

Aloft Circus Arts Full Time Training Course

When: Year One Sept 2020-June 1, 2021; Year Two: Sept 2021- June 2022

Where: Aloft. 3324 W Wrightwood, Chicago

Who: Invite or audition only

Cost: \$9,850/year

Target enrollment: 10-12 students

Applications are open for our next two year cycle. Auditions only happen in even year. Applicants are invited to apply and offered auditions spots on a rolling basis until all spots are full, until Jan 15, 2020. Auditions will be held in Chicago March 18-19, 2020. [Apply now!](#)



The mission of our program is to create curious and questioning artists committed to advancing the role of circus the US and abroad. We aim to inspire our students to aim to inspire others and give them the tools to make physically and emotionally rigorous work that challenges ideas of who we are and what we can do, as individuals and a unified force. We want a circus revolution and we are building an army.

YEAR ONE is our FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH YEAR. You will spend 9 solid months doing intensive training to develop strong core, ensemble skills (juggling, dance, physical theater, acrobatics, handstands) that will make you a valuable and vital circus artist. You'll also dive deeply into research in your chosen apparatus, developing a voice and movement style that is unique to you. Students will work toward an end of the year show and come away with the solid skills and tools needed to progress to Year Two.

YEAR TWO is our LAB YEAR and TOUR. Designed as a sort of "circus graduate program", this year is ideal for emerging artists who have already completed Aloft's first year, a foundational year in a different program, or newly professional artists who wish to intensively develop an act to completion. In addition to independent training time, core classes in physical theater, dance, acrobatics, trampoline, handstands and more each month with feature a week long intensive workshop with a different world-class circus maker. Last year's lab coaches included Cohdi Harrell, Rain Anya, Joseph Pinzon, George Orange, Alessandra Ogren, Emma Sarjeant, Keith Bindlestiff and Lara Paxton.

ABOUT ALOFT CIRCUS ARTS

Founded in 2005, Aloft Circus Arts brings heart and artistry to a performance art usually associated with physical strength and fearlessness. We strive to highlight more than just the physical capacity to fly, twist, balance, and spin - we celebrate the human capacity for sensitivity as well as strength, beauty as well as bravery, empathy as well as pure creative fire. When we work together, the stories we share with the audience are always about the feelings and experiences that unite us all.

Aloft has produced 9 full length shows and performed countless one-off performances around the world. In 2014 we expanded from just a recreational program to include a full-time training program to nurture new artists. We have become one of the largest circus schools in the United States, a vibrant training center for new artists who endlessly inject our community and our creations with raw and passionate talent. Over 90% of our graduates currently work as circus professionals, many forming their own companies, which is one of our proudest accomplishments.

MORE INFORMATION ON YEAR ONE



Photo: Nancy Behall

The first year of the program will focus on the process, rather than the product--on skill development and movement research, both in generalist areas and, beginning in the second term, in a major area of focus. (Students wishing to minor in a secondary act will also have that option with a small tuition surcharge.) Weekly classes in acrobatics, handstands, tumbling, juggling, dance, physical theater, conditioning, stretching, aerial arts, creative and artistic development and more will enhance the development of the artist as a whole, rather than specialty performer. The year will begin quite regimented to develop discipline, safe training habits and ensemble skills. In the second term, private lessons and increased independent training will begin, focusing in this first year on building the highest possible skill level and also researching movement that is unique and true to the individual's voice and vision. We will work on acts, though the goal will be the creation of a draft to be completed in Year Two.

First Term, Year One.

Sept-Nov

Your first term at circus school will focus on developing the core skills to be a vital circus artist and lay a solid groundwork for developing acts and ensemble skills: dance, character work/clown/acting, acrobatics, juggling, conditioning, handstands, flexibility. The group will meet

for these classes from 11:30-4, Monday-Friday. Then, each student will be encouraged and allowed to take up to 7 elective classes from our regular student schedule. This format is intended to encourage you to be well-rounded and take classes in new things!

Second Term, Year One

Nov-Feb

In the second Trimester, students will begin to narrow their focus and develop skills in their areas of focus. While still maintaining daily training in physical theater, dance, juggling and acrobatics, students will begin to work several hours/day increasing their specific skill base in their major (and minor, if desired). The focus on majors for the remainder of this year is on skill development and in-depth movement research, rather than act creation. We are committed to helping students find their unique voices and develop as circus artists. Additionally, students will begin to have more open training time to further develop their research. Training will continue for 8 hours/day.

Term 3, Year One

March-June

The final term of the year will see increase independent training time for you to further focus on your areas of choice and the work you need to do specific to your own success.

Each student will be given a training program to follow and goals to accomplish each week. You will continue working intensely with your private coach on skills and creative research on your apparatus. We will also spend time each week working

on presenting an end of the year show. This show is informal and fun...not something to stress about!



Photo: Nancy Behall

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT YEAR TWO

The second year of our program can be thought of as a circus graduate program. While continuing to build advanced level skills in the core ensemble areas (acrobatics, handstands, tumbling, juggling, dance, physical theater), students will be honing their focus in independent training and private lessons to create acts that will graduate ready for the circus marketplace. In addition to working with the highly trained and qualified coaches at Aloft, we will bring in monthly nationally and internationally recognized guest artists who will work intensely with the students on both their acts and present unique and specialized workshops. The final two months of the program will focus on creating a high quality final show featuring the final acts in majors, minors

and ensemble skills, directed by an internationally renowned circus director. This show will be able to be presented as a future work if the class decides to continue working together as an ensemble after graduation.

Lab Weeks

One week per month during the first two terms of the second year, your training will be handed over to professional contemporary circus directors, artists and creators from around the world. They will spend the week doing private lessons and providing individual feedback to all of the students. They will also lead workshops in their areas of expertise. This unique aspect of our program will forge lasting relationships between the students and working professionals that will carry over into their post-graduations endeavors.

Previous Lab Coaches include **Joseph Pinzon, George Fuller, Cohdi Harrell, Alessandra Ogren, Keith Bindlestiff, Rain Anya, Emma Searjent, Lara Paxton, Holly Trendenick, Francesca Hyde, Aimee Hancock and Terry Crane.**

Final Show and Tour

The final presentation of the program will take the form of a fully conceptualized show, developed over the last 2 months of the program and demonstrating the student's final acts as well as all the

ensemble skills developed through the program. Students will spend an increasing amount of time on show creation and will work with a well-regarded director (in 2018-Emma Searjeant of Casus and Circa, 2020, Joe Pinzon of Short Round Productions/Filament, Eloize) to make something truly remarkable. It is our hope that the final product can be marketed by the group as a professional show after the program draws to a close. Students will also, of course, receive professional-quality photos and videos of the performance to use when seeking work.



Photo: Nancy Behall

Additional Details/expectations/requirements

- One private lesson/week beginning in the second term of the first year and continuing to the end of the program is included in tuition. Students wishing to have a minor area of focus pay a tuition surcharge.
- Additional private lessons in major or minor areas are available but are the financial responsibility of the student. Some area's of focus (namely contortion) and some coaches require additional time and therefore a tuition surcharge may be added at the coach's discretion.

- Students must attend and write reviews of one show per month.
- Students must watch and review books and videos on a weekly basis.
- Students must maintain a strong level of physical fitness and take care of their health. If students are not maintaining strength, commitment, or miss too many days for sickness or injury they may be dismissed from the program at the director's discretion.
- Students must disclose any injuries or illnesses to the program directors
- Special workshops in injury prevention, teaching, auditioning, marketing and more will be held throughout the program. Students are required to attend.
- Occasionally Aloft hosts guests instructors for workshops that are open to the entire student body. These workshops are encouraged, but not required and are not included in tuition.
- Students are NOT allowed to perform or teach during the program without expressed permission, on a case by case basis, from the director. Performing or teaching without permission will result in immediate dismissal from the program.
- There will be regular informal showings for the group to receive feedback on your acts and skill progress. These showings are of vital importance, and all are required to attend and participate.

TESTIMONIALS

"Aloft's full time program has helped me grow physically, mentally, and artistically. The coaches are so talented and helpful! The program gives you time to explore a variety of circus arts, then allows you to hone in on what you are passionate about. In addition to outstanding aerial training, Aloft offers a variety of apparatuses that are not often available, including tightwire and tramp wall. The lab year gives you the opportunity to work with circus professionals that share their experience, training methods, and practical advice about succeeding as a circus professional. I consider myself extremely lucky to have participated in it, and would recommend it to anyone hoping to become more technically proficient, creative, and physically expressive."
Christine Conroy

"The coaches are so supportive. The facility is inspiring and you are surrounded and encouraged by other performing circus artists the entire time. I have made many discoveries throughout the past 8 months: primary among them is the fact that I am still an artist, plain and simple." Johanna Vargas

"I've never before been in a place, or part of a group, where my worth was based not on my looks, my financial status, or my education, but instead on my work ethic, my strength (both mental and physical), and my desire to kick ass." -Julie Marshall

"I am a graduate of two training programs and Aloft's full time training program was by far the most valuable one to me. It pushed me to grow in ways both professionally and personally and to reach my career goals. Some of my favorite aspects of it were the comprehensive group disciplines and classes, working one on one with my instructor on the development of my ideas

and act creation, the classroom knowledge we received about the business side and the beautiful show we put together at the end. I highly recommend this program to anyone who wants to be challenged, changed and deeply moved by this unique experience.” Kristi Taff

“1. The full-time program at Aloft was one of the coolest things I've ever done, and I've done a lot of cool things.

2. I gained so much as a result of the life-changing Aloft full-time program, including a supportive community, a group of lifelong friends, tremendous mental and physical strength, and a safe place and time for creative free expression.

3. The coaches in the Aloft full-time program will help you get stronger both as an acrobat and as an artist. Here muscular strength goes hand in hand with the strength to speak up with your own unique voice.

4. The full-time program at Aloft is more than a circus school. It's a spiritual journey.

5. The world outside is trying to crush your beautiful spirit; don't let it! Join the circus! Get strong! Fight back with style!

6. Being an artist today takes strength and guts. The full-time program at Aloft will give you both.

7. The full-time program at Aloft has found the perfect balance between the development of technical skill and the fostering of artistic creativity.

8. The full-time program at Aloft has so much to offer: incredible professional coaches, an enormous variety of classes and disciplines, a beautiful training space, and a community on the forefront of circus in the U.S.” -Whitni Battle (Gyata Dingo)

“I came in to Aloft’s full time training program with a burning desire to be a badass successful rope artist, the program not only offered me the opportunity to advance significantly in my rope skills, but also allowed me to grow as a generalist. For that I will forever be grateful. Post the program, I continued to work with my coach and within a year found myself working as a professional rope artist. Within a year of graduating the program I had performed my act at festivals throughout the United States as well as being invited to perform as the 5th US artist at the 16th International Festival of Circus CIRCUBA in Havana, Cuba in 2017”. - Bre Lawson 2016