

Suburban Circus

A prize-winning musical revue performed around the world



Words and music by Cenarth Fox
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Some reviews of this popular musical staged by adults, primary, middle and secondary schools and youth theatre



An amazing spectacle. A must for any school **Quarry Hill PS**

An hilarious spoof on civic services, ideal for schools **Eastern Standard**

Highly recommended as a musical in which to introduce children to theatre **Eastmont PS**

Very colourful and enjoyed by all **Camberwell CEGGS**

A terrific musical for kids on camp The show was a hit! **Stonybrook Camp New York**

The sights and sounds of SUBURBAN CIRCUS are still very vivid to all who were privileged to see that magnificent production **Huntingtower School**

We all learnt a great deal from it and had a terrific time **Endac Youth Theatre**

Very funny, a delight to perform **Border Musical Society**

An exciting, vibrant show, a great season **Sorrento PS**

Once again the show was fantastic. It got great reviews. SUBURBAN CIRCUS was just as good as the first time around. It was a huge success **Beaumaris North PS**

Musical spoof in Marx Bros. style. Deals hilariously with garbage collection, public transport, etc **Nunawading Gazette**

Very well received. The children found the songs easy to sing, enjoyed singing them and felt good about the play **Donburn PS**

We had a lot of fun and it was very well received. Thank you for your musical. We'll look forward to producing more of your shows in the future **Brassall PS**

It was excellent. The kids loved it **Yarra PS**

The show was a great success with the audiences and the kids loved performing it.

Pied Piper Players

Thank you very much. The production took off. It was great fun to stage it again. The students got right in to it. The teachers were all active and the timing was fast. We assigned staff to take charge of each scene and as the producer, this made direction far more efficient.

The Scots School

Suburban Circus won first prize in a play competition as part of Victoria's sesquicentenary celebrations. It has since been staged around the world from New York to New Zealand.

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Synopsis

Suburban Circus takes the form of a circus but the jugglers, clowns, gymnasts and high-wire walkers are the people you meet in your town or suburb. The garbage collectors juggle your garbage, the paperboys and girls ride their bikes and skateboards and the road-workers are superb at balancing their shovels.

The only speaking part in the circus is that of the ringmaster. This part is played by the Mayor or Mayoress or both. And there are many other familiar characters including an average family, dancing dogs, public transport travellers, a traffic cop, housewife, supermarket staff, swimmers at the local pool, meals-on-wheels staff and more.

Costumes and Movement

As all the characters are people you meet in your town or suburb, dressing them should be simple and inexpensive. Mind you the motorists who become clowns may be a little over the top and the Mayor will need the robe of office. But it's fun and cheap. Lots of movement – mime, dancing, etc. Keep plenty of room for entrances, exits and performing. More information is provided in the free *Production Notes*.

Set Design

It's a circus. It could be on stage or on the floor of a hall with the audience sitting around or in a tent or just about anywhere. A small low fence across the front, maybe a giant sign with Suburban Circus at the back and lots of brightly coloured flags. Simple set.



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Characters

MAYOR and/or MAYORESS the narrator/s
MOTHER, FATHER & 2 screaming KIDS the average family
GARBOS garbage collectors - 4 - 8
DANCING DOGS a collection of the local dogs in your district
STATIONMASTER public transport official/railways
TRAVELLERS local folk who use public transport
TRAFFIC WARDEN person who supervises a school pedestrian crossing
SCHOOL KIDS screaming monsters who use school pedestrian crossing
TRAFFIC COP stickler for the law who gets his just desserts
MOTORIST driving a tiny toy car
MOTORISTS who dress and behave as clowns
HOUSEWIFE complete with washing, cooking, ironing and more
PAPERBOYS and GIRLS with bicycles, skateboards, roller-skates
SUPERMARKET STAFF at the check-out counters
SWIMMERS & SUNBATHERS who frequent the local swimming pool
ROAD WORKERS who repair, build roads
MEALS ON WHEELS STAFF who deliver food to elderly folk

A company of 10 to 150 is required. Lots of doubling is possible.

Musical Items

*[Items with an * are non-vocal]*

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Overture* | Orchestra |
| 2. | The Circus Is Here | Company & Ringmaster |
| 3. | Average Family | Mum, Dad & the Kids |
| 4. | Garbo Gavotte* | The Garbos |
| 5. | Dancing Dogs | Fidos |
| 6. | Form A Queue | Commuters & Stationmaster |
| 7. | Traffic Tango* | Traffic Warden & Kids |
| 8. | Be Happy In Your Work | Traffic Cop & Motorists |
| 9. | Housewife's Lament | Housewife |
| 10. | Wheelies* | Paper boys & girls |
| 11. | Check-out Chat | Supermarket Staff |
| 12. | Sunburn Parade | Swimmers |
| 13. | Shovels* | Road workers |
| 14. | Meals on Wheels | Voluntary workers |
| 15. | Finale | Company & Ringmaster |
| 16. | Playout | Orchestra |

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Role Sharing

You can share roles. If you have many performers, everyone can appear in one or more items. If you only have a few performers, then you may need to share roles. The parking cop could be a life-guard and the housewife could be the mother in *Average Family*. Main characters in some scenes can join the chorus or company in other skits.

Skills

One benefit from staging *Suburban Circus* can see your performers learning some simple performing skills. Juggling, bike-riding, clowning, skating, balancing and mime can all be learnt or improved from many of the skits. If you don't have anyone with circus skills, you could organise a session or two with someone to teach general things like basic juggling to your performers. Fun and useful.

Format

The idea is to keep things moving. Introduction, skit, next introduction, next skit, etc. You can use more than one person as the ringmaster. They can be the ringmistress. But like any circus, the acts keep coming. Put plenty of time into planning and rehearsing the entrances and exits. Keep them smooth.

No. 1 Overture

[The OVERTURE is played. The company is on stage behind the curtain or in a blackout. The applause for the overture fades and the music for The Circus Is Here begins. The music is soft to start. The lighting is dim to start. The volume increases gradually and the lights brighten accordingly. At bar 16 there is a big rall. Lift the volume and lift the lights as the full company is seen to sing and welcome their audience]

No. 2 The Circus Is Here

Company

*Big-top, three-ring, spectacle and mirth
Show-time, vaudeville, greatest show on earth
Clown-face, juggler, all your money's worth
Laughter, music, greatest show on earth.
The circus, the circus is here
The circus, the circus so dear
The circus, the circus it's clear
Please stand up and cheer the event of the year.*

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*The circus, the circus we know
The circus, the circus in tow
The circus, the circus aglow
Oh good times will flow so it's on with the show.
There's gonna be fun and frolic here for all, you betcha
A son-of-a-gun to rollick, have a ball, you betcha
A chirrupy chirp of laughter will readily ring the rafter
Stand up and cheer the event of the year.
There's gonna be gags 'n gladness round about, we promise
A waggle of wags and madness, have no doubt, we promise
A jovial jape and jest time will surely supply the best time
Good times will flow so it's on with the show*

Ringmaster *[Speech over staccato singing]* Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to the big-top, to the greatest show on earth – welcome to the circus. You are about to witness scenes both thrilling and dangerous. Never before has such tremendous talent been presented on the same programme. Exciting, terrifying, fantastic feats all on display before your very eyes – tonight! From the far corners of your municipality *[or shire or county or region or territory or whatever]* the *[insert name of local council, town or governing body]* takes much pride in presenting – *Suburban Circus!*

[Song continues until finale. The ringmaster's speech fits neatly into the music so rehearse until it works. After the speech, there's a short kick-line by some or all of the company following by the song at its original tempo. Then a coda. The company could start to exit over the last four bars. Try to avoid the end of a number where it takes three hours to clear the stage. Smooth entrances and exits. Once the music finishes, dim general lighting and highlight a spot downstage to one side. The ringmaster steps into this spot and addresses the audience. It's important that there isn't a gap between the end of the applause and the next speech. Keep things moving]

Ringmaster My friends, the circus is a family and families love the circus. Look around. See the sparkling eyes of the children, their happy parents, their glowing grandparents.

The circus family now salutes the suburban family as we present the greatest group in all suburbia. Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls – the Average Family.

[MUSIC BEGINS. Ringmaster turns upstage and indicates. Bring up lights on performing area and kill spot on Ringmaster who exits in darkness. Average Family enter during the introduction. It's Mum, Dad and a couple of kids. One kid could be dragging a toy dog on wheels.. They sing.

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There are bars where all four performers go "wah!" or some such sound in a loud and dissonant way. Mimic a disagreement over TV selection, doing homework and/or being grounded. Bar 19 is the first of the "wahs". During the dance break at bar 54, the performers could mime family activities e.g. a barbecue where the dog pinches the food, watching TV, playing games or doing whatever families often do in your area. Once the song is over, as with the previous number, the performers can start to exit during the coda. Say over the last four bars]

No. 3 Average Family

Family *We're your average family
Normal, the type you would like to be.*

Mother *I'm a mother*

Father *A father*

Kids *We're a couple of screaming kids*

Family *Wah! We're your average family.*

Father *I've got the mortgage to mow, the front lawn to pay
The rubbish to bring inside.*

Mother *I've got the lunches to wash, the laundry to cut
The freezer to open wide.*

Kids *We've got our skateboards to watch, the telly to skate
And lollies [candy/sweeties] to put aside.*

Family *We're simply normal as nuts and nutty as normal
Folk who can sing with pride.*

[Same routine. Kill lights on the stage, bring up spot down stage to one side.. Average Family has disappeared and garbos [trash or rubbish collectors] are waiting in the wings. Ringmaster steps into spot and addresses audience]

Ringmaster Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls – it's time for skill, for strength and for sartorial splendor. Able to juggle, jitterbug and jive at three, four and five o'clock in your street, the [Insert name of your local town or suburb] Suburban Circus proudly presents – the Garbos!

[Four or more garbage collectors bounce on during the snappy four bar intro. Too many garbos looks unwieldy and makes the juggling more difficult. The garbos wear shorts, sweaty singlets or grubby tee-shirts and have knotted handkerchiefs on their heads. Their act consists of outrageously simple juggling routines involving plastic bags of rubbish - stuffed with balls of newspaper later to be re-cycled – and plastic rubbish bins with any metal clips removed.

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Workshop the routines. See what works. Choreograph according to the music, the performing space and the skill level of your performers. Here are some possible tricks.

- [a] throw all four bins around in a circle*
- [b] throw the bins across with one bin going above the other*
- [c] finish with one garbo catching both or all bins*
- [d] each garbo throws his bag of rubbish in the air and catches it*
- [e] perform [d] and turn around while the bag is in the air*
- [f] throw the rubbish as you did the bins*
- [g] throw the rubbish into the bins*
- [h] throw the bags through your legs or over your head into a bin*
- [I] blindfold a garbo and perform some catching*

The performers must be loud and super-confident. They believe they are brilliant at these routines. Lots of shouting "Oi!" etc and throwing of hands in the air at the end of each trick. The music can be divided into 8 bar sections so each trick could end after 8 or 16 bars. You can play from bar 6 twice or even three times if the routines are deemed worthy of this encore.

The ending is important. From bar 41, all the garbos except one scamper off to the edge of the stage. The one remaining garbo is having trouble getting his rubbish in his bin. Stop the music at the end of bar 44. Someone gives a whistle and a wave with maybe big gesture – Get y'skates on, sunshine - the remaining garbo then races off to join his/her mates as the final four bars are played at a lively tempo.

Big chord at the end during which Ringmaster enters and is lit. Dim all other lighting]

Ringmaster It has been said that man's best friend is a dog. You know, those furry, flea-bitten fidos that follow, fight and frighten your feline friends. Well many a circus performer has a faithful pooch who travels from town to town giving and receiving affection along the way.

But chummy canines are not restricted to itinerant entertainers. In our suburb [or town or district] in backyards, bungalows and bed-sits, there are fidos of every bark and bite.

We love them. They love us. So let's woof it up for those tail-wagging tearaways – the Dancing Dogs!

[MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. Down on Ringmaster who exits and up on performing area as several dogs enter at a lively trot]

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No. 5 Dancing Dogs

Dogs

*Everyone loves a pooch
Man's best friend's a doggie
Everyone knows a mutt's
More fun than any moggie.
Everyone needs a house-mouse
For walkies in the sunshine
A bitch or a bow-wow, great at a pow-wow
Everyone loves a canine.*

*We're allowed to wag our tails [They wag tails]
We're allowed to house some fleas [Scratch imaginary fleas]
We're allowed to bark [Loud] Woof, woof.
But not after dark [Soft] Woof, woof
It's seen as a lark that never will please.
We're allowed to shake ourselves [They shake as if wet]
We're allowed a pole to greet [They cock leg]
But we sure don't the fun bring
It's hardly the done thing
To whoopsie in the street.*

[The performers could have complete dog suits moving on their hind legs. The hoods, with floppy ears, could be part of the suit. Pipe cleaners could be attached to the side of the hood for whiskers. Darken the tip of your nose. More costume ideas are found in the free Production Notes.

At bar 10 it's a lively tempo and the dogs are showing off. At bar 35 where the tempo is now slower, the dogs sing and act. They wag their tails, scratch and shake themselves, etc. At bar 51 there is a dance or movement section. At the appropriate bar, the dogs bark, howl and pant before returning to sing.

As with most if not all the items, the performers could start to exit over the last few bars of music. In this case once they start to sing the final word "street" at bar 86, the dogs could start to disappear. Waving of course.

Crossfade lights. Down on performing space and up on spot for Ringmaster who appear]

Ringmaster *[Avoiding unmentionable deposit from previous act] And now you know why we have so much sawdust in the circus. But where would our travelling troupe be without wheels? How else could we travel this lucky municipality [or shire or region or city or county] to bring you such marvellous entertainment? Why, transport is important to everyone.*

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Right here in your own suburb [*or town, etc*] people use cars, bikes, buses trains, and trucks. [*Aside*] I wonder what happened to Shank's Pony?

[Shank's Pony is an expression meaning "one's own legs". You may have to change this expression if it is not used in your area. Perhaps simply say "I wonder what happened to walking?"]

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, with musical daring and a timetable that'll stop you dead in your tracks, please welcome the Railway Rockettes!

[MUSIC BEGINS. The Ringmaster could turn and indicate the Stationmaster who enters and is lit. The lights dim on the Ringmaster who exits. Dim lighting comes up on the performing area. It is dawn and the Stationmaster downstage maybe dusting an imaginary sign on the station. In the darkness upstage, the travellers enter quietly and freeze in a tableaux]

No. 6 Form A Queue

Stationmaster	<i>Down by the station, early in the morning See the little passengers a-standing in the rain See the stationmaster pull a little overtime You can catch most anything except a train.</i>
Solo 1	<i>The seven-fourteen is delayed</i>
Company	<i>Bop shoo wah-dee, wah-dee wop!</i>
Solo 2	<i>The eight-eleven's overdue</i>
Company	<i>Bop shoo wah-dee, wah-dee wop!</i>
Group A	<i>The special train we didn't cost has definitely been lost</i>
Group B	<i>Ah</i>
Company	<i>And anyway, the driver's got the flu.</i>
Solo 3	<i>The nine-oh-three it won't arrive</i>
Company	<i>Bop shoo wah-dee, wah-dee wop!</i>
Solo 4	<i>The ten-oh-five we cancelled too</i>
Company	<i>Bop shoo wah-dee, wah-dee wop!</i>
Group A	<i>In fact the signals are all red, the guards are home in bed</i>
Group B	<i>Ah</i>
Company	<i>But still we know you'd like to form a queue. The train, we love it though it causes pain There's not a day we don't complain It's overdue again By train, to travel so is inhumane</i>

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*The passengers must be insane
But still queue for their train.
Please walk this way and form a queue.*

[The music increase tempo at bar 20. Bring up the lights here and have the passengers come alive. They are a motley collection of users of public transport. Business people with umbrellas and briefcases, school kids with satchels, school bags, even a mother with a stroller, push-chair.

The song features several short solos. The company divides into two groups for a few bars with one group singing to "ah" whilst the other sings the words. It's meant as a tongue-in-cheek look at train travel. Lots of fun and mock seriousness.

Again the exit is over the music. Depending on how many performers you have, begin the exit at bar 62. The tag [the last four bars] is there for the stationmaster to be the last to leave perhaps waving a flag. The stationmaster could perhaps clip or collect the ringmaster's ticket as the two cross paths. Dim lights on performing area and light spot for ringmaster]

Ringmaster Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, I give warning that the act you are about to witness is filled with incredible danger. We're about to walk that thin line between success and failure, between life and death, knowing that one tiny slip means agony and even worse.

You'll be spellbound, on the edge of your seat my friends as you thrill to the risks and rigours of – the Traffic Warden! [If the school-crossing person in your area is called the lollypop lady or something particular, you could use this expression]

No. 7 Traffic Tango

[MUSIC BEGINS. A man or woman enters dressed as a traffic warden in charge of a school, pedestrian crossing. Dim lights on ringmaster who exits. Light performing area. The traffic warden carries a large lollipop type sign reading STOP on one side and GO on the other.

The warden tangoes forward towards the audience using the stick as a partner. This is dangerous work. Imaginary traffic looms from various directions and the warden issues jerky movements in order to avoid the cut and thrust of traffic. In addition, the warden must stay on the crossing thus requiring excellent balance.

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You may wish to add sound effects of motor cars. They could be soft at first building in volume as the piece progresses..

As the music builds to a climax, the warden moves further forward finishing in the centre of the road or downstage centre front. As the final note of music sounds, the warden thrusts the STOP sign at the audience. Instantly the traffic noises, if used, and the music stops. Silence. You may have the squealing of brakes as cars come to a stop. The warden glares at the drivers – the audience.

The ringmaster enters applauding but receives an icy glare from the warden. Sheepishly and quickly the ringmaster mimes an apology and exits or freezes, glued to the drama unfolding. Pause,. Don't rush things.

The warden looks around then produces a whistle giving a short, sharp blast. Pause. The ringmaster cringes. Suddenly a pack of wild school kids enters and races across the crossing. In a well-rehearsed and safe piece of choreography, the warden is lifted up by the screaming kids and carried offstage. The ringmaster has to take evasive action to avoid the fate of the warden.

Dim lights on performing area and light spot for ringmaster who is shaken by the recent screaming monsters]

Ringmaster Well how's that for rotten luck? By-passed by those innocuous, insignificant motor-cars only to be flattened by that terrifying monster – school kids!

But it's all in the cause of fun, folks. That's what the circus represents – a time to laugh. Maybe it's a smile or a quiet laugh. Perhaps a chuckle. Or why not a good old-fashioned belly-laugh? Without laughter there is no circus. So to bring on those roars, guffaws and squeals of delight – send in the clowns!

[Crossfade lights. Down on ringmaster who exits. Light the performing area where a motorist enters driving a small pedal car. The driver could be far too big for the car and wears oversized clothes with a large L on his/her back and the car. The driver makes the brmm brmm noise of the engine and could do a lap or two of the stage. If the actor is clever, develop this scene and have the driver park the car upstage centre. The driver hops out and exits. Enter the villain.

It's a traffic cop, a parking officer and she/he wears a uniform of sorts and a big red nose. In fact everyone in this item could wear a big red nose. The traffic officer carries a pole with a sign on top. We can't see the sign until the last moment.

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The traffic officer places the sign next to the toy car. Evil grin from traffic officer. The sign reads NO PARKING. A paper plate is produced and the traffic officer mimes writing a parking ticket. The driver enters, sees the situation and rushes to the car. The driver mimes his/her protest, begging for mercy.

The officer is heartless. Aren't they all? The officer points to the sign, the driver pleads, the officer shakes his/her head. All this is mimed. No words are spoken. The driver produces a can of cream from a pocket and sprays the plate with the cream. This is the writing of the parking ticket. The driver continues to beg for mercy.

With perfect timing and complete surprise the driver receives the ticket. The paper plate covered in cream is safely slapped in the face of the helpless, hapless motorist. MUSIC BEGINS. The driver staggers offstage and the officer wanders downstage and sings.

No. 8 Be Happy In Your Work

Officer

*When I get up each morning to start a brand new day
I bounce about, I give a shout and this is what I say.
Be happy in your work, be happy in your work
Instead of a frown, pretend you're a clown
You're sure to make somebody perk.
From joking you must not shirk
No matter if they call you a jerk
You've humour within so slap on a grin
And be happy in your work.*

[In the darkness upstage, various clowns enter and freeze. They could wait in the wings if preferred because they must not upstage the officer singing the recitative and then the chorus at bar 12. The company of clowns start singing at bar 44 when the chorus is repeated. They could bounce on as their singing starts or they could be on stage in dim lighting and once they start to sing, the lights could come up.

At bar 47 there is no singing and this is the time for the clowns to clown. There could a variety of tricks being performed all over the stage and even in the audience. Lots of action. Big, sweeping gestures and movements to exaggerate the slapstick and corny comic routines. Here are some possible activities.

*[a] two or three clowns struggle on the end of a rope which eventually they drag on stage to discover the other end has a balloon or one smallish clown holding the rope with one finger
[b] tough person struggles in vain to lift barbell then puny person picks it up with one hand and walks offstage*

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[c] plastic bucket is filled with water from plastic jugs – then simple switch is made and with much fanfare the water is thrown into the audience – the bucket contains confetti

[d] clown balances long pole which extends beyond audience's view into the roof – clown balances pole on one hand, one finger and does a brilliant job – tag is when clown walks away and the pole remains in place being strapped/tied to the rafters

[e] juggling with small bean bags, tennis balls, etc

[f] juggling with flimsy scarves – this is the easiest as they take time to flutter downwards

Invent other routines, have as many as you like and have them happening simultaneously. Time it well, choreograph it well and it should be a lot of fun. Lots of whooping and applauding and signaling the success of the daring feats.

At bar 79 a dance break is played. You could continue with the clowning or have everyone perform a dance or have some dance and others clown. It's a tap dance so you have one or more clowns bring out some taps and dance. Back into the singing of the chorus with a tag for a big finish. The actual musical tag – the last six bars is not played until the parking officer gets a taste of his/her own medicine. Everyone on stage freezes at the end of bar 151. Pause. Parking officer enters and sniggers or remains sniggering if already on stage. Ringmaster enters with concealed paper plate, approaches parking officer and taps him/her on shoulder. Officer turns and cops paper plate with cream in mush. Cheer from company, TAG begins and everyone exits – someone helping the helpless parking officer. Kill performing area lights, light area for ringmaster who steps into light wiping hands and grinning with glee]

Ringmaster [Wiping any cream from hands or clothes] And who said slapstick was dead? Ah yes my friends, the clowns may make us laugh, but who entertains the clowns?

You see the circus, like life, is a business – a glittering, glamorous galaxy of greatness. But beware. Those sequins may not be silver-lined. Those smiles may smother sorrow.

I wonder, do clowns laugh on the inside? Are smiling stars in love with life? Let's visit the most popular member of any suburban circus – the jester, story-teller, ringmaster, animal-trainer and superstar all rolled into one.

Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls – the housewife.

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[MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. Down on ringmaster who exits. Light a small area on the performing stage. Housewife enters the spot. She - or he dressed as a she - has a trolley basket of washing and through the song mimes folding the clothes or perhaps has a mop and bucket and mimes washing the floor]

No. 9 Housewife's Lament

Housewife *I have sometimes sought life's meaning
'Specially when I'm stuck with cleaning
Nappies, oven, drapes and always smalls
But I've never hit the jackpot
Guess that means I'm just a crackpot
Trapped within these paisley-papered walls.
I can handle rainy days
When the pets and kids bring home the mud
I can stomach skins that graze
With the subsequent supply of blood
I can handle slipp'ry slaesmen
And the tradesmen in the hall
I can contemplate a kitchenm plate
And referee a brawl
But the only thing that so far's
Sent me screaming up the wall is
[Whisper] Daytime television!*

*I am proud to be a housewife
Mother too it's such a great life
Wouldn't swap my lot for [Points] yours
Or [Points elsewhere] yours
Once a year I score some flowers
Get to stay in bed for hours
Then it's on again, twelve months of chores.*

[There is a small four bar tag at the end during which the HOUSEWIFE collects her belongings and exits as lights crossfade. Down on performing area and up on side of stage where RINGMASTER appears - perhaps shaking his or her head at the sadness of being forced to watch daytime television]

Ringmaster And now ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, let's thrill to some skill.
This item will be of particular interest and delight to the younger members of our audience.

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Every suburb and town has its paper boys and girls. Every morning these trusty tearaways ride through sun and slush to bring the classifieds to your corn flakes.

Our circus has its own troupe of terrific tabloid-terrors and here they are – the Sensational Cycles!

No. 10 Wheelies

{You can use cyclists with baskets on their bikes and rolled newspapers therein. Or you could have roller-blade delivery persons or even some on skateboards. Or why not a mix of all and then some? This is a routine similar to that of the Garbos in the Garbo Gavotte. It might be amusing to have the garbos dressed as paper boys for this item.

It's a series of well-rehearsed but simple routines showing the bike-riding or skating skills of your members. The fact they do or do not deliver any newspapers is not important. What is important is what they do with on a unicycle, bicycle roller blades or skateboard.

Tricks could involve the following

[a] riding single-file across and around the stage

[b] going onto and off a small ramp

[c] criss-crossing the stage with one going just in front of the next

[d] riding in pairs with arms linked over shoulders

[e] individual tricks such as riding very slowly, balancing on one wheel, leaping through a hoop

[f] as big finale with all riders linking arms and encircling the stage

The music has two distinct sections. The first is snappy and lively. The second is a much more relaxed waltz tempo. The snappy section begins and ends the routine. You might have some "vehicles" for the fast sections and others for the $\frac{3}{4}$ section.

You could have a large letterbox wheeled on and have the cyclists race past and throw a rolled newspaper into the box. Successful strikes getting a huge cheer. If a paper misses the target you could add the sound effects of broken glass.

The item could end with all cyclists/skaters etc riding off and waving with the RINGMASTER entering at the end on a small scooter. A lap of the stage and the RINGMASTER scoots into position as the lights fade on the stage and his spot comes up. Time it well so the RINGMASTER arrives at the spot just as lights complete their crossfade]

16 Suburban Circus

Ringmaster Every circus requires many props. [*Pats the scooter*] Performers need all sorts of gadgets and gizmos. You, our valued customer, require only one item, just one particular piece of paraphernalia. That's right, you've guessed it. A ticket!

And so it is everywhere. Each suburb and town is teeming with tickets. There are lottery-tickets, theatre-thickets, sporting-tickets, transport-rickets, [*Wags admonishing finger*] parking tickets – in fact receipts and records of everything we buy and sell. Let's celebrate those tickets as we salute – the supermarket!

(MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. Up on performing area as supermarket staff enter and sing. The song begins with many short solos which should be in character i.e. the staff are calling to one another as if in business. Lights down on RINGMASTER who exits. The supermarket staff enter a la robots with zombie-like movements. They form lines as in rows in a supermarket. At bar 33 they sing together with more natural movements but they are still under the hypnosis of slaving over shelves and selling)

No. 11 Check-out Chat

Staff [Solos] *Twenty-eight, twenty-nine
Two fourteen, three fourteen
Sixty-six. Is this a delivery?
Ninety-five. Ninety-six
One-oh-four. Two-oh-four.
Fifty-two. Check fifty.
Thirty-six. Forty-six.
Five twenty-one. Six twenty-one.
Ninety-nine. Price check.
Fifty-three. Fifty-four.
Eight fifty-five. Nine fifty-five.
One hundred. Change please.*

All staff *We know the language of the prices
But we haven't learnt to speak
We know the cost of soup and spices
Check out our check-out technique.
Ideas fail us, they go unexpressed
That's why there's a message pinned upon my chest
We know the cost that merchandise is
But we haven't learnt to speak.*

17 Suburban Circus

(At bar 65 there is a dance section which becomes staccato at bar 81. This could be a big production number. It might involve some large grocery items – soft cardboard boxes being juggles, thrown around, etc. It might involve a game of keeping's off with a customer who could enter for the non-singing section. The shopper could exit, fumbling with groceries as the staff repeat the chorus. Big finish. Actors freeze, applause and crossfade lights. Down on performing area and supermarket staff exit. Up to one side where RINGMASTER steps into spot. The RINGMASTER could be carrying some groceries)

Ringmaster My friends, everyone loves a parade. Everyone loves a circus. So when the circus parade bounces around the big-top, eyes sparkle, hands clap and hearts beat faster.

But the suburb too has its parade. Take a sunny summer's day at the beach, the river, the local or backyard pool. Here we see all shapes and sizes, all manner of mini and maxi material adorning posteriors and parts which perhaps shouldn't be on parade.

Skins sizzle, thighs sigh and backs burn. So, strike up the band for – the Sunburn Parade.

(MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. Down on RINGMASTER who exits, up on performing area as locals dressed for a day at the pool or beach march on and set up for the swimming and sunbathing. Some carry towels, umbrellas, car fridges, etc. They spread out and sing)

No. 12 Sunburn Parade

Company *There are four fat folk a-frying in the sun
There are six slick show-offs somewhat overdone
There are saps with caps perhaps who think it's fun
In the sunburn parade.
There are two tall types a-turning on a spit
There are some small sods who don't know when to quit.
Oh it's hell as well to turn the other bit
In the sunburn parade.
Red raw, we're very trendy but we're red raw
We're very friendly but we're red raw
You wouldn't credit that these
Masters and these mistresses
Could carefully cook their carcasses
But red raw, we join the ranks of all those
Mad dogs and Englishmen
From white to pink in just a wink
A scorcher I'm afraid
In the sunburn parade.*

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(At bar 62 there is an instrumental break. This could take the form of a march past as in a surf life-saving carnival. More popular perhaps in those countries with lots of suns and surf. But this is the equivalent of the circus parade so the more shapes and sizes taking part the better. Everyone returns to sing at bar 82 and there is an 8 bar tag at the end of the number. Use this for the company to make their exit. Crossfade the lights as the swimmers depart and light the RINGMASTER who steps forward)

R'master And from the sting of the sunburn, we move to the sheer skill of the juggler. How often have you seen a simple juggling routine and said to yourself, "I can do that". Not so I'm afraid. Juggling is a science, an art-form which demands incredible concentration and countless hours of practice. *(A touch skeptical)* Well, that's according to our next artistes.

Tonight our circus proudly presents some of the world's smartest jugglers. Please welcome – Men at Work!

[MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. RINGMASTER exits and four or more road workers stroll on in a slow but not drawn-out routine. The secret of their act is that they take a long time and make a big fuss out of doing virtually nothing. They juggle time.

No. 13 Shovels

The workers are dressed in overalls, wear heavy boots and have knotted handkerchiefs on their heads. Perhaps they are the garbos in long pants. Each worker could carry a tool for working on the road. Metal tools could be dangerous and plastic ones are recommended.

During the musical introduction which is punctuated by rests – the workers have to have rests – one or two workers carry a sign downstage and place it to one side. The sign reads MEN AT WORK. The worker/s stroll back – everything is slowish – but is stopped by the others. All mimed. The worker is ordered back to the sign which is flipped or turned around to reveal a new sign. This time it's WORKMEN AHEAD.

At bar 15 the juggling begins. Everyone could lean on a shovel. The first worker could make a big fuss of lifting his shovel horizontal to the ground and at waist height. Then slowly and in mock dramatic style, removes one hand thus balancing the shovel.

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It's pathetically simple but the others applaud although not too quickly. They then repeat this trick so you have all workmen lifting a shovel.

Another trick is to have the workers face each other a slight distance apart. With much preparation – rubbing hands, shifting feet, getting into position – the end result is that the shovel is simply handed to the worker opposite. They make a big deal out of absolutely nothing.

The climax could involve all the workers forming – slowly of course – some sort of formation a la gymnastic spectacular with one worker holding a shovel. It takes an age to get ready. Kneeling and turning is a delicate operation. Good timing required as the workers indicate the solo artiste who then raises the shovel and that's it. Another big fuss over nothing.

Just as the trick [or should that be con] is achieved, a hooter or whistle is heard. The men collapse or break out of formation. A loud voice is heard. This could be the Ringmaster. "Tea-break". The slow workmen are instantly transformed. Four bars of lively music begin and the workmen exit in marked contrast to their previous movements. They fly off for their beloved cuppa tea. Crossfade lights as workmen exit and RINGMASTER steps into spot]

R'master *Tea-break. What a great idea. The circus is an institution, the suburb is an institution and both indulge in yet another institution – the tea-break. In the circus, everyone takes a hand at boiling the billy. And in the suburbs there exists a tribe of billy-boilers worth their weight in tea-bags. Where would we be without – Meals on Wheels!*

(MUSIC BEGINS. Crossfade lights. RINGMASTER exist as group of charity workers enter. They could carry picnic hampers and wear aprons. They sing with pride and happiness)

No. 14 Meals On Wheels

Company *We cook all the meals in the morning
We make sure that everything's done
We hop in our vans with our pots and our pans
And then start on the tucker-trip run.
We knock many knockers 'round lunchtime
We give many doorbells a ring
We then go inside to be greeted with pride
And serve food that is fit for a king.
Meals on wheels, luncheon for your liking
Meals on wheels, hampers without hiking
Meals on wheels, the diners are never seen piking
The grub is so great see them clean up each plate
Of our meals on wheels.*

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[To “pike” is to back out of an arrangement, to opt out. The diners definitely don’t pike on the offer of food. During the instrumental break, the workers could move into the audience serving small items of food – hors d’oeuvres, small cakes, etc – all homemade of course.]

Once the food distribution is over, the workers return to the stage to repeat the chorus. The coda begins at bar 108 and the RINGMASTER enters and goes to his/her usual spot during the tag. Song ends. Applause. MUSIC BEGINS. Immediately the RINGMASTER begins his/her final speech. The entire company enters and sings softly under the speech]

R’gmaster A little something ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, for you to remember the wonderful workers who deliver meals to those we love to serve. And this community service, in the spirit of kindness and friendship is how we end our circus tonight. For you see every town has its performers. There is a part of the circus in every suburb. And it’s the same with the spirit of the circus. This too can be found in each community. We’re one big, happy family. We respect our peers and value our customers. *[Indicates the audience]* Please, join the circus.

[Speech ends at bar 15 and music swells and slows at bar 16. This the finale, the curtain calls]

No. 15 Finale

Company *Big-top, three-ring, spectacle and mirth
Show-time, vaudeville, greatest show on earth
Clown-face, juggler, all your money’s worth
Laughter, music, greatest show on earth.
The circus, the circus is here
The circus, the circus so dear
The circus, the circus it’s clear
Please stand up and cheer the event of the year.
The circus, the circus we know
The circus, the circus in tow
The circus, the circus aglow
Oh good times will flow so it’s on with the show
And be happy in your work
Be happy in your work
Instead of a frown, pretend you’re a clown
You’re sure to make somebody perk.
From joking you must not shirk
No matter if they call you a jerk
You’ve humour within
So slap on a grin ‘cos the
Circus, the circus, the circus is here.*

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[The performers take their bows during the above song. Perhaps one general bow at the end of the song before the curtain is lowered]

No. 16 Payout

Rehearsal Material and Performing Rights

If you wish to stage *Suburban Circus* or any play or musical from **FOX PLAYS**, you must first obtain written permission. Request a Show Application.

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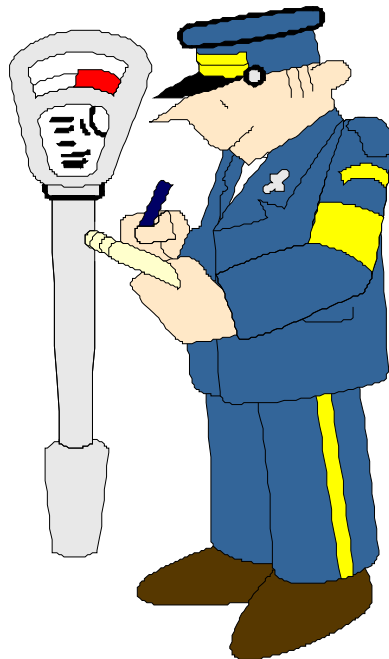
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Some Other Shows from FOX PLAYS

RUBBISH

50 minutes of environmentally correct madness. In the streets under your street [in the drains below] live many fascinating people. There's Can, Plastic, Stick, Smokes, Straw and more. Some recycle their rubbish, some reduce it and others are litter-bugs. The songs are bright and the words spot on re rubbish. It's educationally entertaining and the free activities Booklet has heaps of extra work on the environment.

Doctor Pimples

60 minutes of teenage madness. Dr Pimples is a crazy entrepreneur who cons young people through fashion, music and skincare products. It's a melodrama with over-the-top antics from larger-than-life characters. Dave Sunshine is a pop star with a problem - he's got a pimple. Lulu Smith is tricked into believing that beauty is the opposite of what magazines and models scream from billboards and TV. Leroy is a moron and Spotty and Rash are addicted to chocolate eclairs. But amidst all this froth and trouble is a real dig at how business exploits young people. The simple message is that the right way to judge anyone is not to judge them at all. For more than 20 years this bouncy musical has entertained thousands of happy performers and audiences.

Music!

60 minutes of music, music, music. It's a musical about music. How did it start? How do we hear? Musical theory, instruments, composers and styles. Everything from classical to rock with heaps of comic scenes all designed to educate and entertain. Use a huge cast or as few as 15. Marvellous finale which runs for 7 plus minutes and is all about the language of music. Terrific band parts, stereo backing tape and a great way to teach as part of your performing arts programme.

Some *More* Shows from FOX PLAYS

Germs

Set inside a human, this is the most popular FOX PLAYS musical ever. Staged by adults, youth theatre and junior, middle and senior schools, this is 85 minutes of spellbinding drama with loads of comedy. The songs are fantastic. Marvellous reviews from around the world. The germs are trying to kill the human who fights back. Some germs are planning a mutiny. It's a bloodless coup! The tension builds and the dramatic conclusion is saved until the very last second.

Rat Race

Performed in five countries by actors of all ages. This is a terrific 90 minute musical. The actors are rats in a huge pile of rubbish. They face tremendous pressure and appear doomed until Snortle Tozer arrives. Is he or she a politician, evangelist, con-merchant or all three? The songs are wonderful. The story develops with strong roles for the principals and heaps of work for the chorus. The finale is spectacular. The pile of rubbish is simply transformed into a ticker-tape parade of movie madness. Fantastic reviews from around the world for this moving musical.

Jungle

Another one-set, marvellous musical from Cen Fox. The steamy, eerie set is matched by the magnificence of the costumes as the animals of the jungle face many problems. The young chimps are unemployed and into graffiti. They're up to monkey business. The animals are worried about endangered species of humans - rock stars who can sing, students who spell, politicians who can tell the truth, etc. There's a chance to bring back Tarzan and Jane but things really hot up when a circus comes to town with performing humans. *Jungle* has toe-tapping music, great principal roles and loads of wit and drama.

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