Sports licence order

Warning over circus dangers

By Simon Tait, Arts Correspondent

An alternative circus, which was nearly banned by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe because of dangerous acts involving motorcycles, fireworks and chainsaws, must be licensed as a sporting event with music before it will be allowed to perform in London.

Edinburgh City Council threatened to close the circus, Archaos, because of danger to audiences from flying motorcycles. Acts involving the use of chainsaws were banned. The public objected to another act involving nudity.

Islington borough council, north London, said yesterday it had been decided that the circus must be licensed before a two-week booking at Highbury Fields, north-east London, from September 12 will be allowed to go ahead.

"Circuses are traditionally allowed to perform without licences, and following the Edinburgh publicity this is what is worrying Islington," Mr Adrian Evans, the show's London producer, said.

"We think they are being over-cautious in their reaction to us. We have performed in all the major cities of Europe and there is no danger to public safety. We take risks ourselves, and when people take risks accidents occasionally happen, but the audience is never in any danger."

Mr Evans said there were 13 injuries during performances at the Jubilee Gardens and Clapham Common, south London, last year. However Lambeth council had no objection to performances scheduled for Clapham Common after Highbury Fields.

In Edinburgh, Miss Sarah Sankey, aged 23, suffered crushed hands and vertebrae and a broken arm after falling 30ft during rehearsals. Miss Sankey, the daughter of Adrienne Corri, the actress, was discharged from hospital after two weeks and is acting as liaison for the French performers, who speak no English.

She said: "I hope we can persuade the Islington people that we are perfectly safe. We will do everything we can to satisfy them, but if we have to emasculate the show we just won't be able to perform it."