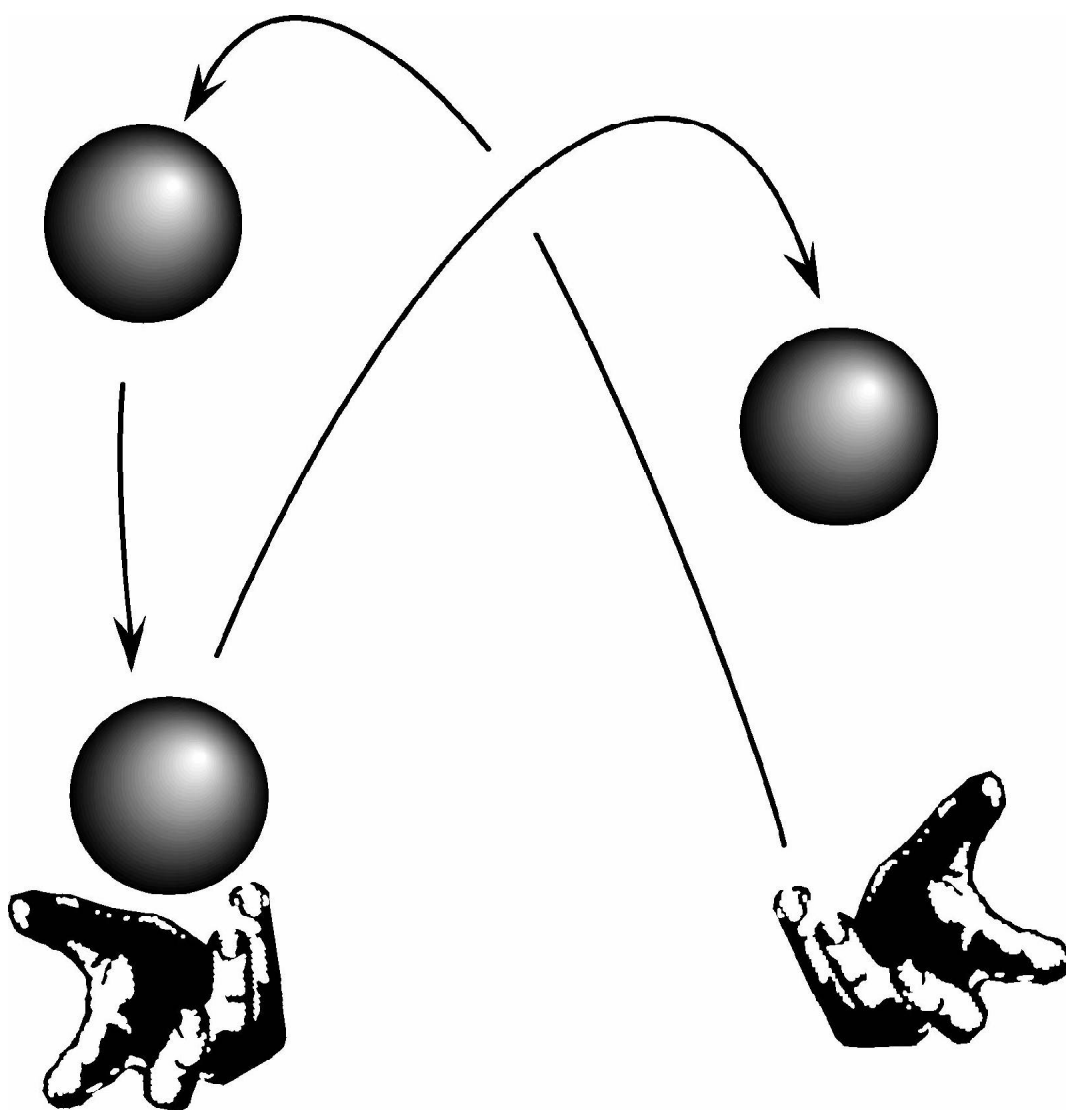


MARK NIZER
in cooperation with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts
PRESENTS:

The Art of **JUGGLING**



Students Study Guide

The Art of JUGGLING

INTRODUCTION

“Do you think juggling’s a mere trick?” the little man asked, sounding wounded. “An amusement for the gapers? A means of picking up a crown or two at a provincial carnival? It is all those things, yes, but first it is a way of life, a friend, a creed, a species of worship.”

“And a kind of poetry,” said Carabella.

Sleet nodded. “Yes, that too. And a mathematics. It teaches calmness, control, balance, a sense of the placement of things and the underlying structure of motion. There is silent music to it. Above all there is discipline.”

-Lord Valentine’s Castle, Robert Silverberg

THE SKILL OF JUGGLING

Juggling is unique to humans, although some staged photographs have given the illusion of animals juggling (See photo 2). The only exceptions are seals. There are performing seals that work with one ball as well, as if not better, than the world’s best jugglers.

Juggling involves not only the throwing between the hands of three or more objects, it also includes balancing, bouncing, kicking, rolling, spinning, and any other type of object manipulation without deceit.

Most people seldom see juggling performed outside of the circus tent. There, it is usually a peripheral part of the clown performances, and only rarely a separate "act." Juggling is also inaccurately associated with magic.



Photo 1: Mark Nizer bounce juggling 5 balls off the floor.

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Unlike magic presentations, juggling is not an attempt to hide something or to deceive the eye. Whatever the juggler does is freely revealed and is the result of skill and practice in hand-eye-mind coordination. A clown or magician may juggle, but seldom is juggling the centerpiece of the performance. A juggler is committed exclusively to the craft of juggling, putting in a staggering amount of practice time to master a new throw or subtle variation, and sometimes practicing a single trick several years before publicly performing it.

HISTORY

As is the case with many art forms, juggling has been practiced for thousands of years. From the early ritualistic twirling of a stick in a cave ceremony to the first graphic representations of juggling on Egyptian wall paintings and Greek vases, juggling has been part of the human experience.

The oldest known depiction of juggling is a drawing made about 2000 years before the birth of Christ. It was found in the Beni-Hassan tombs from the middle kingdom of the ancient Egyptian civilization. These women jugglers were included with acrobats and dancers in one of the crypt's wall paintings (see Photo 3).

Juggling was an acceptable diversion until the decline of the Roman Empire, after which it fell into disgrace; possibly because many pick pockets and thieves used it as a means of distraction. To this day, the word "juggler" also means to manipulate in order to deceive.

At the end of the Middle Ages, juggling slowly began gaining respectability. It continued to grow and diversify. As different cultures collided, new forms emerged.

With the dawn of Vaudeville, jugglers came into their own. There was a huge demand for talent, and jugglers were very popular. This popularity gave jugglers the opportunities to specialize, and many classic routines were developed.

With the development of television and motion pictures, attendance at Vaudeville and Circus declined. Jugglers had to diversify.

Today, jugglers can still be seen in theaters, comedy clubs, and on television. Since the 1950's juggling has been a popular form of recreation. Juggling's unique ability to exercise the body and brain has assured its future.

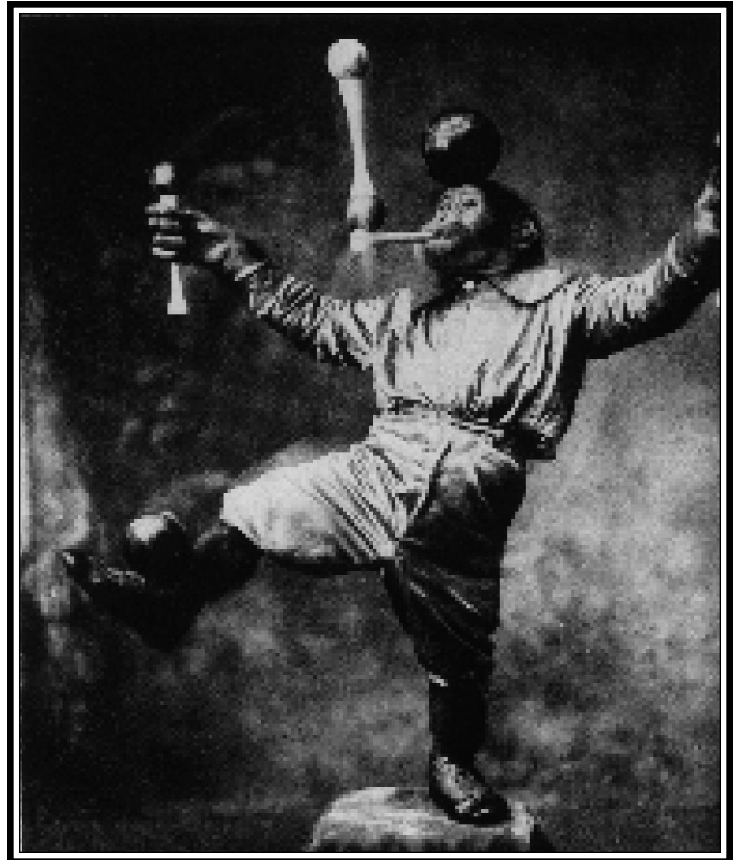


Photo 2: Staged photo of a "juggling monkey".

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Photo 3: Egyptian wall painting, 2000 B.C.

TYPES OF JUGGLING

There are 6 basic types of juggling: numbers juggling, heavy weight juggling, antipodist (foot juggling), balance juggling, spinning and object manipulators.

Numbers juggling involves working with 5 and as many as 11 objects simultaneously; typically, balls, Indian clubs or hoops.

Heavy weight jugglers specialize in manipulating cannon balls, bowling balls, artillery shells, tables and even cannons.

Antipodists juggle while lying on their backs with their feet pointing at the ceiling. They juggle using the soles of the feet and prove that man has neglected these valuable limbs, restricting their use to transportation.

Balance jugglers focus on intricate and precarious placement of objects on top of one another ultimately balancing the objects on their bodies; often the head or chin. They typically use wine glasses, pool cues and golf clubs.

Spinning involves high speed rotation of objects to maintain them in a temporary equilibrium. Plate spinning, ball spinning and tray spinning are good examples.

Object manipulators work mainly with 1-5 props. They create intricate patterns and routines focusing on a particular object. Balls, Indian clubs



Photo 4: Francis Brunn, a juggling master.

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(often mistaken for bowling pins) (see Photo 5), cigar boxes, hats and any other objects are combined to make an intriguing visual effect.

One myth is that juggling objects of different weights and sizes is the ultimate challenge and very difficult. It can take years to perfect but a skilled juggler can keep three objects of almost any shape and size in motion.

HOW TO JUGGLE

The basic pattern of classic juggling is known as the cascade.

To begin stand up with your hands out in front of you and elbows bent 90 degrees. Relax. Hold one ball in hand and toss it back and forth between hands. The ball should travel in a parabola past a point approximately eye level (figure 1). This is the only throw you need to learn to juggle three balls.

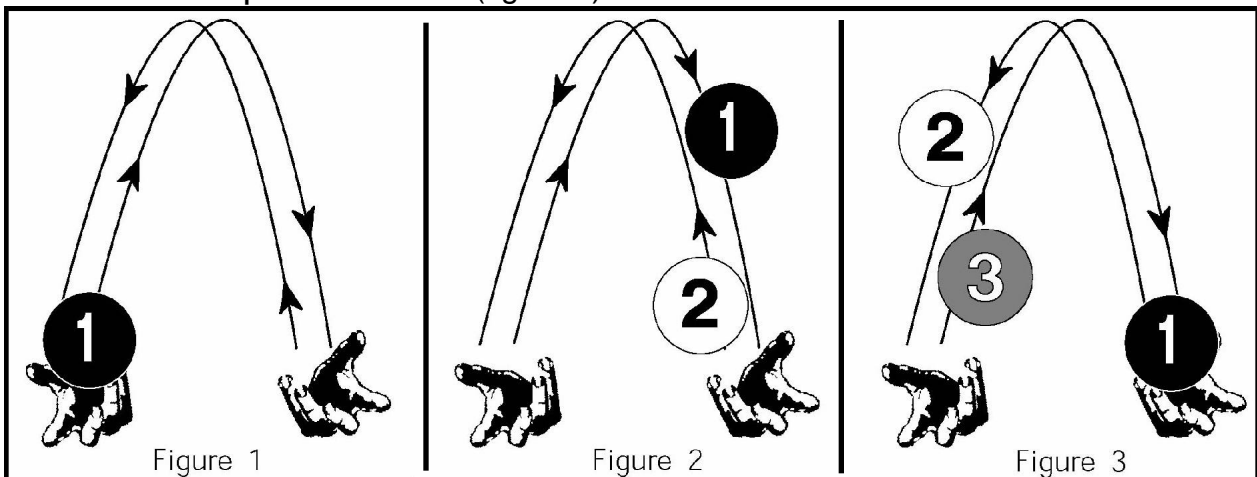
Next, take a second ball and place one in each hand. Throw the first ball as before, but this time as it descends half way from its peak toss the second ball from the other hand under the incoming ball but in the same parabolic path (figure 2). Catch both balls and repeat; this time beginning with the opposite hand as the time before.

Continue repeating this sequence until it becomes smooth and controlled. Go back to one ball and practice if you have problems.

Now, take a third ball. Place two in one hand and one in the other. Always begin with the hand that has two in it. Start as if with one ball, but beginning from the hand with two. Throw ball 1, as it descends half way from its peak, throw ball 2 under it from the opposite hand and in the same path as you did with two balls (figure 2). As ball 2 descends from its peak throw ball 3 (the second ball in the hand you began with) under ball 2 in the same path as ball 1 (figure 3).



Photo 5: Ernest Montego and assistant with indian clubs.



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Now all you have to do is repeat. As ball 3 descends to the opposite hand, throw ball 1 (it is in the opposite hand from which it began after being caught there) under it as you did the first time with ball 2. Now as each ball descends half way from its peak throw the ball in the approaching hand under it.

Don't get frustrated if you drop. Simply, go back a step to make it more solid and then continue. You are teaching your body and brain to work together and it takes time to "polish" the required muscle and nerve paths.

Practice is essential to learning any task. There is no substitute for practice. Jugglers are not gifted people with an innate ability, but individuals who have practiced extensively to teach themselves the necessary skills.

SUMMARY

Juggling has a vast History. Throughout human life it has been a source of fascination. The human ability to juggle and coordinate information has never been duplicated. Juggling can be an individual or group activity. It challenges both the body and mind.

Juggling has appeared as a source of amusement to the masses, but to a master is a way of life and appears almost magical. As modern technology permeates human experience new forms and possibilities will emerge: balls that sequence music as they are thrown, laser clubs thrown in a fog filled stage, holographic juggling and perhaps even a juggling machine.

No matter how far you take the basic pattern, learning to juggle will enhance your hand eye coordination and exercise your body and mind. There is no limit to the possibilities. There are no rules. Almost anything you can think of, given enough practice, can be done. Applying these principles to life's other problems is perhaps juggling's greatest reward.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"4000 Years of Juggling", volumes 1 and 2, by Karl-Heinz Zeithen.

Juggling-Its History and Greatest Performers, by Francisco Alvarez, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1984.

The Art of Juggling, by Andrew Allen, Karl Heinz Zeithen, Werner Rausch & Werner Lüft Inc., 1985.



Photo 6: Trixie, juggling 6 plates while bouncing a ball on her head.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

There are a lot of great resources available to learn more about juggling. Below is a list of web sites, books and films with more information.

Web Sites:

- Learn to juggle at <http://nizer.com>
- Shop for props at <http://www.juggling.org>
- Tons of links to other jugglers at <http://www.jugglingdb.com>
- Find a juggling club near you at <http://juggling.org>



Books:

- Virtuosos of Juggling, by Karl Heinz Zeithan
- Juggling with Finesse by Kit Summers
- The Complete Juggler by Dave Finnegan

Juggling Props, DVD's and Videos:

- Dube <http://www.dube.com> 1-212-941-0060
- Todd Smith <http://toddsmith.com> 1-216-761-6388
- Renegade Juggling <http://renegadejuggling.com> 1-408-426-7343
- Serious Juggling <http://seriousjuggling.com>
- Damp Rabbit Productions <http://www.juggler.com/video>
- Mark Nizer DVD <http://nizer.com/store.html>