

Boulder Circus Center, Colorado

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Instructor assists student in wrapping during an “aerial fabric” lesson. (Claire Walter photo)

Fly High for Fitness

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Tired of the treadmill? Weary of the weight room? Yoga leave you yawning?

A beginner class at the new Boulder Circus Center can elevate you from exercise *ennui*. Founded by Carter Brown and Cindy Marvell, whose Lazer Vaudeville troupe tours nationally, the school reportedly is the only dedicated circus-arts training facility between Maine and California. Dabbling in aerial arts, circus acrobatics, juggling or other skills will get you out of your fitness routine rut. "Circus skills are for additional physical training, because they create an entirely different kind of kinetic awareness," says Brown.

An activity, popularized by the Cirque de Soleil and known in circus-speak as "aerial fabric," involves aerial maneuvers while gripping or wrapped in long bands of spandex suspended from above. The cloud swing is a U-shaped rope can swing trapeze-like through the air or be ridden while the performer is in contact with the floor. "Every aerial activity requires works an incredible variety of muscle groups, including strong stomach muscles," says Marvell.

"In addition to learning something new that takes strength, there's a social aspect to these classes," says Cathy Gaugh, who teaches adult beginners. "We have a lot of fun, and there's a lot of camaraderie and support that you just don't get in a gym. A person will work on something for weeks before finally getting it. The whole class breaks into spontaneous applause."

Aerial fabric has captivated Chad Jacobsen, a 32-year-old digital animator who works in Denver. The former gymnast and body builder finds that it satisfies both his quest for fitness and his aesthetic side. "It is another modality. Few people do it, and fewer teach it," he says, "Fabric is not just about pushing pounds. Fabric requires range of motion, dexterity and flexibility. You use your body as a tool. It is athletic, but the aggressiveness of athletics is in conquering yourself. There is something tangible about accomplishing a maneuver that you couldn't do for a long time."

"Juggling has a lot of common with yoga," adds Marvell, an international juggling champion. "It's physical and it also gets you onto a meditational plane."

For more information, contact the Boulder Circus Center, 303-444-8110 or www.bouldercircuscenter.com. -- *Claire Walter*

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