



58 Bay View St., Ste, 1, Camden ME 04843

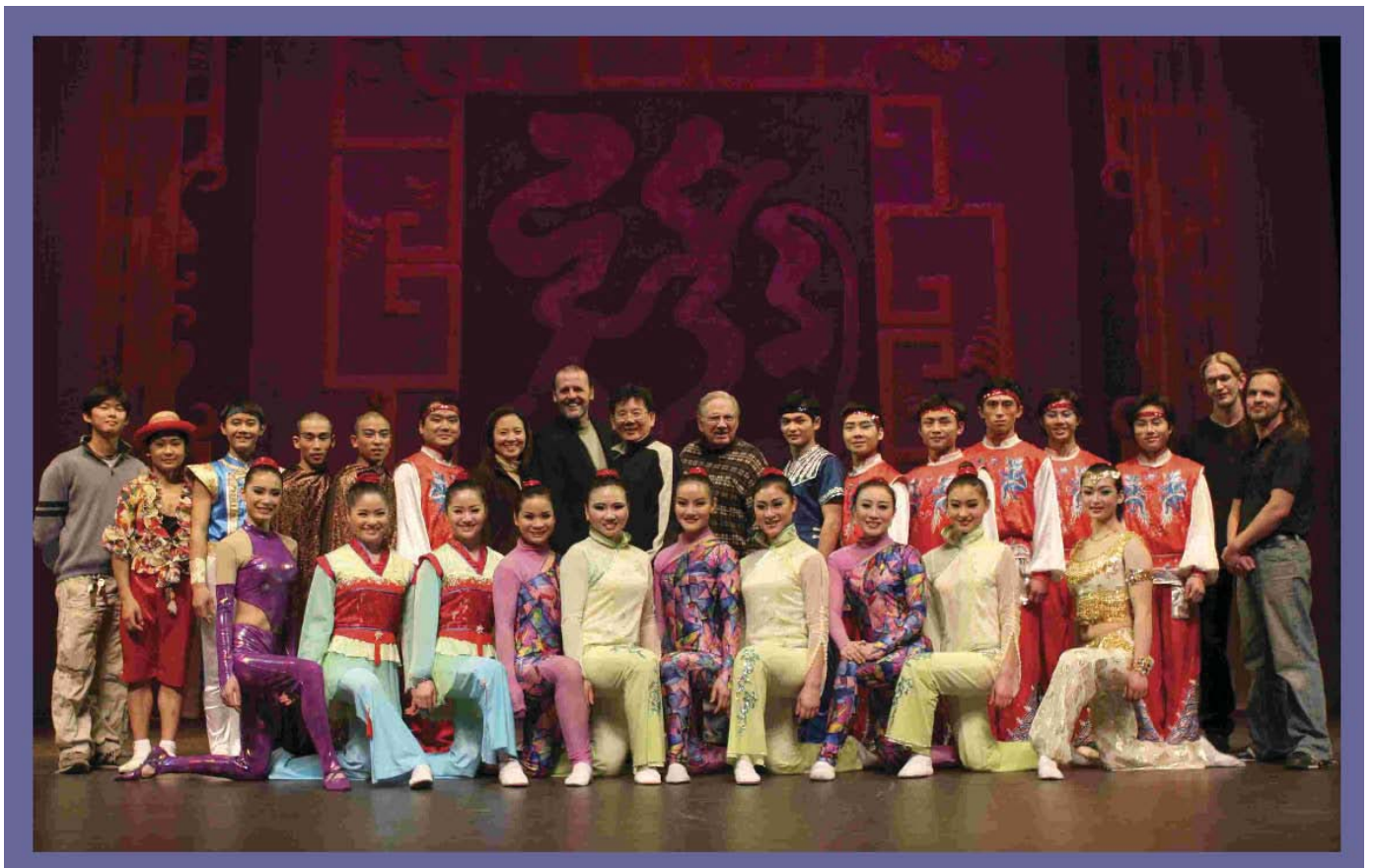
www.baychamberconcerts.org

allison@baychamberconcerts.org

Golden Dragon Acrobats - Study Guide

Friday, February 12, 2010











Strom Auditorium, Camden Hills Regional High School, Camden





Information for Teachers

Field Trip Guidelines

-  **Changes or Cancellations:** If you must cancel your visit, please contact the Bay Chamber Concerts office immediately at (207) 236-2823. We usually have waiting lists for performances and can offer your seats to another school.
-  **Weather Considerations:** In case of inclement weather, check your local news sources. As long as the performer is available, the show will go on. The day of the show, call the Bay Chamber Concerts mobile phone at (207) 975-7101, if you have questions.
-  **Theatre Arrival/Departure:** We request that you unload and load in the area in front of the main theatre entrance, then park in either the bus parking area or the nearest municipal lot.
-  **Check-in:** Please have your group assemble outside the Theatre's front doors while the group leader checks in and is directed to your seats.
-  **Chaperones:** One chaperone for every five students is required for pre-school through third grade. One chaperone for every 10 students is required for grades four and higher. All students must be in the company of a chaperone throughout the visit, including restroom visits. Your chaperones will be responsible for discipline.
-  **Photo policy:** Bay Chamber Concerts may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or on promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please see a Bay Chamber Concerts staff member.
-  **Electronic and recording devices may not be used during performances.** Please remind all attending to turn off cell phones, pagers and game boys.
-  **There is no food permitted in the theatres.** Please ask children to remove chewing gum before taking their seats.
-  **Students must be accompanied to the restrooms.** Please use the restrooms before or after the performance.
-  **Appropriate responses to the performance, like laughing or applauding, are encouraged!**

The last pages of this study guide have a letter form for students and an evaluation form for the teacher. Your feedback is valuable as we apply for grants and community support.

For question or comments, please contact:
Allison Lakin, Assistant Director of Education
58 Bay View St., Ste. 1, Camden ME 04843
www.baychamberconcerts.org
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Who are the Golden Chinese Acrobats?

History

The Golden Dragon Chinese Acrobats combine acrobatics, traditional dance, spectacular costumes, ancient and contemporary music and theatrical techniques to present a show of breathtaking skill and spellbinding beauty.

In 1949 Lien Chi Chang and his family brought acrobatic performance from Wu Qiao China to the audiences in Taiwan. However, Mr. Chang was unable to return to China due to the Chinese civil war. He decided to start an acrobatic business with his brother in Taiwan - "Chang's Acrobatic Troupe." In 1967, the name of the company officially changed to Chinese Golden Dragon Acrobats.

In 1984, Lien Chi Chang accepted a prestigious position as the Head Coach at National Taiwan College of Performing Arts and his son Danny Chang became the company's producer and director. He began his training at the age of eight with his family's acrobatic school in Taipei, and began touring with its touring wing, the Golden Dragon Acrobats, at age ten. He is the recipient of many awards, including the esteemed Medal for International Faith and Goodwill by the Republic of China's Coordination Council for North American Affairs.



Today, the Golden Dragon Acrobats have been recognized as the pre-eminent Chinese acrobatic company in the United States. As the director and the producer, Danny Chang has built a solid reputation based on his talents as both an acrobatic performer and artistic director. Every year, along with the choreographer, also his wife, Angela Chang, they attend different acrobatic competitions to constantly select the most elite performers to join the Golden Dragon Acrobats.

The company hails from both Hebei and Henan provinces, in the People's Republic of China, and has toured the United States continuously since 1978. Its 30 members are athletes, actors and artists who have studied and trained for their craft since early childhood. The group has performed in all 50 states and in over 65 countries across the world. The Golden Dragons had their Broadway debut at the New Victory Theater in 2005, and were nominated for two prestigious Drama Desk Awards for their performance.



The reputation of the company is solidly rooted in a commitment to the highest of production values and an attention to artistic details that is unparalleled in the art form. World renowned impresario Danny Chang and choreographer Angela Chang combine award-winning acrobatics, traditional dance,

Traditional Acrobatic Acts

Acrobatic arts have evolved throughout the history of China. China is credited with producing some of the best acrobats in the world. Chinese acrobats maintain a notable style and standard routines; however, there are some similarities between the acrobatic schools of different countries. All recognizable circuses have juggling acts, trapeze acts, handstand acts and comic relief. Differences are reflected in theatrical presentation, including music, novelty acts, such as clowns, and lighting.

Lion Dance

This evolved from an old folk dance in China. In the dance, there are two types of lions: big lion (played by two acrobats) and small lion (played by one man). They not only perform the various movements of the lion such as rolling and jumping but also vividly portray the lion's strength and agility as well as the quiet and playful side of the lion's character.



Cycling Feats

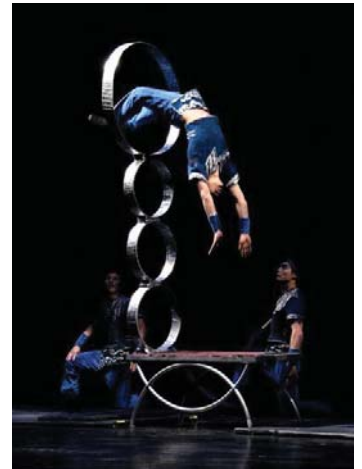
In this act, two types of cycles are used: unicycles on which the acrobats adroitly perform various beautiful postures; and bicycles on which they also display a variety of postures on the bicycle, of which the beautiful tableau of a peacock fanning its feathers is the best.

Tight-Wire Feats

Known as "Rope-Walking" or "Walking on a rope" in ancient China, it is a traditional performance dating back 2000 years to the Han Dynasty. Walking on a wire instead of a rope is a renovation illustrating new vigor and skills. The acrobat uses somersault dexterity, which is a basic acrobatic skill, to perform such difficult feats as cart-wheels and somersaults on a trembling wire.

Hoop Diving

This is an item developed from "Leaping through Rings on the Ground". It was known as "Swallow Play" more than two thousand years ago because the performers imitated the flying movements of swallows as they leapt nimbly through the narrow mat rings. It was also called "Dashing Through Narrows". The performers are graceful and agile in their movements and demonstrate incredible dexterity.



Spring-Board Stunts

Through leaps and somersaults in the air, the acrobats perform graceful movements which give the audience an excellent demonstration of acrobatic art.



Wushu (Chinese Traditional Group Gymnastics)

With movements of somersault, pulling, jumping, kicking and various postures, it has become an acrobatic symbol. The agility, precision and rhythm of acrobat movements convey a sense of vigor, strength and beauty.

Traditional Acrobatic Arts

Gymnastics On Double-Fixed Poles

“Pole Climbing” is one of the main traditional acrobatic numbers in China; vivid descriptions date back 1,000 years. On the basis of “Pole-Climbing”, new acrobatic movements such as jumping from one pole to the other, swift descent, and many others have been added.



Unicycle bowl flip

In a relatively new feat, an acrobat rides a very tall unicycle on a round table, kicking up bowls, kettles and spoons with perfect grace, and piling them on her head.



Chinese Vase

Acrobats playfully squeeze into tiny brightly colored vases as they perform tricky acrobatics—smiling all the while.

Rolling Balance Contortionist

Graceful and beautiful bending and twisting into unbelievable knots, frequently while balancing precariously perched objects on every limb.

Foot Juggling

Many different objects can be used in juggling. Jar juggling demonstrates simplicity and steadiness. Originally, peasants used grain containers to perform various feats in celebration of a bumper harvest. Later, jar tricks were adapted by acrobats and became one of their most popular entertainments. Performers lie on a special seat and juggle or catch objects with their feet. Long ago, in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), jugglers manipulated bottles, plates and jars with their feet. Now performers toss tables, umbrellas, rugs and any number of household items.

Chinese Diabolo

Performed in China for over 100 years, two sticks of bamboo are connected with string to spin an additional piece of wood (like a yo-yo) back and forth in a variety of timed movements. The Chinese Diabolo makes a whistling sound when it spins.



Spinning plates

Performers use numerous long, pencil-thin sticks to support spinning plates that look like lotus leaves facing the wind or colorful butterflies flitting and dancing. This act is often combined with balancing and tumbling, as when a performer spins 12 china plates with both hands while in a headstand on a rubber ball!



Chair stacking handstand

A collective act involving two to seven acrobats and as many or more chairs. While on a pagoda or ladder of chairs, the performers practice handstands and other stunts requiring tremendous arm strength, as well as superior balancing skill.

Acrobatic Training and Handstands

The first two years of acrobatic training are the most important for aspiring acrobats. Acrobatic students work daily on basic skills. The four core foundational skills for Chinese acrobats are handstand, tumbling, flexibility and dance.

Every student will usually have greater talent for one of the four core acrobatic skills. Among the four, handstand is the most important. Many of the signature acrobatic acts have some form of handstand in the performance. Master teachers have commented that, "handstand training is to acrobats what studying the body is to a medical student." It is the essence of Chinese acrobatics. An acrobat goes through progressive steps to learn basic advanced handstands. Handstand training directly affects three areas of the body, shoulders lower back, and wrists.

A weakness in any one of these three areas of the body will compromise the development of learning the handstand. In China, the basic handstand is learned by 6-8 year olds. This is first done against a wall. In three to six months of full time training, students start off with increments of one minute and build up to one half hour of wall handstands. During this time, the three areas of the body are getting stronger and stronger. Students will develop the ability to hold the free handstand shortly after this time.



Holding a still handstand is translated in Chinese as the "dead handstand." A good handstand is one that has good form and versatility. A versatile handstand is a position from which the acrobat is able to execute many variations.

The handstand is the most disliked training aspect for the young students. When one is upside down in a basic handstand, all of one's weight is on the wrist, shoulder and lower back, so there is a natural pressure to want to come down. There is absolutely no way to cheat while in a handstand, because once you are upside-down, only your two hands are on the floor holding you up.

After the initial two-year training, only a few acrobats will specialize in the handstand. However, handstand training is essential to all acrobatic work, due to the importance it has in strengthening the body, mind and spirit of the acrobat.

Activity 1: Map of China



Draw a line to the country name

Myanmar (Burma)

Papua New Guinea

Japan

Philippines

Nepal

Indonesia

South Korea

Mongolia

Vietnam

Russia

Laos

Bhutan

Thailand

Bangladesh

Cambodia

Malaysia

Hong Kong

Taiwan

People's Republic of China

China is located in both the eastern and northern hemispheres. It occupies a huge part of eastern Asia and is bordered by the Yellow Sea, South China Sea, Pacific Ocean and by (14 countries).

Population: 1,306,313,800

Capital City: Beijing metro

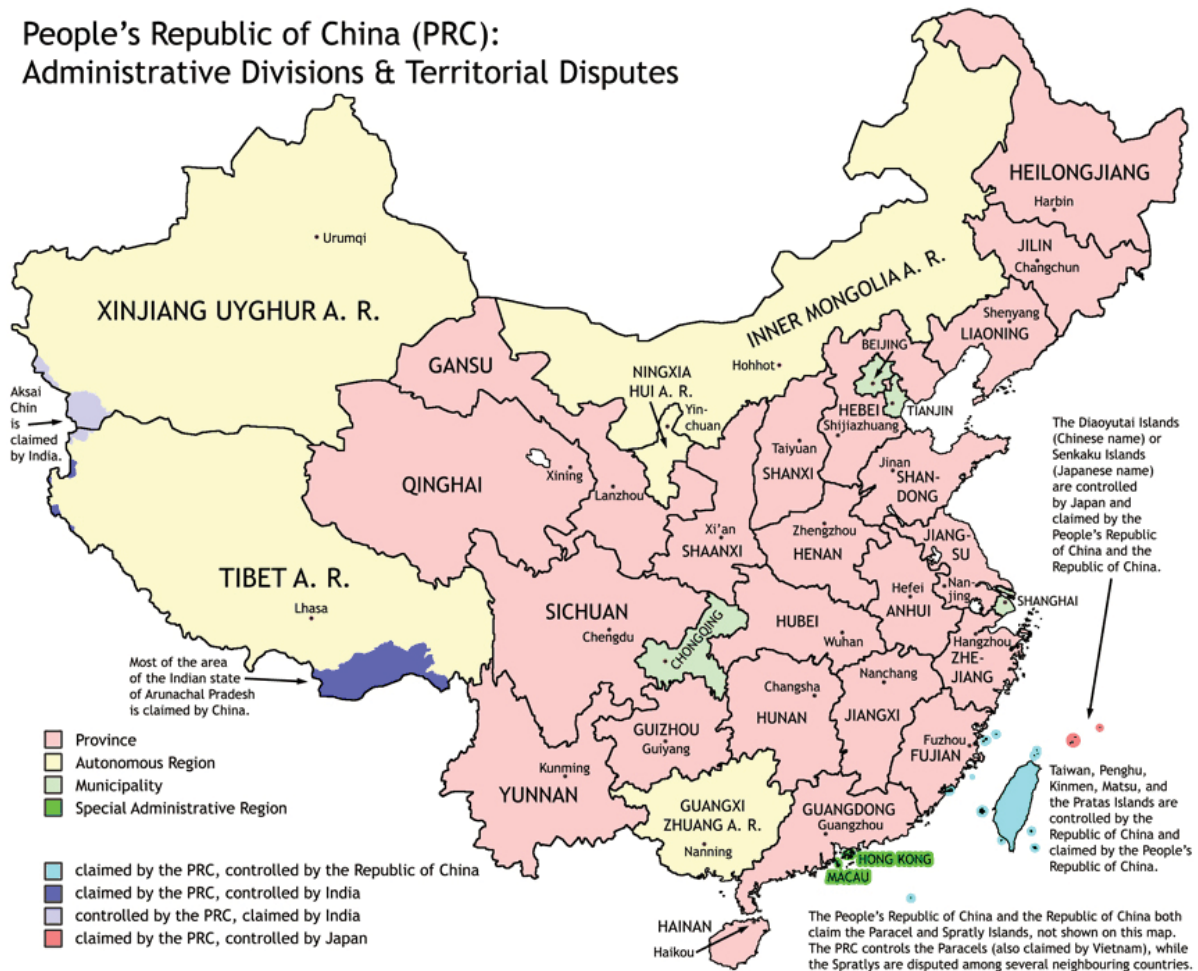
Currency: Yuan

Languages Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua,) Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan, Xiang, Gan and Hakka dialects

Religions: Officially atheist, with small groups of Daoist, Buddhist, Muslim and Christian

Activity 1 continued: Map of China

People's Republic of China (PRC): Administrative Divisions & Territorial Disputes



The acrobats come from Hunan and Hebei provinces. Can you locate them on the map?



Activity 2: Chinese Calligraphy

Chinese calligraphy is an art form, and calligraphers are highly respected. There are several styles of writing: Seal, official or clerical, regular, running or semi-cursive, and cursive. Each one has its own characteristics and purpose.

There are seven standard strokes. Some calligraphers believe there are up to thirty-two strokes. Either way, there are many interpretations.

The seven strokes or 'Seven Mysteries' as they are called:

Horizontal line



dot



sweeping downward stroke



vertical line



sharp



curve

and



downward stroke



downward stroke

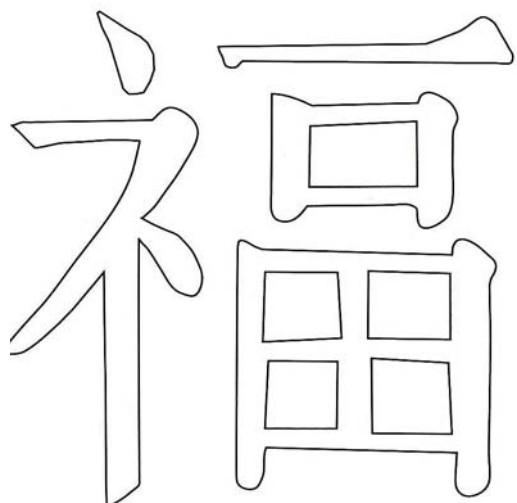


The stroke order of a character is important in mastering calligraphy. The stroke order creates the correct effect for the character.

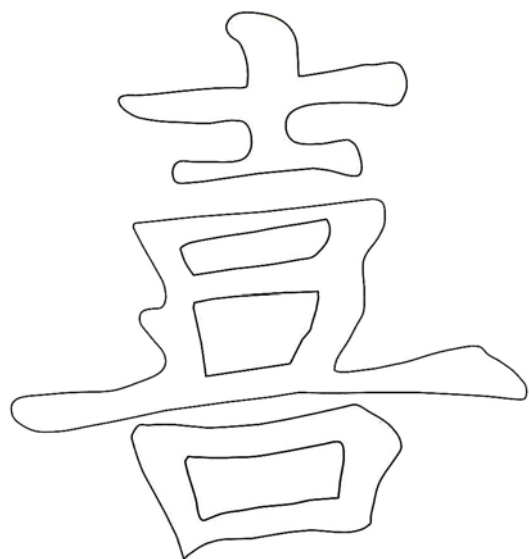


Activity 2: Chinese Calligraphy

Copy the following:



“Good Luck”



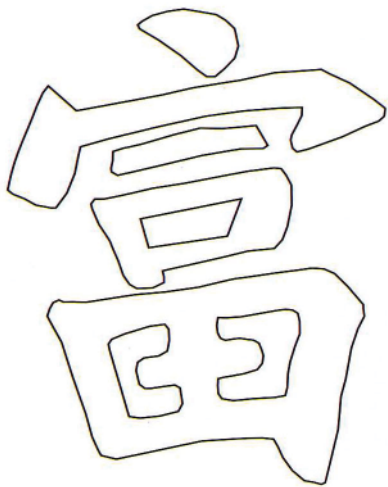
“Happiness”

Activity 2 continued: Chinese Calligraphy

Copy the following:



"Prosperity"



"Riches"

Activity 2 continued : Chinese Calligraphy



One



Two



Three



Four



Five



Six



Seven



Eight



Nine

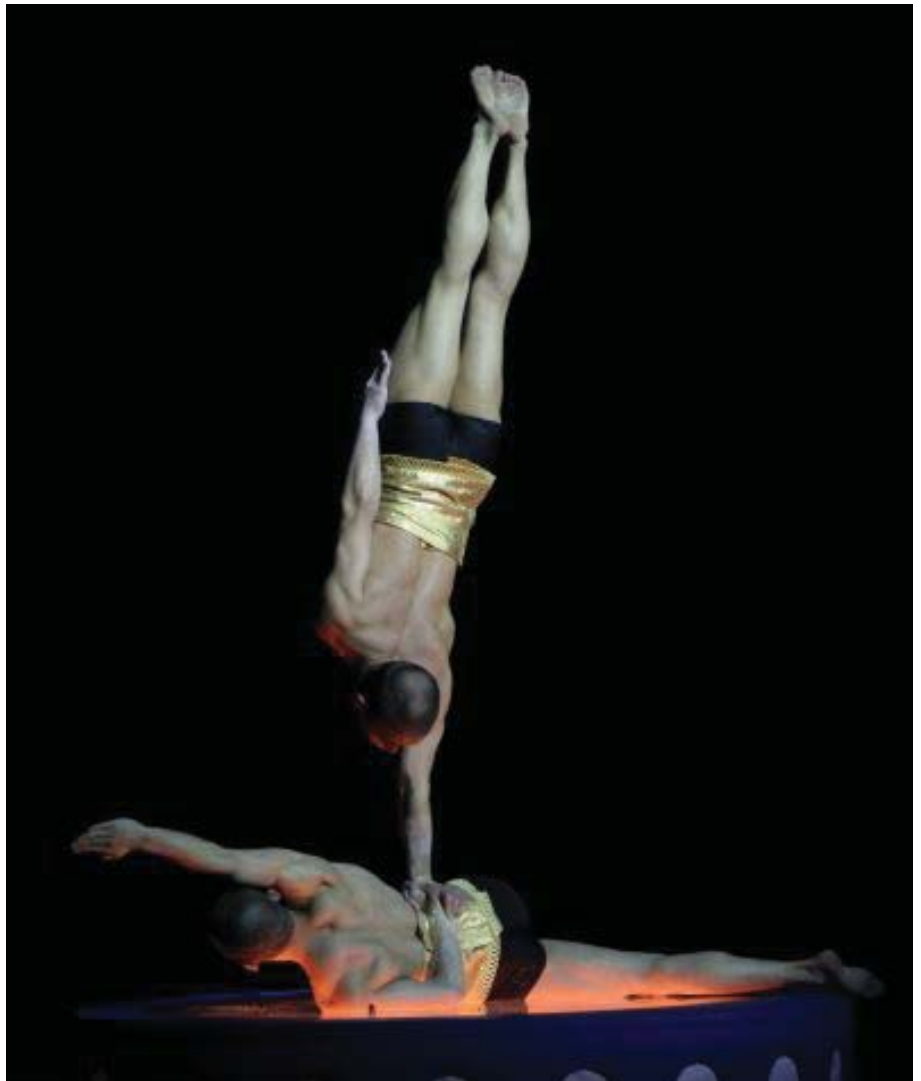


Zero

Activity 3: Finding Your Balance

Whether executing a perfect handstand, a flawless somersault, or spinning a dozen plates, balance is one of the most important skills an acrobat needs to practice. Try some of these balance exercises:

1. Stand on both feet and see if you can find your body's center of gravity—the point where it is in perfect balance.
2. Now stand on one foot. Has your center of gravity changed? What happens if you move your arms into different positions while you stand on one foot?
3. Working with a partner, stand with your toes touching and hold each other's wrists. Each of you lean back, using each other's weight as a counterbalance to keep from falling. Try this with a partner who is roughly the same size as you, then with someone who's much bigger or much smaller. How does your counterbalance change with partners of unequal size?
4. Try your two-person counterbalance again, this time experimenting with lifting up a foot, holding out an arm, or using different connecting points (other than holding each other's wrists).
5. Add a third person to your team and see what kinds of interesting counterbalances you can create. Can one person balance the other two?
6. In your group of three, choose your three favorite balances. Try moving smoothly from one shape to another, changing your balance points as you make each transition.



7. Now try working in a bigger group: four or more people. Working together, create a group shape using as few contact points with the floor as possible. Each member of your group should be connected with the shape. See if you can move your shape across the room without losing your balance or breaking the shape.

Resources

The activities in this study guide align with the following Maine Learning Results:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/lres/pei/index.html>

Visual and Performing Arts

A Disciplinary Literacy – Music: Students show literacy in the discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

A2: Notation and terminology

A3: Listening and Describing

E Visual and Performing Arts Connections: Students understand the relationship among the arts, history and world culture; and they make connections among the arts and to other disciplines, to goal-setting, and to interpersonal interaction.

E1 The Arts and History and World Cultures

E2 The Arts and Other Disciplines

Social Studies

C. History: Students draw on concepts and processes from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

E1 Historical Knowledge, Concepts, Themes, and Patterns

Students understand major eras, major enduring themes, and historic influences in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Internet

National Geographic Kids: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Places/Find/China>

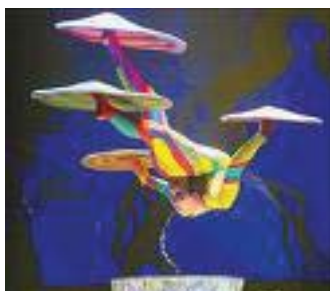
ThinkQuest: "Discovering China, The Middle Kingdom": <http://library.thinkquest.org/26469/>

Print

Cal Performances Education and Community Programs, Study Guide, university of California, Berkeley, 2006

Qiubai, Yan. The Best of Chinese Acrobatics. Foreign Languages Press: 1989.

Fu, Chei-feng. Chinese Acrobatics through the Ages: Traditional Chinese Arts and Culture. China International Book Trading Corp.: 1985.



Your name _____
Your School _____
School Town _____

Date: _____

Bay Chamber Concerts
Education Department
58 Bay View St., Ste. 1
Camden ME 04843

Dear Bay Chamber Concerts,

I came to a Bay Chamber Concerts performance on _____ (date).
Be creative! Would you like to draw a picture, or write a poem about your experience?

My favorite part of the concert was

I was surprised

I learned

I am glad

Your friend,



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Bay Chamber Concerts: Matinee Evaluation

Please indicate the number that most clearly describes your evaluation of the program/visit

Date of your visit and show:

Excellent (5) Very Good (4) Good (3) Fair (2) Poor (1)

Student Response 5 4 3 2 1

Artistic Quality 5 4 3 2 1

Educational Quality 5 4 3 2 1

Artists' interaction with students 5 4 3 2 1

Technical quality of program 5 4 3 2 1

Connections to Arts standards 5 4 3 2 1

Connections to other learning standards 5 4 3 2 1

1. Were the pre-visit materials helpful? How did you use them in your classroom?

2. Did this program satisfy curriculum requirements?

3. Were the bus arrival and departure time assignments helpful?

4. What types of productions would you bring your students to?

Dance World Music Classical Music Jazz Puppetry Other? (Please describe)

5. Any questions or comments?

Can we use your comments in grant applications? If so, please provide your name, school and mailing address.