

SECTION 2

GEOFFREY: Good evening, and in this week's edition of 'Focus on the Arts', Jane Hemmington is going to fill us in on what's in store for us at this year's Summer Festival. Over to you, Jane.

JANE: Thank you, Geoffrey. This year, the Summer Festival is the biggest we've ever seen, so there should be something for everybody. This is the third year they've run it and the timing's slightly different: for the last couple of years

it's been around the fifth to seventeenth, but this year they wanted to allow everyone enough time to recover from the first of January celebrations and they've put it at the end of the month.

Q11

The programme has sensational theatre, dance and also a large number of art exhibitions, but the thing the Festival is most famous for is its great street music. For today's report though, Geoffrey, I'm looking at some of the theatrical events that you might like to see; in particular, at this year's theme – circuses.

Q12

I'm going to tell you about two circus performances, but there are plenty of others in the programme. I've chosen these because they represent distinct movements within circus performance. The first is the *Circus Romano* from Italy. As this is a travelling circus, it follows a long tradition by performing in a marquee – which is really like a canvas portable building, usually put up in a green space or car park, rather than in a theatre or stadium.

Q13

Q14

In spite of this, *Circus Romano* isn't at all like the traditional circuses I grew up with. There are no animals – just very talented clowning and acrobatic routines. The show has a lot of very funny moments, especially at the beginning, but the best part is the music and lighting. They're magical. At forty-five dollars it's very expensive anyway – it's really for adult tastes. In fact, much of it would be wasted on children – so I suggest you leave them at home.

Q15

Q16

The second circus performance is *Circus Electrica* at the Studio Theatre. The purists are suggesting that this isn't a circus at all. It's a showcase for skills in dance and magic, rather than the usual ones you expect in a circus. With only six performers it's a small production, which suits the venue well – the Studio only seats about two hundred people. For my money it's the aerial displays which are outstanding as well as the magical tricks – features which are missing from *Circus Romano*. An interesting feature of the show is that the performers are so young – the youngest is only fourteen. But it's still well worth seeing: a good one for the whole family.

Q17

Q18

And finally, as it's summer, you may wish to see some of the Festival performances that are being presented outdoors. Like the famous *Mekong Water Puppet Troupe*, performing in the City Gardens this week. Now, water puppetry is amazing! It's large puppets on long sticks, controlled by puppeteers standing waist deep in the lake. The puppets do comedy routines and there is some terrific formation dancing. This is a fantastic show and the best moment comes at the end – seeing the puppeteers. When the troupe walks up out of the water, you get this amazing feeling. It's really hard to believe that what you've been watching is lifeless wood and cloth. As an adult, I had a great time, but I did note that other older people in the audience weren't quite as taken with it as I was. It's a must for young children though, and that's the audience it's really aimed at.

Q19

Q20

Well, that's all I've time for today, but I'll be back next week with more news of what's worth seeing and what it's best to miss.