

BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



ACTING



FONDATION
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

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NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

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* The masculine form is used in this text generically and for readability purposes only.

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FOREWORD

NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL

Based in Montreal, the National Circus School is an institution for secondary and higher education whose primary mission is to train circus artists. It is the only institution in North America to offer a complete training cycle in circus arts, starting with the preparatory program, followed by the Circus and High School Studies program, and culminating in the higher education program (leading to the Diploma of Collegial Studies in Circus Arts). Since 1981, more than 400 artists have been trained at the School. A pioneer in the revival of circus arts in Canada and North America, the School has contributed to the emergence of Quebec's great circuses, which were to become *Cirque du Soleil*, *Cirque Éloïze* and *The 7 Fingers*, and has lent a helping hand to numerous foreign circus companies.

Today, the National Circus School enjoys a unique position in the world of circus arts instruction. With a team of more than 60 teachers providing a wealth of educational and artistic experience in circus arts, acrosports, performing arts and education, the School is regularly invited to share its expertise at educational exchanges, meetings and symposia in Canada and abroad, especially those organized by the International Network for Social Circus Training (INSCT), the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO) and the American Youth Circus Organization (AYCO).

With the enthusiasm for social circus, the spread of circus arts as a recreational activity and the overwhelming demand for qualified personnel, the School believed it was essential to support the development of services providing high-quality, safe introductory courses and training programs in the circus arts. Since 2004, its Instructor and Trainer programs – leading to an Attestation of Collegial Studies and recognized by Quebec's Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) – have trained some 100 teaching professionals. These teachers are actively involved in all areas of circus instruction, the education of young people, leisure activities, social circus and even the specialized training of professional artists.

In addition to the skills needed to introduce circus techniques, the role of a circus arts instructor – whether for recreational activities or social outreach purposes – requires particular knowledge of safety issues and of an individual's stages of motor, psychological and social development as well as the ability to organize and manage a class. This manual is intended as a useful and relevant educational tool, but it certainly does not replace actual training for teaching the circus arts. Although these techniques are essential for performing circus arts, these disciplines also need creativity and poetry in order to be truly artistic and meaningful, and this is true at both the professional and amateur levels.

On behalf of the teachers and professionals who were so enthusiastic and thorough in putting together the content of this manual, I would like to thank *Cirque du Soleil* for its generous contribution to the development of an educational work of this magnitude. By taking part in circus arts and with the help of qualified personnel, it will certainly help a great number of young people to achieve their potential more easily.

Daniela Arendasova
Director of Studies
National Circus School
Montreal



INTRODUCTION

The practice of circus arts implies knowledge of and proficiency in one or several techniques, which usually requires progressive and ongoing learning. Use of these techniques opens up a wide range of possibilities intended to develop physical abilities, as well as creative potential and social skills.

Today, there is growing interest in using circus arts for purposes other than performance and shows. Professionals involved in the fields of leisure and recreation, humanitarian development, mental health and physical rehabilitation are watching the development of current initiatives with great interest.

As the learning of these techniques is set to develop in various areas, and with rising interest in circus arts as a recreational pursuit, it seems appropriate at this time to develop a document that fulfils the need for technical knowledge, while also ensuring that learning is done in safety and progressively, according to the basic techniques in the circus arts.

We also believe that this document will be useful to all those organizations involved in the teaching of circus techniques. Circus schools, recreational circus programs, acrobatic gymnastics federations and the educational sector in general can use the knowledge and information contained here to improve their own teaching.

Collaboration between National Circus School and *Cirque du Soleil*

This multimedia educational kit brings together 17 circus disciplines and 177 technical elements. Written with the help of teachers at the National Circus School, it recommends and outlines the principles of teaching basic circus arts techniques. Illustrated by NCS students, this work recommends gradual development of skills and the mastering of various basic circus techniques.

The work comprises two main parts: written documents and video documents.

Written documents: The written part of *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* comprises 17 chapters, each corresponding to a colour-coded discipline. Every chapter is divided into two sections. The first section introduces the terminology specific to the discipline, the equipment required and, specific information, as well as advice about safety and the prevention of injury. The second section illustrates in detail the different technical elements that constitute the discipline. This section comprises a description of the technical elements, detailed explanations of the movement, educationals enabling step-by-step learning of each component, tips for manual aids, corrections and corrective exercises addressing the most common mistake and variants of the movement.

Video documents: The video part of *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* is intended to promote a better understanding of the written material and to provide a visual aid to learning. To make it easier to find information, the colours used for the disciplines in the written documents correspond to those on the video documents. Similarly, the photos shown alongside the explanations of the movement, the educationals and the variants are taken from the video documents. When necessary, close-ups and slow motion are used to make it easier to understand more complex technical positions and quick sequences. When movements are displayed, extra information or warnings about safety or injury prevention will pop up onscreen.



For practical reasons, the section on “Common Mistakes” is not included on the DVDs so that the focus is on showing the correct way of performing the movements. The educational elements required for learning the various technical elements however, are presented in the video documents. In any case, the written document must be consulted to see the complete list of educational elements.

All the exercises contained in the written documents and videos are presented in such a way so as to ensure they are performed as safely as possible (ideally under the supervision of an instructor or coach), with proper preparation and using the right equipment.

The written and video documents included in *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* are complementary: they were designed to be used together. The written documents contain information that is not available on the video documents. Likewise, the video documents allow a fuller understanding of the movements that is not possible from consulting the written documents alone.



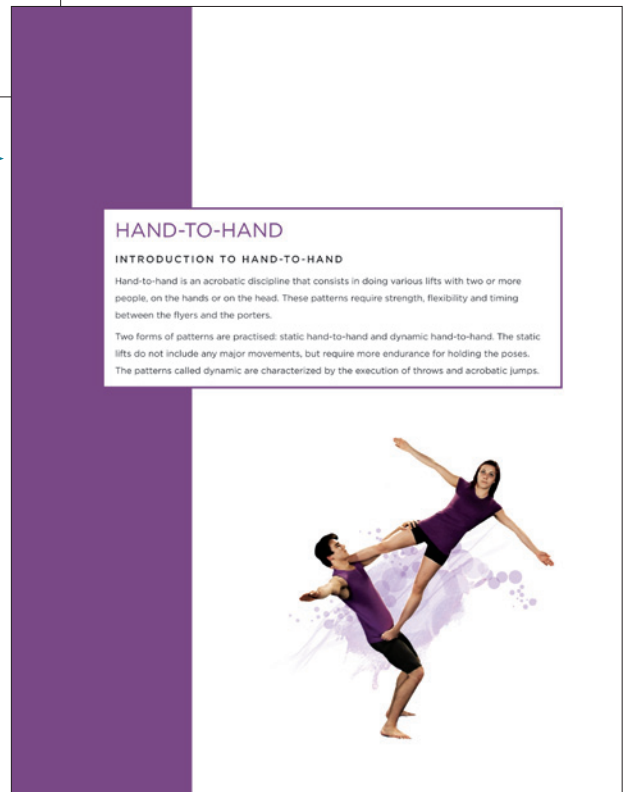
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



Introduction

The first page of each chapter describes in general terms the specifics and characteristics of each discipline.

Each discipline is colour-coded. The different colours, corresponding to those used on the video documents, make it easier to find what the user is looking for.



TERMINOLOGY

Centre of mass (COM)
Point in an individual's body where the body mass is considered to be concentrated and where the three axes of rotation meet.

Closed foot
Position with the foot straight on the wire.

Demi-pointe
Maintaining a standing position on the balls of the feet.

Frame
A-shaped structure that allows anchoring the wire while lifting it off the ground.

Open foot
External rotation of the foot of approximately 45°.

Retirés
Action of flexing a leg, bringing the foot up and placing it on the knee of the opposite leg.

Wire
Cable on which one walks.

EQUIPMENT

- A cable (the wire) to walk on;
- Two A-frames to anchor the cable;
- Side cables;
- A hand-operated winch to tighten the wire;
- A spring;
- Shackles for assembly;
- A floor mat the length of the wire and at least 1.40 m wide.



Side cables A-frame

2 Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - TIGHTWIRE - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

Terminology

The technical terms essential to understanding the elements specific to each discipline.

In-depth terminology research was carried out in conjunction with teachers at the National Circus School in Montreal to determine the most commonly used expressions and terms in circus and acrobatic communities.

Equipment

The equipment needed to practise the different disciplines covered.

Specific Information

Specific information needed to practise the discipline and essential for performing the technical elements properly, bringing together such topics as identifying the dominant side when performing twists and body positions in aerial phases.

Safety

Essential information to consider when training with the aim of minimizing the risk of injury.

These points are specific to each discipline and are of the utmost importance. They concern both the instructor's role and the work environment.

TERMINOLOGY

Aerial silks
Fabric rigging, generally made of Lycra, folded in half and hung from an anchoring point, on which the acrobat executes various acrobatic patterns.

Flexed feet
Position with the ankle in flexion.

Hip flexion
Action of bringing the legs and the upper body together, or decreasing the torso/leg angle.

Iliac crest
Flat bone forming the upper edge of the pelvic bone.

Pike inverted hang
Hip flexion in the inverted position.

Rope
Aerial rigging made up of a twisted or braided cotton rope with a diameter of 3 to 5 centimetres, positioned vertically and from which the acrobat executes various acrobatic patterns.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The rope and silk practice is performed on a vertical axis, which requires sustained physical endurance. The participant is constantly subjected to gravity; the challenge is to limit the loss of height while executing placements and to find combinations that limit the necessary manipulations and the inevitable need to climb back up again.

The practice of these two disciplines requires general muscular endurance and develops good muscle tone. It specifically requires upper body strength in the arms, shoulders and abdominals, as well as grip strength.

Note: In order to simplify the text, the word "rope" will be used in the descriptions to designate both rope and silk, except for the parts specifically dedicated to silk.

SAFETY

As rope and silk allow plenty of room for freedom, creativity and exploration, safety remains the only real rule. Consequently, the equipment must be in good condition and properly installed. Also, it is essential to always use a landing mat. The instructor should be aware of his limitations and be able to assess those of the participants.

Rope and silk are practised without a lunge or safety device, but with a landing mat. It is therefore necessary to ensure that an element can be performed completely, which includes controlling both the movement and the release. During the descent, despite the use of a landing mat, the possibility of deliberately falling should never be considered.

Since rope and silk can cause abrasion burns, it is recommended to wear suitable clothing that covers the legs and torso as much as possible. Despite these precautions, it is normal for people new to these disciplines to experience some discomfort. The rope and silk may cause cramping of the feet, thighs and torso, and may sometimes cause minor burns to the feet or other exposed parts. In order to increase grip and limit involuntary sliding, a resin powder is used, applied to the hands and, if necessary, to the feet and back of the knees.

2 Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - ROPE AND SILK - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil



ACROBATICS
MENICHELLI

Technical Element Description
Rotating 180° around the transversal axis, going into a handstand and finishing with a walkout.

Prerequisites

- Back walkover.
- Handstand with stride split.
- Walkout.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the standing straight position with the arms on either side of the head, rock backwards slightly and lower the arms. Flex the arms until they are in line with the body and extend the legs and hips. **M 1**
- Transfer the COM over the hands and go into a handstand with the legs in a stride split, with the gaze on the hands. **M 2**
- Walk out and get back to the standing straight position, with the gaze forward. **M 3**

Note: Once the leg push is finished, the arms should remain aligned with the body.

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - ACROBATICS - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

Technical Element Description

A concise description explaining the nature or the key movements of the technical element in question.

Prerequisites

Figures, body patterns and technical skills to master before starting to learn the element.

Explanation of the Movement

A detailed description of the different sequences of movements making up the element.

Identified by the icon **M**

These explanations are illustrated by one or more photos. The use of numbers added to the letter **M** allows the user to follow the sequences represented visually: **M 1, M 2, etc.**

Safety Notice

In addition to the information provided in the first section, the safety notices set out essential aspects to consider when performing the movement in order to avoid injury.

PYRAMIDS
EGYPTIAN PYRAMID

Technical Element Description
Seven-person pyramid.

Prerequisite

- Flyer standing on a porter in a sumo pike position.

Explanation of the Movement

- Four porters are positioned next to one another in a sumo pike position, interlacing their legs with those of neighbours so as to stabilize the base of the pyramid and form a straight line. Their backs must be horizontal and all at the same height. **M 1**
- A first flyer gets up on the two central porters supporting himself with his hands on their backs, ascending either directly or by stepping on a porter's thigh. Once up, the flyer puts one foot on each of the central porters' pelvises and rests his hands on their shoulder blades. Two other flyers repeat this sequence, one positioned on the left porters' backs and the other on the right porters' backs. **M 2**
- When the three flyers are stable, they lift their torsos so as to have their backs horizontal. Simultaneously, porters and flyers extend their arms out to the side, resting on their neighbours' shoulders, if they have a neighbour. The porters complete the sequence by straightening their legs. **M 3**
- During the descent, the flyers again put their hands on the porters' shoulder blades, then jump backwards one after the other, from the centre, avoiding any sudden movement.

Safety Notice: It is important to have a landing mat behind the pyramid in case of falls. In this case, the participant should fall on the person below. This way, the speed and height of the fall will be reduced.

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - PYRAMIDS - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil



Educationals


1. One person holds the diabolo with his hands and moves it so that the participant practises corrections with the handsticks. The diabolo is corrected with the hand that provides the rotation speed, that is, the right hand. While correcting it, continue to give it speed by making up-and-down movements with the right hand. ED 1

Three corrections:

1. Stand facing the diabolo; if it turns, follow it.
2. If the diabolo leans inward toward the feet, move the right hand forward; the string will then rub the diabolo's cup and the diabolo will straighten out.
3. If the diabolo leans toward the outside, move the right hand back; the string will then rub the diabolo's cup and the diabolo will straighten out.

Corrections should be made more quickly with practice and therefore should become increasingly smaller.

2. Roll the diabolo along the ground using the handsticks and lift it into the air.



Manual Aid

- The spotter stands behind the participant and manipulates the handsticks with him, providing the rotation speed and applying the corrections.

Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. From the beginning, the participant places the diabolo on the wrong side on the ground.	1. Placing the diabolo on the correct side. If the participant wishes to manipulate it with the right hand, it is placed on the right side.
2. The participant is badly positioned.	2. Staying facing the diabolo.
3. The participant waits too long to make a correction.	3. Correcting the diabolo from the first signs of instability. With practice, one will be able to anticipate corrections.
4. The diabolo becomes unstable and loses speed.	4. Always providing speed when applying the correction.
5. The participant overcorrects and tips the diabolo.	5. Making small correction movements.

6 Basic Techniques in Circus Arts - DIABOLO - © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

Educationals

Step-by-step exercises and sequences of movements recommended to successfully perform the technical element. They make the principle of progressive learning easier, focusing on coordination and physical preparation as well as concentrating on the movements.

Identified by the icon **ED**

These educationals are often illustrated by one or more photos. The use of numbers added to the letters **ED** allows the user to follow the sequences represented visually: **ED 1**, **ED 2**, etc.


Manual Aid

Assistance that the instructor or the spotter should provide when teaching the movements. The images allow the user to see the movements to make and the actions to take to ensure learning is carried out safely.

Identified by the icon **MA**

Manual Aid

- To assist the participant, the instructor stands with his arm solidly extended into a fist in front of the participant. The participant supports himself on the fist, trying to let go of it for as long as possible. **MA 1**
- The instructor should not hold the participant by the hips, because he will not control his balance.



Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant's arms drop during the half turn.	1. Developing the reflex of lifting the arms during the half turn. EX
2. The participant puts too much weight on the right foot.	2. Keeping the COM over the left foot. The right foot must assist in the turn.
3. The participant bends his body.	3. Bending the knee of the left leg more, lifting the arms.

Variants


1. Sequence: Walking, half turn at the end of the wire, walking.
2. Sequence: Four half turns in the middle of the wire.

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HANDSTAND
THE "L" SIT

Technical Element Description
Sitting up straight with the legs extended with support on the hands.



Explanation of the Movement

- Press the hands into the ground with the index finger facing forward and the COM over the palms of the hands. Keep the legs together and outstretched with the feet pointed. Press with the arms while contracting the abdominals and bring the pelvis slightly backwards.

Educationals

- "L" sit on canes or on parallel bars.
- "L" sit with the legs tucked.


Manual Aid

- Watch out for possible backwards falls, especially when the exercise is done with balancing canes or when the participant lifts the legs very high.

Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant cannot lift the legs.	1. Performing strengthening exercises for the abdominal muscles. EX
2. The participant cannot keep the arms straight.	2. Turning the hands toward the outside, the index finger facing front.

Variant

- "L" sit with legs in a straddle position. V 1



Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • HANDSTAND • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

Common Mistakes

The most common mistakes to avoid.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

Modifications to make either by correcting movements or by corrective exercises.

The corrective exercises are identified by the icon EX

Variants


Images illustrating the technical elements give the user the opportunity to progress and to vary his learning.

Identified by the icon V

Manual Aid

- The instructor puts his hand on the participant's ankle to make sure the angle of his knee does not exceed 90°, otherwise the participant could fall. MA 1



Note: Avoid pressing too hard on the leg; the angle should not be tighter than that of the double knee hang position. If the trapeze is higher, the instructor puts his hands under the participant's shoulders.



Common Mistakes	Corrections and Corrective Exercises
1. The participant lets the free hip and leg fall and has difficulty returning the knee to the bar.	1. Keeping the hips even throughout the movement.
2. The participant stays in a pike position and has difficulty maintaining a secure knee angle.	2. Opening the hips by tightening the buttocks and pressing the pelvis forward, pulling the heels toward the buttocks.

Variants

- Front leg to the side in a split. V 1
- Arabesque: Leg to the back, foot pulled toward the head. V 2

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • FIXED TRAPEZE • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil



INSTRUCTIONS - VIDEO DOCUMENTS

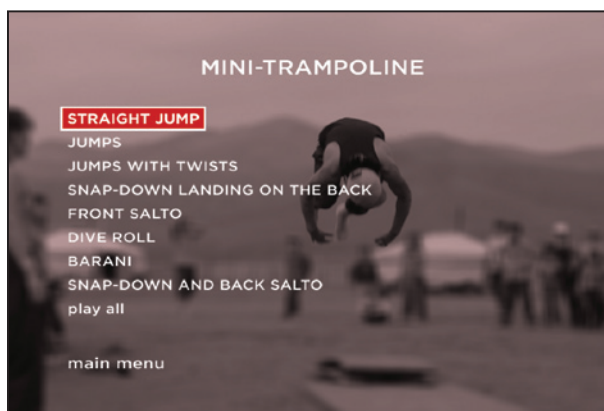


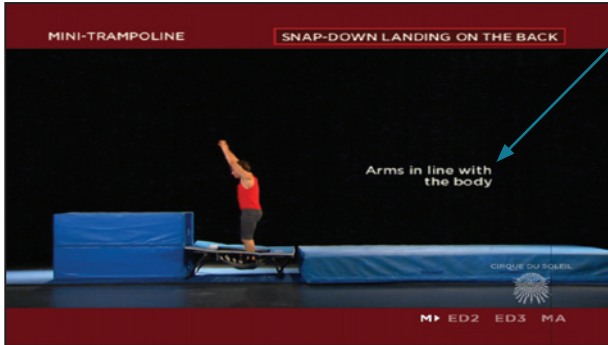
Main Menu

After the opening sequence, a first window presents the disciplines covered on the DVD.

Elements Menu

Once a discipline has been selected, a second window allows the user to go from one technical element to another. The “play all” button, at the bottom of the window, provides the option to watch the elements one after the other.



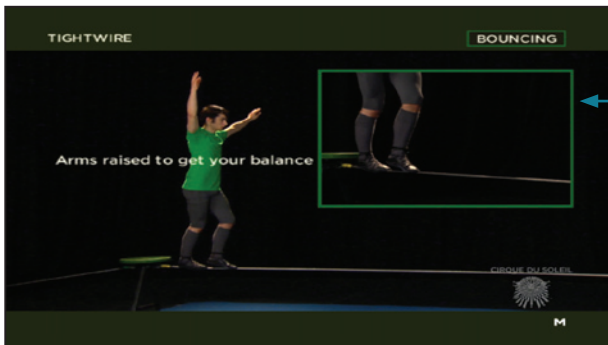
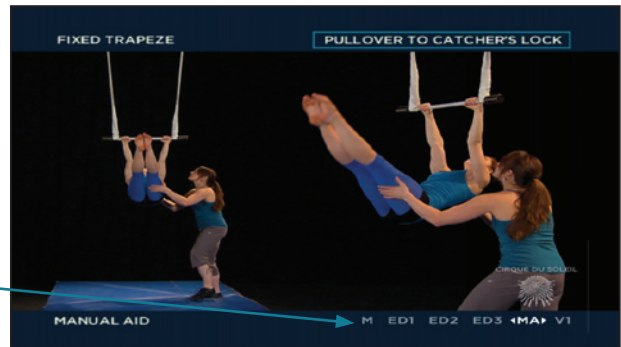


Warnings

Extra information or warnings about safety or prevention of injury pop up onscreen at key moments while the movements are being viewed.

Icons

When highlighted, the icon corresponding to the one in the written document indicates the technical element component being played.



Close-ups

In some cases, special attention is given to an image, part of the body or manual aid as a movement is being demonstrated by showing a close-up or by showing the movement from a different angle.

Technical Notes

The different parts of the element may be viewed out of sequence using the “Skip” function to select the icons at the bottom of the screen. The slow-motion function, available on most DVD players, also allows the user to watch each movement more closely.



ACTING

INTRODUCTION TO ACTING

Acting consists in playing characters as part of a scene according to previously defined instructions. The participants adjust their performance according to the level of acting, the environment, the character features and the required interactions.

This discipline is a vital part of the process of creating circus shows. Circus artists are increasingly being asked to interpret characters and emotions. Like other disciplines, the basic techniques are essential in order to successfully act out an intention, an emotion or a situation in a clear and effective manner.



TERMINOLOGY

Break

Change in tone, going from comic to dramatic or vice versa.

Focus

Place to which one wishes to draw the spectator's attention in order to make him fully understand the message, situation or emotions. This can mean a particular actor, an object or an area in the ring or on the stage. In film, the camera directs the spectator's attention and gaze. In the circus and theatre, focus performs this task.

Focus is determined in two ways: the first, by the actor looking at a specific area, the second, more general, by the specific place or space on the stage at which the spectator must be looking at a precise moment. Normally, the director is the one who determines where the spectator's gaze should be directed. The actors then act accordingly and work to improve the focus of attention by playing minor or major or by looking at the specific area determined by the director.

Lazzi

Improvisation without any impact on the main drama. Opportune moment to develop a little comic sequence. For example, a small cookie crumb on a table can move the participant to improvise for several minutes with this little crumb and then return to the main action.

Play minor

Making up part of the general tableau, the actor playing minor should be a secondary element allowing the spectator to have a more comprehensive understanding of the principal action. While still playing his character and acting in the situation, the actor should not be the main focus of the spectator. His acting should be discreet unless otherwise indicated.

Play major

To be the focus of the spectator's attention.

Subtext

True intention or underlying emotion of a character that may be contrary to the text and that gives nuance to the actor's work.



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ACTING

THE THREE LINES



Technical Element Description

Dialogue in which each reply is repeated three times, with different levels of acting.

Exercise focusing on rhythm, levels of acting, honesty of emotion, control and awareness.

Explanation of the Movement

- The participants are divided into groups of two. They create a short text, each line of which will be repeated three times.
- They must then introduce and repeat the text in a given situation. For example, they pass chairs around as if they were helping to move out of a house.
- The objectives of the exercise are:
 - Learning several lines quickly;
 - Repeating the text three times as a comic process;
 - Achieving a rhythm for the text, hence the importance of using short lines;
 - Expressing subtext. In the example below, it is a question of trust/mistrust, lying and honesty of emotion.
- The lines below are said according to the levels of acting listed:
 - Where were you?
 - Where was I?
 - Where were you?
 - At hockey.
 - At hockey?
 - At hockey.
 - With whom?
 - With whom?
 - With whom?
 - Léonie.
 - Léonie?
 - Léonie.
 - It's not true.
 - It's true.
 - It's not true.
 - You don't believe me?
 - I don't believe you.
 - You don't believe me?
 - I saw you.
 - You saw me?
 - I saw you.
 - Ah...
 - Ah!
 - Ah...



Level 1 - Non-acting

Not doing anything. Not moving. In the centre of the stage, both participants say their lines, five or six each, then leave. Without acting (no text should be heard). The objective is to properly control the level. In this case, it is the non-acting level.

Level 2 - TV drama

Acting minimally, without a lot of expression on the face; everything is internal. Both participants go to the centre of the stage. They say their lines again, but with a minimal level of acting. They imagine that the camera is in close-up and that there is a microphone placed near the actors. Therefore, exaggerating the acting or projecting the lines forcefully is not necessary. Rather, focus is on subtle acting and searching for honesty of emotion. Once all their lines are said, the actors leave the stage. **M 1**

Level 3 - Naturalistic theatre

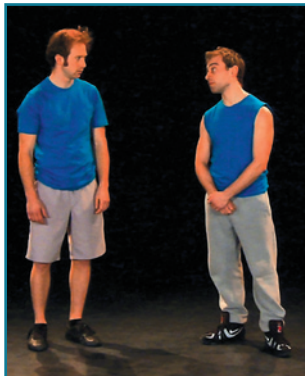
Acting with more projection. Keeping the same intentions, the same subtext, the same honesty of emotions, but with more projection in the voice and more expression of the body.

Level 4 - Burlesque theatre

Acting with more projection and more expression of the body. **M 2**

Level 5 - Clown

The most exaggerated level. All possible lazzis are also permitted, being aware of what happens between two lines and stretching out the time and emotions. Keeping in mind the truth of the emotions and also making breaks. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3



Common Mistake

1. The participant has difficulty saying a line at the same time as he performs an action that has no relationship to the meaning of the line.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Repeating the scene.
Simplifying the movements or staging.
Concentrating on the lines and the staging, or on the movements to be done.

Variant

1. Game with four or five lines.





ACTING

SLOW-MOTION RUN

Technical Element Description

Reproducing a race in slow motion with emphasis on movements and interactions.

Exercise focusing on body control, honesty of emotion, awareness and imagination.

Prerequisite

- Warm-up exercises.

Explanation of the Movement

- At the Olympic Games, at the famous 100-metre race. Each participant represents a country, and must make up a character. At the start signal provided by the instructor, the race begins in slow motion. The participants must cover the distance separating them from the finish line, running in slow motion while trying to trip the other participants and trying to avoid the traps set by them.
- The objective of the characters is to win the race. They must act out determination, will and effort, as well as a certain nastiness toward the other runners.
- The objective of the actor is to run in slow motion with the greatest precision possible. There are also secondary objectives, such as to clearly announce his intentions to the other participants.

Example: if he wants to trip a competitor by hooking his leg, he must be certain that the other participant clearly sees his intention so that he may respond correctly and cooperate in performing the sequence. **M 1**

- Each participant pays attention to the others. So, if an opponent wants to tie the participant's shoelaces together, he makes sure the gesture is clearly understood so that the other participant can let it happen successfully. Consequently, the participant will have to bring his feet closer together so that his opponent can tie them. He should also turn his head away and pretend to be busy doing something else, so that the scene is plausible, and then trip, still in slow motion.
- The exercise ends when all the participants reach the finish line or when all participants are lying scattered around the ring, hurt after falling. **M 2**





M 1





M 2

Common Mistakes

1. The participant forgets the concept of “urgency.”
2. The participant is not precise enough in his movements. For example, he tends to run with the left foot and the right hand in the air at the same time, when actually the limbs must move alternately.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Stopping the race and starting over.
2. Understanding that the goal of the game is not to win the race. On the contrary, it is better to enjoy losing by falling into all the traps set by one’s opponents.





ACTING LOG CABIN

Technical Element Description

Group construction of an imaginary log cabin.

Exercise focusing on awareness, precision of gestures and awareness of the stage space.

Explanation of the Movement

- With a group of about 10 participants, build a log cabin. Without prior consultation among the participants, each of them, representing a character, must find his place in the group, define his job and, with the others, build a fine log cabin. All construction trades are present. All the construction steps must be performed at the right time. **M 1**
- The instructor designates the important areas that the participants must consider during the exercise, such as the wood pile as well as the place where the cabin will be built, such as in the centre of the ring.
- There are multiple objectives to this exercise:
 1. To create a character and maintain it during the whole exercise.
 2. To remain very attentive to what the other characters are doing and respect what they have set up.
 3. To observe great precision in gestures and movements.
 4. To create harmony and synergy with the other participants.
- There is no speaking, but the participants may make sounds. They must find logs, cut them, set them in the right places, install windows and doors, and decorate the space.
- To be aware of and follow up what others have already done. For example, to install a first wooden log, then a second at the right height, to take into account when a wall has been built and enter by the door where it was placed.
- The participants should find their place in the group without consulting beforehand, propose situations and be open to the others' proposals. **M 2**

Note: It is important to instruct the participants to build the cabin slowly, so that they can all easily follow the evolution.





M 1



M 2



Common Mistakes

- 1.** The participant goes through a wall that has been built.
- 2.** The participant does not take it into account that other participants have installed a log at a given height and installs one at the wrong height.
- 3.** The participant does not stay in character.
- 4.** The participant lacks precision in handling the construction elements.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

- 1-2-3-4.** The instructor can talk to the participants and correct them as the action is unfolding.





ACTING CINEMA

Technical Element Description

Representation of viewing film screenings.

Exercise focusing on awareness and honesty of emotions.

Prerequisites

- Warm-up exercises.
- Acting-level exercises. (See p. 6.)

Explanation of the Movement

- Place two rows of chairs. Divide the group into two so that half of the participants act as viewers; the remaining participants act as observers. Afterwards, the groups exchange roles.
- In a cinema, characters attend an evening of film screenings. Several types of films are shown. The characters react to the films, beginning with a realistic level of acting that becomes more and more exaggerated.
- The instructor gives the instructions, and, like an orchestra conductor, indicates the transitions and the types of films shown.
- Once the type of film has been indicated, the participants acting as viewers react and interact. For example, if it is a comedy or a horror movie, the participants must show emotions that are very slight and discreet at first and that become progressively more exaggerated. **M 1, M 2**
- The objectives of this exercise are:
 - To create a believable character.
 - To be open to ridiculous situations.
 - To be attentive and grasp where the group is in the progression in order to act appropriately and propose going to other levels of acting. To observe one's neighbour in order to consider his actions and facilitate interaction.
 - To go from the slightest level of acting to the most pronounced.
 - To control the level of acting and the gestures so as to not slight the others, and to be open to their proposals.





M 1



M 2

Common Mistake

1. Participants have a tendency to create characters with low mobility and responsiveness.

For example, playing the elderly by exaggerating them as being centenarians becomes complicated when they must interact with other characters.

Correction and Corrective Exercise

1. Reminding the participants to choose characters that can follow the acting progression.

Variant

1. Characters in a same environment or in a same situation. For example, movie stars attending an international film festival, children attending a movie at school, a group of bikers, etc.





ACTING

SENSORY MIRROR (Not on DVD)

Technical Element Description

Simulating and reproducing another person's movements with the eyes closed.

Exercise focusing on awareness, concentration and sensitivity.

Explanation of the Movement

- The participants stand back to back, two at a time. They are separated by a few centimetres and cannot touch at any time. They must successfully execute the same movement, always very simple, at the same time, without being able to see each other or speak to each other.

For example, one participant lifts his left arm. The other participant must be able to feel that the warmth and the vibrations that he had been feeling on the right arm have decreased and that he can find the warmth and vibrations by finding his partner's left arm again. Consequently, he will lift the arm and follow this heat and these vibrations. This is an exercise that requires a lot of concentration and sensory awareness. The miracle of synchronization between both partners is rare, but it happens; if such is the case, it is beautiful to witness.

Note: It is preferable to divide the group into two, so that one half does the exercise while the other half watches and vice versa.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant is anxious to succeed at any price and touches his partner.
2. The participant loses concentration after only a few minutes.
3. The participant loses concentration because he does not feel anything.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping a minimum distance between the participants.
- 2-3. Repeating the exercise at regular intervals, so as to increase participant capacity for concentration and sensory awareness.

Variant

1. The participants lie on the floor, alongside one another, the tops of their heads touching.





ACTING WORD ON THE WALL

Technical Element Description

Improvising from suggested words.

Exercise focusing on responsiveness and conciseness in the flow of action.

Explanation of the Movement

- The participants line up facing a wall. The instructor says a word designating an emotion, a topic or a situation. As soon as they hear the word, the participants turn around and express whatever it inspires in them.
- The participants have a great deal of freedom, but must precisely follow the instructor's directions. The instructor may, for example, give certain constraints, such as:
 - “No talking”;
 - “Only with onomatopoeia”;
 - “Without touching the others”;
 - “Touching the others.”
- When the participant feels that he has no more inspiration about the word given by the instructor, he turns to face the wall and waits for the other participants to be finished and for the instructor to suggest another word.



Wedding





Funeral



Baby



Racism



Thank you



ACTING HOT POTATO



Technical Element Description

Passing a hot potato among participants, with progression of acting and interaction level.

Exercise focusing on body control, precision, honesty of emotion and awareness.

Explanation of the Movement

- The participants form a circle. The instructor gives an object to a participant. **M 1**
- The object represents something hot that the participant must handle while respecting the progression of the acting. The object goes from hand to hand and the instructor tells the participants how hot the object is. Both the size of the object and its temperature increase as it is passed along. The participants must act out this progression and quickly pass it to their neighbour before the object burns their fingers. At the end, the object must move rapidly from hand to hand without being dropped. **M 2**



M 1





M 2

Common Mistakes

1. The participant lacks precision in his movements when he passes the object to his neighbour.
2. The participant is not aware of the degree of emotion that his neighbour previously expressed.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

- 1-2. Returning the object to the previous participant and passing it correctly.

Variants

1. Sweet potato.
2. Cold potato.
3. Spicy potato.
4. Fragile potato.



ACTING THREE CHAIRS

Technical Element Description

Representation of various emotions, embodied by each of the chairs.

Exercise focusing on honesty of emotion, consistency of the dramatic situation and awareness.

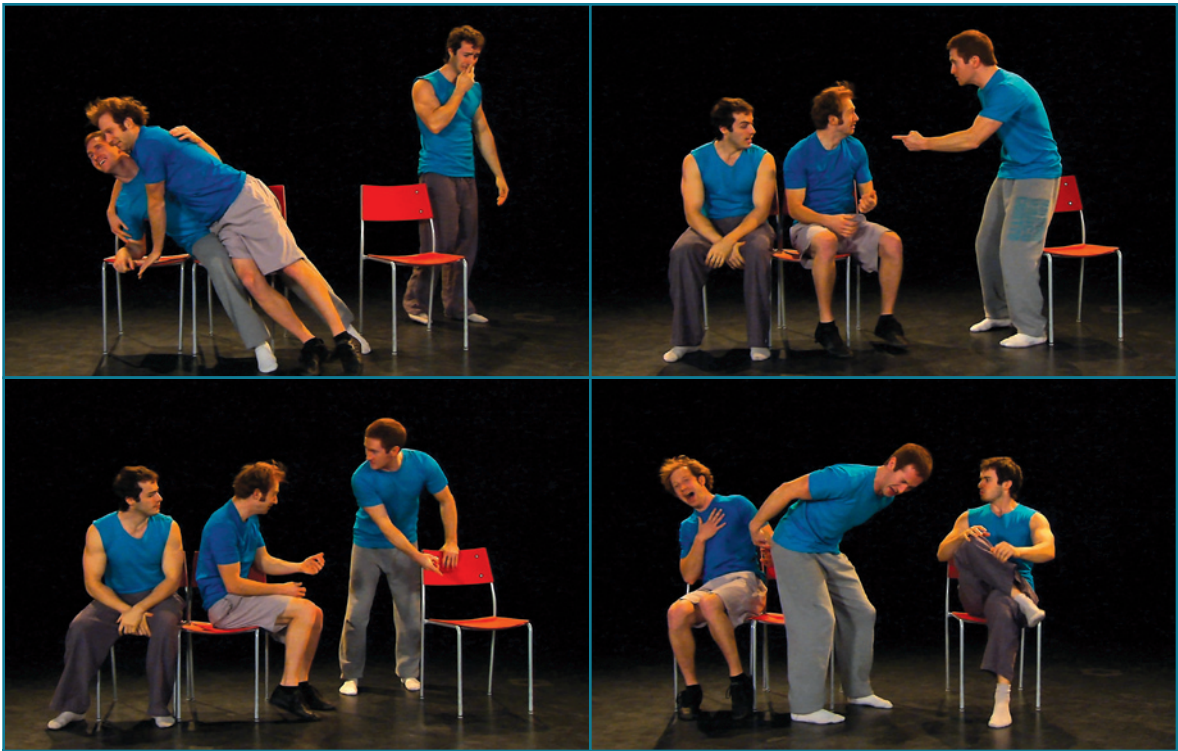
Explanation of the Movement

- Three chairs are lined up, each representing an emotion. One chair represents joy, the second one anger and the third sadness. **M 1**
- One at a time, each participant creates a little scenario. As soon as he touches a chair, he must play the emotion that the chair represents and maintain this emotion until he touches another chair. The contact can be made in several ways. The participant is not obliged to sit on the chair, but only be in contact with it. He develops a coherent story with a dramatic narrative comprising a beginning, the introduction of his character, a progression and an end. **M 2**



M 1





M 2

Common Mistakes

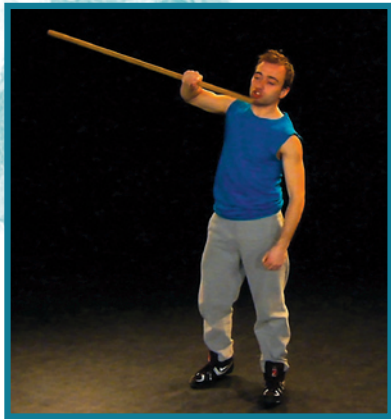
1. The story is inconsistent.
2. The participant lacks precision in constructing his character.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

- 1-2. Reviewing the instructions, such as the consistency of the story and the precision of the characters, and paying special attention during a subsequent exercise.

Variant

1. Starting with two, then three, participants at once.



ACTING MIME OBJECT

Technical Element Description

Transforming the use of an object to suit the story.

Exercise focusing on precision of gestures, story consistency and imagination.

Explanation of the Movement

- The instructor gives an object to a participant. The participant must use it in various ways, such as transforming a simple stick into a gun, then into an oar, a bow and, to finish, a helicopter blade. The narrative must respect a consistent dramatic progression and the character must have depth and honesty of emotion. **M 1**



M 1

Common Mistakes

1. The story lacks consistency.
2. The object is overused and lacks dramatic value.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

- 1-2. The instructor stops the action when he notices participant's confusion, asking him to take it from the beginning.





ACTING STICKS

Technical Element Description

Creating a choreography by intermingling sticks held between the participants.

Exercise stimulating memory and increasing awareness of the importance of others in a choreography or in a group of movements.

Explanation of the Movement

- Each participant is connected to the other by a stick, each holding one end. The group can be positioned in several ways: in a circle, semicircle or line. **M 1**
- The music begins and the start is provided by the movement of the participant chosen by the instructor. The movements of the sticks always form lines and shapes, either in height or in length. A second movement is executed. Then a third one, and so on. **M 2**
- The participants must remember the course that they created, as well as the movements that they executed with the arms, or legs, etc., and without ever letting go of their stick. When several movements are repeated, take away the sticks and start over. This provides choreography with movements. **M 3**



M 1



M 2





M 3

Common Mistake

1. The participant does not repeat the same movements and thus causes other participants to be off balance with erroneous movements.

Correction and Corrective Exercise

1. The instructor points out which movement or sequence of movements were done incorrectly.

Variant

1. Choreography with ropes held tight.



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Produced in collaboration with the National Circus School, and translated into multiple languages, *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* aims to introduce the public to circus arts. As both a technical guide and an educational tool, this document illustrates 177 technical elements drawn from 17 basic circus arts disciplines. Accompanied by video documents, this work offers in-depth expertise and technical content that will enable the delivery of progressive and specialized instruction in a safe environment.

In collaboration with



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