

WHO'S WHO IN CIRCUS MAGIC LANTERN SLIDES

Part 2. Andrew Ducrow, Anselme-Pierre Loyal, Rose Goudschmidt, 'Irma', Philip Astley, William Davis and Marguerite Antoinette Lalanne

Dick Moore



1. Lapierre slide showing Andrew Ducrow (left and middle right) with Charles Keith standing (middle left) and Mme Rose Goudschmidt (right)



2. Slipping slide of Andrew Ducrow performing the Sailor's Hornpipe on a galloping horse

The second and final part of this article continues to identify, where possible, the real-life performers depicted in the popular magic lantern slipping slides featuring the circus (see TML 39 for Part 1), drawing on research into Lapierre circus images.¹

ANDREW DUCROW (1793-1842)

Ducrow was one of the most famous performers of the formative and romantic years of the circus. He was an animal trainer, contortionist, equilibrist, funambulist rope dancer, choreographer and costume designer. He also directed many of the spectacles at Astley's Amphitheatre.²

He was an early exhibitor of 'tableaux vivants', a series of pantomimes on horseback that became known as 'poses plastiques', as seen in the Lapierre slide in Fig. 1 (which also features Charles Keith – see Part 1). One of more popular pantomime sketches was *The Vicissitudes of a Tar*, a story of a man going off to sea, leaving his wife and family behind. During the pantomime Ducrow presented multiple poses reflecting the tar's experiences. He eventually returns home, having survived a harrowing storm. The slipping slide in Fig. 2 reflects one of the happier moments – performing the 'Sailor's Hornpipe' on horseback while galloping at great speed around the hippodrome.



3. Slipping slide of Andrew Ducrow, as funambulist, performing on the low rope

4. Lapierre slide showing M. Loyal, liberty horse and troubador performing 'The Waltz' (image on the right)





5. Double slipping slide of the same act as in Fig. 4, without troubador

Funambulist Rope Dancer

Before high wire acts became popular the funambulist would 'dance' and perform acrobatics on the low rope, a difficult act because of the rope's slackness and tendency to swing. In addition to his other acrobatic abilities, Ducrow was a highly talented rope dancer, performing acts such as the headstand seen in another slipping slide (Fig. 3).

'THE RINGMASTER' ANSELME-PIERRE LOYAL (1753-1826) – MONSIEUR LOYAL

M. Loyal was a renowned French equitation director who achieved lasting fame for both his skill and leadership with liberty ('free') horses and his direction of circus performances. His name became synonymous with 'Ringmaster'.³ In the Lapierre slide (Fig. 4) we see the image of M. Loyal and horse performing 'La Valse' ('The Waltz') together with a roving troubadour and guitar providing music. In the double slipping slide (Fig. 5) we see the same act *sans* troubadour.



MADAME ROSE GERARD GOUDSCHMIDT AND/OR MADEMOISELLE IRMA

The Lapierre slides also feature two female performers – they are most likely Mme Rose Goudschmidt,⁴ a premier equestrienne of the Cirque Napoléon (Figs 1 and 6) and Mlle Irma, a French equestrienne (Fig. 6). They were both known for their remarkable performances of graceful trick acts on horseback including flying over flags, jumping through paper balloons and jumping ropes – all in proper skirts as befitting ladies.



6. Mme Rose Goudschmidt (top – see also Fig. 1) and Mlle Irma performing the leap through the hoop (above), from Lapierre slides. Slipping slides (left) probably featuring one or other – or both – ladies

PHILIP ASTLEY (1742-1814) et al.

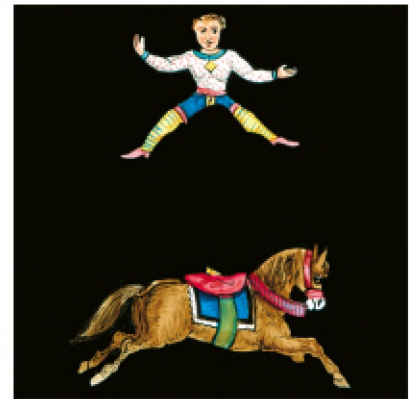
The beginning of the circus was based on outstanding horsemanship and equitation. In 1768 Philip Astley, a retired Sergeant Major from the British cavalry regiment the 15th Light Dragoons – a brilliant rider – set up a riding ring (Astley's Riding School) near Westminster Bridge in London, where he and other equestrians performed complex riding exercises and tricks. With the addition of acrobats, clowns and jugglers, the modern circus was born – in Astley's Amphitheatre.⁵

There are numerous slipping slides showing riders performing 'jockey acts' with leaps, somersaults, handstands and splits, all while cantering around the ring. Since most riders performed many of the same acts there is no way to determine which rider each slipping slide might represent (Fig. 7). Nevertheless, they do show the popular equestrian acrobatics, not just of the early days of the circus but acts that are still seen today.



The Tailor of Brentford Ride (Fig. 8)

Originated by Astley, the act involved a hapless tailor, Billy Buttons (Astley in costume) needing to reach Brentford (now west London) quickly to cast a vote. As he tried to leap on his horse, the horse would step aside, or buck him off, or run around or even chase the tailor – a lot of continuous knockabout fun. It became legendary in circus history, for it marked the first appearance of a circus clown acrobat. Over the years it was a beloved staple of circus venues, and variations of this act are still performed in circuses today. You can find several fun videos of a modern version of the act on YouTube, for example *Funniest Horse Act Ever* Tommie Turvey and Poker Joe.



7. Slipping slides of popular equestrian acrobatics with unidentified riders



WILLIAM DAVIS

Although the slipping slide image in Fig. 9 is not in any scene from a Lapierre slide, it clearly represents William Davis, a celebrated rider at Astley's Amphitheatre. With flags in hand, he would ride at a breathtaking pace around the hippodrome, leaping into the air while proudly waving his banners.⁶ This act was so popular that traditionally it closed the show. Davis co-ran the Amphitheatre with Astley's son John from 1814 when Astley died and, after John's death in 1821, briefly on his own until 1825. At this point he could no longer afford to run it and it was taken over by Andrew Ducrow who ran it until his death in 1842.

8. The Tailor of Brentford Ride, originated by Philip Astley. Image from a Lapierre slide (top left) and a double slipping slide

9. Slipping slide of William Davis (below)



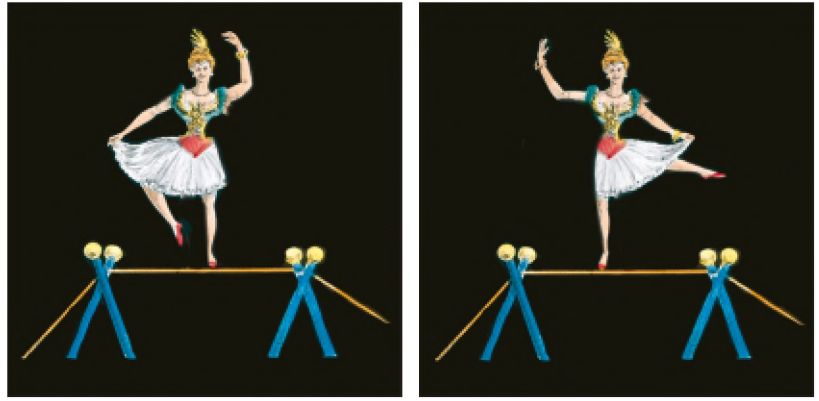
MARGUERITE ANTOINETTE LALANNE (1786-1866) – MADAME SAQUI

Women funambulists were also very popular but did not appear on Lapierre slides. In 1816 one of Napoleon's favourite performers, the celebrated Madame Saqui, the French tightrope walker and rope dancer, came to London. Following enormous acclaim at Covent Garden Theatre she was engaged at Vauxhall Gardens for a tightrope performance. "She mounted the rope at midnight, in a dress glistening with tinsel and spangles, and wearing a nodding plume of ostrich feathers on her head ... Her performance created a great sensation".⁷ She was engaged at the Gardens for four years and is featured in at least one slipping slide (Fig. 10).

CONCLUSION

An abundance of circus slipping slides have emerged during the history of the magic lantern that have been collected and used by lanternists of all ages. Readers who have presented them in shows will know the joy and laughter they can bring to an audience. But, as we have seen, these slides are much more than just a 'fun circus act' in a magic lantern show. Historically they represent the formative years of actual circus performances and performers.

While there are numerous other circus performers and acts that are represented in magic lantern slipping slides, including elephants, trapeze artists, dogs jumping through hoops, monkeys, pigs, lions, tigers, snake charmers and jugglers, the slides reviewed in these articles represent the primary acts from the foundation of the circus and its golden years – acts that after 250 years, still, in their own way, live on in today's circus. The history that I have presented has greatly enhanced my enjoyment, appreciation and presentations of my circus slide collection. I hope it will do the same for you, enhancing your pleasure in equal measure.



10. Funambulist Madame Saqui, who appeared in London

REFERENCES

1. Dick Moore, 'The Lapierre circus magic lantern slides', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2018, pp.317-27
2. A.H. Saxon, *The Life and Art of Andrew Ducrow and the Romantic Age of the English Circus*, 1978, Archon Books, Hamden (Connecticut, USA), 1978
3. Antony Hippiusley Coxe, *A Seat at the Circus*, Archon Books, Hamden (Connecticut, USA), 1980
4. *The Era*, 26 May 1867; see Lee Jackson, *The Dictionary of Victorian London*, www.victorianlondon.org/entertainment/newroyalamphitheatre
5. Mike Rendell, *Astley's Circus: The story of an English Hussar*, Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, London, 2013
6. Saxon, *The Life and Art of Andrew Ducrow*, p.79
7. Thomas Frost, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities*, Tinsley Brothers, London, 1875, pp. 53-54