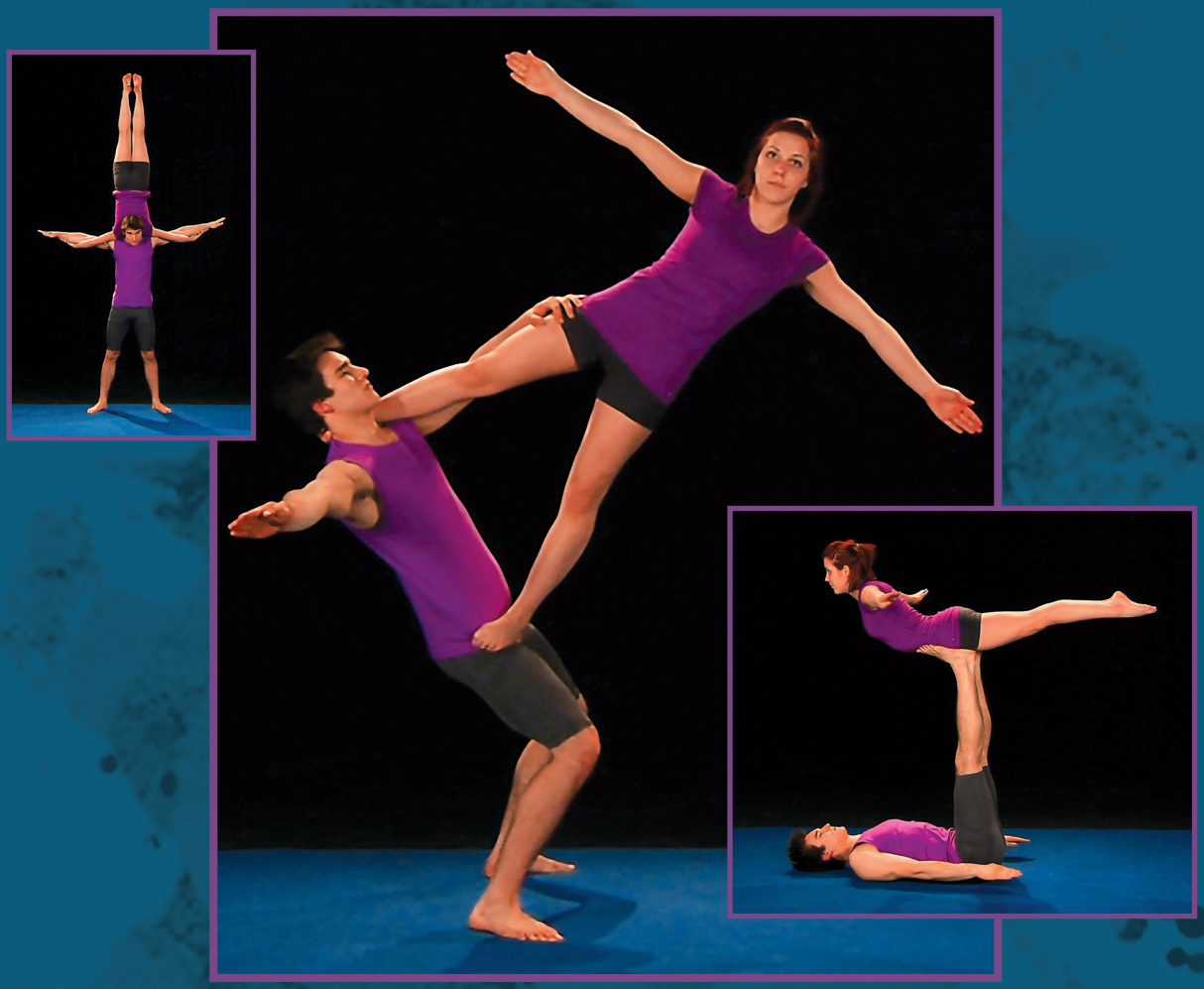
# BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



# HAND-TO-HAND

FONDATION CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™

*CIRQUE DU SOLEIL*
Created and directed by: Michel Lafortune
Production coordination: Carla Menza
Production assistant: David Simard
Linguistic coordinator for English version: Cláudia Marisa Ribeiro
Technical support: Darlene Lenden, Véronique Ricard, Jessenia Villamil Dos Santos

Special advisors: Bernard Petiot, Martin Bolduc

Design:
Artistic direction: Pierre Desmarais
Graphic design: Emmanuelle Sirard, Maria Masella
Graphic production: Eric Sauvé
Photo selection: Jean-Marc Gingras
Cover photos: Éric Saint-Pierre, Lyne Charlebois, Ierê Ferreira, Sarah Bédard-Dubé
Editing and layout: Karine Raymond, Anne Tremblay

Linguistics:
Translation from French to English: Asiastis
Revision and manuscript standardization of original version (French): Patrice Aubertin, Violaine Ducharme, Darlene Lenden, Carla Menza, Sylvain Robitaille, David Simard
Revision and manuscript standardization of English version: Patrice Aubertin, Cláudia Marisa Ribeiro, Johanne Gélinas, André Vallerand, Mitch Head, André St-Jean, Dominique Loignon
Reading committee for original version (French): Hélène Brunet, Lino de Giovanni, Stéphane Groleau, Michel Lafortune, Karine Lavoie, Carla Menza, Simon Rioux, David Simard, Paul Vachon
Reading committee for English version: Patrice Aubertin, Carla Menza, Cláudia Marisa Ribeiro, David Simard
Contribution to lexicon definitions of original version (French): Stacy Clark, Marceline Goldstein, Marie-Andrée Robitaille
Lexicon revision of original version (French): Sandy Gonçalves, Diane Martin, Marie-Odile Pinet, Cláudia Marisa Ribeiro
Linguistic revision and proofreading of English version: Sylvie Lemay, Veronica Schami Editorial Services

**Global Citizenship trainers:**
Emmanuel Bochud: Diabolo – Emmanuel Bochud, Karine Lavoie: Group Games, Flower Stick

NATIONAL CIRCUS SCHOOL
Content direction: Daniela Arendasova, Director of Studies
Content direction assistants: Patrice Aubertin, Coordinator, Programs for Instructors and Trainers; Annie Gauthier, Coordinator, Academic Organization and Students Services

**Writing:**
**TEACHERS:** Nathalie Hébert: Acrobatics, Aerial Hoop – Anne Gendreau: Rope and Silk – André St-Jean: Stilts, Mini-Trampoline, Rola Bola – Sylvain Rainville: Handstand, Hand-to-Hand, Pyramids – Nicolette Hazewinkel: Tightwire – Yves Dagenais: Acting – Sergey Perepelizki: Juggling – Luc Tremblay: Unicycle – Véronique Thibeault: Fixed Trapeze – Antoine Grenier: Head Rigger

**Video and photo demonstrations:**
**STUDENTS:** Laurie Adornato, Devin Henderson, Maxim Laurin: Acrobatics – Anna Kichtchenko, Andréanne Nadeau: Aerial Hoop – Anne-Fay Audet-Johnston, Simon Nadeau, Natalie Oleinik: Rope and Silk – Chloé St-Jean-Richard: Stilts – Louis-Marc Bruneau-Dumoulin, Valérie Doucet: Handstand – François Bouvier: Tightwire – William Bonnet, Ugo Dario, Matthew Holsbeke, Giulio Lanzafame, Jonathan Morell, Jeff Retzlaff, Thomas Saulgrain, Vanessa Vollering: Acting and Group Games – Yann Leblanc, Jonathon Roitman: Juggling – Camille Legris, Tristan Nielsen: Hand-to-Hand – Maxim Laurin, Chloé St-Jean-Richard: Mini-Trampoline – Joachim Ciocca: Unicycle – Alma Buholzer, Marie-Pier Campeau, Lisa Eckert, Miguel Angel Giles Huayta, Anny Laplante, Yann Leblanc, Léonie Pilote, Jonathon Roitman: Pyramids – Simon Nadeau: Rola Bola – Rosalie Ducharme: Fixed Trapeze

Legal deposit: Summer 2011
* The masculine form is used in this text generically and for readability purposes only.

**We would like to thank:**
Gaétan Morency, Vice-President of Global Citizenship, for his support in the production of this project.
Marc Lalonde, Executive Director of the National Circus School, as well as all the employees of Cirque du Soleil and the National Circus School for their collaboration.

# 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 Éloize 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 educationals 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 educationals.

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.

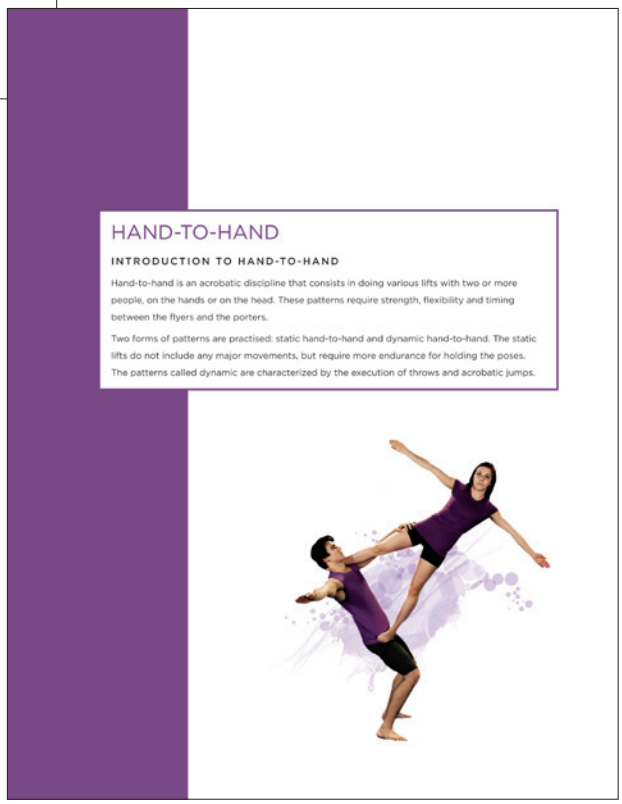
**The written and video documents included in *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* are complementary: they were designed to be used together. The written documents contain information that is not available on the video documents. Likewise, the video documents allow a fuller understanding of the movements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



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.

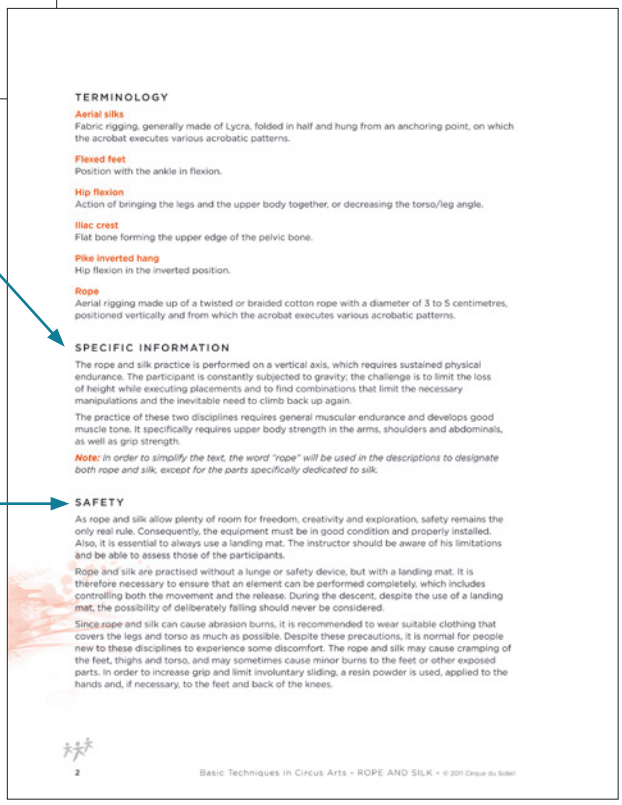
## Specific Information

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.*

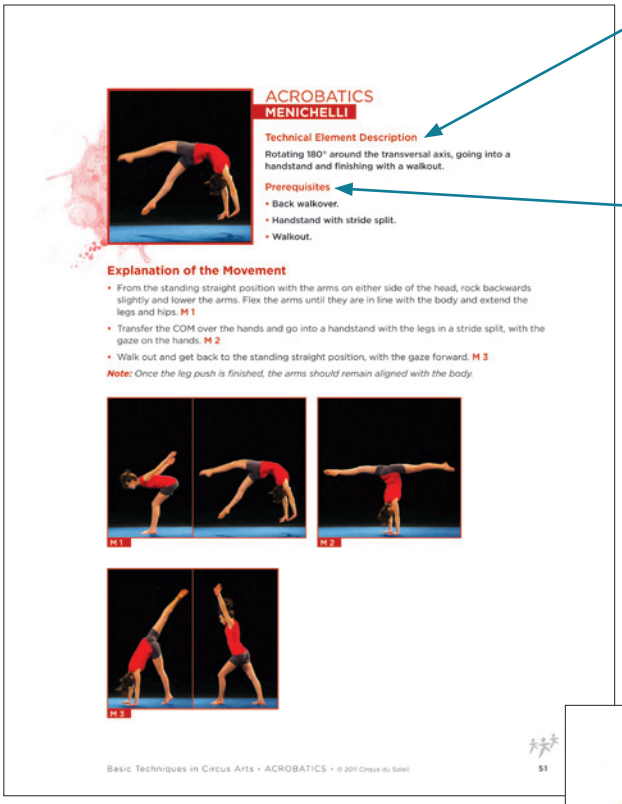
SAFETY

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




## 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

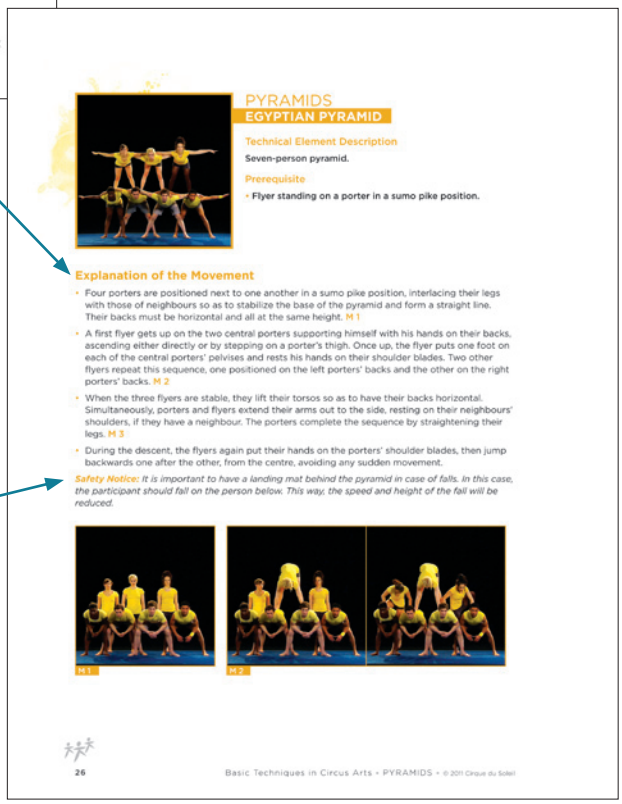
A detailed description of the different sequences of movements making up the element.

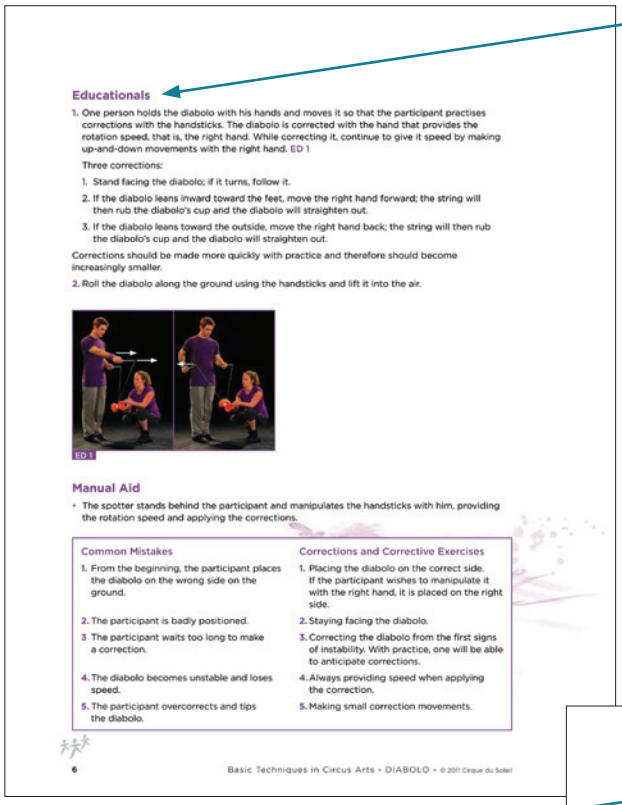
Identified by the icon **M**

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.





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.

ED 1

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. |

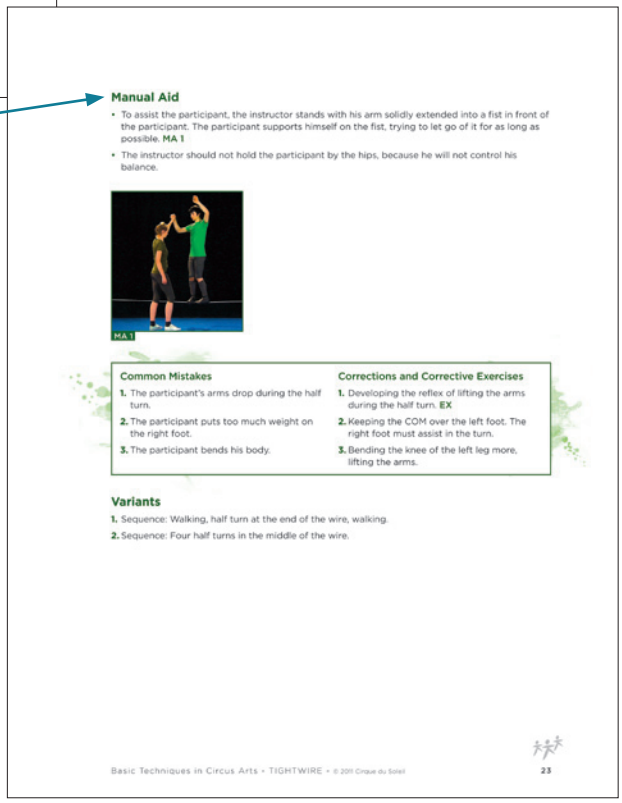
6 Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • DIABOLO • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil

## 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

- 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.

MA 1

| 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

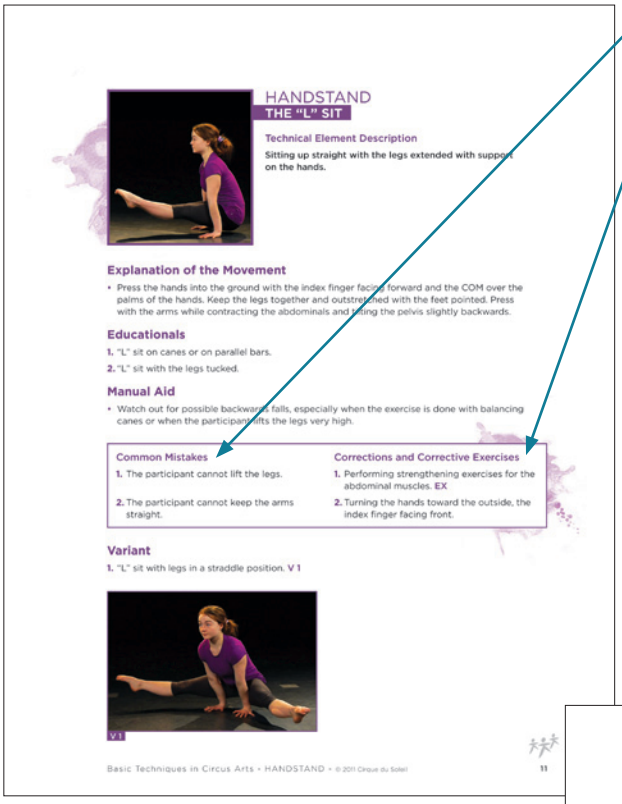
1. Sequence: Walking, half turn at the end of the wire, walking.
2. Sequence: Four half turns in the middle of the wire.

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • TIGHTWIRE • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil 23

## 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**


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 tilting the pelvis slightly backwards.

Educationals

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

Manual Aid

- Watch out for possible backward 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

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

V 1

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts • HANDSTAND • © 2011 Cirque du Soleil 11

## Common Mistakes

The most common mistakes to avoid.

## Corrections and Corrective Exercises

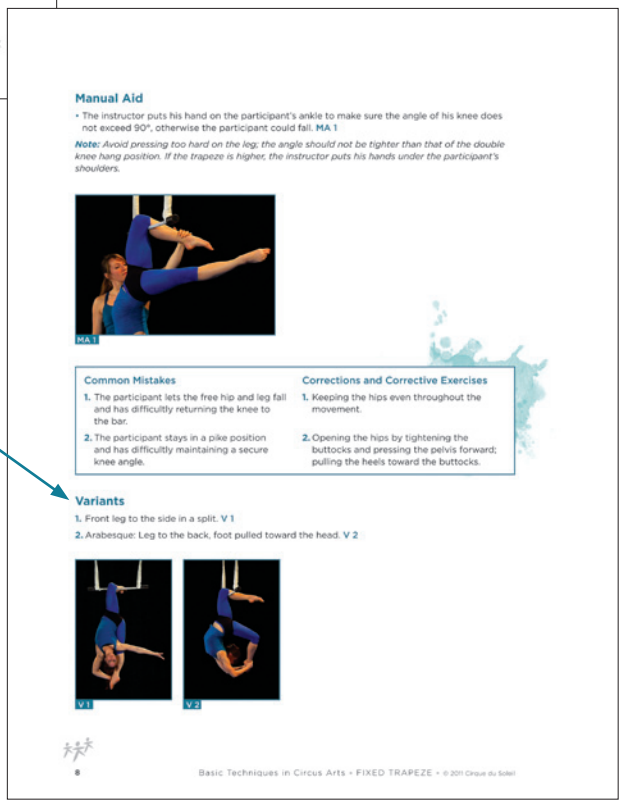
Modifications to make either by correcting movements or by corrective exercises.

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.*

MA 1

| 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. |

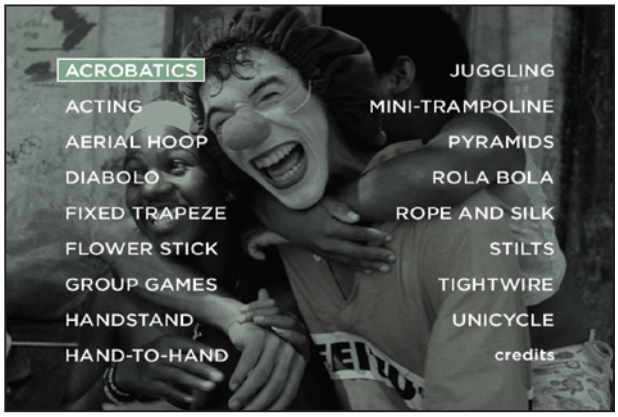
Variants

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

V 1 V 2

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

# INSTRUCTIONS – VIDEO DOCUMENTS

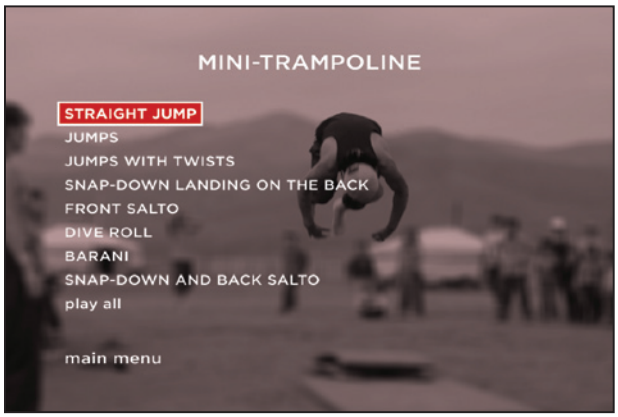



## Main Menu

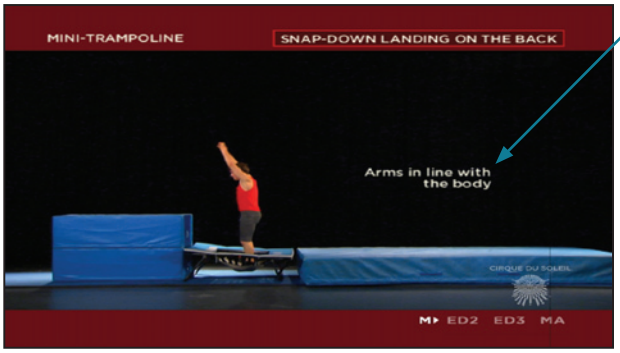
After the opening sequence, a first window presents the disciplines covered on the DVD.

## 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.



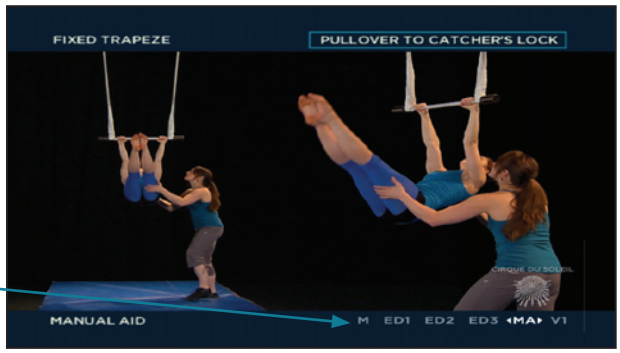


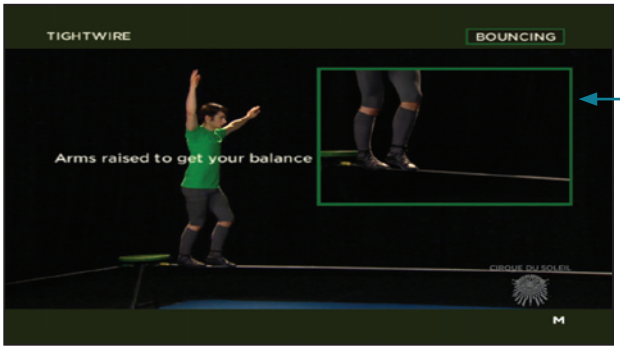

## Warnings

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.

# HAND-TO-HAND

## INTRODUCTION TO HAND-TO-HAND

Hand-to-hand is an acrobatic discipline that consists in doing various lifts with two or more people, on the hands or on the head. These patterns require strength, flexibility and timing between the flyers and the porters.

Two forms of patterns are practised: static hand-to-hand and dynamic hand-to-hand. The static lifts do not include any major movements, but require more endurance for holding the poses. The patterns called dynamic are characterized by the execution of throws and acrobatic jumps.

## TERMINOLOGY

**Airplane**
Flying position where the flyer is balanced horizontally, with the hips supported on the porter's feet.

**All-fours position**
Position with the porter supported on the hands and knees, with the back horizontal.

**Anterior-posterior axis**
Imaginary line crossing through the body from the navel to the middle of the back.

**Arch position**
Position in which the body forms a slight curve to the back, with the arms extended on either side of the head or of the torso and the pelvis in an anterior tilt.

**Balancing canes**
Blocks of wood on metal shafts that allow working above the ground.

**Body alignment**
Straight position of the body with the ribs closed and the pelvis in posterior tilt.

**Candlestick**
Inversion supported on the shoulders.

**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.

**Flyer**
Person who holds various positions on top of a porter.

**Hand platform**
Position of the porter's hand supporting the flyer's foot or hand.

**Longitudinal axis**
Imaginary line through the body from the head to the feet.

**Sumo pike position**
Standing porter position, legs separated and bent, hip flexion with the back horizontal and the forearms resting on the thighs.

**Pike position**
Body position with hip flexion and the legs straight.

**Porter**
Person who supports the flyer in the lifts.

**Spotter**
Individual who manually assists the execution of a movement or a position.

**Sumo position**
Standing porter position, legs separated and bent, the back straight and vertical.

**Transversal axis**
Imaginary line through the body from the right hip to the left hip.

## EQUIPMENT

### Floor mat
Cushioned surface for absorbing the shock of landing.

### Wall bar
Wide ladder attached to a wall used for performing gymnastic exercises.

## SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Generally speaking, the porter controls the exercises. He must have a body position favouring good balance in order to catch the flyer if he loses balance or falls. Ultimately, he is responsible for the flyer's safety.

The flyer should have good body alignment and work with good muscle tone in order to facilitate the porter's task. When moving, he must avoid sudden movements and put his centre of mass over the porter before putting his weight on the porter.

## SAFETY

Manual aid by a qualified instructor is strongly recommended until the elements can be done easily and with control.

The condition of the mats on which the hand-to-hand exercises take place should be inspected daily.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS
## HAND-TO-HAND

### TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

#### Reclining porter



#### Standing porter

# HAND-TO-HAND
## AIRPLANE

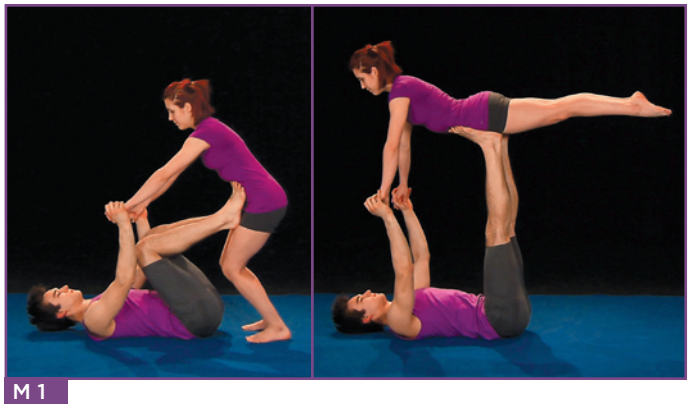
### Technical Element Description

**Position in which the flyer balances horizontally on the porter's feet, with the porter's legs extended vertically.**

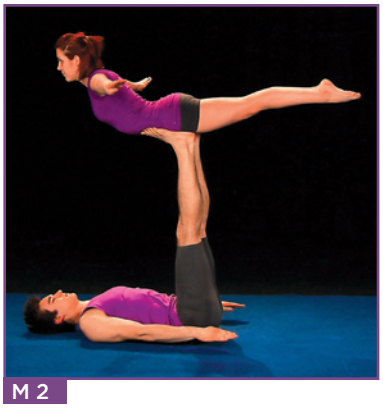
## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: Lying on your back, position your feet parallel to the flyer's pelvis. Take the flyer's hands and bring the flyer over your base of support with your legs bent. Once the flyer is balanced, extend your legs vertically and release the hands if the airplane is stable. M 1
- Flyer: Legs extended and together, allow yourself to be directed by the porter. Arms extended, keep your hands aligned over the shoulders when moving on top of the porter. Once balanced, take the arch position. M 2

***Note:*** *It is important that the porter correctly press the balls of his feet into the flyer's stomach while the flyer makes the airplane.*



M 1



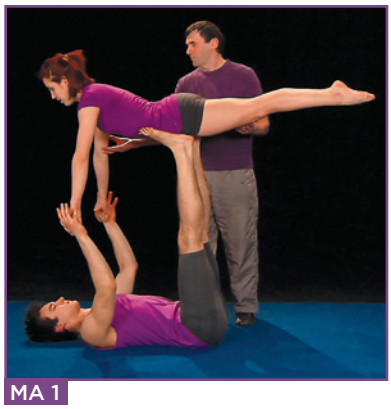
M 2

## Educationals

1. The flyer, lying on the floor on his stomach with arms stretched out sideways, arches his back.
2. The flyer holds the porter's hand while making the airplane.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's arm and leg throughout the exercise in order to stabilize his balance, if necessary. MA 1



MA 1

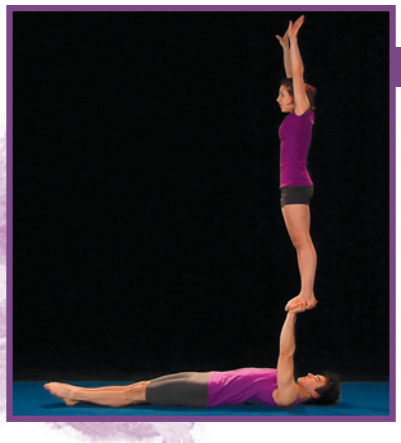
| Common Mistakes | Corrections and Corrective Exercises |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** The flyer is in pike position. | **1.** The porter must align his feet under the flyer's COM. |
| **2.** The flyer is unstable. | **2.** The porter must have his shoulders and hips firmly supported on the ground, and have his legs in a vertical position. |
| **3.** The flyer has trouble getting positioned. | **3.** The flyer must extend his arms and keep the head in line with the body. |

## Variants

**1.** Flyer supine, his back on the porter's feet.

**2.** Flyer in airplane position on the porter's hands.



# HAND-TO-HAND
## FEET/HANDS

### Technical Element Description

**Position in which the flyer balances standing on the porter's hands, with the porter lying down on his back with legs outstretched.**

## Explanation of the Movement

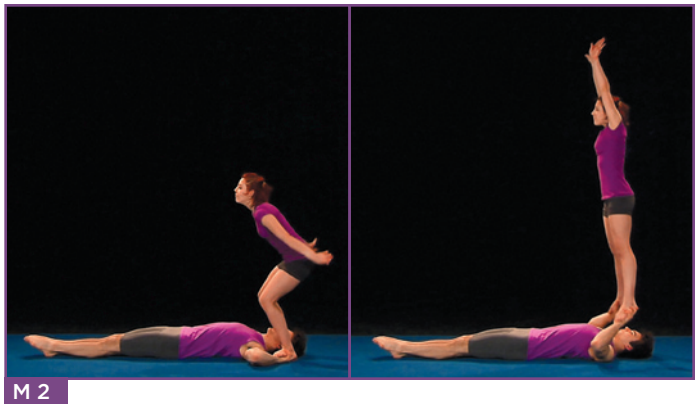
- Hand platform and start position:

  Porter: Lying on your back, put your hands on either side of your head. Adjust the palm of your hand so that only the flyer's toes and a small part of his foot hang off of them. A single finger should be positioned under the heel; three fingers hold the outside of the foot, while the thumb is on the inside of the foot.

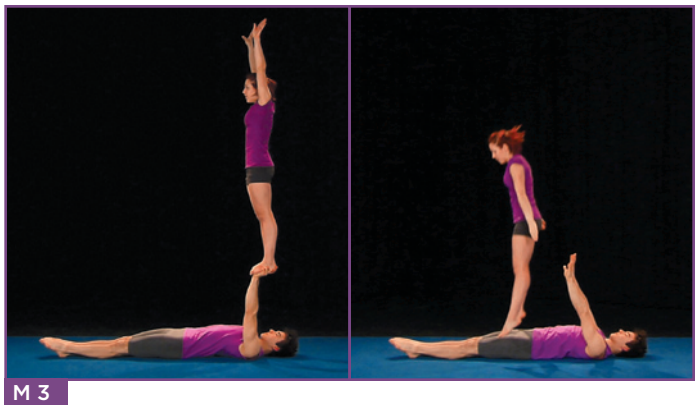
  Flyer: Put one foot at a time on the porter's hands. At all times, the hand platform must favour a demi-pointe position of the feet, and the flyer must put most of his weight on the balls of his feet, in line with the porter's arms. M 1

- Once the porter's hands are properly positioned, the flyer puts more weight on the balls of his feet and jumps up lightly, starting the movement from the pelvis. M 2
- The porter maintains balance and keeps his arms vertical, at shoulder-width. For the descent, the porter opens his hands while the flyer transfers his weight forward and lands on the floor. M 3

M 1



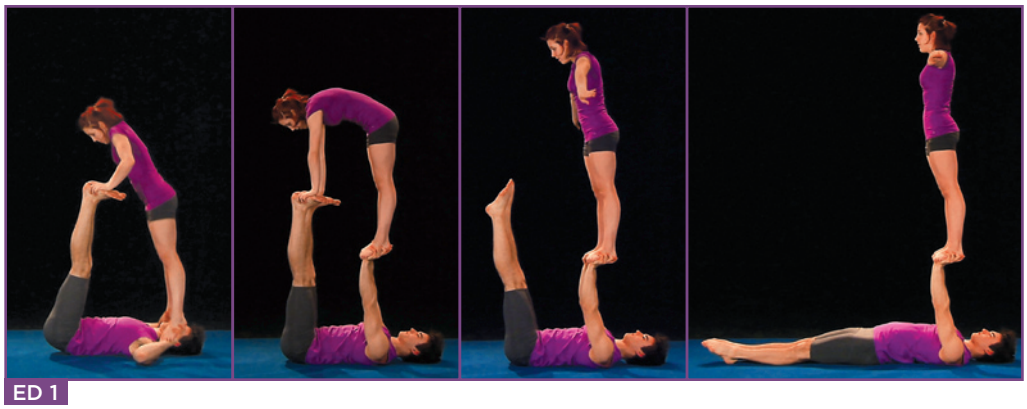
M 2



M 3

## Educational

1. The porter lies on his back with his arms extended vertically. The flyer stands in pike position, his feet on the porter's hands and his hands resting on the porter's feet. The flyer then transfers his weight backwards and stands up. It is preferable that a spotter support the flyer in the first attempts. ED 1



ED 1

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's waist during the jump, keeping him supported until the position is stable. The spotter also helps the flyer during the descent to promote a controlled landing.

| Common Mistakes | Corrections and Corrective Exercises |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** The flyer falls while ascending. | **1.** Directing the flyer's COM over the porter's base of support. |
| **2.** The flyer loses balance. | **2.** Checking the angle of the porter's platform. Avoiding changing the platform angle while the flyer is balanced. |
| **3.** The flyer puts his COM more on one leg than the other. | **3.** Making sure the porter has his shoulders well supported on the ground and checking that his hands are even. |

## Variant

**1.** Flexions and extensions of the porter's arms.

# HAND-TO-HAND
## SHOULDERS/HANDS

### Technical Element Description

**Flyer in balanced position, his shoulders supported on the porter's hands, with the porter lying on his back.**

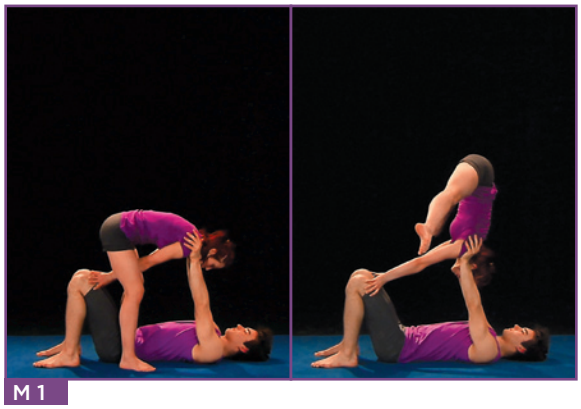
### Prerequisite

- **Tripod, flyer lifting up in pike position.**
  **(See *Tripod*, *Handstand*, p. 7.)**

## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: Lying on your back, legs bent and slightly separated, put the palm of your hands, with your fingers together, on the flyer's shoulders.
- Flyer: Hands on the porter's knees, transfer your weight over the porter's hands, slowly unroll your back, followed by your pelvis. Once balanced, extend your legs in line with the body and keep part of the weight on your hands. M 1
- The flyer, with his hands on the porter's knees, then transfers his weight to the porter's shoulders. The flyer's head pointed downward allows the porter to maintain balance and provides a better visual reference for the body position. M 2

***Safety Notice:*** *It is important to teach the flyer to control any backwards fall in case he loses balance. Should the flyer lose balance, the porter should keep his arms vertical and the flyer should arch his back and land in a bridge position.*



M 1

M 2

## Educationals

**1.** Tripod with arms extended.

**2.** Shoulders/hands in tuck position.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter supports the flyer's pelvis while the flyer positions his back and makes sure his body is in perfect alignment during weight transfer. MA 1
- The spotter supports the flyer's pelvis during the descent.

MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The flyer lifts the pelvis or the legs too early, which makes it hard to lift up.
2. There is too much weight on the flyer's hands.
3. The flyer is unstable.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Putting the upper back over the porter's hands. Unrolling the spine to the pelvis and then aligning the legs.
2. The flyer must move the COM over the porter's hands.
3. The porter should spread his legs further and the flyer should correct his body alignment.

# HAND-TO-HAND
## SHOULDERS/FEET

### Technical Element Description

**Flyer in balanced position, his shoulders supported on the porter's feet, with the porter's legs extended vertically.**

### Prerequisites

- **Airplane on the porter's feet.**
- **Tripod with arms extended.**
- **Shoulders/hands.**

## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: Lying on your back, put your feet on the flyer's shoulders; the flyer keeps his head down. Take the flyer's hands with the arms extended.
- Flyer: Make a triangle with your head and hands. Lightly push with your legs and transfer your weight from your upper back to your pelvis, drawing your head to the inside.
- The porter straightens his legs and keeps the heels together to offer a good support for the flyer's head. Next, the flyer extends his legs vertically with precise body alignment.
- The porter should have the flyer's shoulders supported in the arch of his feet, and should have the balls of his feet on the front of the flyer's shoulder. Then he lets go with the hands and maintains balance with the legs and feet.

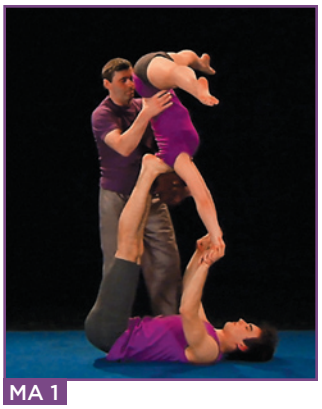
***Safety Notice:*** *It is important to teach the flyer to fall backwards with control if he loses balance. Should the flyer lose balance, the porter keeps his legs extended vertically, and the flyer slightly arches his back and lands on the soles of his feet on the floor.*

## Educationals

1. Shoulders/feet with manual aid.
2. Shoulders/feet in tuck position.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's pelvis while lifting up into the balance and checks his body alignment. He also checks the porter's position; the porter should have his legs vertical and his hips and shoulders well supported on the floor. MA 1



MA 1

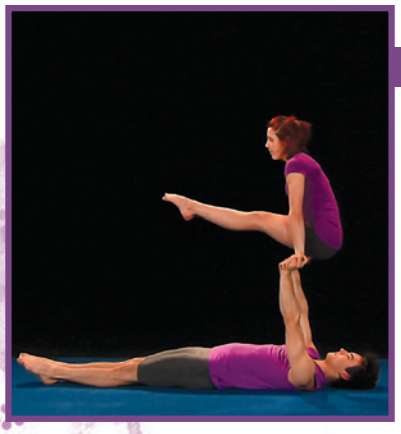
### Common Mistakes

1. The flyer lifts his pelvis or legs too soon and cannot lift up into the balance.
2. There is too much weight on the flyer's hands.
3. The flyer is unstable.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Positioning the upper back correctly over the porter's hands, unrolling the spine to the pelvis and then aligning the legs.
2. The instructor must make sure the flyer's COM is over the porter's legs.

   The instructor must make sure the porter's hips and shoulders are aligned and that the flyer's head is well supported on the porter's legs.
3. Keeping the foot platform stable.



# HAND-TO-HAND
## THE "L" SIT

### Technical Element Description

**The "L" sit position of the flyer supported on the porter's hands, with the porter holding his arms vertical.**

### Prerequisite

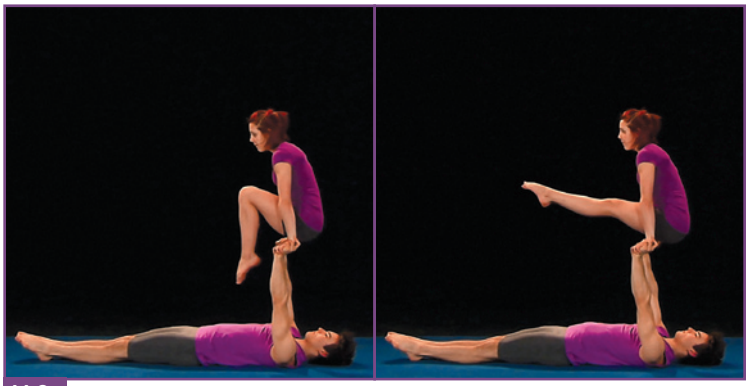
- **The "L" sit on the ground or on balancing canes.**
  **(See *The "L" sit*, *Handstand*, p. 11.)**

## Explanation of the Movement

- The flyer positions his hands with the middle and index fingers on the porter's wrist. The porter, lying on his back, keeps his arms extended vertically, his shoulder blades firmly supported on the floor and his hands in extension at an angle of approximately 100°. M 1
- The flyer, once his hands are resting on the porter's, gets into the "L" sit by first lifting his legs with his knees bent, and only afterwards straightening them to the horizontal position. M 2

***Safety Notice:*** *It is important to make sure the hand platform is in angle during the balances.*


M 1


M 2

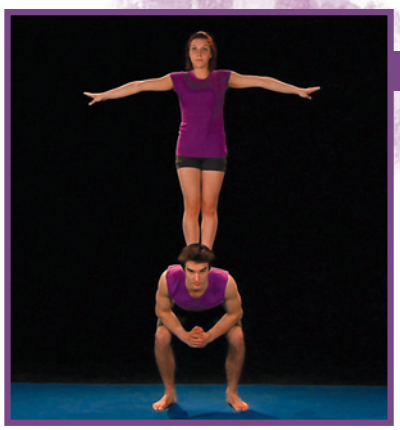
## Educational

1. The porter has his legs bent; the flyer executes the "L" sit while keeping his feet on the porter's knees.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter stands behind the flyer to prevent a backwards fall.

| Common Mistakes | Corrections and Corrective Exercises |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** The flyer is unstable. | **1.** The instructor must make sure the porter's arms are completely vertical and positioned at the width of the flyer's shoulders. |
| **2.** The flyer cannot lift his legs in a horizontal position. | **2.** Doing abdominal strengthening exercises. **EX** |
| **3.** The flyer or the porter feels wrist pain. | **3.** The instructor must check the angle of the hand platform. |



# HAND-TO-HAND
## FEET/BACK

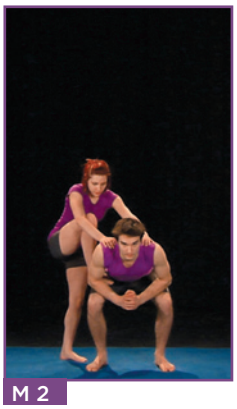
### Technical Element Description

**Position where the flyer balances on the porter's back and the porter is in the sumo pike position.**

## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: In the sumo pike position with your upper body parallel to the floor, turn your feet out and rest your forearms on your knees in order to ensure stability. M 1
- Flyer: Standing next to the porter, put one foot on the porter's leg with one hand on his shoulder blades. M 2
- Then put the other foot on the porter's lower back and transfer the second hand to his shoulder blades. Put your first foot on the porter's lower back. M 3
- The flyer keeps his feet together in order to maximally utilize the platform of the porter's back; then he can stand up. M 4
- Getting down, the flyer rests one hand on the porter's shoulder blade, the other hand on his back, and descends slowly, in a controlled manner, supporting himself on the porter's leg.


M 1


M 2


M 3


M 4

## Educationals

**1.** The flyer stands or walks on unstable surfaces without using his arms to stay balanced.

**2.** The flyer stands on the porter with the porter on all fours. ED 2

**3.** The flyer stands on the porter in a horizontal sumo pike position with manual aid.

ED 2

## Manual Aid

- The spotter watches the ascent and position of the flyer to make sure he is balanced. MA 1

MA 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The flyer pulls the porter toward him, which causes an imbalance.
2. The flyer loses his balance because the platform is uneven.
3. The flyer loses his balance when he stands.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The flyer must transfer his COM over the porter during the ascent.
2. The porter's back must be horizontal.
3. The flyer must keep his feet together, hold his head straight and maintain good body alignment.

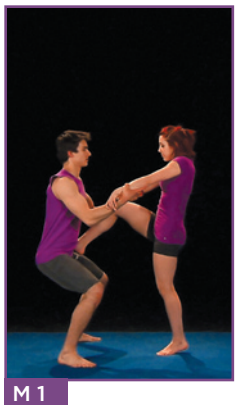
# HAND-TO-HAND
## THE HOOK

### Technical Element Description

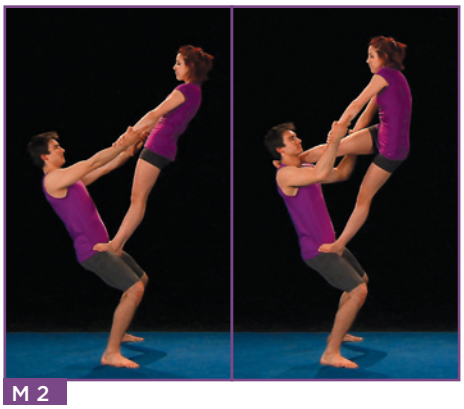
**Balancing position, with the porter standing and the flyer sideways with one foot resting on the porter's legs and the other foot hooked around his neck.**

## Explanation of the Movement

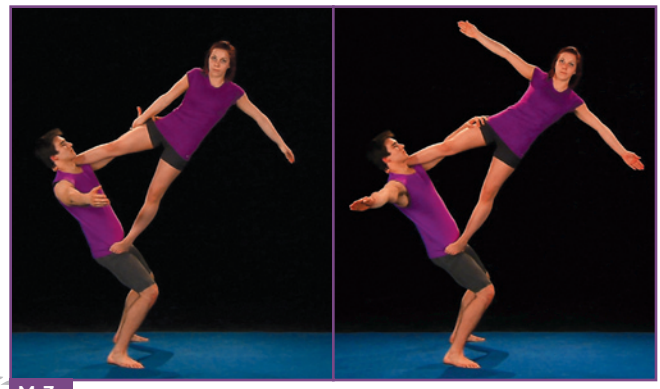
- Porter: Standing with your legs open and flexed to ensure better stability, take the flyer's wrist. M 1
- Flyer: Place one foot on the porter's upper thigh, position your second foot on the other thigh. Straighten your legs, keep the body aligned and your arms still extended. Next, flex one foot and put it behind the porter's nape of the neck. M 2
- The porter controls the flyer's balance with his arms and then slowly extends his arms once the flyer's foot is hooked. He can completely let go with his hands, continue to hold the flyer's wrists or hold his leg. M 3
- The flyer's body should be completely extended. The arm position is free, but the arms should stay still.



M 1



M 2

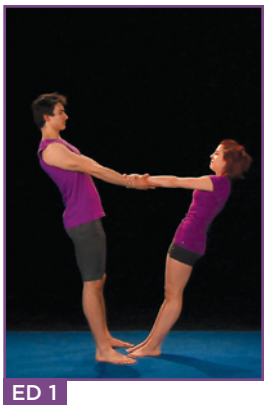


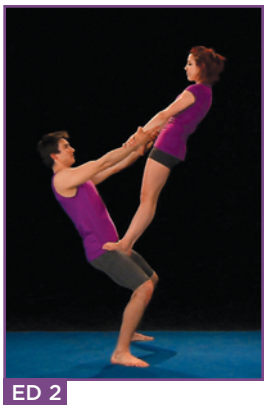
M 3

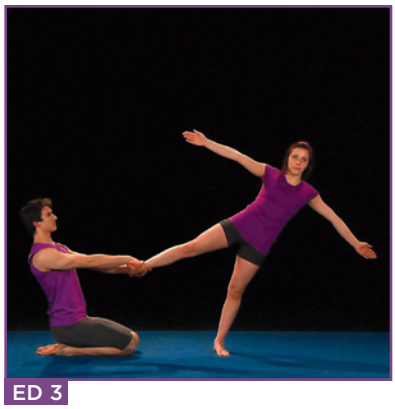
 

## Educationals

1. The porter, standing facing the flyer, holds his wrists. The flyer leans backwards and keeps his feet near the porter's feet. ED 1
2. Position Y: The porter stands with the legs shoulder-width apart. He holds the flyer's wrists; the flyer puts one foot on the porter's upper thigh and then puts his other foot on the porter's other thigh. During the ascent, the flyer keeps his arms extended at all times. The porter bends his arms and controls the balance. ED 2
3. The porter, kneeling on the ground, holds the flyer's ankle. The flyer leans sideways on one foot and the porter controls the balance. This flyer's position is identical to the hook position. ED 3


ED 1


ED 2


ED 3

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer by his hips during the ascent and keeps one arm on his waist during the hook to prevent a sudden fall. MA 1


MA 1

| Common Mistakes | Corrections and Corrective Exercises |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** The flyer falls while climbing up. | **1.** The flyer must transfer his weight onto the porter's thighs before pressing with his leg. |
| **2.** The porter loses his balance in the hook. | **2.** The flyer must remain stable and the porter must maintain balance. |
| **3.** The flyer has trouble maintaining balance. | **3.** The flyer must align his hips over the porter's base of support. |

## Variant

**1.** Titanic position: The porter stands with his legs apart in a stable position. With the flyer standing on the floor in front of him, he holds the flyer's waist. The flyer, with his back to the porter, holds the porter's wrists and jumps onto his thighs. Once the flyer is on the porter, the porter transfers his hands to the flyer's thighs.

# HAND-TO-HAND
## CLIMB UP AND CONTROLLED DESCENT

### Technical Element Description

**Two-person column, the flyer standing on the porter's shoulders after climb up.**

### Prerequisites

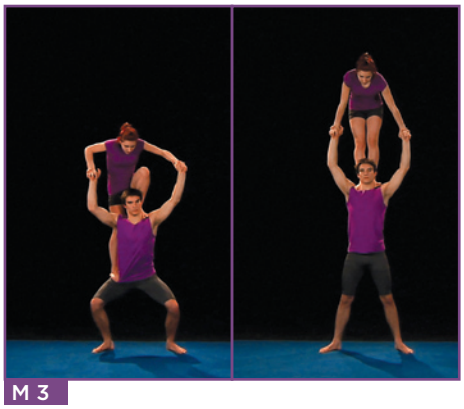
- **Keeping the heels together and down on wall bars or a raised surface.**
- **Standing on a porter who is on all fours.**

## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: In a sumo position, take the flyer's hands, which he holds out to the side. M 1
- Flyer: Put one foot on the porter's thigh at the base of his hips and transfer your weight over the porter. Rest the other foot on the porter's shoulder. M 2
- Once the flyer's foot is on the porter's shoulder, the porter should straighten his legs and simultaneously raise his arms, making a space for the flyer so that the flyer can put his feet on the porter's shoulders. M 3
- The flyer, standing and keeping his head straight, stays on the balls of his feet with his legs straight and the heels together to be able to support his legs on the porter's head. A good body alignment is important. The porter, with his feet shoulder-width apart, puts his hands on the flyer's knees, his fingers to the inside of the flyer's legs, and unlocks his elbows. M 4
- During the descent, the flyer leans on the porter's hands, keeping his arms extended. He bends his legs and puts his upper body over the porter. M 5
- The porter softens the descent, first with his arms, then with his legs. He stands in a sumo position, legs spread and knees flexed to ensure better stability. M 6


M 1


M 2


M 3

M 4

M 5

M 6

## Educationals

1. The porter kneels, sitting on his heels. The flyer steps up onto the porter.
2. The porter sits on the floor with his legs spread. The flyer stands on the porter's shoulders.
3. The flyer steps up into the two-person column with the assistance of a spotter.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's arm to help him get his balance during the ascent and descent.

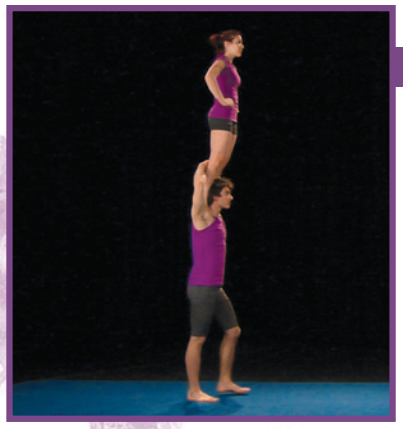
***Safety Notice:*** *The spotter must be vigilant because of the risk of falls during the first few repetitions.*

### Common Mistakes

1. The flyer pulls the porter toward him while climbing up and creates an imbalance.
2. The flyer has trouble getting up into the two-person column.
3. The flyer leans too much on the porter's head.
4. The porter pulls the flyer's knees forward, which causes the flyer's legs to bend.
5. The flyer descends too quickly.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The flyer must move his COM over the porter's base of support.
2. The porter must wait for the flyer to put his feet on the porter's shoulder before raising and extending his arms to provide him with good support.
3. The flyer must stand straight and must press his heels downward.
4. The porter must unlock his elbows, bringing the hands further to the inside of the legs while correcting the head position.
5. The flyer must keep his COM over the porter's base of support.



# HAND-TO-HAND
## MOVING

### Technical Element Description

**Moving in two-person column. The flyer and the porter, alternately, indicate the desired direction by creating a slight imbalance.**

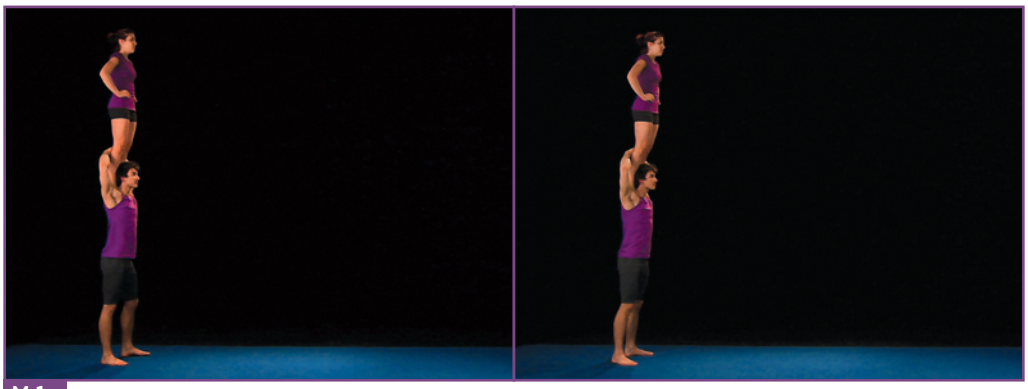
### Prerequisite

- **Climb up and controlled descent.**

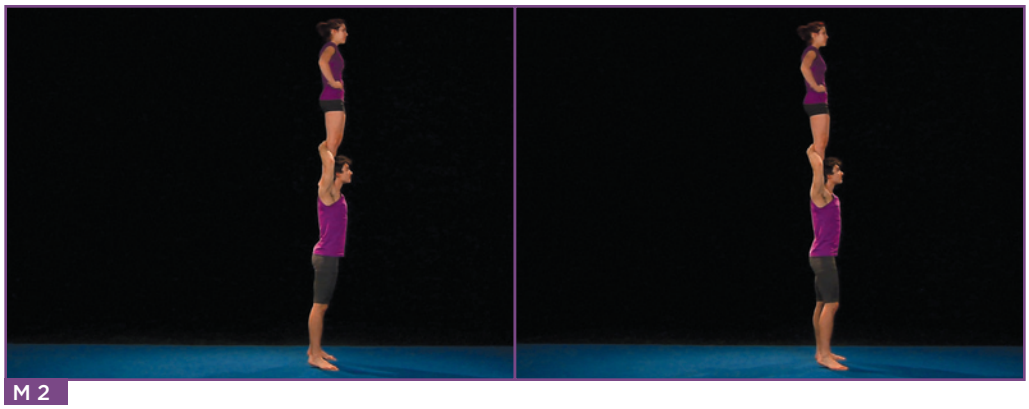
## Explanation of the Movement

- Flyer: To move forward, exert a little pressure on the porter's head by pushing with your legs from the pelvis. To go backwards, exert a little pressure on the porter's hands while moving your pelvis backwards, with straight legs. It is important to maintain body alignment and avoid swaying. The porter should feel the desired movement and always follow the direction indicated by the flyer. At all times, he must put his base of support under the flyer's COM. M 1
- Porter: To move forward, walk while pressing a little with your hands on the back of the flyer's legs. To move backwards, walk while pressing a little with your head on the flyer's legs. The flyer should feel the desired movement and always follow the direction indicated by the porter. At all times, he must keep his COM over the porter's base of support. M 2

***Safety Notice:*** *When moving, it is important to start and stop gradually so as to help one's partner follow and to avoid any major imbalance that could lead to a fall.*



M 1



M 2

## Educational

**1.** Moving with manual aid.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter monitors the speed of movement and the position of both the flyer and the porter. He must protect the flyer in case of loss of balance.

### Common Mistakes

**1.** The porter feels too much weight on his head.

**2.** The message to the porter is not clear.

**3.** The flyer loses balance.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

**1.** The flyer must press his heels down and keep his body vertically aligned.

**2.** The flyer must maintain his body alignment and avoid contradictory movements.

**3.** The flyer must bring his heels together and the porter must slow down his starts and stops.

# HAND-TO-HAND
## CALF MOUNT

### Technical Element Description

**Climbing up into two-person column by pushing with one foot on the porter's back of knee.**

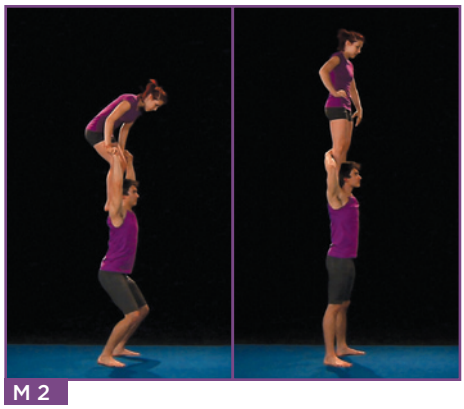
### Prerequisite

- **Climb up and controlled descent.**

## Explanation of the Movement

- Porter: Bend your front leg, stretch your back leg and align your foot with your knee. Put your hands over your shoulders.
- Flyer: Put the tip of your foot on the porter's stretched leg calf while holding his hands. Put a little weight on the front leg in order to feel the porter's tempo.
- The porter does a slow backwards tempo and then fully and dynamically pushes with his legs, while simultaneously moving his arms upward. His arms should be slightly apart to leave room for the flyer's feet on his shoulders. M 1
- The flyer synchronizes the push of his arms and legs with the porter. He aligns his pelvis with his body while pushing, and supports himself on his arms while keeping his feet on the porter's shoulders. M 2

M 1



M 2

## Educational

**1.** With one leg on a raised surface, jump up and land on both legs.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's arm and helps him get up on the porter.

| Common Mistakes | Corrections and Corrective Exercises |
|---|---|
| **1.** The flyer pushes with his leg too late. | **1.** The flyer must put more weight on the porter's leg before starting and concentrate on the speed of the porter's tempo. |
| **2.** The flyer lands on the porter's shoulders with only one foot. | **2.** The flyer must transfer his COM over the porter's leg before completely pushing off, including his hips. He must also lean on the porter's arms before landing. |
| **2.** The flyer has trouble getting up onto the porter's shoulders. | **3.** The porter must push vertically with his arms and work on synchronizing with the flyer. |

# HAND-TO-HAND
## KATIE MOUNT

### Technical Element Description

**Direct lift into two-person column by a dynamic push from the porter with flyer in front of him.**

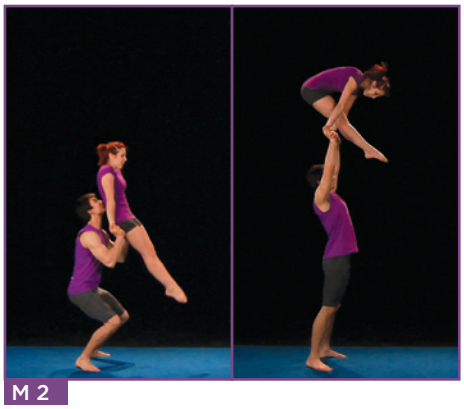
### Prerequisite

- **Climb up and controlled descent.**

## Explanation of the Movement

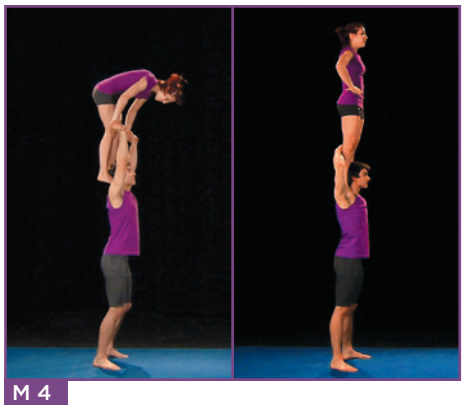
- The porter stands behind the flyer and takes his hands. His legs are spread so they are wider than the flyer's legs. He does a tempo by bending his legs. M 1
- The flyer jumps backwards over the porter's base of support with the back of his hands pressed into his buttocks.
- The porter pushes dynamically with his legs and completes the push with his arms, which are also slightly spread, to leave room for the flyer's feet. M 2
- The flyer supports himself on the porter's arms and straightens up his back, bending his legs to get his feet over the porter's head, then stands up in the two-person column. M 3
- The porter softens the landing by keeping his arms extended and his head straight. M 4

M 1



M 2

M 3



M 4

## Educationals

1. The porter practises the start position while holding the flyer's hands, which the flyer holds against his own buttocks.
2. The porter does the direct lift as far as the leg extension, but does not extend his arms.

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's arms during the push.

### Common Mistakes

1. The porter moves forward under the flyer instead of remaining in place.
2. The porter starts his push before the flyer is over his base of support.
3. The flyer has trouble getting up onto the porter's shoulders.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The flyer must jump toward the porter.
2. The flyer must keep his hands under his buttocks during the push. The porter should push only when he feels the flyer's weight.
3. The porter must be more dynamic when pushing with his legs to help lift the flyer up.

# HAND-TO-HAND
## NECK-TO-NECK BALANCE

### Technical Element Description

**Standing balance position with the porter holding the flyer neck-to-neck.**

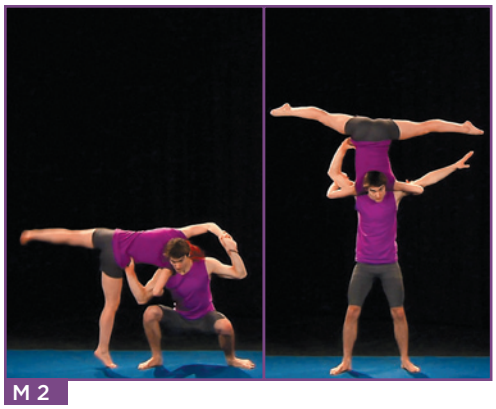
### Prerequisites

- **Cartwheel on the floor.** (See *Cartwheel*, *Acrobatics*, p. 61.)
- **Candlestick on the floor.**

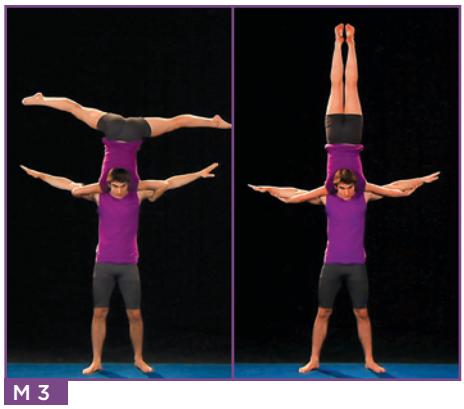
## Explanation of the Movement

- Side by side in opposite directions, the left arm over their heads, the porter and the flyer hold each other's wrists. The porter also puts his right hand on the crease of the flyer's hip, while the flyer holds the porter's right arm at the elbow with his right hand. M 1
- After pressing the back of the nape of their necks together, the porter does a tempo toward the flyer and then comes back over his base of support in the sumo position.
- Simultaneously, the porter holds on with his left hand and pushes the flyer vertically with his right hand, which is resting on the crease of the flyer's hips. The flyer's legs are then lifted up and his COM is moved over the nape of his neck. The flyer keeps his legs spread and wraps his arms around the porter's arms while the porter helps the flyer balance with his forearms. M 2
- Once in neck-to-neck position, the porter and the flyer press against one another with their arms and keep their shoulders back. Once balanced, the flyer lifts his legs vertically. M 3
- During the descent, the porter returns to the sumo position and slightly rocks his shoulders to the side to let the flyer get down. Once the flyer's first foot is on the ground, the porter can straighten out. In order to make getting down easier, it is important to let go with the arm on the side opposite to the descent.

M 1



M 2



M 3

## Educational

1. Do the neck-to-neck movement with the porter kneeling, sitting on his legs. The first neck-to-neck should be done with the help of a spotter. ED 1

ED 1

## Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the flyer's hips during the ascent and helps position his leg over the porter. Once the flyer is balanced, the spotter holds him in place and corrects his position. MA 1

***Safety Notice:*** *It is important to spot closely to avoid having the flyer fall on the porter's head, which could cause an injury to his cervical vertebrae.*

AM 1

### Common Mistakes

1. The porter stands up too early and the flyer has difficulty getting up.
2. The flyer is unstable.
3. The flyer slips on the porter's shoulders.

### Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. The porter must adopt the sumo position and wait for the flyer to have both shoulders on top of his.

   The flyer must move his COM over the porter's base of support.
2. The flyer must maintain his body alignment and let the porter ensure the balance.
3. The flyer must correctly support the nape of his neck from the beginning and keep his shoulders back.

The mission of *Fondation Cirque du Soleil*™ is to promote the circus arts as a development tool to help disadvantaged groups, especially at-risk youth, increase their creative potential, social skills and physical capacity. The foundation also ensures that all revenues from the distribution of *Cirque du Soleil*™ educational material will be reinvested in the company's social and cultural programs.

**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.**

FONDATION CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™

**In collaboration with**

National Circus School
MONTREAL

ecolenationaledecirque.ca