

gravity & levity

'Dissecting Aerial' symposium

A 2-day healthier aerial/dance symposium in partnership with One Dance UK, funded by Arts Council England.

Practice, pedagogical and personal approach presentations from aerial artists, researchers, body workers, medical and sports science practitioners.

Day 1 - Sat 23rd March

Speaker 1, Enya White AKA black trapeze

Topic - The highs and lows of navigating a career in the aerial arts

35 mins (recording).

Presentation - Enya, an accomplished trapeze artist and global aerial coach, will unveil the secrets behind the art of balancing performance artistry and coaching mastery. With over a decade of teaching experience and a distinguished career that includes performances in 31 cities across 10 countries, she brings a unique perspective that transcends the spotlight. Join us for a captivating exploration of the aerial world, where artistry meets coaching mastery, and where every performance is a testament to the continual journey of self-discovery. Uncover the secrets, gain insights, and be inspired by the expertise of Enya, a true artist and guide in the aerial community.

Biography - An accomplished trapeze artist and global aerial coach with over a decade of teaching experience, Enya graduated from the National Circus School of Montreal in 2015. Renowned for her unique dance trapeze style featured in Luzia by Cirque du Soleil, she's left an indelible mark in 31 cities across 10 countries and extends her influence through impactful online coaching.

Today, she is not just an aerialist and coach; she's an artist on a continual journey of self-discovery—an inspiring guide for those navigating the highs and lows of a career in the aerial arts.

Beyond the spotlight, Enya's narrative is woven with experiences resonating with many in the industry. Triumphant over a life-threatening injury, she views setbacks as personal messages guiding her trajectory. Drawing from years on tour, she distills insights into coaching, sharing profound lessons with her students.

An open book committed to demystifying the life of a professional aerialist, Enya, with over 2000 performances, has weathered creative droughts, battled anxiety, and confronted fears. Through it all, she has discovered and rediscovered herself, honing a style that resonates deeply with her - embracing musicality, femininity, and constantly pushing comfort zone boundaries.

<https://www.instagram.com/blacktrapeze>

Speaker 2, Laura Pero

Topic - The Kinstretch®

60 mins

Presentation - Kinstretch® (which is Functional Range conditioning® as group training) is about training the internal environment of the body to help it better serve its chosen physical skill.

Starting with learning controlled articular rotations (CARs) which is how to self-assess, activate and maintain our current functional joint workspace, Kinstretch® trains each joint in isolation to help it build a specific load bearing capacity and better handle the demands of its discipline.

In this introduction Laura will teach a shoulder and hip focused combination starting with joint activation (CARs) and then sharing a few training concepts to demonstrate what kind of internal strengthening aerial athletes can use to open up the anatomy, giving it more variability, increased performance and longevity. Kinstretch can help de-patternise repetitive movements that contribute to the over adaptation and fatigue of tissue (which often results in injury) and over time, advance your physical skills with an enhanced instrument (the body).

Suggested props - Floorspace and a mat, 2 yoga blocks, a chair or stool, be close to a wall and or a surface (kitchen worktop or table height) and a couple of tennis balls if you have them.

Further information on Kinstretch origins:

functionalanatomyseminars.com

What is Kinstretch? video made by Dr Andreo Spina, founder of Functional Range Systems®

<https://youtu.be/Ar91F7sOa8>

For a deeper delve: Podcast conversation about internal training with Functional Range Systems founder Dr Andreo Spina:

<https://youtu.be/QjPfPSrbjos>

Biography - Laura Pero. Originally from London, Laura has roots in dance and aerial circus. She currently specialises in, human movement enhancement through joint mobility & strength training with Kinstretch® (a training concept by Functional Range Systems®)

Since 1995 Laura's work with her chosen physical disciplines has travelled her throughout the UK, Australia and France to train, practice, perform and teach. Alongside aerial circus, she maintained a Yoga practice and teaching studio for 20+ years.

Looking for solutions to her most lasting movement puzzles led Laura to discover Kinstretch® where she found the tools to recover some zones in her body which she had repetitively strained through years of overuse and how to regenerate a foundation of strong functional movement from which she can build more sustainable physical skills.

She has since completed 3 certifications within the Functional Range Systems® structure:

FRC® - Functional Range Conditioning,

FRA® - Functional Range Assessment

and Kinstretch® as a mobility specialist, analyst and group instructor.

Currently the only active, licensed Kinstretch® instructor in France, Laura offers training to both groups and individual clients (online and in person).

This system of thinking provides Laura with the concepts and tools by which she can apply her insight into human movement and her passion for helping people build better and healthier access to their movement.

Instagram: @l.a.u.r.a.p.e.r.o

Website: laurapero.com

Speaker 3, - Charlie Holland

Topic - Aerial Innovation in the 19th Century

25 mins incl Q&A

Presentation - A roughly chronological romp through innovations and trends in aerial performance during the 1800s. We'll touch upon Thomas Hanlon's perilous ladder and his leap for life; Jules Leotard's ankles and la gymnasiarque lilliputienne, Nathalie Foucart; William Hanlon's Zampillaerostation and Farini's Doupangmnastikosaerostation; stomach propulsion and the first human cannonball, and the likes of the Messrs. Ethair, on the double trapeze - where one ascended by a noose, round his neck, and the other a cord held between his teeth.

Biography - Charlie Holland has been a professional juggler and the Programme Director at London's Circus Space (now the National Centre for Circus Arts). In 1997 he published Strange Feats and Clever Turns, an anthology of articles on speciality acts in the Victorian music hall. His new book, Acrobats and Aerialists in Circus and Music Hall, 1850s - 1900s, will be published later this year. He is the Secretary of the British Music Hall Society.
Bluesky @charlieholland.bsky.social

Speaker 4, Aisling Ní Cheallaigh

Topic - Spin-poseium, 'The Art of Spinning'.
45 mins

Presentation - Join Aisling for a deep dive into their research on the science behind the spin. Part lecture and part practical, this spin-poseium (see what they've done there?) will attempt to illuminate the physics and body mechanics behind the excruciating art of the spin. The practical element is not compulsory but if you would like to join it might be an idea to have ginger or other antiemetics at the ready!

Biography - Aisling Ní Cheallaigh is an Irish aerialist with a passion for all things spinning. Specialising in aerial hoop they also dabble with straps and the serious discipline of being hit in the face with a Cyr Wheel. They've performed all over the world from Le Monastère in Montreal to FIRCO in Madrid to multiple Lunar New Year Celebrations in Hong Kong. They have co-created three of their own shows to date; 'How to Square A Circle', 'Sub Rosa' and 'NASC' and are currently performing their new mixed media piece 'The Lost Bride'.

<https://www.instagram.com/aislingcheallaigh>

Speaker 5, Dr Manuela Angioi PhD FHEA FIADMS

Topic - What do we know about MSK injuries in circus athletes? A systematic review of current evidence.

20 mins

Presentation - During this didactic/oral presentation Manuela will use her published work to summarise and present to the audience what we know from current published evidence about the Musculoskeletal Injury profile of circus athletes and will discuss how this evidence can be of use to artists, coaches and healthcare professionals working with circus artists. Particular emphasis will be given to type of injury, mechanism and body region commonly affected according to sub speciality.

QMUL team topic - Engaging 'WeMovetogether' digital tool for motor learning and musculoskeletal rehabilitation

40 mins

Presentation and practical- During this practical workshop the team from Queen Mary University of London, led by Dr Elisabeta Versace (presenter) and Dr Manuela Angioi (co-applicant) with the support of two PhD students (Rosie and Kit) will introduce to the audience a recently developed digital tool to provide feedback to participants undertaking exercises that are related to common movements used by

circus and dance artists. This is part of a funded project that was developed with the support of QM Impact scheme. Elisabetta will talk through the theory behind the tool development and its applications while guiding the attenders/audience to the use of the WeMovetogether website. During the workshop members of the audience will be given the opportunity to interact with the developed tool.

Biography - Dr Manuela Angioi, MSc PhD FHEA FIADMS is a Senior Lecturer in Sports and Exercise Medicine at the Centre for Sports and Exercise Medicine, Queen Mary University of London where she is the Programme Leader of the IBSc Sports and Exercise Medicine degree. She has worked with professional and non-professional dancers as well as circus artists, investigating the effects of increased physical fitness levels on performance and injury epidemiology. Manuela is the leader for Dance Medicine at QMUL where she lectures to clinicians with a special interest in the dancing/performing arts population. Manuela provides research consultancy and support to vocational ballet schools, including the Royal Ballet School, English National Ballet School and previously she assisted with projects at the National Centre for Circus Arts. Manuela is involved in a series of screening studies that have been disseminated internationally, this includes the Project Breakalign, an international cohort study looking into fitness and injury in Breakers. Manuela is the External Examiner for the MSC/MFA Dance Science at Trinity Laban, and her education activities includes consultancies for other Universities as expert in teaching and educational grants (University of Essex 2023). Manuela has been leading several funded teaching grants (GAMERS – MEGA – HUMANOID) and she has an expertise in the use of digital technology for teaching and rehab purposes (DitToc ESRC/UKRI funded and WeMove QM impact). She has published research findings in many relevant scientific journals, contributing to sports and dance medicine blogs and magazines, as well as presenting at numerous international dance and sports medicine and science conferences. Manuela sits in the research committee of IADMS since 2014 and she has been recently awarded the prestigious title of Fellow of IADMS. Manuela sits in the Board of Directors of IADMS (2023-25). Manuela is an active presenter at international conferences, also an invited speaker. Her supervision includes UG, PGT and PhD students.

Biography- Dr Elisabetta Versace is a Senior Lecturer at Queen Mary University of London, where she leads the Comparative Cognition Lab. After gaining her PhD at University of Trieste (Italy), she worked in animal behaviour and cognition, neuroscience and population genetics. Her research interests are focused on the building blocks of cognition, that she investigates using domestic chicks, tortoises and insects as models. The comparison between species and evolutionary perspective offer several advantages in understanding different strategies in early social behaviour, fast learning (e.g. filial imprinting), artificial grammar learning, lateralisation and other features that enable animals to make fast and effective decisions without intensive training. Elisabetta is interested in using insights derived from behavioural mechanisms observed in animals to improve artificial intelligence and machine learning, and in developing robotic systems that interact with animals. Her work aims at clarifying what enhances and what hinders behavioural and cognitive performance. Dr Manuela Angioi (see separate descriptor). Rosie Davies and Jieying Huang (Kit) are PhD students at QMUL currently working on the "Positive Balance" research project in collaboration with the English National Ballet School and Royal Ballet School under the supervision of Dr Versace and Dr Angioi.

Speaker 6, Erin Ball

Topic - Relaxed Spaces and Access Notes within the Circus Industry

40 mins

Presentation - In this Disability-led session, we'll explore how to prioritise our own access needs (everyone has them! Not just Disabled people) for sustainability, and we'll discuss what a relaxed space is, why it is beneficial in circus classes, shows, etc, and what accessibility notes are. This session is for everyone who has an interest in inclusion and equity in circus arts.

Access notes:

This session will be in English on Zoom.

Live captioners will be present throughout the symposium.

Visual material will be described.

This will be a relaxed space and you will not be put on the spot.

Please communicate as it works for you (emojis, gestures, augmentative and alternative communication, speech, etc).

We will strive to create a relaxed space. You are welcome to have your camera on or off, if joining remotely, stimming is encouraged (self-regulatory behaviour like movement and vocalizing), take breaks as needed.

There will be a formal five-minute break.

We will use content notices (and discuss what they are and how to use them) for any intense material.

Everything is optional.

Sign language interpretation is unfortunately not provided at this event, we simply can't cater for an interpreter to be available for each country - apologies.

For feedback and questions, please connect with Erin at kingstoncircusarts@gmail.com

Biography - Erin Ball (ze/zir), a white neurodivergent/neuro non-conforming double below knee amputee and demifemme (agender) human. Erin is an international circus artist, accessibility consultant, and workshop facilitator who strives to increase disability-led art and accessibility.

<https://www.instagram.com/erinballcircus>

Day 2 - Sun 24th March

Speaker 1, Jenn Vigh

Topic - Pilates for Aerialists

45 mins incl Q&A

Presentation - Jenn is honored to be present and teach, Pilates for aerialists. This workshop will build on the fundamentals of how to find balance, and your deep center as an aerialist that finds yourself in a variety of asymmetrical, and complex shapes and sequences. All that will be required is a yoga mat, a yoga block, and a medium density- long theraband (a pair of socks might also be useful!).

Biography - Jenn is a Pilates instructor, aerialist and movement enthusiast who has travelled the world teaching Pilates, training aerial silks and connecting with aerial movers. She has decades of experience as an aerialist and dancer and most recently performed with Blue Lapis Light and other local dance groups in one of her stateside homes, Austin, TX. Jenn's Pilates journey began due to a severe injury in her low back. She has experienced a tremendous amount of healing and stability from reformer and mat Pilates combined, and has been loving teaching and learning from fellow Pilates colleagues worldwide in the US, Australia, and now, the UK. Over the last years, Jenn has also specifically enjoyed working with women during pregnancy, and postpartum, many of which have been aerialists returning to the sky!

Currently, Jenn teaches Pilates at the Australian Physiotherapy and Pilates Institute in north London, a studio and Pilates educator globally recognized for its clinically informed programming. This year, she is also completing a Masters Degree in Sports Therapy at London Metropolitan University.

To learn more about working with Jenn 1-1 and joining her new Pilates program for aerialists, you can visit her [website](#), and follow her IG accounts, @jen_n_motion and @pilates_for_aerialists.

Speaker 2, Dr Jessica Eccles

Topic - Bendy Bodies, Bendy Brains

45 mins incl Q&A

Presentation - Brain and body are dynamically coupled. Dr Eccles believes that the false dichotomy between body and brain hinders our holistic understanding of human experience, holds back clinical practice and research and further perpetuates stigma. She will use the presence of a common bodily variant of connective tissue (joint hypermobility) to demonstrate such brain-body links and how they may relate to neurodivergent conditions including ADHD and Autism. She will draw on her prize-winning work in the field of hypermobility/EDS. She hopes to encourage curiosity and challenge stereotypes.

Biography - Dr Eccles is a researcher and a neurodevelopmental psychiatrist specialising in the links between brain and body, especially as they relate to flexible joints (hypermobility). As well as her University position she works in the Sussex NHS Neurodevelopmental Service where she and colleagues have set up the world's first Neurodivergent Brain Body Clinic. She has been working on the intersect between hypermobility and neurodivergence since she first came to work at Brighton and Sussex medical school in Neuroscience in 2009. Alongside all things brain and body she is interested in photography

<https://www.instagram.com/drbandybrain>

Speaker 3, Daniela Essart and Naissa Bjørn

Topic - Creating safe and brave spaces to flourish in creation and performance

25 mins + Q&A

Presentation - Creativity takes courage, and to grow it requires a safe and brave space. Aerial and movement are the languages that come most natural to Daniela and Naissa for storytelling. Conveying their own poignant narratives through movement require not only safety, but also bravery. Through working together and within their own practices as artistic director and performer/collaborator, they have interrogated what it means to have the courage to be vulnerable within a carefully constructed safety net that allows them the security to do so.

Biographies - Naissa Bjørn (he/him) is an interdisciplinary movement artist. He began his training in circus at National Centre for Circus Arts and graduated from London Contemporary Dance School. He has worked with companies such as James Cousins Company, CLOD Ensemble and Matsena Productions, performing with Caitlin Barnett Company, touring to the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival in Palestine and Glastonbury Festival. In 2023, he showcased new solo work at 'Mind Ur Head', and co-devised and performed in 'Small Town Boys' in Dundee for Shaper/Caper, set to tour in Scotland in 2024. He is also a company member of Sadlers Wells Associate artists Tough Boys, as a creative collaborative performer.

Daniela Essart (she/her) is the co-founder and artistic director of Scarabeus Aerial Theatre since 1988. Her work merges aerial skills with visual theatre and choreographed movement in site-specific, immersive and touring performances. She is also the force behind Scarabeus learning and participation programme.

She believes in the transformative power of the arts, in creating experiences that endure in the collective imagination and promote a sense of belonging. Fearless about experimentation, she regularly collaborates with a wide range of established and up and coming artists and scientists from different fields.

<https://www.instagram.com/scarabeusaerial>

www.scarabeus.co.uk

Speaker 4, Emma Poole

Topic - Body of Worth - 'self-esteem and body image in the aerial industry'

50 mins +Q&A

Presentation - How does our self-esteem and body image impact how we navigate the aerial world? Looking at how our evaluation of our worth affects how we show up in the industry, what we create, how we perform, how/ if we rest, what we charge for our services. How our body image affects what we wear, how comfortable we are when we look back at videos, which studios we attend. Emma will share her research and tools on how we can improve how we see ourselves, to aid a happier and healthier relationship with our artistry.

Biography - Emma is a Liverpool (UK) based aerial rope artist with years of international performing, creating, and teaching experience which carved her tangley, expressive, style. However, following her own struggles, she spent the last few years conducting psychological research and building a practice around improving the self-esteem and body image of aerialists.

Among the hundreds of aerialists who took part in her research, there were many struggling in silence, and it is Emma's mission to help aerial artists get their confidence back.

She is passionate about artists regaining their autonomy and helping them establish their own voice creatively and professionally.

Her online program Body Of Worth is for artists to delve into what is blocking their self-sourced, self-worth and free them from the hold of their insecurities.

Website: www.tangledinair.com

Speaker 5, Adam Woolley AKA proud_coach

Topic - Creativity and risk: how to responsibly bring aerial invention into classrooms and studios

60 mins +Q&A

Presentation - How do we introduce students to aerial invention - creativity and expressive movement - while still managing risk appropriately?

Creative action emerges from variability, and more variability emerges the sooner we introduce it into the learning process.

From the studio owner perspective this involves dynamic curriculums and novel equipment practices; from the coach perspective, this involves pedagogical approaches that encourage physical and social risk permissiveness.

If you're interested in aerial invention...and not just imitation from instagram...this workshop covers the ways you can introduce it into your studio or classes while still feeling responsible about risk.

Biography - Adam has been a circus educator since 2008, with professional and recreational artists all over North America. He served as the Safety Committee Chair for the American Circus Educators Association from 2012-2017 and co-produced five international circus showcases as Circus Now's

Managing Director during his time living in NYC. He was a founding faculty member and the Creative Outreach Director at Circadium School of Contemporary Circus, the first professional training program in the United States to be recognized by the state Board of Education and the International Network for Professional Circus Education (FEDEC). He has worked tirelessly as an advocate for circus arts in the United States, presenting at and helping to organize events for the Smithsonian Institute, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP). He holds a BFA in Directing for Theater from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and a Masters in Applied Health Science from the University of Manitoba. Currently, he runs hybrid teacher training modules for circus/pole/dance/gymnastics studios interested in transformative and liberational teaching and organizational practices.

https://www.instagram.com/proud_coach/

Speaker 6, Janelle Peters

Topic - 'When the rope frays' - burnout & compassion fatigue.

90 mins

Presentation - Formerly thought to only impact first responders and direct care providers, Burnout and Compassion Fatigue actually threaten the mental health of people across many fields. Circus professionals, due to our deep commitment and care for our work, our students, and our communities, are especially vulnerable, and rarely trained in how to identify and work with Burnout or Compassion Fatigue. This workshop provides an opportunity for reflection and self-assessment, as well as tools and frameworks to help prevent, mitigate, and heal from Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in our work as circus humans.

Biography - Janelle Peters (they) is a queer circus artist, circus coach, and psychotherapist based in Colorado and California USA. Janelle creates materials and holds space for conversations about mental health, wellbeing, and systemic change in circus and the performing arts. Their work, both teaching and performing, is rooted in a deep commitment to recognizing and supporting the wholeness and connectedness of circus humans.

Janelle teaches workshops and offers consulting for circus schools and companies. They are also a founding member of Hypothetical Circus.

<https://www.instagram.com/janelledinosaurs>