

Hi, randlibrary
Member Services
LOGOUT

MARKETPLACE
classifieds and more
• Careers
• Cars
• Homes
• Rentals
• Newspaper Ads
• Personals

calendarlive
Art, Theater, Night Life
Movies, Music, TV, Dining

- The World**
- The Nation**
- California / Local**
- Business**
- Politics**
- Sports**
- Technology**
- Travel**
- Editorials, Op-Ed**
- Sections**
- Arts & Entertainment
- Books
- Chess
- Columns
- Education
- Food
- Health
- Highway 1
- Kids' Reading Room
- Magazine
- Obituaries
- Real Estate
- Religion
- Science
- Sunday Opinion
- Times Poll
- Week in Focus
- For the Record
- Editions**
- Print Edition
- National (PDF)
- Wireless
- NewsDirect
- Extras**
- College Connection
- Sweepstakes
- Crossword
- Horoscope
- Lottery
- Traffic
- Weather
- Multimedia
- Archives**

February 27, 2003

E-mail story Print

advertisement

THE ALTERNATIVES with the greatest of ease

By Jenny Hontz, Special to The Times

Hands coated in chalk, belt strapped around my waist, I took a deep breath, approached the blue metal ladder and started to climb.

The 10-foot platform looked much higher from the top. As two guys hooked safety wires onto my belt, I stepped to the edge, heart racing, and clutched the trapeze.

And then I jumped.

As I swung through the air on the flying trapeze, a grin of terrified delight on my face, a rush of adrenaline surged through my body. My legs swooped forward and sharply back, again and again. Then I was falling onto a plush black mat with an audible exhalation.

"Flying is not about holding on. It's about letting go," says Ray Pierce, magician, choreographer, trapeze instructor and director of the Dream Circus Aerial Arts School, which opened in Hollywood in December. "It's a very Zen-like state. You can't take control. You have to let go and find the swing." Easier said than done, and this was just the training rig. A 32-foot rig is being installed out back so students can fly high in the open air, beneath the Hollywood sign.

Dream Circus is located in a warehouse that doubles as a nightclub and performance space called Qtopia. Pierce, a longtime entertainer, and his former circus clown assistant gear classes toward performance. Students who come once a week can exhibit their skills in shows every Sunday.

Six fliers joined me one Saturday morning, including another newcomer, Laurie Scott, 29, who recently moved from Arizona to work for Digital Angel, which specializes in high-tech tracking devices.

She'd never done anything like this, and her friends scoffed, "You'll never make it out of trapeze basic training."

Others in the class -- an eclectic group of men and women ranging in age from 23 to 43 -- had been learning for a few weeks. Dawn Matsui, 23, works for a think tank and took trapeze as a teen. Miguel Alvarez, 39, of Spain, is a former ballet dancer who now restores fine art. Anne Shackman, 43, is a graphic designer.

I'm an ex-gymnast, and the people who take to trapeze often have backgrounds in diving, gymnastics or dance. Even if you're in shape, trapeze uses muscles in a dynamic new way, and my hands and back, pectoral, hamstring and stomach muscles were still sore days later.

Times Headlines

more >

SUBSCRIBE to the Los Angeles Times.
click here

NewsDirectALERTS

Get e-mail alerts on topics related to this story:

OR enter keyword (optional)

Enter your email address:

• Manage your keywords

For more breaking news, try
latimes.com NewsDirect
CLICK HERE

Enter Keyword(s):

Detailed Search

SITE MAP

Los Angeles Times
Subscription Services
(800) 252-9141 Home
Delivery Subscriptions
NewsDirect
Gift Subscriptions
College Discount
Mail Subscriptions
Additional Subscription
Information & FAQs

MARKETPLACE
classifieds and more

- Careers
- Homes
- Cars
- Rentals
- Newspaper Ads
- Personals
- Times Guides
- Recycler.com

LA Times Initiatives

Times in Education
Reading by 9
LA Times Books
LA Times Family Fund
Times-Mirror Foundation
Community Events
Inside the Times

Partners



You don't have to be an athlete or daredevil to fly, though. Pierce has taught overweight students who just wanted to experience a few gravity-defying swings. Three weeks before my class, a student stood for 20 minutes on the platform, crying and afraid to jump.

Pierce, who has practiced hypnotherapy, knew something else was going on; sure enough, she was in the midst of a breakup. Once he made the connection, she got up the nerve to jump. "Fear stems from a lack of understanding," he said.

I tried to keep that in mind after my fourth swing, when Pierce asked me to try something new. Wisely, he gave me no time to think, or I might have choked.

Listening to his commands to get the timing right, I hopped off the platform and hoisted my legs up over my head, hooking them on the bar. I let my hands go, hung by my knees and flew up, arching my back.

Then I grabbed Pierce's wrists as he dangled from a cradle. Gripping him like a vise, I let go of the trapeze with my legs, and, before I knew it, I was swinging from Pierce. It was over in seconds, but it was one of the most exhilarating experiences I've had.

Next stop, the circus.

*

Where to swing

What: Dream Circus Aerial Arts School, 6021 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood

When: Classes Mondays, Wednesdays

and Fridays at 4 and 6 p.m., Saturdays

at 10 a.m.

Cost: Ranges from \$15 to \$25, depending on class schedule

Info: (323) 465-3997 or Dreamcircus@aol.com

If you want other stories on this topic, search the Archives at latimes.com/archives.



[Click here for article licensing and reprint options](#)

Copyright 2003 Los Angeles Times
By visiting this site, you are agreeing to our [Terms of Service](#).
[Privacy Policy](#)