

BASIC TECHNIQUES IN CIRCUS ARTS



UNICYCLE



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 Vollerling: [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.

Any reproduction is strictly prohibited without prior authorization of the copyright holders. Any infringement is subject to civil or penal sanctions.
All rights reserved
Produced in Canada



© 2011 Cirque du Soleil
cirquedusoleil.com

Cirque du Soleil is a trademark owned by Cirque du Soleil and used under license.

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.



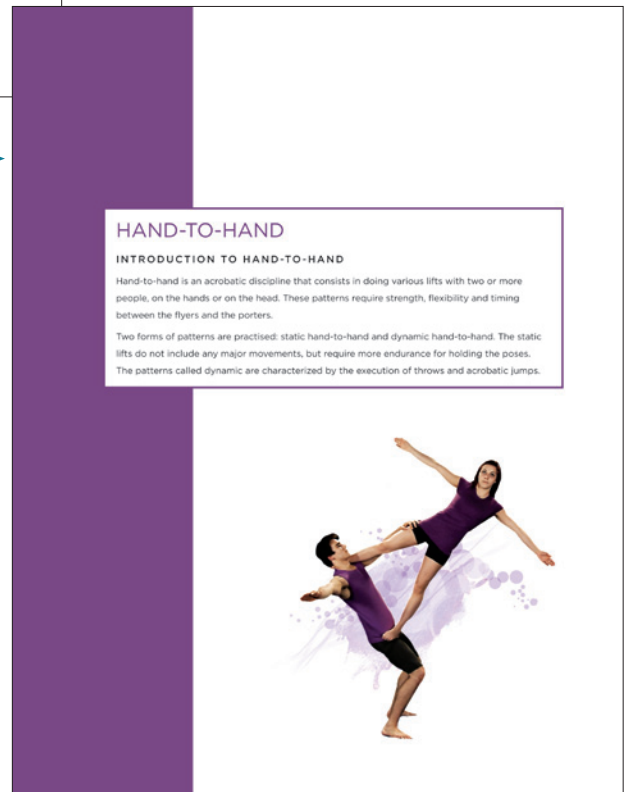
INSTRUCTIONS - WRITTEN DOCUMENTS



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.


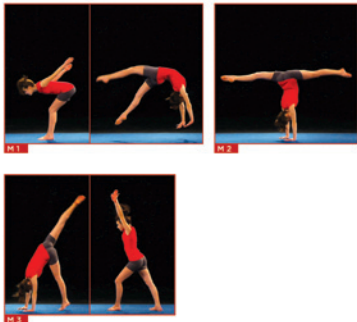
Prerequisites

- 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.

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



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

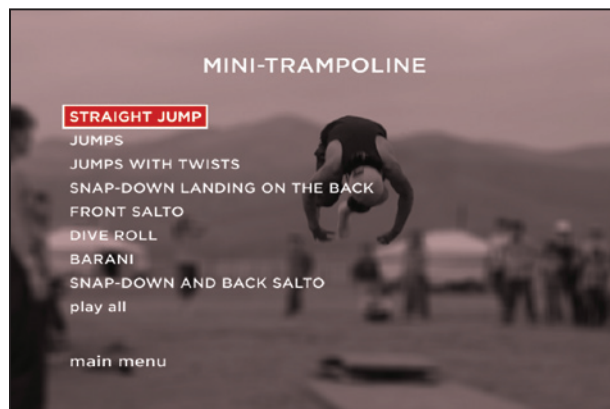


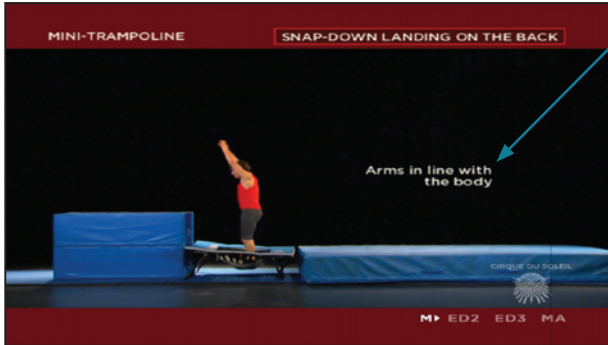
Main Menu

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.



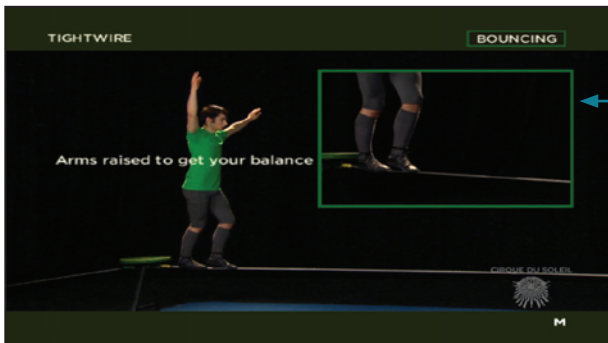


Warnings

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.



UNICYCLE

INTRODUCTION TO THE UNICYCLE

Unicycle practice consists in executing various acrobatics, balances, turns and jumps on a vehicle made up of one wheel with pedals and a saddle. Invented around 1880, this discipline is widespread today and is frequently combined with juggling. It requires balance, coordination and precision.

Unlike the bicycle, the unicycle does not ordinarily have a chain, and the cranks are attached directly to the wheel axle, without gearing.



TERMINOLOGY

Abdominal muscle group

All of the abdominal muscles.

Anterior-posterior axis

Imaginary line through the body from the navel to the middle of the back.

Arc

Movement that follows the trajectory of a circle.

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.

Longitudinal axis

Imaginary line through the body from the head to the feet.

Pike position

Body position with hip flexion and the legs straight.

Spotter

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

Transversal axis

Imaginary line through the body from the right hip to the left hip.

EQUIPMENT

Dance bar

Horizontal bar fixed at about 1 metre from the ground used for performing gymnastic movements.

Unicycle

- The diameter of the wheel is 50 to 60 centimetres.
- The saddle is narrower in the front and it should be set about 5 centimetres lower than the length of the leg from crotch to heel.
- The air pressure in the wheel should be kept at the maximum pressure rating to make moving easier.

Wall bar

Wide ladder attached to a wall used for performing gymnastic movements.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The practice of this discipline specifically requires upper body muscle tone, that is, the arms, shoulders and abdominals, as well as leg strength.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNICYCLE

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Basic mount	5
Riding	
Riding straight ahead	7
Riding in circles	9
Riding in a figure of 8	11
Rocking in place	13
Bunny hops on the spot	15
Cycling backwards in a straight line	17
Side mount	19
Rocking in place with one leg	21
Forward slalom	23



UNICYCLE BASIC MOUNT

Technical Element Description

Mounting the unicycle from the standing position.



Explanation of the Movement

- Take a stable position seated on the saddle, the unicycle leaning back with the wheel forward, the pedals in horizontal position, with one foot on the ground and one foot on the pedal. Extend the arms out to the side. **M 1**
- Move the weight forward while pushing with the leg on the ground. Position the COM over the wheel and one foot on each pedal. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educationals

1. Mount while resting one hand on a wall bar.
2. Mount while resting on the arm of a spotter positioned on the side.



Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the unicycle's saddle with one hand and the participant's arm with the other hand. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant is in the pike position when seated.
2. The participant relaxes the hips and pivots laterally.
3. The pedals do not stay horizontal during the COM transfer.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Moving the pelvis forward, keeping the torso vertical.
2. Performing core strengthening exercises so as to keep the arms in a perpendicular axis. **EX**
3. Increasing the weight on the saddle. Changing the pedal-weight versus saddle-weight ratio.

Variant

1. Reversing the legs: Execute the element while reversing the leg on the floor and the leg on the pedal.





UNICYCLE RIDING STRAIGHT AHEAD

Technical Element Description

Moving forward seated on the unicycle.

Prerequisite

- Basic mount.

Explanation of the Movement

- Seated on the unicycle, the arms extended to the side and the torso vertical, move the COM by moving the pelvis slightly forward and start to pedal. **M 1**
- Keep the COM slightly forward and pedal in a straight line. **M 2**
- Try to go at a constant speed. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educationals

1. Riding forward resting one hand on a wall bar.
2. Riding forward with manual aid from a spotter positioned on the side.



Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the unicycle's saddle with one hand and the participant's arm with the other hand. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant is in pike position while moving, and loses balance.
2. The participant's pelvis sways.
3. The participant moves with an irregular rhythm.
4. The participant is unbalanced.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Vertically aligning the pelvis and the shoulders.
2. Performing body strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**
3. Putting more weight on the saddle than on the pedals. Making the pedal movement regular.
4. Increasing movement speed.
Performing leg strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

1. Speed variation: Ride forward slowly, ride forward quickly.
2. Arms crossed.
3. Hands on the head or behind the back.
4. Riding along a line on the floor.





UNICYCLE RIDING IN CIRCLES

Technical Element Description

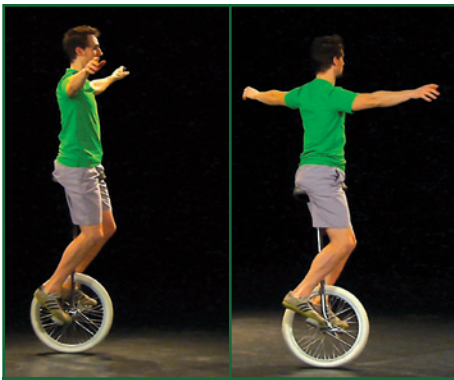
Riding forward in a circle, seated on the unicycle.

Prerequisite

- Riding straight ahead.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the riding straight ahead element, move the COM, which is at the pelvis level, laterally to create an imbalance in the chosen direction of the circle, to the right or left. **M 1**
- While unbalanced, pivot the torso on the longitudinal axis to turn in the same direction as the imbalance. **M 2**
- Keeping the arms extended to the sides, turn the arms in the direction that the torso moves on the longitudinal axis. Slightly pull the arms back, finding the inside of the circle in order to turn in the direction of the imbalance. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educational

1. Ride with manual aid: The spotter stands next to the participant and holds the hand that is on the inside of the circle.



Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand while walking inside the circle. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant makes a circle that is too large.
2. The participant makes an irregular circle.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the lateral movement of the COM.
2. Stabilizing the rhythm of the pedal movements.
Performing core strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

1. In a small circle.
2. In a large circle.
3. Circle to the right.
4. Circle to the left.





UNICYCLE RIDING IN A FIGURE OF 8

Technical Element Description

Riding forward while making a figure 8.

Prerequisite

- Riding in circles to both sides.

Explanation of the Movement

- From riding forward in a circle, transfer the COM laterally in the opposite direction. **M 1**
- With the arms extended to the sides, move the pivot axis of the arm in the direction of the circle while making sure the arms are still perpendicular to the direction of the circle. Keep the same riding speed as that used in the straight line. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand inside the circle. Every time the participant completes a circle, the spotter takes his opposite hand, which is now inside the circle. **MA 1**



MA 1

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble executing the second circle successfully.
2. The participant experiences an involuntary sway.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Continuing in a straight line before going into the second circle.
2. Moving the COM in the direction of the imbalance.
Performing abdominal strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

1. Alternating the direction of the first circle, left or right.
2. Varying the size of the circles.
3. Arms crossed.
4. Hands on the head or behind the back.





UNICYCLE ROCKING IN PLACE

Technical Element Description

Balancing in place by a back-and-forth semicircle movement of the pedals.

Prerequisites

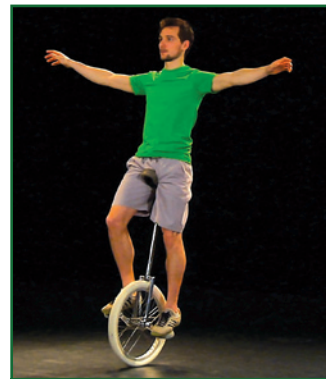
- Riding straight ahead.
- Cycling backwards in a straight line, with manual aid.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the seated position, with the torso vertical and the arms extended to the sides, put the pedals in the vertical position.
- Move the COM forward while pedalling until the pedals are horizontal. **M 1**
- Then, reverse the process backwards until the pedals are horizontal. Repeat this back-and-forth movement about once a second. Move the wheel laterally when there is a lateral imbalance. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educational

1. Rock in place with one hand on a wall bar.

Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand on the side, keeping his arm at shoulder height.



Common Mistakes

1. The participant is unbalanced and falls to the side.
2. The participant moves with an irregular rhythm.
3. The participant is constantly unbalanced.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the back-and-forth rhythm with the pedals to make lateral movements of the wheel easier.
2. Keeping the torso vertical.
Performing leg strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**
3. Making the back-and-forth movement of the pedals bigger.

Variants

1. Changing the support leg.
2. Arms crossed.
3. To the rhythm of music.





UNICYCLE BUNNY HOPS ON THE SPOT

Technical Element Description

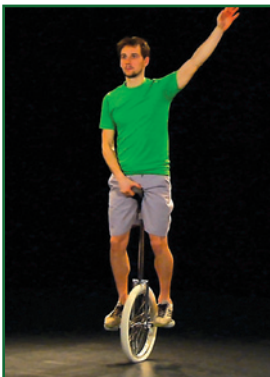
Jumping in place, balanced on the unicycle.

Prerequisites

- Riding straight ahead.
- Rocking in place.

Explanation of the Movement

- Seated on the unicycle with both feet on the pedals in horizontal position, hold the saddle firmly with one hand and extend the other arm to the side. Extend the legs until the arm that holds the saddle is straight. **M 1**
- Push vertically with the legs and synchronize the bounce with the reaction of the tire. Move the wheel under the COM during the imbalance and maintain a rhythm of about two jumps per second. **M 2**



M 1



M 2

Educational

1. Perform the bunny hops on the spot with one hand on a wall bar.

Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand on the side, keeping his arm at shoulder height.



Common Mistakes

1. The participant loses balance.
2. The participant does not jump high enough.
3. The participant does not jump vertically.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Quickly moving the wheel under the COM.
2. Performing leg strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**
3. Keeping the torso vertical and positioning the pedals horizontally.

Variants

1. Bunny hops on the spot and riding in a forward circle, to both sides.
2. Rocking in place with side jumps.
3. To the rhythm of music.





UNICYCLE CYCLING BACKWARDS IN A STRAIGHT LINE

Technical Element Description

Cycling backwards in a straight line, seated on the unicycle.

Prerequisite

- Riding straight ahead.

Explanation of the Movement

- From the seated position, with the torso vertical, put both feet on the pedals in horizontal position and extend the arms to the side.
- While moving the COM backwards and drawing the shoulders back slightly, begin to pedal backwards.
- Keep the COM slightly to the back and pedal backwards while trying to maintain a constant speed. **M 1**



M 1

Educational

1. Mount the unicycle and go backwards with manual aid by supporting on the spotter's arm.

Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the unicycle's saddle with one hand and the participant's arm with the other hand.



Common Mistakes

1. The participant is in pike position while moving.
2. The participant's pelvis sways.
3. The participant moves with an irregular rhythm.
4. The participant is unbalanced.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Moving the pelvis forward and bringing the shoulders back.
2. Performing abdominal strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**
3. Increasing the weight on the saddle.
4. Increasing movement speed slightly.

Variations

1. Speed variation.
2. Arms crossed.
3. Riding along a line on the floor.





UNICYCLE SIDE MOUNT

Technical Element Description

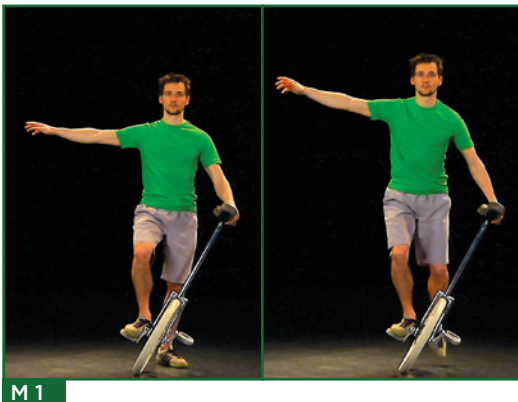
Side mounting the unicycle.

Prerequisite

- Rocking in place.

Explanation of the Movement

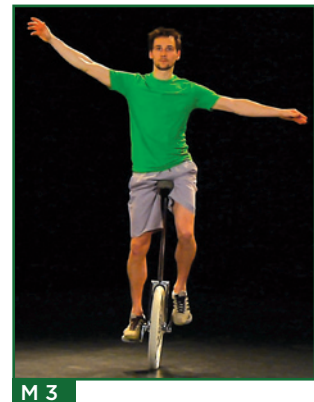
- From standing behind the unicycle, arm extended to the side, hold the saddle with the left hand and put the right foot on the pedal, which is all the way to the bottom. **M 1**
- Tilt the unicycle to the outside, throw the left leg forward in an arc above the saddle and sit on it. **M 2**
- Release the left hand and rock in place. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



M 3

Educational

1. Mount the unicycle, while resting one hand on a wall bar or a dance bar. **ED 1**



ED 1



Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand on the side, keeping his arm at shoulder height.

Common Mistakes

1. The left leg does not make a complete arc over the saddle, which prevents the participant from sitting.
2. The participant is constantly unbalanced.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. While resting on the pedal, tilting the unicycle further to the side before throwing the leg forward in an arc.
2. Keeping the torso vertical.
Performing abdominal muscle group strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

1. Side mount from the left and right sides.
2. Speed variation.





UNICYCLE

ROCKING IN PLACE WITH ONE LEG

Technical Element Description

Rocking in place with a single leg resting on the unicycle.

Prerequisite

- Rocking in place.

Explanation of the Movement

- Rock in place and slightly increase the rhythm of the pedal movement.
- Support on the leg on the lower pedal and slightly reduce the weight of the foot on the higher pedal. **M 1**
- Slightly lift the foot of the free leg every time the upper pedal is forward. **M 2**
- Completely lift the foot of the free leg.



M 1



M 2

Educational

1. Rock in place with one leg while resting one hand on a wall bar.

Manual Aid

- The spotter holds the participant's hand on the side, keeping his arm at shoulder height.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant is unbalanced and falls to the side.
2. The participant moves with an irregular rhythm.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Increasing the back-and-forth movement with the pedals to make lateral movements of the wheel easier.
2. Putting more weight on the saddle to prevent losing the pedalling rhythm.
Performing leg strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

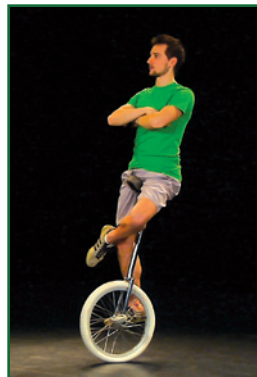
1. Big or small rocking in place movement.
2. Free leg held forward or backwards. **V 2**
3. Free leg crossed. **V 3**
4. Arms crossed. **V 4**
5. Pivot 360° on the ground axis. **V 5**



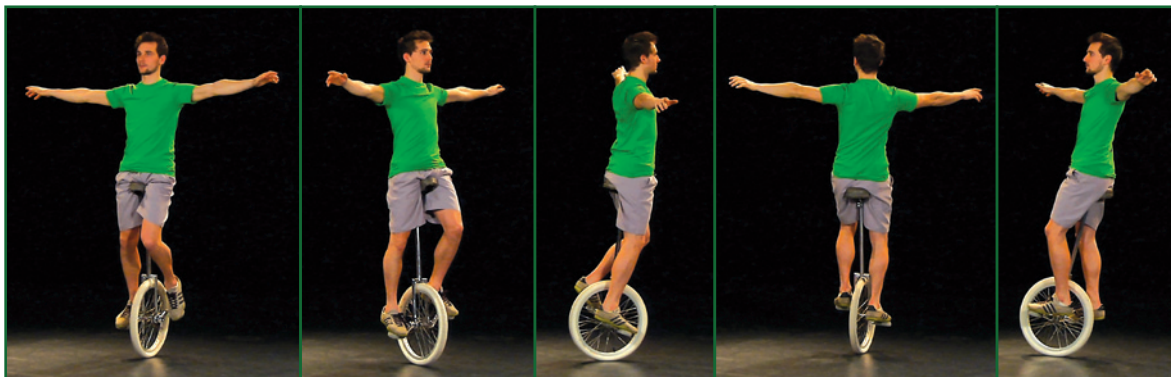
V 2



V 3



V 4



V 5





UNICYCLE FORWARD SLALOM

Technical Element Description

Riding through a slalom.

Prerequisite

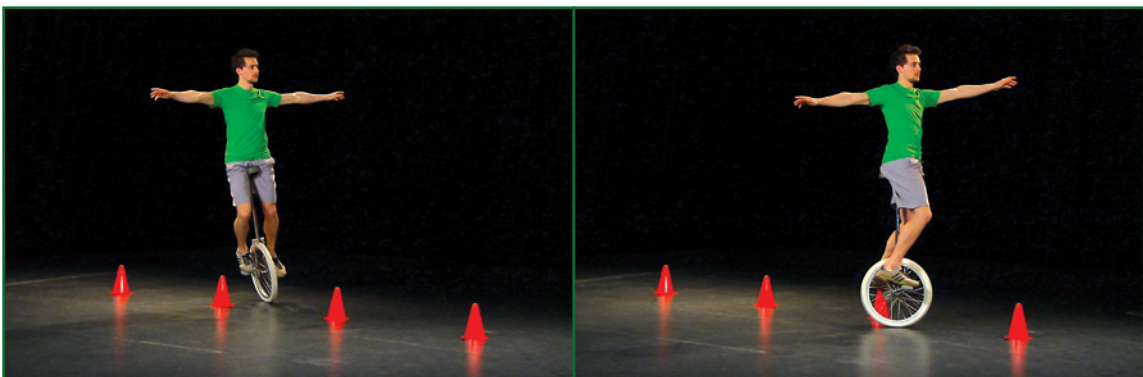
- Riding in circles to both sides.

Explanation of the Movement

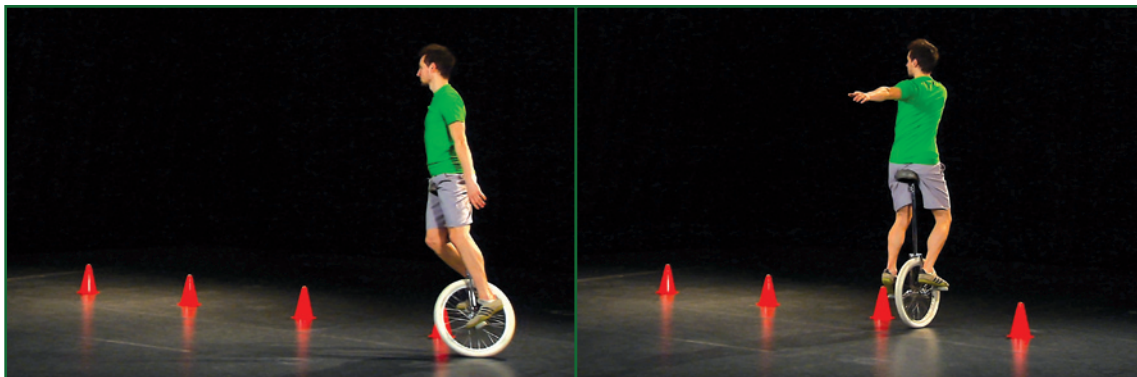
- From the riding straight ahead element, arms to the sides, transfer the COM laterally so as to make a quick short turn. **M 1**
- Sequence with another turn in the opposite direction. **M 2**
- Line up a series of obstacles and slalom around the obstacles. Execute several turns in opposite directions, one turn every two seconds. **M 3**



M 1



M 2



Educational

1. Riding in circles to both sides, varying the size of the circle.

Common Mistakes

1. The participant has trouble pivoting.
2. The participant cannot sequence turns or pivot in the opposite direction.
3. The participant's hips constantly wobble.

Corrections and Corrective Exercises

1. Keeping the torso vertical.
2. Putting the arms to the sides as leverage so as to turn quickly in the opposite direction.
3. Performing abdominal strengthening and toning exercises. **EX**

Variants

1. Variation of the slalom, small and large.
2. Arms crossed.



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.

In collaboration with



Produced in Canada/Produit au Canada © 2011 Cirque du Soleil
All rights reserved/Tous droits réservés

Cirque du Soleil is a trademark owned by
Cirque du Soleil and used under license.
Cirque du Soleil est une marque détenue par
Cirque du Soleil et employée sous licence.