

DO JUMP!

Extremely Physical Theater

Presents

The Teacher's Guide

for

At Such a Dizzy Height

Inspired by the paintings of Marc Chagal



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why Do Jump? an introduction

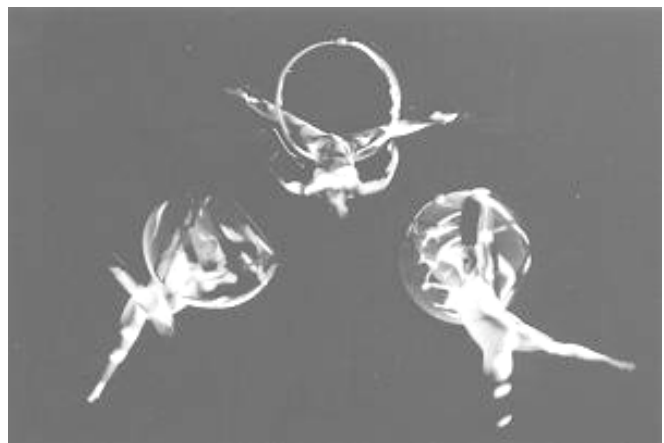
What is Do Jump? Do Jump is a radical form of theater combining dance, acting, music and acrobatics in a framework of extreme physicality. Where else can you see actors flying through the air on the trapeze or tumbling together in a dizzying display of physical strength and grace? Formed in 1977 by Robin Lane, Do Jump entertains, transforms and provokes audiences with indelible images, sounds and thoughts.

Because Do Jump is filled with passion, energy and whimsy—not to mention, they fly!—they knew that they were just the right choice to interpret the magical work of painter, sculptor, stained glass artist, Marc Chagall in movement.

At Such a Dizzy Height, based on the work of Marc Chagall is a remarkable way to introduce your students to a wild array of the arts—performing and visual. Oregon State Benchmarks mandate that students be able to identify, interpret and have an aesthetic opinion on dance, music, and theater, not to mention the visual arts. *At Such a Dizzy Height* will introduce your students to the life and works of Marc Chagall in a high impact way, perhaps inspiring them to explore this amazing artist in more

depth. In addition, your class will see virtuosic displays of modern dance and acrobatics, hear the lively strains of vibrant Klezmer music, and see great theater, too. Each element of our production is an avenue to thought provoking discussions and taken together, a breathtaking live performance.

It is our hope that this study guide will provide you with plenty of information and ideas to enrich your experience at the theater as well as your students' regular course of study. Enjoy the show!





who is Marc Chagall?

We all know that a good person can be a bad artist, but no one will ever be a genuine artist unless he is a great human being and thus also a good one.

--Marc Chagall

Marc Chagall's long and prolific life of creativity began on July 7, 1887 in Vitebsk in Russia. While his early life was impoverished and he endured grief, war, and tremendous tumult, one would never know it from his vibrant, joyous works. Even the paintings done in grief retain a certain buoyancy. On rare occasion his paintings of war and the Holocaust reflect something of the depth of depravity humans are capable of, but these paintings are few in comparison to the multitude of works full of life, movement and color. In general, Chagall was a man who experienced hardship and smiled in the face of it, much like one of his fiddlers on the roof.

When he was born his parents named him Moyshe. His father's last name was Segal. Chagall chose a French name while he was a young man in Paris. Moyshe was the oldest of nine brothers and sisters in a Hassidic Jewish family. His father worked in a fish processing plant and his mother ran a small grocery store.

Despite great poverty, Chagall remembers this time as one of great happiness, filled with music and laughter. One of his uncles played the violin, and the young boy was often transported by the music—Moyshe said he felt as if his head came off his shoulders and floated toward his uncle when he started to play. As a very young boy, Moyshe played the violin, sang and wrote poetry (which he continued throughout his life), but by the time he was 8-years-old, he knew that he wanted to be a painter. He began to draw pictures of his family and animals, but it was not until he was about 13 years old that he saw a drawing or a painting by someone else...visual art wasn't much a part of his village. It was at school and he saw a boy in class copying pictures from a book. He immediately began to copy pictures himself and decided that he wanted to take lessons. His parents were not very happy with this decision—no one they knew was an artist! But Moyshe insisted and his mother relented, enrolling him in a local school of art run by a painter named Penne. He was

a little disappointed in this school, though. All he got to draw were the plaster statues in Mr. Penne's studio. Noses and hands, noses and hands...not the wonderful, colorful exciting things he had drawn on his own. Still, he kept on.

In 1907, when he was 20, Moyshe moved to St. Petersburg to continue studying art. Here he was introduced to every style of painting and art. St. Petersburg was not an easy city for Jews at this time. If you were a Jew in St. Petersburg, you needed a permit to live there. Moyshe spent some time in jail because he lacked this permit, which cost money, a thing he had very little of. But his eyes were opened to the possibilities of art and he began to define his trademark style here in St. Petersburg. Here he learned about Paris and its lively arts scene, and in 1912 he decided to move to glittering Paris. While there, he began to call himself Marc Chagall, and so now we will do so too.

Chagall learned about the works of Monet and Matisse, with the color and light inherent in them. He began to add more color to his own work and to revel in the life it lent his paintings. Chagall found his way into an artists' colony called The Beehive. The Beehive was really a collection of apartments and studios in a cheap part of Paris, where artists could afford to rent. Here

Chagall rubbed elbows with other artists who were to become as famous as he did, artists like: Leger, Soutien, Modigliani. At one point, Chagall even met Lenin there. The Beehive was humming with ideas and creativity, and Chagall reveled in it—even if he was so poor that he was painting on tablecloths and white shirts.

In Paris, Chagall defined his style, gained a reputation and some financial stability. By 1914 he was showing his work and left Paris to be at the opening for one of his shows. After that he went home to Vitebsk to have a short visit, but the visit ended up lasting 9 years. World War I broke out and he was unable to leave Russia. During his stay he married his beloved wife Bella. She was a favorite subject of his and he painted her often. The couple moved to St. Petersburg to wait out the War. Chagall continued showing his work in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and in 1916, their family grew. Chagall and Bella had a baby girl whom they named Ida. In 1917, more violence rocked Russia as the Russian Revolution began. Believing that the Revolution would secure freedoms for all people, including Jews, Chagall actively and eagerly supported the Revolution.

Chagall was offered position of Commissar of Fine Arts for Vitebsk in 1918 and opened an art school there in 1919. It didn't work out at

the school, and Chagall moved his family to Moscow in 1920. Chagall's attitude toward the Revolution soured after the government refused to pay him for the murals he had painted for the Jewish Chamber Theater. They declared his work "irrelevant" and "indulgent" and banished him to teaching art to orphans. Chagall knew it was time to leave.

He moved his family back to Paris in 1923, and he continued to paint and gain popularity and fame. More commissions came including one to illustrate the Bible. He and his family were very happy.

But this stability and peace were not to last. Tensions were straining Europe to the breaking point as Hitler rose to power in the mid 1930s. In Germany modern art was considered inhuman and immoral. Three of Chagall's paintings were included in Hitler's 1937 "Degenerate Art" exhibition. By 1941, conditions in France were dire. The Nazi's had taken France in 1940 and Chagall and his family were in grave danger even in the little Southern village where they now lived. The Museum of Modern Art in New York provided Chagall and his family an opportunity to flee Europe, which they did. In June of 1941, Chagall and his family steamed into New York Harbor with crates and crates of his art work.

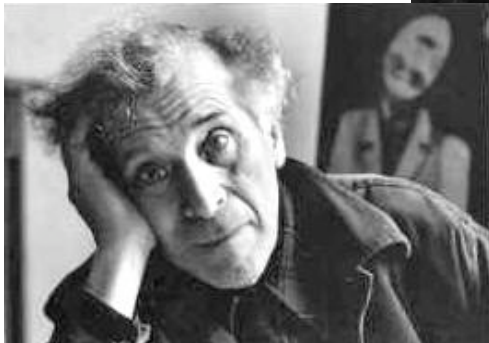
Now his work began to reflect the horrors of war. But war was not the last devastation that Chagall would suffer. In 1944, Bella died unexpectedly and Chagall was plunged into the blackest of despairs. He turned the paintings in his home to the wall and couldn't paint for months. Slowly, slowly the agony ebbed and he began to paint in more somber colors than previously. He fell in love with his housekeeper, Virginia McNeil and together they had a son. Their relationship lasted for 7 years during which time, Chagall returned to France taking Virginia and their son with him.

When the two separated, Chagall met and married Valentina Brodsky. They fell in love and married, and his paintings took on more color. As he grew older, Chagall began to start using different media. He began to create lithographs, design sets and even sculpt. Then he began to create the most beautiful, deeply hued, glittering stained glass windows. An exacting craft, Chagall took it upon himself to study from the finest masters and in time became a master himself.

Chagall lived to be nearly 100 years old and to the end of his days never stopped creating art. Some of his most amazing work was done in his late 70s. In his 80s he was still designing theatrical

sets and he was still producing lithographs up until his death in 1985.

Despite influence from all of the major art movements of the 20th century, Chagall remained exuberantly, obstinately true to his own inner visions and style. He gave much to the Surrealists, much to dreamers of all kinds. A musician, a poet, a painter, a lover, husband, father, Chagall lived a life full of rich and beautiful possibility—just like his magical works.





what is acrobatics? a brief history

The term acrobatics has evolved to include many things: tumbling, tightrope walking, trapeze flying, gymnastics...it seems if it is a physically difficult feat of daring do it falls under the category of acrobatics. Lots of things are linked with acrobats—theater, juggling, circus acts—but where did all these activities originate? Who first thought it might be fun to do a somersault or make a human pyramid or vault over a high object?

The fact is we really don't know who was first, but three ancient cultures stand out as having contributing to the prehistory of acrobatics and gymnastics: Greece, Egypt and China.

The word *acrobatics* derives from two Greek words: *akron* (summit) and *baino* (walk)—so you might say that acrobatics means quite literally high walk. About 1500 B.C.E., an artist created a fresco depicting young Minoan men and women grasping a charging bull by the horns and vaulting up over its back to land on their feet behind the bull, or perhaps on its back. All sport derives from religious rites, which would make sense, since the bull was sacred to the Minoans, but by the time the fresco was painted, it seems

that religious rite had evolved into entertainment. The Greeks also used acrobatics and gymnastics as a means to remain physically fit—vital to body worshipping Greeks. The Greeks also enjoyed sport for sport's sake. Gymnastics were used to condition body and mind as well as provide a competitive outlet. While elsewhere in Greece only men trained in gymnastics, Spartans required their women to go through physical conditioning as well. The Spartans valued gymnastics as a form of discipline as well as a way to stay fit—a necessary tool for the militaristic society. All of the gymnastic exercises were done to music and gymnasts were trained in that art as well. The Romans also used gymnastics, but primarily as a way of training their great legions. The Romans were also responsible for inventing the first pommel horse, used to train cavalry to mount and dismount quickly and agilely. But the Greeks don't have a corner on the ancient origins of acrobatics. In fact, it could be argued that the Egyptians taught the Greeks to play.



The Egyptians are the progenitors of much modern sport—from soccer to hockey, and yes, tumbling and other acrobatics.



They developed rules and techniques and trained and taught both men and women in the art. As with the Greeks, Egyptians participated in gymnastics and other sports to tone their bodies and entertain themselves. They loved competitive games! Most pharaohs had themselves depicted somewhere participating in at least one sport. Lihesome, toned bodies were prized and sporting was so popular it resembled a cult!

But some Chinese sources claim a 4000 year old history for Chinese acrobatics. Most verifiable is a 2500 year old origin for Chinese acrobatics—which means it is probably far older. 2500 years ago, during the Warring States Period, Chinese peasants used the implements of their daily lives: tridents (pitch fork), tables, chairs, dishes as props for impromptu entertainments. Eventually, these casual tricks were codified into the “Hundred Plays” which included Hoop Diving, which was

based on the movements of hunting swallows and involved graceful dance-like diving and jumping through rush hoops; Wushu, which is comprised of somersaults, kicks, human pyramids—all displays of strength and beauty; and Lion Dancing, which involves acrobats costumed as Lions mimicking the rolling, fighting, jumping, etc. of their flesh and blood inspirations. In China, acrobatics evolved into many different entertainments which weren't performed in the theaters during the feudal period. The nobility condemned acrobatics as an activity of peasants. Still, it crept into the theater, particularly after the Cultural Revolution of the 1960's, when the government was promoting “authentic” Chinese art forms.



Acrobatics as we know them emerged in the 1830's and were “re-invented” by the Soviet Union in the 1930's as a true competitive sport.



what is that music?

Klezmer music is a uniquely Jewish form of music, with a long history, stretching back to Biblical times, but the distinctive sound that is unmistakable today traces back to the 19th century in Eastern Europe. Jewish immigrants brought the music to the United States in the 1880s.

The word Klezmer is a combination of two Hebrew words meaning “clay” and “song”—combined it means “vessel of music”. The basic ambition of Klezmer music is that the instruments evoke human emotions in a direct way, mimicking the sounds of exuberant laughter as well as the weeping of despair.

The musicians themselves were rarely formally trained—there were few resources available to impoverished and “contained” Jews in Europe. Melodies and techniques were passed down from father to son (women were not allowed to perform in public), father to son for generations. The Klezmerim, as they were called, often traveled from village to village, playing joyous occasions with traditional songs. They were familiar sights and considered magical and mysterious—as well as a trifle shabby and invariably itinerant—by the Jewish villages they frequented. Images of the

Klezmerim occur and again and again in the vibrant work of Marc Chagall.

Groups of Klezmerim were typically 5 or 6 musicians, playing a variety of instruments, traditionally: violin, clarinet, cello, bass, and accordion...but could include flute or trumpet. Today, Klezmer music has vast influences, but always reflects the joys and agonies of humanity.





the art

Chagall's work was intensely joyful and miraculously varied, while always being undeniably "Chagall". Below are brief descriptions of the works inspiring Do Jump's *At Such a Dizzy Height* and information on where they are available to view online. As you and your students look at the pictures, make a list of symbolic elements Chagall seems to use a lot. What about colors? As you watch Do Jump's show, think about how the movement fits with the painting.

- *The Birthday*: Painted in 1915, oil paints on cardboard. This painting is autobiographical, as so many of Chagall's paintings and depicts a birthday of his own, when (according to Bella's memoir, *First Encounter*) he caught his beloved wife, Bella, decorating their tiny apartment for his birthday. He asked her to stop so he could paint her. Here the happy couple floats on air (as he and Bella always seemed to do in Chagall's paintings) and tenderly exchange a kiss. The painting resides in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. You can see it online, as well as another viewer's thoughts on it at www.chagallpaintings.org.
- *The Promenade*: Painted circa 1917, oil on canvas. This painting contains many elements familiar to Chagall. Here are the two of them again, happy as always, Bella, literally swept off her feet as they walk about Vitebsk. You can see this painting online at: www.1001artnet/mark-and-bella.com. The painting itself is housed at The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.
- *The Blue Horse*: 1982, original lithograph. As you can see, Chagall was creating right up until he died in 1985! Here we have a happy couple embracing in the foreground, while the background is dominated by the head of a smiling blue horse. In the lower right corner is a vignette of Vitebsk, and there are winged figures flying above. You can see this lithograph and many others at www.artnet.com
- *Cowshed*: 1917, oil on canvas, housed at the Sprengel Museum in Hannover. Once again, we see that Chagall likes cows and village life. You can see this picture at: www.fineartmuseum.net/New_AG/Chagall.html

- *Over Vitebsk*: 1914, Oil on paper mounted on canvas. This painting may be found at the Art Gallery of Ontario. You can find it online at:
<http://www.moma.org/collection/provenance/items/277.49.html>
- *The Circus Horse*: c. 1964 This painting is hard to find online, and is better viewed in a book. There is a lot going on in this painting. What initially attracts the eye is the horse in the center ring, but all around him are performers doing electrifying feats of skill—including another horse playing the trumpet!
- *Paris Through the Window*: 1913, oil on canvas. Currently resides in the Guggenheim Museum in New York City. There is lots to look at in this painting, and it is very famous. You may see it online here:
www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_28_2.html - 28k
- *Paris Opera House*: 1964, Paris Opera. Chagall was commissioned to paint the roof of the opera house later in his life...music had always played such an integral part of his life that perhaps it is apropos that he be asked to create a work for such a prominent theatre. Chagall intended to depict the connections between performers, musicians and artists and so painted the ceiling as a huge flower with five petals of varying colors containing symbols of art, man and the divine. You may see it and a wonderful article about the work at: www.duponis.com/magazine/VOLUME1-N2/VOL1-N2-HEARTBODYSOUL-01.asp
- *American Windows*: 1977, stained glass, The Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois. This triptych originally created celebrating the American Bicentennial and Mayor Richard Daley features remarkable images of art and American and Jewish symbology. Remarkable blue color. You can see these windows at www.artic.edu/aic/collections/index.php.



but what does it mean? symbolism in Chagall's work

Candlestick:	Jewish religious life; faith
Circus:	Harmony between man and beast; Creativity
Clock:	Time; a modest life
Cow:	Wonderful life; abundance
The Crucifixion:	The Holocaust
Fiddler:	Momentous occasion: birth, wedding, death
Fish:	(sometimes flying) Honors his father's livelihood
Horses:	Freedom
Rooster:	Fertility. Often pictured with a couple
Tree:	Life
Vitebsk:	Home



how to see

You may think you know how to see—and, of course, you do, but there are ways to look at art—indeed all things--that will help you get much more information and understanding out of what you are seeing. Below are some ways to look at visual works of art, but could be easily adapted to dance and music as well (although you hear music rather than see it!)

Describe!

- ♠ Describe what you see.
- ♠ Describe the artist's use of color—how many colors are used?
- ♠ How has the artist applied the paint? In long brush strokes? Smoothly, or in thick blobs?
- ♠ Describe the texture.
- ♠ Describe the lines in the work
- ♠ What kinds of shapes do you see?

Analyze!

- ♠ Is your eye drawn to any particular area of the painting?
- ♠ Is there an element that stands out?
- ♠ Is the composition balanced?
- ♠ Does the work make you think of movement? How does the artist express movement?
- ♠ Does the painting look flat or does it give the idea of depth or space?
- ♠ Where might the artist have stood while painting this picture?

Interpret!

- ♠ What kind of mood or feeling do you get from the painting?
- ♠ If you could imagine yourself within the painting, how would you feel?
- ♠ What sounds would you hear?
- ♠ Why do you think the artist chose this particular subject?
- ♠ What part of the subject most interested the artist? How do you know?

Judge!

- ♠ Find an interesting painting. Why does it interest you?
- ♠ What do you like or dislike about the work? Why?



speaking the same language

Each art form has its own language—terms artists, dancers and musicians use to communicate with each other. Sometimes the languages have words that each art language uses, with similar definitions. Actors, too, will sometimes use words that musicians, artists and dancers will be familiar with. Below is a chart of elements in art, dance and music. See where they intersect.

elements of art	elements of dance	elements of Music
composition	space	pitch
Line		Melody/Line
Line Direction	Direction	
Shape	Shape	Shape
Size	Level	Volume/dynamics
Texture	Pattern	Motif
Value		
Color		Timbre, color
		Harmony
	Design in space	
	Personal space	
	Active space	
Gallery	Performance space	Performance space
	time	time
	Tempo	Tempo
	Duration	
	Momentum	
Symmetry	Regular	Symmetry
Asymmetry	Irregular	Asymmetry
	Accent	Accent
	Meter	Meter
Repetition	Repetition	Repetition
	Natural rhythms	
Negative space	Stillness	Rest
	dynamics	Dynamics
	Release of energy	
	Weight of force	



words to know

Abstract art:	style of visual art that is independent of reality--art may be based on something real, but might be made of colors and lines for their own sake
Acrobatics:	combination of gymnastic feats of balance, grace, strength and agility. Some examples might included tightrope walking, trapeze flying, walking on one's hands, contortion, etc.
Avant garde:	new experimental, radical ideas
Choreographer:	person who creates dances and arranges dance movements for performers
Cubism:	nonobjective school of painting and sculpture developed in Paris in the early 20th century, characterized by the reduction and fragmentation of natural forms into abstract, often geometric structures usually rendered as a set of discrete planes.
Dance:	the art of moving one's body rhythmically in patterns--especially to music
Gymnastics:	physical exercises that develop and demonstrate strenght, balance and agility often performed on special equipment
Klezmer music:	traditional Jewish folk music performed in a small band
Mime:	creating and performing a character, mood, idea, or story by fatial expression, gestures and body movements
Props:	Anything on stage that is not part of the set or costumes--short for properties
Set:	The scenery singers, actors or dancers work on--short for setting
Slapstick:	broad comedy full of physical action, for instance pies thrown in actor's faces, huge facial expressions (mugging)
Surrealism	art that tries to show the life of our unconscious minds and dreams
Symbols:	something, such as an image of an object, that represents something else, such as an idea or emotion--a visual metaphor



let's try it! curriculum ideas

Below are some ideas for expanding and deepening students' experience at the show. Try a few!

- ❖ Create mimed presentations of stories from current curriculum and examine what makes certain gestures and movements effective.
- ❖ Listen to several contrasting selections of music and have students draw the music. Talk about how sounds in music make you feel—are their color corollaries?
- ❖ Watch a video of dancers or acrobats and have students try to draw the movement patterns.
- ❖ Choose multiple fine arts pictures and allow students to choose one. Have plenty of index cards or paper scraps for students to write their thoughts down with. As the students gaze at their art, have them pretend they are “in” the picture. Ask them to write a word or phrase on different pieces of paper for each of the questions you will ask them. Questions: Where are you? ✍ What do you hear? ✍ What can you smell? ✍ Where are you going? ✍ What are you feeling? ✍ How old are you? ✍ What season is it? ✍ Who are you? ✍ What are you doing? ✍ If you could have an object, what would it be? ✍ What are you eating? ✍ What is being said? (This should be put into quotation marks on their card or scrap of paper). Let students take their words and phrases and experiment with reading them in different orders—change them a number of ways. Then write a story, poem or descriptive paragraph using all the words or phrases you responded to the questions with. Title your writing, and underneath be sure to list the title of the art you wrote about, the artist, medium and the date created.
- ❖ Have students choose one of Chagall's paintings from the list provided in “The Art” section of this teacher's guide. For younger students, bring copies of the pictures into the classroom, for older students; have them locate the pictures in books in the library. Have them write the story that they think the painting tells. Older students might want to take into consideration Chagall's symbolism.

- ❖ After seeing *At Such a Dizzy Height*, have students watch several examples of different genres of dance on video. Discuss the similarities and differences in the different styles. Talk about the types of music and moves and how they fit or don't fit together. Have the students decide which type of dance they would like to draw. After they have made their drawings, look at how other artists have interpreted dance.
- ❖ After being introduced to Chagall and his works, talk to your students about some of the other styles of art during the 20th century, like surrealism. Chagall uses lots of symbols in his work (although he himself sometimes insisted that he did not intend to put symbols in his work). Have your students think about one of the most intense experiences of their lives—happy or sad. Have them create a work based on the feelings and experiences of that event, using the types of methods Chagall used.
- ❖ Have students pair up and assign one “A” and one “B”. Looking at paintings by Chagall, Sonia Delaunay, Matisse, have “B” pretend to be a statue being sculpted by “A”. “A” will then position “B” in a way that evokes the painting. It may be a physical representation of the canvas or a position that describes the feeling of the painting. Switching images, have “B” do the same for “A”.
- ❖ Explore some different poems. Have students pick one or two that really speak to them as a class. Read the poem several times and ask students if the poem suggests movement to them. This movement might be suggested through the meaning of the words, the rhythm of the words, or even how the poem looks on the page. As a group, have students illustrate the poem with movement, creating a dance.
- ❖ (This requires space!) Play 2 contrasting pieces of music for students. Have them imagine that they have giant paint brushes in their hands and a massive canvas. Play the music again and have them paint the music, making sure that they cover the entire room sized canvas...explain that they might have to leap or twirl to get the picture just right, or maybe they must make themselves very small—all depending on what the music tells them to do.



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