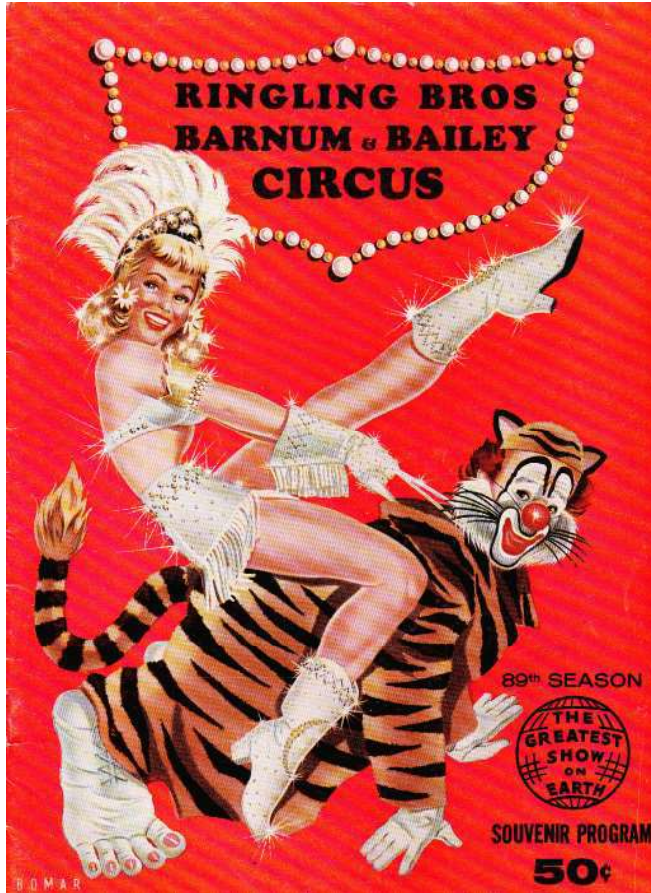


# 1959 RINGLING-BARNUM MUSICAL PROGRAM

By Eric Beheim, WJU #66



Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's bandleader in 1959 was Izzy Cervone, who had previously led the show's bands in 1956, 1957, and 1958. My overview of Izzy Cervone's 1957 Ringling-Barnum musical program appeared in the JAN-FEB 2022 issue of *Circus Fanfare*, while his 1958 musical program was covered in the MAR-APR 2022 *Fanfare*. According to the 1959 souvenir program, Cervone also did the special musical arrangements used that year.

While it is possible that an audio recording of a complete 1959 Ringling-Barnum performance exists somewhere, I did not have access to it while writing this article. Instead, I had to rely on material obtained from other recordings that were made that year. My primary source was the 12-inch LP **Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus** which was released to the kiddie record market on the Cricket label. In addition to most of the special production number music used in 1959, it also contains music that was played for some of the acts that appeared that year.

Additional music titles were obtained from soundtrack recordings of Ringling's two 1959 TV specials: its annual one hosted by Ernie Kovacs and the "Christmas with the Greatest Show on Earth" special hosted in December by James Arness and Dennis Weaver of *Gunsmoke* fame.

Between these three sources, enough music was obtained to provide at least some idea of the selections that comprised Ringling-Barnum's musical program for 1959. (If and when an audio recording of a complete 1959 performance does come to light, a new and revised version of this overview will be prepared.)

Special thanks are due Don Covington (WJU #119) who provided me with an audio tape of the 1959 "Christmas with the Greatest Show on Earth" TV special. I'm also grateful to light opera authority Michael Miller, who identified Josef Strauss' *Mein Lebenslauf ist Lieb' und Leben* as the waltz played during Display 20's ménage number *Viennese Interlude*.

Some of the 1959 music heard on the Cricket record and the two TV special recordings could not be identified, even by the knowledgeable circus music fans with whom I shared it. In addition to his own extensive music library, acquired during his many years of conducting the bands at Shrine and Grotto winter circuses and grandstand shows at major fairs in the U.S. and Canada, Izzy Cervone often used unfamiliar music which performers had brought with them from Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere. Heard today, this music is now almost impossible to identify. In 1967, I showed Izzy Cervone the melody line for the oriental number played for Hans Naumann's tigers in 1959 and he could not recall it or its title. More than likely, it was music that Naumann had brought with him from Europe.

As had been the case with earlier Ringling editions, the 1959 Edition featured original music written by the show's owner John Ringling North. Although 1959 would be the last year that North contributed any new music to a Ringling edition, Merle Evans would sometimes include some of North's better compositions in his musical programs in subsequent years.

## Overture:

(Heard on the Cricket LP) *Introduction to Selections from "The New Moon"* by Sigmund Romberg, followed by a medley of songs composed by John Ringling North for the 1959 Edition's production numbers: *The Drum Majorettes*, *Encore*, and that year's theme song *Children of All Ages*.

## Display 1: Hans Naumann, Tigers

(Heard on both Ringling TV specials): unidentified march, oriental number, and galop. [When the Ringling show played New York City, The Paramount Bears and Professor George Keller's mixed wild animal act were presented in addition to Hans Naumann's tiger act to "beef up" the performance.]

## Display 2: Manfred, Chair Balancing

No music is available for this display on surviving recordings

**Display 3: Ibarra Brother Démoniac Divers**

(Heard on the Cricket LP and both TV specials) An unidentified number played very fast.

**Display 4: Elephants directed by Hugo Schmitt**

(Heard on the Cricket LP and the annual TV special) *Lohengrin Entrance Music* (Wagner), *Caesar's Triumphal March* (Mitchell), *Jungle Drums* (Ketèlbey), *Minor Key Fanfare No. 2* (from the 1951 Ringling elephant act), *Passing of Salome* (Joyce), unidentified, unidentified waltz, *Minor Key Fanfare No. 3* (from the 1951 Ringling elephant act), *Pahjamah* (Henry & Onivas), *Minor Key Fanfare No. 1* (from the 1952 Ringling elephant act), *A Vision of Salome* (Lampe), *Minor Key Fanfare No. 2* (reprise), unknown, unknown reprise, drum roll, chord, *Baby Be Mine* (North) (used for an after-act routine featuring Hugo Schmitt's baby elephant Diamond)

**Display 5: Clown Cavalcade**

(Heard on the Cricket LP) *That's How Long the Blues are Going to Last* (North)

**Display 6: Rolling Globes featuring the Dior Sisters**

(Heard on the annual TV special) *Encore* (North)

**Display 7: Clowns**

**Display 8: Lady Principal Bareback Acts**

**Display 9: Kaichi Namba, the man who walks on his head**

No music is available for these three displays on any of the known surviving recordings.

**Display 10:**

**Aerial "Ballet of the Buccaneers" with Maryse Begary**

(Heard on the Cricket LP) unidentified special music used for the opening, unidentified march, *You May Wear a Patch on Your Eye* (North), drum rolls for Maryse Begary's one-armed planges.

Elephant trainer William "Buckles" Woodcock recalls that *Poor Wandering One* from Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera *Pirates of Penzance* was played for this number.



William "Buckles" Woodcock with the Ringling elephants

**Display 11: Clown Number "Rocket to the Moon"**

**Display 12: Low Wire Acts with Domi in the Center Ring**

**Display 13: Lou Jacobs' miniature car**

No music is available for these three displays on any known surviving recordings.

**Display 14: Mixed Animal Acts featuring Stephenson's Dogs in the Center Ring**

(Heard on the Christmas TV special) *Left Right Out of Your Heart* (Shuman), drum roll, chord

This was the first season that Stephenson's Dogs appeared with Ringling-Barnum. They would continue on as a centering attraction with the show up through the end of 1973.

**Display 15: Single Trapeze Acts featuring Frank Doyle over the Center Ring**

(Heard on the annual TV special) *Temptation* (Brown), drum roll, chord



LP Cover - Cricket Records CR-14

**Display 16: Spec "Carnival Round the World"**

(Heard on the Cricket LP) *Mardi Gras* from "Mississippi Suite" (Grove); *Children of All Ages* (North); *Deutschland über alles* (opening bars) (Haydn); *Sorcerer's Apprentice Theme* (Dukas); *O Du Lieber Augustin* (introduction); *Encore* (North); *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* (fragment); *Tarantella Napoletana* (Ricci); *Ciribiribin Waltz* (Pestalozza); *Tarantella Napoletana* (reprise); *La Cucaracha* (The Cockroach; folk corrido), *La Cumparsita* (street procession; Rodriguez); *La Marseillaise* (fragment) (de Lisle); *Can-Can* (Offenbach); *South Rampart Street Parade* (Bauduc-Haggart); *At a Georgia Camp Meeting* (Mills); *That's How Long the Blues are Going to Last* (North); *La Marseillaise* (reprise); unidentified cakewalk; *Encore* (reprise); *Closing Fanfare*

## Intermission

### Entr'acte Music:

Although the Entr'acte Music which opened the second half of the performance is not available on surviving recordings, it was undoubtedly one of John Ringling North's songs written for one of that year's production numbers.

### Display 17: Flying Acts: The Flying Comets and the Flying Rockets

(Heard on the Cricket LP and the annual TV special) *Zacatecas March* (Codina), *Rustle of Spring* (played in  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) (Sinding), *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* (Lyle), *In a Little Spanish Town* (Wayne), *Goodnight My Someone* (Willson), drum roll, *Saddleback Galop* (Allen)

### Display 18: Clowns

No music is available for this display on surviving recordings.

### Display 19: Jugglers featuring "the juggling jitterbug" Bert Holt in the Center Ring

(Heard on the Cricket LP) *Finale* from "Dance of the Hours" (Ponchielli)



### Display 20: Ménage Number "Viennese Interlude"

(Heard on the Cricket LP and the annual TV special): *Hungarian Dance No. 4* (Brahms), *Hungarian Rhapsody* (fragment) (Liszt), unidentified, *Rakoczy March* (fragment) (Liszt), *Mein Lebenslauf ist Lieb' und Leben Waltz* (Josef Strauss), *My Darling Said Yes* (North), fanfare, *March Militaire* (fragment) (Schubert), unidentified march, fanfare, *The Moon My Love and Me* (North), *Tritsch-Tratsch Polka* (Strauss), fanfare, *My Darling Said Yes* (reprise) fanfare

### Display 21: Paul Jung's Misfit Army

(Heard on TV special) *You're in the Army Now* (Jones)

### Display 22: High Perch and Ladders acts

(Heard on the Christmas TV special) *Who?* (Kern), *I Know that You Know* (Youmans), *Swanee* (Gershwin), chord

### Display 23: The Sciplini Chimps

(Heard on the Cricket LP) *Children's Marching Song* (This Old Man) (Arnold)

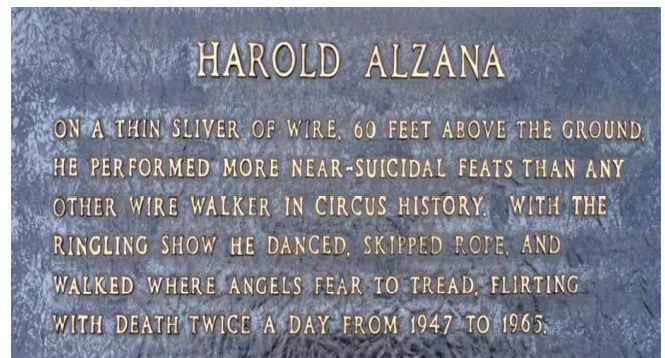
### Display 24: Clowns

### Display 25: Tumblers

No music is available for these two displays on any known surviving recordings

### Display 26: Harold Alzana High Wire

(Heard on the Cricket LP and the annual TV special) *Fanfare* based on Wagner's "Flying Dutchman Overture", *Prelude in G Minor* (Rachmaninoff) (played as walkup music), chord, *El Relicario* (Padilla), chord, *España cañí* (Narro), unidentified, drum roll, chord, *Prelude in G Minor* (reprise) (played as Alzana's descent music), chord



#### Tribute to HAROLD ALZANA:

On a thin sliver of wire 60 feet above the ground he performed more near-suicidal feats than any other wire walker in circus history. With the Ringling Show he danced, skipped rope, and walked where angels fear to tread, flirting with death twice a day from 1947 to 1963

### Display 27: Finale "Drumbeats" featuring the Zacchini Cannon Act

(Heard on the Cricket LP and the annual TV special) *The Drum Majorettes* (North), *My Heart Beats in Time with Your Music* (North), *Madame Butterfly Selection* (Puccini) (played after the cannon act is introduced), *Tannhauser: Pilgrims' Chorus* (Wagner), *Zacchini Bows Fanfare*

Although Izzy Cevone returned to conduct the Ringling band again in 1960, he left the show at the end of the season. He told me in 1967 that he left because of the low pay he was receiving.

In 1961, with the Ringling show once again traveling on its own special train, Merle Evans returned as bandleader and would continue in this capacity until the end of the 1969 tour when he retired. Cervone, in turn, went back to conducting the bands for Orrin Davenport's indoor Shrine and Grotto winter circus dates and was active in this capacity until shortly before he passed away on March 1, 1972.

The music from Ringling's 1959 Season TV Special and the Cricket LP is now available on the WJU Website.

Check it out!