



*An Introduction to Old World  
Entertainers*

# — ENTERTAINER —

## DESCRIPTION

From acrobats to strongmen, from knife throwers to hypnotists, from dancers to ventriloquists, the Empire is full of Entertainers. Some do it for the roar of the crowd and others for the money. Many become Entertainers just to escape the hard life of the Imperial villager. Entertainers travel frequently, sometimes alone but more often in troupes that perform in villages, towns, and cities. Lucky troupes get continuous bookings, sometimes spending months in the same city. The less fortunate scrape by as they can, always looking for a more appreciative crowd (or a less suspicious watch) over the next hill. The very best Entertainers gain Noble sponsorship and earn undreamed of sums of money performing for the upper crust.



## — Entertainer Advance Scheme —

### Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
+5%	+10%	—	—	+10%	—	+5%	+10%

### Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
—	+2	—	—	—	—	—	—

**Skills:** Animal Care or Swim, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire), Evaluate or Gossip, Perception, Performer (any two), Speak Language (Reikspiel), Any one of: Animal Training, Blather, Charm Animal, Hypnotism, Ride, Scale Sheer Surface, Sleight of Hand, Ventriloquism

**Talents:** Any two of: Lightning Reflexes, Mimic, Public Speaking, Quick Draw, Sharpshooter, Specialist Weapon Group (Throwing), Trick Riding, Very Strong, Wrestling

**Trappings:** Light Armour (Leather Jerkin), Any one of: Instrument (any one), Trade Tools (Performer), 3 Throwing Knives, 2 Throwing Axes, Any one of: Costume, One Set of Good Craftsmanship Clothes

**Career Entries:** Herald, Rogue, Thief, Vagabond

**Career Exits:** Chatlatan, Minstrel, Rogue, Thief, Vagabond

## Credits and Further Reading

Article compiled by Dave Allen.

Sources include the *WFRP Core Rulebooks* for both editions, *Shadows Over Bögenhafen*, *The Gotrek and Felix Omnibus* by William King, *The Vampire Genevieve* by Jack Yeovil, *The Dying of the Light*, *Mousillon: Barony of the Damned*, WFB Third Edition *Warhammer Siege*, WFB Fifth Edition *Brettonian Army Book*, *Middenheim: City of Chaos*.

Thanks to Jody Macgregor for his thoughts on Entertainers. Read Jody's in-depth article *That's Entertainment* in issue 21 of *Warpstone* magazine. Two Theatres of Talabheim are described in issues 17 and 20 of *Warpstone*. A transcript of the play *Tintabriel and Aurore* appears in *Warpstone* issue 16.

The Mordheim website includes more articles on the Carnival of Chaos.

See *The Warhammer Companion* for more on Old World Carnivals.

**Hans Hartung - Entertainer**

Hans was born to a poor Delberz family. His elder brothers helped out with his father's rat-catching business whilst Hans, a wan and sickly child for the much of his youth, was left at home to help his mother. Whilst Hans was neither a strong nor athletic boy he was nimble-fingered, quick witted and musically gifted. He soon taught himself to play an heirloom of his father's, an old, battered and scratched cittern. Hans began to busk about the streets of Delberz, and proved popular enough that he was invited to perform sets in the taverns of the city too. His songs are deftly played, but it is his lyrics that draw people to Hans' performances, wry and knowing, sung in a range of voices that often mock the subject of the song with accuracy and some venom. Hans risked getting into trouble with outraged audience members on many occasions, such as his debut performance of the scandalous *Death of Leos von Liebwitz*, but his natural charm and gift of the gab ensured that he usually escaped with little admonishment.

Recently Hans' family have had a hard time of it. The rat-catchers of Delberz have had to adopt a number of new procedures that are time-consuming and costly - all because their have been complaints about some mythical race of ratmen living in the sewers of Delberz. Hans wrote a song that rudely mocked the source of these new procedures: Direktor Liebrecht Schleicher of the Delberz guild for safety and sanitation.

Later that week Hans was winding down from a set when the Direktor approached him. Nan Mahler, a man Hans knew to be a violent thug, was also there. Liebrecht was livid at Hans, and aggressively accused him of many wrongs - greatly exaggerating the insults that Hans had sung in his song. Nan backed Liebrecht up and spat curses at Hans, trying to exacerbate the situation in the hope of justifying some violence.

Hans began to babble excuses, even going as far as claiming that he not only knew of and believed in the fictional ratmen, but that he had also learned some tunes said to enchant them into a wearied compliance. All of a sudden Liebrecht's mien warmed. He called Nan off, shook Hans by the hand and ordered the three of them a very expensive round of drinks. Whilst in his cups Hans agreed to accompany a group Liebrecht had selected to travel to Miragliano in order to learn more about how to combat the ratmen. Hans can't believe his luck - a free holiday in sunny Tilea just to chase after some myth!

Main Profile							
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
29	33	30	31	37	33	34	46*
Secondary Profile							
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	11	3	3	4	0	0	3

\* An advance has been taken in this characteristic.

**Skills:** Blather, Charm, Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10, Gossip +10, Perception, Performer (Clown), Performer (Musician - Cittern), Speak Language (Reikspiel), Swim.

**Talents:** Lightning Reflexes (added to profile above), Mimic, Public Speaking, Suave (added to profile above).

**Entertainers make their living by providing live shows in the cities, villages and palaces of the Old World. They travel widely, either in small bands or alone, performing wherever they think there is a chance of earning some money, or even as little as a free meal or a bed for the night. A very few become sufficiently famous to attract the patronage of the nobility, but the rest live more or less as vagabonds, performing when and where they can before being moved on by the town Watchmen.**

**Gruenliebe the Greasy**

'That was Gruenliebe the Greasy. You may remember him. He used to be court jester in Luitpold's day. His speciality was a nauseating act with trained lambs. When he became too old and fat and slimy to entertain any more, he expanded his business. Now he owns a string of so-called entertainers who clown and juggle and caper in taverns, and turn over a good three-fourths of their earnings to him for the privilege. If the fumbler drops the balls, the minstrel sounds like a basilisk in pain or the comedian uses lines that might just have been topical in the days of Boris the Incompetent, then you can be certain he belongs to Gruenliebe.'

- *Drachenfels* by Jack Yeovil

**Day to Day Entertaining**

There is a great variety of Entertainers who perform in the Old World, Acrobats, Actors, Animal Tamers, Artists, Bunko Artists, Clowns, Comedians, Dancers, Escapologists, Fire Eaters, Fortune Tellers, Hypnotists, Impressionists, Jesters, Jugglers, Knife Throwers, Mimes, Poets, Singers, Storytellers, Strongmen, Tight Rope Walkers, Troubadours, Ventriloquists and Wrestlers are just some of the different performers that can be encountered in taverns and on street corners.

Many Entertainers are individuals who work alone and take an opportunistic approach to making money, busking on street corners or giving impromptu performances in coaching inns, at festivals or any other place that people might gather in number.

Other performers join troupes. Musicians band together in groups, Actors join companies of travelling players and Acrobats, Wrestlers, Knife Throwers and Clowns often travel together as they follow carnivals and other shows around the towns of the Old World.

Entertainers who regularly impress their audience with their talents can find more secure employment. The many theatre houses around the Old World employ companies of actors and musicians, and whilst the pay is not great these Entertainers can console themselves with the fact that they do not have to travel about, that training and equipment are provided by their employers, and that they will have an audience come to them night after night provided they produce a decent show.

The most fortunate Entertainers are those who are employed by a rich noble or merchant. In return for virtuoso performances they may receive a very envious rate of pay and have a room of their own provided for them. They will be asked to play at the whim of their employers, and this can mean having to give a sudden performance at some unusual hours, but they may just as likely to be left to their own devices for lengths of time if their employer is abroad, or just not in the mood.

## Actors

Plays are all the rage throughout the Old World, and are enjoyed by young and old, commoner and noble alike, though the popularity of the theatre means that it can become a target of certain religious and secular authorities who might see certain productions as blasphemous, lewd or seditious.

Actors are one of the most common entertainers to be encountered in the Old World, though large travelling companies and theatres are also likely to require other Entertainers such as Acrobats, Animal Tamers, Artists, Comedians, Dancers, Poets, Singers, Storytellers and Troubadours too.

There are a number of famous actors and dramatists working the Old World, and others whose work, whilst written hundreds of years ago, continues to influence Entertainers.

Most of the plays performed in the Old World are somewhat crude affairs, dealing with a religious subject or a matter of morality, or consisting of little more than a string of bawdy puns and slapstick sketches tied together by a flimsy and unconvincing plot. Generally Old Worlders are quite happy to sit through a heavy-handed religious morality tale, a clichéd drama or a boorish comedy, after all it isn't often that a troupe of actors visits an outlying town or village. For the city dweller though, plays are far more accessible. As a result the demand for more sophisticated fare is strong, and many theatres provide well-honed performances of brilliantly written plays with a high standard of production values.

### Price of Admission

Travelling troupes will tend to perform their works in public areas such as parks or market squares. They often don't ask for money until the play is over, relying on the generosity of their audience. Cannier managers of travelling troupes demand that their audience raise a certain amount of cash before the play begins, or threaten not to continue the play after the interval unless the troupe is paid.

City theatre prices are more fixed. Poor theatres charge little for seats (The Fallen Heaven in Mousillon charges 1 pence for standing space and 3 pence for a chair), hoping to recoup costs through sales of beer and snacks. Better quality establishments are of course more expensive (Anselmo's in Altdorf charges 10 pence for a seat and boxes are available for 3-6 shillings, prices for premiere performances or operas are even higher).

Actor's Skills, Talents & Trappings
The Entertainer career gives multiple options, and some of them are more suitable for Actors than others.
When choosing skills almost any choices from the Performer skill could suit an Actor, though Performer (Actor) is an obvious choice. Other apt choices are Performer (Storyteller), Performer (Acrobat) and Performer (Comedian). Blather is the most obvious choice from the optional skill list.
Of the optional Talents list Mimic and Public Speaking make good choices for an Actor.
From the Trappings list an Actor would need a Costume and Trade Tools (Performer) to represent their make up and other kinds of theatrical accessories.
Whilst many jobbing actors learn speeches by listening to and repeating their words, actors at city theatres will be expected to be literate in order to learn their scripts. It may be apt for GMs to allow an urban actor to swap one of his random starting Talents for the Read/Write Skill.

**Sergeant Pfeffer's Fiery Hearts Club Band** It was twenty years ago this Aubentag that Sergeant Pfeffer put the band together to play at ceremonies and events for the Knights of the Order of the Fiery Heart. They've even played for the Grand Theogonist himself, back in the day, before they split due to artistic differences to pursue various creatively rewarding but financially disastrous solo careers.

Now, in order to get the bailiffs off their backs, the group are reforming, but Pfeffer is a little perturbed by the attitudes of some of his band mates. Johan has been hitting the Weirdroot hard, and is talking a great deal about some grand vision to juxtapose Averland folk music with Tilean Operatics whilst a chorus of halflings sing about how many music halls it would take to sate the Great Maw, or something like that.

Jeorg has been travelling a lot, and has studied the (admittedly impressive) droning folk music of Ind. However, whilst there he has picked up a taste for some of the natives' customs and beliefs, and Pfeffer is terrified that some devout Sigmarite might hear him expounding on blue-skinned gods with multiple arms and something he calls 'enlightenment'. It's a sure-fire way to get them all burnt at the stake, frankly.

Worst of all though is the usually erstwhile and dependable Ricard, the greatest percussionist of his time, surely. However, the fool has got it into his head that he can sing! He keeps on approaching Pfeffer with pages full of his childish lyrics, stuff like "I want to be in a Bog Octopus's Garden" or "We all live in a Purple Nautilus".

Pfeffer is beginning to panic, they are due to play at the Imperial Palace itself to mark their reformation. If he can't bring his band mates back on track soon it's sure to mean his ruin, at the very least!

**A Seditious Season** The Talabheim cell of the Purple Hand have been dogged by bad luck recently, all their attempts to work their members into spheres of influence within the city have come to nothing, as the city's labyrinthine legal systems have foxed all their attempts to pose as people they are not, or enter roles they are not fully verified for. They did try and counter this by training a member in the law of the city. Whether this move displeased Tzeentch or whether his studies were simply too strenuous is not known, but the man became irrevocably insane within a month.

They did have one small success, in that one of their number has become a member of the board of directors at The Temple Theatre.

Excited plans to produce a play glorying in the Great Mutator were quickly quashed, such things had been attempted before and the eyes of the enemies of Chaos kept a close watch out for such things. A season of controversial plays, such as *Brave Konrad & the Skull-Faced Slaughterer* or *Strange Flower* was also vetoed as too unsubtle. Instead the cultists plan to make the next season one long and intermittent ritual. Who knows what powers might be invoked by having an altered man trace a pentagram in public on Geheimisnacht, or have nine maidens dance in a circle on a night when Morrslieb waxes full, or have the young audience of a Mondstille pantomime chant "Njawrr'thakh 'Lzimbar" in unison?

The wizards of Talabheim have begun to notice shifts in the currents of the Aethyr, and have heard reports of nightmarish visions or brief visitations of daemonic creatures around the city. Worried, they are investigating the source of these disturbances.

### Adventure Seeds for Entertainers

**A Stack of Pamphlets** Hanna Kiefern is a pretty young Stirlander who dances in the taverns of Wurtbad's Stahlstrasse. She puts on a particular show in the Splintered Skull, where customers who are bored of the regular rat baits can pay money to have a private dance with her. For a few extra shillings she'll shed a few garments, though she doesn't go so far as to allow her dance partners to touch her.

Recently someone has been leaving pamphlets on inn tables or on park benches, and the contents of these pamphlets are always full of allegations about members of the town's influential Vintner's Guild. Hanna has no real interest in the pamphlets, or whatever political wrangling has led to their publication, but it does interest her that one of her regular customers, a wiry yet sweaty little man who calls himself Ralf, has been exceedingly furtive about their meeting arrangements recently. He has also taken to tipping her very generously and asking her to let him know should anyone want to talk to her about her customers.

Hanna is wondering what to do. She hasn't told Leopold, her manager, about these matters yet, as she is worried he will just use it as an excuse to raise his fee. She suspects that Ralf is a member of the guild though, as most rich people around Wurtbad seem to be. Perhaps she could make a bit of money here...

**A Family Affair** A new run of *The Rats of Hammstadt* is being performed at the Rotunda Playhouse in Altdorf's run-down East End district. The play is unusual in that the director has cast one of the feuding families in a flattering light. The impoverished and sprawling Stahl family are usually as venal and myopic as the other members of the town, but in this production they are cast as a poor yet noble clan who urge the other families to cooperate, but are tragically ignored.

This has caused some outrage in Altdorf's Rat Catcher community, as the other families claim that the Wiesel family have obviously had some say in the production in an attempt to satirise the more successful Fretchen and Hermelin families. Asked to comment on the situation by a writer for the *Altdorf Speiler*, the renowned playwright Detlef Sierck has claimed that he would "never have sunk to such a vulgar analogy in the first place", and so washes his hands of the affair.

Pieter Hermelin, one of the more senior members of his family, is curious to learn the truth of the matter, and has put the word out to some underworld contacts of his to see if some larcenous types can be hired to find or fabricate some evidence of the Wiesels' involvement with the play.

**Cobweb Castle** He should have seen that it would end up in trouble. Werner Gruppental, manager of The Geheimnisstrasse Theatre, is always looking for ways in which to improve the verisimilitude of his renowned sets, so when his latest season began with a production of the popular melodrama *Cobweb Castle* he thought using a captured giant spider to spin all the webs he required would be a boon.

However, the creature escaped and has eaten the caretaker. Gruppental needs to keep it all hush-hush, as he didn't technically acquire all the licences and other legal permissions needed to use the animal in this fashion. He is putting the word out, on the quiet, for a group of people who might be able to help him with his "pest problems".

### Detlef Sierck – The Greatest Dramatist of his Generation

*'Not just a play, my dear Guglielmo! The play. The play that, if it had ever been produced, would have lived forever in the minds and hearts of those mortals lucky enough to see it. The play that would have sealed my reputation as the premier genius of my day.'*

Detlef Sierck is 5ft 7in tall, with brown hair and eyes, and a plump appearance from years of fine living. He cuts a dashing figure in his fine silks and feathered hat.

Detlef was born in 1471. Despite an inauspicious upbringing (Detlef's father was little more than a thug who had cornered the Nuln vegetable market by assembling a gang and smashing other traders' stalls) he went on to attend the Nuln University and was taught by Dorian Diessl, who was also a playwright. The two did not get on well, and the student was even ejected from some lessons when his points exposed the outmoded ideas of his tutor. Detlef moved to Middenheim and went on to become the brightest star of the Konigsgarten theatre, an imposing and monumental building. It was the site of his greatest failure, *The History of Sigmar* which saw him earn a debt of 119,255 gold crowns. After the play's failure the theatre was burned to the ground and Detlef was jailed in Altdorf's Munsden Keep with little hope of seeing freedom again. Fortunately he was liberated in order to dramatise the defeat of the Great Enchanter Drachenfels by Oswald von Konigswald. The debut saw strange events though, including a rumoured attempt on the Emperor's life and the manifestation of some fell creature. Had he died at the hands of the monster that night he would have been remembered as nothing more than a minor imitator of Tarradasch who showed promise he would never fulfil. He survived though and went on to thrive, despite constant controversy and rumours of some odd companions.

Detlef is a runaway success, his plays are brilliantly crafted, laugh-out-loud funny and he is, usually, able to get away with a degree of satire, social comment and lampooning of authority that would see some of his peers in gaol. He is lauded by the Emperor himself, receives regular praise in the critical pages of the *Altdorf Speiler* and is beloved of the common folk of the Empire. Even critics who hate him personally (and there are a number of them) acknowledge him at least the equal of Jacopo Tarradasch. Only the wilfully contrary and the critically reactionary would be comprehensively dismissive of his body of work.

Main Profile							
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
40	40	34	33	39	60	32	55
Secondary Profile							
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	16	3	3	4	0	0	0

**Career Path:** Merchant (Manager of the Vargr Breughel Memorial Playhouse), ex-Scholar (Playwright), ex-Entertainer (Actor), ex-Student.

**Skills:** Academic Knowledge (the Arts), Academic Knowledge (Genealogy/Heraldry), Academic Knowledge (History), Blather, Charm +10, Common Knowledge (Bretonnia), Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10, Common Knowledge (Vampires), Evaluate, Gossip +10, Perception +20, Performer (Actor), Read/Write +10, Search, Speak Language (Breton), Speak Language (Classical), Speak Language (Kislevian), Speak Language (Reikspiel) +20, Swim.

**Talents:** Etiquette, Lightning Reflexes (added to profile above), Mimic, Public Speaking, Streetwise, Suave (added to profile above), Super Numerate.

**Trappings:** Good clothing, dagger, vial of ink, quill, dozens of sheets of paper.

## Famed Thespians of the Old World

**Jacopo Tarradasch** Writing circa 2300, Jacopo Tarradasch has been regarded for the last two centuries as the finest playwright of the Old World. Tarradasch's plays often concern religious themes, which some scholars say is an obsession of his, whilst others claim is merely a fashion of 24th century writing. He cleverly included comic relief in his tragedies and tragic moments in his light works. He also acted in many of his own productions. Jacopo had some limitations though, for example some critics say that his female characters are overly similar (the veracity of this claim is one of some debate though). He was also reputed to be less skilled as an actor and director than he was as a writer. Despite this he remains very highly regarded by most theatre goers in the Old World, though recently his star has been somewhat eclipsed by that of Detlef Sierck.

**Lilli Nissen** A vain and spoilt prima donna who is most comfortable when surrounded by wooden and untalented actors in order to make her own performances seem better in comparison. She has the ability to make audiences love her, even if they would find her much less appealing in person. Lilli goes nowhere without her astrologer and personal sycophant, Nebenzahl, who she treats as little more than a valet and messenger. She was a part of Detlef Sierck's company for the production of *Drachenfels*, but quit the show after some unpleasant and eerie events began to affect rehearsals. She continued acting, but after the failure of a Marienburg production of *The Romance of Fair Matilda*, and the ego-bruising event of being offered her first 'mother' role, Lilli (to the relief of her co-stars) retired from the stage.

**Laszlo Lowenstein** A tall, gaunt actor famous for his imposing and melodramatic roles. In a Nuln production of Tarradasch's *Immortal Love* he had played the god of death. For seven years he was the actor-manager of the Temple Theatre in Talabheim. He then moved to Altdorf where he performed a critically acclaimed Baron Trister in a production of *The Desolate Prisoner of Karak Kadrin*. Laszlo joined Detlef Sierck's company for their debut performance of *Drachenfels*, but he disappeared during the debut performance. Rumours persist that Laszlo was a man who harboured dark secrets, that he became a conduit for some kind of daemoniac possession, and that his actions led to an attempt on the Emperor's life during the first performance of the play.



## The Carnival of Chaos

*A foul and repugnant odour filled Demitri's nostrils as an uncomfortable burning sensation grew upon his chest but he couldn't take his eyes off the play, utterly lost in the unfolding drama. His wife and child, sitting at the front of the stage, were a distant memory. Now only he and the bizarrely macabre players existed. The Knight Panther slipped again and Demitri laughed out loud. A plague daemon bore down upon the play's unlikely hero and the enraptured farmer marvelled at its realism. Eyes widening, Demitri stared with incredulity as the plague creature swelled, stomach bloating as if filling with stagnant air.*

*A shape with what looked like arms and legs pawed within, stretching the flesh thin like clinging mucus.*

*Something was wrong. The plague creature's mouth distended to agonising proportions but Demitri couldn't look away. It belched forth a tiny daemon creature that sat wallowing amidst a foul miasma of vomit and pooling slime from the creature's stomach.*

*The charade was revealed for what it was; a conjuration of Chaos. Slime trails left by the actors spat and bubbled. Human eyeballs, heads; real corpses diseased and rotting were strewn about the stage. These things wore no masks but were daemons themselves!*

No one knows from whence it came, the dreaded Carnival of Chaos. Some have rumoured that it was once a gypsy caravan from the east of the Empire, wandering folk that brought their colourful fare from village to village entertaining the poor rural folk of the Empire with their lavish shows and stage plays. If this past is the truth then what it has become in the present is far more sinister and deadly. Still it wanders the rural backwaters of the Empire, in a colourful cavalcade of wagons, its folk dressed in the colourful finery of travelling players, bringing sonnet and song to excitable villagers and peasants.

Upon reaching a new settlement, these outlandish showmen erect their stage and entertain the poor rural folk with songs and plays of the dark days of the Empire. Tales such as: *The Emperor's True Face*, *Orfeo and Pustulate*, *Papa Noigul's Festering Children* and *A Midsummer Nightmare* wow the enraptured throng.

Strongmen perform feats of incredible prowess to the adoration of the crowd, whilst players in garish, grinning masks juggle balls, knives and flaming brands. As the crowd's numbers increase, a fool in bright jester's garb with an inflated pig's bladder on a stick leaps from one enthralled watcher to the next joking and cackling, poking and prodding.

It is only when the show reaches its blasphemous climax, as the sun begins to set, that the truth of the Carnival of Chaos is revealed in all its putrid, festering glory. For these are no mere wandering thespians and entertainers. When the players perform their final act, known as the *Dance of Death*, the enchantments covering their true visages slowly slip away revealing them to their blissfully ignorant audience for they are cavorting, cyclopean daemons with rotting flesh hanging from yellowing bones. What were originally considered intricately decorated masks and cleverly applied make-up is soon revealed as the players' true horribly mutated faces, covered in pustules and pox-ridden lesions. As the villagers' expressions turn from those of elation to abject terror at the sight of these horrific visions the slaughter begins. By now most of the folk who made up the cheering audience would have already succumbed to the virulent diseases spread by these malevolent players. The insidious Carnival Master, accompanied by his cackling fool, rounds up those unfortunate women and children that remain alive, taking a finger from each of his new brides, exclaiming "You're my wife now!"

The survivors are then led away to an unknown fate and the village is left deserted, its inhabitants and livestock killed by innumerable diseases and plague.

- From *The Carnival of Chaos* by Steven Hambrook

## Entertainers and Chaos

Entertainment can be a vehicle used by Chaos cults. In particular many travelling shows have provided a front for cults - travelling from village to village and preying on the people who come to view their shows.

Many forms of entertainment call for social change and upheaval with almost as much vehemence as any Agitator, and thus they can become corrupted by Tzeentch and twisted to his own ends. Tales of a Carnival of Change that travelled the country are told. The carnival carried with them a large ornate looking glass that looked directly into the shifting realm of their loathsome and inscrutable god, and they were said to produce this mirror at the end of shows, causing all who gazed into it to transform into a hideous and mewling Spawn of Chaos.

Entertainment is also a pleasurable experience for many, and thus some Entertainers throw their lot in with Slaanesh. Musicians and artists are often rumoured to have pledged their soul to the Prince of Chaos in order to receive unholy inspiration. This is such a commonly understood phenomenon that any Entertainer who suddenly and unexpectedly improves their act can become the subject of rumours suggesting that they have done a deal with the Lord of Pleasure. More than once a talented cittern player has been put to the fire just because he started to practice regularly.

However, there certainly are Entertainers who have thrown in their lot with Slaanesh. The people of Middenheim tell of a cross-eyed piper whose dulcet tunes so charmed children that they would follow him wherever he went. He was certainly inspired by the deity, but for what dark purpose it is probably best not to expound upon. The pie-eyed piper attempted to misdirect a children's parade away from the main streets of Middenheim into a warehouse in one of poorer quarters of the city. In this he was fortunately thwarted, but he remains at large and the blame for any disappearances of children in the City of the White Wolf is often laid at his door.

Despite all this the Chaos power who has the closest bond with Entertainers might well be Nurgle. Followers of the Plague Lord often adopt the mien of a carnival, a cavalcade of Nurgle; an almost endless array of circus caravans and gypsy wagons all covered in banners and flags and accompanied by hordes of beggars, cripples and other poor unfortunates. The wagons are often in no better condition than the cultists within, their shrouds are tattered and rotten, their frames split and bent, and their metal-work pitted and rusted. Within the wagons, however, all is bustle and activity as the cultists prepare for their show. The owners of the wagons muster their charges whenever they reach a new village, producing shows dedicated to the joyous celebration of their own physical corruption and the pestilent gifts that they willingly and generously bestow on the rapt audiences who have the 'good fortune' to attend their shows.

So fond is the Plague Lord of his followers' attempts to praise him in this manner that he even assigns his daemons to these travelling companies. Tiny and jubilant Nurgling stage hands might help move scenery and props between scenes, and a Plague Bearer might prompt a dithering actor who forgets his lines in a morose droning voice.

Followers of the Blood God do not care for such distractions and tend to view slaughter as the only form of entertainment worth partaking in.

## Some Old World Theatres of Note

**Aardbol Theatre** Located in the Goudberg district of Marienburg. The theatre is famous for productions appealing to the "common man".

**Anselmo's** A theatre on the Breichtstrasse in Altdorf. The theatre directors have a reputation for being somewhat conservative, and have been accused of being wrapped up in regurgitating two-hundred-year-old productions of Tarradasch's lesser works for burghers and merchants who come to the capital (and feel they have to snore through a play whilst in the city).

**The Fallen Heaven** A theatre in Mousillon hosting bills including dancing girls, saucy comic sketches, singers, bad comedians and more dancing girls.

**The Geheimnisstrasse Theatre** An Altdorf theatre, well respected for its solid productions of major works.

**The Konigsgarten Theatre** This imposing and monumental building is situated on the outskirts of Middenheim's Royal Gardens, near the Temple of Sigmar. Detlef Sierck used to be a playwright in residence here and it was the site of his greatest failure, *The History of Sigmar*. The theatre was burned to the ground by an angry mob after the failure of the play, but has since been rebuilt and refurbished (though some patrons say it lacks the grandeur of old).

**The Marienburg Playhouse** A somewhat conservative institution, but the largest in the Tilean city, which has banned luridly melodramatic productions for being overly morbid and likely to incite public disorder.

**The Nyesnavistny Theatre** Located in Talabheim. Offers cheap entertainment and packs the crowds, of all classes, in. The theatre is particularly famous for plays by the co-owner Josef Schatstufel. Rumours abound that Schatstufel is a political radical.

**The Temple of Drama** This theatre in Altdorf is known for staging a number of brave experimental productions that meet with more critical acclaim than financial success.

**The Temple Theatre** Laszlo Lowenstein was actor-manager of this theatre in Talabheim for seven years. A conservative theatre that produces well-known works.

**The Rosae Theatrum** A purpose built theatre in Gisoreux, whose players sometimes journey to Marienburg as a travelling troupe performing a variety of plays on the way.

**The Royal Theatre** Its full title is 'The Theatre Illustrious of his Royal Duke', this is a huge and impressive building in Talabheim and it is very much the theatre 'to be seen in'. There is a fierce rivalry between The Royal Theatre and The Nyesnavistny Theatre.

**The Vargr Breughel Memorial Playhouse** This large and opulent theatre in Altdorf used to be the Beloved of Shallya, which specialised in under patronised but uplifting religious dramas. It subsequently became the home for Detlef Sierck's company and has become a very popular destination for theatre goers in the city as it regularly stages new works by the popular playwright. The theatre is rumoured to be haunted by the ghost of Bruno Malvosin, who was once the playwright in residence at the playhouse.

**The Von Blech Theatre** Located in Nuln, a theatre frequented by the higher end of Nuln society and is particularly famous for its operas.

### The Attitude of the Authorities to Actors and Plays

Plays are a very popular form of entertainment in the Old World, to the degree that some sections of society can come to view them as a threat, particularly as many plays choose to send up authority figures, satirise current events and deal in controversial subject matter. Some members of the aristocracy and the clergy take the view that all play acting is intrinsically immoral and seditious. Even morality plays and religious works can be criticised for seeming to prefer the position of one member of the Old World pantheon over another.

For the most part though, those who wish to see a blanket ban of plays put into place know they are onto a losing battle, this form of entertainment is simply too popular, and preventing people from watching plays would certainly lead to agitation, demonstrations and the risk of widespread civil unrest.

So rather than a wholesale attempt to prevent plays being performed the moral guardians of the Old World tend to find something to complain about in regard to any particular performance of any particular play, whether it be criticising *Brave Konrad & the Skull-Faced Slaughterer* for being so unremittingly violent, or claiming that *The Infernal Machinery of Desire* leads people to consider suicide, or wanting to ban *Vengeance of Vaumont* because it was written by a mutant (a Bretonnian mutant to boot). Rather than attempting to outlaw plays altogether the authorities find they can cause far more fuss if they try to ban each and every play they disapprove of for some reason or another based on it's individual characteristics. In the main these attempts are unsuccessful, and some critical commentators have noticed that if the authorities really didn't want people to see a play then they should just keep quiet about it, as the performances of many plays have received a useful publicity boost as a result of any controversy that they provoke.

Some theatres have even tried to engineer their own bad press in order to boost audience attendance. A week after the opening run of a Temple of Drama production of *Cobweb Castle*, which had met with an indifferent critical reception and low audience numbers, a priest of Sigmar was regularly seen stood in front of the theatre railing against the corrupting influence of such lurid melodramas. He was later unmasked as a member of the theatre company and now resides in Mundsens Keep, awaiting trial for impersonating a member of the priesthood.

### Common Perceptions of Actors

Whilst the normal folk of the Old World do not tend to heed the voice of the moral majority in regard to shunning the theatre they do, however, tend to view the lifestyle of actors with some disdain. Many Old Worlders who happily attend productions of plays would balk at the idea of their son or daughter joining the theatre

This view tends to stem partly from the larcenous activities some travelling companies indulge in in order to supplement their incomes. Members of many troupes, whether or not they are travelling players or a company at a theatre, are treated as potential thieves in much the same way that Halflings are. Furthermore actors are also dogged by persistent, and often unfair, rumours that they prefer the company of their own sex.

### Orfeo

*'Nor am I, begging your pardon, a minstrel. I could not presume the skill of an elf, though my art serves well enough for the accompaniment of such songs as humans sing, and for the better forms of dancing too.'*

*'I will give them an honest account of my nature and skills, I will tell them I was a passenger on the ship, bound for the great cities of Araby, where I hoped to amuse rich men with songs and stories, and learn some new tales which, in the course of time, I might bring back to the lands of Estalia and Bretonnia, and even to the Empire itself.'*

Even at 40 years old, Orfeo can still turn the ladies' heads. Standing at just over 6ft 2in and slender of build, Orfeo retains the appearance of a man half his age. His poise and manner have stolen many a woman's heart.

At the age of 8, Orfeo was abandoned in the forests of Breton. He remained there for the next four years, fostered in a small community of wood elves. It was there he learnt how to play the lute to a standard only surpassed by the elves themselves. But even though he was happy with the elves, Orfeo knew that he did not truly belong. He decided to make his own way in the outside world, living off his skill as a musician. Since then Orfeo has drifted wherever his fancy took him.

Orfeo is a likeable enough chap. He has a quick wit, a gentle manner, and an unerring feel for what is just and true. What causes him problems and gets him into trouble, is his curiosity: he hates to think he is missing something. He will often be in over his head before taking a breath. Some have even called him reckless. Orfeo himself thinks that's a little strong, though deep down he knows it's true.

Orfeo can be encountered almost anywhere within the Old World. As a wandering player (he is loathe to call himself a minstrel), he can be found in any roadside inn plying trade for a meal and a bed. What's more, given Orfeo's natural curiosity, any suggestion that there is adventure to be had will see him first in the queue to apply.

Main Profile							
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
50	35	34	36	53	35	32	40
Secondary Profile							
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	11	3	3	4	0	0	0

**Career Path:** Minstrel, ex-Entertainer (Musician).

**Skills:** Blather, Charm +10, Common Knowledge (the Empire) +10, Common Knowledge (Border Princes), Common Knowledge (Albion), Gossip +20, Perception +10, Performer (Musician - Lute) +10, Performer (Singer), Performer (Storyteller), Read/Write, Speak Language (Reikspiel) +10, Swim.

**Talents:** Etiquette, Lightning Reflexes (added to profile above), Mimic, Public Speaking, Suave (added to profile above).

**Trappings:** Rough travelling clothes, suit of fine clothes, rapier, knife, lute, other items as the GM sees fit.

### The Lay of Lipstrangle

Today the final battle of Karaz-Lumbar is remembered in the *Lay of Lipstrangle*. This beautiful and haunting ballad traces the actions of one Quango Lipstrangle, the Halfling cook who, according to legend, stemmed the Orc attack on the west wall by heroically pouring a cauldron of boiling oxtail soup onto the scaling teams below. A memorial to the defenders now stands upon the spot where the Dwarf chieftain, Dumwin Stoutbelly, fell to the Giant Grimsmirk Danglejaw. The moment is touchingly recalled in the lay:

*'Nay! Hold! Go back!' Thus spake the Dwarf,  
Through all the smoke and fire,  
'Avaunt! Arroit! Go home! Naff off!  
Depart or face my ire!'*

*Then Danglejaw surveyed the breach  
And dragged his body through,  
Espied the Dwarf and judged his reach  
Then bit the fool in two.*

**Dwarfs** It is not completely unknown for dwarfs to tread the boards, but those dwarfs that do risk disownment from disapproving communities and kin and, as a result, dwarf actors are very uncommon. It is something of a theatrical tradition in the Old World to cast dwarfs in more comical roles, making light of their relative shortness, ill-temper and clumsiness. Members of local dwarven communities can take umbrage at this and regularly protest against the representation of all dwarfs on the stage as comic relief. Perhaps it is this stereotype that has led dwarfs to take a dim view of actors, or perhaps it is the dim view that has provoked playwrights to mock dwarfs. It is a good idea for theatre managers to mollify these complaints, as despite the hard feelings involved a great many dwarfs work in the theatre as scene shifters.

Whilst not known for their vocal grace, the stamina and passion of the dwarfs can make for the arresting performance of songs. The renowned Dwarf Valley Choirs perform regularly at such prestigious events as the Middenheim carnival. The powerful lungs of dwarf horn players make them highly sought after by the conductors of orchestras and many songs composed by dwarfs are highly regarded by those with an appreciation for the lachrymose - or for a good tune to bellow whilst stinking drunk in a tavern.

**Other Races** Ogres tend not to have much in the way of a culture of entertainment beyond pit fighting and bellowing at each other. Radical composers of some Tilean operas have tried to make use of ogre mercenaries to add a bass section, of sorts, to their works. The ogres' poor memory for lyrics and tunes tends to render the results of such experiments unimpressive. Ogres tend not to appreciate people laughing at them either, and so an ogre entertainer really is something of an alien concept.

Whilst many of the other races have some grasp of musicianship and performance, these tend to be wound up so tightly with martial and ritual aspects of their lives so as not to count. A goblin feast might be accompanied by shrill primitive piping, but these wouldn't serve to entertain so much as to work the listeners up into a frenzy of gluttony and appetite for the gruesome "entertainments" that would follow. The revels of beastmen are even cruder, whilst those of the dark elves, whilst sophisticated and skilled in their own manner, would sicken those not well-inured to life in Naggarth.

### Some Famous Quotes from Plays and Playwrights

*Listen my masters, and listen well,  
For I have a tale of horrors to tell,  
Of heroes and daemons and blood and death,  
And the vilest monster e'er to draw breath...*  
- Opening Quatrain of *Drachenfels*

*All men and women are beastly,  
and when skinned,  
a beast in velvet  
is a beast for all to see.*  
- Excerpt from *The Desolate Prisoner of Karak Kadrin*.

*"A patron is a man who watches you drowning for twenty minutes and, when you finally manage to drag yourself to shore by your own efforts, burdens you with help."*  
- Attributed to *Jacopo Tarradasch*

*Let joyful towers a tintinnabulation sound  
That the Enchanter Great is under good ground,  
And let the infernal churches ring their bells  
To welcome Constant Drachenfels.*  
- Closing Quatrain of *Drachenfels*

### Actors and Guilds

There is no formal guild structure regulating the employment of actors and theatrical establishments are granted relative freedom to employ who they want. Unfortunately this can mean that nepotism and unfair business practices are even more rife within the theatre than they are more closely regulated businesses.

The tendency is for theatrical companies and troupes to take on people interested in a place at the theatre provided they can prove some aptitude at an audition (or other apt demonstration of their skills if they wish to become a painter or set designer). Constant auditions mean that the best person for a role tends to get it more often than not.

At a higher level theatrical companies do often operate like guilds of their own. For example, the Geheimnisstrasse Theatre company wouldn't let any old stranger into an audition for the part of Morr in their upcoming production of *Immortal Love*, but if he came with a letter of recommendation from the Konisgarten Theatre in Middenheim they would almost certainly give him due consideration.

Rivalries between local theatres can become fierce though, such as in Talabheim, where Karlos Rapheim, of The Royal Theatre, regularly refuses to consider the services of anyone who has worked for Josef Schatsttuffel of The Nyesnavistny Theatre.

In many communities there is a sizable minority who are keen to act and do not mind doing so for free. The professional theatres can call on these people to take on small parts or practice as understudies to fill in if one of the main actors falls ill or is unable to perform for some other reason.

## Cursed Plays

Whilst various authority figures have attempted to label the theatre as morally irresponsible most Old Worlders pay them little heed. Racy content and satirical dialogue may get the moral guardians of the Old World upset, but are much beloved by the populace at large. However, there are a few plays that even a hard bitten cynic only mentions with reluctance and a frisson of fear. These are the Cursed Plays, certain dramas that depict subjects such as mutation, witchery, worship of the ruinous powers, seditious ideology and overt sacrilege, and have histories of performances bedevilled by serious backstage accidents, sudden company bankruptcy, rioting audiences and mysterious deaths.

One such play is *Strange Flower* by Manfred von Diehl, which deals with the subject of mutation. The play treats the subject in a fairly tasteful manner, but implies that mutation is not necessarily the fault of those who suffer from it - an opinion that is at odds with those of many in the Old World, including most Witch Hunters and Priests. Von Diehl's background, a nobleman with a passion for the theatre considered unseemly by many of his class during his time who subsequently suffered exile and a mysterious disappearance, also adds to the air of scandal surrounding the play. Many feel that to become involved in productions of the play is to risk injury and ruin - and almost anyone with a history of involvement in the theatre has a story about a friend who underwent or witnessed something strange, dangerous or violent during a run of this show. Despite all this *Strange Flower* remains popular with audiences (having seen a production of the play is seen by some as a badge of bravery, and it is a powerful and haunting work).

### Felix and Manfred

'The name of Manfred von Diehl is not unknown amongst the scholars of Altdorf, my home city. As a playwright.'

Manfred beamed broadly. 'I am he. By Ulric, an educated man! Who would have thought to find one here? I can tell you and I are going to get along Herr Jaeger. Have you seen *Strange Flower*? Did you like it?'

Felix considered his answer carefully. He had not cared for the play, which dealt with the degeneration of a noblewoman into madness when she found out that she was a mutant, devolving to beasthood. *Strange Flower* was lacking that open-hearted humanity to be found in the works of the Empire's greatest living playwright, Detlef Sierck. However, it had been very topical in these dark days when the number of mutations was apparently increasing. It had been banned by Countess Emmanuelle, Felix remembered.

'It was very powerful Manfred, very haunting.'

'Haunting, very good! Very good indeed! I must go now, visit my ailing uncle. I hope to talk to you again before the journey is complete.'

They bowed and the nobleman turned and walked away.

Felix stared after him, unable to reconcile this amiable eccentric young nobleman and the brooding, Chaos-haunted images of his work. Among the cognoscenti of Altdorf, Manfred von Diehl was known as a brilliant playwright - and a blasphemous one.

- *Wolf Riders* by William King

## Some Notable Songs of the Old World

Title	Notes
<i>The Song of Bold Oswald and Fair Genevieve</i>	Imputes that a previous Crown Prince of Ostland defeated the Great Enchanter, Drachenfels, for 'the love of his long-dead lady'. Since Prince Oswald was found a traitor to the Empire the song has declined in popularity.
<i>The Woodcutter's Daughter</i>	"Oh my lovely lad/ what you have done to me/ my father will do with his axe to thee..." Is a famous and oft quoted line from this bawdy morality tale. Alternative title is <i>The Woodcutter's Daughter and the Priest of Ranald</i> .
<i>To Hunt the Manticore</i>	Popular in the sort of music halls visited by those who are unlikely ever to have seen a Manticore in their lives.
<i>Tomas Wanderer</i>	A cautionary nursery tale of the Empire, often sung to the tune of <i>Drakwald's Lament</i> . Lyrical transcript can be found in <i>The Old World Bestiary</i> .

## Non-Human Entertainers

**Elves** The musical skill of elves is renowned throughout the Old World. Their agility means they can play with a virtuosity that the greatest players of other races find impossible to match, and their fine hearing allows them to interject subtle and pleasing nuances to their song and music. The word 'minstrel' is reserved by some conservative music fans purely in reference to elven players.

Many human nobles will include an elven minstrel as a member of his entourage, and even electors invite elves to join their court in order to provide musical entertainment, such as the Lute player Rallane who is a member of Boris Todbringer's court in Middenheim.

Whilst many elves partake in singing and musicianship they tend not to found partaking in other forms of entertainment. Whilst it is far from common to find an elven actor or acrobat they are not unknown, but their performances (at least within their own communities) tend to include a reference to elven history and ritual that outsiders find difficult to comprehend.

**Halflings** The Moot folk are the most like humans in terms of what kind of entertainment they will enjoy and are willing to get involved in. Indeed a Halfling family will not tend to view a son or daughter wanting to join a troupe of actors or musicians with the same degree of disdain that a human family might. Halflings are highly sought after for operas and choirs, as their high but strident voices can add an unusual timbre to the range of the singers. Most Halfling Entertainers are comedians though, and amongst many Nobles (particularly Bretonnian ones) it is considered very fashionable to have a Halfling jester at court.



## Some Notable Songs of the Old World

Title	Notes
<i>A Bandit Bold</i>	Often dedicated to Rudi Wegener, the Bandit King who played a part in the downfall of Constant Drachenfels.
<i>Chanson de Gilles</i>	This ballad tells the story of Gilles le Breton, and inspires feelings of pride and honour in patriotic Bretonnians. It is a matter of debate as to whether this is the longest popular Bretonnian song, as many claim the <i>Chansong de Guillaume</i> is longer.
<i>Come Ye Home to Bilbali, Estalian Mariner</i>	As the title suggests this is a sea shanty, much beloved of boatmen and sailors throughout the Empire. To hear the song sung loudly by a drunk is a common experience in the docklands of the Empire's cities. The song is a jaunty number, and very popular.
<i>Four Foolish Knights</i>	A popular Bretonnian drinking song about the perils of tarrying near Athel Loren. " <i>Bold Brandyn met with a lady fair/ As graceful as light, and as free as the dawn/ He strayed with her into the wilding wood,/ And nobody saw him no more...</i> "
<i>Myrmidia's Doleful Lads</i>	As the title suggests, this is a somewhat lachrymose number.
<i>Quest's End</i>	A parody of a popular Bretonnian folk story sung to the tune of <i>Carroburg Fayre</i> . " <i>Chain-mail fitted Ogre's arm/ A goblin took his lady's charm/ His greatsword, once a weapon dire/ Spitted meat on open fire.</i> "
<i>Sigmar's Silver Hammer</i>	A bawdy and ribald tune, regarded with distaste by devout Sigmarites. Regarded as less than a classic by most other Old Worlders too.
<i>The Ballad of Midnight Jacque</i>	Romantic tale about a Bretonnian highwayman who is betrayed by his lover. The song originated in the Empire, and Bretonnians do not care for it.
<i>The Black Dragon Crest</i>	Bretonnian sonnet about a vampire returning to his love. One of many tales that cast the vampires in a romantic light. Lyrical transcript can be found in <i>Night's Dark Masters</i> .
<i>The Goatherd of Appuccini</i>	A jaunty Tilean number.
<i>The Heart is a New Strung Bow</i>	An Oblast Fireside song regarding the battle of the sexes. Lyrical transcript can be found in <i>Realm of the Ice Queen</i> .
<i>The Lament of Karak Varn</i>	Many songs are sung about the tribulations of the Dwarfs. They are often so lachrymose and lengthy as to make Bretonnian songs seem lively in comparison.
<i>The Lazy Sonne</i>	Moral song about the wages of sloth. Also known as <i>The Skaven Crept In</i> . Lyrical transcript can be found in <i>Children of the Horned Rat</i> .
<i>The Pirate Prince of Sartosa</i>	A vivacious and lyrically intricate sea shanty much beloved by those folk of the Old World who do not have to live in fear of piracy. It is unpopular in port towns and singing it whilst on board a ship can result in a quick keel-haul.
<i>The Reik is Wide</i>	A wistful romantic ballad.

Naysayers even point out that *Strange Flower* is very a popular play with a long history of performances, and that any play with such a heritage would have racked up a number of notable accidents, failed runs and coincidental tragedy as a regrettable part of its legacy.

Even the most cynical of naysayers tend to remain tight-lipped on the subject of *Seduced by Slaaneshi*, by the Bretonnian playwright Bruno Malvosin, though. Even mentioning the play by its euphemistic alternative title, *The Baneful Lusts of Diogo Briesach*, is likely to result in the speaker being rudely shushed at and subjected to suspicious glances. The play is so scandalous that it is said to have offended the gods of Chaos, who went on to punish Malvosin by turning him into a mutant. The Emperor of the time declared the work obscene and it has been banned in the Empire ever since. The work is one of a list of texts officially proscribed by the cult of Sigmar and Witch Hunters have put those they have found in possession of a copy to the torch.

The work also has enemies from an unexpected quarter. It seems that cultists of Slaanesh will go to some efforts to hunt down and destroy copies of the work. What it is that could offend the followers of a god personified by depravity and excess is not clear. This has led radical Verenan's to suggest that protecting, studying and even staging the work might be important in discovering what it was Malvosin wrote that might be used as a weapon against the Prince of Chaos. Other more conservative elements fear that the action is a double-bluff on behalf of Slaanesh, who hopes that the play will reach a wider audience who will become corrupted by it.

No theatres in the Empire would ever stage a production of *Seduced by Slaaneshi*, but there are places further afield that aren't so wary of doing so. The Fallen Heaven in Mousillon, for example, once staged a fortnight-long run of the play, and did very brisk business as secret admirers of the work travelled far to see the production. Theatres in Tilea and the Borderlands have also been known to show it as well.

### Actors' Superstitions

Actors have a deserved reputation for being a superstitious bunch, possibly even more so than sailors! Under close examination some of these superstitions have a basis in common sense. Others, however, do not, and are more a result of peer group pressure and identification with the acting community. Many actors adopt these superstitions without really believing them, though a notable minority hold them quite seriously.

A common superstition is that to whistle backstage is bad luck. This has a practical purpose because some theatres use whistles to signal that scenery needs shifted or backdrops let loose, so careless whistling has been known to cause accidents.

It is considered bad luck to wish a fellow thespian good luck, so actors often tell one another to "break a leg" before a performance begins.

The most notorious superstition is the use of euphemisms to refer to plays with a bad reputation. Thus *Strange Flower* might be known as "the Von Diehl play". Some of the more low-rent playwrights even craft alternative names for their own works, hoping to imbue them with a eerie reputation, and some underground cache, from the start. This is why so many melodramas in the Old World are known by two (or three) titles.

Some Plays of the Old World

Title	Playwright	Genre	Notes
<i>A Farce in the Fog</i>	Detlef Sierck	Comedy	A fool's parade of lecherous husbands, ravenous mistresses, ardent lovers, innocent wives, vulgar midwives, comic watchmen and absurd clerics. The play was noted for it's marvellous fog effects during it's initial run in Altdorf. There is a darker side to the play too, a throat-slitting imp features and there is much talk of the hypocrisy of supposedly good men.
<i>Accursed of Khorne</i>	Jacques Ville de Travaleurs	M'drama	Also known as <i>Death of a Daemon Lord</i> .
<i>Acharniazusoi</i>	Aristides	Classical Comedy	Known as <i>The Knights at the Circus</i> for those unable to pronounce the classical name. A farcical misadventure of mistaken identity, bawdish sauciness and the low habits of high citizens.
<i>Altdorf After Dark</i>	Detlef Sierck	Comedy	A satirical review poking fun at Altdorf's more conservative religious leaders. They play goes so far as to accuse the cult of Morr of a lack of humanity, viewing everyone as nothing more than a potential corpse.
<i>An Estalian's Treachery</i>	Bruno Malvosin	Tragedy	A play by the Bretonnian playwright and director of the previous century, now mostly forgotten.
<i>Barbenoire: The Bastard of Bretonnia</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	History	Telling of events surrounding the story of Guillaume the Conqueror and his exploits. The character of Guillaume is a popular one for mature male actors.
<i>Bold Benvolio</i>	Bruno Malvosin	Comedy	A uncharacteristically upbeat play by the morose playwright, now mostly forgotten.
<i>Brave Konrad &amp; the Skull-Faced</i>	The Balladeer	Lurid M'drama	An incredibly violent play. Performances of this work regularly provoke heated debates between Konrad's
<i>Cobweb Castle</i>	-	M'drama	Also called <i>The Disembowelment of Didrick</i> . One of those dim haunted castle melodramas in which the cast drop dead at regular intervals until a High Priest of Morr deduces who the killer is and the audience wakes up.
<i>Death to the Dead</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	History	A cautionary tale about vampires concerned with the time of the von Carstein wars. The play is much beloved by many of the Empire's moral guardians, but is not too popular in Sylvania.
<i>Downbeat</i>	Detlef Sierck	Low Key Tragedy	The dramatisation of some goings on in Detlef's own playhouse. A rare flop for Detlef - closed during the second week of previews. Audiences in Altdorf do not like it when the girl leaves the boy at the end, it seems.
<i>Girl in Glass</i>	Anton Denisovich	Opera	A Kislevian legend about a powerful spirit trapped in a glass box, waiting for a great warrior to free her.

Bretonnians are defensive of their culture, and often claim to find the short and light hearted songs of other nations to be unsophisticated and crude. Those from outside Bretonnia find their obsession with melancholy songs to be indicative of an unhealthy outlook on life, and blame it (as they do so many other aspects of Bretonnian existence and culture) on the kingdom's proximity to the enigmatic denizens of Athel Loren.

Some Famous Musicians of the Old World

**Felix Hubermann** The conductor to Detlef Sierck's orchestra, Hubermann is said to be capable of wringing melodies from his troubadours that no human ear had ever before apprehended. He was particularly lauded for his score for the play *Drachenfels*. During the magic scenes the music became unearthly, almost horrifying, and certainly added a great deal to the atmosphere of the work.

**Ferring the Balladeer** A famous Altdorf songwriter who is particularly renowned for his many songs about the hero, Konrad.

**Tristan le Troubadour** When Tristan le Troubadour took up the grail quest, Jules his faithful jongleur begged to go with him. Together they roamed Bretonnia accepting hospitality in the castles of dukes and barons where they provide entertainment in return for a feast. As they journey through the troubled country Tristan sings his songs of noble valour to give him courage, accompanying himself on the lute. The quest has taken him to many battlefields where his talents have been welcomed by the embattled knights. Their spirits raised and their hearts made bold by Tristan's songs.

Old Soldier's Song from Reikland

*Where march you, men of Reikland,  
Where carry you halberds and swords?*

*We march to war for our Emperor  
And Sigmar, our saviour and lord.*

*Tomorrow we go to war  
to face the hosts of Chaos.*

*Tomorrow we will be buried  
in the cold graves that await us.*

*And when this war is done,  
and my body lies on the field at night.*

*Hear my prayer, save my soul,  
Lord Sigmar take me to your light.*

This is a somewhat doleful song for the Reikland, and one that treats Sigmar with an unusually cloying regard. It is perhaps a reaction to pressure from external threats, such as the large bands of greenskins and chaos marauders that have been observed lately, as well as internal divisions such as the growing number of mutant births and strains with the cult of Ulric.



### Putting the 'Dour' in 'Troubadour' - Bretonnian Music

Brettonnia is well known for it's lachrymose taste in music and many other Old Worlders, whilst begrudgingly admitting to the beauty of many Bretonnian compositions, find Bretonnian songs somewhat depressing and tiresome.

As a quick example compare the following two songs, *Tomas Wanderer* and *Four Foolish Knights*. Both of these songs deal with a common subject - that of the dangers of walking in the woods of the Old World.

*Tomas Wanderer* is full of the rambunctious spirit associated with the character of those from the south and the west of the Empire. It is lively, full of inventive wordplay, and whilst the tale is, by necessity, bleak a sense of self-deprecating humour is fully evident throughout.

*"What mires you here, younge smoothskin-born?  
Did not your mother about me warn?"  
"I have no fear!" Tom cried aloud,  
Horsing forward 'til Beast he growled.*

*"I shall wolfe your flesh and snap your bones,  
Skriend your folk and burne their homes.  
For mocking ked to dare my rage,  
Your jibe it traps me like a cage.  
The unclaimed ones must dread my kinde,  
Can never squander fear behind."*

*So Tomas Wanderer was no more, who never did no goode,  
So remember poor Tomas, and roam not in the woode.*

Compared with this *Four Foolish Knights* is a sedate affair, melancholy and slow in pace, with wordplay confined to sparse description and oft-repeated expressions of regret and despair.

*Bold Brandyn met with a lady fair,  
As graceful as light, and as free as the dawn.  
He strayed with her into the wilding wood,  
And nobody saw him no more.  
Yes, nobody saw him no more.*

Detractors may point out that *Tomas Wanderer* is a song for children, but they would fail to recognise in return that *Four Foolish Knights* is a popular drinking song in Brettonnia, and is, by the standards of the kingdom, relatively light hearted and brief enough to listen to in one comfortable sitting (many Bretonnian chansons last for hours). In comparison *Tomas Wanderer* is based on *Drakwald's Lament*, and is therefore fairly bleak in tone for a popular children's song of the Empire.

Bretonnian songs are also often interminably long. A Bretonnian troubadour's worth is often rated by memory and endurance. The best musicians in the kingdom are judged to be those who can sing for the longest, not necessarily those who can sing in tune or play the lute well. In fact, a common insult in the Empire is to accuse somebody of being "as boring as a Bretonnian Minstrel".

### Some Plays of the Old World

Title	Playwright	Genre	Notes
<i>Drachenfels</i>	Detlef Sierck	First written as a History, rewritten as a Tragedy	Tells the story of the Great Enchanter Drachenfels defeat at the hand of Oswald von Konigswald. After the premiere of the play was witness to a number of disturbing events the play was rewritten as the <i>Tragedy of Oswald</i> . The play boasted a prologue, five acts, an envoi, with six intervals, including one long enough to have a meal in, and ran for about six hours. We recommend you read <i>The Vampire Genevieve</i> by Jack Yeovil for the full story of this play.
<i>Genevieve &amp; Vukotich</i>	Detlef Sierck	M'drama	The play is one of Detlef's latest works. Also known as <i>A Celestial plot in Zhufbar</i> . The play is full of fight scenes, active lovemaking and much swinging from the rafters. These elements may be the result of some less than kind critical comments in the Altdorf press regarding Detlef's increasing girth.
<i>Great Days of the Empire</i>	Klegghel	History	An experimental production of this play directed by Detlef Sierck was one of the genius's few notable critical failures.
<i>Hexenachtabend</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	Comedy	The heroine of this play, Violetta, disguises herself as her twin brother for much of the plot.
<i>Immortal Love</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	Tragedy	Morr, the god of death, features as a prominent character in this play.
<i>Lustrian Vengeance</i>	Sendak Mittell	Lurid M'drama	Also known as <i>I Will Eat Their Offal</i> , in which an Imperial plenipotentiary eats deathbane-laced tripes that were pulled from his beloved grandmother whilst she was still alive.
<i>Manc the Frogwife</i>	Largely improvised	Comedy	A traditional Mousillon comedy involving a man dressed as a woman reeling off a list of very crude jokes.
<i>Prince Oswald</i>	Dorian Diessl	History	Detlef Sierck reckons <i>Prince Oswald</i> a "terrible play" and "appalling rubbish". He is not an unbiased source of criticism, however. Diessl was an old tutor and rival of Detlef's, and Detlef lampooned some of the mechanisms of <i>Prince Oswald</i> in his own play about the same subject, <i>Drachenfels</i> .
<i>Seduced by Slaaneshi</i>	Bruno Malvosin	M'drama	A scandalous piece, declared obscene by the Emperor of the day. It is said that this work even offended the Chaos gods, and that Tzeentch took revenge by turning Malvosin into a mutant. This work is the only Malvoisin play widely remembered today. The play is also known as <i>The Baneful Lusts of Diogo Briesach</i> , possibly to avoid using the word Slaanesh. Diogo is a character in the play who succumbs to the temptations of his own private daemons.

Some Plays of the Old World

Title	Playwright	Genre	Notes
<i>She Served Him Ill</i>	Detlef Sierck	Low Key Tragedy	Concerns the painful break-up of a passionate romance. A recurring theme of Detlef's in recent years.
<i>Strange Flower</i>	Manfred von Diehl	Tragedy	This play explores the subject of mutation and a Detlef Sierck production was so beleaguered by accidents during rehearsal that it never reached production. A Daemon Prince is one of the principle characters in the play. Many consider it a "cursed play". Performances of the play are banned in Nuln by order of Countess Emmanuelle.
<i>Taking a Cat to Wife</i>	Gregory Hoggis	Comedy	In which the leading man is seduced by a passionate feline, leading to marriage, social ostracism, comic business and the traditional happy ending.
<i>The Bloody Chamber</i>	Wilhelm Pikewaver	Tragedy	A very well-known play, a lurid tale of adulterous liaisons, villainous conspiracies and murderous intrigue. Performances last about two hours and end with the ambitious but haunted Madame d'Arbalon's repentant soliloquy and suicide.
<i>The Desolate Prisoner of Karak Kadrin</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	Tragedy	The prisoner of the title is the disconsolate Baron Trister, one of the Old World's most prestigious roles for a male lead.
<i>The Downfall of Drachenfels</i>	Matrac	History	Detlef Sierck reckons Matrac "a poltroon" and the play "appalling rubbish". Detlef is hardly an unbiased source of criticism, however.
<i>The Fate of Fair Florence</i>	Manfred von Diehl	Lurid M'drama	Also known as <i>Tortured and Abandoned</i> , and featuring a daemon-haunted inn as a primary location.
<i>The Infernal Machinery of Desire</i>	Wilhelm Pikewaver	Tragedy	Also known as <i>Love</i> . Set in Marienburg, it is a potent mix of political rhetoric, romantic tragedy and family passions. The closing soliloquy of the play has the hero wondering whether or not to commit suicide, and opinion is divided as to whether Pikewaver intended for the decision to remain unportrayed, or whether he died before completing the play.
<i>The Little Princess Sonja</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	Tragedy	A play set within the depths of a particularly bitter Kislevite winter. Even critics admit that Sonja is one of
<i>The Loves of Ottokar and Myrmidia</i>	Jacopo Tarradasch	Tragedy	Ottokar, a haughty tyrant, falls in love with the goddess Myrmidia. His obsession leads to his ruin, death and damnation. His dying speech is a favourite for auditioning actors. Tarradasch had claimed to be divinely inspired the day he wrote it.
<i>The Magnus the Pious Cycle</i>	Sutro	History	Covering the age of the Seven Emperors, the rise of Magnus and the Great War Against Chaos.

A Closer Look at the Musician Skill

As written the skill Performer (Musician) seems to suggest that any musician can try to perform on any instrument.

However this is not at all likely, a virtuoso on the cittern does not necessarily know how to play a note on the shawm or hold a beat on a bodhran.

Therefore we suggest you add a note next to the skill to indicate which instrument the Troubadour has learnt, like: Performer (Musician - Lute), or Performer (Musician - Dulcian).

If forced to play on an unfamiliar instrument the GM might like to impose a penalty if the instrument is similar to the one the musician is used to (for example, a dulcian player might be able to get a tune out of a shawm, or a symphonie player might be able to wring out a pleasant drone from a hurdy-gurdy), but such tests are **Hard (-20%) Performer Skill Tests**.

If the instrument is very different to the one that the Troubadour is used to then the GM may like to impose a **Very Hard (-30%) Performer Skill Test** on them, or rule that they cannot make anything other than the same racket that an untrained character would.

However, once one instrument is mastered it becomes easier to learn others. For this reason if a character wants to take more than one Performer (Musician) Skill in order to learn to play a wider range of instruments, then every purchase of the skill after the first costs only 50 Experience Points.

**The Shawm** A double reed instrument with a wide conical bore that flares quickly towards the end into a large bell. These two attributes give the shawm its characteristic power and tone, making it suitable for outdoor playing and use with large consorts. The strident sound of a shawm carries well in a noisy environment such as a tavern. The shawm probably developed from a zurna, a smaller instrument which is still popular in Kislev.

**The Dulcian** A large woodwind instrument played with a double reed. The sound of the vibrating reed travels a long a folded and conical expanding bore and different notes are created by using the fingers to stop holes along the side. The instruments are produced in a variety of tones, from soprano to contrabass.

**Other woodwind instruments in use in the Old World include:** Krummhorns, Cornamuses, Racketts, Hummelchens, Bagpipes, Sordunes, Recorders, Flutes.

**The Coach Horn** A cylindrical brass instrument used to signal the approach or departure of coaches. The players of these instruments use mostly just lip control to determine pitch. Some coachmen become quite proficient in the playing of their coach horns, and use them to entertain their customers in the hope of increased tips.

**The Sackbut** A large s-shaped brass instrument that uses a sliding handle to manually control the pitch of the notes that are played. It is illegal to play this instrument in Talabheim.

**Other brass instruments in the Old World include:** Cornetts, Serpents, Bugle Horns, Trumpets, Lurs.

There are many more instruments in the Old World, though they are not typically played in the taverns and streets. Harpsichords and Clavinets might be played by particularly rich and successful musicians, and in large cities strange and exotic performances might include a Sitar player from Ind accompanied by a man who can make small animals dance to the sound of a squealing flute, or a group of Southrons banging out hypnotic rhythms on various types and sizes of drum.

## Troubadours

Troubadours are encountered regularly in the Old World. Poorer Troubadours can be found on many street corners, banging bohdrans, plucking at lutes or cranking the handle of a hurdy-gurdy. More adept Troubadours may be paid to join an orchestra, or become the personal musician of some noble or merchant.

### Popular Instruments of the Old World

The following are instruments often played in the streets and taverns of the Old World by Troubadours.

**The Lute** The lute was introduced into the Old World by Arabyans via Estallia many hundreds of years ago, and derives its name from the Arabyan 'al Ud' (meaning "the wood"). The curved back is constructed from separate ribs of wood and has become an object of exceptionally fine craftsmanship, held in the highest musical esteem by elves as well as humans. The notes are played by plucking strings of wire or catgut cut to various lengths and thicknesses. Lutes come in various shapes and sizes, ranging from the immense theorbo to the tiny mandolino. This is probably the Troubadour's most popular instrument, and an extensive repertoire of tunes written for the lute exists throughout the Old World, particularly in the kingdom of Bretonnia.

**The Cittern** The cittern is almost as popular as the lute, and is especially common in Tilea. Its appearance and sound are entirely different from the lute, it is easier to play and tune and, being smaller and less delicate, far more portable. Thus, although it is played and enjoyed by all classes, the cittern is a premier instrument of casual music making for the common people.

**The Hurdy-Gurdy** Regarded as something of a vulgar instrument by Old Worlder high society the hurdy-gurdy is nevertheless popular with the lower classes in both town and country, particularly in Bretonnia, where it is known as a vielle de roule. The right hand is used to turn a crank which drives a wheel, the left hand plays keys which press stings onto the wheel to create the notes. Many hurdy-gurdies are also fitted with droning stings, producing a sound somewhat akin to both a fiddle and a bagpipe.

**Other stringed instruments in use in the Old World include:** Mandolas, Viols, Symphonies, Harps, Barytons, Psalteries, Lyres, Dulcimers.

## Troubadour Skills, Talents & Trappings

The Entertainer career gives multiple options, and some of them are more suitable for Troubadours than others.

A Troubadour should obviously select the Performer (Musician) skill. Other apt choices are Performer (Storyteller), Performer (Singer) and Performer (Comedian). Blather is the most obvious choice from the optional skill list.

Of the optional Talents list Lightning Reflexes would be useful for particularly dextrous shows of musicianship, whilst Mimic or Public Speaking might also add to a Troubadour's performance.

From the Trappings list a Troubadour would need an Instrument and a set of good quality clothing to wear during performances for high-class customers. A portable instrument is probably the best choice for an adventurer Troubadour. Whilst many Troubadours in the Empire play the Harpsichord, not many of them take to the road with their instruments.

### Troubadour's Career Exits

Note that of all the different types of Entertainer the Troubadour and Singer are the only ones that should normally be allowed to become a Minstrel.

## Some Plays of the Old World

Title	Playwright	Genre	Notes
<i>The Merchant of Sorcery</i>	-	Tragedy	In this play Gathros, a merchant whose lavish and decadent habits have led him to bankruptcy, turns to selling sinister enchanted toys to restore his fortunes. An ugly witch, Jalissa, believes she is trapping Gathros, but soon learns that he is exploiting her as he exploits all women.
<i>The Rape of Rachael</i>	Bruno Malvosin	Tragedy	A typically lachrymose and obscure work by the Bretonnian playwright.
<i>The Rats of Hammstat</i>	Detlef Sierck	Comic Opera	In which the growing problem of a rat infestation in a sleepy Reikland hamlet goes unnoticed whilst attentions are fixed on petty disputes between village families. Often said to be a satirical attack on the family unions of Rat Catchers in Altdorf and also as a comment on the continuing "Skaven Controversy". Detlef denies such rumours, however.
<i>The Romance of Fair Matilda</i>	-	Romance	A much-vaunted Marienburg production of this play led to the ruin and retirement of the famed actress and harridan Lilli Nissen.
<i>The Seventh Voyage of Sigmar</i>	Bruno Malvosin	History	A play which is now mostly forgotten. Lighter in tone than most of Malvosin's works, and thought to be an early work by the playwright.
<i>The Strange History of Dr Zhiekhill and Mr Chaida</i>	V I Tiodorov	M'drama	Written by V I Tiodorov (a Kislevite) and adapted by Detlef. Detlef's version was considered far darker than the hoary melodrama of the original, and drew serious complaints from Altdorf's moral guardians. The play is set in pre-Katterin Kislev, and concerns a humble cleric of Shallya who, under the influence of magic potion, transforms into a lustful prodigy of evil.
<i>The Tragedy of Magritta</i>	Bruno Malvosin	Tragedy	A play by the Bretonnian playwright and director, now mostly forgotten.
<i>The Wise Children</i>	Johann Bart	Comedy	In which the children of an important noble family depose their ineffectual parents and adopt a uniquely childish attitude to local politicking.
<i>Tintabriel and Aurore</i>	Siegfried Schwartzadler	Tragedy	Also known as <i>The Tragedy of the Treasonous Lovers</i> , an Imperial play set in the Bretonnian court.
<i>Vampireslayer</i>	Wilhelm Konig	Comedy	A verse drama performed by mummers for children, much beloved by the Empire's moral guardians
<i>Vengeance of Vaumont</i>	Bruno Malvosin	Tragedy	A play by the Bretonnian playwright and director of the previous century, now mostly forgotten.
<i>Ystareth</i>	Brithan Cragg	Tragedy	Also known as <i>The Plague Daemon and Orfeo's Tall Tale</i> , also also known as <i>The Doom of Zaragoza</i> .

### A Brief History of Theatrical Genres in the Old World

Most scholars of the arts agree that theatre originated in ancient Tilea (though more jingoistic professors can find enough evidence to claim that it belongs to other cultures, for example the rites of the druids are sometimes referred to as theatrical in nature). Certainly the classical playwright Aristides was a resident of Remas, and his plays are amongst the oldest works still regularly performed in the Old World. Works of this vintage are old fashioned and somewhat inscrutable, the action is not so much portrayed on the stage, but described in verse by the majority of the cast (the chorus) whilst the main characters are usually small (traditionally three in number). The use of masks is also popular in these old plays, which can also confuse modern audiences.

The traditions of tragedy and comedy were also established in antiquity, and most serious playwrights choose to work within one of these genres, either dealing with light matters and/or a satirical touch for comedies, or dealing with weighty subjects with an eye to melancholy for tragedies. The other serious genre is that of historical plays, which tell audiences about the lives of the great heroes and religious figures of the Old World. These plays tend to be partisan and jingoistic in the extreme, and prove popular in times of war, famine or other kinds of national strife. These distinctions were realised to the full during the 24th century, when Jacopo Tarradasch was the undisputed master of theatre in the Old World. Plays written during and since this period have mostly done away with the chorus and added more distinct and individual characters to the cast. Tarradasch also wrote in blank verse for some of his characters, giving greater distinction between noble characters (who typically rhyme eloquently) and common characters (who typically don't rhyme at all).

In the last century or so opera has become a popular entertainment, particularly beloved of the upper classes. This form of theatre is said to have sprung up in Tilea, though some fans of opera claim that it was developed in Nuln (Countess Emmanuelle is a great patron of opera at The Von Blech Theatre). In an opera certain classical traditions (such as the use of a chorus, and sometimes masks) are reintroduced, but the verses are sung rather than intoned. Furthermore it is a tradition in opera for the songs to be sung in Tilean, no matter where the show is performed. Operas tend to be visual feasts, with sumptuous costumes and props created to add to the spectacle. The high production costs of operas mean that ticket prices tend to be higher than those of traditional plays, but fans of opera claim that the shows are well worth 'coughing up a Karl' for. A sub-genre, comic opera, exists. These plays are written with the common man in mind, and tend to drop the high production values and the Tilean as a result.

Melodrama is a recent and wildly popular genre in the Old World. The genre is typified by plots that explore the horrors of life in the Old World, particularly in regards to being haunted by the undead or afflicted with mutation. Another feature of the genre is the exaggerated horrified poses that the actors are directed to hold, often for a length of time that some audiences find unintentionally amusing. Melodrama tends not to impress the critics, but it is gathering popularity with the theatre going audiences who find classical theatre somewhat inscrutable, or who find it hard to follow the witty wordplay of a clever comedy or the grand soliloquies of a Tarradaschian tragedy. Even Detlef Sierck has produced the occasional melodrama when the need to 'get bums on seats' has outweighed the need to impress the critics.



### Palmist's Skills, Talents & Trappings

When choosing skills for Palmists Performer (Palm Reader) is an obvious choice. Other apt choices are Performer (Story Teller), and Performer (Actor). Blather is the most obvious choice from the optional skill list.

Of the optional Talents list Lightning Reflexes, Public Speaking or Mimic make good choices for a Palmist.

From the Trappings list a Palmist would need a Costume (to look like an authentic Strigany Mystic) and Trade Tools (Performer) (in this case a crystal ball and a small tent decorated in mystical symbols).

**Optional Rule:** If the GM so desires a character using the skill Performer (Palm Reader) can make an **Intelligence Test** as they do so. If they are successful they may be given some vague information about the personality, intentions or family detail of the person whose palm they are reading. A failed test results in incorrect information.

### Other Festival Performer Suggestions

**Hypnotists** could be given Performer (Story Teller), Performer (Actor) and/or Performer (Comedian). Hypnotism is the most obvious choice from the optional skill list. Of the optional Talents list Lightning Reflexes and Public Speaking make good choices.

**Strong Men** would suit Performer (Acrobat). Other apt choices are Performer (Juggler), and Performer (Actor). Blather or Scale Sheer Surface also make sense. Very Strong and Wrestling are the most obvious of the Talents.

**Bunko Artists** could use Performer (Actor) and Performer (Story Teller). Sleight of Hand will be helpful too. Public Speaking and Lightning Reflexes are apt Talents.

**Knife Throwers** and/or **Jugglers** could use Performer (Juggler) and Performer (Acrobat). Sleight of Hand or Blather would be useful. Lightning Reflexes and Specialist Weapon Group (Throwing) are apt Talents.

**Hypnotists**

Hypnosis is a little understood phenomenon in the Old World, with some people seeing it as nothing less than magic whilst others regard it as a science. As a result hypnotists have to be very careful, in the same manner as Palmists, that their acts do not result in cries of witchcraft.

**Jugglers**

Jugglers are a common and popular form of Entertainer, often seen in market squares juggling balls, beanbags or other small items. It is quite common for a juggler to learn some fire eating or knife throwing tricks too, just to make his act that little more spectacular by performing a variety of feats.

**Knife Throwers**

Knife Throwers are another popular attraction, with the help of a 'volunteer' who they throw weapons towards in a seemingly carefree manner. Whilst some knife throwers actually perform feats of accuracy and dexterity with real knives, most employ a mix of sleight of hand and spring loaded fake knives to give the impression of a thrilling and dangerous show.

**Palmists**

Fortune Tellers purport to be seers or mystics with skills in divination. Through a mixture of storytelling, astrology, props such as cards or crystals, and some basic psychology they make vague but impressive predictions about their client's future.

Fortune Telling is a risky business in the Old World, as a convincing performance may lead the teller to be labelled a witch, or someone who communicates with dead spirits or daemons. Real seers, and the priests of various religions, can also look down on the practice, but it is still a popular diversion at more rural festivals.

**Strongmen**

Strongmen and wrestlers are another popular attraction at fairs. These (typically) burly men perform feats of strength and also challenge members of the audience to compete with them for a prize. These competitions sometimes involve lifting heavy weights or lasting for a certain number of rounds within a brawling ring.

Some of these strongmen become real celebrities in Old World society, like Hagedorn, the wrestler who could put anyone on the mat three out of three falls. Others use subtle charlatany to achieve their success, such as crafting 'weights' of the same size but of different heaviness, or strategically placing rocks around their wrestling rings that opponents can be 'accidentally' thrown upon.

**Fire Eater's Skills, Talents & Trappings**

When choosing skills almost any choices from the Performer skill could suit a Fire Eater, though Performer (Fire Eater) is an obvious choice. Other apt choices are Performer (Juggler), Performer (Acrobat) and Performer (Clown). Blather is the most obvious choice from the optional skill list.

Of the optional Talents list Lightning Reflexes and Public Speaking make good choices for a Fire Eater.

From the Trappings list a Fire Eater would need a Costume and Trade Tools (Performer) (to represent the alcohol-based preparation they use to breathe fire).

**Optional Rule:** Should a Fire Eater use his skills to attack someone it takes a Ready (Half Action) to swig the inflammable preparation and ready a match or other source of fire. They can then use a Standard Attack (Half Action) which can be treated as a missile weapon or close combat attack. The attack has a range of 2 yards, and hits with a Strength of 3. Note also the Fire rules on page 136 of the **Core Rule Book**.

**The Vargr Breughel Memorial Theatre Open-Stage Night**

The programme of an evening was set aside for all those who fancied themselves entertainers - jesters and jugglers mostly - to come up, be introduced to the paying throng - other jesters and jugglers mostly - and try out their acts. Most hopefuls only lasted a minute or so before a volley of last week's vegetables silenced their venerable jokes or croaked songs. They would slink off into the wings, covered in rotten cabbage, vowing to go back to the counting-house or the tannery and forget any notions they had nurtured about a life of wealth, fame and unlimited beautiful lovers on the stage. The theatre only charged a modest admission fee and let in those who chanced performing free of charge, but the canny business manager Guglielmo Pentangeli had struck an agreement with the farmers' market to take away all the unsaleable fruit and veg at the end of the day. This was then sold to amateur critics who got far more enjoyment from pelting the acts than watching them. After open-stage night, produce was gathered from the backdrop and sold again, as fodder for the carriage-company stables in Hasselhoff Street.

Tonight's losers were even more pathetic than usual.

First up was a longshanks scholar from the University who did impressions of notable Imperial personages. He barely got into his satirical depiction of Konrad the hero when an entire vegetable marrow burst against his face, hammering him against the backdrop. As the glowering Renastic dragged the insensible scholar offstage, Detlef supposed he should have mentioned that Konrad's Oath of Devotion Society was in the house tonight. Then came an Estalian guitarist with an enormous wave of oiled hair cockatoo-combed up over his forehead. He actually managed to finish his number without so much as a tomato, perhaps because the sweetness of his plucking was matched by the extreme obscenity of his lyrics. A magic act wasn't so lucky, and Renastic had to rush out with a bucket of sand to smother the flames that had leaped from the wizard's brazier to his robes at the climax of his first and only trick.

The Three Little Clots, dwarfs in loud jerkins and baggy trousers, came on and abused each other with eye-pokes, beard-tugs and mallet-blows to the skull for five minutes. They did each other more harm than any flung fruit and had the wit to work the audience attack into their routine - the bald-pated one with the knock-knees kept snatching thrown edibles out of the air and stuffing them into his mouth while the bespectacled one with an explosion of lightning-struck hair quipped that this was the best meal they could expect all month.

After that Detlef sacrificed a string of stuttering jokesters, an old woman who tied inflated pig-bladders into strange shapes she claimed were animals, a temperance lecturer who mistakenly thought this was a fine opportunity to take his message to the masses, an elf who dressed as a human woman and propositioned sailors, another conjurer who made himself disappear and never came back and a dock-labourer who took off his shirt and did peculiar things with his stomach tattoos.

It was always a good idea to wind up with a sure winner, so he brought on Antonia Marsillach, who danced athletically, and sans much in the way of costuming, behind strategically-placed roc-feather fans. The Three Little Clots came back, to popular acclaim, and snatched away Antonia's fans, which they used to batter each other as the unblushing dancer outdid the stomach-writher in assuming unlikely positions and the audience expressed their appreciation with a hail of flowers.

'Good show tonight,' said Guglielmo as Detlef rushed past him backstage.

'Sign the Clots to a long-term contract, extend Antonia for another two weeks and ask the greasy guitarist to come in next week for a proper audition. I never want to see any of the others in here again.'

- *The Ibbby the Fish Factor* by Jack Yeovil

## Festival Performers

Many of the different types of Entertainer fall into this broad and vague category. Acrobats, Animal Tamers, Bunko Artists, Clowns, Dancers, Escapologists, Fire Eaters, Fortune Tellers, Hypnotists, Jugglers, Knife Throwers, Strongmen, Tight Rope Walkers and Wrestlers are all acts that are often (though not exclusively) thought of in connection with carnivals and festivals.

However, there is no reason why other types of Entertainer would not also be part of a carnival, indeed Actors and Troubadours are often employed or encountered at fairs, fetes and festivals throughout the Old World. It is also far from unknown to see these kinds of festival performers in streets and taverns outside the festival season.

Many of these Entertainers lead a nomadic lifestyle, and live rather hand to mouth for most of the year. They wait for one of the big fairs, such as the famous Bögenhafen Shaffenfest, or the Middenheim Carnival, when they can make an awful lot of money in a very short period by performing for curious onlookers.

### Acrobats

Acrobats may include trapeze artists, tight rope walkers, stilt walkers, and more general feats of tumbling and gymnastics. Those few elves who take up the vocation of a festival performer (and they are very rare indeed) excel at this sort of act and can draw huge crowds. Acrobats tend to perform in small groups rather than singly.

### Animal Tamers

Animal Tamers may include people who organise baits, which are common forms of entertainment in towns and in the country. This may include rat baits, dog baits and cock fighting in tavern gardens, or coursing hares in the country. Trick riding horses is also a popular attraction, combining animal training with acrobatic displays.

Other Animal Tamers may teach an animal to perform certain tricks, or may teach a dangerous animal to behave in a passive manner so that the trainer's feats of bravery seem even more daring. See *Realm of the Ice Queen* for a Bear Trainer career that provides ideas for this sort of Entertainer. Some animal tamers even go so far as to attempt to train exotic beasts such as mutated wolves or giant eagles. They are usually given large commissions to entertain people at one of the great menageries of the Old World. The mortality rate for such performers is high.

### Bunko Artists

Bunko Artists set up games of chance or skill as attractions in a fairground or a street corner. They love areas that are thronging with people, such as market squares. Their methods range from cardsharpping and cup-shuffling to more elaborate set-ups, such as coconut shies with the coconuts nailed down or hoop-la stalls with the hoops slightly narrower than the prizes. Such characters operate outside of the law and are usually very wary of the Watch, though legitimate Entertainers who have licenses and run fair games also exist.

Bunko Artists often operate in pairs, one performs the trick whilst another keeps an eye out for the law. If people seem unwilling to take up the challenge the second bunko artist may even play the part of a willing customer, who goes on to receive a fabulous prize (with apparent ease) in order to attract people to the game.



### Clowns

Clowns are comic performers who undertake routines involving a lot of visual humour, slapstick violence and exaggerated clumsiness, usually whilst wearing garish make-up and clothing. Even companies specialising in high drama employ a few clowns for comic relief during their productions, if only to keep the stupid and drunk portion of the audience happy. Whilst not very fashionable in the Empire, clowns in Tilea, Bretonnia and Kislev meet with more acclaim and are regarded as serious forms of entertainment.

### Dancers

Dancers are a common form of Entertainer, and are often found working in taverns as well as fairs, festivals and breaks in theatrical performances. Bawdy tales abound of young girls dancing with such alluring movements that anyone watching them becomes rapt to the point of incapacitation, though learned folk dismiss such tales as pure bunk.

### Escapologists

Escapologists use a mixture of sleight of hand, contortion and lock-picking to escape from what seem to be unbreakable shackles or firmly locked manacles. Some even go so far as to be placed inside sacks, safes or cells.

### Fire Eaters

Fire Eaters perform tricks with burning torches, such as extinguishing lit brands using their mouths. Their most impressive stunt is to use a flammable liquid which they spit out through a source of fire to produce impressive "flaming breath".

A famous fire eater was Abdul Al'Baran the "Arabyan Regurgitator", a resident of Averheim (and an Averlander by birth named Karl Graveur who dressed up as an Arabyan as part of his act). He used to drink a large quantity of water before his act. He would then perform a typical fire breathing trick, setting alight a wooden model of an Estallian castle as he did so. To complete his act he would then vomit up the water he drank earlier, dowsing the flames as a result.