

FESTIVAL CIRCUS LEADS THE WAY

by BUFF THOMAS



The circus take part in BBC's "Multi Coloured Swap Shop".



Big or small, it's always difficult to ride on a unicycle.

Take a bunch of sixteen lively kids, a pair of stilts, a unicyclist, face paint, costumes, a gorilla and a contortionist and there you have it, The Children's Circus.

It all started back in February 1981 when the Festival Association decided to employ Haggis full time.

Most of you have probably heard of "Haggis". I don't mean the Scottish dish but the clown, alias Mike Alderdice.

Haggis started clowning around at the age of fifteen. After seeing a clown show he decided that was what he wanted to do. When Haggis left school he started working in a hotel, he could juggle a bit before but his skills improved as he spent a lot of time in the kitchen juggling with potatoes, but he wanted to spend more time clowning around, so Mike joined the Craigmillar Festival Society as a Y.O.P. doing circus and drama.

This was where he learned the uni-cycle, stilts and acrobatics.

Y.O.P.'s only last for a year so when Mike's time was up he joined "The Smallest Circus on Earth", but unfortunately it had to come off the road due to bad weather as they were unable to pitch their tent so Haggis moved on — this time his destination was Wester Hailes.

By this time Mike was self employed with his Suitcase Circus. The Festival Association heard about him and decided to employ Haggis for two weeks, during which he took kids in the area for circus workshops. These were a great success so Haggis was taken on full time.

He carried on teaching the kids as he did before but they moved into one group, forming the circus. From then on they started performing to the public as fifteen year old Jim Dickson better known to others as "Jim Bob" explained: "I've been with the circus for one and a half years, since then I've been to Salisbury, Suf-



Concentrating hard and the cyclists are away.



Festival circus unicyclists are busy learning the art in Hailesland

folk and Northampton as well as performing in local shows."

One of the biggest achievements of the circus was their Northampton, Salisbury and Suffolk trip last April. The tour was a great success as Simon Jaquet, co-ordinator of the Festival Association told the *Sentinel*: "The seven kids did really well. They were really together as a perform-

ing unit because each of them was skilled at something. It was very hard work as they were doing three shows a day, travelling round to different venues. We performed in places like churches, schools, market squares, housing schemes, hospitals and pubs. The venues gave them confidence and they learnt how to handle the audiences really well."

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Haggis The Clown.

The tour went down so well that they came home with some promising results as Simon explained: "When we were down South we performed with other children's circuses, one of them being Reg Bolton's Suitcase Circus. The result being that he has asked us to come and perform in 'The Reg Bolton's Suitcase Circus International'."

The Pimlico Festival invited us down to London. Unfortunately we couldn't make it due to lack of funds but we are appearing in the Fringe this year."

Since the circus started there have been a lot of changes, it now has a lot more younger kids involved, the youngest being five. Some of the older kids help Haggis with the teaching, as well as learning themselves. Fifteen year old Diane Pete told us: "I've been

helping Haggis with the playschemes and I also help at rehearsal as well as learning myself. I like the circus, it keeps me occupied."

When the kids join the circus their skills are pretty basic, but gradually they improve. Ten year old Fiona Shearer told us, "I practice with Haggis, sometimes I practice

after school with my friends at acrobatics. I've improved."

One of the circus favourites is the unicycle which ranges from one foot to six feet in height. Ten year old Robert Bett thinks "It's barry." Juggling is also popular although it's hard as ten year old John Stickins explained "I can juggle two or

three balls now. It's hard at first but it's okay once you get the hang of it."

Haggis is now planning to establish circus clubs throughout the area to enable him to get more kids for the circus.

By reading this article you will realise how important the circus is to the kids. Sadly Mike's contract is finished with the Festival Association so more adults are needed to teach the kids. So if you like clowning around, or trying to ride a unicycle with your legs tied in knots why not come down to W.H.E.C. on Wednesday afternoons between 2.30-4.00 for Haggis the Clown's Circus Workshops or phone 442 2292.

As Simon says, "From small beginnings the circus has moved on doing shows not only in other parts of Edinburgh but other parts of the country." It would be a shame to see The Children's Circus fold up as it is definitely a great asset to the kids of the community.



Suitcase Circus leave for Salisbury. Pic: Cathy McGowan.

Wester Hailes at the Fringe

by THURSA SANDERSON

This year Wester Hailes is strongly represented at The Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Bits and Pieces Theatre Group are presenting a new anti-nuclear show by local writer Malcolm McFie with the title "Not So Quiet". Directed by Castlebrae drama teacher Bob Urquhart, the play is set in a small rural community a few months after the holocaust, as local residents begin to come to grips with their new reality.

The Parents Support Group are reviving and adding new sketches to their highly successful "Women Live" show performed at the Netherbow in May with Razzle Dazzle Theatre Group from Pilton. These "Sketches of the Sexes" deal in a humorous and dramatic way with the daily problems and concerns of local women, using mime and movement techniques, and traditional kinds of Theatre like Punch and Judy to get their message across. The Netherbow show was reviewed enthusiastically in *The Scotsman* and "*Scottish Theatre News*" describing the show as ranging from "memorable", "painful" and "stimulating" to "zany" and "outrageous".

The third Festival show in which Wester Hailes people are involved is Reg Bolton's "Suitcase Circus International" at the Theatre Workshop. Members of our local Children's Circus, having impressed Reg with their skill while performing on tour in Salisbury, were invited to take part in this circus extravaganza of acrobatics, clowning, juggling, tight-rope walking, unicycling and tumbling.

Details of the shows are as follows: Tickets for "Not So Quiet" and "Sketches of the Sexes" are available from the Wester Hailes Festival Association and the Fringe Box Office in the High Street. They will also be on sale at the door each day of performance.

BITS AND PIECES THEATRE GROUP "NOT SO QUIET" by MALCOLM McFIE

- Fri. 3rd September W.H.E.C. 7.30 p.m.
Masonic Lodge 7.30 p.m.
- Tues. 7th September Hill Street
- Wed. 8th September Masonic Lodge 7.30 p.m.
Hill Street
- Fri. 10th September Masonic Lodge 7.30 p.m.
Hill Street
- Sat. 11th September Masonic Lodge 7.30 p.m.
Hill Street

Tickets £1.50, £1.

PARENTS SUPPORT GROUP AND RAZZLE DAZZLE "SKETCHES OF THE SEXES"

- Thurs. 2nd September W.H.E.C. 7.30 p.m.
Masonic Lodge
- Monday 6th September Hill Street, 7.30 p.m.
Masonic Lodge
- Thurs. 9th September Hill Street 7.30 p.m.

Tickets £1.50, £1.

REG. BOLTON'S SUITCASE CIRCUS INTERNATIONAL

August 23rd-28th Theatre Workshop 10.30 a.m.
Hamilton Place

Tickets £1.00, 60p.

EASTERHOUSE EXCHANGE

by THURSA SANDERSON

There are two events planned for September 1982 which will be the foundation of what we hope to be a close and valuable collaboration between Wester Hailes in Edinburgh and Easterhouse in Glasgow.

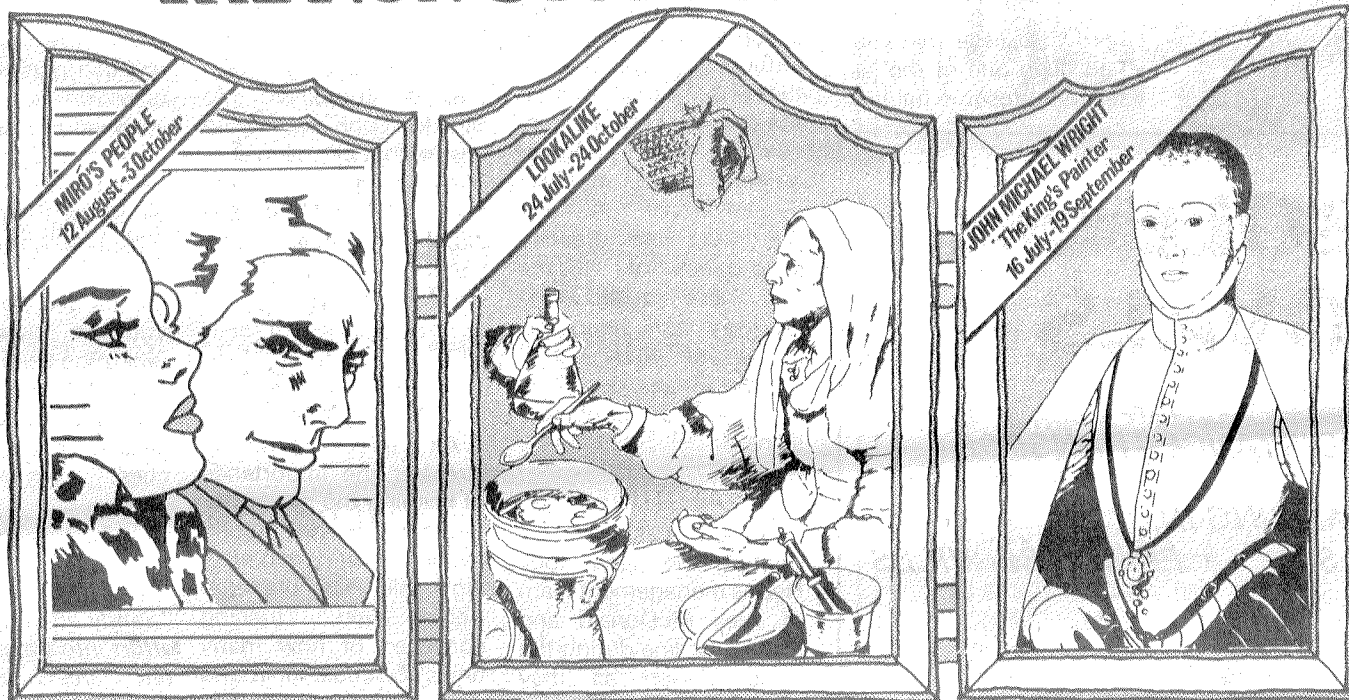
The first, which will function as an introduction between the two communities, is a combined

sponsored walk. On Sunday, 9th September a party of intrepid pioneers will set out from each area and advance its standard as far as Bathgate, where a series of challenges will be met by either side.

This initial contact will be followed up the next weekend with a festival day in Easterhouse (Saturday 25th) with discussion groups, exhibitions, shows, demonstrations and stalls, and a disco in the evening. The plan is to exchange as much information and as many skills and ideas as possible, in order to extend and develop the potential in each community.

The Easterhouse and Wester Hailes Festival Associations are liaising in making plans for both events, but in order for the collaboration to be as useful as possible for each community, we need to get ideas from you. So if you belong to a group or an organisation and you would like to take part, please bring your suggestions to: Simon Jaquet or Thursa Sanderson at the Festival Office in the Community Workshop, 5b Hailesland Place, 442 3063.

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