

CWM Audio 7

Jens Larson Interview, August 13, 2014

Interview Transcript

Part 2

Peter Shrake: We are back again with James Larson, and after our initial interview, we had a couple of the remembrances came up. You had spent a little time with the Big Apple Circus.

Jens Larson: Right, after leaving the Royal Lichtenstein Quartering Sidewalk Circus, I moved to New York and wanted to see how I could become part of the Big Apple, because I had just really started a few years earlier.

[00:00:30] So, I was finally given the opportunity to join a big bareback riding act that was being put together by James Obey and the members of the circus company that they had, the regular. So I was invited to be part of that. I got to be in the little vaulting number and the pyramid number at the end, and I remember ... I mean, it was a dangerous act for people that were just learning it, because it's not something you learn one day and perform the next.

[00:01:00] There was a lot of bouncing off the ring curb and James ended up in the audience a couple times. Usually he was able to, you know, he did some great stuff, that you just don't see these days. He didn't even use pads and [inaudible 00:01:08] back riders.

And I don't think I've seen it since, back flip on one horse. The flip from horse to horse, full pirouette. It's pretty rare in this country. So it was really fun to be part of that.

[00:01:30] And then I was one of the people bouncing off the ring curb one time. My closest connection to Tito Gaona was having Tito Gaona watching when I flipped off and ended up wedged between the ring curb and the vinyl box seats. Literally wedged. I was totally unhurt, but I was stuck looking straight up at the lights, wondering how I was going to get out of here.

[00:02:00] And the first thing I see is Tito Gaona's face, looking over the top wanting to see how I was and he yanked me out and I was able to jump back on the horse, literally, continue with the act. I'm sure he doesn't remember that or know who I am, but, I do. I remember that very well. So, that's my bareback riding anecdote.

Peter Shrake: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Jens Larson: Oh, the Big Apple Circus, well it was a beautiful show and it's just gotten even more elaborate since then. I've gotten to see it several times, but, when you think about how it's evolved, it actually was quite simple and plain, in a way, back in the early '80s, really. So they were a pioneer in this country of one ring circus. And bringing, you know, higher production values to circus.

[00:02:30]

And let's take ... been a long time that other shows would try to catch up to them.

Peter Shrake: When were you with them? What years?

[00:03:00]

Jens Larson: It was 1983, summer of 1983 and summer of 1984. Yeah.

Peter Shrake: Thank you.

Jens Larson: You bet.