

Le Vorriss & Vox
Risk Management Plan: 2011 - 2012
(Last revision: 11/25/2011)

To whom it may concern:

We know, as with any activity a person does, that there exists a certain amount of risk in the circus arts. We also understand that all risk cannot be eliminated, but we strive to manage and minimize the risks that we will incur. Our main goal is to focus on injury prevention for both the participants and performers of Le Vorriss & Vox Circus and our audience. We will focus on rigging safety as well, being aware that our rigging is only as strong as its weakest link. The working load limitations of the equipment we use will be accounted for, as well as an awareness of shock loads on the equipment, and the complicated subject of dynamic forces that occur while suspended motion is taking place. We are educating ourselves and corresponding with professionals so that we can be skilled in safety and knowledgeable as performers. That way, we can handle taking on some calculated, well-measured risks. It is important to note as well that circus and aerial activities are ranked at a safety level with soccer and cheerleading, and are considered safer than football, according to Allison Williams of the Aerial Angels, in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

We are willing to make creative compromises to work within a space and with the administration. The one thing we will not compromise ourselves on is safety. Being responsible practitioners of the circus arts, we plan to make inspection of all of our apparatus a part of our ritual practice; never assuming the equipment is the same as the way we left it. We are constantly in communication with the professional circus community in Chicago to ensure that our safety measures are on par with those in the professional world.

This document will enumerate which specific circus activities (and the details thereof) that the club would like to train with in its weekly practices and perform in its shows. This document will explain our specific plans of action regarding the risk management of each activity aforementioned. In addition, specifics pertaining to the *exact* safety precautions that the members of Le Vorriss & Vox must follow while engaging in circus activities and rigging essentials, procedures, practices, and the shows, will be described, in detail.

Sincerely,
The Members of Le Vorriss & Vox

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Part I. Activities Details:

1) **Aerial Silk/ Tissue** – polyester fabric hanging from rigging, on which performers climb, knot, pose, and slide. Can be hung from free-standing tripod rig or from the building structure on load-bearing beams.

2) **Aerial Static Trapeze** – A steady bar attached to rope on either end, on which performers can do a series of controlled tricks. Can be hung from free-standing tripod rig or from the building structure on load-bearing beams.

3) **Juggling (non-fire)** – Items such as balls and juggling clubs and knives will be juggled.

4) **Dance** – This includes leaps, spins, etc.

5) **Acrobatics** – This includes basic tumbling, gymnastics, partner acrobatics/ hand balancing, and basic cheerleading-type tosses.

6) **Unicycle riding**

7) **Stilt Walking** – Stilt walking consists of the extension of the legs by wood/mental stilts, or leg extensions, which attach to the feet and legs using a variety of safely secured straps.

8) **Hula Hoop**

9) **Fire Manipulation:**

- **Staff** – A staff is a long, rigid metal stick with two wicks (1.5” in length) on either end, which the performer spins with his/her hands and arms.
- **Fans** – Fans are spider-web like metal apparatus’ with five *small* wicks on each. They are finger holes, which help to manipulate the fans. These are used as apparatus’ in *fire dancing*, and are extremely controlled and safe.
- **Fingers** – thin, metal rods attached to small wicks, which attach to the fingers of the performer.
- **Hoop** – Similar to a non-fire hoop, except that it has fire-finger-like metal rods that can be attached via screws for fire hooping.

Part II. Action Plans: (general)

(Each member of Le Vorris & Vox *must* sign ORSCA's waiver of liability when they join and then each year that they are a member of Le Vorris & Vox Circus RSO).

Faculty/ Staff Advisor:

(as of Fall 2011)

- Asad Ali, ORCSA Advisor
- Tom Burch, Staff Advisor

In addition to the support from ORCSA, Le Vorris & Vox circus is now underneath the umbrella of the Theater and Performance Studies department (TAPS) at the University of Chicago. We work closely with TAPS staff and students, including Heidi Coleman, Laura Ashlock, and Brian LaDuca.

Fire Marshall Approval/ Clearance:

Le Vorris & Vox has offered to speak with someone from the Hyde Park Fire Department about having a fireperson present during our fire performance. As of now, the University of Chicago administration has denied our offer to do this. If the administration gives Le Vorris & Vox the green light, Le Vorris & Vox would be happy to pay for the service of having a fireperson at each performance.

Professional Aerial Support:

CircoRose entertainment is a professional, Chicago circus company. Le Vorris & Vox has worked with them since becoming a student group again in 2010. They supply us with the aerial rig for our shows, and supply us with inspection for each space we perform in, in order to ascertain whether it is safe to perform aerials. (Please see <http://www.circorose.com/Circo/Home.html> for more information).

We have also rented a free-standing with the Actor's Gym, a professional and well-established circus school in Evanston, IL, through one of its aerial instructors, Jill Heyser.

Professional Fire Support:

Le Vorris & Vox Circus works closely with Liz Campanella of Pyrotechniq, a Chicago-base fully insured fire performance troupe, which is regarded as the Midwest's premier fire dancing troupe with over 40 years of experience. (Please see <http://www.pyrotechniq.org/> for more information). We use their trainings to train our fire performers and safeties. All Le Vorris & Vox members who are involved in fire performance *must* be trained, either at the Full Moon Jam (a city-sanctioned fire gathering each month organized by Liz Campanella), or by one of senior members of Le Vorris & Vox Circus who went through a training with Liz Campanella.

Safety Guards at performances:

During specific acts that involve aerials, unicycling, or stilt-walking, we will have one to two members of the show who will act as safety guards in our performances, to ensure correct crowd management and safety during our shows.

Acrobatics & Aerials Spotting Safety Support:

Each member of Le Vorris & Vox will be trained by Lucy Little and Alessandra Stevens in spotting techniques for acrob, as learned from MSA & Circus Arts school in Chicago.

Additionally, any acrobatics and aerials that are worked on in practices and in shows *must* be done with either panel mats or the crash pad, depending on the risk level of the trick.

Le Vorris & Vox Circus owns three panel mats, uses four that are owned by TAPS, and owns it's own large crash pad.

Itemization of safety precautionary tools:

- Fire extinguishers
- Fire Blanket
- First Aid Kit
- Gymnastics mats/sports pads

Spotting and learning new skills:

All students who train in fire dance and manipulation *must be trained in the current safety standards* before each show. All members have agreed to *not* practice with fire until they have been trained, unless they are in a facility off campus. These trainings *must* happen before each and every show that LV&V puts on in which fire manipulation is involved, and will usually happen three weeks before each performance.

In addition, students wishing to perform aerials, or work on aerials in our practices, can only do so under the guidance of Actor's Gym trained UChicago and Le Vorris & Vox alumnae, Alessandra Stevens, who currently acts as a trainer for Le Vorris & Vox Circus.

Routine Equipment Inspection:

- Each quarter, a selected student will go over each piece of Le Vorris & Vox inventory, to ensure that is still safe to use.
- Fire equipment must be maintained *only* by those students who are trained/training in the fire arts.
- Stilts will *continually* be checked, to ensure that it can withstand the loads meant for it.

Part III. *Specific Action Plans:*

For circus arts that carry a level of risk with them, these are standards known by those in the circus community around the nation and in Chicago, and therefore are the standards that the members of Le Vorris & Vox *must* uphold. They are as follows:

1. Acrobatics

- Le Vorris & Vox will maintain sports pads (gymnastics mat or crash pad) under themselves when necessary while practicing and performing acrobatic activity.
- Members will stretch and warm up each time they prepare to do acrobatic activity.
- Members will consciously be aware of falling techniques and partner safety.
- On stage spotters will be worked into routines when possible and necessary. The main goal of spotters is to protect the head.
- Generally, it is the base's responsibility to watch out for the safety of the flyer. In this respect, the base is the spotter, and should do whatever they can to avoid the flyer getting injured. That said, flyers also should be proactive about falling safely (tucking the head, keeping a hollow body, etc.)
- Clothing: snug fitting, but easy to move in comfortable attire. If doing partner acrobatics, be sure to coordinate clothing choices with your partner and see what works best for both of you from both functional and aesthetic perspectives.

2. Fire Manipulation and Dance

- **BE AWARE.** Specifics about your surroundings and environment, as well as location of audience members fellow club members should all be carefully noted and constantly reevaluated at all times when doing fire performance.
 - **For performances**, there must be a specified distance (between eight and ten feet) between the audience and the performers at all times. It is the job of the safeties to maintain this distance. At each performance, the area of the stage where the fire performance is taking place must be visibly drawn **using caution tape**.
- **Always** have a fire blanket and three fire extinguishers on hand. All members will know where these are located and how to use them.
- **There will at least be one spotter for every fire performer.** These spotters have damp towels.
- In addition, there will be two or three spotters with fire extinguishers, who mark the perimeter of the staged area.
- There will also be spotters stationed behind the caution tape and in front of the audience, insuring an added boundary between the audience and the fire performance.
- Always store the fuel and lighter several feet apart, only one person has the lighter and is in charge of it.
 - This area will be marked and *separate* from the stage.
- Always alert everyone before igniting.
- Long hair will be tied back. Hair must be wet with water. People with significant facial hair are advised to not eat fire.
- Loose and polyester clothing **will not be worn** while working with fire.
 - Cotton, Silk, and Jeans are the only materials to be worn.
- Be aware that some make-ups are flammable and can cause serious damage to the face if put under concentrated heat situations (aka fire-eating). Watch your lipstick!

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- Do **NOT** yell the word “fire”, as it can frighten those who overhear and or mishear.
- Keep fuel can in a plastic box **with a lid**.
- **Directly** after the performer is done, the fire object **must be put out by a damp towel before** the performer leaves the stage.
- When packing up, keep things that have fuel on them and things that do not separate. Also be conscious of not using towels that could still have fuel on them to extinguish another apparatus or person.
 - Because of this, there will be damp towels on hand that are *specifically for* other apparatus or people and **will not be used** for to extinguish fire objects.
- Remember to stay calm and make the audience feel at ease. If they are confident that you are in control, they’ll enjoy the show more. If an unplanned incident occurs, keep it low profile if possible.

3. Aerials

- Le Vorris & Vox will maintain mats under the aerial apparatus at all times while practicing and performing.
- Only students that can demonstrate at least a intermediate level of skill will be allowed to perform.
- The aerial silk will always extend down to the ground.
- All jewelry must be removed before working on the aerial silk.
- Be conscious of how slippery or sticky your body may be. Take in consideration the temperature of where you are working, and whether or not you’ve used lotion and or soap with moisturizer. Believe it or not, this can make a big difference in aerial ability.

Part IV. Conclusion:

Le Vorriss & Vox Circus wishes to be taken seriously in terms of our performance capability. While we understand that the Le Vorriss & Vox Circus of 2001 – 2006 may have approached performance safety differently, we wish for the administration to recognize that we have an entirely new student body and new leaders, all of whom are highly committed to changing the relationship that Le Vorriss & Vox Circus holds with the University community. We have done our research, and have a commitment to make our club function in the safest, best way possible, so that we can bring great entertainment and training to the University of Chicago Community. Continually, we would like to uphold Le Vorriss & Vox Circus's four-fold mission statement:

- To educate students in a unique art form that they would not otherwise have access to
- To provide a practical outlet for students who have an interest in circus arts to learn and develop skills in a safe and fun environment.
- To entertain the campus community with an art form that combines a multitude of different cultural skills and practices.
- To aid students who wish to continue pursuing circus arts after graduation, through education, outreach and fundraising.

We look forward to continuing the successful relationship between Le Vorriss & Vox and the administrative community at the University of Chicago!

Thank you,
The members of Le Vorriss & Vox Circus.

Part V: Current Contact Info.

President: Lucy Little (lalittle@uchicago.edu)

Key Board Members:

Edward Menendez (emenendez@uchicago.edu)

Nicholas Cassleman (ncasslem@uchicago.edu)

Diana Harper (drharper3@gmail.com)

Molly Berkemeier (mollyberkemeier@gmail.com)

Alumnae Trainer & Coordinator:

Alessandra Stevens (alessandrastevens@gmail.com)

*All six members listed above can be contacted regarding safety questions. If the questions are specific to a certain skill, please contact:

- Acrobatics: Lucy Little
- Aerials: Alessandra Stevens
- Fire manipulation: Eddie Menendez or Lucy Little

