

Learning Links presents  
Do Jump! Extremely Physical Theater  
Thursday, October 5, 2006  
9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

*“In Robin Lane’s circus-like vision of lighter-than-air  
creativity, walls tumble...”*  
--- *The Oregonian*

**Making Curricular Connections!**

*History & Geography:* genesis of acrobatics in Egypt, China, Greece;  
Oregon, with possible history tie-ins, such as Lewis & Clark

*Arts:* Music, dance, gymnastics, circus, comedy

**What Is It?**

When you hear the phrase “Do jump!” what pops into your head? Try something new? Choose to commit? Take the leap? Well, this six person troupe takes you on a **leap!** of imagination --- and many, many gravity-defying leaps through space! They’re so good at these acts of acrobatic virtuosity, in fact, that they’ve opened up a school and are ready to take your name and teach you how to do what they do. Of course, the performance at the McCallum Theatre --- and elsewhere in their tours throughout the world --- is not **just** acrobatics, but dance and theater as well. The **way** they move --- apart from a very unique look --- exemplifies grace and beauty. They evoke a sense of wonder. And just in case we grow too serious, they enliven our spirits with a rollicking humor. It isn’t, however, all as spontaneous as it seems. Even the comedy must be crafted. Each laugh is earned the hard way, through judicious movement, choreographed surprise, and energy energy energy!



### **Who is it?**

What were **you** up to in 1977? Robin Lane was creating Do Jump Movement Theater in Portland, Oregon. Lane had a vision for this group --- and it has remained consistent these twenty-eight years. That vision has included a mandate to provoke. Well, theater does that anyway, doesn't it -- - when the theater has a bit of an alternative flavor, re-imagined from the more standard entertainment fare. Certainly DJMT seeks to entertain. But the vision cuts deeper. DJMT looks to **transform** audience members with sights that stir, amaze, amuse, and remain burned in the retina --- indelible, unforgettable.

It goes without saying the performers in this show operate at the pinnacle of physical prowess. All six of them have trained for years. Watching them defy gravity, you sense the wealth and rigor of their training. Not only must they successfully complete the physical stunts, but in addition they must engage us as performers. Which takes greater skill --- flying through the air or working a comic bit?

***“They so easily transform ... They talk, dance, leap, run, fly. Are they dancers? Actors? Comics? Acrobats? Vaudevillians? Who cares? They are LIBERATORS!”  
---The Oregonian***

### **Roots**

Hop onto the web to find out who started acrobatics in the first place --- and you'll find several cultures each vying for the distinction. Some say the first acrobats surfaced in Ancient Egypt. China, however, is pretty sure that acrobatic skill and form developed within its own vast boundaries. Still others point to Ancient Greece. They say the art of acrobatics grew out of exercises used by Greek soldiers to maintain fitness. These seem to have involved mounting and dismounting horses, for example.

In China, the art has been alive for over 2,000 years (some say 3,000). The earliest traces appear to have emerged in the Warring States Period (475-221 B.C.). Later, the Han Dynasty hosted the “Hundred Plays”, an intricate and varied art of acrobatics. “Rope walking” was included. (A precursor to tight-wire?) Also “Five Tables”, a balance exercise. And “hoop diving” and “flying trident.”

Modern “acro” emerged in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

**Before the theater**, students may want to research:

- Physical theater (mime, slapstick, etc.)
- Acrobatics
- Gymnastics
- Aerial skills
- Comedy, different forms of (satire, slapstick, burlesque, screwball, drawing room, etc.)

**In activities, could students...**

1. Create mimed presentations of stories from current curriculum, and examine what makes certain gestures and movements effective?
2. View a video of acrobats, isolate particular moves, and see if they can chart these moves on paper by drawing superimposed pictures of acrobats moving through the range of movements in the action?
3. Explore some basic --- and safe! --- gymnastic moves, possibly in slow motion, and notice which muscles and muscle groups are most involved?
4. Create, as a group, a large picture in which figures execute the various aerial skills which emerge from research?
5. Having researched different forms of comedy, enact a scene from a curriculum story in which humor plays a role? Have them try several styles of comedy, to notice the differences and determine which style suits the material best.

**After the theater, students will surely want to research...**

- Extreme physical activity & its effect on the body
- Portland, Oregon
- Do Jump Movement Theater
- Dance
- The Han Dynasty, Ancient Egypt, and Greece

**In activities, could students...**

1. Write biographies of people who stretched the limits of physical activity within the arts?
2. Compose a newspaper article extolling the virtues of Portland, Oregon, focusing especially on its artistic output? Perhaps some history --- Lewis and Clark anyone? --- could be included.
3. Ask for an application to Do Jump Movement Theater School and examine as a class the requirements and curriculum?
4. Try dancing suspended from the ceiling? Not so easy, is it???

***“They shape and reshape themselves, apparently immune to gravity, to centrifugal force, to human limitations.”***  
***---The Oregonian***

## **Inquiry**

- In what ways is this work a synthesis of athletics and aesthetics?
- How are objects used and/or animated?
- What single moment --- or act --- stands out to you, and why?
- What are the different kinds of energy on display?
- How does what these performers do affect our sense of the passage of time? When does time stretch out; when does it go quickly; when does it stand still?
- Which aspects of the performance would you call vaudevillian?
- What are some funny moments in the show --- and what specifically makes them so?
- How does this work differ from other theatrical presentations you've attended?
- What evidence is there that a director has guided the creation of this work?
- How is the idea of community embodied in this work?
- Which contrasting elements are juxtapositioned within the work --- and how does positioning affect each element?
- In what ways does lighting contribute to this work?
- What are several instances in which music has a particular impact on the visual components? On other components?
- If confidence is one characteristic in evidence in the performers' demeanor, what are some others?

## **Looking It Up: Internet**

### ***Do Jump Movement Theater***

[www.dojump.org](http://www.dojump.org)

### ***Acrobatics***

[www.usa-gymnastics.org/acro/history.html](http://www.usa-gymnastics.org/acro/history.html)

### ***Portland, Oregon***

[www.portlandonline.com](http://www.portlandonline.com)

# Books

## *Acrobatics*

### Mirette on the High Wire

by Emily Arnold McCully

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: Paperstar Book; Reprint edition (March 1, 1997)

ISBN: 0698114434

### High Wire Henry

by Mary Calhoun, Erick Ingraham (Illustrator)

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Hardcover

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers (April 1, 1991)

ISBN: 0688089836

### Circus Girl (Sendak Reissues)

by Jack Sendak, Maurice Sendak (Illustrator)

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Michael Di Capua; Reprint edition (October 1, 2002)

ISBN: 0060287837

### Kids Perform Circus Arts (Crabapples)

by Bobbie Kalman

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Library Binding: 32 pages

Publisher: Crabtree Publishing Company (May 1, 1997)

ISBN: 0865056307

### An Acrobat (I Want to Be Series)

by Ivan Bulloch, Diane James, Fiona Pragoff (Illustrator), Derek Mathews (Illustrator)

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: World Book Inc (April 1, 1997)

ISBN: 0716643049

The Hanlon Brothers: Their Amazing Acrobatics, Pantomimes and Stage Spectacles

by John A. McKinven, David Meyer Magic Books

Hardcover: 113 pages

Publisher: David Meyer Magic Books (September 1, 1998)

ISBN: 0916638820

***Gymnastics***

Superguides: Gymnastics

by Shannon Miller (Foreword), Joan Jackman

Reading level: Ages 9-12

Hardcover: 45 pages

Publisher: DK Publishing; 1<sup>st</sup> American ed edition (February 1, 2000)

ISBN: 0789454300

I Love Gymnastics!

By Jane Feldman (Illustrator)

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Paperback: 24 pages

Publisher: Random House Books for Young Readers (May, 2000)

ISBN: 0375805451

***Theater***

On Stage: Theater Games and Activities for Kids

by Lisa Bany-Winters

Reading level: Ages 4-8

Paperback: 180 pages

Publisher: Chicago Review Press; 1<sup>st</sup> ed edition (November 1, 1997)

ISBN: 1556523246

Kids Take the Stage: Helping Young People Discover the Creative Outlet of Theater

by Lenka Peterson, Dan O'Connor, Robert Coles

Paperback: 196 pages

Publisher: Back Stage Books (September 1, 1997)

ISBN: 082307742X

***“Highly creative”***  
***--- New York Times***

