

Course Syllabus
Acrobatics, Balance, Counter Balance and Weight Sharing

Course Description:

In this experiential course, actors will explore basic acrobatic movements, such as rolls, cartwheels, and inversions, to develop self-awareness and responsiveness to their bodies. They will also engage with partnering techniques to balance and counterbalance effectively, using their body's natural shelves to support their own weight and that of others.

To perform with agility and ease, actors must cultivate a disciplined movement practice. This course provides a structured regimen of physical exercises to build a sustainable movement practice, essential for a long-lasting career in the performing arts. Through this practice, students will gain an understanding of how they occupy space and how they can use their physical form to interact with their environment and fellow performers.

In addition to developing physical skills, students will explore how to integrate these movements into performance, emphasizing the connection between movement and the written word. The course will encourage students to embrace the courage required to step into the unknown and trust their creativity to guide them. They will learn to incorporate movements into fight choreography, adapt skills to match musicality by adjusting speed and rhythm, and transform basic tumbling into theatrical character movements.

Throughout the semester, students will gain spatial awareness, practice set choreography, and create their own sequences. They will build confidence in moving both solo and with partners, learning to trust their bodies to move with agility, and understanding how to support others' weight while allowing others to lift them. By exploring the intersection of movement, imagination, and text, students will develop a deeper understanding of their roles as artists and performers.

Students will also reflect on how these skills relate to their artistic journey by considering questions like: How does my body move in response to my surroundings? How can my movements reflect my character's journey? How can I use my body to communicate emotions and ideas?

This course is designed to help students develop a commitment to movement, enhance their creative expression, and discover new ways to incorporate physicality into their performances.

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Course Objectives

Overall Objectives:

- Establish a sustainable movement regimen to support a long and agile career in the performing arts
- Strengthen confidence and build trust in solo and partner movements, trusting your physical form to move with agility and support others

Master Basic Acrobatics

- Cultivate an understanding of how your body moves and interacts with space
- Enhance body awareness and physical responsiveness
- Learn and execute fundamental acrobatic movements, such as rolls, cartwheels, and inversions
- Develop spatial awareness to effectively occupy and navigate performance spaces

Master Partnering Techniques

- Develop skills in balance and counterbalance techniques with partners, using the body's natural shelves to support weight.
- Build trust with fellow performers
- Collaborate with fellow performers

Integrate Movement with Performance

- Explore the integration of movement with text, poetry, play structure, and music
- Consider how physicality communicates character, emotion, and ideas within a performance context

Enhance Creativity and Imagination

- Utilize creativity and imagination to transform basic movements into compelling theatrical movements for storytelling
- Encourage courageous exploration of new ideas and techniques without predefined answers

Build Choreographic Skills:

- Gain proficiency in learning set choreography and the creation of original choreographed sequences

Required Texts and Materials (provided by instructor)

- Selected readings from *Laban for Actors and Dancers* by Jean Newlove
- Selected online videos of theatrical performances with acrobatics

Materials

- Comfortable clothing suitable for movement - no jeans, and be prepared to roll around on the floor, skirts and dresses are not advised
- Note: We will primarily be barefoot in the class.
- A journal for reflections and notes is required to be brought to class each session and will be read by the instructor periodically throughout the semester

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Course Schedule

Week 1, Class 1: Introduction to Movement and Acrobatic Training for Actors

Overview: Course objectives and expectations

Discussion: Importance of developing a movement practice to enhance body awareness on stage

Activities: Warm-up exercises, introduction to basic rolls, and preparatory cartwheel movements

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Reflect on self-awareness and physical response. Where are you starting from? What knowledge of physical movement are you beginning with? What goals do you have? What concerns do you have?

Week 1, Class 2: Introduction to Movement and Acrobatic Basics, Session 1

Discussion: Building a movement practice and taking care of your physical body

Activities: Warm-up, kicks, preparations for rolls, inversions, and cartwheels

Conditioning: Abdominals

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on tips for taking care of your physical body while building strength, flexibility, and body awareness.

Week 2, Class 3: Introduction to Movement and Acrobatic Basics, Session 2

Discussion: Building a movement practice and caring for your state of mind; understanding your progress without judgment

Activities: Warm-up, kicks, preparations for rolls, inversions, and cartwheels; variations and adaptations introduced as skills become routine

Conditioning: Legs

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on methods for developing a healthy state of mind while building a new movement practice. How do you speak to yourself? How do you encourage or hinder your progress? Where are you in relationship to where you want to be?

Week 2, Class 4: Movement and Acrobatic Basics, Session 3

Discussion: Taking calculated risks; training both sides of the body and mind

Activities: Students begin leading practice; warm-up exercises, kicks, training of basic rolls, and preparatory/traditional cartwheel movements

Conditioning: Arms

Homework:

- **Reading:** Selected sections of *The Anatomy of Movement*
- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on your experience practicing acrobatic skills using both sides of your body.

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Week 3, Class 5: Partnering Techniques and Trust-Building, Session 1

Discussion: Balance and counterbalance techniques; building trust; taking calculated risks; verbal and non-verbal communication about consent and trust

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, training of basic rolls, and preparatory/traditional cartwheel movements

Activities: Partner exercises in counterbalance and weight-sharing; group trust activities

Conditioning: Full body connection

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words reflecting on partnering trust and collaboration. How skilled are you in advocating for yourself? How do you determine when you trust someone in partner acrobatic training? How do you assess readiness to increase the level of risk?

Week 3, Class 6: Partnering Techniques and Trust-Building, Session 2

Discussion: Balance and counterbalance techniques; all bodies are good bodies; unique interactions between partners

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements; introduction to linking skills

Activities: Partner exercises in counterbalance and weight-sharing; group trust activities

Conditioning: Abdominals

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on what changed between sessions 1 and 2. What new knowledge do you have about your abilities and your classmates?

Week 4, Class 7: Acrobatics and Partnering Techniques, Session 1

Discussion: L-basing and flying; using body stacking to support weight-sharing

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements with a focus on linking skills

Activities: Partner L-basing and flying: bird, back balance, assisted forward rolls, sitting on feet

Conditioning: Legs

Homework:

- **Reading:** Selected sections of *The Anatomy of Movement* and *Laban for Actors and Dancers*
- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on how partnering with others has informed your movement abilities.

Week 4, Class 8: Acrobatics and Partnering Techniques, Session 2

Discussion: Creating body shelves and body stacking; focus on L-basing and using the back as a shelf

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements with a focus on linking skills

Activities: Back-to-back rollovers, belly-to-back, back-to-back pops; review of known solo and partnering movements considering space, time, weight, and flow

Conditioning: Arms

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on your experience with L-basing, using the back as a shelf, and how you altered your movements by varying space, time, weight, and flow.
- **Reading:** Selected sections of *Laban for Actors and Dancers*

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Week 5, Class 9: Musicality and Rhythm to Create Sequences, Part 1

Discussion: Allowing music and rhythm to influence movement

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Introduction to using musicality to determine space, weight, time, and flow in acrobatic movements; setting choreography based on improvisation

Conditioning: Full Body Connection

Homework:

Prepare for the Midterm Exam:

- Create a solo choreographed movement sequence (1-2 minutes) to music (no lyrics)
- Work with a partner to create a choreographed movement sequence considering Laban movement principles

Week 5, Class 10: Musicality and Rhythm to Create Sequences, Part 2

Discussion: Integrating movement with music and rhythm

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Using musicality to guide space, weight, time, and flow in acrobatic movements; setting choreography with a partner based on improvisation

Conditioning: Abdominal

Homework:

Prepare for the Midterm Exam:

- Be ready to showcase your solo performance in the next class
- Continue working on partner choreography

Week 6, Class 11: Midterms, Part 1

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Solo performances with class feedback

Conditioning: Legs

Homework:

- Prepare for Midterm Exam, Part 2: Performance of partner choreography

Week 6, Class 12: Midterms, Part 2

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Duo performances with class feedback

Conditioning: Arms

Homework:

- **Midterm Assessment:** Write a 300-word self-reflection on your midterm performances and a 300-word peer evaluation

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Week 7, Class 13: Acrobatics and Partnering Techniques, Session 3

Discussion: Creating body shelves and body stacking using the hips and legs

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Half-high, face-to-face thigh stand, face-away thigh stand; review of previous skills including L-basing and flying

Conditioning: Full body connection

Homework:

- Watch a playlist of theatrical acrobatics
- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on your observations of two of the provided videos.

Week 7, Class 14: Integrating Movement with Status

Discussion: Creating a simple story through status

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Improvisation with consideration of status in solo and partnering movements

Conditioning: Abdominals

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 150 words on the use of status as a tool for storytelling with acrobatics. Watch *DV8's Can We Talk About This?* and write a 150-word journal entry on your observations.

Week 8, Class 15: Integrating Movement with Voice-Over Text, Part 1

Discussion: Applying Laban movement principles to text

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Develop partnering phrases with text voice-over through exploration of improvisation into set choreography

Conditioning: Legs

Homework:

- **Journal Assignment:** Write 300 words on movement and text integration.
- Work with your partner to select a provided text and break it down into beats with consideration of Laban movement principles.
- Prepare to create a movement sequence.

Week 8, Class 16: Integrating Movement with Voice-Over Text, Part 2

Discussion: Creativity and imagination in movement

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Develop partnering phrases with text voice-over through exploration of improvisation into set choreography with a focus on storytelling.

Conditioning: Arms

Homework:

- Continue developing partner performances for class presentations with peer review

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Week 9, Class 17: Preliminary Presentation of Final Performance with Peer Review, Part 1

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Preliminary performances with peer review

Conditioning: Whole body engagement

Homework:

- Continue developing partner performances for the finals

Week 9, Class 18: Preliminary Presentation of Final Performance with Peer Review, Part 2

Warm-up: Stretching, kicks, rolls, and cartwheel movements

Activities: Preliminary performances with peer review

Conditioning: Abdominals

Homework:

- Finalize partner performances for the finals.

Week 10, Class 19: Finals, Part 1

Warm-up: Group warm-up followed by on-deck warm-up

Activities: Final performances

Homework:

- **Self-Review:** Write a 400-word self-review of your final performance.
- **Peer Review:** Write a 200-word peer review of a classmate's final performance.

Week 10, Class 20: Review of Final Performance

Discussion: Watch final performances and engage in peer and self-reviews

Activities: Final group warm-up and whole-body engagement conditioning

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Grading Structure

2%	Week 1, Class 1	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 1, Class 2	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 2, Class 3	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 2, Class 4	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 3, Class 5	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 3, Class 6	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 4, Class 7	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 4, Class 8	Homework: Journal Assignment
13%	Week 6, Class 11: Midterm	In-Class Presentation: Midterm Solo Performance
13%	Week 6, Class 12: Midterm	In-Class Presentation: Midterm Duo Performance
9%	Week 6, Class 12: Midterm	Homework: Midterm Assessment
2%	Week 7, Class 13	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 7, Class 14	Homework: Journal Assignment
2%	Week 8, Class 15	Homework: Journal Assignment
5%	Week 9, Class 18	In-Class Preliminary Presentation of Final Performance
20%	Week 10, Class 19: Final	In-Class Presentation: Final
9%	Week 10, Class 19: Finals	Homework: Self-Review
9%	Week 10, Class 19: Finals	Homework: Peer Review