

# CIRCUS PERFORMANCE DEPENDS ON THE BAND

Actors and Animals Get Cues From Music, and Tunes Announce Each Act.



NELLIE JORDAN  
TRAPEZE PERFORMER



HIGH SCHOOL HORSES  
AND THEIR RIDERS



BICYCLE TRICK RIDERS  
LOOKING PLEASANT



AL MIAO  
OLDEST CLOWN IN THE  
BUSINESS



SIX LITTLE PIGS THAT WENT TO MARKET



CLOWNS AWAITING THEIR TURN



DWARF MUSICIAN



DWARF SOLDIER



ON THE WAY TO THEIR  
DRESSING ROOM



CHILDREN OF THE ACROBATIC FAMILIES



RUSSIAN SHEEP-DOG AND  
THE DONK



LIMBERING UP BEFORE  
GOING ON

IT'S an ill wind that blows nobody good, and on the same principle it's a poorly-played tune from which the trained circus horse cannot take his cue. No matter how wobbly the notes may be or how breathless the poor bandman who has been blowing wind through his big brass horns all the evening, both circus folk and animals in a great show like Ringling's, catch the cue to their acts and make their entrances entirely from the music. Let us say the time is a few minutes before 8:15 in the evening. The long lines of people that have been pouring through the ticket entrances and into the big tent suddenly begin to thin out. To the unpracticed eye it seems that every seat in the great stadium is filled, though here and there the ushers find places for the late comers as if by magic. The huge audience is buzzing with conversation and expectancy. At this moment the ringmaster looks about him. If people are still coming in any numbers, he waits, for he makes it a point to have the track as clear as possible before calling the performance. But the moment he catches a decided lull he raises his hand. There is a blare of trumpets, a crash of drums and cymbals, the band strikes up a lively air and the grand march begins. The circus is on.

Fifteen minutes later dashing bare-back riders are careening about the three rings, strong men are doing their feats of strength, jugglers are juggling, the contortionist is making a living cheating of himself, trapeze performers and acrobats are turning dizzy somersaults and making perilous leaps in the air, and act follows act without a pause. The moment one act is ended another set of performers rushes in. But aside from the cracking of the ringmaster's whip and the occasional shrilling of his whistle, there has been no signal. How do they do it? How do they keep track of all? In all the hustle and confusion, how do animals and players so unfailingly get their cues? It is all done to music.

**Musicians Earn Their Pay.**

Now, playing in a circus band is no tired man's task. The player must not only be a mightily accomplished musician, but he must have enough reserve air stowed away about him to blow a baby mountain over. Did you ever stop to think for instance, that during the two and a half hours of the average circus show, the band is not still one moment of the time, and stops one tune only long enough to catch up another. Well, it's a fact. And more than that, the whole performance is played to a musical score just as rigid and exact as an elaborate in its way as the score of a grand opera. Day after day and night after night, the band plays the same old notes at the same old moment, and the score is changed only when an act is left out or a new one added.

That's how actors and animals back behind the scenes always manage to turn up just to the dot. The animals, too, you say. Oh my, yes! It takes some of the beasts a good while to develop an ear for music that can differentiate between a grand opera selection from "Il Trovatore" and one of Sousa's marches, but when they once get it they never forget. And when a horse or an elephant or one of Lili

Kerslake's five little pigs that went to market gets good and solidly educated on classics, you can't fool him with either. Not he! Nary a step will he budge till he hears the old accustomed notes, and then he is all a-quiver with excitement and anxiety to get into the ring.

Ten minutes before the big show begins is a busy time behind the scenes of a circus like Ringling's. In their dressing-rooms—long tents ranged on each side of the grand entrance, one for the men and the other for the women—200 performers are making up. Out in the open space, circus hands are running about with bits of apparatus and the horses, the elephants, the camels and all the other beasts that take part in the grand march are being ranged in their places. Here and there some trainer is putting the animals through some of their stunts to limber them up a bit. At a word from Doc Kealey, or Earl McClair, or John Johnson, the elephant men, the huge fellows rise in line on their hind legs and salame with their trunks. Off to one side, the trick horses are going through a stunt or two. An elephant trumpets, a camel squeals and a dozen horses answer with snorts. Mike, the clown's trick mule, leans wickedly at a circus hand, and gives a contemptuous hee-haw. It's a noisy place.

The performers take the opportunity to limber up, too. The six Saxon brothers give a stretch or two at their great muscles, and then playfully play ball with each other. Alexander Patty, the head-walker, trots around the enclosure a few times on his head. The contortionist lies themselves about a tent-pole and back again just to see if they can do it. Here and there a painted clown walks soberly about—but he doesn't just. Not a bit of it! In private life a clown is about the most serious-minded person of us all.

And then in the midst of all this seeming confusion the band starts up and the show is on.

From then till the end of the performance the activity in the dressing-rooms continues without cessation. Most of the performers take part in two or three acts; every few moments a group of them will rush into the dressing-room, and make up for their new parts, chatting sociably with each other as they do it. These dressing-rooms themselves are curious places. Early in the season, be-

fore the show left New York, every person was allotted a given place in the dressing-rooms for his trunk. And at every stop the circus hands place each trunk in exactly the same place each time. On their present trip, however, Ringlings have introduced a decided novelty in circus dressing-rooms. It consists of a series of private dressing-rooms for about a dozen of the principal stars with the show; these tented enclosures are fitted up with all the conveniences of the dressing-room of the great theatrical stars, too.

When you see them out of the glitter of makeup and away from the glamor of the sawdust ring, these people of the circus are mighty human folk. They have their little likes and their dislikes, their peculiarities and their eccentricities, and they are no more perfect than the rest of us are. But they are just as nearly perfect and for the most part they get along like members of one great family. They make firm and steadfast friends and their hearts are easily touched.

While Ringlings' circus was at Seattle about a week ago Charles Smith, "Boss" of the animal man, who has had charge of the menagerie for many years, fell ill of typhoid fever. "Boss" Smith is a huge favorite with everybody in the circus. He was sent to the hospital and when the circus left he had to be left behind. But his friends in the show have averaged a dozen telegrams a day to him ever since, and make it a point to write him cheering letters, inquiring anxiously how he is making it and telling him how much they miss him.

One of the old-timers with the circus this year is Al Miaco, the oldest clown in the world. Miaco is 72 years old; he has been a clown for more than 50 seasons. He was with Ringlings' when it started and he has been with it ever since. Miaco has some grown sons in the circus business, who have asked him many times to stop and take it easy for the rest of his life. But there is a lure and a fascination to the atmosphere of the sawdust ring, the lights and the

people of the circus that age cannot shake off. Miaco won't stop. He is a good clown, too. He was the funny fellow that got all the youngsters to laughing so hard when his nose caught on fire during the show, and later on, when he caught a perfect whopper of a cloth fish out of the deep sea-saw.

Then there is Jules Turnour, another old-time clown. Turnour is mailman for the show. In that capacity he not only attends to all the mail, but sends money orders for the foreigners, does their shopping for them and does little favors for everybody whenever he gets the chance. He is a rare favorite, especially with the children. At the end of the season they will take up a collection for Jules, and it will not be a small one, either. Last year the grateful folk contributed something like \$800 as a token of their appreciation. Turnour, by the way, is the clown who told the story of his eventful circus life in the Saturday Evening Post some weeks ago.

**Girl With Perfect Figure.**

One of the most beautiful young women with the circus is Nellie Jordan, one of the Flying Jordans. She is said to have the most perfect figure in America, and when she is doing dangerous stunts in mid-air she is a very picture of grace. During the winter season Miss Jordan and her troupe form a one-ring circus of their own and go touring through some little European province. They make a deal of money at it, too, it's said.

Lil Kerslake, the man who has the trained pigs, is a character. Kerslake is unique in the circus business, where most of the performers come from families that have been with circuses for generations, practically all the acrobats and tumblers and equestrians have been in one show or another since they were mere children. But Kerslake was a mechanic in a New England town. He was a big, good-natured fellow and used to stand a lot of joshing from his fellow

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