

Circus Arts Historical Chronicles

Circus Arts History · Practice Test · 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