

Lesson 20

Fancy Moves

High Throws

High throws are always spectacular. Use lightweight equipment and either throw just a single club or both. The number of spins made by the club in the air is determined by the amount of flick in your wrist as you throw.

First try throwing just one club with one spin. You will have to watch the spin carefully to catch the handle rather than the head of the club and then allow your grip to slide down to the knob. Increase the height of the throw and the number of spins up to 4 or 5 spins. Swap hands and then try to throw two clubs at once.

When two clubs are collected and stacked in one hand before being launched together, this double throw is known as a 'multiplex'.

Body Throws

There are a range of trick throws around the body that can be integrated with club swinging. These include throwing a club under the leg, behind the back, over the top, with any number of spins and even a side or reverse spin.

Juggling Three Clubs While Also Club Swinging

Club juggling usually involves the manipulation of three clubs and you will be able to find a juggling text book or someone to explain the basic cascade pattern. Many jugglers find that club swinging is a perfect warm up to juggling. There is also the advantage that swinging can be a very useful method of keeping the performance going if one of the clubs is dropped.

The easiest way of bringing in club swinging into a juggling routine is to catch two clubs in one hand and then swing both clubs as if they were a single club. However, the most common method of mixing swinging with juggling is to juggle two clubs in one hand while club swinging independently with the other hand e.g. two in the left hand while swinging lower-front and back circles with the right hand.

The forward cross-follow (page 42) is one pattern where three clubs can be juggled and swung together. I understand that the 'spare' club must be thrown from the hand that is underneath. It should travel straight up with a slow double spin. The clubs change around with one club always in the air on the outside of the pattern. I am still working on this!

Beating - Hitting Equipment Together

Deliberately knocking either clubs or poles together is called beating. By introducing an audible sound from your equipment you can bring life and surprise into a performance. It is very useful when choreographing a routine, since beating is an effective method of tightly, and noticeably, fitting movements to the music. Beating adds interest as it is largely unexpected. Variations include beating the clubs of a partner, domino effects, knocking two clubs together in the same hand and group beats set by clubs drummed against the floor. To succeed, the hitting must be very controlled and you must remember to keep a sense of symmetry throughout the whole of your body. Otherwise, it may seem as if the tapping were an unintended mistake!

Beating poles together will be louder than clubs. Different sounds will be heard depending upon the material - e.g. wood, metal or bamboo. A crashing sound may be frightening, which adds excitement to your show. Alternatively, you could aim for creating a pattern with an interesting rhythm, for instance, tap dancing with a walking stick.

In some Peking Opera scenes the warriors slap the ends of their spear against their own upturned feet and use various parts of their body to deflect or kick the spears thrown by opponents. I would not recommend that you try these moves with an ordinary broomstick. They are possible without injury mainly because of the flexible nature of the ratan sticks preferred by traditional Chinese pole spinners.

Swinging With 4 Or 6 Clubs

Although much more tiring, it is possible to club swing with more than just a single club in each hand. The grips alter as you will need to stack the clubs. This restricts freedom over the range of tricks as you cannot change grip. However, alternating patterns usually work well.

For two clubs in each hand, one fits in the normal place between finger and thumb Figure 1.3, (page 8). The other knob rests in the palm and is held by the last two fingers so that it points in the opposite direction to the first. A second club should not go between any of the other fingers. To add a third club, place it in the gap between your middle and ring fingers.

Rolling

Your clubs or other equipment could be made to roll along the ground, adding a slow aspect to your routine. Rolled clubs will form an arc on the floor and the push-off into the roll must be very controlled for the movement to work.

Balancing Equipment

Add further dimensions to your swinging performance by integrating balancing movements. It is possible to place the base of the club on the floor and lean weight upon it in order to, for instance, lift one leg high and swing a pattern underneath with the free club.

Alternatively, a club could be balanced with the knob placed on your chin or forehead. This will take some practice and the skill relies on watching the top of the club and making many small movements with your neck to compensate for any tilting of the club. Balancing is easier with long objects and with objects that are top heavy.

Placements and Carries

Some advanced swinging movements rely on placing the clubs on parts of the body and then letting go while the clubs rest or are carried for a short while. Examples are where forward swings are used to place clubs on the back of the shoulders which are dipped down to the horizontal plane. Release the club grip just before lifting your shoulders to make the clubs bounce up and the clubs are then caught in front of the body.

The neck, elbows and knees are other possible positions for placements where the club is temporarily released from the hand. Placements include movements where clubs are carried from the back to the front of the body whilst held only by the elbow. These very individual movements are best learnt through experimentation - have fun!

This chapter is taken from

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and Pole Spinning**

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www.cosmosjugglers.co.uk - see the *Holidays* pages for Anna's annual May and August UK events for club swingers, poi & pole spinners, jugglers, fire enthusiasts and glow-in-the dark/UV performers.