

The Aerial Hoop Manual

Volume 2

A step-by-step reference guide for teachers
and students of any aerial lyra program

PREVIEW

Rebekah Leach
with Julianna Hane

Special Thanks to
Circus Building

PREVIEW

The following is a preview of the Aerial Hoop Manual Volume 2 written by Rebekah Leach. If you would like to purchase this manual in full, in either download form or paperback, please visit AerialDancing.com.

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This book may be purchased with bulk discounts. For information, e-mail books@aerialdancing.com. Corresponding video content is now available on AerialDancing.com.

When practicing aerial hoop, always perform warm up exercises before attempting any individual exercises. Also, when practicing aerial hoop, always do so in the presence of a trained professional, with load-tested hoop hanging from load-tested rigging, which has been set-up and inspected frequently by rigging professionals, along with crash pads underneath the hoop. It is recommended that you check with your doctor or healthcare provider before commencing any exercise program, especially one as rigorous as aerial hoop.

Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of this material, there is a real chance of injury in execution of the movements described in this book. The Publisher and all persons involved in the making of this manual will not accept responsibility for injury to any degree, including death, to any person as a result of participation in the activities described in this manual. Purchase or use of this document constitutes agreement to this effect. Furthermore, rigging of aerial equipment is not discussed in this manual. Consult a professional rigger when it comes to using any hanging equipment.

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DISCLAIMER

This manual is not intended for a layman person to pick up and start learning on their own. All use (and misuse) of this manual is done so AT YOUR OWN RISK. Your use of this manual constitutes your agreement to waive all rights and assume all risk associated with injury that may occur when applying the knowledge of this book.

If you have any health concerns whatsoever, make sure that you check in with your healthcare professional. Inverting and going into positions that cause pressure to certain places on the body can be a dangerous situation for persons with particular medical conditions. Risks include stroke, heart attack, dizzy spells, or other injury. As always, stop exercising if you feel any symptoms such as feeling faint or dizzy. As with any activity involving height, there is always a risk of injury including paralysis and/or death.

BE SAFE

The top 5 things you can do to make sure that you are practicing safely:

1. Start by taking live lessons from a professional aerialist. Use this book for reference only.
2. Always inspect your rigging that was rigged by a professional.
3. Practice over a mat.
4. Never practice alone. Always have a spotter.
5. Practice safe progression. (Do not attempt moves you are not ready for.)

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Preface

Dear Reader,

When writing Volume I, I promised that I would cover tippy lyra in the second volume of aerial hoop. That was back when I figured that Julianna and I would only write two volumes on hoop. This series has exploded like all my projects seem to do. This book didn't have room for tippy lyra, especially not after adding two chapters on intro to partnering work. Besides, as I did the photo-shoots, I started to get attached to my tippy lyra. Now I feel that there is so much to explore. The new plan is to write another volume of hoop after this one in which tippy lyra will be covered and possibly more partnering work as well.

If you purchase the download version of this manual from our website, *AerialDancing.com*, then a video icon appears in the upper right hand corner of every page. Those icons are active links that will take you directly to the video for the moves on the page. You can view the video as long as you are a paying member on *AerialDancing.com*. If you are holding the paperback book, you are also welcome to jump onto the site to view corresponding video content covering the moves in this book and plenty more. It is especially helpful for those moves that can't quite be fully conveyed in pictures and/or writing. In the future, we plan on adding to the video content by uploading training ideas, workouts, warm ups, sequences, you name it, to help keep you and your students in aerial shape all along your journey, whether you are beginner or advanced, young or old, recovery from having a baby or at the top of your game. We're here to support your journey. Thank you for bring us along on yours.

As always, Happy Flying,

Rebekah Leach

Introduction

We are excited to have you join us for round two. This volume focuses on advancing a student through their aerial journey. Some students will be ready to learn moves that require a high level of strength and flexibility. You will find plenty of new ideas for those students. Other students will be growing in their quality of movement, but they are not necessarily ready for high strength or high flexibility moves. Not to fear! We have thought of that group of students as well. Besides the solo moves spread throughout the book that will be well suited for them, we also suggest advancing these students into partner work to continue their hoop journey. Be encouraged that there are other ways to grow than strength or flexibility. Everyone has their limits, and the best dancer is not necessarily the most flexible or the strongest. The best dancer has the best heart, and is the one who can capture a story on stage. Working with a partner can challenge and grow the performer in us all.

As far as specific content goes, we start with a bang in chapter one with the one arm hang. It is wise to train with your end goals in mind. If you want to perform a one arm hang, you won't wake up suddenly able to do one day unless your training prior to that day prepared your muscles for that goal. With the one arm hang and every challenging move along the way, start training long before you reach the day you plan on attempting them full out. It is good to present the idea or concept of a move prior to the expectation of performance.

After exploring the space below the hoop in chapter one, move on to chapter two where you will find ways to explore movement inside the hoop. The pose from the cover of this manual is covered at the end of this chapter. Rebekah discovered that pose when playing one day, and it is one of the moves she is most proud of being able to perform for this manual.

In the single tabbed chapter, you get to slide and roll on your belly in our variation of cat scratch. In double tabbed moves, you get to learn a beautiful outside knee hang that transitions into a gorgeous single ankle hang. This flows into the perfect transition into upside down man in the moon. Be forewarned: Rebekah loves upside-down man in the moon, so you might see that shape pop up a few different ways.

There's some real treasures in the transitions chapter. Because transitions are at the heart of individual style, it is not realistic to consider this set of transitions as standard curriculum for a program. Every student in a program is going to approach the hoop with their own unique view. We expect the natural flow between moves to vary along with everyone's different shapes and sizes and likes and dislikes. The transition chapter we present here includes moves that could be considered standard dynamic movement taught in a curriculum, but there is also a large dose of personal flavor that could come and go from the curriculum. Use it as a launching pad. It is the start of the brainstorm until you find what fits your own style and/or your own curriculum.

As far as layout goes, the best looking pages are the last two chapters. If you do a quick flip through, these pages are likely to jump out at you as they are colored with a purple background. These pages took on a new look to separate them as partnering pages. If you've never done (or taught) partnering before, we've given you some foundational starting points. Be safe and happy flying.

Safe Training Practices

Since we cover some fairly advanced movement in this manual, I thought it would be a good idea to remind you what safe training looks like. As the teacher, you can promote safe training practices for your students and set the example in your own self-training time.

1. Use spotters & mats.

Spotters are essential for the learning process. Every aerialist, no matter how advanced, is going to be in need of a spotter at some point during their training. Every spotter also needs to be backed up by a mat. Always practice over mats. No one plans on falling, but you'll be thankful for the mat the day an accident happens. See the next page for more spotting guidelines.

2. Use proper progressions.

In my curriculum, I use very light and/or very little physical spotting. The reason for this is that my number one tool for safe training is progressions. Every time a student of mine learns a new move, I am working with them on that move because I feel that they have the prerequisite strength to carry out the move on their own. If you are doing a lot of heavy spotting, then that may be a sign that you are working students at a pace that is too fast. In general, you should not be lifting students into moves. If you are carrying a student's weight because they are not strong enough for the move, then they are not ready for the move. They need to regress, gain strength (or flexibility, etc), and then re-attempt the move at a later date when their body is ready. Also, always train both sides of the body as you work through progressions. This maintains a balanced body required for injury prevention.

3. Train the EXIT before the ENTRY.

Some moves have harder exits than they do entries. Skin the cat is a good example of this. It is easy to go into a ball inversion and continue towards the ground. After you have dropped the hips towards the ground, it is extremely difficult to stop mid-air and retrograde back under the bar. Think about this as you train. Teach the exit first. Instead of letting the hips drop all the way towards the ground in skin the cat, drop them only an inch or two and come back up. If that was easy, repeat with an additional inch. Repeat again. Hopefully, you get the idea.

4. Teach self-spotting and bail techniques.

At some point, students will be independently practicing moves. (Think open workout for example.) As a student practices a move, it is good if they know how to spot themselves as well as know how to safely bail a move. Give them a plan of action that you think they can follow safely on their own. In some cases, you may advise them to not practice a move on their own because they are not ready. If they are, give them the tools to safely spot themselves or properly exit a move when they need to.

Let's talk about that bail plan. If the student is half-way through a move, and they feel like they cannot complete the move, what do they do? My personal pet peeve is a drop to the ground. Unplanned drops or a bad habit of dropping can lead to injury. Instruct student how to return to a base position on the apparatus if they feel they need to abort the move they were attempting.

5. Practice low to the ground.

Keep all aerial apparatuses low to the ground when first learning. This will enable spotters to get in there and give the appropriate spot. The only negative is that students may not complete the movement to the very end. They might step or jump off the apparatus. Encourage students to act like the apparatus is 10 feet up. That is how they gain your trust to progress in height at a later date.

Lessons in Spinning

Prerequisite(s):
grip strength

About this move: As you play, remember to maintain proper core positioning. If you enter a released position, do so with intention and caution (not by accident!). No sudden or dynamic movement is advised while in a disengaged body form. This is the surest route to injury. Instead, engaged your shoulders with your shoulder blades tucked in your back pockets while spinning or performing other dynamic movement on hoop.

Grip Variations for Spinning

Grip Variations

You can spin holding onto the top bar, bottom bar and everywhere in between. Hold with hands wide, or hold with the hands narrow. Hold with two hands; hold with one hand; hold with no hands. No hands would entail holding with an elbow or inverting and “holding” with your knee, etc. We are going to start our discussion of spinning technique where you hold with one or both hands. Wrap your thumbs.



Use Your Core

Use Your Core to Spin On Axis

The axis is the vertical line or plumb line of the hoop. It is possible to spin off axis, but for beginning technique, we recommend spinning on axis to maintain more control.

The core muscles are the secret to maintaining control over spins. In the photos to the right, notice that the core is being utilized to remain spinning around plumbline in photo 1. In photo 2, notice that the core has been released and although the aerialist is still spinning, there is almost no control over the spin. The aerialist is being flung around, and the body position is floppy. The hoop is also out of control, which presents a danger as the hoop could fling back and hit the aerialist. If you are familiar with the hollow body concept of core position, these spins are the perfect time to put that knowledge to good use.

Finding the Sweet Spot of Minimum Inertia

If you have ever done any spinning in your life, you are likely to possess working knowledge of the fact that pulling limbs in makes you go faster and reaching limbs out makes you go slower. This has to do with inertia. Inertia refers to how mass is distributed from the axis of rotation. The more inertia you have, the more mass is distributed away from the center of rotation. So, limbs away from center means there is more inertia than when you pull in. With limbs in, you have less inertia.

Angular momentum must always be conserved as you spin. When the inertia decreases, something else has to increase in order to keep the momentum conserved. That something else is angular velocity. This is why you speed up as you pull in. The fastest spin can be accomplished by gradually pulling the entire body into a vertical line as close as possible to the axis of rotation. This is the same principle that ice skaters use as they go into those super fast spins. As you hunt for the sweet spot of minimum inertia and maximum angular velocity, there has never been a more appropriate time to get in touch with core control. Once found, you can use a similar core engagement in your handstands and more!



Rib Cage & Bicep Hangs

Prerequisite(s):
some pain
tolerance

About this move: *In my personal opinion, it is dangerous to hang on the lumbar spine as well as the cervical spine. These sections of the spine are simply too vulnerable. I believe the thoracic spine and the sacral spine (sacrum) are better places to support hanging. Sacrum hangs were in Volume 1. For the thoracic hangs, I like to start at the base of the back of the rib cage and work my way up the back until I am hanging under my armpits.*



Rib Cage Hang & More

There are two main entries into rib cage hang. You can either start in a foot block and carefully lower the legs or you can enter from a sacrum hang (back balance), being careful to avoid landing on the lumbar spine. This can be accomplished by rolling slightly onto your obliques as you lower to the bottom of the rib cage. Use your hands on the hoop to stabilize as you engage your back and gradually release your hands. Having bent legs makes it easier to maintain the back arch (photo 3). An easier position to enter is having the arms down as in photo 6. This brings the hoop higher on the back. At this point, you can transition into a bicep hang by bending your arms. Keep your forearms or hands pinned to your side. To continue the sequence, remove one arm from the hoop. Swim your second hand into the space created by the first. Carefully exit to two hand grip below the hoop.

BOTTOM BAR BEAUTY

The rib cage hang position is a very powerful position on the hoop. It can look easy because of its simplicity, but as all hoop practitioners know, it is not an easy nor comfortable move when you first train it. Once you get cozy with the rib cage hang, and you start to choreograph it into your dramatic piece, you might try taking it to the side... and then the other side while you toss your head back in the transition. Beautiful.



Outside Knee & Ankle Hang

Prerequisite(s):
strong hamstrings
and ankle flexion

About this move: *The outside knee hang leads right into the outside single ankle hang, so they are presented together here. The term outside generally refers to when the apparatus is crossing along the back as opposed to in front of the torso. Recently, we made a revision to the overall terminology of the hoop books to be more consistent with the use of "inside" and "outside." This corresponds to rope and fabric as well.*

Outside Knee Hang on Top of a Double Tabbed Hoop

Outside Knee Hang

From a ball inversion, hook one knee on the top bar. Hook the knee near the opposite span set so the knee is slightly off center. It can make the move easier to transfer the same hand as hooked knee up to the rope.

With a snug knee hook holding steady, slide the other hand down the hoop and open your hips towards the ground. If secure, release the bottom arm.



Single Ankle Hang

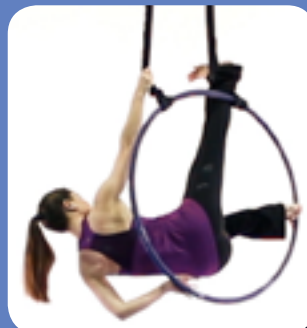
Single Knee Hang

From the outside knee hook, hold your weight mostly in your top hand and straighten the top leg, hooking the ankle on the rope. Keeping a strong flex, sink your weight and release the bottom arm when secure.



ADDING ON

From the single ankle hang, place your bottom foot on the hoop around 4 o'clock and your bottom hand around 8 o'clock. Push into the hoop as you lift your hips away from the hoop. In this push out, lift the hips towards the ceiling slightly more than it feels necessary to prevent a droopy middle. Keep those obliques engaged.



Horizon Splits

Prerequisite(s):
strong arm-core
connection

About this move: Another impressive split, this move requires a lot of brute force! Full body tension and pulling against the hoop with the upper body keeps this split in place and creates a powerful effect. This move can be performed on either a single tabbed hoop or a double tabbed hoop. If you are working on a single point hoop, it usually works best to place the top hand slightly closer to the back leg, just behind the tab.



Horizon Splits

Begin in a knee hang on the top bar. Leave enough space for one hand to fit between the knees. Place one hand between the knees and the other hand on the bottom bar (photo 3). This placement automatically turns you toward one side. The leg you are facing will become the front leg in your split. Alternate sliding your legs down the hoop, stopping just before you get to the horizon line of the hoop.

Pull like crazy with your arms. Your front leg should arrive at 3 o'clock and the back leg at 9 o'clock, creating a horizontal line. Just before your back leg reaches horizontal, rotate your hips so the back leg locks in place. If you don't rotate soon enough, you will slide out of position. This is another reason to learn and practice the exit prior to learning the full split.

If you have a sticky hoop, you may have to do some extra weight shifts to get into place. The good thing about a sticky hoop is that the position will be easier to hold once you're there.

EXIT STRATEGY

As you sink out of the splits position, send your sit bones through the hoop so that you can momentarily rest your grip. Thread one leg through the hoop to land in outside lion. Or explore other options.



Amazon

Prerequisite(s):
Amazon

About this move: On the previous page we talked about making choices for the limbs that make a clean position. For the Amazon, the clean choice for the arms is by the side. If you have the legs together, decide where they will be in space. Are you going for straight down? Are you going for an arched look? It will take some practice to achieve the desired goal. It will also take practice to break habits you might be used to doing.

Amazon Entry

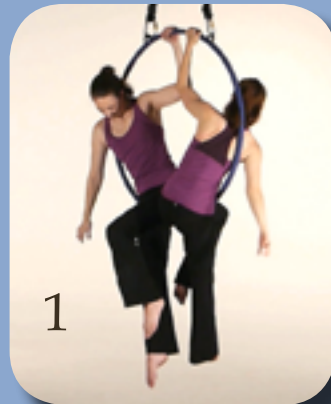
Start in lion in a tree. It helps to do the sleeper variation in order to connect the back of the shoulder into the hoop.

Hold the hoop and remove your leg.

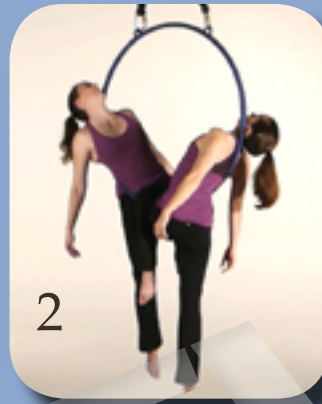
Remove your top arm and press on the hoop with the other arm.

Partnering Tip

It helps to aim for legs that are straight down towards the ground in order to match each other.



1



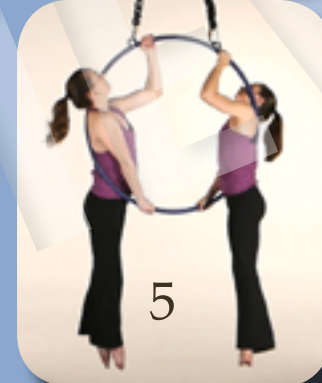
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3



4



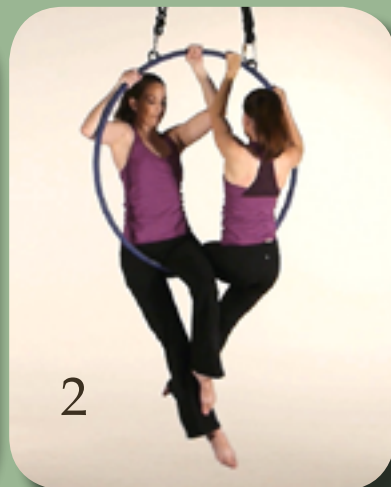
5



6



1



2

Amazon Exit

It can be tricky to bring both of your feet over simultaneously. Lift the knee as high as you can towards your chest first and sickle your foot, sneaking it right past your partner's foot. A larger hoop can be helpful, but not entirely necessary.

EXIT

About the Authors



Rebekah Jean Leach has been dancing for over three decades now. Anywhere she is, is her stage, starting with the fireplace hearth when she was 3 years old. In college, she took her first official course in dance. On the wall of the studio there was a picture of dancers dancing in ropes. She felt the urge—the calling, if you will, to higher ground. At age 22, she attended a workshop by Fred Deb held at the Aerial Dance Festival in Boulder, CO. Before the festival, she attended a performance of Fred Deb’s with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. That performance changed her life.

In 2008, Rebekah and Matthew Leach opened an aerial dance studio in Ojai, CA. Rebekah combined her background in education with teaching her love of aerial dance. However, when the recession hit, and Matthew was laid off from his job, hard times hit. Relying on her technical background, Rebekah joined the Navy, where she is currently a commissioned officer teaching nuclear physics at the Nuclear Power Training Command in Charleston, SC. When her active duty commitment is complete, her dream is to once again open an aerial dance studio. All of Rebekah’s profits from the sales of these manuals are going towards that end. Thank you for helping dreams come true.

Rebekah currently resides in Charleston, SC with husband and daughter.

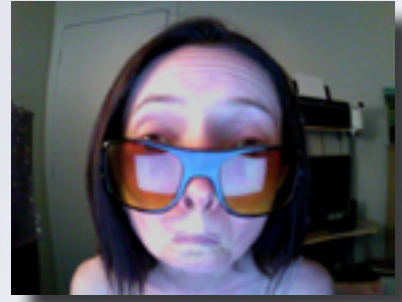


Julianna Gaillard Hane, a native of South Carolina, traded life on a cotton farm to be a dancer and aerialist. Julianna’s first experience in aerial dance happened at Winthrop University (where she received a B.A. in Dance) when she performed in two rope & harness works by Mary Beth Young. She then continued her study of aerial work at New England Center for Circus Arts with Elsie Smith, Serenity Smith Forchion, and Aimee Hancock. She has also studied with Bay Area artists Joanna Haigood and Elena Panova.

Julianna holds a M.F.A. in Modern Dance from the University of Utah. During her graduate study Julianna founded Revolve Aerial Dance, a school and performing company specializing in aerial fabric, trapeze, and aerial hoop. Through the company she co-produced aerial concerts, performed in corporate events, and set an aerial dance work on the Snow College Dance Company in Ephraim, Utah. She wrote her master’s thesis on aerial dance choreography under the guidance of Donna White, Eric Handman, Abby Fiat and Tandy Beal. She also wrote an aerial dance curriculum for her studio and a teacher training course to mentor new aerial teachers. This manual has been an extension of that work.

Julianna moved Revolve Aerial Dance to Charleston in 2010 to collaborate with local dancers, musicians, writers, and other artists in her home state.





Acknowledgments

The picture above was taken from my mac as I was taking a break from editing one day. I have to wear sunglasses when I look at computer screens because my eyes are very light-sensitive and I can feel my retinas burning. I'm thankful to my glasses for keeping my eyes in good shape for many hours of editing.

A very extra special thanks goes to Jordan Anderson and Clayton Woodson. Much of the video and photography for the moves in this book were taken at their studio, Circus Building. Clayton Woodson appeared as a spotter in this manual, and I am very grateful for his willingness to jump into the book. Other video and photography were also captured at RED Creatives, so many thanks to them as well!

As for editing this manual, I am blessed with lots of people to thank! Among those who helped thoroughly edit this book are: Anne Miller, Krista Bocko, Jordan Anderson, Clayton Woodson, Lorraine Bruce-Allen, Michelle Hutchinson, and Jerusha "Juice" Horlick. Another colleague who reviewed chapters was Kate Edwards of Spin City Fitness. Kate has been wonderfully generous in sharing her hoop curriculum materials and giving excellent feedback during the making of this manual. This book is that much better because of her.

And of course, last but not least, my amazing, talented, supportive, loving, dedicated husband, Matthew Leach. He works daily on shipping out books and has helped this book arrive in your hands in one way or another. :)

A woman in a purple leotard is performing aerial arts. She is suspended by two vertical grey fabric straps, holding them with her hands. Her legs are extended horizontally to the right. Below her, a large, light purple hula hoop is visible, partially overlapping the fabric straps.

Aerial Dance Manuals by Rebekah Leach

Beginning Aerial Fabric Instructional Manual

Intermediate Aerial Fabric Part 1

Intermediate Aerial Fabric Part 2

Aerial Yoga Manual Volume 1

Aerial Yoga Manual Volume 2

Aerial Hoop Manual Volume 1

Aerial Hoop Manual Volume 2 (live link. click to order)

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Corresponding video content
for all manuals is now
available on *AerialDancing.com*.

