educated horses.

In the reign of Queen Anne the following announcement was made about an educated horse:

To be seen, at the Ship, upon Great Tower Hill, the finest taught horse in the world. He fetches and carries like a spaniel dog. If you hide a glove, a handkerchief, a door key, a pewter basin, or so small a thing as a silver 2d., he will seek about the room till he has found it; and then he will bring it to his master. He will also tell the number of spots on a card, and leap through a hoop, with a variety of other curious performances. 35

In the seventeenth century, William Stokes, a vaulting master, introduced horses into the program at Sadler's Wells. He boasted in a publication called The Vaulting Master, printed at Oxford in 1652, that he had reduced "vaulting to a method." 36 In the book are several plates containing different specimens of his practice, which consisted chiefly in "vaulting over a horse, over two horses, and leaping over them, in one alighting in the saddle, and in another upon the bare back of a horse." 37

34 Ibid., 25.

35 Ibid.


37 Thomas Frost, The Old Showman, and The Old London Fairs (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874), 58.
The earliest known references to horses on the stage occurs in Pepys' Diary of July 11, 1668, in a brief mention that horses were "brought upon the stage" at the King's Playhouse for a revival of Shirley's Hyde Park. 38 M. Willson Disher, in an article on equestrian drama explained that drama does not become equestrian merely by reason of the presence of horses; "only when chiefly designed for the exploitation of horsemanship, trick-riding, or equine sagacity does a play come within this category." 39

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the nobility built riding schools for the exercise of horsemanship and arms. These in turn suffered from the pinch of economy and riding masters had to turn showmen. Midway through the eighteenth century, Islington took a sudden fancy for trick-riding. 40 These unemployed riding masters were a novelty and drew such crowds in all areas of London that they amassed small fortunes by passing round the hat. 41

Before the modern circus came into being there were many wandering "professors of horsemanship" 42 who gave performances in fields and pleasure gardens. Their more thrilling feats of horsemanship were

38 Saxon, Foot and Horse, 6.
40 Greatest Show On Earth (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1937), 11-12.
42 Ibid.
usually set off with burlesque scenes on horseback. *The Taylor Riding To Brentford* quickly became a favorite of all late eighteenth century audiences. At first it was merely a display of awkwardness between a tailor and his comical difficulties in attempting to ride to a customer. Little by little, a story was told: "The tailor, who knew so little of riding that he sat in the saddle backwards, finally reached his destination running for dear life with the horses in hot pursuit."43 Both Philip Astley and Charles Hughes, when they formed their "riding schools," announced this item as part of the performance.

The word circus, meaning circle, comes from the Latin. The Romans derived it from:

The circuit made by chariots as they raced, and it was finally used to indicate the place in each city where a chariot race, gladitorial contests and various feats of skill were held.44

Charles Hughes was the first to borrow the term from the Roman chariot-courses and call his theatre the Royal Circus, a name used until then, "solely for the outer ring of Hyde Park where carriages, cabriolets and chaises circled."45

The training of a horse for performing tricks on the stage required time, energy, and a great deal of patience. But once taught a particular piece of business, a horse was not likely to forget it. The trainer won

43 Ibid., 830-831.
the confidence of his horse and then worked with him until he and the horse were confident of each other. The trainer would work up signals that the horse could recognize, but that were unidentifiable to the audience. Brian Vassey-Fitzgerald, in his book on horses, explains that a horse could be taught to count by utilizing his strong sense of sound; the trainer "clicks the nails of thumb and finger together, the horse taps the ground with hoof in response and continues to do so until the last click."  

Once the horse had learned his tricks, practice was all that was needed. Arthur Saxon points out that the demands of horses, as many theatrical managers undoubtedly pointed out to their two-legged counterparts, the actors, were certainly not as excessive as perhaps theirs were. "Given a comfortable stall, a few bucketfuls of oats, and an occasional pat on the nose, they were the most uncomplaining employees imaginable."  

The purpose of Philip Astley's book on equestrian education was to illustrate the fundamentals of horsemanship and illustrate the variety of actions which could be taught to a horse. These actions or "Airs" as Astley called them, could be used for pleasure or in the ring. They were the pesade, the croupade, the ballotade, the capriole, the courbette, the terre-à-terre, the pirouette, and the plaffe.  

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47 Saxon, Foot and Horse, 9.

48 Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education (London: Thomas Burnside, 1802), 175. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736a.
The Pesade (see Figure 3)

The pesade is the "movement performed when a horse raises his forefeet and immediately bends them up towards his body, without moving those behind." \(^{49}\) The manager of the horse has to throw all the weight of the horse on his haunches, in order that the legs may be raised more or less in perfect cadence.

The Croupade (see Figure 4)

In the croupade, "the horse leaps into the air with all his feet off the ground at one and the same time, without stretching out those behind." \(^{50}\)

The Ballotade (see Figure 5)

In the ballotade:

The horse being now foreshortened, well on his haunches, and in every way obedient, is instructed to rise forward somewhat higher than in the croupade; and, at the moment he has drawn up his forefeet, a stroke from the chambrerie, or a touch of the spur-stick, at his croup, causes him to strike with his hindmost feet, sufficiently only to show his shoes. \(^{51}\)

The Capriole (see Figure 6)

This is one of the most difficult of the actions performed by the horse; the horse is for a time suspended in the air with front feet tucked under and hind feet extended. \(^{52}\)

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 176.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 178.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 179.
Figure 3. The Pesade. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 176. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736*.
Figure 4. The Croupade. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 177. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736a.
Figure 5. The Ballootade. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 178. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowall Film Archives, F.27368.
Figure 6. The Capriole. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 179. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736a.
The Courbette (see Figure 7)

The help of an assistant or two is needed for this action. A horse that can already pesade and croupade is placed between two pillars; "there, still more thrown on his haunches, and raised before, rather higher than in the two foregoing airs." The manager aids the horse forward with two small whips, while an assistant with the whips at his flanks, encourages the horse to bring his hind legs under, and to support his body in the action of foreshortening.

The Terre-à-Terre (see Figure 8)

The action can be performed in either a circle or a square. "It is a kind of compressed gallop, in an oblique direction, with the shoulders more advanced than the croup."54

The Pirouette (see Figure 9)

The action can be accomplished by the horse moving in one of two directions, right or left. If the pirouette is to the right, "the horse in such cases, raises his forefeet and the left hindmost, supporting himself on the right, while turning."55

The Piaffe (see Figure 10)

The manager with the use of the whip, "encourages him to move to the right, to the left, and sometimes forward, until he is foreshortened

53 Ibid., 180.
54 Ibid., 181.
55 Ibid., 182.
Figure 7. The Courbette. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 180. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736x.
Figure 8. The Terre-à-Terre. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 181. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736.
Figure 9. The Pirouette. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 182. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2/36x.
Figure 10. The Piaffe. Philip Astley, Astley's System of Equestrian Education, opp. 183. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.2736a.
and well on his haunches."\textsuperscript{56} The opposite front and hind legs are raised for this action.

John Adams in \textit{An Analysis of Horsemanship} described the art of menage riding:

\begin{quote}
It is the science whereby you become acquainted with, and learn, the superiority you have over the horse, by a proper correspondence of the hand—teaching the effect and power, every variation of situation and aids produce, with the theory and knowledge of dressing horses—improving your horse after what a manner you please, rendering him obedient to the most delicate touches, riding him with the greatest ease and exactness, and making him display himself in the most elegant attitudes, and some either forward, backward, or sideway.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

He also describes the various actions which are similar to those described in Philip Astley's book; however, he does list one additional feat, the mezair.

\textbf{The Mezair}

\begin{quote}
It was similar to the terre-à-terre, being "a side movement of the horse, in an action, derived from the gallop, as the forefeet follow each other, and then the hind feet in like manner."\textsuperscript{58} The main difference between the terre-à-terre and the mezair was that the position of the horse was less bent and the beat of the forefeet followed closer to each other.
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{56}\textit{ibid.}, 183.
\textsuperscript{57}John Adams, \textit{An Analysis of Horsemanship} (3 Vols.; London: James Cundee, 1805), 1, xviii.
\textsuperscript{58}\textit{ibid.}, 111, 22.
\end{flushright}
Thomas Frost in *Circus Life* discusses centrifugal force and its effect upon equestrian performers. The performer leans inward so much that, if he were to stand still in that position, he would inevitably fall off the horse. But centrifugal force—the tendency which bodies have to fly off in a straight line from a motion round a center—and the power which prevents bodies from flying off, and draws them towards a center, "which has a tendency to impel him outward from the circle, or in a straight line of motion, sustains him, and he careers onward safely and gracefully."\(^{59}\)

During the middle of the eighteenth century, riding masters turned to equestrian performances to show off their skills and earn a livelihood. At first these performances took place in open fields, but by the 1770's they had enclosed spaces in which to perform. Feats of horsemanship immediately caught the attention and imagination of the public and proved to be quite profitable. Philip Astley and Charles Hughes both published books on methods of training horses, for show and for pleasure riding.

Several other types of entertainment were conducted at the minor theatres, sword-dancing and rope-dancing. Both of these can be traced back to antiquity. Along with horsemanship and other equestrian feats, a major portion of the evening's entertainment during this period was composed of sword-dancing and rope-dancing.

\(^{59}\)Thomas Frost, *Circus Life* and *Circus Celebrities* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 116-117.
Rope-dancing

Rope-dancing is a very ancient art. It is believed to have originated in China, and it was practiced, also, in ancient Egypt. It was a favorite spectacle with the Romans, and a law was passed by Marcus Aurelius to protect the rope-dancers with a net.  

No such protection was given to, or sought by, the rope-dancers of medieval or later times.

Royal marriages seem to have been considered appropriate occasions for rope-dancing displays. At Richmond, on the marriage of Prince Arthur and Katherine of Aragon at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a Spanish rope-dancer set up his apparatus.

It was a rope stretched steadfastly, and drawn with a wheel, and stayed on both sides with divers cords. . . . the man danced with pattens on his feet, and did tricks. Then—ef soon he cast himself suddenly from the rope, and hung by his toes, some time by the teeth. . . .

An early example of these feats occurred when Henry VIII, in one of his "progresses" through the City of London:

did spye a man upon the uppermost parte of St. Powle's church: the man did gambol and balance himself upon his head, much to the fright and dismay of the multitude that he might breake his necke. On coming down, he did throw himself before the King beseechingly, as if for some reward for the exployt; whereupon the King's highness, much to his surprise, ordered him to prison as a rogue and strudy vagabonde.

A performance was exhibited before King Edward VI prior to his coronation at the time when he passed in procession through the City of London on Friday, the nineteenth of February, 1546.

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60 Manning-Sanders, *English Circus*, 251.
61 Ibid., 251-252.
When the King was advanced almost to St. Gregory's Church, in Paul's churchyard, there was a rope as great as a cable of a ship stretched in length from the battlement of Paul's steeple, with a great anchor at one end, fastened a little before the Dean of Paul's house gate; ... then came a man lying on the rope from the battlements to the ground. Then he came to his majesty, and kissed his foot; and so ... went upwards upon the rope till he came over the midst of the churchyard; where he, having a rope about him, played certain mysteries on the rope, and tied it to the cable, and tied himself by the right leg as little space beneath the wrist of the foot, and hung by one leg a certain space, and after recovered himself again with the said rope and unknit the know, and came down again. Which stayed his majesty, with all the train, a good space of time.  

For this rope-flying, which seems to have been popular in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, the acrobat wore fastened to his chest, a flat board, with a groove in the middle of it to fit the rope. (See illustration of Figure 11, upper right hand corner, for that rope-dancer was using such a board). But this was still a dangerous profession.

A similar trick was performed in the reign of Queen Mary from the steeple of St. Paul's.

A man came downe upon a rope, tied to the battlement of Sainte Paule's Church, with his head before, neither staiing himself with hand or foot; which shortlie after cost him his life.  

In the reign of Charles II, the famous Jacob Hall drew great crowds to watch his rope-dancing at the fairs. Pepys mentioned him dancing on the ropes at Southwark Fair as "a thing worth seeing, and

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64 Ibid., 180.
Figure 11. Southwark Fair. Samuel McKechnie, Popular Entertainment Through the Ages, opp. 41.
Rope-dancing, both by single performers and by troops, continued to be popular at the fairs through the succeeding years.

Soon after the accession of James II to the throne, a Dutch female rope-dancer made her appearance. "When she first danced and vaulted upon the rope in London, the spectators beheld her with a pleasure mixed with pain, as she seemed every moment in danger of breaking her neck." 66

One of the most celebrated of the rope-dancers was a man named Cadman, "the Wingless Bird-Man." 67 In Figure 11, Hogarth has immortalized him in a picture of Southwark Fair. He can be seen in the upper right hand corner against a background of clouds, flying, on the tightrope from the tower to the ground by means of a grooved board fastened to his chest. At Derby he flew down a rope stretched from the top of All Saint's Church steeple, on a grooved board, a distance of about one hundred fifty yards. On the way down, "He fired off a pistol and blew a trumpet, and the velocity with which he flew raised a fire by friction, and a bold stream of smoke followed him." 68 Though he succeeded at Derby, he later fell and lost his life while exhibiting at Shrewsbury. The manner of his death was told in his epitaph:

65Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 254-255.
67Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 252.
68Ibid., 252-253.
Let this small monument record the name
Of Cadman, and to future times proclaim
Here, by an attempt to fly from this high spire
Across the Sabrine stream, he did acquire
His Fatal end. 'Twas not for want of skill
Or courage to perform the task, he fell;
No, no—a faulty cord being drawn too tight
Hurried his soul on high to take her flight,
Which bid the body here to beneath good night. 69

Also in Figure 11, is a man in tights and a flowing shirt bal-
ancing himself on his hands on the slack-rope. His name was Violante,
and he was an Italian. 70 He performed his rope-dancing before a member
of royalty in the following account:

Soon after the completion of the steeple (St. Martin's in
the Fields) an adventurous Italian, named Violante, descended
from the arches, head foremost, on a rope stretched then across
St. Martin's Lane to the Royal News; the princess being pre-
sent, and many eminent persons. 71

He married another rope-dancer, Luppino, whose family had been rope-
dancers since the middle of the seventeenth century. She appeared:

dancing a minuet on the rope at a great height 'as well as
it could be done on the ground'; dancing on a board placed
on the rope, dancing on the rope with two boys fastened to
her feet, dancing with two swords at her feet, all on a
rope 'no thicker than a penny whip-cord'. 72

In 1734, another performer, trying to exceed Cadman, went from
All Saint's church steeple to St. Mary's Gate, approximately three hundred

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69 Samuel McKechnie, *Popular Entertainment Through The Ages*

70 Ibid., 42.

IV, 194.

72 Manning-Sanders, *English Circus*, 254.
yards in length. He drew a wheelbarrow after him, in which was a boy of thirteen. After this surprising performance, an ass was to fly down the rope. This feat with the ass was by far the most unusual, but did, however, turn out disastrously for the crowd assembled. The appearance of the ass, with lead weights on each foot, at the top of the steeple, must have been a tremendous sight. As the animal started down the rope, it looked as if it were falling perpendicularly.

About twenty yards before it reached the gate the rope broke. From the velocity acquired by the descent, he bore down all before him. A whole multitude was overwhelmed; nothing was heard but dreadful cries; nor seen, but confusion. . . . In this dire calamity, the ass, which maimed others, was unhurt, having a pavement of soft bodies to roll over. No lives were lost. As the rope broke near the top, it brought down both chimneys and people at the other end of the street. This dreadful catastrophe put a period to the art of flying.

At the All Saint's Church in Hertford, about 1750, an unusual incident with a rope-dancer occurred. The rope, approximately eighty yards long, was stretched from the church steeple to the ground. Feather beds were placed near the ground to receive the performer when he descended the rope.

This man had lost one of his legs, and in its place was supplied by a wooden leg, which was furnished on this occasion with a quantity of lead sufficient to counterpoise the weight of the other. He performed this (sliding up and down the rope on a grooved board) three times in the same day: the first time, he descended without holding anything in his hands; the second time,

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74 *ibid.*, 182.
he blew a trumpet; and the third, he held a pistol in each hand, which discharged as he came down.75

Sword-dancing

Traditionally the sword dance came to British shores during the invasions by the ancient Germans. However, this dance appears earlier in antiquity. Tacitus described the sword dance in this manner:

One public diversion was constantly exhibited at all their meetings; young men who, by frequent exercise, have attained to great perfection in that pastime, strip themselves, and dance among the points of swords and spears with most wonderful agility, and even with the most elegant and graceful motions. They do not perform this dance for hire, but for the entertainment of the Spectators, esteeming their applause as sufficient reward.76

During the reign of Queen Anne, a sword dance was performed at Bartholomew Fair. One bill spoke of "dancing with several naked swords, performed by a child of eight years of age," which, the showman assured, had given "satisfaction to all persons."77

Strutt remembered to having seen a sword dance about 1770, in which a young girl danced with the swords for approximately twelve minutes:

She came upon the stage with four naked swords, two in each hand; when the music played, she turned round with great swiftness, and formed a great variety of figures with the swords, holding them over her head, down by her sides, behind her, and occasionally she thrust them in her bosom.78

75 ibid., 180.
76 ibid., 177.
77 ibid., 178.
78 ibid.
Horsemanship, equestrian feats, rope and sword-dancing comprised much of the bill at the Royal Circus during its first twenty-five years of operation. These forms of entertainment were developed out of necessity since these minor theatres were not licensed to perform spoken dialogue. The last section of Chapter I traces the various licensing acts starting in 1737 which led to the development of the minor theatres and the type of fare they were required by law to perform.

III

The Licensing Acts

That some reformation in the control of the playhouses was essential, the march of events in the early decades of the eighteenth century will show. Political tracts, pamphlets, and dramatic entertainments of the 1720's and 1730's sharply criticized and satirized the government and its policies. These attacks were later to force the Licensing Act of 1737 to be enacted by Parliament. This act severely limited the building and licensing of new theatres and was responsible, in part, for the non-dialogue type of entertainments performed by the minor theatres. Subsequent acts of 1752 and 1788 related directly to the minor theatres due to their rising popularity.

The first theatrical production directly satirizing the government was The Beggar's Opera by John Gay in 1728. The success of that piece induced Colley Cibber to bring out Love in a Fiddle the next year. Newspaper editors tried to wage war against the managers of these theatres. "The silencing of some of the theatres was declared to be the only means
left to protect public morals and save the dramatic art."  

It was in the opinion of many that only Parliamentary action could remedy the corruption and evils the theatres of London were thought to possess.  

Several attempts were then made to have Parliament act. The first attempt early in 1733, was a bill introduced into the lower House. On its first reading, there was "a debate of about two hours upon it, but no division," and nothing came of that attempt. During this period the absolute but indefinable authority, which the Lord Chamberlain had traditionally exerted, proved somewhat ineffective in dealing with the expansion of the theatre. The climax seemed to have been reached when an announcement appeared that yet another theatre was to be built, St. Martin's le Grand. Whether this playhouse was really intended or whether it was a false announcement deliberately inserted to provide an excuse by the patent theatres for intervention is not clear.  

The second attempt came in 1735 when Sir John Barnard asked leave to bring a bill into Parliament to "restrain the number and scandalous abuses of the London playhouses." He felt the theatres of London were responsible for "corrupting the Youth, encouraging Vice and Debauchery,  

80 Ibid., 49-55.  
81 Ibid., 55.  
83 Nicholson, Free Stage, 55.
and being prejudicial to Trades and Industry. In the course of the debate, James Erskine spoke for the bill:

that it was no less surprising than shameful to see so great a change for the worse in the temper and inclination of the British nation, who were now so extravagantly addicted to lewd and idle diversions that the number of playhouses in London was double that of Paris . . . that it was astonishing to all Europe that Italian eunuchs and signorinas should have set salaries equal to those of the Lords of the Treasury and Judges of England, . . .

During further debate a clause to confirm the power of the Office of Lord Chamberlain was inserted. This clause met with such opposition that the bill was withdrawn.

The novelist Henry Fielding embarked on a theatrical enterprise of his own. Gathering a company together, he secured the Little Theatre in the Haymarket and there produced a series of allegorical satires on Walpole and his ministry which caused a great sensation. His Pasquin, first performed on March 5, 1736, with "wonderful Scenery, surprising Transformations, beautiful Landscapes, and Dances," satirized and ridiculed Sir Robert Walpole so severely that he was forced to take action. The success of Pasquin was due chiefly to Fielding's burlesque of contemporary politics. In the first part of the play, which consists of the rehearsal of "A Comedy, call'd The Election," both parliamentary candidates and voters were shown alike as being devoid of political

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86 Crean, "Licencing Act," 249.
principles. All that mattered to them was just how much one could gain. The second part of the play was devoted to the rehearsal of a tragedy: "The Life and Death of Common Sense." Fielding here made a grave attack on the professions of religion, law, and medicine.

The second and final stroke came about from a play that was never acted, The Golden Rump. Henry Giffard, the Manager of Goodman's Fields, was sent a copy of the play. Giffard became frightened at its abuse of the King and his ministers, and sent it to Walpole. After reading it, Walpole had the Licensing Act hastily drawn up and pushed through Parliament on May 20 when few were in attendance.

To explain and amend so much of an Act, made in the 12th year of the reign of Queen Anne, intitled, 'An Act for reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants, like one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectually punishing some rogues, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, and vagrants and sending them whither they ought to be sent, as relates to common players of interludes."

During its rapid progress through the house, certain amendments were made and two clauses were added: the first

empowered the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit the representation of any theatrical performance, and compelled all persons to send copies of any new plays, parts added to

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87 Ibid.
88 Ibid., 249-250.
old plays, prologues and epilogues, fourteen days before they were acted, and not to perform them, under forfeit of £50, and of the license of the house.\textsuperscript{91}

The second clause operated on the principle of restraining the number of playhouses by enjoining 'that no person should be authorized to act except within the liberties of the city of Westminster, and where the King should reside.'\textsuperscript{92}

Only one Lord spoke against the playhouse bill, Lord Chesterfield. He evoked several strong points to explain his opposition to the impending bill. One, it was not only a restraint on the licentiousness of the stage, but a restraint on freedom of the press. The bill prevented a licentious play from being acted, but not being printed; therefore, if the license was refused for its being acted, then you can be sure it will be printed with the refusal in 'capital letters.' Lord Chesterfield stated that because of the Lord Chamberlain's refusal everyone would now buy the copy of the play and for 'a sixpence everyone would be able to read what only a few could have seen.'\textsuperscript{93} Secondly, if players were to be restrained and tried, let them be restrained and tried by the laws already on the books, not by the arbitrary will of one man. Further, he went on to explain the following:

A power lodged in the hands of one single man, to judge and determine, without any limitation, without any control or appeal is a sort of power unknown to our laws.

\textsuperscript{91}ibid., 328.

\textsuperscript{92}ibid.

\textsuperscript{93}ibid., 329-336; Nicholson, Free Stage, 65-66.
Inconsistent with our constitution. It is higher, a more absolute power than we trust even to the King himself; and, therefore, I must think, we ought not to vest any such power in his Majesty's Lord Chamberlain. 94

But Lord Chesterfield's arguments were in vain for the bill passed the House of Commons, was sent to the House of Lords, passed there and returned to the House which passed it on June 8. The King signed it on June 21, and three days later it became law. 95

The Vagrant Act of 12 Queen Anne had fallen into disuse and furthermore so had the control of the crown over theatrical amusements. The new Licensing Act merely brought into focus what had already been sanctioned by common law; that is, all performances other than those given under "royal license were deemed illegal." 96 The patent theatres were more firmly established with the crown now already to defend that position. The clause of fundamental importance to the act was the definite establishment of the Lord Chamberlain as the licensor of all plays produced in the area of his control. 97 The immediate effect of the Licensing Act was the closing of the three unlicensed theatres—the Haymarket, Goodman's Fields, and Lincoln's Inn Fields—to the satisfaction of "the sedate, industrious part of the nation." 98 Apart from the Opera House, all that remained were the two patent houses.

94 Ibid., 336.
95 Ibid.; Nicholson, Free Stage, 66.
97 Ibid.
The Licensing Act had been in practice several years when events occurred which were to test the act as to its severity. Giffard tried to circumvent the law by offering concerts and a free play during the intermission. He was successful for several seasons with his venture. The major theatre managers and Walpole apparently took no interest in that attempt to outwit the government.

The second attempt was more serious when David Garrick made his first appearance at Goodman's Fields in 1741 in *Richard The Third*. He proved to be an immediate success and drew people from the patent houses to see him. Whereupon the patent managers then threatened Garrick and Giffard with the Licensing Act. Giffard closed his theatre and they both went to work at Drury Lane.\(^{99}\) The new act had some teeth in it after all.

Another piece of conflicting legislation was enacted in 1752 to help meet the police demands of "certain places of amusement and Sadler's Wells in particular."\(^{100}\) During the early part of the eighteenth century, Sadler's Wells had regular performances of rope-dancing, singing, dancing, theatricals, and tumbling; but by 1744 the Wells was characterized as "one of the most disreputable dens of thieves, robbers, and licentiousness in, or about, London."\(^{101}\) In 1744, information was given the grand jury accusing the proprietors of keeping a disreputable and

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\(^{100}\) Ibid., 125.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
disorderly house. To put a stop to these evils at the Wells as well as other places, Parliament passed a bill (25 George II) "for the better preventing Thefts and Robberies, and regulating places of public entertainment, and punishing people keeping disorderly houses."

The operation of the bill was confined to London and Westminster and within a distance of some twenty miles round. All persons within that area were required to take out licenses from the county magistrates at their quarter sessions before they could open any place for public dancing, music, or any other like entertainment. These licenses were usually issued for the summer months only. At first the act was to be conducted for three years as an experiment; but at its expiration, the law had proved to be so beneficial that it was renewed and made perpetual. However, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the King's Theatre in the Haymarket were exempt from the act.

These two acts reinforced and reasserted the former rights of the patent theatres. For a play to be performed it had to pass through the office of the Lord Chamberlain. And since the minor theatres were not being licensed, they were not permitted to perform spoken drama, but

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102 *Parliamentary History*, XIV (1752), 1234.

103 *Ibid*.

104 *Nicholson, Free Stage*, 126.

105 *Ibid.*, 86. The list was inclusive, comprehending "interludes, tragedies, comedies, operas, plays, farces, or other entertainments of the stage."

had to be content with burlettas, pantomimes, dancing, horsemanship, and the like.

John Palmer opened the Royalty Theatre on June 20, 1787, intending to perform Shakespeare's plays, and believed the act of 25 George II gave him the authority to do so. But since this act did not include the regular drama in its provisions, his theatre was judged illegal and was immediately closed, although it reopened on July 3, 1787.\(^{106}\) This time the theatre presented burlettas, pantomimes, and dances. One unfortunate actor, Delpini the clown, uttered the words "Roast Beef" without any musical background,\(^{107}\) and he, along with Palmer, was arrested. This action caused Palmer to place before Parliament a request for a license for the Royalty Theatre. However Parliament, incensed at his disregard for the law, denied his request. This had the effect of signaling the other minor theatres to do likewise, including the Royal Circus.

On March 10, 1788, a bill was presented to Parliament to license Sadler's Wells.\(^{108}\) The patent theatres had a true friend in Parliament, that being Richard Brinsley Sheridan, late manager of Drury Lane. Sheridan argued against the bill by claiming several issues stated in the original application were false. He said:

\(^{106}\)Ibid., 126.


\(^{108}\)Parliamentary History, XXVII (1788), 159.
the proprietors of the winter theatres had lately instituted suits at law not only against the last newly erected theatre (Royalty), but intended to commence suits and prosecutions against all others indiscriminately. 109

Sheridan said that these charges were wholly unfounded. In addition, he pointed out another misleading statement: "The proprietors of Sadler's Wells asked only to be legally empowered to continue their performances, as usual." 110 Sheridan felt Sadler's Wells was now asking for monopoly rights and would be unfair to the other minor theatres. He won a motion to postpone the second reading of the bill until April 4, closer to the time the Wells was to open. 111

On April 8, an amendment to the original bill known as the Interlude Bill was brought before the House. The Royalty Theatre a week later petitioned to be included in the new amendment, but their petition was rejected. On April 25, the Royal Circus also petitioned to be added but they, like the Royalty Theatre, were also rejected. The original motion passed and was sent to the House of Lords, who added an amendment which included the Royal Circus, the Royal Grove (Astley's), and the Royalty Theatre. This amendment was returned to Commons where it was defeated on June 25. 112

Because of the uproar created in both Houses, it was mutually agreed that the Licensing Act should be amended. A new bill, therefore,

109 Ibid., 160.
110 Ibid.
112 Ibid., 131-137.
was drawn up, "An Act to enable Justices of the Peace to license theatrical Representations occasionally; under the Restrictions therein contained."¹¹³ This bill gave the Justices of the Peace authority to license on petition all theatrical performances presented at the patent theatres within the magistrates' jurisdiction. There were several conditions attached to the bill; one, the period of the licensing was not to exceed sixty days; and two, no place should be licensed within twenty miles of London, Westminster, or Edinburgh.¹¹⁴

The minor theatres did, however, receive a special license in 1788 to perform pantomime. These theatres, the Royalty, Astley's, Sadler's Wells, and the Royal Circus, might "continue exhibiting performances of singing, dancing, pantomime and music,"¹¹⁵ on payment of double the usual penal sums. The licenses were to last from Easter Monday to the fifteenth day of September. The only drawback was that the proprietors were forbidden "to sell, give or supply any spirituous liquors, wine or beer" during the time of any exhibition.¹¹⁶

There were now three distinct general laws as well as numerous special acts governing the theatres of the realm. This legislation seemed both cumbersome and complicated. Further, the legislations were overlapping in jurisdiction, especially with the infinite number of

¹¹³Ibid., 137-138.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 138.

¹¹⁵Disher, Clowns and Pantomimes, 274.

¹¹⁶Ibid.
restrictions relative to the kinds of entertainment which could be exhibited under the authority of the magistrates license of 25 George II, 1752. The Royal Circus was licensed under this latter act by the Surrey magistrates to perform burlettas, pantomimes, and dancing. The Lord Chamberlain was named chief authority in Westminster, and within twenty miles, could license certain aspects of theatrical entertainments; and magistrates outside the twenty-mile circle were permitted to authorize regular drama only for a limited period each year.
CHAPTER 11

THE Earliest Appearance of EQUESTRIAN ENTERTAINMENT:
Pleasure Gardens and Astley’s Amphitheatre

Pleasure Gardens

During the eighteenth century the middle class had enough leisure time to enjoy themselves and enough spare money to be able to pay for their entertainments. It was some time before the same could be said of the ordinary working man who made up the greater part of the population.¹ The pleasure gardens afforded a place to gather for concerts, tea-drinking, games, drinking of medicinal waters, rope and wire dancing, and equestrian entertainments. The earliest pleasure gardens sprang up near a spa or a medicinal spring. Some gardens offered only concerts and later fireworks; others offered tea and light foods; another group, and the one group of pleasure gardens concerned here, offered various types of entertainment.

In the early days of these gardens no charge was made for admission, but a visitor would naturally spend something on cakes and medicinal waters or spirits. The musical entertainments that afterwards became a feature of the principal gardens were originally of

little account. In some gardens a Long Room was built for dancing and booths and raffling-shops were set up for the benefit of card players and gamblers. About 1730-40, the managers of the principal gardens found it desirable to make a regular charge for admission.²

Beginning in what are now the densely populated districts of Clerkenwell, central London, and London south of the Thames, (see Figure 12), one would find himself in the open fields and in a region abounding in mineral springs.

Islington Spa (1684-1840) and Sadler's Wells (from 1683) had springs that claimed to rival the water of Tunbridge Wells in Kent, and if the water itself was unpalatable, the adjoining pleasure gardens and Long Rooms, with their gay company, tended to make the drinking of medicinal water both pleasant and seductive.³

Islington and North London were full of rural resorts. The Three Hats in Islington attracted visitors who wished to see the surprising horsemanship of Sampson and of Johnson "the Irish Tartar." Canonbury, Highbury, Kentish Town and Hornsey were pleasant places farther north.⁴ In the London area south of the Thames, Lambeth had its wells and its Spring Garden (Vauxhall Gardens). Further east were the Besmondsey Spa and the St. Helena Gardens at Rotherhithe.

Such was the geographical distribution of the London pleasure gardens. A clue to their intricacies may be found by describing them

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³Ibid., 3.

⁴Ibid., 3-4.
Figure 12. Warwick Wroth, The Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century, opp. 12.
according to Wroth's groupings, each with its distinctive characteristics.

In the first division are pleasure resorts of the Vauxhall type, beginning with the four great London Gardens—Cuper's Gardens, the Marylebone Gardens, Ranelagh and Vauxhall itself. These were all well established in popular favor before the middle of the eighteenth century, and all depended for their reputation upon their evening concerts, their fire works and their facilities for eating and drinking. Ranelagh relied less on the attractions of its gardens than did the other resorts just mentioned. Here the great Rotunda overshadowed the garden, and the chief amusement was the promenade inside the building. Except on gala nights only tea, coffee, and bread and butter were procurable.  

Imitations of the principal gardens were attempted in various parts of London. Thus the Mulberry Gardens (circ. 1742), the Sir John Oldcastle and the Lord Cobham's Head in Clerkenwell had their fire works and their concerts. Finch's Grotto Garden in Southwark (1760-circ. 1773), was illuminated on certain evenings of the week and provided very creditable concerts. Bermondsey Spa, from about 1784, had its Grand Walk and colored lamps. Two places, the Apollo Gardens and the Temple of Flora, on Westminster Bridge Road, also endeavored to acquire something of a Vauxhall tone, at least to the extent of having illuminations and music.  

\[5\text{ibid.}, 4-5.\]
\[6\text{ibid.}, 5-6.\]
To a second division belong the gardens connected with mineral springs. Several of these date from the end of the seventeenth century—Islington Spa, Sadler's Wells, and the Wells of Pancras, Hampstead, and Lambeth. "Such places were usually day resorts, opening early in the morning and providing something in the way of breakfasting, dancing, and music. The waters were advertised, and by many accepted, as Universal Medicines."\(^7\)

But the chance attractions of these places had a tendency to diminish their importance as spas. The well lost its prominence early in the eighteenth century and relied for profit on the development of the rope-dancing and pantomimes in its theatre. The Dog and Duck became a tea garden and a dancing saloon. Finch's Grotto and Bermondsey Spa, when their springs had ceased to attract, developed into minor Vauxhalls. Dobney's and The Three Hats developed equestrian entertainments.\(^8\)

The third division of the London gardens consisted of those that were mainly tea gardens. Many of these, though small and unpretentious, possessed a distinctly rural charm. Such were Highbury Barn, the Canonbury House tea gardens, Hornsey with its romantic wood and Copenhagen House. Bagnigge Wells and White Conduit House were prettily laid out and pleasantly situated. The great day at these gardens was Sunday, especially between five and nine o'clock. The amusements were of a

\(^7\)ibid., 6.
\(^8\)ibid., 6-7.
simple kind: games, a walk in the gardens, and tea-drinking in the bowers and alcoves. 9

Only at a small number of these pleasure gardens were rope-dancing and horsemanship popular: Dobney's Bowling Green, The Three Hats, Belvidere Tea Gardens and The New Wells. The Weavers Arms and Bancroft's Almshouse also had horsemanship as a feature of the entertainment; however, these sites were outside the area of the map in Figure 12.

Dobney's Bowling Green or Prospect House

One of the early pleasure gardens was Dobney's Bowling Green, or, as it was originally called, Prospect House. Later on, the place was called Dobney's Bowling Green House, after the name of its proprietor. Upon the death of Mrs. Dobney in 1760, a Mr. Johnson became the new proprietor. He converted the Bowling Green into "an amphitheatre for equestrian performances al fresco, and engaged Mr. Price, who had been starring at the Three Hats, a rival house close by, to exhibit his original feats of horsemanship." 10

Price was so successful as an equestrian, that he amassed by his performances there and elsewhere during the early 1760's, a sum of £14,000. 11 Figure 13 is a representation of the performances of Price

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9 Ibid., 7.


11 Wroth, Pleasure Gardens, 142.
Figure 13. Price at Dobney's. Warwick Wroth, The Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century, 142.
in 1767. This picture is significant as it shows the various feats of horsemanship performed at the pleasure gardens and later at the Royal Circus and Astley's. These feats of horsemanship often utilized more than one horse and included the following: leaping, jumping, pistol firing, and the retrieving of objects while on horseback.

In 1770, Dobney's became a boarding school for a short time, but soon reopened as the Jubilee Tea Gardens, where in 1772, David Wildman exhibited a most unusual equestrian act. The following account from a contemporary handbill describes his performance:

He rode standing upright, one foot on the saddle, the other on the horse's neck, while the swarm of bees covered his head and face. He also rode standing upright on the saddle, with the bridle in his mouth; and by firing a pistol made one part swarm in the air, and return to their proper hive again.12

After 1774, the garden fell into disuse and by 1810 had totally disappeared.

The Three Hats

A scenic old inn, The Three Hats, became known as a place of amusement in 1758 when, in the field adjoining, 'Thomas Johnson, 'The Irish Tartar', one of the earliest equestrian performers in England, made his debut.'13 He galloped around the field standing, first on one horse, then on a pair, then on three horses. Figure 14 is an

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13 Wroth, Pleasure Gardens, 148.
JOHNSON AT THE THREE HAILS, 1753.

Figure 14. Johnson at the Three Hails. Warwick Wroth, The Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century, 149.
Illustration of Johnson riding there in 1758. He remained the chief equestrian performer from 1758 to 1767.

In the spring of 1767, Johnson was succeeded by the equestrian Sampson, who announced his daily appearance at five o'clock at a commodious place built in a field adjoining The Three Hats. In the summer of that year Sampson introduced his wife into his entertainment. She appears to have been the first Equestrienne. He inserted the following advertisement in the Public Advertiser for July 23:

Horsemanship at Dingley's, Three Hats, Islington. Mr. Sampson begs to inform the public that besides the usual feats which he exhibits, Mrs. Sampson, to diversify the entertainment and prove that the fair sex are by no means inferior to the male, either in courage or agility, will this and every evening during the summer season perform various exercises in the same act, in which she hopes to acquaint herself to the universal approbation of those ladies and gentlemen whose curiosity may induce them to honour her attempt with their company.  

Sampson had a formidable rival in the person of Price, who "ensnared him 'into gay company'." Sampson was forced to sell his equestrian stud to Coningham in 1771, who also was performing at The Three Hats.

Coningham presents himself to the public, and as he has bought Mr. Sampson's horse, he will perform during this week every evening, at the Three Hats, Islington. First—he rides on gallop, standing upright, on a single horse, three times round the room without holding. Second—he rides a single horse on full speed, dismounts, fires a pistol, and performs that boasted feat of Hughes', leaping over him backwards and forwards for forty times without ceasing. Also flies over

\[14\]ibid., 148-149.

\[15\]ibid., 150.
three horses on full speed, leaps over one and two horses on full speed as they leap the bar, plays a march on the flute, without holding, upon two horses, standing upright. The public are desired to take notice, that I do not throw myself over the horses with my feet touching the horses' hind legs, but my feet over the saddles, and will perform every other feat that is performed by any horseman. Mr. Brown, Etc., will perform to make these nights the completest in this kingdom. . . . Mr. Coningham will engage to fly through a hogshead of fire upon two horses' backs, without touching them, and, for a single person, will perform activity with any man in the world. 16

However, in 1772, Sampson resumed his performances at The Three Hats and gave riding lessons there as well.

Some other curious attractions exhibited at The Three Hats were advertised in The Gazetteer of June 6:

A young gentleman will undertake to walk and pick up one hundred eggs (each egg being one yard apart) and put them in a basket within an hour and fifteen minutes; if any egg breaks he puts down one in its place, for a wager of ten guineas. Mr. Sampson intends to learn ladies and gentlemen to ride in the completest manner. Horses stand at livery, broke in, or managed for the road or field. 17

About this period the tradition of riding seems to have come to an end, but The Three Hats continued on as a tea garden. The building was demolished after a fire there in 1839.

Belvidere Tea Gardens

The Belvidere tavern and tea gardens occupied the site of Busby's Folly, itself a house of entertainment with a bowling green attached to it. "Busby's Folly, which was in existence at least

16Pinks, Clerkenwell, 554.

17Wroth, Pleasure Gardens, 151.
as early as 1664, and afterwards acquired the name of Penny's Folly.\textsuperscript{18}

On August 8, 1769, the following announcement appeared in one of the public journals:

This is to inform all lovers of curious performances and the public in general, that the brother of the famous Mr. Zucher, a high German, who has gained such universal applause, and had the honour of performing before their Majesties and all the Royal Family, is moved to Penny's Folly, Islington New-road, will exhibit this evening, and every evening till further notice, several extraordinary performances never before seen in this kingdom. He has brought with him his Learned Little Horse, from Cowland, whose amazing and wonderful performances have been allowed by the Nobility, Gentry, and others, \ldots \textsuperscript{19}

The last sentence of the announcement is curious indeed: "The Little Horse will be looking out of the windows up two pair of stairs every evening before the performance begins." Zucher must have trained the horse to climb stairs and had the horse on the second story looking out a window as a drawing card for the newly arriving guests.

Nothing further appears about the performance or what feats the horse and rider performed. Zucher probably was capitalizing on the success of Philip Astley, who was to become one of the most important equestrian performers. The name of Zucher's horse appears very similar to that of Astley's Little Learned Military Horse which was performing at the same time in Lambeth.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{19}Pinks, Clerkenwell, 533.
The New Wells

The New Wells, during a considerable period of its existence, must have rivalled Sadler's Wells, judging from the attractive variety of its amusements. A theatre was built in the gardens for operatic and other performances, to which the cost of admission was to purchase a pint of wine or punch. This establishment provided diversions other than equestrian feats consisting of rope-dancing, singing, tumbling, and serious and comic dancing.²⁰

In the Daily Post, August, 1774, appeared the following advertisement:

. . . six hundred persons were present one evening to see Mr. Dominique's flying over twenty-four men's heads with drawn swords; Madame Kerman's curious performances on the stiff rope, who dances on a pair of stilts, and jumps over a garter ten feet high; and Mr. Henrick who dances on a rope, with a wheel-barrow before him, out of which are displayed several curious fireworks.²¹

In 1745, a giant, seven feet four inches tall, was exhibited at the New Wells. He performed on the rope at intervals. In 1746, there was a variety of amusements consisting of tumbling and rope-dancing by a Miss Rayner, who appears to have been the prima donna of the Wells. An advertisement of 1746 gave the following account of her performance:

She is to walk up a slanting rope one hundred feet long, from the bottom of the stage to the upper gallery, with

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²⁰Ibid., 651.
²¹Ibid., 170.
two lighted flambeaux in her hands; then follows singing and several dances, serious and comic, . . .  

From 1747 to 1750 the theatre and gardens were closed. Then on Easter Monday, April 16, 1750, it was publicly announced:

The New Wells, . . . will open with a variety of new performances. The Grand Turk, Mahamed Carathe, will exhibit on the slack-rope. Feats of activity on the tight rope, by Giacomo Perghen, the Turk's apprentice. To conclude with an entertainment of music, . . .  

Sadler's Wells Theatre

Toward the close of the seventeenth century before 1683, there stood on the site of the present Sadler's Wells Theatre, located on the north side of the New River, a wooden building erected by Sadler as a Music House. While some workmen were digging gravel in the grounds of Sadler, a surveyor of highways accidentally unearthed an ancient well. This was soon identified as one that had belonged "to the Priory of Clerkenwell, and in the Middle Ages had been accredited with miraculous powers." Sadler lost no time in advertising his Wells, and in preparing for the reception of water-drinkers. He laid out his garden with flowers and shrubs, and constructed in the center a marble basin to hold the medicinal water which became very celebrated for its

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22 Ibid., 171.  
23 Ibid., 170-171.  
curative properties. Posturers, tumblers and rope-dancers, performing at first in the open air, were engaged.\textsuperscript{25}

About 1687, the place was comparatively deserted and the well fell into disuse. The Wells was again advertised about 1697, but the water-drinking appeared finally to have ceased early in the eighteenth century. From about 1698 onwards, the most prominent feature of Sadler's Wells was the theatre. The establishment passed from Sadler to Francis Forcer to Mills to Forcer's son, Francis, Jr.

Sadler's Music-house came after his death to one Francis Forcer, whose son was the first who exhibited there the diversion of rope-dancing and tumbling. To these have for many years been added musical interludes and pantomimes, the machinery of which is in general extremely well managed.\textsuperscript{26}

In 1735, having been disturbed by legal interference, he petitioned Parliament for a License for Sadler's Wells, stating that "the place had been used for music, rope-dancing, ground dancing, a short pantomime, and the sale of liquor at Sadler's Wells forty years before."\textsuperscript{27} His application, however, was rejected. From 1739, Forcer stressed rope-dancing, tumbling, both serious and comic dances, and singing in his advertising.

In 1746, Rosoman and Hough reopened Sadler's Wells and started many prosperous years. He hired Miss Rayner, the rope-dancer, as she had performed the same feats at The New Wells. She "jumped on the

\textsuperscript{25}Wroth, \textit{Pleasure Gardens}, 44.
\textsuperscript{26}Pinks, \textit{Clerkenwell}, 414.
\textsuperscript{27}Denis Arundel, \textit{The Story of Sadler's Wells 1683-1964}. 
wire with a pair of candle-sticks fixed to her feet."  In 1750, he hired Michael Maddox, a rope-dancer, who had a seven-year popularity at Sadler's Wells. This man was quite versatile, as seen from an early advertisement:

while standing on the wire he played the violin, trumpet and drum, balanced a coach-wheel, stood on his head while the wire was in full swing without using his hands, even discharging a brace of pistols at the same time.  

In 1755, Miss Isabella Wilkinson, the graceful wire-dancer and player of musical glasses, was a principal performer. She continued as a performer there until she broke her leg in a fall from the wire.

In September of 1761, it was advertised in the Public Advertiser that:

a Mr. Matthews would perform on the wire without putting his feet on it, stand on a pint bottle in full swing, quitting the wire with his hands, balance half a pound weight on the top of a straw, and a boy on the top of a ladder, and turn round on the wire fifteen times in ten seconds; this he affected by laying himself along the wire and holding it with his hands and feet, the latter being crossed; it was called 'roasting the pig.'

In the bills which announced the opening of Sadler's Wells at Easter, 1763 and 1764, Signor Grimaldi appears as Maître de Ballet, and chief dancer; remaining there until 1767. He was originally a pantomime actor at the fairs in Italy and France. He was also to appear as dancing master of the Royal Circus some fifteen years later.

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28 Ibid., 17.
29 Ibid., 18.
30 Pinks, Clerkenwell, 419.
31 Wroth, Pleasure Gardens, 48.
In 1764, Rosoman had the old theatre pulled down and the new building was erected and opened in 1765. Although it was enlarged and altered many times, the building remained virtually unchanged until the late nineteenth century. Rosoman picked his artists and entertainments well, for the theatre was very popular during his term of management.

Thomas King bought the share of the theatre from Rosoman in 1771 and became its manager. Rope-dancing, tumbling, and pantomime continued to be very popular entertainments along with Charles Dibdin's songs. In 1781, two French rope-dancers were hired. One, Paula Redigé, was called "The Little Devil" in contrast to Nevil at Astley's, who was called "The Great Devil." He performed feats never before attempted in London. On this same bill there appeared a clown who remained with the theatre intermittently for almost fifty years, the great Joseph Grimaldi.

In 1784, the most popular performers were a troop of performing dogs. Crowds flocked to the theatre to see these dog stars. In 1785, besides the performing dogs, other animal acts were brought onto the stage, including two horses doing a minuet. In 1785, Wroughton, then manager, applied to Parliament for a license for pantomimes, but this was rejected by the House of Lords. Sword-dancing and rope-dancing, both slack and tight rope, continued to be very

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32 Arundel, Sadler's Wells, 27.
33 Ibid., 37.
popular. In 1788, another petition was sent to Parliament for a license to present dancing, singing, and musical pieces. Since other minor theatres would also want a license (including the Royal Circus) it was turned down.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1804, Sadler's Wells was known as the "Aquatic Theatre."

"A large tank filled with water from the New River occupied nearly the whole of the stage, and plays were produced with cascades and other 'real water' effects."\textsuperscript{35}

Sadler's Wells opened as a pleasure garden with a medicinal well. Rope-dancing and tumbling were early additions to the entertainments to attract crowds to the site. This practice continued throughout the eighteenth century. Because of the quality of performances and performers, this theatre continued to be a most popular and important one. During the last quarter of the century, the entertainments consisting of rope and wire-dancing, pantomimes, horsemanship, animal acts, and burlettas were, indeed, the same attractions so popular at the other minor London theatres such as the Royal Circus and Astley's.

The London pleasure gardens during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided an outlet for those Londoners who had leisure time to spare. As new and exciting entertainments such as rope-dancing, tumbling, and equestrian feats were added to the fare of the pleasure

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 41.

\textsuperscript{35} Wroth, Pleasure Gardens, 52.
gardens, they gained an ever wider audience and popularity. Although the number of pleasure gardens offering equestrian entertainments were few out of the total number of pleasure gardens in existence at the time, they did, however, offer a significant contribution to the beginnings of equestrian drama.

Sampson and Johnson were the principal performers of their day. Philip Astley, who at this time was beginning equestrian feats of his own, was soon to overshadow all those performers around him. His pupil, Charles Hughes, also opened a riding academy and the two men, Astley and Hughes, were to compete for almost thirty years as to which could offer the better equestrian performances.

The entertainments at the London pleasure gardens formed the core of entertainments later performed at the Royal Circus and at Astley's Amphitheatre. These minor theatres, as will be shown, greatly expanded these early equestrian acts and brought them up, with practice, to a highly specialized form of entertainment. The decline of the London *al fresco* followed a change in taste of the people themselves, that taste itself an inevitable consequence of an increasing population and an increasing prosperity. The careers of the less famous gardens to the south and the west were almost invariably concluded in even less reputable circumstances, for the lower classes frequented those establishments. Their conduct at times was often riotous and boisterous and this in turn brought upon them the interferences of the authorities. This interference in most instances caused the gardens to be closed by order of the magistrates.
Astley's Amphitheatre

It is important now to turn to a house whose policy profoundly affected the minor theatres and whose influence was far-reaching in the history of entertainment.

The great Philip Astley, who synthesized all the various forms which constitute the English Circus, was a man whose range of endeavour, audacity in the execution of ideas, and force of personality, amounted to genius. He is, by his enrichment of variety entertainment, to be placed among the great creative figures of the music hall.\(^{36}\)

He was a fine looking and resourceful man who had been a soldier. He possessed a marvelous understanding and sympathy for the animals he trained, as well as having an instinctive quality and flair for showmanship.\(^{37}\)

Philip Astley was born in 1742 at New Castle-under-Lyme, and was instructed in his father's trade of cabinet-making.\(^{38}\) However, this trade did not suit him and at age seventeen, he furtively left his father's home and rode to Coventry horse fair on a borrowed mount. At Coventry he enlisted in Colonel Elliot's new regiment, the 15th Dragoons, as a horse breaker and rough rider. Very soon he was amazing crowds of onlookers by leaping off and on his horse while at gallop and by standing on his head while in the saddle. Astley had

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\(^{37}\) Ibid., 105.

seen Thomas Johnson and, influenced by him, had practiced similar feats. 39

When Philip was nineteen, his regiment went overseas to serve under the King of Prussia. Thomas Frost, a writer on Circuses, tells us that Astley's imposing appearance, "being over six feet in height, with the proportions of Hercules, and the voice of a Stentor, attracted attention to him." 40 Hugh, handsome Sergeant-Major Astley, with his bawling voice and his ferocious, dare-devil courage, became one of the celebrities of the regiment.

In the battle of Emsdorff, he took a royal standard of France, though his horse was shot under him; but, being remounted, he brought off his prize in despite of an escort of the enemy's infantry, by whom he was wounded. 41

At twenty-four, Astley sought his discharge, which was granted him in consideration of his "general proper demeanour," and found himself the happy possessor of a magnificent white charger, Gibraltar, a gift from Colonel Elliot. At Islington he worked as a horse breaker for a time while perfecting his horsemanship. "There was a vision in his mind, and though the vision was still dim, it dictated his every act." 42 First, he married a horsewoman, then, with a few pounds in his

39 Pinks, Clerkenwell, 533.

40 Thomas Frost, Circus Life and Circus Celebrities (London: Chatto and Windus, 1881), 17.


42 Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 35.
pocket, he purchased a lively but docile little horse, Billy. Billy was quick to learn, and the "Little Military Learned Horse," as Astley called him, became his pride and joy. Having laid out another five pounds on yet another horse, larger and more suitable for riding than Billy, Astley took himself, his wife, and his three horses to Lambeth. 43

Where the present Waterloo Station is now located, in the 1760's, was a broad ditch surrounded by fields and market gardens. A pathway led through the fields, and for its use pedestrians paid a half-penny toll, hence its name, Halfpenny Hatch. In one of the fields adjoining Halfpenny Hatch Philip Astley, in 1768, gave his first circus performance. 44 He did not call it a "circus," but a riding school, and what we now refer to as the ring he called "the ride." 45

The first circus or riding school was merely a small section of field ringed by rope and stakes. Before the performances, Astley, looking magnificent in full uniform, and riding his white charger, Gibraltar, distributed hand-bills in the vicinity of Halfpenny Hatch. When the spectators were assembled, he announced the various turns in the ride:

Now I will ride these here two horses at once and put them to the jump. . . . Now I will ride with one foot on the saddle and the other on my head. . . . Now the Little

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Military Horse will lie dead in a manner very extraordinary. . . . Now Mrs. Astley performs. 46

And, when the show was over, he went around with his hat collecting his fee, which came from the donations of the crowd.

Because of his success, Astley dreamed of expansion, and looked about him for a more permanent site. His next important move was the acquisition of a piece of ground with a valuable frontage on the south side of Westminster Bridge Road, near the bridge. This became Astley's as the result of a mortgage of £200 granted to the owner, who subsequently defaulted and surrendered the site. About the same time, the fortunate Astley picked up a diamond ring on the road, and on the proceeds of its sale, erected the new establishment. 47

In the following year, 1769, he moved to his newly acquired piece of ground on the south end of Westminster Bridge, where he prospered and was able to provide roofed-in seats for his audience, though the "ride" was still open to the sky, (see Figure 15, bottom). The covered grandstand was 120 feet long. The audience was admitted through a two-story entrance with galleries overhead for the gentry and stables stretching out on either side. Over this main entrance was a large figure on a horse raising his whip. 48 In the morning he gave lessons in horsemanship and in the afternoon there was a program of equestrian entertainment.

46 Ibid., 36.

47 Scott, Early Doors, 106.

Figure 15. Top, Astley's Amphitheatre in 1808; bottom, Astley's first circus. Samuel McKechnie, Popular Entertainment Through the Ages, facing 193.
Two early advertisements, quoted by Frost, will show how this first of all circuses was growing. The earliest advertisement promised the following:

Horsemanship by Mr. Astley, Mr. Taylor, Signor Markutchy, Miss Vangable, and other transcendent performers, -A minuet by two horses, 'in a most extraordinary manner,' -a comical musical interlude, called The Awkward Recruit, and an 'amazing exhibition of dancing dogs, from France and Italy, and other genteel parts of the globe.49

An advertisement of 1772 is more expansive:

Horsemanship and New Feats of Activity. This and every evening at six, Mr. and Mrs. Astley, Mrs. Griffith, Costmethopila, and a young gentleman, will exhibit several extraordinary feats on one, two, three, and four horses, at the foot of Westminster Bridge.

These feats of activity are in number upwards of fifty; to which is added the new French piece, the different characters by Mr. Astley, Mrs. Griffith, Costmethopila, etc. Each will be dressed and mounted on droll horses.

Between the acts of horsemanship, a young Gentleman will exhibit several pleasing heavy balances, particularly this night, with a young lady nine years old, never performed before in Europe; after that Mr. Astley will carry her on his head in a manner quite different from all others. Mrs. Astley will likewise perform with two horses in the same manner as she did before their Majesties of England and France, being the only one of her sex that ever had that honour. The doors will be opened at five, and begin at six o'clock. A commodious gallery, 120 feet long, is fitted up in an elegant manner. Admittance there as usual.

N.B. Mr. Astley will display the broad-sword, also ride on a single horse, with one foot on the saddle, the other on his head, and every other feat which can be exhibited by any other. With an addition of twenty extraordinary feats, such as riding on full speed, with his head on a common pint pot, at the rate of twelve miles an hour, etc.

To specify the particulars of Mr. Astley's performance would fill this side of the paper, therefore please ask for a bill at the door, and see that the number of fifty feats are performed. . . . The amazing Little Military Horse

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49 Frost, Circus Life, 18-19.
which fires a pistol at the word of command, will this night exhibit upwards of twenty feats in a manner far superior to any other, and meets with the greatest applause.50

Meanwhile, Astley was engaged in training his son and another assistant to help him. In addition to increasing his company, he attempted to attract attention by advertising riding lessons for both "nobility and gentry." His pupils happily included two daughters of the Lord Chancellor and this circumstance was to stand him in good stead later when misfortune struck him.

Due to his haste and with an almost sublime disregard for the law, he enclosed the ground and made a charge to the public without resorting to the formalities of obtaining a license from the local magistrates.51 His rival Barrett, the proprietor of Vauxhall Gardens, obtained an injunction against him as well as Charles Hughes, who was conducting a similar riding establishment. However, once again his fortune was to aid him as he was successful in obtaining a magistrates' license, under the 25 George II Act. His friendship with the Lord Chancellor's daughters had paid off.

By 1776, Astley had added tumbling and rope-vaulting to his program. Prices had gone up, too. In 1769, he was charging a modest six pence for admission. Now the charges were "in the gallery 2s., the riding school 1s."52

50 Ibid., 19-20.
51 Scott, Early Doors, 105.
52 Ibid.
Meanwhile he had given a command performance before King George III in Richmond Gardens, and had even crossed the Channel, Little Military Learned Horse and all, on the invitation of the French ambassador, to perform at Fontainbleau.

In Astley's company was another herculean equestrian named Charles Hughes, and Hughes also had ambitions. In a field near Blackfriars Bridge, he opened a riding school in 1771. In his loudest voice, and with his richest vocabulary, Astley denounced Hughes as an impostor. Mounted on the gallant Gibraltar, accompanied by trumpeters and equestrians, and followed by the Little Military Learned Horse seated in a coach with the clown, he rode up and down Westminster proclaiming his own virtues and Hughes' villainies.53

But Hughes was not to be daunted. He set himself in his programs to outclass Astley and, in his advertisements, made sly references to his former employer's shortcomings:

Hughes has the honour to inform the Nobility, etc., that he has no intention of settling out every day to France for three following seasons, his Ambition being fully satisfied by the applause he has received from Foreign Gentlemen who come over the Sea to see him. Clementina and Miss Huntly ride one, two, and three horses at full speed, and take Leaps surprising. A little Lady, only Eight years old (Astley's young lady was actually nine) rides Two Horses at full gallop by herself, without the assistance of any one to hold her on. Enough to put any one to fits to see her. H. will engage to ride in Twenty Attitudes that never were before attempted; in particular, he will introduce his Horse of Knowledge, being the only wise animal in the Metropolis. . . . Tickets 2s.

53Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 38.
Hughes with the celebrated Sobieska Clementina, the famous Miss Huntley, and an astonishing Young Gentleman (son of a Person of Quality) will exhibit at Blackfriars-road more extraordinary things than ever yet witnessed, such as leaping over a Horse forty times without stopping between the springs—Leap the Bar standing on the saddle with his right Foot on the Saddle, and his left Toe in his Mouth, two surprising Feats. Mrs. Hughes takes a Fly and fires a pistol—rides at full speed standing on Pint Pots—mounts pot by pot, higher still, to the terror of all who see her. H. carries a lady at full speed over his head—surprising! The young gentleman will recite verses of his own making, and act Mark Antony, between the leaps. Clementina every night—a commodious room for the nobility.54

The rivalry existing between these two men can be compared in the above example. At Astley's there was merely a "Young Gentleman," but at Hughes' there was a "Young Gentleman, son of a Person of Quality"; Astley rides with one foot on his head, Hughes with his left toe in his mouth; Astley rides with his head on a pint pot; Mrs. Hughes rides upon a whole galaxy of pint pots, and so it went on.

In 1779, Astley built an elaborate roofed-over grandstand or riding-house, and advertised it as "The Amphitheatre Riding-House, Westminster Bridge, the most complete building of its kind in Europe."55 The lower floor of the grandstand served as a stabling area. With his newly renovated circus, Astley and his two assistants began to develop the show along more theatrical lines.56 Lighting was installed so that

54Frost, Circus Life, 24-26.
55Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 39.
56Scott, Early Doors, 106.
performances could be given after dark. The doors opened at five o'clock and the show began at six. 57

In 1782, Hughes, in partnership with Charles Dibdin, countered by building the Royal Circus in Blackfriars Road. This large building contained a stage for burlettes, as well as a ring for equestrian acts. In his advertisement, Hughes now openly referred to Astley's antagonism. A further point of contention came about through Astley's old father who had come to London to witness his son Philip's triumphs. Because of some unspecified quarrel, Philip had shown his old father to the door. Hearing of this "the vexatious Hughes added insult to injury by employing the old man to distribute handbills for him," 58 Nothing has been written, however, concerning the fate of the elder Astley after that incident.

But Hughes' triumphs did not last long, for he did not have Philip Astley's genius. Falling into debt and differing with the proprietors, he and the Royal Circus went steadily downhill. In 1805, the Royal Circus was burned to the ground, and after that Astley remained without a rival.

Pantomimes, when first introduced at Hughes' and Astley's, were carried on in blithe disregard for the law; for, neither establishment was licensed for these stage entertainments. In 1783, both men were put in Bridewell for giving unlicensed stage performances, and

57 Murray, Circus, 82.

58 Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 39.
after their release this part of the program had to be omitted for a time. Astley, seeking for an alternative attraction, hit upon fireworks, and the patient Gibraltar—who by this time must have surely learned to be surprised at nothing—"appeared in the ring surrounded by a circle of fire, with Sergeant-Major Astley mounted on his snowy back, and energetically letting off a cascade of golden rain, and crackling stars, and Roman candles." 59

Licensed in 1784, by the Surrey Magistrates and through Lord Thurlow, to whose daughter he taught riding, Astley was ready for his major undertaking, a new theatre; which he was impelled to build in his competition with Hughes and Dibdin. For building materials he went to Covent Garden, where small speaking platforms had recently been erected for an election. Offering rewards to the porters and loiterers of the neighborhood, he removed the timber to Westminster. Relying on his own architectural conception, Astley's Royal Grove (the title rising from the idea of giving the auditorium the appearance of a glade in a wood), soon rose in place of the original riding-house. 60

Astley's troop, who had previously been to Paris to perform on many occasions, again returned there. This time his troop created a furor in Paris, but though the riding of Astley pere was admittedly astounding, it was to the feet of Astley fils that the Parisians, from the highest to the lowest, brought their laurels. Marie Antoinette

59 ibid., 41.

60 Horace Foote, A Companion To The Theatre (London: Edward Philip Sanger, 1829), 68.
named this handsome and elegant young man her "English Rose," and presented him not merely with a gold medal, but a gold medal that sparkled with diamonds.

When, under the patronage of Marie Antoinette, the Amphitheatre Des Sieurs Astley was erected, there was consternation in the Paris entertainment world. Every winter, when the pomp and splendor of Astley's returned to Paris, the other theatres were emptied of their patrons. Astley's was the rage, and the Parisian theatrical managers naturally resented it. Putting their heads together, they discovered that, although Astley had been granted the monopoly of presenting trick-riding, he had not been granted the monopoly of presenting acrobats and rope-dancers. One evening the police were called and all performances not on horseback were forbidden.62

Paris waited a few days; then the grand moment arrived, for into the ring marched sixteen horses, bearing by struts fastened to their saddles, a large platform stage. On this platform, tumblers tumbled, and rope-dancers danced as heretofore, and all on horse-back.63 As can be seen in Figure 16 Astley, not to be thwarted, had evaded the police order.

Then came the French war. Astley could no longer appear in Paris, and his amphitheatre was taken over by an Italian named Franconi.

61 Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 42.
62 Ibid.
Par Permission du ROI, & de Monseigneur le Lieutenant-Général de Police.

EXERCICES
SURPRENANTS
DES SIEURS
ASTLEY,
RUE ET FAUBOURG DU TEMPLE,

Aujourd'hui MERCREDI 27 Décembre 1786.

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Figure 16. Astley in Paris. R. Humphreys, The Memoirs of J. De Castro, facing 44.
Astley, who was now fifty, left the London Amphitheatre in the charge of his son, John, rejoined his old regiment, and proved by his exploits that in war, as in peace, he could out fight and out manoeuvre his French antagonists.

But he had not been fighting for more than a year when in 1794, he heard that his beloved London Amphitheatre had been burned to the ground. He obtained a leave of absence, hurried to London, established his circus in the Lyceum Theatre, and proceeded to rebuild the Amphitheatre. The theatre rose from the ashes and was quickly reopened. The money necessary for rebuilding the theatre was partially obtained by writing a book: *Astley's System of Equestrian Education, exhibiting the Beauties and Defects of the Horse.*

The war ended and Astley set out for Paris to reclaim his lost theatre. On the return of troops from the war of 1802, he made the gesture of setting aside a number of free seats every evening for the use of demobilized soldiers, an act which made for considerable popularity. While on the campaign, Astley had taken part in the siege of Valenciennes, and on his return made this event the subject of a spectacle.

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64 Manning-Sanders, *English Circus*, 43.


But war broke out again and Astley found himself a prisoner in France. He feigned ill health and was given permission to drive out in a carriage; while out driving he put a pistol to the driver's head and ordered him to make for the border. So he escaped into Holland; but there bad news awaited him. A display of fireworks at the London Amphitheatre in September, 1803, had ignited and the building was once more a heap of charred ashes. But this was not the worst event, for his mother-in-law and fifty horses had also perished in the flames.  

John Astley had insured the building this time, but only for a sixth of its value. However, father Philip was still undaunted. Spurred on by his indomitable energy, his phoenix rose again. And a bigger, grander and more luxurious Astley's opened on the following Easter Monday; see Figure 15, top.

Charles Dickens described the house as follows, but his visit probably dates from the 1820's.

The form of the house was that of an 'elongated lyre,' with the very unusual distance of fifty feet from the stage to the back of the pit. The decorations were in white, lemon and gold, and the hangings of crimson. The 'ride' had a border about four feet high which was painted in imitation of stonework. The ceiling was supported by trellis-work pilasters and contained a circular opening, through which a cut-glass chandelier was let down by machinery over the ring. . . . The forty-foot proscenium opening displayed a 'radiant head of Apollo,' and a remarkable feature of the proscenium was that it could be widened or heightened at will. . . .

Ten more years of active life lay before him. "At seventy-two, suffering from gout in the stomach, he went to Paris, seeking a cure.

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67 Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 43-44.

And in Paris he died, very peacefully, leaving behind him a great name and a new form of amusement.

Astley had vision, courage, flair, color, a great understanding of animals and a great love for them. He was the best trainer and breaker of horses then living and, though horses had danced before his day, it was he who brought this beautiful art to a perfection. As for the Little Military Horse, Billy, he seemed to have been able to do consummately anything that any proud circus pony has since accomplished.

He could dance, jump through hoops, feign dead, ungirt his saddle, wash his feet in a pail of water, play hide and seek, calculate, set a tea table, lift a kettle of boiling water off the fire and make tea for the company, in a manner 'which elicited rounds of applause'.

Gibraltar, which he had received from his Colonel on leaving the army, and on which he had performed in the open air, survived him and lived to the remarkable age of forty-two. Decastro described an incident after the death of Gibraltar while Davis was manager. Davis wished to perpetuate the animal's memory; therefore, when the horse died, he had the hide tanned and made into a thunder-drum. "It stands on the prompt side of the theatre, and when its rumbling sounds die on the ear of those who know the circumstance, it seems to their recollection as his 'parting knell'."

69McKechnie, Popular Entertainment, 202.
70Manning-Sanders, English Circus, 44.
71Ibid.
72McKechnie, Popular Entertainment, 202.
73Humphreys, Memoirs, 30.
John Astley had neither his father's gift of showmanship, nor his father's passionate interest in the Amphitheatre. He preferred the life of a gentleman, and it was to his partner, William Davis, that Londoners had mainly to look for the continuance of their amusement at Astley's. Indeed, the "English Rose" only survived his father by seven years, and, curiously enough, his end was singularly like that of his parent. Suffering from a liver complaint, and being ordered abroad by his doctor, he went, as his father had done before him, to Paris and there died, so the legend goes, "on the same day of the year, at the same house, in the same room, and on the same bed" as his father, Philip.\(^7^4\) The legend appeared to err in one particular only—the date; actually Philip died on October 20, and John on October 19.

After their decease the theatre was carried on by Davis and then by Messrs. Ducrow and West. On the morning of June 8, 1841, the entire building was destroyed by another accidental fire.\(^7^5\)

The London pleasure gardens were the location of the early equestrian performers who executed their feats with great skill and dexterity on horseback and in the open air. Philip Astley, an excellent horseman, opened his first riding academy in an open field where he gave his exhibitions. These proved so successful that he later built an amphitheatre with stage and ring in which to perform. Charles Hughes, his pupil, opened a riding school in competition, but he never proved to

\(^7^4\) Manning-Sanders, *English Circus*, 45-46.

\(^7^5\) Tanswell, *History of Lambeth*, 187.
be as popular as Astley. From this modest beginning, Charles Hughes later teamed up with Charles Dibdin to open the Royal Circus as a place which combined productions on the stage with equestrian feats in the ring.
CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL CIRCUS 1782-1785

As early as 1772, Charles Hughes had opened a riding school on the Surrey side of Blackfriars Bridge under the name of the British Horse Academy\(^1\) in opposition to Philip Astley's riding school. Both men continued until 1773 when their establishments were shut down by the magistrates for not being licensed. Astley reopened in 1775, but Hughes was never able to reopen his riding school. These exhibitions of horsemanship first gave Charles Dibdin, \("\text{the most eminent of the naval song writers,}\)\(^2\) the idea of devising a scheme for the purpose of uniting dramatic entertainments with equestrian feats.

The object of this novel scheme was to unite the business of the ring with that of the stage as Dibdin had conceived it.

Horsemanship was at that time very much admired; and I conceived that, if I could divest it of its blackguardism, it might be made an object of public consequence. I proposed, therefore, that it should embrace all the dexterity and reputation of ancient chivalry; that tournaments, running at the ring, and other feats of equestrian celebrity, should be performed, and that a classical and elegant turn should be given to exercises of this description which

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might there be practiced to such a degree of novelty and credit as to create a lively interest in the public.

These exhibitions, I knew, would require not only an appropriate, but a powerful interdiction. I therefore proposed to have a stage on which might be represented spectacles, each to terminate with a joust, or tilting-match, or some other grand object, so managed as to form a novel, and striking coup-de-theatre, and that the business of the stage and the ring might be united.³

In February, 1782, Dibdin, having explained his project to Hughes, went to William Davis, a surgeon, to solicit financial assistance for the building of the theatre they proposed to call The Royal Circus. Davis considered the proposal and within twenty-four hours formed a proprietorship with James and George Grant, businessmen, and Harborne, a solicitor, to finance the proposed establishment. The four proprietors were to receive one-fourth of the profits for putting up the necessary capital; Hughes was to receive one-third for his performances and breaking horses; and Dibdin was to receive the remaining five-twelfths, one-twelveth more than Hughes, for being manager.⁴ Dibdin was "appointed manager, for life, of the stage; and Hughes, with the same permanence, manager of the horse department."⁵


⁴Charles Dibdin, The Royal Circus Epitomized (London: printed for the Author, 1784), 304. The work was written as both an attack and an appeal to Davis who he felt betrayed him in 1784.

⁵Thomas Read, The History of The Royal Circus (London: by the Author, 1791), 8. Read, a later manager of the Royal Circus, was employed by the Secretary and Treasurer to manage the books, thus giving him valuable insight and information into the workings, proprietors, and artists of the Royal Circus.
A building site was secured, but when it proved too small, Temple West, who owned additional land, was taken in as another proprietor. Work was then commenced on the building, the horse acts, and the preparation of the entertainments. Giuseppe Grimaldi was hired as the ballet master by Dibdin for a period of five years. Approximately twenty children were bound apprentices to Grimaldi with the stipulation that they should not be employed at any other place of entertainment. Dibdin also entered into agreements with the fathers of two or three other children who were to be members of the company.  

The final arrangements of the articles were made among all parties. The proprietors, since the undertaking was larger than had been originally expected, requested a fresh division of the profits. They were to receive one-third, Hughes the same (standing all his own expenses), and Dibdin the remaining third (who would stand no expenses whatever) plus an annuity of £150 for managing.  

An article was ordered to be drawn up by Harborne, in which the parties were to agree:

that a committee, consisting of Mr. Harman (Mr. Harborne's clerk), secretary and treasurer, on the part of the proprietors, Mr. Hughes and myself, should adjust and decide upon the current business, Mr. Harman having the casting vote if any dispute should arise between Mr. Hughes and me. 

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6Dibdin, Royal Circus, 5-6.

7ibid., 6.

8ibid., 7.
As late as July, no articles by Harman had been drawn up although they had been agreed upon by the proprietors and the artists. Dibdin said that he had expressed concern to Davis, who assured the manager that his extensive private business had caused the delay.

The next important step in establishing the theatre was obtaining a license. Colonel West proceeded to apply to the Duke of Manchester, the Lord Chamberlain, for a license. After an interval of some months, in July, the application for the license was rejected. It appeared very doubtful whether the Lord Chamberlain had sufficient power to permit a public entertainment beyond his jurisdiction. The license had to be approved by the magistrates of the county of Surrey.9

The proprietors were informed that the only time they could apply for a license was at the Michaelmas sessions. Opposition was thus beginning to form regarding the opening of the theatre. Dibdin was opposed to waiting for the license, but wanted to open as had been scheduled. To support his opinion, he gave the following reasons: interest had excited and raised some envy; the seeds of the opposition were sown and by waiting they were sure to nourish; and the major theatres naturally opposed it, thinking a place prepared at such expense might in the end rival their theatres. He argued that opening without a license would give them a chance to win public sympathy now and thus help to win the license later. He further feit they had nothing to

9Dibdin, Royal Circus, 7.
fear, as all they intended was "harmless amusements represented by children."¹⁰

His advise was not taken and work on the building was slackened and the opening was delayed until October. Dibdin then warned the proprietors that mounting opposition would surely take place. The proprietors undertook a public dinner to woo the local magistrates, but none accepted the invitation. Opposition was clearly building. Application was finally made at a general quarter session for the county of Surrey, held on October 9, 1782,¹¹ for the license.

The London Chronicle (October 10-12, 1782) published an account of the proceedings.

. . . Mr. Hughes, and the well known Mr. Dibdin, for themselves, and in behalf of the proprietors at that magnificent building in St. George's Fields, applied also for a license; . . . the Chairman of the Quarter Sessions acquainted him that the Court had received two letters from the Secretary of State, purporting that it would be very improper at this time, when the police of the county wanted a total reform, to licence any new place of public diversion and hoped the Bench would consider it accordingly. . . . It came out in the course of the debate that near fifty children of both sexes, from six years old to fourteen were to be under the tuition of Mr. Grimaldi, a Dancing Master, late clown at Sadler's Wells, and were intended to act speaking pantomimes, operas, medleys, drolls, and interludes under the direction of Mr. Dibdin as a chef d'œuvre of the place. The horsemanship by Mr. Hughes, intended only to be served up as a dessert. After much altercation the question was put, when the Bench divided, eight for the licence and twenty-six against it. It is most extraordinary that any man or

¹⁰Ibid., 10-13.

¹¹Read, Royal Circus, 9.
men should erect such a building without a certainty of lawful leave to carry on the purpose intended therein to be performed.\textsuperscript{12}

The proprietors, at length, came to the conclusion that they should open without a license.

The theatre opened on November 4, 1782, as "The Royal Circus and Equestrian Philharmonic Academy\textsuperscript{13}" to a crowded and elegant audience. Since the theatre opened in an unlicensed state, the Surrey magistrates continued their opposition until the Christmas holidays when a serious incident took place. Justice Hyde came to the theatre, arrested Hughes and placed him in Bridewell. The theatre remained closed until March 15, 1783.\textsuperscript{14}

The anticipation leading up to the opening night's performance must have been great. Short notices appeared in the newspapers attesting to the fact that the theatre was indeed going to open as scheduled on November 4. Finally that night arrived and a great crowd of persons was on hand for the opening. The Universal Magazine reported the curiosity of the people was so great that "every part of

\textsuperscript{12}This collection of materials in the form of scrapbooks held by the New York Public Library titled, Theatre England London. Hughes' Royal Circus, Scrapbook, Clippings, 1782-1832, Stead Collection. This material will be referred to as the Stead Collection in later references. In many instances the clippings and reviews are not identified as to newspaper. The material, however, is organized by year. The following reference will be used 82:1, meaning the year 1782, and same one from that year; 82:6. OSU Theatre Research Institute, McDowell, F.2652\textsuperscript{a}.


the building, appointed to the reception of spectators, was filled
before one-half the number of those who had come for that purpose
could be admitted.\textsuperscript{15} In a review of November 5, the size of the
crowd was estimated even larger:

there were more people attended last night, to be present
at the first representation, than would three times have
filled the audience part of the academy, every part being
crowded as soon as the doors opened; . . . \textsuperscript{16}

The exterior view of the Royal Circus (see Figure 17) was
quite handsome and imposing, for on top of the building was a figure
of Pegasus, as applicable to a part of the amusement of the place. The
reviews for The Universal Magazine and The European Magazine attest to
the interior decor.

The building is very handsome, commodious and neat. It is
disposed in an oval form, at one of which stands the
stage, and round the other end are thrown the pit, boxes,
and gallery, the centre forming a kind of circle for the
equestrian performances. The style in which it is arranged,
with the light manner of its decoration (the colours being
principally a straw-coloured ground with silver ballustrades
and silver ornaments) gives the whole an air of simple
grandeur, . . . \textsuperscript{17}

Londoners must have been quite impressed with this new theatre and as
one reviewer remarked, the Royal Circus promised to be one of the most
frequented public places in this kingdom.

\textsuperscript{15}The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure (London:
Stephen Austen Cumberlege, November, 1782), LXXI, 252.

\textsuperscript{16}Stead Collection, 82:8.

\textsuperscript{17}The European Magazine and London Review (London: Printed for
the Proprietors at the late James Asperne's, 1782), 385. The account
from the Stead Collection, European Magazine and Universal Magazine are
identical.
Figure 17. Exterior, The Royal Circus, 1782. OSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.1443. Courtesy of The British Museum.
The opening night production met with considerable success. The reviewer for The Universal Magazine gave a very thorough account of that night's activities. Before the curtain went up, a well-delivered and witty prologue was spoken by one of the young children. Included in the prologue was the reference to the only remaining relic of Samuel Foote, his wooden leg, which was to be used as the cornerstone. The overture to the prelude immediately followed and then the curtain rose to discover a view of Mount Parnassus, the dwellings of the muses, the Temple of Apollo, and in the distance the city of Delphos and the river Helicon. Baynes, a member of the company, was seeking the assistance of Thalia, but was informed that Hazard, a daughter of Fortune, had supplanted Thalia. Hazard appeared and told him by what means he must get applause; he must desert Nature and follow Caprice. He submitted to her and the scene changed to the lottery-officers wherein he chose his lot for the evening, a pantomime and a tragic ballet. While he was reading their titles, it disappeared and he found himself in front of his theatre. He called for his companions and asked their assistance in acquiring horses for the evening's entertainment. The horses then made their grand entrance, one on hind legs, and another on his knees. They then all lay down to the playing of a death march; Hughes entered on a richly caparisoned horse to review his troops. The horses were then led off and the prelude ended with a chorus of Fairies, thanking Fortune for having placed them in a land of freedom.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} Universal Magazine, Vol. 71, 252-253.
The remainder of the program consisted of a grand ballet, titled *Admetus* and *Alceste*, danced by children; a variety of feats of horsemanship by Hughes and his pupils; and a burlesque pantomime parody called *Mandarine; or, The Refusal of Harlequin*. (See the Appendix for a list of entertainments performed at The Royal Circus from 1782-1808.) The critic for *The European Magazine* (November, 1782) felt the ballet was "admirably well executed, and in a style far superior to the dances generally seen in our theatres. It was decorated with a variety of well painted scenery, and other stage assistance." The horsemanship by Hughes and his pupils was excellent. Of special note by the critic were "some feats performed by a girl and a boy, the one eight, the other nine years of age."[19]

The pantomime parody was a series of loosely unified parodies performed by children; among others, a parody of the opening and conclusion of *Harlequin's Choice*; a parody on the celebrated tent scene in *Richard the Third*; and musical parodies of some of John Edwin's most popular songs. The pantomime ended with a Chinese wedding with a superb procession in which two little boys entertained the audience with tunes and trumpets. Just before the curtain fell, a splendid fire-works was displayed. Although a picture does not exist, the roof of the stage could open in order to let "the smoke out the top of the

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19 *European Magazine*, 385.

20 *Universal Magazine*, 253.
building, thus preventing the disagreeable odor and smell for the audience.\textsuperscript{21} This bill played each night for the first week of November.

The novelty at The Royal Circus was the use of children as performers. Colonel West had made a proposition before becoming a proprietor; his design had been to render The Royal Circus a kind of nursery for actors. The children were chiefly to be "the off-spring of theatrical parents, and were to be instructed in religious, moral, and useful learning, during the intervals of professional practice."\textsuperscript{22} A schoolmaster and schoolmistress were, with unusual generosity, engaged to look after those children who did not live with their parents, and it was announced on the bills that "Feats of Horsemanship will be relieved by the efforts of a number of children educated in the Academy, who will perform their exercises in music, dancing, oratory, etc."\textsuperscript{23} The idea was to make The Royal Circus a school for actors; these were sixty in number, and among them were several thereafter to make their names in the theatrical world. Among these sixty children were Master Samuel Russell, Miss Romanzini (afterwards Mrs. Bland); Miss Wilkinson (afterwards Mrs. Mountain); Miss DeCamp (afterwards

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22}Edward Brayley, \textit{Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Theatres of London} (London: J. Taylor, 1826), 68.

Mrs. Charles Kemble); Miss Blancette (afterwards Mrs. Wybrow); the two
Misses Simonet, the two Leanders, and Young Sestini.\(^24\)

An interesting comment appeared in a newspaper dated November 9,
1782.

Hughes' riding, says a correspondent, is so excellent, so
singular, and so much surpasses everything of its kind, that
he stands a much greater chance of making a fortune, by
kissing his own toe on full speed, than ever a Cardinal did
in kissing the Pope's!\(^25\)

Dibdin stated, according to the proprietors, that he had done
"wonders" with the theatre and that there was "no degree of liberality
that should not be shown me for such uncommon and successful exertions."\(^26\)
The articles which had been agreed on some time before still had not been
signed. Hughes and Grimaldi now conspired against Dibdin and both told
him the proprietors had no intention of signing with either of them.
Dibdin then went to Davis and Colonel West to discover the truth of the
matter. They persuaded Dibdin that all was well and the proprietors had
the best intentions towards him. He then considered Hughes and Grimaldi
as the two "incendiaries" who were endeavoring to set him at odds with
the proprietors.\(^27\)

\(^24\)Henry Miles, \textit{The Life of Joseph Grimaldi} (London: Charles
Harris, 1838), 17.

\(^25\)Stead Collection, 82:10.

\(^26\)Dibdin, \textit{Royal Circus}, 16.

\(^27\)Ibid., 16-18.
During the second week of operation The Mandarine was substituted for a new comic petite piece called The Miniature and an intermezzo titled The Graces. In addition, the superb temple in Chinese Fire, was introduced at the close of Admetus and Alceste. The bill played for five days when a charge was made against the Circus for being unlicensed and it was forced to close on November 16. Dibdin in The Royal Circus Epitomized stated that the charge was made after nine nights which would make it November 14, Thursday. The playbills in the Stead Collection stated on November 16 (Saturday) that "the entertainments are suspended till further notice."28

By this time the public had been won to the side of The Royal Circus. Distinguished persons consulted them about reopening and information was given that the Lord Chamberlain would be more receptive to another application this time. Since the general expenses were incurred and the performers engaged, Dibdin thought it advisable to open under some plan within the law. He then devised a new plan of amusements, like nothing done before and with the advice of council, brought out these new entertainments. They met with some success, but at the end of the fifth night a new charge was made and Hughes was arrested.29

No information is available as to what Dibdin's new plan was.

On November 28, an article explained that the proprietors meant to make another application to Parliament for a bill:

28Stead Collection, 82:10.

29Dibdin, Royal Circus, 18-19.
to enable them to perform a certain number of nights, during the winter and summer months, as the majority of the magistrates continue inflexible in their determination, not to let them upon the above place of amusement.\textsuperscript{30}

An advertisement for December 19 listed the following bill of fare:

Horsemanship under the direction of Mr. Hughes; feats by Two Astonishing Children; and an allegorical exhibition called Georgium Sidus, in which will be introduced Monuments of Deceased Heroes, the Cavern of Merlin, a picture of still life called the Dumb Orators, and to conclude with a view of the Siege and Relief of Gibraltar.\textsuperscript{31}

On Monday evening, December 23, an interesting incident occurred in the flies of The Royal Circus during the production of Georgium Sidus. The supposed inhabitant of the new planet called Georgium Sidus, asked of the genius of the Enchanted Bower, "When the honor of England would decay?" Upon this, the word "Never" became illuminated from behind a transparency. This word, however, was hardly in view when from some accident in the machinery, one side of the word fell, but was swiftly corrected. This provoked an amusing comparison between the state of the English nation and the unfortunate word. The article went further to remark that the most remarkable feat performed that evening by Hughes was "the leap over the Surrey Justices prohibition."\textsuperscript{32}

On Friday, December 27, the entertainments were again interrupted about eight o'clock by the appearance of Justice Hyde in the pit who then proceeded to the stable, where he served Hughes with a warrant

\textsuperscript{30} Sted Collection, 82:12.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 82:13.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 82:15.
and enjoined him to stop any further exhibition for the evening. Hughes acquiesced to the law, and went to the stage where he addressed the audience. He expressed his concern for their disappointment and offered to return their money. While the company was preparing to depart, the Justice made his appearance in the house a second time. General cries of "the Warrant, the Warrant" broke out, and some of the more respectable spectators surrounded the magistrate and demanded to see the authority by which they had lost their evening's entertainment. Hyde and his companions very prudently made their escape and that put an end to the dispute. Hughes was taken to Bridewell where he offered to pay a penalty of fifty pounds, which was refused.33

The following is a copy of the commitment order 'To the Governors of the House of Correction, or his Deputy at the New Bridewell in St. George's Fields:

Receive into your custody the body of Charles Hughes, here-with sent you, brought before us Thomas Parker, John Croft, and William Hyde, Esqrs. three of his Majesty's Justices of Peace in and for the said county, by John Jenkinson and Thomas Adams, and charged and convicted before us said Justices, upon the oaths of Peter Goughard, Thomas Shirley, for being a rogue and vagabond; to wit, for acting, representing, and performing, for hire, gain, and reward, at a certain place called the Royal Circus, in the parish of St. George's and in the said county, a certain entertainment of the stage, called, Georgium Sidus, or the Dumb Orators; an oration by a boy, a procession of horses, with drums and fire, displaying several scenes and views, transparent, a boy making a long speech and describing the different paintings, a large groupe of children one upon another, and after marching like soldiers against the statute, etc. Him, therefore safely keep in your said custody, until the next general Quarter Session of the

33Universal Magazine, December 1782, 383.
Peace, to be held in and for the said county, or until he shall be then discharged by due course of law, and for so doing this shall be your sufficient warrant. Given under our hands and seals this twenty-seventh day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty two.

Thomas Parker, John Croft, William Hyde. 34

Hughes remained in prison until the case was heard on Wednesday, January 15, 1783, at which time he was charged with violating the Vagrant Act. The prosecution agreed that if he promised he would never perform again without a license, he could have his immediate discharge from Bridewell. Hughes refused and the trial continued. Mingay, Hughes' counsel, questioned several prosecution witnesses. Peter Gough described part of the performance which he had seen at the Royal Circus and said Hyde had given him a shilling to go there, but was unable in court to identify Hughes. Thomas Shirley gave similar evidence, but identified Hughes as having seen him at the King's Arms after Hughes was taken into custody; however, he could not identify him as participating at the Royal Circus. Justice Hyde then admitted he paid the men to attend a performance at the theatre so they could testify.

Mingay contended that the Vagrant Act did not warrant a commitment upon such facts as had been presented. The commitment stated that the offence was done in the "parish of St. George," in the county of Surrey. There was no such parish in the county; "St. George the Martyr" was the parish in which the Royal Circus stood. Since Hughes had not acted nor performed, he was unindictable for a dumb oratory exhibition

34Stead Collection, 82:16.
under the statute. The magistrates voted eleven to seven to free
Charles Hughes. 35

Dibdin stated that the prosecution helped the theatre to win
friends rather than hindered their efforts. The application to the
Lord Chamberlain made with the help of powerful friends continued,
but he would grant a license only if the Attorney General declared he
had the authority to do so. No word came from the Attorney General
and no license was received.

In February, Hughes took an important stand: if the articles
were not agreed on, he would withdraw himself from any connection
with the theatre. Dibdin felt that the matter was deliberately
unsolved for months in the hope of lessening the terms for himself
and Hughes. The proprietors now emphasized that, because of the vast
sums of money expended, the loss of profits for many weeks, and the
possibility that a license might never be obtained, they, the proprie-
tors, would be forced to bear the entire burden. A third and new
proposal was drafted by which Dibdin and Hughes would each receive
one-fourth of the profits, after paying all expenses, interest, and
ground rent at £100 per year to the proprietors. The document was
drawn up, including the financial agreement; a stipulation that
"Dibdin and Hughes could work only at the Royal Circus; and a promise

35 Ibid.
of entering into a special agreement, as soon as it should be found convenient to lay a proper deed before council.\textsuperscript{36}

A decision was made to open the Royal Circus merely to test the reaction of the town; and, if successful, this would avoid any further prosecution. Performances were again resumed on March 15, 1783, and continued on uninterrupted until the middle of September.\textsuperscript{37} This opening production consisted of horsemanship by Hughes with the help of a Lady from St. Sebastian in Spain; a lecture delivered on:

'The Living Manners' with pictures and paintings, among them; 'The Innocence and Remorse,' 'The Relief of Gibraltar,' and an exact representation of the Siege of that place with the destruction of the Floating Batteries, and a new Tower-Hill. The whole evening ending with a display of Fireworks.\textsuperscript{38}

On March 31, a monologue was added to the bill called The Barrier of Parnassus. The weather must have turned cold for a note at the bottom of the bill stated "The Academy is kept well aired with good fire."\textsuperscript{39} The bill continued through April 12, and the theatre closed during Passion Week, April 13 to April 20. It reopened on April 21 with new entertainments consisting of:

Paintings, statues, and heterogeneous objects, properly explained and elucidated, and brought into the parts


\textsuperscript{37}Read, Royal Circus, 11; Dibdin, Royal Circus, 22.

\textsuperscript{38}Stead Collection, 83:11.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 83:14.
under the following titles: The Barrier of Parnassus, The Land of Enchantment, and lastly, A Grand Oriental Spectacle with superb decorations, a procession of transparent figures, and a most brilliant display of Chinese fire, called The Temple of Confusions. 40

May started with pretty much the same bill, but a new grand English spectacle called Rus in Urbi; or, Jack in the Green was added.

It consisted of:

serious, merry, and grotesque Figures and objects being an oblique glance at Romulus and Remus, a representation of all the Kings and Queens of the May, and an elucidation of that first of characters, an English Sailor. 41

On May 20, a new musical entertainment was added to the bill, The Passions, 42 which played until June 7 along with horsemanship and the Lady from St. Sebastian.

On Monday, June 9, the bill was changed to include a mélange (a short medley of music, pantomime and dance selections), The Quackers, a magic spectacle The Talisman, and Robin Hood. The latter was advertised as:

A tract from Domestic History, told by gesture and attitude, and embellished with several most superb Paintings, particularly a view of Sherwood, and the town of Nottingham, and a grotto in Shell Work, being the story, from the best authorities, of that famous English Outlaw Robin Hood. 43

40Ibid., 83:16.
41Ibid., 83:17.
42Ibid., 83:18.
43Ibid., 83:19; The Morning Post, June 9, 1783 (London).
The June 9 advertisement further stated that, "in order to keep up an unremitting variety of entertainments, The Talisman will be relieved occasionally by The Passions, and The Land of Enchantment." Sometime in late June, Dibdin got up a medley of characters called Le Mélange Universal; or, The Regular Confession. The first reference occurs on June 30 and on July 5 the Le Mélange Universal, Robin Hood, and The Passions were set aside after that evening to make way for new entertainments.

An "Arcadian Amusement" called The Sicilian Peasants was performed on July 7, and the week of July 14 saw the production of a "Mythological Spectacle" entitled Pandora, which played until July 26, when it was replaced by The Miniature on Monday, July 28. An interesting sidelight also appeared in the July 16 advertisement as the weather must have turned hot: "The public are respectfully informed that the windows are taken out, and every possible precaution taken to ventilate the building." On July 26, Sappho; or, The Temple of Fame, an "introductory imitative intermezzo" was brought out.

August 16, a "National Allegory," decorated with a very superb painting, in transparency, entitled The Regions of Accomplishment, was

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44 Ibid., 83:19.
46 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
brought out in honor of the Prince of Wales' birthday. The popularity of the piece was attested by the favorable comments in the review.

... such general point and strength of character, that few pieces have been so popular. The assistance it deserves from the performers, requires no less to be noticed: Miss Romanzini, with equal strength and sweetness, as well as good stile and expression, commands the loudest applause in the song 'Points to the magnet honor'; and the young sailor Sestini sustains the part of the Sailor, with so much truth and correctness, that many of his speeches are interrupted by expressions of approbation from the audience; and his song is constantly, and loudly encored. 49

Another reviewer commented on Miss DeCamp: "... though but eight years of age, possessing so much lightness and grace, that she is known in the boxes by the appellation of Theodore in Miniature." 50

Friday, August 29, marked the new piece called The Saloon. Don Caesar, an old Spanish nobleman, guardian of Irene, conceives an idea of marrying her at the age of fifteen. He builds a salon and ornaments it with various paintings of Jupiter, Venus, and Adonis. Venus is complete, but a space is left for Adonis; he means to fill the space himself. Young Garcia, however, occupies the space and falls in love with Irene: Don Caesar, not to be outdone, occupies the same space, but meets with ridicule. He confesses his folly and agrees to the match between Irene and Garcia. The critic made special note of the salon with its masterly paintings. He went on to say the fable was simply and humorously treated and the entire production acted in

49 Ibid., 83:23.

50 Ibid.
a most polished and finished style. Sestini, only ten years old, gave Don Caesar all the "humour and nature it would have received at the hands of Shuter," while his singing was in the best style of an Italian Buffo. Miss Romanzini apparently had all the taste and judgment of an excellent singer, as well as a very capital merit as an actress, for she "gave the flippant Flametta every advantage she could derive from the union of such abilities." 51

The present bill continued for the month of September when the theatre closed its summer season on the 27th. On September 17, Colonel West died at his home from the result of an old war wound received in a battle with the French when he was sixteen. The loss left the theatre without someone to mediate disputes between Dibdin and Hughes.

During the past six-month period, Dibdin and Hughes received their payment of a fourth of the profits every Saturday. Soon another event gave Dibdin more cause to worry. Harborne had set himself up as treasurer, solicitor, and proprietor. After a meeting with the proprietors, Grosmith, Harborne's brother-in-law, was appointed treasurer. Harborne then drew up a new draft which denied Dibdin or Hughes, without the consent of a committee, the right to publish any book; that sixty pounds per week were to be turned over to Harborne to pay all expenses; he nominated himself as perpetual treasurer; and finally the committee was to have absolute power over Dibdin and Hughes. Dibdin was especially concerned over the publication clause, but was

51 Ibid., 83:24.
assured that his words and music were not included. It was placed there less "any nonsense of Hughes should be published to the dis-
grace of the concern." 52

Another agreement was entered into by the proprietors them-
­selves, to enforce the observance of their own private engagements. That following clause was important to Dibdin's future case against the proprietors:

That should any of the Proprietors be inclined to sell a share, it should be offered at a stipulated price to the rest, and that upon their refusal of the bargain, the buyer should be obliged to purchase, subject to all covenants and agreements whatsoever; and particularly that the present, as well as all future Proprietors, should be bound to keep, in the strictest sense, all engagements entered into with Mr. Hughes and myself. 53

From the inception of the Royal Circus, Dibdin had been troubled by his private financial situation. In February, 1782, he was in debt some £600, made up of "dregs of former law suits, penalties of engagements for a valuable and unfortunate relation, and some the consequence of follies committed twenty years ago." 54 By the 15th of March, 1783, the debt had grown to £800 by the addition of law expenses. That season was a very profitable one and by July, Dibdin had repaid £400 of his debt. Then for no reason, he asserted, "the rest of his creditors began to prosecute him in a most rigorous and

52 Dibdin, Royal Circus, 22-26.
53 ibid., 26.
54 ibid., 27-28.
extraordinary manner.\textsuperscript{55} After searching into the business, he and the proprietors discovered that Hughes was the one responsible. Davis appeared irritated at this and assured the officer, who came to arrest Dibdin, that he, personally, would answer for everything in the future and that Dibdin could now work in peace. However, the next time Dibdin was arrested, Davis "refused to keep his word.\textsuperscript{56}

The Royal Circus about this time began to be one of the "completest scenes of confusion that folly, ignorance, and interested art could plunge it into,"\textsuperscript{57} said Dibdin. His story of the backstage intrigues was clearly one-sided and allowances must be made for his "violent prejudices against foreigners in general, and against Signor Joseph Grimaldi in particular." Dibdin goes on to say: "He performed his duty, perhaps better than any other could have done, but the commendations which he reaped for his efficiency fired his ambition."\textsuperscript{58}

Behind Dibdin's back he wormed himself into the proprietors' favor and he finally succeeded in buying a half-share in the theatre. Miles in \textbf{The Life of Joe Grimaldi} quotes Dibdin's reaction to Grimaldi:

This Italian, whose nauseous history would sully the foulest paper, was engaged to me, at a salary, as Ballet Master. He knows in himself exactly the degree of merit he actually possesses; and, in the same proportion that you give him credit for any thing beyond it, do you become his dupe. Thankless in his nature, envious in his heart;

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid., 27-29.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{58}Findlater, Grimaldi, 38.
honour is with him a jest; religion a mockery; the milk of kindness which you afford him, mixing in him with the malignant qualities of his mind, turns to slow poison, which, unseen, he spits upon you as it may serve his purpose.59

Moreover, the parents of Grimaldi's apprentices were "eternally presenting" Dibdin with petitions against Grimaldi's treatment of their children. Eventually "criminal accusations were preferred, addressed to religious lords; the magistrates interfered, and a complete investigation into the morals and conduct of the place was ordered."60 Some members of the commission were for the theatre's annihilation and one in particular declared, "He was so shocked at the idea of bringing up a number of children to the stage, that he should be afraid to meet them in the other world lest they should reproach him." Dibdin sarcastically believed there would be no danger if the meeting "took place in heaven."61 Three men were appointed inquisitors, but they found nothing which would be grounds for the objection.

J. Decastro, a comedian at the Royal Circus, commented in his book on several methods of Grimaldi's harsh treatment of his apprentices. Grimaldi, as a punishment to the children when they misbehaved, "had a cage made, and drew them up to the flies."62 Another mode of punishment was placing them in stocks, which were too large for some,

59Miles, Grimaldi, 18.

60Findlater, Grimaldi, 38.

61Dibdin, Royal Circus, 29.

for when he returned to release them, they were sitting on top playing marbles, then "this cage was their portion."

Meanwhile, Hughes was trying to gain control of the Royal Circus and have the license in his name only. After meeting with the proprietors, at which was brought out that Hughes had been "canvassing the county in his name for the license"; 63 they agreed that the license should be made out in both names, Hughes' and Dibdin's; and second, that any and all agreements previously made would be adhered to after the license was obtained. After this was agreed to, there was relative peace at the Royal Circus until autumn except for the occasional lawsuits instituted against Dibdin. 64 These suits were the results of his financial troubles. Each new suit got Dibdin further into debt because of lawyer's fees.

Finally the time came for the license to be applied for in October; Hughes insisted that it be in his name only or not at all. The proprietors wanted both names on the license as a check on Hughes, but they agreed to Hughes' request. Their application for a license was granted and for the first time the Royal Circus could now open by authority and do burlettas, pantomimes, and have a proper orchestra. Dibdin warned the proprietors that remaining open all winter would lead to a financial loss. He suggested that the company should travel to Liverpool and Norwich in order to "wear out the old pieces, to be in

63 Dibdin, Royal Circus, 31.
64 Ibid.
the continual practice of new ones, and so come back at Easter with a
fund of fresh dramatic materials.\textsuperscript{65} His advice was not taken for
the proprietors wanted the theatre to reopen immediately.

The Royal Circus resumed performances on Saturday, October 18,
1783, with horsemanship by Hughes and his pupils; a new piece titled
The Fairy World divided into three parts, The Cestus, Le Noce Du
Chateau, and Harlequin: The Phantom of a Day. In the review, the
entertainments were considered to be much more "various, extensive
and costly, than the former prescribed limits permitted"; in addition
to the equestrian performances which were "given with great improve-
ments, and superbly and elegantly dressed," the audience was given a
"most capital band, a musical address, a burletta, a ballet, and a
pantomime."\textsuperscript{66}

The burletta, (a piece with a certain number of songs) The
Cestus, revolved around the idea of Juno's borrowing the cestus
(girdle) of Venus to preserve the love of her husband. Venus enjoins
her not to utter a single word to him when he returns. This she does
and Jupiter falls in love with her, recommending Good Nature as the
true cestus of Venus.

The pantomime of Harlequin, which the critic thought was "enter-
taining and successful," had a Fairy, sent in the character of an old

\textsuperscript{65}\textit{Ibid.}, 31-34.

\textsuperscript{66}Stead Collection, 83:28. Fahrner in his work quotes \textit{The
London Chronicle} of October 18-21, 1783.
woman to demand charity of Pantaloon, who is on the point of marrying
his daughter Colombine to Leander. She is rudely repulsed and vows
vengeance by changing Harlequin into a phantom to torment Pantaloon.
The Fairy, however, at a period when they seem to have been suffi-
ciently punished, pardons Pantaloon, annihilates Harlequin, and makes
the lovers happy.

The final comments of the review were accolades to the young
performers: Sestini, although hoarse, was astonishingly good in the
part of Jupiter; his "shrewd conception of the passages of humour and
his manner of executing so much difficult music, were objects of per-
fected admiration"; Miss Wilkinson's Venus was "prettily executed"; and
Miss Romanzini's singing and acting the role of Juno were "as perfect,
as capital and as finished a kind as ever we witnessed." The bill
was continued the rest of October and into mid-November.

On November 13, a new burletta, "demi Celestial and demi
Terrestrial," was brought out, The Long Odds. The reviewer thought
the production most successful. "The music gave the highest satisfac-
tion and the scenes were admirably painted." Plutus wagers Jupiter
that he can carry off a girl from Apollo. Plutus descends to earth
and wins his wager by winning the girl with wealth. That night he
unMASKS himself and restores the girl to the real lover.

67 Ibid., 83:28.

68 Ibid., 83:29-30.
The theatre closed for the holidays on December 2, but reopened on Friday, December 26 with four new pieces. A correspondent who had seen a rehearsal felt such an undertaking could only be done by the Royal Circus for the expenses must have been immense. The evening's amusements were ushered in by a prelude called A Breaking Up; a grand ballet called, Bacchus and Ariadne; a comic burletta called, The Milk Maid; and finally, a pantomime called, The Lancashire Witches; or, The Distress of Harlequin.69

The Breaking Up is an insurrection in a school for boys and girls. The children hold the governess and the schoolmaster until a promise that they will be permitted to participate in equestrian performances is granted. That being done; they are released. The children go back to their studies and the performances are continued. Hughes' horses were part of the show which utilized both the stage and the ring. They were "so well blended together, that they became a striking and pleasing relief to each other."70 Dibdin had originally attempted to combine the two forms of entertainment when he first presented the idea to Hughes; however, the temperaments of the two partners were so totally unsuited that these plans were very seldom carried out. J. Decastro noted that the production ran into difficulties with the magistrates. Because the winter theatres were jealous of its success, "as there was so much prose dialogue in it, and as the minor theatres being then only

69 ibid., 83:32.
70 ibid.
allowed to speak in recitative, accompanied on the pianoforte," the magistrates sent down an order to Dibdin that it must no longer be performed, and he withdrew it.

The Milk Maid plot hinges on Patty, whose fortune is milk. She kicks over the pail which is the source of her good fortune. She spurns both low characters in the piece because she wants to marry the squire. She laments all her riches are spilled, but then resolves to "prize an humble fate," agreeing to marry Bellows, a blacksmith. 72

The pantomime, The Lanchashire Witches, was staged by Grimaldi who had given a fresh instance of his "indefatigable industry and a proof how well he knows how to make the galleries laugh." 73 It is a succession of perilous dangers, which Harlequin and Colombine, who are pursued by an old father and disagreeable lover, with the great difficulties encountered in their escape.

This bill was presented nightly until January 17, 1784, when The Passion was added to the entertainments. On February 2, The Saloon, a comic entertainment, was added. This bill finished out the week and the season closed on February 7, 1784. 74 On February 3, Dibdin was dismissed as manager. The immediate cause of Dibdin's dismissal went back to October.

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71Humphreys, Memoirs, 15.
72Fahrner, Mr. Dibdin, 219.
73Stead Collection, 83:33-34.
74Ibid., 84:1-2.
Although the October reopening was a successful one, Dibdin was still troubled by financial obligations. He had paid his creditors nearly £600, but still owed £450, mostly for law expenses. Dibdin felt he was "persecuted, . . . evidently at the insistence of Hughes." He goes on,

the most scandalous and illegal measures were taken purposely to expose me; and every illicit and vulgar manoeuvre put in practice to injure my peace of mind, and render me incapable of doing my business. 75

The proprietors deposited a hundred pounds with Sewell (Dibdin’s lawyer) with the instructions that they would be answerable for the payment of the rest of the debts within a year. Davis, who was to have been at a meeting of the creditors, instead sent a letter apologizing for his absence, but reaffirming the conditions set down previously. The creditors were satisfied and another meeting was proposed, but again Davis did not appear at the second meeting. This time, the rest of the proprietors "absolutely declined to undertake to settle Dibdin’s affairs or to engage for the payment of any part of his debts." 76 Sewell assured Dibdin and the creditors that the first agreement was still binding. One of the creditors dropped all proceedings, but the other two did not.

Dibdin’s troubles continued until early in December when the Royal Circus was doing so poorly that a resolution was formed to "shut

75Dibdin, Royal Circus, 35-36.

76Ibid., 37-38.
it up, to open at Christmas, and then continue the entertainments if they should succeed."\(^{77}\) When the theatre reopened in December, the first week did not make expenses, and it looked as if each Saturday would be their last. Sir John Lade blamed Dibdin for the trouble, constantly attacking his music and finally ordering him to cut down on the size of the orchestra. After some arguments, Dibdin cut out the trumpets and a few "useless performers who had been only engaged in compliment to Mr. Hughes."\(^{78}\) He was next ordered to dismiss painters, carpenters, and others "by wholesale." He pleaded to keep these persons because he could not get new productions out without new materials. Next Lade ordered him to dismiss the performers hired for the new pieces and use the company already assembled. After pleading with Davis, Dibdin was told to forget everything Lade had told him. Within the company, "all subordination was at an end; nor could the eloquence of the accomplished Mr. Harborne restore it."\(^{79}\)

Because of his debts, Dibdin was obliged to surrender himself to prison on January 21, for he could not pay his creditors.\(^{80}\) Since Dibdin was now in prison, Davis offered to help him. Dibdin learned, however, that Davis had sold half of his share to Crimaldi and wrote him on February 2. In the letter Dibdin reasserted his right to the

\(^{77}\)ibid., 41.  
\(^{78}\)ibid., 43.  
\(^{79}\)ibid., 43-47.  
\(^{80}\)ibid., 40.
one-fourth share of the profits and his position as manager of the stage department subject to control of the committee. Two resolutions were added to the letter: the first requested "that he is considered, for the term of his natural life, as manager of the stage and all its entertainments, and allowing, . . . a full fourth of the profits . . ."; and the second asked that he have "leave to write and compose an opera for one of the theatres."81

The first letter was ignored; instead, word was sent that he had been voted out of the Circus. Dibdin then wrote a second letter to Davis requesting the friendship so often talked about now could be used to help him regain his position. The following day two resolutions of February 3 arrived from the proprietors. The first,

in consequence of Mr. Dibdin's having frequently, . . . neglected his duty as the deputy acting manager of the Royal Circus; and being now a prisoner in the King's Bench, whereby the business of the house in his department is wholly neglected; it is therefore absolutely necessary that the entertainment close on Saturday next; . . . second, . . . notice be given to Mr. Dibdin, . . . that they shall dispense with any further attendance of Mr. Dibdin at the Royal Circus, as the acting manager thereof, or any other engagement they have with Mr. Dibdin respecting the Royal Circus.82

Dibdin wrote to Davis a third time, requesting an answer and urging him "to keep his word of honour." Davis replied three days later with the following answer:

81ibid., 46-50.
82ibid., 51-58.
assuring the prisoner that he would have answered sooner if he could have 'written with a probability of mitigating in any degree' Dibdin's 'disagreeable situation'; he lamented that since the Royal Circus was first projected hardly a week had passed 'without some new mischief arising to perplex the parties concerned in the unfortunate undertaking; he explained he had invested more than £2000 . . . with little chance of recovering any of it, and that the other proprietors found themselves in similar situations; he stated that 'to have continued the undertaking a year or two longer in the loose and extravagant manner in which it has hitherto been conducted' would have ruined (and even brought to prison) some of the investors; he stated lest four or five of the proprietors had felt that Dibdin's management had been the cause of the failure of the Circus and consequently had voted for his compulsion; he explained that his single vote, if he had cast it, would not have stopped the move; he expressed the highest regard for Dibdin's abilities and regretted that Dibdin's conduct had lost him the 'confidence of the proprietors' who had supported . . . a project which 'properly managed' would have provided them with a moderate return and placed Dibdin in a different position; . . .

Dibdin wrote an answer to Davis' letter on February 25, accusing him of being a false friend all along. He denied all of Davis' allegations in his previous letter. He further accused Davis and the other proprietors of having conspired to depose him so they could have his share of the profits. He concluded with a pledge to seek "legal justice," armed with the memorandum Davis had signed. 84

The summer season of 1784 commenced on Easter Monday, April 12, 1784, when the burlettas were performed by adults and the children continued in the dances only. Dibdin had been replaced by Grimaldi as stage director. Read, who was at that time Harborne's bookkeeper,

83Fahrner, Mr. Dibdin, 216-217.
84Dibdin, Royal Circus, 63-70.
characterized the change as being dreadful. "Grimaldi was doubtless a good Ballet Master, and builder of harlequinades; but an Italian dancing master could never be very eligible as the manager of an English Theatre." The stage poet who succeeded Dibdin was Frederic Pilon; the scenic artist was Michael Novosielski; his chief assistant was William Capon. A piece called Old Robin Gray, a burletta in which Decastro played the lead, was the first production of Pilon.

The pantomime, *The Vicissitudes of Harlequin*, opened in late June. The reviewer commented mostly on the staging:

... its representation is the best proof imaginable of the great capacity of Grimaldi, ... The management of the machinery was as near perfection as possible, and every eye was struck with admiration, ... the merits of the scenery as well as the incidents of the Pantomime are to be attributed to Mr. Grimaldi, who we understand, furnished the painter with models; however, the last scene we think very imperfect. We think it too heavy for the size of the stage, and the amazing large pillars which constitute the side wings, do not correspond with the background, agreeable to the distance of perspective; and we warmly recommend to the managers of the Circus, to pay more attention to their scenery in the future.

A new burletta was performed for the first time on July 18, *Circe and Ulysses*. The reviewer gave credit to the author, musical composer and the performers in general. He further paid tribute to

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86 Brayley, *Historical Accounts*, 70.
88 Stead Collection, 84:5.
Hughes and his pupil's superior horsemanship abilities. He felt their tricks were amazing and the "greatest performers in the universe"; and that a boy of eight "is capable of riding on a man's head in full speed, and in that extreme difficult situation to perform, with ease, such wondrous acts of agility."\(^{89}\)

In September, when the license came up for renewal, although someone had written in protest to the magistrates, they deemed this protest insufficient and the license renewal was granted in Hughes' name.

For about two hundred years (1680's-1880's), the payment of actors and actresses was dominated by the system by which their weekly salary, almost always scanty, except in the case of stars, was supplemented by the proceeds of a benefit performance. These benefits were of various types, but all types had two common features—"that the beneficiary was supposed to derive profit from them, and that he or she was the center of attraction on the 'night'."\(^{90}\) The first benefit at the Royal Circus was on October 9, 1784, for Messrs. Johannot, Burkitt, and Decastro. Decastro in his Memoirs printed a copy of the playbill of that first benefit. These three men were the main featured performers that evening doing their favorite and best roles. The Lover's Device was done in which Johannot introduced a new song to the favorite

\(^{89}\)Ibid., 84:6.

Air of "Fal de rol Tit"; The Jovial Cobbler in which was introduced a new song "Blue Ey'd Patty" by Burkitt; Imitations, vocal and Rhetorical by Decastro; the comic song of "Four-and-Twenty Fiddlers," by Johannot; and, The Vicissitudes of Harlequin, the part of the Tailor, with the "Balloon Song" by Decastro. The night was quite a success and all received a handsome profit.

Three other benefits occurred in October: October 12, Thompson, Box-Book and Housekeeper; October 18, Miss Pownall Jones; and October 21, Miss Crofts, Master Robinson, Sutton and Pereira. The summer season was closed on Wednesday, October 27.

The season of 1784 had not been a productive one; and at its close Hughes claimed a balance of £2800 as due him for "the purchase and keeping of horses, board and maintenance of apprentices, and sundry other matters," for which he brought action in the court of King's Bench. Read was told to make up an accounting as the proprietors were determined not to lose any more money. Novosieliski, who had purchased a moiety of George Grant's share, was appointed stage manager for that season. The administration for that season was just about complete when

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91 Humphreys, Memoirs, 22-23.

92 Brayley, Historical Accounts, 70.

93 Read, Royal Circus, 24. James Grant had also disposed of his fifth share to Sir John Lade, who sold a moiety of that fifth, or a tenth, to Bullock; so that the proprietors now were, the representative of the late Colonel West, Harborne, Davis, George Grant, Novosieliski, Sir John Lade, and Bullock, Harman, the solicitor, and his brother-in-law, Grossmith, secretary and treasurer.
Hughes brought about a sort of revolution. He went to Dibdin, who had been released, but was still a prisoner in the King's Bench, and persuaded him to join along with a band of "jail keepers, bailiff's followers, and nondescripts."\(^{94}\) They executed a well-planned coup de main, and forcibly took possession of the theatre, wardrobe, and scenery, and immediately prepared for an Easter opening. The proprietors, furious, finally agreed to rent jointly the theatre to Hughes and Dibdin from then until the first of January, 1786, for £1750.\(^{95}\) Peace was restored and they both started working on the season.

The Royal Circus opened the 1785 season on March 28. An indication of the season is taken from the first program, "entertainments . . . will be performed in a Plan, and in a stile infinitely superior to anything ever yet attempted at that Place."\(^{96}\) The bill consisted of Hughes and his pupils performing their usual equestrian feats; a burletta called The Olive Branch; a burletta with "Grotesque, Plaintive, Bravoura, Gigantic, Liliputian, Celestial, and Infernal Music, and Modern Obligato Accompaniments, particularly for the Drone," called The Life, Death, and Renovation of Tom Thumb; a "scotch pastoral" ballet called The Banks of the Tweed; a "grand grotesque" pantomime called The Talisman of Crosmanes; two animated figures, one of which "postures on the tight-ropie in the form of a monkey" and the other imitates the

\(^{94}\) Read, Royal Circus, 25.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 20-25.

\(^{96}\) Stead Collection, 85:3.
the "sagacity of the Learned Pig"; and the whole to conclude with fire-
works.\textsuperscript{97}

On April 16, \textit{The Statue; or, The Bower of Confidence},\textsuperscript{98} an
intermezzo was brought out. The novel feature about this piece was
that it included a real fox hunt with a fox and fourteen pairs of
trained hounds. Within a few days the piece was so popular that fifty
pairs of dogs were now made part of the fox hunt. The new pantomime on
April 18 was \textit{The Land of Sorcery; or Harlequin Will O'-The-Wisp}. On
May 11, \textit{The Generous Pirate; or, The Union of the Cossack Tartars},\textsuperscript{99}
a grand ballet, was performed. The piece was evidently "got up with
great pains, at a large expence, and in a masterly manner," so the
reviewer stated.

\textit{Clump and Cudden}, a comic intermezzo, was first produced on
May 21;\textsuperscript{100} it finished with a "Sham Fight and Review, which (with words
and music) is the production of Mr. Dibdin." The playbill promised "an
effective appearance in Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry, and Spectators, of
at least Thirty Thousand Men; and which Spectacle will finish by a
general Discharge of Cannon and musquetry." The ending of the piece is
described by Fahrner:

The scene "draws, and discovers an open hilly country, where
all the Manoeuvres are performed," after which the characters

\textsuperscript{97}ibid.
\textsuperscript{98}ibid., 85:4.
\textsuperscript{99}ibid., 85:5-7.
\textsuperscript{100}ibid., 85:7.
come forward to celebrate, in a final chorus, the contributions the soldiery makes to England's welfare. 101

The Benevolent Tar; or, The Miller's Daughter, a spectacle, opened on June 4, in which was introduced "a splendid exhibition containing all the manoeuvres of a Sham Fight at Sea and Naval Review." 102 The only other new piece offered in June was a "burlesque ballet" of The Beggar's Opera on June 16.

In July, Dibdin wanted to undertake a project to commemorate the memory of Dr. Arne, the first English composer, the idea being a presentation starting on July 23 and running the next five consecutive Saturdays. "Hughes opposed the idea, so Dibdin offered to pay for the affair out of his share of the profits." 103 Hughes was still opposed to the idea and a clash, which had started some months before, turned into a campaign of harrassment. The business at the theatre thus began to fall off. An account by Decastro seems to verify the account Dibdin gave. Hughes was always "acting contrary to the system of management" which Dibdin had set down; "negligence and confusion prevailed," the treasury failed and a "general desertion took place."

One evening, the band having struck, and refused to enter the orchestra again unless the arrears which were due to them were paid up, Mr. C. Dibdin was compelled to come before the curtain, and request the indulgence of the audience to permit him to accompany the performance of one of his burlettas Called 'Clump and Cudden', on the piano-forte, . . . no sooner had Mr. Dibdin seated himself . . .

101 Fahrner, Mr. Dibdin, 232.
102 Stead Collection, 85:9.
103 Fahrner, Mr. Dibdin, 233.
then Mr. Hughes, at the head of his horse, sallied forth from the stable-entrance into the ring, followed by his performers, ... It was the custom then, when they made their 'Grand Entree' to be preceded by a drum and fife, ... the wide difference the sound of one instrument and that of the others was soon very distinctly heard, as the brilliant tones and sweet concord of the piano were entirely beat out of the ears of the audience by the loud thundering of the drum, and the shrill notes of the piercing fife, and the house, by degrees, became totally deserted by the public.\textsuperscript{104}

The program for the Commemoration of Dr. Arne appears in the Stead Collection, but the piece seems not to have been presented\textsuperscript{105} as shortly thereafter Dibdin quit the management of the Royal Circus never to return again. His name appeared on several playbills of August and September, but by fall his name never appeared again.

The only new piece brought out in July was a pantomime, \textit{The Defeated Magician}; or, \textit{The Metamorphoses of Harlequin and Pierrot} which was quite well received. The next new pieces were introduced on September 12, an intermezzo called \textit{The Recruiting Sergeant} and a new dance called \textit{The Algerine Pirate}; or, \textit{The Union of the Spaniards and Algerines}. The horsemanship that night consisted of the Little Devils and Hughes' Troop; Master Robinson and Sutton playing several tunes on the clarinets dancing on their horses at full speed; and to conclude with an entry of twenty horses and performers.\textsuperscript{106} Also on that Monday,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{104}Humphreys, \textit{Memoirs}, 120-121.
  \item \textsuperscript{105}The \textit{Daily Universal Register} (London), later called \textit{The London Times}, July 22, makes reference that the Commemoration of Dr. Arne will not be performed, but notice will be given later for the first night.
  \item \textsuperscript{106}Stead Collection, 85:14; 85:20.
\end{itemize}
Hughes introduced his new horse, Chilliby, into the Act. He made the following claim:

it will jump from the Ring upon the Stage; and take off one of the Dancing Ladies' capes, and carry it to his Master; will then jump back again from the Ring to the Stage, and dress the Lady, by putting it back where he found it.\footnote{ibid., 85:27.}

The first benefit of the season occurred on September 16 for Madame Julien, a singer and dancer, and Jones, an equestrian performer. She danced in two new dances, The Piratical Persians and La Provensall. The next benefit, for Dr. Arnold, was on Saturday, September 17, to raise funds so that he could try a new parachute trick. His original benefit was scheduled for September 10, then rescheduled for the 17th. He seemed to draw poor houses and did not raise enough money for the project.\footnote{ibid., 85:21-22.} The third benefit was in honor of Holland, "ballet master and principal dancer on the stage and on horseback."\footnote{ibid., 85:23.} The final benefit for September was on the 28th, that being for Connell, a singer and dancer.

A number of benefits occurred during October and November: on the 4th, for Miss Jameson, a singer; on the 7th, for Tomlinson, actor and dancer; on the 21st, for Hughes; on the 28th, for Oliver; and in November, on the 9th, for Hughes' pupils, Master Robinson, Pereira, Wilton, Davis, Shirley, Jefferees, and the Little Devil; and, on the
18th, for Mrs. Arnold and her son 'who so miraculously escaped impending destruction on his late ascension in the Balloon from St. George's Fields, by falling in the River Thames.'

Several new pieces were offered during the rest of the season: In October, on the 7th, a dance The Milk Maid's Disaster; in November, on the 9th, a dance The Sleepy Miller and a burletta, Auld Robin Gray; on the 14th, a dance The Cobbler; and in December, on the 28th, a pantomime The Cavern of Vulcan.

The popularity of the fox hunt was well known, and by October 21, Hughes had also included a stag, wild boar, and racoon hunt as part of the program. Since Dibdin's departure, Hughes resorted more and more to equestrian entertainments, both to rival Astley and draw crowds into the Royal Circus. He pitted a troop from Dublin against his own and used two strong men forming a pyramid with six persons standing on three horses. These feats of physical strength now became a part of the repertory of the Royal Circus. Wire and rope-dancing made their appearance towards the end of the season. A bill for December 28 lists a new entertainment, the 'wonderful Homo Aquilinus; or Flying Machine.' The season closed on December 29.

From its inception in 1782 until Dibdin quit the management in 1785, the artists and proprietors went through a period of considerable

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110 Ibid., 85:27.
112 Ibid., 85:28.
stress. The original concept of combining the stage and the ring was a sound one, but never reached the degree of fruition Dibdin had imagined because of the temperaments of the two partners. Although both men were at fault, Dibdin seems not to have had the temperament to be a strong manager. He had the inventive genius and industry necessary, but that, pitted against the intemperance and irregularity of Hughes, produced nothing but clashes and lawsuits. The proprietors, mostly businessmen, knew little about the theatre or the problems involved in running that type of operation. To be successful, one must have a good deal of artistic license and not continually have a committee worry only about financial matters. All the artists seem to have been of strong temperament, so it was inevitable that clashes were to take place.

Dibdin's *The Royal Circus Epitomized* was a strong account in his favor; the other persons left no account for comparison. The proprietors wrongly blamed Dibdin for many of the management problems at the Royal Circus; yet it is a fact that he was a poor handler of his personal financial matters and was probably partly to blame for the mismanagement of the financial matters of the Circus. Dibdin, however, made a strong case that the proprietors were out to get him; for they were so reluctant to draw up the business agreement between the two partners, that maybe the argument has some validity. Dibdin, forced out in 1785, never returned, but Hughes operated the theatre on and off until 1795.
The original concept of children as the principal actors was novel indeed, but after several seasons, adults were hired to do the principal acting and the children to continue with horsemanship and dancing. It was difficult to manage and train the children of so young an age. Inevitably the managers had to answer to the parents complaints if they seemed to be too strict with the children. The reviews of the day attest to the fact that some of these young people must have been excellent performers, especially being able to perform such difficult equestrian feats.

During this early period the theatre was licensed to perform burlettas, pantomime, and dumb show, but no dialogue was to be spoken. To circumvent this restriction, works were performed which used dialogue spoken to a piano accompaniment. Grand ballets, burlesque pantomimes, comic pieces, intermezzi, and musical entertainments were the main kinds of entertainments. The Saloon featuring paintings and backdrops explained the story and the actions were sung or pantomimed. This example is typical of the type of entertainments performed. A unique touch was that the performances generally concluded with a grand display of fireworks inside the theatre. Luckily they were set off in a controlled situation and surprisingly no evidence has shown any fire resulting from a fireworks display. The fireworks were brought to the theatre each night for that performance only.

Horsemanship and equestrian displays were by far the most novel productions at the theatre. Hughes' apprentices proved to be very skillful on horseback. In addition, another type of equestrian
performance offered was the fox hunt. With the use of real foxes and
dogs these hunts must have been quite spectacular. Along with the
popularity of the fox hunt, other elements were added to the chase
such as stags, racoons, and boars. The Royal Circus was unrivaled
for this type of production.

The Royal Circus did, however, produce a type of equestrian
entertainment that proved to be quite popular and made a significant
mark on theatrical history of the late eighteenth and early nine-
teenth centuries. Operating without a license, they were continually
at odds with the magistrates and the major houses. Equestrian enter-
tainments were extremely popular as shown by the rivalry between the
Royal Circus and Astley's Amphitheatre. When licensed they could do
burlettas, pantomimes and musical entertainments. The Royal Circus
then was the first and best of its kind at this time to offer eques-
trian entertainments.
CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL CIRCUS 1786-1794

On the first of January, 1786, Hughes and Dibdin's term of rental for the theatre expired and the proprietors demanded possession of the property. Dibdin returned to the theatre to surrender his possessions, but Hughes refused. His attorney had inserted a clause in a previous agreement "that those articles should not be produced as evidence, in any matter of dispute, or litigation whatever, between the parties."¹ The proprietors had obtained a joint possession of the theatre at least. The repossession of the theatre had to be obtained by law and a declaration was served on Hughes, who immediately filed a bill in the Chancery Court. The results of that suit went against the proprietors and Hughes now found himself in full possession of the whole property. He opened the theatre for the seasons of 1786 and 1787, refusing to pay any rent to the proprietors, and it was not until 1788 that the Court decreed that the theatre be returned to the original proprietors.²

²Ibid., 27-35.
Charles Hughes, in possession of the property, opened the Royal Circus on Easter Monday, April 17, with the following bill: a new dance, _The Cricketers_ composed by Holland, the dancing master; a new burletta, _Who's Who!_ or _The Double Disappointment_; a new dance, _Nobody_; or, _Two Faces are Better Than One_; a new pantomime, _Harlequin Chymist_; or, _The Fall of the Nunnery_; and horsemanship by Hughes and his pupils.³ The bill played until May 8 when new entertainments were offered: a new burletta, _The Peckham Gardner_; or, _The Camberwell Joke_; and a new dance, _The Cheapside Disaster_; or, _Edmonton in an Uproar_.⁴ A reviewer of _The Peckham Gardner_ gave the following account, "in the course of the burletta, humour and ridicule, instead of ill-natured satire, seems to be aimed at, and is most successfully played off."⁵ That bill played twenty-four nights until June 5.

On June 6, in honor of His Majesty's birthday, Hughes brought out a new burletta, _The English Lion_; or, _Jovial Tars_, in which was shown a view of His Majesty's Fleet at anchor; and a new dance, _The Stolen Nosegay_. The front of the theatre was "illuminated in a very splendid manner," and the reception of the bill was both brilliant and respectable. A note about the equestrian exercises appeared in a review:

_He was amazed at an equilibrium performed by Mr. Hughes, who balanced one of the boys on the palm of his hand, the_  

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³Stead Collection, 86:2.  
⁴_Daily Universal Register_, May 9, 1786.  
⁵Stead Collection, 86:4.
horse at the same time going round the ring at a brisk canter, during which time the lad put himself in the attitude of a flying Mercury, after which Hughes, by a dexterous manoeuvre, leaped from the horse and left the boy on the saddle, who went once or twice round the amphitheatre.  

Towards the middle of June, advertisements appeared announcing the changing of the bill and "the whole Circus made into a Grand Salon for the reception of the famous Charini's family." The Charini's opened on June 17 with "Wire and Tight-rope, Trampoline, Batto, etc." One performer did the extraordinary feat of "throwing a back Somerset Twenty-two Feet high, and flip-flaps with his legs tied together." A new burletta, The Sailor's Merry Meeting, was also performed. 

Excerpts from the review commented that "the lady's performances on the tight-rope, slack-rope and wire, are more excellent and far superior to any man who has yet appeared in this kingdom." Furthermore, Hughes scored another triumph with the little Charini being "so clever; though only a boy of ten years of age, that Hughes offers one hundred guineas to any one who can equal him." This excellent company drew crowds to the Royal Circus through mid-December.

Meanwhile other entertainments were regularly added to the bill during the summer and fall. On July 17, a pantomime, The Whim; or,
Fairy of the Cave, 10 received excellent reviews and was considered one of the best ever done at this theatre. It was produced the rest of July, August and the first half of September. The wild horse, Chilliby, was brought by Robert Jones from his Riding House in Whitechapel to perform at the Royal Circus. This horse remained a favorite throughout much of the rest of the season.

On September 4, a new burletta was brought out, The Lawyer Outwitted; or, The Sailor's Return. The Royal Circus continued to be packed each night as evidenced by the following notice regarding handbills. The custom of the day was to print large quantities of handbills and have them passed out on the streets and put in coaches. Hughes' printer seemed to have suffered a loss of revenue, for some eight weeks he had not printed the 5,000 or 6,000 bills per day because the crowds at the theatre had been so large. 11 The summer season closed on Friday, September 15 and the winter season opened on Monday, September 18.

For the opening of the winter season, four new pieces were brought out: two dances, The Lamb Cherish'd; or, The Shepherd Surpris'd, and The Garland; or, The Lover Crown'd; a new pantomime, The Cave of Merlin; and a new burletta, The Victorious Sailor. 12 The first benefit of the season was on September 27, that being for Mrs. Hughes;

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10 Ibid., 86:11.
11 Ibid., 86:14.
12 Daily Universal Register, September 18, 1786.
the next on September 28 for Signor and Signora Charini and their two sons, and Signor and Signora Nicolini; the third on September 29 for Mr. West; in October, on the 4th for Holland; on the 11th for Thorn, the Harlequin and Meunie the Clown; on the 12th for Mr. Jones; and on the 16th for the rope-dancer, Signor Placido. 13 Two new burlettas were brought out on September 27, *The Deuce Is In Her* and on October 2, *The Deuce Is In Him.* 14

On October 6, Hughes and his counsel met in the General Quarter Sessions to renew the license for the Royal Circus. The proprietors voiced opposition to Hughes' being the only name on the license for they wished one of their names to be included along with Hughes'. The magistrates found him to be a man of good character and quickly granted him the license—and in his own name. 15

On October 9, two new pantomimes were introduced: *The Eyes of the Master; or, The Cats Away The Mice Will Play,* and *The Prodigal Son; or, The Destruction of Harlequin.* On October 26, a new dance called *The Industrious Mechanic* was performed; on October 30, a pantomime, *Harlequin's Triumph; or, The Devil Take The Clown* was done. The theatre was closed from November 3 to November 12 on account of the death of the Princess Amelia. It was reopened for Taylor's benefit on November 13, at which time a new burletta, *The Squire Outwitted; or,*

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13 *ibid.*, September 27, 1786

14 *Stead Collection, 86:17.*

15 *ibid.*, 86:19.
Double Disappointment was played. Brother Geoghegan's benefit, he being the printer to the house, was on November 21 and Norris' benefit was November 29. 16

The Charini family played its last performance on December 15 and left for Europe the next day. December 16 marked the date of Hughes' benefit and the close of the season. The theatre was so overly crowded that "at least five thousand people could not get in for lack of space." On December 26, 27, and 28, the bill stated "for the Benefit of Hughes, and the other Proprietors, agreeable to their respective interests to be settled in pursuance of an order of the High Court of Chancery." 17

The season of 1786 was a very profitable one for Hughes. Thirteen new burlettas, six new pantomimes, nine new dances, and other types of entertainment were brought out. The greatest success of the season was the horsemanship, both by Hughes and his pupils. A major triumph was engaging the Charini family in June for they brought large crowds to the Royal Circus with their horsemanship, tight and slack-rope dancing, juggling, trampoline and other acts. Tumblers, imitators of birds and animals, and jugglers as well as the equestrian performances delighted the audiences throughout the season. Thus Hughes' first year was quite a successful one.

16 Ibid., 86:21-23.

17 Daily Universal Register, December 28, 1786.
The next season opened on Easter Monday, April 9, 1787. The house "having gone through a repair."
The monies received nightly, to discharge the growing expenses from the first of January, 1787, and opening the theatre this present season; the residue; after paying the Performers, is to be at the disposal of the Hon. Court of Chancery. 18

Suits were still filed by both Hughes and the proprietors over control of the theatre. The first night's performance saw three new pieces brought forward: a new burletta, The Boarding School; a new opera, Botany Bay; and a new pantomime, Harlequin Conjurer; or, Pinetti Turned Pierrot. 19 This bill was performed for the next three weeks. Horsemanship and rope-dancing remained a regular nightly feature also.

On April 30, a new dance was performed, The Bird Catchers; a new burletta, The Merry Combat; and a grand ballet, The Villagers Merry Making. 20 Horsemanship captured much of the spotlight, "The Little Devil will throw a somerset from a chair, eighteen feet high, to the stage, and will leap over several horses from the trampoline, though only ten years of age, superior to any vaulter in the world." 21

During the month of May, two new dances, two burlettas and one ballet were produced. The dances, on May 22, The Merry Forresters, and May 28, The Bottle Conjurer; the burlettas, on May 15, The Master Outwitted, and on May 20, The Maid's Last Shift; or, Any Rather than

18 Ibid., April 9, 1787.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., April 30, 1787.
21 Stead Collection, 87:3.
Fail; and on May 29, a ballet, *Le Veux A Rejeune*. In June, a new
burletta, *The Chap House*; or, *The Box Lobby Lounger* was introduced on
the 6th; on the 7th, a pantomime, *The Drunken Gardners*; two new dances,
*The Miller*; or, *The Night's Intrigue* on the 11th, and *The Industrious
Peasant* on June 30. 22

A review about mid-June attested to Hughes' well-run theatre:

The above place is now conducted more like the King's
Opera-house than a Summer Theatre; the dances graceful,
the dresses grand, the scenery good, the house well
lighted: and the whole group happy under Hughes' direc-
tion. 23

In an article dated July 14, Hughes' solicitor was offered a
bribe of £500 if he would drop the suit against the co-proprietors.
Hughes' solicitor stated he was as determined not "to receive a bribe,
as Hughes is not to permit Faro playing at the Circus, however grateful
and convenient it might be to some of the proprietors." 24 The article
in The Gazetteer explained the suit brought by the proprietors:

The case was heard before the Lord Chamberlain, a cause, where in the Proprietors of the
Circus are the plaintiffs, and Mr. Hughes the defen-
dant, the cause is brought to oblige Mr. Hughes to give
them the possession of the Circus, as they are not con-
tent with the profits he has sworn to have arisen these
last two years, which have amounted to £70 each pro-
rietor. 25

25 *Daily Universal Register*, July 18, 1787.
That day Hughes wrote to the editor of The Morning Herald. Following are the highlights of his answer refuting all the statements:

I am very much surprised to read in so respectable a paper as The Gazette, a notorious falsehood, from the beginning to end erroneously stated: so far from my being indebted to my co-proprietors £2000, they at this time stand indebted to me in a sum very much more than the above sum. With regards to the £90 yearly to each proprietor, the statement is false; my co-proprietors in the year 1782 received £1400; in the year 1783, £2000; in the year 1784, £1200; in the year 1785, £1750, ... No cause of mine was to have come on as last Wednesday before the Chancellor. Out of the above sums in 1782, 1783, 1784, and 1785, I received no more than £830 and no interest whatever for £2200 expended by me in the scheme. I have made no oath concerning £70 a year to each proprietor. N.B. Twelve months ago Counsellor Lade offered me £500, afterwards double that sum to drop the suits with my co-proprietors ... My answer to Mr. Lade was, I would not make any private agreement whatever until the tradesmen were first paid, ... I most heartily wish the business to be settled as soon as possible, without bribery, or robbing those who ought to be paid their just demands.26

The benefits started earlier this season, but were fewer in number: August 2, Mr. Taylor; August 3, Mrs. Hughes; August 10, Mr. Thorne; August 15, Mr. West; and September 6, Mr. Ferrere. Ferrere composed two new dances, The Slavish Thief, in which he danced in chains, and The Rival Is A Conjurer; or, The Power of Love. Four new dances were performed in August: the first on August 3, The Industrious Farmer; the second on August 10, The Haymakers; and the third and fourth on August 15, De La Cour and Gavott.27

26The Morning Herald, July 15, 1787
27Stead Collection, 87:10-11.
Throughout the rest of the season, only four new items appeared: on September 3, a pantomime, *The Triumph of Mirth; or, Harlequin's Animation*; on October 29, a burletta, *The Village Conjuror*; and on December 27, a pantomime, *Harlequin Triumphant* and a burletta, *Lawyer Outwitted; or, Sailor Triumphant*. 28

The following account given by Read on the state of the theatre at the close of the 1787 season was most probably factual as he was in possession of the records of the theatre. Hughes had made some changes in the interior of the theatre for the Charini family and Read's account went into great detail about these changes which he felt totally destroyed the design of the theatre.

Hardly a single trace was left of that beautiful theatre, either before the curtain or behind it. The once elegant green-room and committee room were dismantled of their costly furniture; drinking benches and forms were substituted, and the whole became a scene of nocturnal orgies, riot, dissipation and confusion. For Hughes having obtained a license for selling spirituous liquors; performers, managers, and audience assembled here, at all times, in heterogeneous jumble. The business of the stage standing still, till a performer had smoked out his pipe, or finished his bowl, was considered an indulgence, no reasonable audience could have the smallest objection to grant; . . .

The boxes, which had been fitted up with so much taste and elegance; once the resort of beauty and fashion, were now occupied by butchers just transmigrated from their slaughterhouses, who scorned the vain ceremony of throwing aside their greasy aprons, or unslinging their steels; bum bailiffs, jail-runners, and thief-takers, who might be 'following their vocation' perhaps. Such were the evils that at once contaminated and destroyed, in manner, the whole theatre, and all its former consequence. 29


Toward the end of 1787, the suit in Chancery that Hughes had first started, drew to a close, for the court gave the property back to the proprietors. They were to take formal possession on January 28, 1788. The proprietors then drew up articles of agreement between all parties, first being: the proprietors were to receive one hundred guineas for ground rent; they received £1200 as rent for the loan of their money; the profits were divided thus, three-fourths to the proprietors, one-fourth to Hughes; they would appoint a yearly stage manager who, with Hughes, would work under their control; a committee would meet weekly to make decisions which Hughes was expected to follow; that Hughes should not interfere with anyone hired by the committee in any other department; the committee would settle all disputes arising between Hughes and any other hired person; and finally, Hughes could not hire any actors or performers or buy any horses without their approval first.\(^{30}\)

The committee first met on January 30, at which time Hughes was ordered to move his family out of the apartments in the theatre. He requested to be allowed to live in the stable-green room complex (which consisted of two dressing rooms, a large room, and an open stable) which they agreed to. The committee then elected Grossmith their secretary and treasurer, appointed Grimaldi stage manager and Read, house and wardrobe keeper. They also allowed Hughes a guinea-and-a-half for each apprentice, his ten performing horses and two hostlers.

Thus whether the Circus succeeded or not, he had sixteen guineas per week for certain. However, Grimaldi died before the season opened and Delpini was appointed in his place at £11 per week.31

The time before opening was too short to prepare any great novel entertainments, so the theatre opened on Easter Monday, March 24, 1788, with only one new divertissement (a ballet with music) by Delpini, The Dutch Tea Garden. Most of the performers were novices to the stage and the reviews for that opening night attested to that fact:

The gentleman who played Bellows, was much terrified on the drawing up of the curtain, but soon convinced the audience, that he possessed a most powerful voice... The young lady, who played Venus, though much alarmed, possesses a most harmonious voice.32

Pieces from last season, The Vicissitudes of Harlequin, The Cestus, and The Milk Maid, played most of the rest of March and April. Several new pieces were added in April and May including: a musical entertainment on April 7, The Tarantula; a burlesque entertainment on April 15, Hubbubinarians; or, Shoreditch Scavoir Vivre; a ballet on May 5, The Reluctant Recruit; and on May 12, a musical entertainment, The Deception; or, The Shade The Substance.33

Delpini's long awaited pantomime finally made its appearance on June 10, Love Triumphant; or, What You Please. It was considered "a

31Ibid., 40-43.
32Stead Collection, 88:2.
33Ibid., 88:3, 5-6.
fine exhibition; beautiful scenery and dresses, and fine music. Women
dancing on their heads is certainly a new stage idea and is admirably
represented in the pantomime."34 A new musical entertainment Lovely
Nancy; or, The Miller's Cricht opened on June 20. July opened with a
new dance, La Bottiglie du Barbier Francois; or, The Friar's Frolic,
followed on July 5 by a musical entertainment, A Match At Gibraltar.
On July 16 another musical entertainment, The Anacreontic Festival;
and finally, on July 25, a divertissement The Impressed Recruits; or,
The Siege of Belgrade.35

The benefits started off on July 16 with Mr. Page's night, a
singer; July 17, for Mr. Grove; on August 4, for Delpini; on the 23rd
for Mr. and Mrs. Juliens; August 25 for Mrs. Hughes and August 29 for
Jackson and Brother Gilbert. Three new works were brought out on the
25th: The Disappointed Lawyer; or, The Jealous Serenaders; a dance,
The Spanish Coquettes; and a pantomime, Four Quarters of the World.36

Towards the very end of the season Delpini brought out two new
burlettas; Beau Outwitted; or, Vulcan's Triumphant on September 1, and
Le Maitre de Hotelle Turned Conjurer; or, The Jealous Wife Trompre on
September 6; plus a new dance, The Cobler. But it was too late in the
season; the cost was immense and the time required in getting it up was

34The Times of London, June 10, 1788; formerly The Daily
Universal Register.

35Stead Collection, 88:10.

36Ibid., 88:12.
more than could be afforded. The season closed with Hughes' benefit on September 8 (the next day he left for the country). The theatre lost some £2500 that season because of Delpini's lateness in bringing out his last entertainments. 37

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The proprietors began looking around for a new manager of the theatre for the 1789 season. Because of Hughes' interest in the enterprise, they could not appoint a stage manager and then make an agreement with him on the division of profits. Read, the box office manager, proposed the following conditions: first, that he would pay the ground rent and taxes; and second, pay the sum of 500 guineas if it appeared at the end of the season that there indeed had been that much profit, but not otherwise. He further stipulated that if upon trial, the season was not successful, then he would owe nothing. 38 The proprietors objected to part of the second proposal and it was agreed that the books would be checked each month to determine the profits and the proprietors would be paid 100 guineas at the end of each month if the profits did exist. They were to receive nothing if the venture was not successful. Read was given the warmest assurances that they, the proprietors, would look out for his interests and back

37 Read, Royal Circus, 46-47.
38 Ibid., 49.
him when needed.\textsuperscript{39} They had given similar assurances to Dibdin with the results being about the same in both cases.

Read then set about getting the theatre and the entertainments ready for the opening of the season. He and Hughes agreed to reduce the size of the riding circle so the stage could be brought closer to the audience. Hughes agreed that his horsemanship feats could indeed be performed in a smaller circle without loss of effect. The stage was brought forward six feet; the elegant balconies, stage doors, and ornamentation were restored, having been removed the previous season by Delpini for his new productions.\textsuperscript{40}

The Royal Circus had undergone considerable restorations to bring it back to the elegant style it once had. Figure 18 shows the interior of the theatre c.1786-1790. Here can be seen the ring with horses and riders on their backs, the elegant stage boxes, columns, and candle sconces.

By decision of the committee and Read, the number of horses used by Hughes in the equestrian acts was reduced to five. When Hughes was informed of this resolution, he insisted that, since he was paid for ten horses last season, he should be allowed the same number this season. The proprietors remained fixed on only having five horses and the opening date arrived without Hughes and the proprietors having come to a definite conclusion.

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 49-50.

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 52.
Figure 18. The Royal Circus c.1786-1790. DSU Theatre Research Institute, John H. McDowell Film Archives, F.1443. Courtesy of The British Museum.
The season opened on Easter Monday, April 13, to a crowded house, but for the first time without any horsemanship. Hughes, not to be daunted, sent his horses into the ring, not to perform, but to irritate. People in the audience called for horsemanship and very soon a great deal of confusion took place in the house. The acting manager came out onto the stage, trying to quell the disturbance, but Hughes jumped onto the stage and insulted him. After some time the disturbance was quieted and the evening's entertainment proceeded. The new entertainment that opening night consisted of a ballet Le Prix De Lard; or, The Village Feast; a musical entertainment, The Knight Errant; a dance The New Hollanders; and a new pantomime, The Generous Hermit; or, Harlequin Fisherman. The scenery was designed and executed by William Capon.

The handbills for both Monday and Tuesday had announced horsemanship; but none was performed. Tuesday evening was a repetition of the events which occurred on Monday, but this time they were more serious. The evening's entertainment reached the point for the final pantomime when cries broke out in the house for horsemanship. The acting manager again tried to explain the reason for no horsemanship, but to no avail. Several audience members removed the candles from

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41 Stead Collection, 89:2.
42 Read, Royal Circus, 57-58.
43 Stead Collection, 89:2.
their sconces and threw them onto the stage. The performers, armed with bludgeons, jumped off the stage and started beating members of the audience.

About forty of them, including the underlings, scene-shifters, carpenters, etc., armed with bludgeons and other weapons, leaped from the stage; they attacked the audience, who were defenseless and unarmed—beat them with their bludgeons in a merciless manner; nay, one had the audacity to run at a Gentleman with a drawn sword; ... and the sword only went through his coat ... the scenes, the orchestra, and all the chandeliers were broke to pieces, and the seats in the inveteracy of the audience, have been mostly cut to pieces.44

The immediate consequence of these proceedings was the suspension of all performances for several days.

The committee met Thursday morning, but instead of reprimanding Hughes "they engaged his apprentices for the season; and—what had been ever unprecedented in that theatre—granted him two clear benefits."45 The theatre then reopened on Friday night, but the damage had been done: the theatre was not well attended. The acting manager addressed the audience that evening and apologized for the scene which took place on Tuesday evening.

Several new pieces were brought out in April: on the 20th, a musical entertainment with transparencies and fireworks, St. George's Day; or, Britain's Joy; and on April 29, a ballet, The Morris Dancers; or, Humours of May Day. On May 4, The What Is It, a musical piece was

44The Times, April 16, 1789.

45Read, Royal Circus, 66.
introduced: on May 12, a pantomime, I Don't Know What; and on May 18, a musical piece, The Grenadier, a burletta, Tom Thumb, and a pantomime, The Spirit of Fancy. 46

In June two musical entertainments were performed: June 1, Lingo's Wedding; June 19, Johnny Gilpin; or, A Trip To Edmonton and Back Again, interspersed with horsemanship; and a dance, The Hop Pickers; or, The Double Elopement. 47

Although new entertainments were constantly being brought out, Read went to the proprietors and explained that he felt he had to close the theatre at the end of the three-month period for profits were slim. The committee met and Read proposed paying them 500 guineas "provided so much was cleared" 48 after paying all of the expenses of the season. Although nothing was put in writing, they assured Read they would not take advantage of him if the theatre remained open and was not successful.

Read, to add further to the novelty of the theatre, in late June hired the boxer, Mendoza, who previously had performed at Covent Garden. A sparing match was introduced as part of the pantomime, The Spirit of Fancy and proved to be very popular. Signor Rossignal was hired in July to do his imitations of singing birds. His act proved popular and he remained with the theatre for several weeks. 49 Read then hired

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46 Stead Collection, 89:5-7.
48 Read, Royal Circus, 73.
49 Stead Collection, 89:10-12.
John Palmer to perform his "As You Like It!" which he had previously
done at the Lyceum in the Strand. He was hired for twelve guineas per
week to perform three times a week. Palmer then informed Read of a
new piece which he could obtain for the Royal Circus, the subject of
which was the fall of the Bastille. The piece could be purchased for
£20 plus a third of each night's profits for the author. The terms
were agreed upon and The Triumph of Liberty; or, The Destruction of
the Bastille, opened on August 5 with John Palmer playing the role of
Henry du Bois. The playbill noted the following:

Exhibiting one of the grandest and most interesting spectacles that ever engaged the feelings of mankind; including amongst a variety of other striking matters incident to the event, the whole of the plan, attack, storming, capture, and demolition of that horrid sepulchre of the people, the Bastille.—The dreadful massacre of the citizens that first passed the draw-bridge—the execution of the Governor and Major—the whole of the several military engagements, and processions on that and other occasions; together with the proceedings that gave freedom to the empire of France.51

The Bastille met with overwhelming success and the house was
crowded and many hundreds of people were turned away. The bastille
scene proved to be the most popular because of the familiarity the
british had with the French Revolution.

A flag of truce is brought forward, and met by the
Governor, who agrees to surrender up the place, ... the drawbridge is lowered and the audience see at a
distance forty men enter, whilst a large body of the
regulars who had gone over to the National Assembly,
front the prison with charged bayonets. ...  

50 Read, Royal Circus, 76.
51 The Times, August 5, 1789.
The drawbridge being pulled up as soon as forty had passed, the noise of firing, and the groans of the people so treacherously murdered within, are heard by the soldiers without, when a young volunteer, who is the hero of the piece, steps forward, and addressing himself to his brethren, calls upon them to revenge this murder of their companions, but to temper their actions with mercy.

The breach made, the soldiers form themselves and push forward with amazing velocity, their bayonets forward, firing irregular shots, and at last mastering the place, taking the Governor prisoner, etc., which, with the release of prisoners and the meeting of the lovers, concludes the piece.\textsuperscript{52}

The popularity of The Destruction of the Bastille soon induced two rival theatres to bring out similar productions. The Royal Circus production was far superior to either of those brought out by Sadler's Wells or Astley's Royal Grove. A review stated the Royal Circus production had the real merit; "it is but a mockery of the scene elsewhere."\textsuperscript{53} Another production of The Bastille was needed as the King wished to see the play, but could not attend any theatre but a Theatre Royal. Palmer arranged to have an exact reproduction of the piece, including the scenery and his Naval Review, done at Covent Garden near Christmas so the Royal Family could see it.\textsuperscript{54}

The Destruction of the Bastille made no pretense of being musical. What was even worse in the eyes of those who invoked the law, was that it pleased the public. The visit of George Coleman, however, was ominous. He paid 3s.6d. for a platform on which he and his lady

\textsuperscript{52}ibid.

\textsuperscript{53}Stead Collection, 89:22.

\textsuperscript{54}ibid., 89:25.
could stand in the back of the theatre as all the seats were sold. As licensee of the Haymarket, he resented actors speaking dialogue, this being an attack on the dramatic monopoly and "had only to inform the patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden of the Royal Circus' success for them to put an end to it." A suit was instituted against the Royal Circus which resulted in the arrest of John Palmer for speaking dialogue.

Several new pieces were produced in August and September, although the audiences still flocked to see The Bastille. On August 17, a pantomime, The Deserter of Naples; or, Royal Clemency appeared plus a musical piece, Thomas and Susan; on September 2, a tragedy, Lindamira; and on September 3, a new piece by John Palmer called The Naval Review; or, Royal Tour To Plymouth. The reviews were most favorable and it was said to be one of the most magnificent reproductions that ever appeared on any stage. The review went on as follows:

The procession is one of the grandest spectacles we ever witnessed, and so exactly conformable to the scene at Plymouth, that it gives a most just idea of all that passed there. The Royal Family in their carriages pass the stage, attended by the light horse, and accompanied by a train of other carriages, . . . The entertainment at sea, and the manoeuvering of the ships, models of all which appear in action, had a fine effect, and whoever goes to see it, will find that we have not said one syllable too much.


56Stead Collection, 89:19-22.

57Ibid., 89:24.
The Naval Review played throughout the rest of the season. The final three new pieces for the season were: on September 26, Don Juan; or, The Libertine Destroyed, a pantomime; on October 12, The Catch Club, a musical entertainment; and on November 4, a musical entertainment, Boxing The Rage. 58

Although The Bastille ran for nearly eighty performances, all was not well with the financial situation of the theatre. The piece was brought out in August, near the end of the season and although the receipts were large, the author of the work took one-third of the profits each night. Another factor governing the receipts were the number of benefits contracted to earlier in the season. Starting in July and running throughout the remainder of the season, a total of twelve benefits occurred. This, Read explained, accounted for the low profits. The proprietors met in September to go over the books and determine the extent of the profits for the season. They assumed the money was there and immediately wanted their 500 guineas. Read stated that all the tradesman’s bills were not yet in, but would grant them 300 guineas now and the rest at the close of the season. The proprietors, however, agreed to settle for 400 guineas. 59

Another dispute centered on the rental date of the theatre as the theatre had been rented by the original agreement from Michaelmas

58 Ibid., 89:26,28.
59 Read, Royal Circus, 77-85.
1788 for one year. A new agreement was drafted for the remainder of the season; that being:

that I should pay the proprietors one fourth part of the profits made from Michaelmas to Christmas, or to the end of the season, should it happen before that period. 60

The season closed on November 11 and the proprietors wanted the profit, which in this case was actually a loss, from Michaelmas to the closing date in November. They then demanded the ouster of Read from the Royal Circus.

The rather abrupt closing of the theatre on November 11 was due to the fact that Palmer, a performer at the Royal Circus, was arrested and sent to Bridewell. While he had only been delivering his lectures, the patentees of the winter theatres did not appear to view these efforts with any particular jealousy. But with the unparalleled success of The Bastille and since he spoke in character, he was arrested and sent to prison. He was soon freed, but Justice Hyde suspended proceedings of the Royal Circus until an assurance was given to the patent-managers that, in the future, the season should be limited to between Easter and Michaelmas. 61

The season had produced some fine artistic successes for Read, but he, like Dibdin, was continually in disagreement with the proprietors over financial matters. Shortly after the close of the season,

60 Ibid., 86.

the proprietors published a request for a new manager for the stage department for the theatre. Two offers were submitted and one was from Thomas Read who submitted a new proposal for the season of 1790. Instead of paying rent, the profits, if any, were to be divided at the close of the season. Read, after long discussions and waiting, was appointed the stage manager, but the proprietors refused to sign any agreement with him. The bond which he had posted the season before was still in effect. John Palmer was then hired as acting manager at twenty guineas per week.  

The season of 1790 opened on Easter Monday, April 5, with three new entertainments: a musical piece, Cymon and Ipheugne; a pantomime, The Village Maiden; or, Harlequin Miller; and a spectacle, Medea and Jason. The theatre had been repainted a light green for the opening. The horsemanship was not up to the calibre of the past seasons as a review mentioned that Hughes had engaged only four children that year. The scenery, again this season, was designed by William Capon. One other new piece appeared in April, a dance by Holland, The Rustic Revels.

Reception to the opening week was not what Read had expected and the audience was rather small. The committee met and decided to revive The Bastille on April 16 as a means of bringing more people into

62 Read, Royal Circus, 91-93.
63 The Times, April 5, 1970.
64 Stead Collection, 90:3.
the theatre. The part of Henry du Bois which had been spoken last season was set to music and performed by Barrett, an actor from the Norwich Company. The piece again met with a hugh success. Meanwhile, on May 1, on his way to the theatre, Barrett was arrested by Justice Hyde on warrants from the major theatres. He was taken to the Red Lion where proof was given that he had acted without a license in The Bastille and was then sent to Bridewell Prison. 65 The Bastille was then withdrawn from the Royal Circus.

Read and Palmer both felt the theatre should be closed immediately, but the proprietors overruled this attempt at closing. Palmer did, however, decline to appear in any piece during the second week in May until Saturday evening when The Siege of Quebec, a spectacle, was presented. On Monday morning, May 17, Palmer himself was arrested coming out of his own house on his way into town; he being under the day-rule of the King's Bench. He, like Barrett, was committed to Bridewell. 66 Both Palmer and Barrett remained in prison until the quarter sessions in July when they were both found guilty. They were subsequently released, but a change was made in the Rules of the King's Bench relating to performers. No longer could debtors be under the day-rules on the Surrey Side if they performed at public houses or places of amusement. 67 Debtors had been allowed to purchase what were

65 Read, Royal Circus, 99.
66 Ibid., 101-103.
67 John Timbs, Curiosities of London (London: J. S. Virtue & Co., 1867), 702-703. The Rules are said to have been granted in time of the plague.
called "the rules," which enabled them to have houses or lodgings outside the walls of the prison, but within a prescribed area of about three miles. These liberties were purchasable at so much per cent on the amount of the debts owed, and against good security to the governor. Day-rules could also be obtained permitting the prisoner to go out on certain conditions.68

Meanwhile, entertainments were still brought out at the Royal Circus although the attendance had slackened off. On May 24, a pantomime, Chamberwell Mill; and on June 21, a pantomime, Inkle and Yarico, and an entertainment, Effusion of Fancy were performed. Palmer junior appeared in Inkle and Yarico, this being his first appearance on any stage. The son appeared in a benefit for his father since there was no one to support Palmer's wife and nine children.69 On June 26, three new pieces were presented: a musical entertainment, The Election; a pantomime, The American Heroine; and a dance, A Characteristic Dance of Savages.70

The Destruction of the Bastille was revived in late June and played all of July and part of August. However, with Palmer's and Barrett's guilty verdict, business at the Royal Circus had dropped off appreciably due to the loss of Palmer as an actor and acting manager.


69Stead Collection, 90:12-13.

70The Times, June 26, 1790.
Under the new rules of the King's Bench, Palmer was not allowed to perform at the Royal Circus. Since the anniversary of *The Bastille* piece was drawing near, Palmer offered Read a new work by the same author and under the same terms as the year before. Read wished to consult the committee about buying the new work, but Palmer insisted it must be purchased on the spot or not at all. Since the business at the Circus had been poor, Read felt he had no choice but to purchase, sight unseen, the new work.  

71 *The French Jubilee; or, Grand Confederation at Paris*, opened August 2, but the piece proved to be a failure.

Read tried then to get in the rest of the benefits as the season was quickly drawing to a close. The only new piece brought out was a burletta on September 8, *The Cobler*. Early in September, Hughes withdrew the acts of horsemanship because he had not been paid. The actors, however, being in the same state on many nights, refused to perform unless paid in advance. The theatre abruptly closed on September 14.

The articles of agreement between Read and the proprietors had never fully been agreed on before the start of the season. Thus at the close of the season, Read was responsible for most of the bills still outstanding. He performed *Fantoccine* at the theatre in Saville Row and was able to pay off most of the incurred debts at the Royal Circus.  

72 The proprietors then instituted actions against Read saying he owed them over £300 from the previous season. The reason for this

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71 Read, *Royal Circus*, 113-115.
72 Ibid., 117-119.
action stemmed from a lawsuit which Hughes had recently won for £800 against the proprietors for the keep of horses. The proprietors were determined to make Read pay. Read's history does not either mention the outcome or the final judgment laid against him by the proprietors; nor do the newspaper accounts of the period. Read's *History of the Royal Circus* was written in the form of a letter to a friend. This book, like Dibdin's work on the Royal Circus, was written in the hope of influencing public opinion to his side and further as an indictment of the proprietors, especially Davis. The theatre, however, remained closed until April, 1793.

IV

The Royal Circus indeed fell on hard times. For the next several years very little information is available on the theatre or anyone connected with it. The proprietors gave little concern to their theatre after this time and finally they all deserted their property, chagrined by their losses. At length, Lady West put "an execution in the house for arrears due, and thus became, by due course of law, possessor of the entire concern."\(^7^3\)

It is quite difficult to trace Hughes' steps during these next few years. It appeared he continued to live in his quarters at the Royal Circus, but no definite evidence is present to substantiate this

claim. Hughes was recommended to Count Orloff, a favorite of Catherine the Great of Russia, to purchase blood stallions and breeding mares for the purpose of improving the breed of fleet horses in Russia. Decastro mentioned the date of 1793, but Hughes had returned to England by 1793, so it must have been in 1791 or 1792 that he left London.

The business was arranged at the first interview with Count Orloff, and Hughes then set about purchasing the horses. The Count further wished for Hughes to take care of the animals until they were safely lodged in the Imperial Stables of the Empress' palace at St. Petersburg. Hughes also decided to take the rest of his trained horses along with him as well as several apprentice boys. The following group left for Russia:

his horse Edward, who, amongst the rest of his tricks, used to run away with a living boy in his mouth, ... his performing mare, Betsy; and the well known Billy horse, with two little fast-trotting ponies, of the names of Crop and Spaniard. His two remaining apprentice-boys, John Jefferies, known by the name of General Jackson, so called in opposition to a monkey whom Astley once had, who did an act of horsemanship similar to a human being, — Thomas Stent. ...  

He set sail and arrived safely in Russia with the whole lot. He was introduced to Catherine the Great and warmly received by her. Hughes, always a showman, convinced her that he had brought over his performing horses at great expense and could perform equestrian exhibitions

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which had never before been seen in Russia. She directed that an
Amphitheatre be built within the walls of her Palace as well as one at
Moscow for the exhibitions. As soon as the former was completed, she
invited a grand assemblage of nobility for its opening. The venture
proved such a success that Hughes drew a very large sum from her treas-
sury for the upkeep of his troop and his own living expenses. 76

The novelty of the entertainment was so great that she ordered
a permanent residence built for Hughes and his company. There he
remained for almost a year, performing at Imperial command, provided
with most of the luxuries of that country, while he broke horses and
taught riding in his leisure hours. 77

During his absence, an execution for ground-rent was put into
the Royal Circus by Lady West and he received an announcement of it
from London. He petitioned for a leave of absence on those grounds,
which the Empress granted. The one stipulation was that he leave his
lads and horses behind. He believed that he would have no further need
of them in England so he was happy for the bargain. He struck a very
handsome bargain for his horses and thus from "those of a humble indi-
vital, they became the Imperial property of the renowned 'Catherine,
Empress of all Russia'." 78

Upon his return to London, he met with Sir John Dick who had
first introduced him to Count Orloff. Hughes was given care of highbred

76 Ibid., 141-143.
77 Ibid., 143.
78 Ibid., 144.
mules, asses, Capt of Good Hope sheep, and silver-haired goats by Sir John Dick. Hughes lodged them in the stables of the Royal Circus which was by then in a dilapidated state. It is said that Hughes turned the goats and sheep into the interior of the theatre. Decastro quite poetically explained it as follows:

where Bacchus had often presided at the festive board; where Classicus pen had so frequently heightened the mimic scene; where sweet harmony, with all its dulcet strains, had repeatedly soothed and charmed the ear; ... where teats of agility and strength had been performed, that rivailed Rome's gymnastic exercises in the proudest days of her Olympic games of yore, ... was now a Sheep Pen and a Goat's Refuge, shorn of all its former wonted and irresistibly alluring gaiety and attraction—a miserable waste or wild of once valuable property. \(^{79}\)

The Royal Circus, after refurbishing, opened the 1793 season on Easter Monday, April 1, with a great variety of horsemanship by Hughes and twenty performers, part of which were Hughes' joined by Handy, from the Riding Schools of Bristol and Newcastle. \(^{80}\) Tumbling, rope-dancing, and The Taylor Riding To Brentford were also a part of the program. On April 15, a new dance, A Trip To Newmarket, was performed; that, along with horsemanship, tight and slack-roped dancing, feats of strength, and a horse parade made up the bill of fare. The review particularly mentioned his pupils' efforts:

Mr. Smith's (The Little Devil) astonishing tricks with oranges, forks, handkerchiefs, garters, and his back and fore somerset from the horse on full gallop, and Master

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\(^{79}\) ibid., 145-146.

\(^{80}\) Stead Collection, 93:2.
Ackerhell playing on the violin while the wire was in full swing, and he on his head, seemed much to astonish the company; ... 81

On April 20, a fox chase and a stag hunt were reintroduced after a number of years absence. Included were twelve pairs of hounds, two foxes, and a stag. Two comic horsemanship exhibitions also were performed that evening: "The Humors of the Sack; or, The Clown Deceived by a Woman;" and "The Taylor's Disaster, or, His Wonderful Journey to Brentford."

On Tuesday, April 23, an event took place during the fox chase which delighted the audience:

The Fox, being closely pressed by the dogs, leaped into the pit, and concealing himself there until the dogs had passed and come to a check, he crept out, and made his escape; this he did twice with success, ... 82

The fox chase, meeting with much success, remained an active part of the program throughout the season.

The only new piece to be brought out in May occurred on May 13, when a new pantomime, The Life, Death, and Restorations of Harlequin appeared. Over one hundred feats of horsemanship were advertised for the performance that evening. The one notable item was for a Child of Promise who:

will stand on her head on the Top of Jacob's Ladder, surrounded with Fireworks; at which time the Ladder will divide in Pieces, and leave her on the other

81 Ibid., 93:3.
82 Ibid., 93:4.
side of her Head. She will also stand on the Point of a Spear. 83

Two benefits were held before the close of the season. The first on May 16 was for Master Smith, the Little Devil. His list of feats appeared in a bill for that day:

go through a variety of different performances with a skipping rope: will take a surprising leap over Eight Horses; will leap over Three Garters going once round the ring, and will take a wonderful leap through a Balloon, suspended in the air, ten feet high, and alight on the saddle. He will take a surprising leap over fifteen men's heads, and also over two horses length ways, likewise, over the Clown, with a Boy on his head, and afterwards through a Balloon of Fire. 84

The second benefit was for Mrs. Hughes on June 1, the last night of performances before the company left for tour in Manchester.

Hughes reopened on June 24 with another troop of equestrian performers that he gathered together, the principal performer being a Mr. Franklin. Horsemanship, tumbling, rope and wire-dancing, feats of strength and the fox chase remained the principal entertainments during the rest of the season. On August 7, a new dance was performed, The Croatian Merchants. In the review for the night of August 24, comment was made on the excellent horsemanship, as well as on Hughes' finances. "Go on Hughes, this is not 'the road to riches,' it is 'how to grow rich'." 85 The stag hunt was changed that night to include an exact representation of the Windsor Hunt.

83 ibid., 93:5.
84 ibid., 93:6.
85 ibid., 93:11.
On September 2 a new dance, The Merry Negroes, was performed for the first time. It was Franklin's benefit at which time he performed a variety of equestrian exercises. Hughes' benefit was on September 23. On September 30, the benefit for the Child of Promise, only nine years old, was held when the last dance of the season was brought out, The Happy Lovers and Lovely Old Age. The next benefit occurred on October 3 for Macklous, fire-worker of the house and the final benefit on October 7, for Mrs. Hughes. The season closed on Monday, October 14, 1793. The season that year produced only one pantomime, and four dances. The remainder of the events were of an equestrian nature.

In the winter of 1793, Hughes was asked by the managers of Covent Garden to procure horses, hounds, and foxes for a fox hunt in their Christmas pantomime. His apprentices being in Russia, he engaged three boys to ride and acquired the necessary animals for the theatre.

At the end of the 1793 season, James Jones, a dramatist, and George Jones, an equestrian manager, met with Hughes who acquired for them from Lady West a repairing lease for twenty-one years, at a rent of £210 per year. Hughes still had the license for the theatre in his name. For the use of that license, he was to have six double orders of admission every evening, and two benefits, one clear and the other by paying the expenses for each season. The Joneses had the building surveyed which was found to be overrun with dry rot; and they gave

86bid., 93:13-14.
orders to have the whole interior renovated. The theatre thus remained closed during the 1794 season.

The first several years were quite successful for Charles Hughes without the efforts of Charles Dibdin as manager. Delpini's career as manager was fairly uneventful. He did produce some new entertainments of merit, but the pieces brought out towards the end of the season were not successful. Read, as manager, fell into the same trouble with the proprietors as did Dibdin. The proprietors being a shrewd lot, Read did not match their capabilities in the execution of contracts; thus it led to his downfall, loss of money, and finally his ouster as manager. The Royal Circus by 1791 was in financial straits and finally closed. Hughes, always the successful promoter, did gain financially during this period in Russia. Upon his return he did manage to complete a successful season of horsemanship and equestrian acts to complete a successful season of horsemanship and equestrian acts in 1793. By that year, however, the interior of the theatre had deteriorated appreciably; the proprietors had left; and Lady West was forced to give a repairing lease to Jones to renovate the entire interior of the structure.

This middle period of the theatre's history was far from the illustrious period when the theatre first opened under Dibdin's management. Horsemanship and various equestrian feats did reach a high point under Hughes' control and direction. During this last period from

87 Humphreys, Memoirs, 148-150.
1795 to 1808, while still called the Royal Circus, Jones and Cross displayed horsemanship as well as melodramatic spectacles and grand ballets of action which soon would become the most popular fare on the British stage.
CHAPTER V

THE ROYAL CIRCUS 1795-1809

George Jones had previously owned and managed an equestrian riding stable in the Whitechapel area. James Jones was taken in as a partner, but failing to obtain a license, they were forced to close their school. James Jones went to Hughes with the prospect of leasing the Royal Circus for £300 per year. Since George Jones had been a former pupil of Hughes and had married his daughter, he agreed to the transaction.\(^1\) The Royal Circus opened under the management of the Jones' on Easter Monday, April 6, 1795, to a full audience and a newly remodeled theatre. The first night's entertainments consisted of the following: a prelude, *Veluti in Speculum; or, Britain's Resources;* a dance, *The Happy Cottagers;* a burletta, *The Recruiting Serjeant;* a pantomime, *The Prophecy; or, Mountain In Labour;* and equestrian exercises. The prices had increased slightly; Boxes 4s., Pit 2s., Gallery 1s.,\(^2\) up a shilling for the boxes. The equestrian performers, the finest London had to offer, were mostly newcomers, the best of them

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\(^1\) Stead Collection, 96:15.

\(^2\) *The Times*, April 6, 1795.
being Smith and Crossman, although Sutton was back after a long absence. Smith, adept at horsemanship, the trampoline, tumbling, and slack-roped vaulting, issued a challenge backed up by 100 guineas to anyone who could surpass him in these feats. Sutton performed The Taylor's Journey to Brentford.3 The scenery, machines, and decorations were painted and executed by Cooper as he had done in 1793.

In previous years, Hughes had operated a riding school in conjunction with the Royal Circus. This tradition was continued by George Jones during the time when rehearsals were not going on, from eight o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. A playbill further stated that "Gentlemen will not be admitted to the Riding School when Ladies are riding."4

The entertainments were then changed after playing the rest of the month of April. On May 4, three new pieces were performed: a burletta, The Blind Beggar of Betham Green; a dance, Rural Felicity; or, The Drunken Peasant; and an entertainment, The Prince of Candia; or, The Royal Nuptials. The latter piece exhibited an emblematic procession of the Prince of Wales "from Edward of Caernarvon to the present era; to conclude with a superb allegorical transparency, representing the Portraits of their Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales."5

3Stead Collection, 95:2.
4Ibid., 95:1.
5Ibid., 95:2.
Humours of the Camp; or, The Bumpkin's Trick'd, a new comic piece, was introduced on May 25. On May 28, an equestrian pasticcio (songs and dances with equestrian feats to a musical accompaniment) was brought out, The Birthday Fete; or, All Alive at Windsor. This entertainment was in two parts: Part I, a representation of the Fair with songs and dances; and Part II, a view of Frogmore Lodge with a race course. Ponies and donkeys were the equestrian part of the racing bill.

A playbill noted "that platforms and ramps were built from the ring to the stage so that the animals could run around the ring, up and down the ramps and onto the stage." Figure 19, dated 1795, illustrates a show called The Birthday Fete. This figure shows the newly remodeled interior of the theatre with its ramps from the ring to the stage. It also shows the two newly built stage boxes, candle sconces on the gallery walls and the large chandelier of candles over the ring. No dimensions can be located as to the size of the stage or the ring.

On June 17, a new dance, The Merry Soldiers, was added to the bill. On June 19, the first benefit of the season was held for the Free Masons School. On July 1, the entertainments were changed to include: a burletta, The Rings End; or, Make Hay While the Sun Shines; a dance, The Irish Reapers; a pantomime, The Magic Feast; or, Dishes of All Sorts. The Times review of July 1 was devoted to a discussion of the pantomime.

6ibid., 95:2-3.
7ibid., 95:4.
THE ROYAL CIRCUS.

Published by Harrison D.C. Oct, 1795.
The reviewer recalled that the pantomime as presented, of late, by the other London theatres, had included dialogue; but Jones had presented *The Magic Feast* in the original and purer style of John Rich, "abounding with tricks, beautiful scenery, and the most exquisite machines." This bill, along with *The Birthday Fete*, played throughout July and early into August.

A new pantomime was performed on August 10, *Valour and Virtue*; or, *Oswald and Egbertha*, which proved to be very popular. Pony races caught the public's fancy and proved to be so pleasing to them that they were continued almost every night for the remainder of the season. The Bologna family, a group who performed feats of strength and equilibrium, opened on August 10. This act performed under the name of "The Herculean Chinoises."9

On September 24, a new burletta was performed, *The Jew and the Gentile*; or, *No Bottle No Bird*. On October 12, three new pieces were performed: a musical entertainment, *He Would Be A Player*; a dance, *The Shepherd's Homage to Man*; and a spectacle, *Cinderella*; or, *The Little Glass Slipper*.10 There were a total of nine benefits during September and October and the season closed on October 16.

The Jones' first year at the Royal Circus was a very exciting one, as well as being well attended. The improvements they made were of

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a substantial nature to the theatre. Five new dances, four burlettas, three new pantomimes as well as a number of other entertainments helped to make it a most successful season. The equestrian feats were of a far superior nature than any seen before in that theatre.

The season of 1796 opened on Easter Monday, March 28, with a new burletta, *The Village Doctor; or, Killing No Cure*, and a new dance, *Love and Festivity*. Blanchard, late of the Covent Garden theatre, was a principal actor when the new season commenced.\(^{11}\) Horsemanship with the horse, Grand Turk, as well as tumbling and vaulting were a regular part of the performances. Another new dance was added April 6, *The Spring Meeting*. On April 11, *The Capture of the Cape of Good Hope*; and on April 12, *The Work For Cooper* were danced. Pony races, which had played for over sixty nights the previous season, successfully reappeared again this season.\(^{12}\) These entertainments continued to play until the middle of May when the program was changed.

On May 17, Holland composed a new ballet, *Dulce Domum; or, Age of Infancy*. A new musical extravaganza, *Marvellous*, was also introduced. On May 23, a new pantomime was added which had been in rehearsal several weeks, *Harlequin Mariner*. In a review dated May 25, the exciting technical achievements of the pantomime were praised:

*The Shipwreck was finely executed, and the men tossed up and down amidst the dashing waves; ... sometimes the heads and

\(^{11}\) *The Times*, March 28, 1796.

\(^{12}\) Stead Collection, 96:1-2.
sometimes the whole bodies were seen, and at other times they sunk out of sight. The enchantress bursting from an old tree, is a most excellent piece of mechanism; the Welshmen mounted on their goats and riding across the stage, ... the whole to conclude with a storm and shipwreck, a nightmare, a transformation and an Indian sacrifice.  

During the summer months only a few new pieces appeared and only two new performers were hired. On July 5, a spectacle, The Robbers, was performed; Rees was hired to do imitations of other actors; Ducrow was hired to do bird imitations; and on August 1, a dance, Highland Festival and a ballet, The Way To Get Married, were danced. On August 23, a burletta, Matrimony; or, What We All Must Come To was acted as well as the ballet, The Triumph of Agriculture. On September 7, several changes were made to the bill: a ballet, The Nosegay; and a pantomime, Olympian Revels were added. These entertainments played during the month of September.

The month of October was a busy month with seven new pieces brought out—two burlettas, two ballets, one dance, one spectacle, and a musical entertainment. Furthermore, there was a total of thirteen benefits. Charles Hughes had taken his first benefit on July 25 and the second was given to Mrs. Hughes on October 20. Mr. and Mrs. Jones each took their benefits, the former on October 3, and the latter on

\[13\text{Ibid., 96:5.}\]

\[14\text{Ibid., 96:7.}\]

\[15\text{The Times, August 24; September 7, 1796.}\]
October 27. The remaining benefits were for the principal performers. Horsemanship, pony races, vaulting, t램 polyline, and other feats made this month a very popular one indeed. The season closed on October 31, 1796.

Misfortune marred the apparently successful month of October for Hughes. Early in October, a magistrate, Peter Broadley, Esquire, called on Hughes and told him that if he did not give up his license to the Royal Circus he would not be issued any future licenses. He explained to Hughes that James Jones owed his friend a sum of money. Hughes, outraged at this, felt that he should not be the one to suffer because of Jones' debt. Hughes stated that Jones was totally unacquainted with the business of horses and horsemanship; and finally he pleaded that if he lost his license he would have no other livelihood. His appeal failed, and subsequently when Hughes applied for a new license, he was refused. To alleviate the situation, George Jones asked that his name be included on the license since he managed the horse department and lived on the premises with his family. James Jones objected and pointed out that since the repairing lease was in his name the license should be in his name also, thus the license was duly granted. 16 Although the season had been a great financial success, for Hughes it was a personal disaster as he, the last of the original founders, was ousted.

16 Stead Collection, 96:15.
John C. Cross, a dramatist, who was both an actor and manager at Covent Garden Theatre, was hired as acting manager of the Royal Circus for the season of 1797. On the death of his first wife, who also had been of the stage, he married Miss Jones, daughter of the then proprietor of the theatre, James Jones. 17 Through this marriage, he was to become a part-proprietor in the concern.

The season opened on Easter Monday, April 17, with the following entertainments: a musical spectacle of the Irish invasion, Neither Frighten'd Nor Hurt; or, A Cure For Invasion, in the course of which was represented the French Fleet in a fog; Lunardi presented L'Espion du Commandant; Rees from the Covent Garden Theatre returned to do his imitations of famous London performers; a pantomime was enacted, Olympian Revels; or, Harlequin Momus; and equestrian exercises were exhibited between the various pieces. The scenery was painted by Greenwood. Two new dances were introduced on April 25, Transformation and The Caledonian Recruit. 18 Tumbling and slack-rope dancing were again made part of the entertainments.

On May 15, a new spectacle was introduced, Julia of Louvain, which was so well received that it played through July, and a new dance, The Sailor's Welcome, accompanied on the bells by Lawrence. 19 On June 12, ..........................


18 Stead Collection, 97:1-2.

19 Ibid., 97:2.
a new pantomime was introduced, *Nioble; or, Harlequin's Ordeal*. Early in June the pony races were brought back since they had been so successful the year before. On June 27, for the benefit of John Cross, a new burletta was performed for the first time, *In Love, In Debt, And In Liquor; or, Our Way in Wales*. On July 31, for the benefit of Hughes, a new ballet by Holland was danced, *A Pastoral Divertissement*. 20

On August 2, *The Renegadoes*, a spectacle, was exhibited. On September 18, *Nymph of the Fountain*, a pantomime, was performed in which Harlequin was an Arab. 21 A number of new pieces were presented during this time: On October 5, a ballet, *The Butterfly* and a pantomime, *The Castles of Athlyne and Dunbayne*; on October 9, a musical entertainment, *The Breach of Promise* and a comic bagatelle, *An Empty House and No Actors*; on October 15, a burletta, *Love In The Country*; on October 30, a spectacle, *The Dutch Defeated; or, Britannia Rules The Waves*, and an olio, *The Drunken Coblars*; and finally on November 1, a ballet, *The Custom of Zurich*. 22 There was a total of eleven benefits during the month of October and four in November. The season closed on November 4, 1797.

Charles Hughes died on December 7, 1797, at the age of 50, and his mortal remains were disposed of in St. George's Churchyard,

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20*ibid.*, 97:4.

21*The Times*, August 2; September 18, 1797.

22Stead Collection, 95:5-7.
The season of 1797 was the first that Charles Hughes did not have the license issued in his name. His ouster and death brought about a change in the management of the Royal Circus. More spectacular pieces were now produced by John Cross using the typically British naval character of the Jolly Jack Tar.

Cross was admitted as a partner into the theatre this season with a fourth share, George Jones having retired. Upon his elevation to the proprietorship, Cross resigned his engagement at Covent Garden and devoted himself entirely to the interests of the Royal Circus. Serious pantomime with "blood and thunder," was customarily done at the Royal Circus before the term melodrama had become popular on the British stage.

The season opened on Easter Monday, April 9, 1798, with Davis as manager of the horse department, Greenwood doing the scenery, and Cross as acting manager. The theatre had undergone a complete repair during the recess from last season. A ballet and a spectacle were the first new pieces brought out; Love and Jealousy; or, The Lawyer's Sacked and the spectacle of Black Beard; or, The Captive Princess. Black Beard became so popular that it played intermittently through September.

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24 Edward Brayley, Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Theatres of London (London: J. Taylor, 1826), 73.

25 The Times, April 8, 1798.
Madame De La Croix from Covent Garden and Mrs. Wybrow made their appearances in this work.

In his chapter on "Blood-and-thunder dumbshow on the Surrey-side," M. Willson Disher, described the "blood and thunder" pantomimes done at the Royal Circus:

We'll enter the center door beneath the trellis, go up a small flight of stairs, and look upon a half-darkened theatre, with a large sawdust-covered ring in its centre. Pause; the place grows lighter, a thick smoke ascends from a cut in the centre of a green baize curtain; a row of oil lamps arises,... this is followed by a drama of serious pantomimic character, aided, where the story grew dark, by written scrolls held up to the audience. For instance, 'I am thy father,' 'Behold thy mother,' 'Your sister is dumb,' 'Your brother is an idiot,' with a spirited sprinkling of attempted murder, broadsword fighting, and music, and a wind up of many persons on the stage, and a brilliant tableau, where the oppressed were relieved from oppression, and the oppressor dealt with by true theatrical justice.  

Nautical melodrama itself was essentially entertainment for the industrial working class; it grew up with them and died away when they turned to other means of entertainment. Melodramas were shows in which the characters were clearly defined by type, such as hero, heroine, or villain. For a work to classify as being nautical, it was closely associated with the life of the sea; i.e., the Jolly Tar. At the Royal Circus, ships were constructed that could roll or could be pulled across the stage; a full sized ship was constructed for The Northern Fleet which moved in this manner. The crude spectacles that Cross entitled "dumbshows" appeared in the working class areas of London.

Oftentimes, these shows made use of a scroll held up by an actor to tell the audience the outcome or feeling of a particular situation and were used at a point of high emotional impact.

The emphasis of melodrama was on rapid action and abrupt transition from pathos, to farce, to violence, and back again. Pictorial spectacles required a particular style of production that could facilitate quick scene changes and sensational effects. The technical requirements of this style were great for they made great demands on the stage carpenter, scene painter, machinist, and lighting man. Conventional wings, flats, and drops of the eighteenth century and the woods, dungeons, castles, and mountains painted on them, adequately symbolized the settings for melodrama. Stage fire and controlled explosions enabled forests and ships and castles to burn, and powder magazines to blow up with perfect safety and tremendous excitement.\(^{27}\)

However, as it was against the law to have words spoken in a minor theatre, Cross's problem was to adapt melodramas which utilized dialogue into another form which could be produced without words. Cross was equal to the task. When gestures were inadequate to express a turn of the plot, one character would hand to another a scroll bearing a statement such as "Louisa is secretly united to Palador," or (this in bloodstained letters) "I swear to be thine."\(^{28}\)


Black Beard which opened in April and played for over a hundred nights, was presented in rivalry to Blue Beard performed at Drury Lane. While the jolly pirate's crew is cannonading a vessel bearing Mogul colors, Nancy, disguised as a sailor, expounds the plot in song. Nancy's appearance in an age devoted to damsels in distress is a very pleasant surprise:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In jacket blue, and trousers neat,} \\
\text{Snow-white that play'd around my knee,} \\
\text{I join's the ship in Willy's fleet,} \\
\text{Most dear to Anne, and cross'd the Sea.} \\
\text{A storm came in—rude tempests blew—} \\
\text{A Pirate's flag appal'd each heart!} \\
\text{We struck—they forc'd him join their crew,} \\
\text{I still from Willy scorned to part.}
\end{align*}
\]

Ismene, a Mogul Princess, is captured, and is going to throw herself into the sea, when a negro enters bearing one of the following scrolls. Blackbeard reads it and quails, but after the audience cheers it, he displays the other.

| THE ENEMY IS BRITISH AND WILL DIE OR CONQUER | SHOULD THE ENEMY PROVE VICTORIOUS BLOW UP THE SHIP |

Scene XIII, and last, shows Blackbeard's ship and the British ship grappling together in close action, which gives such satisfaction to the audience "that the piece was provided with dialogue and became part of nineteenth-century theatrical stock."  

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The good-hearted, rough-hewn British tar had long been a favorite on the British stage. Both Charles and Thomas Dibdin had written songs and entertainments about him.

The British Tar is heroically brave, will gladly die for his country, is contemptuous of the enemy and proud of his Captain and his ship, which he is glad to leave only to see once again his Sal or Susie or Mary. The Tar of melodrama has no pretense to social refinement and is all homespun honesty and bluffness. A gay fellow except when concerned for his wife or sweetheart or old mother, he enjoys merry times with his messmates and in an instant will break into a ballad, a jolly hornpipe, or a tale of battle.31

On May 1, a new pantomime, Restoration of Harlequin, and a ballet, The Wheat Shaft, were performed. Twenty-five acts of horsemanship and fireworks were also done that evening. Crossman's benefit was May 10, at which time he did a variety of equestrian exercises and a new dance was done, La Provencial. On May 15, a new musical entertainment, The Escape; or, Stranger At Home was performed.32 On June 12, a dance, The Village Revels and a new pantomime, Harlequin Highlander appeared. On July 24, a ballet, The Wedding Day; on July 30, a spectacle, New South Wales; or, Love in Botany Bay were brought out.33 Black Beard was now replaced by New South Wales for the remainder of the season. Rees doing his imitations was again hired for the remainder of the season. New South Wales and Harlequin Highlander played continually until the second week in September.

31 Booth, English Melodrama, 101.
32 Stead Collection, 98:2-3.
33 Ibid., 98:5-6.
For the benefit of Cross, on September 10 were introduced: a 
divertissement, La Fete Champetre; a dance, Transformation; and a new 
spectacle, The Knights of Malta. From a review of the technical aspects 
of The Knights of Malta, it was very well done:

The scenery, by Greenwood, is beautifully picturesque, and 
in great variety; the moonlight scene is beyond anything 
ever witnessed, and produces a wonderful effect, contrasted 
with the fire from Mount Etna, which is awfully grand, with 
the ebullitions of the lava in motion, and the crater of 
the volcano, which are ingeniously and admirably executed. 34

A new dance, Jenny's Return, was performed on October 1; on 
October 8, three new pieces were presented: a ballet, Old Heads on 
Young Shoulders; a musical drama, The Two Lawyers; and a musical pas-
ticco, Nelson, A Match For Bonaparte. On October 18, a ballet, The 
Shipwreck was danced; on October 22, a burletta, The Breach of Promise; 
and a pantomime, Alexandra; or, Harlequin In Egypt, were done: on 
October 30, a pantomime, Love In South Wales and a bagatelle, The 
Country Crier's Disaster were performed; and on November 5, a ballet 
was danced, Duncan and Peggy.

The benefits for the season were numerous, being some twenty in 
number. Jones was known for his generosity which the magistrates noted 
when the license was given in his name. On April 23, a benefit was 
given for Davis, acting master from Astley's on the loss of the troop 
and horses in a shipwreck; on July 24 and September 18, for George Jones, 
former riding master; on October 18, for Mrs. Hughes, late widow of

34Ibid., 98:10.
Charles Hughes; and on September 27, for the widow and three orphan children of Jenkinson, the clown who performed on horseback. The rest of the benefits were for the actors, actresses, and other persons employed at the theatre. The season closed on November 15 and the company, because of its popularity in London, left for a tour in Scotland. The grand spectacles and nautical dramas during the season were characterized as "blood and thunder" type pieces which, in a few years, were labeled as melodramas by the major theatres. They were extremely popular as attested by the reviews and drew great crowds into the Royal Circus. Cross had indeed proved to be a very capable acting manager and inventor of the "dumb show" nautical drama.

During the winter and early spring, the interior of the theatre was rebuilt from Cabanel's designs. The stage and ceilings were raised and the lobbies were made more spacious.\textsuperscript{36} The season opened on Easter Monday, March 25, 1799, to a full house. A new oriental spectacle, Almoran and Hamet; or, The Fair Caussassion, was first produced along with Harlequin Highlander from last season and equestrian exercises.\textsuperscript{37} The scenery again this season was designed and painted by Greenwood.

May 7 was the benefit for Cabanel; Ireland, the Flying Phenomenon, was hired to do equestrian and gymnastic tricks; and a new dance


\textsuperscript{37}The \textit{Times}, March 25, 1799.
was performed that evening, *The Fountain of Love*. On May 16, a new
pantomime, *The Seasons; or, Harlequin In All Weather*, was introduced
for the benefit of Cross. Three philanthropic benefits, because of
Jones’ generosity, were given in June: on June 6, for the Philological
Society; on June 13, for the Surrey Dispensary; and on June 25, for the
Humane Society. Ireland took a benefit on June 11 and Laurent, the
clown, took his on June 18.

On July 15, for the benefit of Jones, the entertainments were
changed because the same bill had played since the opening of the season.
That evening the following were performed: a new dance, *Killarney Court-
ship*; and a new spectacle, *Cora; or, The Virgin of the Sun*. This latter
piece was taken from Marmontel’s *Incas of Peru* and Kotzebue’s *Virgin of
the Sun*. Richard Sheridan had recently staged *Pizarro* at Drury Lane,
also taken from Kotzebue. Thus the popularity of the "Inca" idea
had already been established. The piece was in two parts:

Part I—A chain of mountains. The Wall appertaining to the
garden of the Sun, with the temple at a distance. A romantic
View. Interior of the Temple of the Sun, in which is
represented the Festival of Consecration, initiating Cora
as a Bride of the Sun. The splendid Tent of Huascar, King
of Cusco. Golden Garden of The Sun. Distant view of the
Temple, which is reduced to Ruins by a tremendous Volcano.
Part II—The entrance to Rolla’s Cave, with a distant View
of the repaired Temple of the Sun. A Romantic View. The
Chamber of the stars. Ataliba’s Grand Hall of Audience,
and the Valley of Sacrifice.

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38 Stead Collection, 99:6-7.
39 *ibid.*, 99:8.
40 *ibid.*, 99:9.
41 *ibid.*
Mrs. Wybrow acted the part of Cora and later did a Broad-sword-horn-pipe dance in the pantomime. Cora was so popular that it played until September 24, when a new spectacle was brought out.

On August 15, a new pantomime was introduced, Harlequin in Egypt; or, The Siege of Jean d'Acre. Within the piece was a representation of the 'Siege of Jean d'Acre, with a view of the British Squadron in the Harbour and the destruction of the battle camp of Napoleon.' The evening ended with a grand illumination and a fireworks display in honour of the Duke of York.

For the benefit of Cross on September 24, two new pieces were brought out; a dance, Love in Our Country and a new spectacle, Halloween; or, The Castle of Athlin and Dunbayne. The piece was founded on Robert Burns' poem and the fable by Mrs. Radcliff's Highland Story. On September 25, a new pantomime was introduced for the benefit of Laurent, Harlequin's Restoration; or, Charity Merits Its Own Reward.

Other benefits held during the last part of the season were:
September 23, Master Parker; September 26, Mr. Helm; September 27, Mrs. Hughes; October 1, George Jones; October 2, Mr. and Mrs. Adams, while he performed imitations and she danced; October 11, Miss Fisher, an equestrian performer; October 22, Lawrence; and November 1, Ireland, an equestrian performer.

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42 The Times, August 15, 1799.
43 ibid., September 24, 25, 1799.
During the 1799 season, three spectacles, Almoran and Hamet, Cora, and Halloween, were the most popular. The entertainments were lavish in design and in execution, and they drew full houses most of the season. The Royal Circus was again financially back on its feet under the capable management team of Jones and Cross. The grand spectacle was not firmly established at the Royal Circus and the theatre's fame rested on these productions.

Prior to the opening of the new season, Davis, the riding master, advertised in February that the riding school would be open for instructions in horsemanship. The theatre season opened on Easter Monday, April 14, 1800, with three new entertainments: a ballet composed by Byrne, late of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, called The Transformation; a spectacle, The Mine; or, The Black Forest of Istria by Cross; and a pantomime, Harlequin's Banquet; or, The Magic Feast.\footnote{Stead Collection, 00:1.} The theatre had been altered and further embellished for the opening. Greenwood again this season designed and built the scenery. This opening bill of fare played for the first month the Circus was open.

On May 6, for the benefit of George Jones, Astley, Jr. loaned Crossman, his equestrian performer, to appear at the Royal Circus. On May 12, a new ballet by Byrne was danced, Jockey and Jenny. Three benefits occurred in May: On May 15, for the Philological Society; on May 26, for the Humane Society; and on May 30, for the Freemasons School for Female Orphans. On May 19, a new burletta was first performed,
Maids and Bachelors. Two new ballets were danced on May 27, The Nuptials and Queteria The Fair.45

June 23 opened with equestrian and trampoline exercises under the direction of Davis. A new pantomime was exhibited, The Magic Flute; or, Harlequin Champion. As part of the pantomime, there was a grand tournament in which the horse "Turk" reared and seized a streaming banner, which it tore down from the rampart walls; plus a procession of Equestrian Knights before the Emperor Charlemagne.46 It was founded on Sotheby's translation of Wieland's Oberon. Greenwood's scenery for this magnificent production was reputed to have cost 2,000 pounds. In order to accommodate the scenery, machines, and horses, the stage was brought out into the house and lengthened by twenty feet.47

On August 1, a new ballet was given, The Blue Bell of Scotland and on August 4, a new naval spectacle, Sir Francis Drake and Iron Arm.48 There were ten scene changes showing the "bandit's cave by a 'wild bridge over a waterfall,' a view of Streets, the quay, harbour and fortifications in Carthagena, a ruined monastery, and finally an engagement between the Spanish and English Fleets."49 This spectacle had a burning castle as well as a naval combat.

45 Ibid., 00:5-6.
46 Ibid., 00:7-8.
48 The Times, August 4, 1800.
49 Disher, Blood and Thunder, 60.
Boats are seen rowing from ship to ship—Sir Francis giving orders, from his quarter deck, through his speaking trumpet—Iron Arm, on board of one of the boats, attacks Alphonso on board another—boards him—overburthened with numbers it sinks, and Alphonso and Iron Arm swim for their lives, the former to another boat, the latter till he reaches the head of a large ship near the front of the stage—attempts to board it, commanding his men to follow him—the Castle takes fire, and the whole town of Carthage appears in ruins.50

On September 8, for the benefit of Byrne, a new spectacle was brought out which featured a real fox hunt called, Is it A Wedding; or, Horns and Hounds. The incidents were relative to the Marriage of Commodore Trunium, in the first volume of Smollett's Peregrine Pickle.

The following is a brief outline of the events:

In the course of the Chase, the Sport will be increased by the Appearance of old Hawser on his Hunter, who is compelled, against his inclination, to abandon his Wedding Cruise and, outstripping all Competitors in the Chase, is hurried over Hedge, Ditch, and Stile.51

On September 22, a new musical drama, The Bird of Paradise, was performed for the benefit of Cross. For the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Adams, on September 24, were danced, Lubin of the Vale and Strathspey and Reel. On September 29, for the benefit of Jones, a new divesturement, The Harmonious Anthology, was presented. For the benefit on October 6 for Sanderson, composer and leader of the band, two new pieces were introduced; a musical drama, The Baker and Bailiff; or, Honesty's The Best Policy, and a burletta, The False Friend. On October 11, a new dance

50 The Times, September 8, 1800.
51 Stead Collection, 00:11.
was performed for the benefit of Masters, *The Drunken Swiss*, and on
October 23, another dance was done, *The Highland Camp*. 52

The new naval spectacles brought out this season as described
by the reviews were overwhelmingly successful. Yet they were not the
only successful productions of Cross, for he produced burlettas, panto-
mimes, and dances. Over twenty benefit performances had also been given
that season.

The theatre opened on Easter Monday, April 6, 1801, and several
very judicious improvements had been made both on the stage and in the
auditorium. The boxes were painted pink enriched with white, and their
appearance was bright and agreeable. The stage had been lengthened and
heightened. 53 The opening performance was: a new grand ballet, *Rinaldo
Rinaldini*; equestrian exercises; Ireland, the Flying Phenomenon; and *The
Magic Flute* (its 62nd performance). 54 The story of the ballet was based
on fact and told in the *Lady's Monthly Museum*:

This celebrated outlaw flourished in the former part of the
sixteenth century... All Italy speaks of him, the
Appenine mountains and the Sicilian vales resound with the
name of Rinaldini;... From the summit of the Alps to the
Appenines, men talk of his achievements. ... the shepherds
of the Sicilian vales alternately entertain each other with
stories of him; and the simple peasant, though exhausted by
the heat and labour of the day, seems reanimated the moment
he begins to talk of Rinaldini, ... He is the hero of the
soldier's talk in the guard room; and of seafaring men.

52 Ibid., 00:12.

53 Monthly Mirror, Vol. 11, April, 1801, 273.

54 Ibid.
Hills and valleys, spinning rooms and cottages, alike, resound with ballads of Rinaldini.\textsuperscript{55}

Cross had also used scrolls in this production in place of dialogue.

The following is a description of the scene:

Practicable mountains, from which a stupendous waterfell precipitates itself which, increasing, becomes a river, over which is a picturesque, arched, practicable Bridge. On one side of the stage is Rinaldini's tent, his dog on guard, under the banner 'Hands and Hearts United'; on the other, straggling Tents and Baggage Wagons.\textsuperscript{56}

This piece played continuously until June 20.

On April 20, a new naval spectacle was introduced, \textit{The Northern Fleet}; or, \textit{British Intrepidity Triumphant}, the story of Lord Nelson's victory over the Danes. One review stated that the ship (the invention and execution of Branscomb) appeared real and life-size with its full compliment of brave officers and seamen. "The ship passes proudly through the Sound, silences the batteries of Cronenburg, overcomes every impediment, and destroys the supposed invincible Danish Navy."\textsuperscript{57}

The theatre brought out new entertainments based on British victories as soon as they occurred. This latest pantomime, appearing on May 20, telling of British victories in Egypt, was \textit{Harlequin Mamaluke; or, The British In Egypt}, which used the following scenes: "subduing the Invincible Legion, Taking the Invincible Standard, and the presenting it to the conquering but expiring hero, Sir Ralph Abercromby."\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55}The \textit{Lady's Monthly Magazine}, May 1801, 405-406.

\textsuperscript{56}Disher, \textit{Nineteenth Century}, 831-832

\textsuperscript{57}Stead Collection, 01:2.

\textsuperscript{58}ibid., 01:14.
Another reviewer was astonished when Sir Ralph's horse was shot from under him. He said, "nothing can possibly be more amazing than to behold that animal brought to such a perfection of obedience." This was a good example of the kind of work that went into the training of horses for the spectacles.

A grand new ballet of action was presented on June 20, *The Fire King; or, Albert and Rosalie*. The ballet was in two parts in which was introduced:

a real splendid Barge and War Galley, Soldan Saladin's Imperial Pavillion, Palace of the Fire King, View of the Christian Church before Jerusalem. The whole to conclude with a splendid representation of the Magical Mirror of Munificence in rewarding feminine virtue and unsubdued constancy. The marches, dances, will be accompanied by an additional and extensive military band.60

On July 18, for the benefit of the Royal Humane Society, Cross presented a new grand ballet of action, *Humanity's Triumph*. On August 10 *The Eclipse; or, Harlequin in China* was presented, in which was introduced the "costuming, manners, amusements, sports, dances, and military and civil employments of the Chinese Empire."61 The solar eclipse preceded the action which found Titchee engaged to Tanga. Tichou, his rival, tried to prevent the marriage. A Chinese priestess described Tichou's state of mind and led him, transformed as Harlequin, through the following scenes:

59Ibid., 01:15.
60*The Times*, June 20, 1801.
61Stead Collection, 01:7.
exterior of the cave of Cameons; distant view of Nankin; interior of a Chinese pagoda, military signal post; Turon Bay; transformation to a tea garden; western gate of Pekin; palace of Indolence; mart of Industry; Chinese quay; Cape of Good Hope; East India House; England's Herring Pond; Bologne Bay with the destruction of the gun boats by the gallant Nelson, mausoleum at Maaco, and the Chinese pavilion of Cheerfulness. 62

On September 16, for the benefit of Cross, a grand spectacle was presented, King Caesar; or, The Negro Slaves. The scenes consisted of the following:

accurate view of Cape Francois, Port au Prince, Exterior and Interior of La Rapinier's mysterious hiding place. Interior and exterior of the Negro's Caras. In one of which views, will be introduced the African Ceremony of Mumbo Jumbo, being the Negro method of settling family disputes, this is succeeded by the tremendous effects of an earthquake, and, on its termination, by a beautiful romantic View illuminated by the Rising Sun, combining the most prominent and interesting scenery in the island of St. Domingo. 63

The True Lover's Knot for the benefit of Adams, Treasurer, and the three Miss Adams' was danced on September 30; on October 14, a new Scotch ballet, Donald and Peggy for the benefit of Mr. Montgomery, the clown; and on October 26, for the benefit of Jones, a spectacle, Triumph of Peace, and a burletta, May Morning, in which was introduced a grand equestrian pageant. The final new piece for the season appeared on November 3, a divertissement, Fancy Festival; or, The Mirror of Mirth. 64 The final benefit for the season, there being a total of seventeen, was on November 11, for Mrs. Helme and Mr. Meyer.

62 Lady's Monthly Museum, September, 1801, 203-204.
63 Ibid., October, 1801, 274-275.
64 Stead Collection, 01:10, 20, 21.
The naval spectacles and grand ballets of action based on British victories during this season were enormously popular. The Royal Circus had the reputation of being one of the most popular theatres in London, rivalling even the major houses in the quality of technical production as exemplified by spectacles complete with earthquakes, fires, and battle scenes done to a high degree of perfection and technical skill. Cross invented these dumb show spectacles and developed them into a style that was not frequently copied at other theatres.

The next season opened on Easter Monday, April 19, 1802, at which time the house had undergone "every possible improvement in elegant and splendid decorations, particularly the addition of a new and commodious Fruit Saloon." Master Saunders returned to perform his equestrian exercises, and Mrs. Wybrow also returned from Covent Garden to play Colombine in the first pantomime. The first night's entertainments included Rinaldo Rinaldini from last season and a new pantomime, The Enchanted Harp, "the whole to conclude with a splendid representation of the cloud-capped Columns of the Hall of the Arch Druid Caedmuthack." The Enchanted Harp played until the end of June.

The first benefit of the season was held on May 11, for George Jones. On May 17, a new ballet was performed, The Fatal Prediction; or

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65 ibid., 02:1.

66 ibid.
Midnight Assassin. Pony races were introduced about the middle of June and the benefit for Mrs. Wybrow was held on June 17. On June 28, a new pantomime was introduced, The Golden Farmer; or, Harlequin Ploughboy; Colombine was played by Mrs. Wybrow and Harlequin by Byrne. On July 19 the pony races were discontinued so that a new intermezzo, The Aerial Candidates, in which "Ranleigh was represented as well as the passage of a balloon over London and Westminster." 67

On Wednesday, August 11, a new spectacle, Gonsalvo De Cordova; or, The Conquest of Granada, made its first appearance. The scenes of action in which Flora entered on a camel were as follows:

Encampment of the Wandering Gegrís—Royal Tent of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile—Interior of the Alhambra—Grotto and Pavilion of the General—Exterior Marine view, originally calm, but progressively tempestuous, in which is portrayed the heroic Boarding of a real Moorish Xebec, which is afterwards struck by a thunderbolt and wrecked—The Chamber of the Silver Fountain—Valley of Palms—Field of Combat—Exterior of the City of Granada—Grand Square of Execution—Exterior and interior of an underground Prison. The whole to conclude with the Explosion of the Moated Castle of the Four Towers, and the total Conquest of the Kingdom of Granada. 68

The reviews of this production stressed the splendid scenery, especially the last scene with the explosion of the castle; the splendid music by Reeve; and the finely contrasted characters of Zorinda and Almanzor.

On September 6, a new ballet opened, Zamor and Zamora; a Peruvian Boy, composed by Byrne and designed by Greenwood. The action commences with a landing party of Spaniards, the Captain of whom, after

67 Ibid., 02:2-3.
68 The Times, August 11, 1802.
treacherously starting a conflict in which he is finally defeated, ravishes Zamor's young and beautiful bride. He carries her on board his ship. Just as he is about to kill her, the infant child of Zamor and Zamora, having sailed on a skiff to the Spanish vessel, shoots him with an arrow and restores his parents to love and liberty. The reviewer stated that whatever was "improbable in the story was abundantly compensated by the feeling it excited, and the throbbing bosoms, the enraptured exclamations, and the frequent applause from the fair part of the audience."69

On September 20, for the benefit of John Cross, a new divertissement, The Jubilee of 1802; or, Preston Guild, was introduced and it contained a grand procession from the Church to the Town Hall. On September 27, Halloween was brought back for the benefit of Jones; Byrne's benefit was on October 4; and George Jones' benefit was on October 5.70 For the benefit of Adams and the Misses Adams, on October 6, was performed a revival of the spectacle, Black Beard, and a new dance, Rural Sports. The other benefits held that month were: October 13, for Burrows; October 15, for Flexmore; and October 29, for Salloway, box-keeper, and McKean. Two final benefits for the equestrian performers were held in November: on November 11, for Masters and on November 18, the closing night of the season, for Master Perry.71

69 Monthly Museum, Vol. 14, September, 1802, 204.
70 Stead Collection, 02:4-5.
71 Ibid., 02:6.
Cross's entertainments this season were grand indeed. The pantomimes were quite spectacular and the grand naval spectacle of Gonsalva De Cordova was an unparalleled success. Cross had perfected this genre of entertainment to a great degree, and the theatre was enormously popular.

Once again, the Royal Circus made some improvements from last season. In addition to the company from the previous year, additional performers were hired: Smith from Bath, whose performances on the pipes had been "greatly celebrated;" Backenger, "the famous equestrian;" Mrs. Parker, late of Covent Garden who took the lead in the pantomime; Miss Horvels, of Covent Garden, Miss Sims, Mrs. Macartney and a clever little infant under the age of three named Lettin. The scenery continued under the supervision of Greenwood and Cross crowned the whole company with his talent.

It is but justice to Mr. Cross to mention that, to his persevering assiduity, and excellence of the pieces produced by him, during the last seven years, much of the success of this theatre is to be attributed, and it must continue to succeed while so able a pilot is at the helm.72

The season opened on Easter Monday, April 11, 1803, with a new pantomime, The Rival Statues; or, Harlequin Humourist; The Fatal Prediction (for the ninety-ninth time); and horsemanship by the house troop which was augmented by McKene. On April 15, the entertainments were changed to include two ballets, The Marriage Day and Obellino, and a pantomime,

Harlequin Bacchus. On April 25, a grand new spectacle was introduced, Louisa of Lombardy; or, The Secret Nuptials. On May 3, the first benefit of the season was for George Jones. On May 30, a new pantomime was introduced, Number Nip; or, The Elfin King of the Great Mountain, in which some of the following scene changes took place:

Two views of the extensive Mines of Number Nip, his Giant Mountains, and Magic Palace, Pompey's Pillars and in Egypt, and the Great Gun in St. James Park; the entrance to Oxford, and the Club Room, . . . a Villain's lurking place; Number Nip's Enchanted Castle, surrounded by a Fairy Lake.74

On June 17, another grand spectacle was performed, The Black Forests; or, Natural Child. On June 20, a new dance for the benefit of James Jones was danced, The True Lover's Knot and this was followed on June 23 by a new divusement, Our Native Land. The piece was written at that period in history,

when the aggrandizing spirit of Buonaparte had roused the indignation of my gallant countrymen to that fixed detestation of his despotism and aggression that led to the present War; and was, from coinciding with the general sentiment of the Times, uncommonly well received by the public.75

Most of the action took place in a hay field and against a background of a grand naval view.

On July 12, a grand naval spectacle was performed, The Corsican Pirate; or, The Grand Master of Malta. On August 8, a new burletta, John Bull and Buonaparte; or, A Meeting at Dover was presented,

73Stead Collection, 03:1-3.
74Ibid., 03:3.
75Cross, Cirusiana, 1, 160.
representing the recent "Acquatic Excursion of the City Volunteers to Greenwich." The following three scenes were represented: "Interior of the Dover Theatre, Exterior of John Bull's Castle, and the Temple of Renoun." For the benefit of Mrs. Parker on August 30, The Highland Revels was danced and a new pantomime, The Round Tower was performed.

A new naval spectacle, Johnny Armstrong; or, The British Captives, which concluded with the bombardment of Boulogne, was presented on October 3. For the benefit of Mr. and Mrs. Helme, on October 6, The Jolly Millers was danced. Benefits were held for George Jones on October 4; Adams, the treasurer, on October 5; Pilbrow and Mihill, riding masters, on October 7; Henley on October 10; Montgomery, on October 11, at which time Sandy and Moggy was danced; October 14, for Flexmore when The Merry Soldiers was danced; October 17, for Sanderson; and on October 29, for Decastro. On November 14, for the benefit of Wallack, a new burletta written by Charles Dibdin, Jr. was presented, Flats and Sharps; or, The Spring of Shetaly.

The season closed on November 17, but for the first time since Cross had become manager, the theatre opened again for a short holiday season on December 26 with a new dance, The Woodcutters' Frolic, and the revival of the pantomime Harlequin Mariner. On January 2, a new

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76 Stead Collection, 03:4.
77 Ibid., 03:5.
78 Ibid., 03:7-10.
79 Ibid., 03:10.
dance composed by Montgomery called *The Caledonian Revels* was performed. On January 7, a new pantomime was added to the bill, *The Cavern in The Rocks* and on January 11, a new dance by Collett, *The Shipwreck'd Tar* was performed. On January 16, *The Rival Indians* by Montgomery was danced and also a new burletta by Charles Dibdin, Jr., *The Serjeant's Whim* was done. *The Happy Peasants*, composed by Paul in which he made his first appearance in this country was danced.\(^80\) Equestrian feats, especially those by the talented Master Saunders, were performed the entire month.

For the benefit of Davis on February 2, new entertainments were brought out: a new dance by Collett, *The Tar's Return*, for earlier in January a dance, *The Shipwreck'd Tar*, was danced; a musical piece, *The Sleeping Draught*; and a pantomime, *The Burning Mountain*; or, *Neptune's Gift*. Saunderson took his benefit on February 6 when he and his sister performed a variety of equestrian feats.\(^81\) The special holiday season closed on February 9, but the reviews fail to mention why this successful practice was discontinued the next year.

The 1804 season opened on Easter Monday, April 2. The interior of the theatre had been repainted a buff or fawn color with white ornaments, emblematical trophies and cameos during the recess.\(^82\) The

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\(^80\) *ibid.*, 04:1.

\(^81\) The *Times*, February 2, 1804.

first performances of the season were a revived spectacle, The Renegadoes, and a new magic ballet, The Dwarf, as well as a new pantomime, Cybele; or, Harlequin's Hour. The bill played until April 23 when three new pieces were added: a ballet, Sabotiers; a spectacle, Zittaco The Cruel; or, The Woodman's Daughter; and a pantomime, Silver Star; or, Mirror of Witchcraft. On May 14, another grand spectacle with a new overture, military band, machinery, and scenery, called The Wild Girl; or, La Belle Sauvage, was performed with the following scenes:

A tremendous Tempest and Shipwreck—Interior and Exterior of Old Robin's Cottage—Front View of Baron Colville's Castle and Bridge—Etreham Forest and Wild Mountains of Normandy—Hermit's Cell—Back View of Colville Castle, with adjoining Ruined Abbey and awful Cemetery.

The presentations were changed on June 11 with the addition of a new burletta, Haste To The Wedding, which was an alteration of The Jubilee of 1802. A benefit for the Freemason's Charity was held on June 21. On July 3, a grand new national and historical spectacle, Johanna of Surinam, was performed, a show which demonstrated the recent achievements of the British on the island of Surinam. On July 12, a new pantomime was brought out, Pedlar's Acres; or, Harlequin Medicant. A grand Scotch spectacle appeared on August 15, Mysteries of the North; or, The Maid of Lochlin and on August 22, The Coat and the Badge by Montgomery was danced.
Only one new piece was brought out in September, _The Mermaid_; or, _Harlequin A-Ground_, a pantomime on the 17th for the benefit of Cross. Jones' benefit was on October 1 when a new military diverte-ment was brought out, _Brothers In Armour; or Britain's Protectors_. A new dance was performed on October 3, _The Merry Highlander_ for the bene-fit of Helms. October 4 was the benefit of Male when he spoke a special new prologue for the performance of the military spectacle, _The Siege of Quebec_ with the death of General Wolfe. For the benefit of the dancer Flexmore on October 1, a new dance was composed, _The Gardner's Girls_. Betterton's benefit was fixed for October 17, he being one of the best broadsword dancers; and the final benefit for the composer, Sanderson, was held on October 22.  

The Royal Circus opened on Easter Monday, April 15, 1805, with the following entertainments: an occasional address by Miss Manners; horsemanship in which McKene exhibited specimens of equestrian agility; a new ballet diverte-ment by Montgomery, _The Marriage Day_; a new ballet of action, _Abellino; or, The Bravo's Bride_; and the evening concluded with the pantomime, _Harlequin Bacchus_.  

Adapted to the stage by Cross from Lewis's romance of the _Brave of Venice_, on April 29 a new diverte-ment was added commemorating the recent splendid installation at Windsor, _The Knight's of the Garter_; or,
St. George's Day. The first benefit of the season was on May 7 for George Jones. On May 20, a new ballet by Montgomery was performed, *The Mogul Tale; or, Harlequin Wanderer* and on June 24, a new ballet of action was danced, *Imogen, Princess of Britain*. It was founded on:

events recorded in the Bernard and Zindura of Boccaccio; but principally from incidents 'traced in narrative,' and expressed in action, of occurrences, proceeding, progressive and conclusive, of the interesting fable of Shakespeare's pleasing and romantic play of *Cymbeline*, by Mr. Cross.

*The Fourth of June; or, Muros Bay*, a national and military burletta, opened on July 8, commemorating the glorious achievement of Captain Maitland and Lieutenant Yeo aided by the gallantry of British seamen. A new Scotch ballet, *Love and Laughter; or, The Piper of Linlithgow* composed by Montgomery, opened on August 5.

On August 12, a new pantomime by Cross entitled, *The Witch of Wokey; or, Harlequin Forester*, was to have opened, but tragedy struck on the night of August 11. Between one and two o'clock in the morning, a fire broke out at the Royal Circus. Accounts of the fire appeared in all the London newspapers. The flames burned so furiously that within approximately twenty minutes from the time they first appeared, the whole of the roof fell in. The property man was the first to discover the fire; 'he is of the opinion that it originated in the premises of the beef shop adjoining, which belonged to a man by the name

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88 *ibid.*, 05:2.
89 *ibid.*, 05:3.
90 *ibid.*, 05:4, 6-7.
of Croft.\textsuperscript{91} The partition between his shop and the paint shop was the first part which was seen to be on fire. Next to the paint shop was an eighteen-stall stable. The loft of the stable had been converted into a scenery storage area and was nearly full of canvas. Fortunately, the horses were saved.\textsuperscript{92}

The Equestrian Coffeehouse, owned by Johnson, The Circus Coffeehouse adjoining and a printing house were all destroyed, as well as the dwelling house of Jones, the proprietor. The fire engines arrived, but it was some time before water could be procured; however soon after four o'clock, the flames were brought under control. The cause of the fire was not readily determined, although several different accounts were given: one, conjecture was that it started from a candle igniting some fireworks for the rehearsal of the pantomime; another, that it began in the painting room; and a third, that it started in a shop next door.\textsuperscript{93}

Although the theatre building itself was a total loss, that was not the total extent of the losses, for all of the scenery, costumes, and musical instruments were totally destroyed. The performers also sustained heavy losses in their stage properties as well as the loss of their salaries for the rest of the season.\textsuperscript{94} The proprietors likewise

\textsuperscript{91}Gentlemen's Magazine and Historical Chronicle, Vol. 75, Part II, August, 1805, 768.

\textsuperscript{92}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{93}Stead Collection, 05:8-9.

\textsuperscript{94}Monthly Magazine or, British Register, September 1, 1805, 179.
suffered heavily; the building was worth about £25,000, but was insured "in the Globe for £6,000 to Midsummer last; but since that period no insurance was made at that office, in consequence of the Proprietors refusing to pay the percentage required."95

The fire illuminated the whole of St. George's Fields and could be seen in London across the Thames. One account of the fire mentioned that Drury Lane theatre in particular "appeared on the south side to be enveloped in flames."96 Many families in the neighborhood removed furniture from their homes, fearing the fire would spread. An article dated August 14, cleared up some of the confusing stories about the fire:

The Royal Circus was insured only to the amount of £3000. There was no rehearsal on the Sunday, as had been reported. The performers met, but it was put off until the Monday morning. No fireworks were preparing in the house for the birthday of the Prince of Wales, they being always brought from the house of the maker of them ready for exhibition.97

On October 21, with the authority of the Lord Chamberlain and the permission of the proprietors, Jones had his benefit at the Haymarket Theatre. The Union Theatrical Society, Lyceum, Strand, had kindly undertaken to perform that evening.98 Thus Jones had received some money, but the rest of the performers had to find work wherever

95 Gentlemen's Magazine, August, 1805, 768.
96 Stead Collection, 05:8.
97 Ibid., 05:9.
98 Ibid., 05:10.
possible. This was the first fire at the Royal Circus and it was a devastating one indeed.

Plans to rebuild were immediately drawn up and work was started in November by James Donaldson, the younger, from the designs of Signor Rudolphe Canabel, Jr. Donaldson engaged two crews of workmen, one to work by day, and the other by night for he had promised to have the theatre open by the following Easter Monday. The new theatre, rebuilt from the shell, was reported to have cost £14,500 to construct.

III

And open it did on Easter Monday, April 7, 1806. Cross continued on as acting manager, but for the first time under a committee of five trustees appointed for the creditors. A short sketch of the design follows:

The form comprehends four segments of a circle, affording three elevations, each side of equal symmetry, the proscenium embracing the fourth, the whole supported by elegant pillars, and lighted up by splendid chandeliers. The ceiling is decorated with lattice-work, through which there are appropriate figures and devices; a broad margin surrounds it, the compartments of which are embellished in alto-relievo with variegated colours. The boxes, consisting of two tier, and over an elegant open lattice-work, richly ornamented with cameos, the proscenium magnificently corresponds with the superb decorations of


the front, and is rendered particularly striking by a
pleasing front-piece, and a handsome painting of his
Majesty's arms. 101

Figure 20 illustrates the interior of the Royal Circus after Canabel's
designs, c. 1806-1809.

The initial season opened with the following productions: a pre-
lude, The House Warming; a grand spectacle by Cross, The Mysterious Free-
booter; or, The Days of Queen Bess; a pantomime, Sorceress of Strazzi;
or, Harlequin Wanderer; and various equestrian feats. 102 This bill
played until the middle of May with the addition of one new dance by
Montgomery, Cottage Courtship, on April 21. On April 26, a new panto-
mime was introduced, Momus and Mercury; or, Harlequin's Hay Day. The
following scenes were representative:

Mount Olympus, splendidly fitted up and decorated for an
imperial Banquet; distant View of a Village Fair, an
Italian Huckster's shop, View near Richmond, Fall of
Snow, . . . the whole to conclude with a brilliant Olympic
Palace, the enthronement of Jupiter and Juno. 103

Black Beard was revived in May and the next new ballet by Signor
Bologna, The Swiss Rivals, was not brought out until June 9 along with
Juan Fernandez; or, A British Seaman's Story, a grand spectacle. It was
founded on the well known history of Alexander Selkirk, a native of
Scotland, who was found after five years of solitary life on the island

101 Stead Collection, 06:1.
102 The Times, May 7, 1806.
103 Ibid., May 26, 1806.
of Juan Fernandez. Daniel Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe* from these same materials. The scenery represented among various interior views on the Island, "the inside of Selkirk's Hut, a Storm, a Cottage on Fire; and the Interior of the Cavern which, when blown up, discovers a View of the Sea."  

Cross produced a new melodrama, *The Cloud King; or, The Magic Rose* on June 30. This piece was based on a ballet of *Zemue* and *Azor* and the poetic episodes of the *Cloud King* by M. G. Lewis. The following is a selection of scenes in the production:

Grand Persian anti-chamber, which opens to a splendid Salon; Interior of Zeratres Cottage, View of her flower garden, Cloud King's Palace, Storm Wreck'd Forest, Rocky Promontory, obscured by the descent of the Cloud King in elemental Glory.  

Another interesting feature was the character of the merchant, seen at intervals in a storm, riding a horse which "breathed fire from its nostrils when attacked by a lion."  

The only new pantomime production in July was *The Flying Island of Laputa; or, Harlequin Gulliver*. A month later, on August 25, a melodramatic ballet of action, *The False Friend* and a bagatelle (comic pantomime done to a musical accompaniment), *The Stage Letter* were produced. These works played until September 22 when a new pantomime, *The Parcae; or, Harlequin and Time* replaced them. *Poor Jack*, a dance, was added to

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104 Ibid., June 9, 1806.
105 Ibid., June 30, 1806.
the performance on September 26. The last two new pieces appeared during benefits in October: on October 2, for Mrs. Roffey, a burletta, The Young Widow's Choice; and on October 20, for Mrs. Cross and Bramah, leader of the band, a musical entertainment, My Uncle; or, The Jew's Wedding. 107

Although Cross had introduced many new works in this newly rebuilt theatre, the attendance was not up to what it had been in years past. During the period of rebuilding, his audience discovered other places of entertainment and during the initial season Cross was unsuccessful in bringing the crowds back to his new theatre.

The season of 1807 opened on Easter Monday, March 30, to a crowded house, something which Cross was pleased to see for attendance had fallen off last season. The theatre had undergone several alterations since the previous season. Two new boxes were added at the end of the orchestra and new stage doors were also added, the panels of which were painted a bright green. 108 The opening night's presentations consisted of: horsemanship, the principal performers being Sutton, Master Avery, and young Saunders; a new grand oriental ballet of action, Solina; or, The Maid of the East; and a new comic pantomime, The Wishing Cap; or, Harlequin Blue-Boy. On April 15, a new comic dance composed by Mr. Montgomery called Indian Slaves and British Sailors was danced. The

107 Stead Collection, 06:3-4.
108 Ibid., 07:2.
last two new pieces brought out in April were a dance, The Tan Yard and a grand ballet of action, Buenos Ayres which were performed on April 27. 109

A new pantomime was introduced on May 25, The Magic Sword; or, Harlequin Warrior. A superior performance by Mrs. Wybrow as Colombine was recorded in the reviews. On June 6, a new comic dance composed by Mr. Montgomery called The Highland Laddie was performed. A new magic melodrama called Rodolph and Rosa; or, The Queen of the Silver Lakes was presented on June 29 with the following display of new scenery:

View of Blumenburg Castle, Forest of Witchery, Enchanted Lakes, with a grand representation of the Empress of the Elements, in which will be introduced, an appropriate splendid cars, the elemental Monarchs, the Fire King, the Cloud King, the Water King, and the Eel King, with their attendants in grand procession. 110

The first benefit of the season occurred on April 21 for Jones. On July 6, Young Saunders had his benefit, performing equestrian feats. On July 30, a new pantomime was brought out, Edwin of the Green; or, Harlequin Hunchback. Cross' benefit was held on August 31, at which time the burlesque opera written by Harry Carcy and not performed for over thirty years, The Dragon Wantly, was done. Almoran and Hamet was revived from the production of 1797. Bradbury's benefit was held on September 29. On October 12, for the benefits of Mrs. Cross and Bramah, a new grand military spectacle, The Death of General Wolf was presented.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid., 07:4.
Part of the action of the piece was the storming of Quebec and a grand Broad Sword combat for the English colors. The final new piece for the season was a ballet of action on October 19, *The Happy Disguise* and the season closed on that night.\(^{111}\)

This season had been successful for Cross and the company and part of the performers went to the Royalty Theatre for the winter season. After the closing on October 19, the theatre reopened for several nights to assist the difficulties of the Sadler's Wells company.\(^{112}\)

The theatre opened on Easter Monday, April 18, with a display of horsemanship, the principal performers being Masters Sutton and Avery; a new ballet called *Love's Artifice*; a new pantomime, *The Farmer's Boy; or, Harlequin Zodiac* in which appropriate scenes were displayed for each month of the year; and the ballet, *Charlotte and Werther*.\(^{113}\) These entertainments continued until May 12 when a new melodrama, *Elfrida; or, Faithless Favourite* was performed. On May 10 Jones took his benefit. On May 31, another new melodrama was performed, *Elizabeth, The Siberian Exile* and a new pantomime, *Harlequin's Cockney; or, London Displayed*.\(^{114}\)

\(^{111}\)Ibid., 07:5-7.

\(^{112}\)Ibid., 07:7.

\(^{113}\)The Times, April 18, 1808.

\(^{114}\)Stead Collection, 08:1, 6.
Three new works were performed in June: On June 6, a ballet, *The Lover's Stratagem*, by Giroux; on June 13, a grand romantic spectacle by Cross, Alarice and Eliza; and on June 30, a new pantomime, *The Witch and the Wizard*. In July, one new piece was produced, on July 12, for the benefit of Miss Giroux, *Daring Robber and Intrepid Sailor*, a ballet written and produced by her husband. In August, two new pieces were performed; one, on August 1, *Johnny Gilpin; or, Linen Draper's Tour*, a grand military spectacle based on a Cowper ballad; and on August 15, a new grand melodramatic spectacle, *Andalusia; or, The Spanish Patriots*.

Bradbury's benefit was held on September 5 with pony racing offered in the theatre for the first time in two years. On September 19, the entire performance was changed for the benefit of Cross. The following new pieces were presented that night: a new burletta, *The Wedding Portion*; a new melodramatic spectacle, *Koromantyns; or, Caesar and Clara*, adapted from the story of "The Grateful Negro."

On October 10, a new ballet was danced, *Pan's Frolic*; followed on October 11 by the benefit for George Jones. Bradbury had another benefit on October 24 when he raced the ponies and performed other equestrian feats. Weidner's benefit was on October 26, he being the principal flute player. On October 28, for the benefit of Spencer, a new burletta was brought out, *Puff in a Pucker*. The season then closed on that night.

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115 Ibid., 08:2-3.
116 Ibid., 08:8.
117 Ibid., 08:7-9.
All had not gone well with the Royal Circus since the fire.
Cross had brought out many new pieces during the reopening period, but by 1808, the audience had dropped off considerably, going instead to his rival, Astley's. Astley, not to be daunted by the success of Cross, developed his own spectacular dumb shows after the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1802, he produced a very popular Knights of the Sun, running for over two hundred nights. By 1806, his The Fair Slave had scenes of towns, rivers, forests, and plantations. There was also a floating bridge over the Black River and a Moorish encampment which was destroyed and a procession of real camels and horses. In 1807, John Astley equipped his stage with a new invention for dividing the stage into platforms, that raised and lowered, for a production of The Brave Cossack. This far surpassed the practicable scenery of Cross for at the end of the piece was a tremendous warfare. 118

Cross attempted to recapture his patrons with an equestrianized version of Johnny Gilpin, but neither this nor any other production was able to stem the tide running in favor of Astley's. That winter, John Cross died in Manchester and the trustees advertised for a new manager of the Royal Circus. On February 23, 1809, Robert Elliston (the day before the fire at Drury Lane) sent in proposals to become the new tenant. A lengthy correspondence ensued, but it ended with Elliston becoming the lessee for seven years at £2100 per year. 119 He covered

118Disher, Nineteenth Century, 832-833.
119Ledger, Era Almanack, 7.
over the "riding circle" and used the space thus obtained for the pit; and after making various other alterations in the house, both inside and out, he changed the name of the place to the Surrey Theatre. 120

Elliston opened the Surrey Theatre on Easter Monday, April 3. His engagement at the Lyceum prevented his appearing at his own theatre until June 16, 121 when he made his grand entre as Captain Macheath, in a burletta melodrama, before which he spoke an address with an allusion to the "Horse Circus" which had been there before:

At home, then, view me—where, unawed by rule, The gravest sometimes dare to play the fool; To cheer the heart,—make every plan their choice,— And e'en turn singers, unpossess'd of voice: That thought has nearly stopp'd my scanty breath, While flitting past, appears to crown Macheath; Minims and Crothets seem to weep and wail, And like King Richard's ghosts my ears assayl; Richard, who here might bawl in tragic strain, 'A Horse! A Horse!' nor bawl for one in vain! While the poor Captain's strains, less prized my half, Perchance may only raise a loud horse-laugh! But then, like all Macheaths, I feel a hope, You'll ask from me no feats upon the rope; But, mingling mercy with dramatic laws, As usage my doon:—transport me, with applause. 122

Thus the era of equestrian drama at the Royal Circus drew to a close.

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120 Brayley, Topographical History, 323.
121 Henry Baker, Our Old Actors (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1881), 402.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The late eighteenth century was a period of great activity at London's minor theatres. The two licensing acts earlier in the century had outlined the type of entertainment permitted: the first act in 1737 stated all performances other than those given under Royal License were deemed illegal and the office of the Lord Chamberlain was established to license all plays; and the second act in 1752 regulated places of public entertainment by having the county magistrates license all theatres within their jurisdiction. The effect of these acts was to forbid any spoken drama at the minor theatres and with this condition set forth, the theatres had to look to other types of entertainment.

Horsemanship, a new attraction, and equestrian feats were the most significant types of entertainments performed at the Royal Circus. These attractions proved to be popular with the London working class. This working class audience was heavily concentrated in the area of south London which prior to this time had been a rural area. These people came to the city for work by day and at night were provided an entertainment outlet from the drudgery of long working-day hours by the minor theatres.

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The first group of equestrian performers were riding masters who began to perform in the various London pleasure gardens. These entertainments consisted of riding on horseback and executing tricks while in full gallop around a circular area. Many of these experts had mastered their skill originally by performing for the nobility and teaching these aristocrats the skills of trick riding. These equestrian feats were of a spectacular nature and provided a form of much needed relaxation as well as excitement. They inspired Philip Astley to open his own riding academy on Blackfriars Road where he enclosed the circular ring and built a grandstand for the audience to see the performance. His pupil, Charles Hughes, opened a similar establishment in 1771. But being unlicensed, these places were soon forced to close by the action of the Surrey magistrates. Philip Astley soon reopened, but Charles Hughes was never able to reopen his riding school. The beginnings of equestrian drama can be traced to Astley's innovative enterprise.

Other attractions licensed by the magistrates included burlettas, pantomimes, and various musical entertainments. Under the latter category are a number of works including the musical drama, the burletta, the bagatelle, the divertissement, the intermezzo, the mélangé, and the pasticcio. Because of licensing problems, a work might be called one thing at one time and something quite different later on, depending on the pressure of the magistrates.

The burletta was a good case in point, for in the 1780's the term meant a musical entertainment with a certain number of songs. This classification was a broad one and could include almost any work
utilizing singing and music, but containing no spoken dialogue. When the restrictions were relaxed, the magistrates allowed occasional dialogue to be spoken so long as the major theatres did not object. If the work became too popular, then the magistrates were forced to act, such being the case with *The Destruction of the Bastille* in 1789-1790. This piece was very popular and John Palmer was arrested on a warrant of the major theatres because he spoke dialogue without a musical accompaniment. By the turn of the nineteenth century, more dialogue was being used and the musical accompaniment was less likely to appear under all of the dialogue. By the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, such pieces might have only an occasional chord struck on a piano in order to fit within the burletta classification.

Additional types of musical entertainments performed at the Royal Circus included: the comic bagatelle, a short piece consisting of pantomime with a piano accompaniment; the comic divertissement, a ballet or series of ballet pieces with music; the intermezzo, either a musical or dramatic entertainment or a combination of both; the mélange, a short medley of music, pantomime, or dance selections; and the pasticcio, a hodgepodge of materials consisting of dancing and singing, and it could also contain equestrian feats. A final group of entertainments included: the grand view, a series of pictures with pantomime and singing; spectacle, which combined singing, dancing, equestrian feats and elaborate scenery; and the "representation," a piece with singing, pantomime, and elaborate scenic background.
The managers of the Royal Circus were a varied group indeed, and their theatrical backgrounds were, for the most part, lacking in the field of management. Charles Dibdin and Thomas Read both suffered from problems with Charles Hughes and the rest of the proprietors. Grimaldi and Delpini lacked general experience in the management area. Cross and Jones were the most successful operators and the theatre flourished during their term of management.

Charles Dibdin, the song writer, teamed up with Charles Hughes, the equestrian performer, in 1782 to build the Royal Circus. From its earliest conception, Dibdin's idea had been to combine the ring with the stage and thus make equestrian performances more versatile. However, the two partners' contrasting temperaments did not suit this venture, for they were constantly arguing over policy and methods of operation.

Obtaining a license for the theatre created considerable friction between these two ambitious men. At first, the Surrey magistrates refused a license, but soon the theatre was able to open without one. One major humiliation for Dibdin occurred in 1783 when Hughes was able to obtain the license in his own name only. Hughes, seeking to gain complete control over the theatre, pitted the proprietors and actors against the weak willed Dibdin. He took advantage of Dibdin's personal financial problems by prodding his creditors continually to seek financial judgments against Dibdin. The ends justified the means as far as
Hughes was concerned, for these lawsuits finally forced Dibdin to surrender himself to Bridewell for non-payment of his outstanding debts.

The first several years of the theatre's operations were marked by a series of lawsuits and counter suits between Dibdin, Hughes, and the proprietors. Hughes seemed to be the only one to profit by these legal manoeuvres. Dibdin was a good manager of the stage department, but he lacked judgment in financial matters. The proprietors were mostly businessmen and lawyers and had never before been connected with any theatrical enterprise and were thus overwhelmed by the cost of operations at the Royal Circus. Further, the terms of most agreements were shaded in vague legal terms or not spelled out precisely enough for Dibdin to understand. Hughes was the only one to emerge from this arrangement with money in his pockets. He pitted the proprietors against Dibdin at every opportunity and played on Dibdin's poor financial condition to force him into debtor's prison. When this occurred early in 1784, Hughes now was rid of a partner, had a license in his name, and had his own way in all matters relating to the theatre. In looking over the early problems of the Royal Circus, the fault seemed to lie with Dibdin. Although a good artistic director, he proved to be inept at financial matters. Clear cut lines of authority were never established in writing, but merely talked about in meetings. This vagueness led to later misunderstandings.

Originally, the theatre had been organized with the idea of training young children, from five to ten years of age, in the arts of
equestrian feats, acrobatics, and pantomime. These children (being the off-spring of theatrical parents) would be under the care of the managers of the theatre. This situation produced negative results and continued infighting as the children's parents continually complained to Dibdin because Grimaldi, the dancing master, worked them too hard and too long. In spite of all the problems, the children became excellent performers on horseback, on the slack and tight-ropes, and on the trampoline. However, after only one season they were replaced with adult performers in the entertainments although Charles Hughes retained young apprentices for the horsemanship exhibitions.

Early in 1784, Dibdin was a prisoner in Bridewell and the proprietors fired him as manager since he could hardly perform his duties while in jail. With Dibdin in prison the proprietors had the means of getting rid of him with the hope of lessening their managerial problems at the Royal Circus. Grimaldi was appointed in his place, but he had little success as a manager, and although he was a good ballet master, he had neither the temperament nor the talent to be a strong general administrator. At the end of that season, a most curious series of events took place. Hughes went to Dibdin who was now out of prison, but still within the King's Bench rules. He convinced Dibdin that all was now forgiven between the two of them and that Hughes was his friend and could be trusted. Hughes' idea was for them to take possession of the Royal Circus forcibly and open the season of 1785 together. Dibdin being gullible, acquiesced to Hughes' plan; and to the astonishment of the proprietors, they took possession of the theatre. A one year rental
agreement was finally negotiated, but by mid-season in 1785, Dibdin had become disgusted with Hughes, the proprietors, and the Royal Circus, and left the establishment never to return again. He even went so far as to sign over his life share in the theatre to the proprietors. From this point onward, the proprietors had to contend solely with Hughes as a partner.

Hughes then ran the theatre himself for the next two seasons with the majority of entertainments being of the equestrian variety. During this time Hughes won a judgment in court giving him complete control of the theatre. The proprietors immediately started another round of court proceedings. Hughes further refused to pay any rent to the proprietors until 1788, when the court ruled in favor of the proprietors and returned the theatre to them. Delpini, appointed manager after the death of Grimaldi in 1788, left the theatre after one season. However, he did produce some good entertainments, but he like Grimaldi, did not have the strong determination and qualifications for management of a theatre. Because of his extravagance, he lost a large amount of money and the proprietors looked for another replacement for him.

Thomas Read was then appointed manager of the theatre for the next two seasons, but he too fell out of favor with Hughes and the proprietors. Read's problem was very similar to Dibdin's in that he and the proprietors could not agree on contractual agreements and confusion arose over the agreements which had not been put in writing and signed by all concerned parties. Read moved from box office manager to the manager of the stage department, a position of greater responsibility.
From his own account he seems to have assumed a position of far greater responsibility than he was prepared to handle.

One of his first acts provoked Hughes' disfavor, for he tried to limit the number of horses Hughes could use in the entertainments. This action caused a riot for the audience loved horsemanship. Because of this disturbance, the proprietors rallied to Hughes' side against Read. The next event which further complicated Read's relations with the proprietors occurred when he produced The Destruction of the Bastille. Although the show brought in large profits, most of the earnings went to the author by contractural agreement. John Palmer was arrested and sent to Bridewell for speaking dialogue in The Bastille. Thus, the theatre was forced to close abruptly, and suffered a loss. The profits of the entire first season were not up to expectations, but Read managed somehow to pay all the bills. In the 1790 season misfortune struck again as Palmer and another actor, Barrett, were arrested and sent to Bridewell where they remained for several months until being proven guilty of speaking dialogue without being licensed to do so. The public, being unable to see their favorite attraction, The Bastille, began to go to other theatres, and by mid September the theatre was forced to close because of lack of business.

The theatre now feel on especially hard times. What had been the best of the minor theatres offering equestrian drama was now in a state of financial collapse. The proprietors, also facing hard times, began to desert their property one by one until Lady West instituted a
suit to gain the entire possession of the theatre. This was granted to her in 1793.

During this interim period, Hughes, being an able and astute showman, fended for himself quite successfully. He took a herd of horses and what was left of his own performing horses and left for Russia as a guest of Catherine the Great. There he established a riding amphitheatre for her. Upon learning of the suit giving Lady West the theatre, he returned to England to open the Royal Circus for the season of 1793, where his fox chases and stag hunts using ramps between the ring and the stage again became the most popular entertainments.

The Royal Circus building had fallen into a very dilapidated state. Lady West, in 1794, gave a repairing lease to George and James Jones to rebuild the theatre which they then opened for the season of 1795. Their first two seasons were quite successful as they brought out many new entertainments and performed excellent equestrian feats. In 1796, Hughes lost his license which he had had since 1784 to James Jones.

As long as Charles Hughes was associated with the Royal Circus, equestrian entertainments were presented nightly to the great pleasure of the audience. At first children rode and balanced on horseback and performed by leaping from horse to horse. As the popularity of the Royal Circus grew, the equestrian feats also grew in complexity. Soon the performers were riding, jumping from horse to horse, and performing leaps through rings of fire. Hughes hired troops of performers to
supplement the activities at the Royal Circus. He also owned several performing horses which he taught to do tricks on command; Chilliby being the most famous of these horses. Among this horse's many accomplishments were his ability to count, identify objects, and perform various tricks.

John Cross was appointed acting manager in 1797 and he retained that post until his death in 1808. During this period of the late 1790's the theatre was to prosper and have no rivals among the other minor theatres. In 1798, Cross became a partner through marriage and the retirement of George Jones. Cross and the Royal Circus became famous for the "dumb show" nautical spectacles performed there. Since dialogue was forbidden, Cross got around this limitation by having his actors explain the situation by holding up a printed scroll periodically. On these scrolls were several explanatory words or a phrase of dialogue to let the audience know at what point was at conflict. A direct parallel for this technique can be seen in what would become a technique of the silent screen many years in the future.

These early spectacles at the Royal Circus were of the "blood and thunder" type with a great deal of spectacular action scenes such as fires, earthquakes, avalanches, and fierce battles. In this type of non-dialogue piece, action became all important. Cross also turned to grand ballets of action to represent the various British victories both on land and sea. Any scenes showing spectacle, violent action, battles, intrigue, and British military superiority met with great applause from the working class population of south London who made up the vast
majority of the audience. These people, tired after a long day's work, went to the theatre to witness these spectacles of action.

Such spectacles used horses and dogs frequently: in *The Magic Flute* (1800), the horse reared and seized a streaming banner, which it tore down from the rampart walls; in *Rinaldo Rinaldini* (1801), the dog rescued the hero from drowning after a battle on a bridge; and in *The Cloud King* (1806), a merchant rode a horse which breathed fire from its nostrils when attacked by a lion. But while Cross cannot be called the founder of equestrian drama itself, his contribution was in his development of the technique of large and spectacular theatrical effects needed for cataclysms of man and nature such as storm and battle scenes, which are associated with this type of drama and which played so prominent a part in the melodramas and extravaganzas of the next century. Because he was able to demonstrate how to manage plots which would string these events together with dramatic suspense, the authors of these horse spectacles were able to win the public's favor, money, and applause. Out of the "dumb shows" and naval musical dramas of the 1790's and the grand ballets of action of the early 1800's, there evolved a new character type, the good-hearted, rough-hewn British Tar.

Cross' productions were examples of the nautical melodramas popular during the early nineteenth century. Although today we would classify these productions as melodramas, Cross was forced to call them "dumb show" spectacles, or grand ballets of action. Prototype melodramas they were from the standpoint of characterization, action, and suspense. Spoken dialogue was the only major element lacking. The popularity of
these shows spread quickly from productions at the minor theatres to the major theatres. Thus the Royal Circus played a most significant role in the development of this type of entertainment. Future research work could be done in the period of Cross' management with special emphasis on his influence on nineteenth-century melodrama.

The Royal Circus was totally destroyed by fire August 4, 1805, and with this building's destruction went a great deal of the theatre's former "glorious" entertainment tradition. The theatre was rebuilt and reopened the following year, but Cross was never able to prosper as he had done before the fire. His rival Astley won the crowds away, for Astley's equestrian dramas were far more spectacularly produced than were those of Cross. Astley used divided stages that raised and lowered and staged more realistic battle scenes. Cross died in Manchester and the theatre was leased to Robert Elliston. He made major renovations to the building, removed the ride, and renamed the theatre The Surrey. Equestrian entertainments were seriously curtailed by the new renovations in The Surrey Theatre. Because of the lack of a place for performing this special type of spectacle, equestrian drama went into an eclipse to be replaced by other spectacular offerings in the nineteenth century.

A parallel can be drawn to present day productions using equestrian feats. During the twentieth century, the western became a popular form in both the motion picture and television industry. The singing cowboy of the 1940's and 1950's relied on his equine counterpart to further the action. Specially trained animals such as Trigger, Bullet, Silver, and Lassie still delight the audiences of today as did Morocco,
Billy, or Chilliby in centuries past. These animals had amazing skills of knowing where danger lurked, where the villain was hiding in wait, or when to amaze the audience with their intelligent tricks. These feats were performed with amazing grace and ease and many times under impressive odds against survival; yet they ended with victory for the master. These melodramatic and spectacular feats are reminiscent of John Cross' productions of the late 1790's and set the tone for productions, even more spectacular, in the nineteenth century.

The Royal Circus has left a distinct and significant mark on the history of the late eighteenth century British Theatre. Horsemanship and equestrian feats, as well as other forms of non-dialogue pieces, were developed to a high calibre to the great satisfaction of the area's working class audiences. Furthermore, an early melodramatic tradition was initiated at this theatre and this tradition quickly spread to the rest of the minor theatres and then on to the patent theatres as well.
APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ENTERTAINMENTS

The following list of entertainments were performed at the Royal Circus from 1782 to 1808. The method of citing these works is as follows: (1) date of the original production; (2) an indication of the type of work, see contractions listed below; (3) the full title when known. Horsemanship and equestrian feats are not included in this list for they appeared almost every day.

B. Ballet  ME. Musical Entertainment
BA. Bagatelle  ML. Mélange
BU. Burletta  MLD. Melodrama
D. Dance  O. Opera
DI. Divertissement  OL. Olio
E. Entertainment  P. Pantomime
EX. Extravaganza  PR. Prelude
GV. Grand View  PS. Pasticcio
I. Intermezzo  R. Representation
MC. Medley of Character  S. Spectacle
MD. Musical Drama
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1782</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Admetus and Alceste</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Mandarine; or, Refusal of Harlequin</td>
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<td>11/11</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>The Graces</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The Miniature</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/12</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>Georgium Sidus</td>
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<td>1783</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The Living Manners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Barrier of Parnassus</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/21</td>
<td>EX</td>
<td>The Land of Enchantment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>The Temple of Confucius</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Rus In Urbe; or Jack in the Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/20</td>
<td>ME</td>
<td>The Passions; or A Visit To The Mansions of Serenity, Indulgence and Moderation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/9</td>
<td>ML</td>
<td>The Quakers</td>
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<td>5/8</td>
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<td>The Village Feast; or, The Happy Couple Married</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>The Jovial Cobbler; or, A Light Heart is Better Than A Heavy Purse</td>
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<td>The Life, Death, and Renovations of Tom Thumb</td>
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<td>Who's Who? or, The Double Disappointment</td>
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<td>Nobody; or, Two Faces Are Better Than One</td>
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<td>Harlequin Chymist; or, The Fall of the Nunnery</td>
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<td>The Whim; or, Fairy of the Cave</td>
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<td>The Lawyer Outwitted; or Fairy of the Cave</td>
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<td>The Lamb Cherish'd; or, The Shepherd Surpris'd</td>
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<td>Trap; or The Fortune-Hunter Deceived</td>
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<td>Harlequin Conjurer; or, Pinetti Turned Pierrot</td>
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<td>BU</td>
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<td>4/30</td>
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<td>The Chop House; or, The Box Lobby Lounger</td>
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<td>The Miller; or, The Night Intrigue</td>
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<td>I Don't Know What?  I Hope 'Twill Please Ye!</td>
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<td>Inkle and Yarico; or, The American Heroine</td>
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<td>6/26</td>
<td>ME</td>
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<td>The American Heroine; or, Ingratitude Punished</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>A Characteristic Dance of Savages</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Old Age Metamorphosed</td>
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<td>The King of the French; or, A Trip Over The River Seine</td>
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<td>The French Jubilee; or, Grand Confederation At Paris</td>
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<td>The Life, Death, and Restoration of Harlequin</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>The Merry Negroes; or, The Humours of Africa</td>
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<td>Vetuti in Speculum; or, Britain's Resources</td>
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<td>Rural Felicity; or, The Drunken Peasant</td>
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<td>Prince of Candia; or, The Royal Nuptials</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>Humours of the Camp; or, The Bumpkin's Trick'd</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>The Ring's End; or, Make Hay While The Sun Shines</td>
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<td>Magic Feast; or, Dishes of All Sorts</td>
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<td>The Jew and The Gentile; or, No Bottle No Bird</td>
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<td>ME</td>
<td>He Would Be A Player; or, The Stage-Struck Butler</td>
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<td>The Shepherd's Homage To Man</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>The Village Doctor; or, Killing No Cure</td>
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<td>Dulce Domum; or, Age, and Infancy</td>
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<td>Matrimony; or, What We Must All Come To</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>The Triumph of Agriculture; or, A Happy Harvest</td>
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<td>The Nosegay; or, Bridal Chaplet</td>
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<td>BU</td>
<td>Quack, Quack, Quack, or The Baker of Bedfont</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>Neither Frighten'd Nor Hurt; or, A Cure for Invasion</td>
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<td>L'Espion Du Commandant; or Wonderful new Portable</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Transformation, or Affection Fends The Way</td>
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<td>The Caledonian Recruit, or Love in the Islands</td>
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<td>S</td>
<td>Julia of Louvain; or, Monkish Cruelty</td>
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<td>In Love, In Debt, and In Liquor; or, Our Way in Wales</td>
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<td>The Renegadoes; or, Algerine Corsair</td>
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<td>Love In The Country or No Fools Like Old Fools</td>
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<td>The Dutch Defeated; or, Britannia Rules The Waves</td>
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<td>Love and Jealousy; or, The Lawyer's Sock'd Black Beard; or, The Captive Princess</td>
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<td>Transformation; or, The Jew Turn'd Gentile</td>
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<td>The Knights of Malta; or, The Midnight Bell</td>
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<td>The Two Lawyers; or, The Old Folks Reconciled</td>
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<td>Trial of Skill; or, The Monkey Too Much For The Clown</td>
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<td>Alexandria; or, Harlequin in Egypt</td>
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<td>Duncan and Peggy; or, The Scotch Cottagers</td>
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<td>Cora; or, The Virgin of the Sun</td>
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<td>Harlequin in Egypt; or, The Siege of Jean d'Acre</td>
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<td>The Mine; or, The Black Forest of Istria</td>
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<td>Is It A Wedding; or, Horns and Hounds</td>
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<td>Donald and Peggy</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
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<td>Gonsalvo De Cordova; or, The Conquest of Granada</td>
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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*The European Magazine and London Review*

*Gentlemen's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*

*The Lady's Monthly Museum*

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*The Satirist*

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