

Circus Arts Historical Chronicles

Circus Arts History · Answer Key · 15 Questions

1. Which English cavalry officer is widely credited with establishing the first modern circus in 1768 by combining equestrian displays with acrobatic performances?

- A) Philip Astley**
- B) James Anthony Bailey
- C) Dan Rice
- D) P.T. Barnum

2. What was the primary innovation introduced by Jules Léotard in 1859 that fundamentally changed aerial circus performance?

- A) The centrifugal force act
- B) The flying trapeze**
- C) The silk ribbon act
- D) The safety net

3. The term 'Circus' derives from the Latin 'circus', but which specific Roman structure served as the primary inspiration for the name?

- A) The Colosseum
- B) The Circus Maximus**
- C) The Pantheon
- D) The Theatre of Pompey

4. In the history of clowning, who was the first person to develop the 'Auguste' character, characterized by an exaggerated appearance and subversive humor?

- A) Joseph Grimaldi
- B) Tom Belling**
- C) Charlie Cairoli
- D) Grock

5. Which circus family, originating from Hungary, became famous in the 19th century for their contributions to 'Risley' acrobatics?

- A) The Wallendas
- B) The Flying Codonas
- C) The Hanlon-Lees
- D) The Risley Troupe**

6. What historical development in the 1830s allowed American circuses to transition from small horse-drawn caravans to massive rail-transported touring shows?

A) The development of the flatcar for heavy equipment

- B) The invention of the steam engine circus wagon
- C) The federal subsidization of traveling troupes
- D) The transition from canvas tents to permanent arenas

7. Which famous 19th-century circus performer was known as 'The Greatest Showman' for his promotion of the 'feejee mermaid' and other curiosities?

A) P.T. Barnum

- B) William Cameron Coup
- C) James A. Bailey
- D) Adam Forepaugh

8. The 'Great Moscow State Circus' was nationalized and centralized under which organization in 1919 following a decree by Vladimir Lenin?

A) Gosgoscirk

- B) The Soviet Ministry of Culture
- C) The Union of Circus Performers
- D) The Russian Academy of Arts

9. What is the historical significance of the 'Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey' merger in 1919?

A) It created the world's first circus to use electricity

B) It unified the two largest competing American circus empires

- C) It ended the use of exotic animals in American circuses
- D) It marked the invention of the three-ring circus layout

10. Which discipline, originally developed as a survival skill in the 19th-century French military, became a foundational element of modern circus 'parkour' and acrobatics?

A) Méthode Naturelle

- B) L'Art du Déplacement
- C) Systema
- D) Savate

11. Who was the first woman to perform a triple somersault on the flying trapeze in 1915?

- A) Antoinette Concello
- B) Lillian Leitzel

C) Lena Jordan

- D) Clara LaClair

12. What is the 'Risley' act, named after Richard Risley Carlisle, based on?

A) A performer balancing another on their feet while lying on their back

B) A high-altitude rope walking technique

C) The use of tensioned bungee cords for height

D) A form of synchronized equestrian vaulting

13. In the context of traditional circus history, what was a 'concert' during a circus performance?

A) A musical performance involving the entire cast

B) An after-show variety act used to increase ticket revenue

C) The orchestra's opening overture

D) A scheduled break for the animals

14. Which Australian circus company, founded in 1984, was instrumental in the 'Nouveau Cirque' movement by emphasizing narrative and artistic themes over animal acts?

A) Circus Oz

B) Flying Fruit Fly Circus

C) The Great Moscow Circus

D) Silvers Circus

15. Before the standardization of the 'three-ring' circus in America, what was the standard performance space configuration?

A) The single-ring 'Hippodrome' layout

B) The 'Cross-stage' performance area

C) The 'Arena-in-the-round' theater

D) The 'Street-market' style parade