



'The Greatest Show on Earth'



Clockwise from top: A circus tiger and his tamer go one-on-one in the center ring of the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus. The stars of the circus parade around the three rings at the beginning of the event Tuesday night at the Omaha Civic Auditorium. A member of the Children of the Rainbow comes flying over a group of spectators and members of the crew.

Photos by Jeff Haller

Performers dazzle young and old alike

By Joel Strauch
Senior Reporter

The circus has come to town! The Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey circus entertained children and adults alike in a 2 1/2-hour show at the Omaha Civic Auditorium on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The circus was chock full of clown acts, including a featured act by renowned harlequin David Larible. Larible's comedy utilized audience members to help him perform his hilarious antics. The unsuspecting circus patrons added a special flavor of improvisation to the scene.

Other clowns entertained each section of the audience during changeovers and the intermission.

The music of this three-ring spectacle was delivered by the circus' own full orchestra. They played instrumental songs from such artists as U2, Peter Gabriel, Michael Jackson and John Williams.

Original circus tunes were also performed by the orchestra and sung by the multi-talented ringmaster, Eric Michael Gillett.

Of course, there were many impressive animal acts. Tyrone Taylor and his 11 Bengal tigers shook the center ring with a roaring performance. At one point, a monstrous cat sat perched on a disco ball, spinning it around with most of the lights off.

Mark Oliver Gebel, son of legendary circus performer Gunther Gebel-Williams, presented an act featuring two animals that weren't on the best of terms in the wild — elephants and zebras.

Gebel, along with his sister Tina, also brought out an impressive array of Lippizaner horses and Arabian stallions that responded only to their trainer's voice.

And the Bogers of Arkansas brought out their bison-and-mountain lion act, which brought back memories from Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

There were a number of traditional circus acts, including a number of big, burly men who spanned nearly half the length of the Civic with their flying trapeze performance.

There were also several balancing acts, featuring children from around the world. The hand-balancing of the Tumens from Mongolia came close to suspending gravity.

And 13-year old Olga Pikhienko from Moscow extended grace and flexibility beyond its norms as she dazzled the audience with her combination of ballet and gymnastics.

The Children of Cherepovets from Russia and the 12 Chicago Kidz performed amazing floor acrobatics and redefined rope-jumping as an art form.

One of the final acts was the infamous Globe of Death, a noisy show featuring three motorcyclists in a seemingly too small steel sphere that sped around each other, and at one point a woman standing in the middle, at every angle and degree.

When the lights were turned out and ultraviolet rays pointed at the cyclists in their day-glo outfits, the audience took a collective gasp of awe.

Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey once again proved that they give, without a doubt, "The Greatest Show on Earth."