

# **PLAYING AUSTRALIA**

## **Australian theatre and the international stage**

edited by

***Elizabeth Schafer***  
and  
***Susan Bradley Smith***

Volume 9 in the series

**AUSTRALIAN PLAYWRIGHTS**

**SERIES EDITOR: VERONICA KELLY**



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Cover

Cate Blanchett and Geoffrey Rush in the 1993 Sydney Theatre Company Production of *Oleanna*.  
Photograph: Tracey Schramm.

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## Foreword by the Series Editor

This volume on Australian theatre's long-standing and evolving relationships with its traditional imperial centre is the ninth in the series 'Australian Playwrights' commenced by Ortrun-Zuber Skerritt of Griffith University, Brisbane. Since 1985 eight monographs or edited collections and eight video interviews have been produced. The book studies are *Louis Nowra* edited by Veronica Kelly; *Patrick White* by May-Brit Akerholt; *Jack Hibberd* by Paul McGillick; *David Williamson* edited by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt; *John Romeril* edited by Gareth Griffiths; *Alma De Groen* by Elizabeth Perkins; *Our Australian Theatre in the 1990s* edited by Veronica Kelly and *Body Show/s: Australian Viewings of Live Performance* edited by Peta Tait.

The recent publications in the series are focussed less on author studies and more upon industrial developments, contemporary theorisations and the works of specific artists and theatre companies, thus mapping the cultural and industrial contexts in which Australian theatre-making occurs. It provides information about the general theatrical field and documents and analyses the work of specific groups. This covers a broad range of drama, performance, dance and physical theatre devised both inside and outside the now problematic fields of text-based or authored writing. The illustrations are a major feature of the series, allowing readers to glimpse Australian theatre and its performers in front of their varied audiences.

Future plans for the 'Australian Playwrights' series include author studies and further historical, thematic and theoretical studies.

The following video programmes where playwrights speak about their work are available.

Louis Nowra (1985)	36 min
Dorothy Hewett (1986)	52 min
Jack Hibberd (1986)	42 min
David Williamson (1986)	50 min
Stephen Sewell (1986)	59 min
Alma De Groen (1990)	44 min
Michael Gow (1991)	49 min
John Romeril (1992)	54 min

My thanks are due to the artists, editors and contributors for their scholarly work, patient collegiality and enthusiasm for Australian theatre-making in all its aspects.

Veronica Kelly  
*Australian Drama Studies Centre*  
*University of Queensland, February 2003*

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Elizabeth Schafer  
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December 2002

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5.

*'The Australian Marvels': wire-walkers  
Ella Zuila and George Loyal, and  
geographies of circus gender body  
identity*

Peta Tait

*Solo high wire-walker Australian Ella Zuila performed extraordinary tricks. She was Australia's most famous female performer in London in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Yet Zuila is notably absent from Australia's theatre history. This article investigates the cultural languages of gender and geographical body identities in death-defying performance spaces. Zuila was performing an idea of Australia within the British Empire. Her act was timely given a cultural imaginary that associated Australia with the risky frontier stretches of the Empire, and ideas of conquering new territory. Her act was an overt challenge to Victorian beliefs about the inferior physicality of the female body and even nature, and her husband-manager and partner, George Loyal, probably cross-dressed in her act.*

Australia's most famous female performer in London in the last quarter of the nineteenth century performed a unique, dangerous act on a high wire. She played her Australian nationality as part of her aerial act. This was a golden age for female aerialists in circus. A number became internationally famous for performing at height and at speed — as if in defiance of the laws of gravity, that is, the natural laws for physical bodies. Record-breaking feats were done by both muscular male and female bodies, and some female aerialists outdid their male counterparts. These performances directly challenged beliefs about the innate gender difference of bodies. They contravened social ideas that set limits to nature and its physicalities. This is an investigation of the cultural languages of gender and geographical body identities in death-defying performance spaces.

The Australian wire-walker Ella Zuila

gets quickly to work. With pole in hand she glides out upon the wire and makes her way steadily to the opposite haven, while the gazers below watch her progress with quickening breath. It is true that a net is stretched below to catch the performer should she fall, but such a long distance seems to intervene between the figure above and the net below, and the net itself appears so frail and small, that the consequences of a slip or a false step seem almost as inevitably fatal as though this protection were not there. ('Royal Aquarium' 183)

This review describes Zuila's legendary act in 1902, after three decades of performances throughout the world and star billing in Sydney, New York and London. Undeniably this was a very dangerous act. Zuila would fall two years later, on 26 August 1904, while riding a bicycle across the wire at the Rotunda, Dublin (Turner 1995, 140). She was too badly injured to perform on the wire again. By then, however, Zuila was probably fifty years old and had had a long career. Zuila's available biographical details are minimal. She died on 30 January 1926 at Walton-on-the-Naze, England, aged 72 (Slout 340), which would mean that she was born in 1854. Although largely forgotten, Zuila was Australia's forerunner on the international touring circuit of Con Colleano, the Aboriginal who pioneered the forward somersault and became recognised in the 1920s as the world's greatest tightwire performer (St Leon). When Zuila debuted as a teenage aerialist in Sydney in 1872, trained by Englishman George Loyal, rope walking had been an Australian entertainment for three decades (St Leon 71-72).<sup>1</sup>

Zuila rose to international fame for her balancing skill doing complex actions on an exceptional high wire ninety feet up, and as one of the first woman catchers hanging from trapeze to catch Loyal in his human cannonball trick.<sup>2</sup> In 1876 Zuila rode a velocipede (probably with two grooved wheels) across a 500-foot long wire 368 feet above the Magani Falls, eleven miles from Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal (*New York Clipper* 7 February 1880, 361).<sup>3</sup> Zuila and Loyal had done solo and duo seasons on wire and trapeze in Sydney theatre at least until mid-May 1874,<sup>4</sup> and after South Africa in 1876 were probably working in London during 1877 and 1878.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently employed to star in American circus, Zuila was the 'Heroine of the High Wire', promoted as having performed in London consecutively for two hundred days (*Adam Forepaugh's* 3).

At the height of Zuila's fame in America in 1881, illustrations show that she wheeled a child over the wire in a barrow, carried a man — probably Loyal — on her back, poured water from one vase to another

held over her head, walked the wire on stilts, with baskets on her feet and with a full body blindfold (*Adam Forepaugh's*). She is also drawn hanging upside down by her knees to catch Loyal. Zuila's work consisted of tricks of strength, balance and skill on the wire — around the time wire was replacing rope as the preferred apparatus.

Performing at Tony Pastor's Theatre in New York, and known as husband and wife towards the end of July in 1879, Zuila and Loyal had advertised themselves as 'the Australian Marvels'. They gave top billing to Zuila as

the Australian Funambulist ... premiere gymnast of the world ... turning a complete somersault in mid-air from hand to hand, assisted by Mr. George Loyal, the Human Cannon Ball and Living Projectile, in his incomparable and original performance of being shot from a cannon loaded with powder a distance of 50 feet diagonally and catching a trapeze. (*New York Clipper* 26 July 1879, 143)

They added — probably backdating Loyal's achievement — that he 'is the original of this act, having performed it over six years'. From mid-December 1879 and into 1880, Loyal and Zuila were working in Havana with the Orrin Brothers & Co.'s Metropolitan Amphitheatre (*New York Clipper* 20 December 1879, 307).

By February 1880 Zuila and Loyal were back in New York, making the front page in the entertainment news and described as internationally known for their daring and 'graceful ease' (*New York Clipper*, 7 February 1880, 361). Loyal and Zuila's tour of North America with Adam Forepaugh's Circus in 1880 and 1881 was promoted to rival the female human cannonball Zazel, who was a protégé of Canadian showman Farini — the recognised inventor of the cannonball act — and had been brought over from London by P.T. Barnum (Peacock 265). Subsequently Zuila and Loyal worked with other American circuses touring to Mexico and Havana until 1884 (Slout 183-84),<sup>6</sup> before returning to London.

Zuila was to remain a major aerial star in London and Europe from 1885 until 1904, with Loyal astutely managing the act and reputedly cross-dressing as Lu-Lu in it (Turner 2000, 72). From 1885 their daughter Winifred, billed as 'little Lu-Lu' (ibid), was assisting with props for the act although when she actually performed on the wire is unclear. In 1885 Zuila was performing to thousands of people at the Crystal Palace in Sydenham, London's Canterbury Theatre, the Paragon Theatre, and touring to Antwerp and Europe in 1886.<sup>7</sup> She was back in London working intermittently at the Royal Aquarium from March 1890 until 1895 and Christmas seasons at the World's Fair in Islington

1891-92, 1892-93 and 1893-94. She appeared in Transfield's American Circus on 13 September 1897, and was still performing at the Royal Aquarium in 1902.<sup>8</sup>

Loyal discontinued the cannonball act sometime before their return to London — he had at least one accident in 1879 (Peacock 245), and Farini had been publicising his patents over the cannonball projectile mechanism (*New York Clipper* 8 April 1882, 42). The focus was Zuila's wire-walking act and her act's composition was enhanced. As well as her balancing actions on the wire, during the 1880s she introduced a mime drama with Lu-Lu. To what extent this was little Lu-Lu in the mime or a cross-dressed Loyal is unclear, and they were sometimes advertised as a trio.<sup>9</sup> In 1887 Zuila carried little Lu-Lu on her shoulders to mid-wire at which point Lu-Lu climbed down and they passed each other before quarrelling and making up. Zuila also executed her standard tricks of running, walking in baskets, blindfolded in a sack and for her finale standing on a chair at the centre of the wire and then riding a bicycle. She was 'Standing Still, at the same time taking the Feet off of the Pedals, and placing the same over the handles'.<sup>10</sup>

Advertised as the Female Blondin, Zuila was the second woman to have this title — the career of the first, Madame Geneviève, in London in 1861 was comparatively shortlived. One account of Genevieve walking a tight rope across the Thames river from Battersea to Cremorne claims that some of the supporting ropes had been cut in order to steal the lead weights, and this sabotaged her apparatus and her act.<sup>11</sup> Zuila, therefore, was the undisputed female counterpart of the legendary male wire-walkers; Frenchman Blondin, who first walked across Niagara Falls in 1859, and his arch rival, Farini.<sup>12</sup> Unquestionably, Zuila also found it advantageous to be billed as Australian since the remoteness and the newness of her nationality could be emphasised and played upon to publicise her act.

### **Performing empire**

What were the cultural significances of this death-defying act's geographical allusions and the performer's gender identity? While Zuila's Australian identity evoked an exotic geography of untamed margins away from the European centre of culture, she legitimised her exceptional feats by an association with Blondin. The important achievements of French aerialists including Leotard, the inventor of the trapeze, perpetuated this practice whereby aerialists adopted labels to denote Frenchness and legitimise their skills. The named geographical and/or national identity of a nineteenth-century circus act often

represented the type of act rather than the performer's country of origin. For example, performers in acrobatic tumbling and balancing acts were costumed as Arabs because Bedouin Arab acts pioneered important tricks (Speaight 65).<sup>13</sup> A number of wire acts were billed as Blondins, albeit with a unique qualification; for example, there was an 'African Blondin' and even a Blondin horse. As a female duplicating many of the feats of the leading male performer, however, Zuila's Blondin label linked the act's geographical imitation to gender identity imitation.

The visual culture of the British Empire thrived on representations of travel, geographical acquisition and the triumph of its 'civilisation' in foreign places, albeit with military conquest, and these were sought to display in London (Morris 48). Zuila and Loyal travelled extensively and by 1879 had performed across Europe, Asia, China, Japan, the Philippines, South Africa, South and North America, West Indies, Australia and New Zealand; they became celebrities and claimed medals from the Emperor of Brazil, the Mikado of Japan, and gifts from diamond-seekers of Natal and New Zealand gold diggers; Zuila received a medal for daring from the Louisville Exposition (*New York Clipper* 7 February 1880, 361). Circus daring also encompassed arduous touring schedules, so that the known risks of travel coincided with performed spectacles of danger.

Timothy Mitchell describes the nineteenth-century European practice of conceiving of the colonised world as picture-like and systematically 'enframing' it, in order to organise and reproduce an 'object-world', as the '*world-as-exhibition*' which was 'the world conceived and grasped as though it were an exhibition' (220-22). Exhibitions ranged from ethnographic displays with curiosity value, to staged representations in theatre, to detailed reconstructions of foreign places in large world exhibitions – the first being in 1851 at London's Crystal Palace. Zuila's act served the British Empire's appetite for exhibitions of foreignness, of travel and exotic adventure. She personified a far world of colonial extremes and miraculous survival. Her success in London seemed assured.

While there does not seem to be a surviving description of the reactions of Zuila or her audiences – which on a holiday could exceed 6,000 at the Crystal Palace or Royal Aquarium – Zaeo, a contemporary English aerialist, left an account of her act supposedly in her own words. Zaeo, who debuted in 1878 and became Europe's most celebrated human projectile for diving down to a net and being catapulted into the air, describes her act's first trick of walking a rope:

The first thing that struck me was the splendour of the light, as I looked down from a platform which was fixed fifty feet from the ground, and when I took my first two steps on the wire it really seemed that I was walking on the air, which was filled with the dazzle of the lamps; but I felt no fear, only a joyous exultation, and walked straight on, till I arrived on the pedestal at the other side of the vast building.

Then I heard for the first time in my life the applause of 12,000 people who had been watching me from below. The blood turned cold in my veins, for it rolled up with a sound like thunder, and I was filled with a dazed wonder as to what it might be or mean.

... I realised that it was applause, applause, for me, and I was thrilled with a sensation of triumph, which only those who have ever experienced such a moment can conceive. (S.R. 14)

As nineteenth-century circus performers traversed national borders, both as travellers and with spectacles of performed identity, they evoked an imaginary geography. In the execution of Zuila's act, actual space and a cultural imaginary of geographical spaces converge. Zuila provided a spectacle in visible space that tamed gravity while her nomenclature echoed fantasies of nature's dangerous untamed spaces. Australia was associated in the popular imagination with weird and exotic flora and fauna, and its indigenous inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> The execution of precarious mid-air action on the wire was enhanced by an imaginary of strange geographies. The performing body's defiance of death was refracted through a cultural imaginary of the Empire's expansionism that sought to conquer and control remote colonial geographies.

Of all nineteenth-century circus acts, wire-walking spectacles were most closely connected to cultural fantasies of the world's great geographical discoveries and wonders, as wire-walkers sought increasingly greater physical challenges. These acts, displaying human agility that defied nature's indomitable forces, are best exemplified by Blondin's walk over Niagara Falls. Monsieur Vertelli's 1865 walk across South Australia's Mount Lofty waterfall (St Leon 74), prefigured the British Empire's celebratory spectacles of conquering Australia's physical geography. Vertelli billed himself as the (first) Australian Blondin. Undoubtedly Blondin's 1874 and 1875 visits directly influenced his Australian imitators including Zuila, as well as young amateurs, one even cross-dressing as Britannia (Dunstone). Blondin was managed by Australian Harry Lyons (Braid 4), and despite the significant risks of ship travel to Australia, it was on the international touring circuit for circus performers from Dalle Case's first short-lived

venture in Sydney in 1841, reportedly with Brazilian and European performers.

Significantly, two record-breaking high wire acts in Sydney followed Blondin's visit. A year after Zuila's 1876 feat in Natal, the (second) Australian Blondin, Henri L'Estrange, crossed a bay in Sydney's Middle Harbour, reportedly on a 1420-foot long wire 314 feet in the air, either on 29 March and 14 April 1877 (Braid 4), or on 18 April 1877 (St Leon 77). On 27 April and 4 May 1878, the brothers Andrew and John Le Grande crossed a wire over Middle Harbour meeting in the middle to lie down; they would later work in P.T. Barnum's Greatest Show (Braid 4). A sketch of L'Estrange performing in American three-ring circus has him walking on a wire carrying a man, with a caption that he is crossing the Sydney Harbour Heads (*Coles Brothers Advance Courier*). The conquest of a specific physical geography promoted the performer. These risky acts of wire-walking across huge physical spaces happened in the context of the nineteenth-century idealisation of spatial conquest. Perhaps though, the death-defying feats of wire-walkers in Australia masked how the Empire's occupation of its large land spaces was underpinned by a militarised geography and its technologies.

### **Gendered body technologies**

Aerialists reflected nineteenth-century ideas of progress whereby technological advances facilitated physical mastery over nature's spaces. The aerial act is defined by its apparatus, and its history dependent on new inventions. Performing bodies on the centuries-old slack rope and mid-nineteenth-century tight rope, and subsequent copper and electric wire apparatus (Speaight 71), however, did not produce the same imaginary spaces of flight as bodies in action after 1860 on the newly-invented trapeze. Despite an associated cultural imaginary of exotic geographies during the span of Zuila's career, wire-walking acts were predominately solo demonstrations of the most distinctively quotidian aerial tricks. By 1901 wire-walking acts had completely changed as three-performer-high balances were accomplished.<sup>15</sup>

Although technological advances expanded the physical spaces of performance and increased the complexity of the action and thereby the dangers, most wire performances replicated movements and behaviour that could be recognised as executed on the ground unthinkingly: walking, running riding bicycles, manoeuvring wheelbarrows. Performed on a rope or wire high in the air, these everyday actions became spectacular. Wire acts needed to mark the humanness of the performing body in order to make its conquering of space through

physical control and balance appear to be a great accomplishment, even superhuman. These performers did skilled balancing acts that required precision timing and footwork. Implicitly, their display challenged expectations for social identity and its physicality through their capacity to confound ideas of the socially defined body's limitations. Wire-walking purposely reoriented visible spatial geographies in spectacles of balance. Bodies moving on wires also disorientated cultural beliefs about the natural laws for the physical body and its spatial configurations.

In London Zuila's identity as an Australian from the other side of the world evoked ideas of coming up from below or down under. The performing body's spatial reorientation mimicked disorientation in imaginary geographies. At the same time Zuila's prowess as a gymnast, a field dominated by males, defied beliefs about gendered physicality. Her tricks matched those of Blondin: carrying a man on her back, stilt walking, walking with baskets on her feet, and walking blindfold. What made Zuila's tricks more impressive, however, was the cultural expectation that female bodies were weaker. The gender identity of the performing body was important, especially when a female carried the heavier male body. A female performer's appropriation of the action of male bodies became a spectacle of gender competition. Performances of physical actions that were culturally associated with masculinity disoriented gender identity.

The aerial body conveys gender identity through nomenclature, costume, stance and gesture, but its muscular action in the execution of the act often completely defies social beliefs about the physical difference of sexed bodies. Circus has always blatantly encouraged performances that blur gender and race identity (Tait). The female aerialist performed across the cultural spaces of masculinity with her muscular strength and daring. The body's signing of cultural identity was routinely manipulated to enhance the performance; the authenticity of bodily identity was always questionable.

In considering how a body is emblematic of nature and a cultural sign with and through technologies, as it does explicitly, for example, through body building, Anne Balsamo writes that as 'a social, cultural, and historical production' it functions both as an entity and a process of becoming a social identity (3). It is not only culturally represented as gendered, but its materiality is shaped through such gendered representations. Balsamo points out that femininity and nature are 'so closely aligned, any attempt to *reconstruct* the body is transgressive



against the “natural” identity of the female body’ (43). In her act of muscular skill, Zuila presented a transgressive female body, and the long-standing popularity of her act in London suggests its converse impact on perceptions of female physicality. This raises the question as to whether the accumulated effect of viewing muscular acts by nineteenth-century female aerialists impacted socially on the material development of bodies.

The duplicity of circus body identities may have undermined this impact if it was known, for example, that Loyal had supposedly cross-dressed as Lu-Lu as the support person in Zuila’s act. It is difficult to understand this cross-dressing other than as Loyal’s pique and cheekiness faced with Farini’s ownership of the cannon projectile patent, since it did not actually enhance Zuila’s act — carrying a woman was a less impressive feat than carrying a male. Competition over ownership of aerial tricks and their newly invented apparatus was fierce and Farini patented the idea of five spring mechanisms behind human projectile acts (Peacock 227-28). In 1870 Farini’s protégé Lulu became Europe’s most celebrated trapezist when Farini’s apparatus propelled her twenty-five feet vertically into the air up to an aerial platform to do her routine on the trapeze, which included a triple somersault to a net also designed by Farini. In June 1873 Lulu performed on a program that included Herr Holtum who caught cannonballs, and Farini took a steamer from San Francisco to Australia and New Zealand just after Loyal claimed to have first done the cannonball act (Peacock 213-14). Interestingly though, there is a Lulu advertised at Sydney’s Theatre Royal in December 1872 when Loyal and Zuila are absent (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 December 1872, 4). Certainly new tricks reached Australia quickly.

By 1876 it was widely known that Farini’s Lulu was actually Sam Hunt cross-dressed as female. Perhaps Loyal’s later cross-dressing in London was intended to provoke Farini. Nonetheless Loyal’s parody, hidden or otherwise, of the gender mimicry in the act of Farini’s Lulu heightened the spectacle of gender competition in Zuila’s act. Around the time Loyal’s Lu-Lu returned to London it appears that Farini was off exploring the Kalahari Desert with his Lulu, Sam Hunt — their conquests in aerial, social and geographical spaces being seemingly interchangeable.

Cross-dressing in aerial acts was a performance strategy assisted by the malleability of the body’s social identity, and this was also evident in nineteenth-century theatre acts. Male to female cross-dressed aerialists could be accepted in the nineteenth century because female aerialists

looked comparatively muscular. The greater popularity of female aerialists encouraged duplicitous cross-dressing in the aerial body's merging of physical and social dangers.

Perhaps then, Lu-Lu's presence, played either by Loyal or Winifred or both, offsets the act's masculinisation and gender disorientation. A story about Zuila's sense of humour, however, suggests one further interpretation of the cross-dressing claim. In 1881, when circus agent Wightman of Cleveland heard that Zuila was about to perform on the wire with her baby (Winifred), he planned to ambush her at rehearsal and take the baby away. Zuila outsmarted him and climbed up to the wire with the baby, saying that there was little danger. 'In the centre, she stopped, and to the horror of Wightman lost her balance. Swaying for a moment, she uttered a piercing shriek and dropped her child to the ground below.' Zuila grabbed the wire, and running over, Wightman found that the 'baby' was canvas filled with sand. Zuila came down laughing and telling Wightman that show people were not cruel to children (*New York Clipper* 18 September 1880, 204). Zuila certainly liked to play practical jokes to make a point. Any cross-dressing by Loyal could have also been tongue-in-cheek comic play.

In the early 1880s Zuila had been in direct competition with Farini's Zazel. While Zazel's cannonball act would become a generic act owned by Farini with probably four different female Zazels, there was only one Zuila. Although Zuila does not appear to have done somersaults or similar tricks, her sustained level of skill and her nerve made her unequalled and famous. In 1902 Zuila swung up to the pedestal on a trapeze and crossed the wire with a balance pole in her hands, and then sat on a chair with 'as much apparent security and comfort as though she were upon *terra firma*'. Then she wheeled a barrow across the wire and balanced the pole across the handlebars of a hollow-rimmed bicycle and, pushed out along the wire by her assistant, pedalled quickly to the other side. ('Royal Aquarium' 183). By this time Zuila's legendary career achievements ensured that her act was a perennial attraction for large crowds. In the era of solo wire-walkers, Zuila was unquestionably one of the greatest.

## References

My grateful thanks to circus historians: Fred Braid for his very helpful assistance with some of the primary research on Loyal and Zuila in Australian newspapers; Mark St Leon for help with trying to locate Zuila's photo (see Photo 6 for what is probably a photograph of Zuila); and to Steve Gossard for his ongoing invaluable assistance.

## 90 Peta Tait

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## Notes

- 1 Zuila was advertised as first appearing as a gymnast at the Royal National Circus in Sydney, 23 March 1872 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 March 1872: 8), and subsequently performing on a double trapeze with Loyal. Mark St Leon identifies a Blanche Zuila working with George Loyal's Combination Troupe (Gossard 109). Loyal is reported to have arrived in Australia sometime around 1868, when he reportedly rode a velocipede on a high wire at the Theatre Comique, Melbourne (*New York Clipper*, 7 February 1880: 361). He was billed performing at the Prince of Wales Opera House on single trapeze, doing a Niagara Leap with Mr Magilton, and then playing Isidore in the 'The Devil' in the great diving scene (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 1869: 4). In his 1870 outdoor act at Albert Ground, Redfern in Sydney, Loyal rode a bicycle across a wire 20 feet above the ground carrying a balancing pole, walked

- forwards and backwards across the wire with a blindfold, and performed on the horizontal bar (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 July 1870: 5). Loyal (the Miraculous) went on to do his 'aerial bicycle feat' under the patronage of 'Earl of Belmore' in Victoria (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 July 1870: 8) and was advertised on both trapeze and horizontal (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1870: 8).
- 2 'Zuila, besides being an accomplished high wire performer, served as the catcher in the duo's human canonball act ... suspended from a single trap high above the launcher' which came up vertically (Conover 14).
  - 3 Adam Forepaugh's publicity reported this as 300 feet up on wire, walking over Umgami Falls, South Africa 23 February 1876, (*Adam Forepaugh's* 10).
  - 4 The advertisement of the nightly program at Queen's Theatre during May listed among performers, Madame Zuila 'Queen of the Air' and George Loyal 'Monarch of the Air' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1874: 12; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 1874: 4).
  - 5 The *Era's* annual listing of 'balancers' includes a Mlle Zuila for 1877 and 1878.
  - 6 They were reported in Chicago to be planning to revisit Australia ( *Bulletin*, 19 June 1880: 5) and in San Francisco at Woodward's Gardens (*Bulletin*, 25 December 1880: 8).
  - 7 Zuila went to the Canterbury Theatre after twelve weeks at Crystal Palace and then continued on to Paragon Theatre (*Era*, 19 September 1885: 22). She was still at the Paragon in November (*Era*, 3 October 1885: 12). By December she was advertising a trip to Scala, Antwerp (*Era*, 5 December 1885: 22). Zuila's regular advertisement in the *Era* announces 'Grand Continental Tour commencing at Frankfurt', 16 May 1886 (*Era*, 29 May 1886: 22).
  - 8 The Royal Aquarium advertised Zuila and Lu-Lu (*Era*, 22 March 1890: 12; *Era*, 5 August 1893: 12; *Era*, 5 January 1895: 29) as did the World's Fair, Agricultural Hall, Islington (*Era*, 6 January 1894: 26). Ella Zuila performed at the Royal Aquarium in 1902 (*The Music Hall and Theatre Review*, 14 February 1902: 183), and in 1903 (Turner 2000, 120).
  - 9 The Royal Aquarium advertised the Ella Zuila Trio, High Rope Artists (*Era*, 18 March 1893: 12 - 1 April 1893: 12).
  - 10 Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection, Box 4, Canterbury Theatre of Varieties' Handbill Australian Funambulist Ella Zuila 1887 assisted by Little Lulu, Canterbury Theatre of Varieties. '1. Grand Introductory March, 2. Running on the Wire ... 3. Grand Double Act, Carrying on the Shoulders, Mounting and Standing on the Shoulders, Dismounting, Passing and Repassing, Double Forward and Backward Marching. The Quarrel in Mid-Air; now I leave you to your fate; come over here; if I do I shall fall. The making up and retaliation. Pick-a-back home, Ella Zuila and Little Lulu. 4. Walking baskets Little Lulu. 5. Blindfolded and enveloped in a sack Ella Zuila. 6. The Masterpiece, with a Chair Crossing and Recrossing, and Standing on the Chair while in the middle of the Wire, Ella Zuila. 7. Terrific and Sensational Ride on a beautiful Silver Bicycle, Riding Forwards and Backwards; Standing Still, at the

same time taking the Feet off of the Pedals, and placing the same over the handles, a marvel of equipoise, by Ella Zuila.'

- 11 Madame Geneviève, whose real name was Selina Young, was at Cremorne Gardens managed by Mr E.T. Smith, a 'good-natured rogue'. 'The tight-rope was raised on trestles ... but when only about six hundred feet from the end of her journey she stopped, and there was a long pause while attendants tried to tighten the remaining portion of the rope, which was sagging too much to make it possible for Madame Geneviève to continue her journey. The rope was tightened and she began to move forward, but as she moved the rope began to swing to and fro, and it was discovered that some unspeakable rogue had cut the guy ropes in order to steal the lead weights. It was of course impossible to proceed, and with the greatest of presence of mind the girl threw away her balancing pole, bent down and caught the rope with both hands, swung herself down on to one of the stay ropes, and slid down it into the river, where she was picked up by a boat' (Scott 122).
- 12 On 30 June 1859 Blondin crossed Niagara Falls on a rope, taking twenty minutes and '[R]unning most of the way' (Shapiro 28). Farini's wire-walking challenged Blondin (Peacock 73-94).
- 13 Colleano costumed himself as a Spaniard; the Spaniard, Juan Caicedo, had pioneered the backward somersault (St Leon 131). However, Colleano's earlier Arab and Hawaiian performance personae suggested that only some racial identities were acceptable (Tait).
- 14 By 1885 Adam Forepaugh's Federation of Nations would be advertising more exotic Australian acts than wire-walkers; 'Australia's Real Native Boomerang Throwers, Kangaroos, Emus, Birds, Reptiles in Menagerie.' (*Adam Forepaugh's Annual Courier*, 1885, Milner Library, Illinois State University).
- 15 See advertisement for the Zalva Trio crossing a wire as a human pyramid, 'standing erect 3 high on shoulders' (*Era*, 5 January 1901: 30). Rope acts had changed from performances of gracefulness mid-nineteenth-century, to increasingly greater challenges of balance and skill.