

## **Jump Rhythm Technique™: Six Action-Ideas** (Billy Siegenfeld; Copyright 2010)

In Jump Rhythm Technique, the goal is *full-bodied rhythm-making* – learning how to use the alignment concept of *standing down straight* to transform the moving body, accompanied by the scat-singing voice, into a dynamically expressive, rhythm-accurate percussion instrument. Six action-ideas move us toward this goal:

**1. Being on the beat.** This involves pulsing the body downward into the floor in equally timed intervals and in a quality of motion called *swing-bounce*. Full-bodied pulsing depends on relaxing all of the joints of the body and legs. This joint relaxation allows the pelvis (where the center of gravity is located) and other bony weights of the body to let go, fall through the legs and feet, and get *grounded*. Grounding the body – which involves gathering its bones toward the *axis of gravity* and stacking them so they fall as one mass into the floor – is called *standing down straight*. Standing down straight reinforces full-bodied rhythm-making because it allows the body to pulse downward in one line of motion. That is, making contact with the floor along the gravity-directed plumb line allows the body to pulse as a unit both *downward* and *on* the beat. Standing down straight also helps the body make clear rhythms while it's moving axially or traveling through space. It allows the body's weight to shift clearly from one foot to the other or to the same foot, transforming actions like walking and hopping into time-precise motion. Thus, making clear weight-shifts contributes to making clear rhythms in the moving body.

**2. Making clear rhythmic accents.** Beating out a precisely timed accent involves transforming an extremity of the body like a hand or a foot into a *drumbeater*. The accenting body part is called a drumbeater because it acts the way a drumstick does in a drummer's hand: the hand or foot is picked up and thrown against the resistant surface of either an actual or imaginary surface, called a *drumhead*. An actual drumhead is the floor. So, in tap dancing, the drumbeaters of the feet strike against the drumhead of the floor to create accents. Another actual drumhead is the body. In Patting Juba, the drumbeaters of the hands percuss against the drumheads of other body parts. When striking *imaginary* drumheads, the drumbeaters accent against the infinite number of spaces (other than the floor) that surround the body. These drumheads are the surfaces against which the Jump Rhythm Technique's *four primary drumbeaters* – the two hands, head, and, in accompaniment, the voice – play rhythms.

**3. Using the voice rhythmically.** Vocalizing rhythm, or *scat-singing*, clarifies body rhythm in two ways. First, resonating vocal sound through the body automatically causes the diaphragm to pump up and down. This action signals the pelvis to drop into its anatomically correct position, which in turn allows the body to ground itself – as noted above, a necessary pre-condition of full-bodied rhythm-making. Second, because the voice is a carrier of emotion, and because vocal sound is felt *inside* the body, vocalization reinforces the expressive goal of “moving from the inside out,” to use Doris Humphrey's historic description of expression-based dancing.

**4. Understanding musical concepts.** This requires being able to analyze and physicalize concepts such as quarter-notes, eighth-notes, and sixteenth-notes; duple rhythm and triple rhythm; downbeats and offbeats (syncopations); and accents performed with either a sharp (*staccato*) or an explosive (*sforzando*) dynamic attack.

**5. Understanding anatomical concepts.** This involves learning about the bones of the skeleton; the muscles that move them; and how the skeleton's architecture, when aligned according to the gravity-driven laws of nature, gives clues about how to move efficiently and injury-free using standing down straight as the basis of alignment. Jump Rhythm focuses the technical work on two bones in particular, the *scapulae*. Abducting one or the other scapula reinforces the idea of *sidedness* – directing the body weight toward the right side or the left side so that it can then drop downward through the arch of the right foot or left foot. *Scapular abduction* is nature's way of making the body *go down to go forward*. It is also Jump Rhythm's way of anchoring the body into the earth at the moment an accent percusses against the space.

**6. Expressing energy.** Jump Rhythm Technique emphasizes dancing that focuses on turning the body into an articulator of *energy* rather than of *shape*. Learning to use the body's drumbeaters to express energy with precise timing is central to the technique. It can also strengthen any type of dancing performed to metrical music.