

Galumpha Teacher's Guide **The Human Jungle Gym**

Introduction: Galumpha performs acrobatic modern dance emphasizing shape-building in which one performer lifts the other two off the ground. The resulting poses appear as spectacular feats of physical strength, but in fact are more reliant for their success on skeletal cantilevering than on brute force. The Galumpha performers create pieces collaboratively through choreographic games and long brainstorming sessions. Mutual trust, regarding both physical and emotional safety, is paramount. Galumpha offers two different educational or outreach activities: **Lecture Demonstrations** are 35-minute performances in which Galumpha dancers demonstrate excerpts from typically longer shows, followed by ten-minute question-and-answer sessions. **Workshops** are physical classes in creative movement, acrobatic lifting, dance composition, and/or dance technique. Institutional scheduling needs, space limitations, and student age and skill-level determine the length and content of such.

Program Description: **Lecture-Demonstration**

Lecture Demonstrations are mini-performances. Pieces are selected from Galumpha's existing repertoire and are costumed and executed just as they would be for an adult, ticket-holding audience. Galumpha understands that educational venues are rarely well equipped with sound, lighting, and theatrical drapery. (Think Elementary school *cafeteriums* or gym floors.) A smooth, splinterless floor, a CD player with sufficient amplification for the anticipated audience, and existing lighting (even sunlight streaming through windows) is all we require. Galumpha dancers perform for approximately 35 minutes and then offer a ten-minute opportunity for students and staff to question or comment.

Program Description: **Workshop**

Workshops must be held in spaces suitable for rolling around on the floor. Students dress to move, and generally remove their shoes. Galumpha personnel carefully guide the students through warm up exercises, and then move on to choreographic games, trust and awareness exercises, and elementary acrobatic partnering. We design a given workshop's specific content and length to suit student skill-level and institutional preference. We work with students of all ages, from preschool through adult professionals, and are proud to report that no injury has ever occurred in a Galumpha workshop.

Goals:

- To provide stunning examples of the results of hard physical work among trusting, creative teammates.
- To motivate by modeling the joy that comes from free expression of creativity.
- To broaden the scope of career ideas.

Vocabulary:

Galumpha: The word "galumph" (without the final "a") was coined by author Lewis Carroll and first appeared in print in his 1871 Children's novel, *Through the Looking*

Glass, as part of the poem-within-the-novel, *Jabberwocky*. The originally nonsensical word has fallen into frequent usage, and is currently defined by Webster's Dictionary as *To move with a heavy, clumsy tread*. Another definition, by philosopher and author Steve Nachmanovitch follows:

Anthropologists have found “galumphing” to be one of the prime talents that characterize higher life forms. Galumphing is the immaculate rambunctiousness and seemingly inexhaustible play-energy apparent in puppies, kittens, children, baby baboons – and also in young communities and civilizations. Galumphing is the seemingly useless elaboration and ornamentation of activity. It is profligate, excessive, exaggerated, and uneconomical. We galumph when we hop instead of walk, when we take the scenic route instead of the efficient one, when we play a game whose rules demand a limitation of our powers, when we are interested in means rather than in ends. We voluntarily create obstacles in our path and then enjoy overcoming them. In the higher animals and in people, it is of supreme evolutionary value.

Excerpt from *Free Play–Improvisation in Life and Art*, by Stephen Nachmanovitch, pp. 43 – 44, used with author's permission.

We added an “a” to *Galumph* to make *Galumphia*, in our minds turning the verb into a noun.

Choreography: Movement sequences that are created, memorized, and performed.

Positive Space: Space taken up by the performers' bodies.

Negative Space: Space not filled with the performers' bodies.



Original Image



Positive Space



Negative Space

Cantilever: to support a protruding beam from only one end.



Balance: To stack objects maintaining weight symmetry over a vertical center so that none falls.

Trust: The knowledge that one is safe among friends. In Galumph's case trust is the knowledge that no dancer would ever intentionally drop another; that any creative idea, however absurd, would be respected and considered by the others. Trust is essential to the creative process.

Teamwork: Working together toward a common goal.



Collaboration: Creating as a group without a leader. Galumph performers create *collaboratively*, without any director reserving the last word. It is slow but rewarding, and we strongly feel that the results of our collaborative process speak for themselves.

Focus: To concentrate on a task to the exclusion of all else.

Conversations about the Galumph Experience

We have come to recognize FAQ's that arise time and time again, from students of all ages, during Question-and-Answer sessions. Here is a list of the most prevalent, along with our answers.

How do you memorize all that choreography?

We practice again and again until we can perform the dances without thinking about them. It might be like learning the Pledge of Allegiance. I doubt any of you would have to pause to remember the words—you have said them so many times before that you don't have to think about it. Or have you ever watched certain grown-ups type? Their fingers seem to move impossibly quickly. They type very often, and so have learned to do it without thinking.

Do you ever get hurt?

Yes, we do. Although we thoroughly enjoy performing it can be dangerous and we have to be careful. When we're developing new lifts and balances we work slowly and safely, often over mats. But in performance, under blinding lights, slippery with sweat and charged with adrenaline, things occasionally go wrong.

Where have you performed?

We have performed in most of the United States and in most Provinces of Canada. We have also performed in Chile, Venezuela, Israel, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, The Netherlands,

Finland, Russia, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and even Lichtenstein!

Do you like to travel?

Yes, but it can be hard on our families. Some of us have children, and when we're touring in the summer and the children don't have school we take them with us. But often we have to leave our families behind and that can be painful. However, visiting new countries is a joy and we feel lucky to have the opportunity to do so.

How do you get by in countries where English is not spoken?

Many of us speak foreign languages. Among the Galumphers performers we have fluent speakers of Chinese, Spanish and French. When none of those languages work we must rely on interpreters.

What is your favorite place to perform?

Sometimes I think my favorite place is Singapore, because I love the food!

Do you like what you do?

Yes, we love it! We feel very lucky to be able to earn our livings by performing on stage.

Galumphers Biographical Information

Combining stunning acrobatics, striking visual effects, physical comedy and inventive choreography, Galumphers brings to life a world of imagination, beauty, muscle and merriment. The performers create a sensory feast of images ranging from the ridiculous to the sublime, drawn together into a seamless whole, consistently bringing audiences to their feet. Galumphers is a triumphant mix of art and entertainment, offering world-class, award winning choreography (Edinburgh Festival Critics' Choice Award, Moers International Comedy Arts Prize) that is equally at home on the concert stage, at a comedy club or at an outdoor festival.

Formed in 2002 by Andy Horowitz and Greg O'Brien, Galumphers delivers a fast-paced, athletic brand of movement, distinctive for its ingenuity. Highlights include "Velcro" as seen on The Late Show with David Letterman, Crook and Chase (TNN) and the 2002 MDA Jerry Lewis Telethon and "Clackers", seen on MTV, Showtime, the A&E Network, Just for Laughs in Montreal and by over one billion television viewers around the globe. Other pieces feature experiments in human architecture set to music by, Rachmaninov, Mahler and the virtuoso Czech band, Jablkon, making for an exceptionally entertaining program.

Galumphers is available for theatrical performances, festivals, television, educational services, residencies and corporate entertainment.

Andy Horowitz, President & Director / Performer

Andy attended Oberlin College, Shifan University in Taiwan, earned a BA in Theatre from Binghamton University, and an MBA from Syracuse University. Andy

acted in Kung Fu movies, traveled extensively through remote reaches of China, and worked as a Wild West stunt rider. Andy speaks Chinese and is sometimes asked to act as a court interpreter for Chinese speaking defendants in Binghamton, where he lives with his wife Carol and their two children, Elias and Talia. Andy makes the company's costumes and props. Andy is always building something, whether it be electric guitars, congas, leather bound journals, furniture, additions on his house or strange and fun props to play with onstage. Andy is a member of CID Unesco, of Dance/USA, and is an Artist-in-Residence of the Binghamton University Department of Theatre.

Marlon Torres, Vice President/Performer

Marlon Torres has performed lead dance roles on stages throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia, including venues such as the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach, FL, California's Napa Valley Opera House, the Tollwood Festival in Munich, Germany, Finland's Jyväskylä Festival, and the Singapore Arts Festival. He began his career as a principal dancer in Mini Pops--a highly-rated Venezuelan TV dance ensemble featuring child performers, which enchanted millions of loyal viewers in Venezuela and the Caribbean. Marlon is on the teaching faculty of North Carolina Arts in Action, and is currently working to develop a dance exchange program for young students from Venezuela and the United States. He is a member of the *International Dance Council* and *Dance USA*, is an honors graduate of Binghamton University's Department of Theatre, and anticipates a 2008 MBA from the University of Leicester, England

Erin Stanley, Performer

Erin Stanley performed with Galumphia in January 2005 at the Anderson Center for the Arts with the Binghamton Philharmonic Orchestra, and at the Ithaca State Theatre for the Light in Winter Festival. In April, 2005 she performed with Galumphia in Binghamton with Tim LeFebvre and Chaikyou Mallinson. Erin joined Galumphia again in June 2005 for an educational performance at Jennie F. Snapp Middle School in Endicott, NY, at the Kirkland Arts Center in Clinton, NY, and at the Woodstock Playhouse in Woodstock, NY and again in July for the Grassroots Festival in Trumansburg, NY . Erin danced for the Tri-Cities Opera in *Lucia Di Lammermoor* (February 2005) and in *The Merry Widow* (May 2007) playing the roles of "Margot" and "Vilja," In May 2007 Erin assisted BU professor of Theatre, Fred Weiss, in teaching a four-week, intensive summer session jazz class to students at the International Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Beijing, China. Erin Stanley is in her senior year of a Binghamton University Theatre major. Erin studies the martial art *Tang Soo Do*, and has won many competitive awards including First Place in Women's Sparring at the International World Championships in Cardiff, Wales.

For more information on Galumphia please visit www.galumpha.com,
Call Director Andy Horowitz at (607) 348-4044,
Or Email andy@galumpha.com

We are very attentive to student email. On Friday, February 29, 2008 I received the following from a student of Apalachin Elementary School, Apalachin, NY, where we had performed that morning:

Have you ever done a move wrong in a dance? –Patrick

Dear Patrick,

Great question! Frankly, everything that could go wrong in a performance has gone wrong at one time or another. I have messed up thousands of moves in thousands of performances. I have forgotten choreography, dropped people from lifts, put on wrong costumes, and, well, you name it! One of the jobs of a performer is to keep going even when huge mistakes are made.

You know, television and movie performers also make mistakes, but these mistakes are typically hidden from the audience. They are filmed, but later cut out of the final project so you never get to see them. I believe that live theater, that is, real people performing right before your eyes, is much more exciting than the recorded entertainment we see on TV or at the cinema because mistakes happen.

Also consider that our audiences have come to expect a rather high level of difficulty in Galumph performances. If it were easy we wouldn't make so many mistakes, but at the same time the audience wouldn't be so thrilled, either.

--Andy