

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PLAYED?

“The opposite of play is not work. It’s depression.”*

Brian Sutton-Smith, Play Theorist

Play, in its purest form, extends beyond the innate intelligence of our biological processes raising two puzzling questions: How? and Why? How does play work in our lives? And, why are we born with this ability?



Studies show that play is paramount to the development of young children. The lack of it can be the catalyst for many social, physical, and cognitive disorders throughout childhood, adolescence, and even adulthood. Research has proven that play is the way children learn about the world around them. Now as an adult, I find myself asking, does play serve a purpose outside of our childhood and adolescence? And, why do some of us stop playing as we get older... or do we really?

From childhood to present, play has consumed me. I am an artist who thrives off creativity. I am a practitioner of capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian ritualized martial art form that is described as “playing” not “fighting.” It is no exaggeration to state that play is a fundamental part of my life. And with 13 years of experience as a teacher, I have spent most of my days with the master players I refer to as young people. From the San Francisco Bay Area to East Africa, my interactions with young people range from homework assistance to outside supervision to basketball coaching, circus acrobatics, and of course, capoeira. My lifestyle is centered around the things that I enjoy most (photography, film, children, capoeira, circus, and travel). I make a living through work that is my recreation. I do not have one without the other. How I Play—is How I live.

The purpose of this exhibition is to display how play takes shape in our lives. Through the personal and cultural experiences of children, adults, artists, and scholars, this exhibition explores the existence and significance of play beyond childhood to adulthood; the stage of life where society often deems play unnecessary. However, play is all around. *How We Play—is How We live.* ■

—Jarrel “Chumbinho” Phillips, Guest Curator and AVE Executive Director

* Kane, Kane. “What is ‘The Play Ethic’?” *The Play Ethic*. n.d. Web. 9 Sep. 2014.

All photos in this exhibition have been photographed by Jarrel Phillips unless otherwise noted.

How We Play—is How We Live design and layout by Christine Joy Ferrer.

Title Illustrations by Jian “Aguia” Giannini.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAY PERSONALITY?

“The main characteristic of play—whether of child or adult—is not its content but its mode. Play is an approach to action, not a form of activity.”¹

Jerome Bruner

PLAY PERSONALITY²

The Collector:

Coins, cars, wine, even bugs. You like to gather things.

The Competitor:

Competition within sports and other games. You are in it to win it.

The Director:

You are a planner and organizer, whether for a great party or vacation.

The Explorer:

Into somewhere new or exploring new feelings, emotions and imagination.

The Joker:

Your idea of fun typically revolves around some kind of nonsense.

The Kinesthete:

You are a mover. Dancing, biking, swimming, not necessarily competition.

The Artist/Creator:

You enjoy creating and making things.

The Storyteller:

You thrive through imagination, everything can be play for you.

1. Else, Perry. *The Value of Play*. New York: Continuum National, 2009. *Google Books*. Web. 9 Sep. 2014.

2. Brown, Stuart. *Play*. New York: Avery, 2009. Print.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PLAY FROM CCSF'S CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES DEPARTMENT

"The playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward to new stages of mastery."¹

Erik H. Erikson, American Psychoanalyst

Play. Imagine yourself at play as a young child. What are the first images that come to your mind? Are you laughing... connected.... engaged... happy... present? Where are you? When we play, our brains are alight with activity, present in the moment as we feel, predict, act and react. We build social skills and learn ways of being flexible in the world. Children learn complex skills through playing, which our culture seems to have forgotten. "Play enables children to sort through conflicts and deal with anxieties, fears and disturbing feelings in an active, powerful way. Play provides a safety valve for feelings. When they pretend, children can say or do things that they can't do in reality," says Janet Gonzalez-Mena in *The Child in the Family and Community*². Learning academics through play, engaging children's interests, and providing the time and space to learn and work through things by playing—this is the study of life. We hope this exhibition gives you an opportunity to re-imagine play for yourself and for the children in your life. This is what children truly need us to do. The Child Development and Family Studies Department is grateful for the chance to support such an important and thoughtful exhibition! ■



—Tracy C. Burt, Child Development & Family Studies Department Professor, CCSF

1. "Play Quotes." The Strong National Museum of Play. n.d. Web. 5 Sep. 2014.

2. Gonzalez-Mena, Janet. *The Child in the Family and Community*. New York: Merrill, 1993. Print.

• Photos: (Top) Child Development and Family Services Department Head, Kathleen White, poses with staff at Nina Mogar's (second to right) honor celebration. By Jarrel Phillips.

• (Bottom) Pyramids with Coach Jarrel at Rice and Beans Cooperative preschool, www.riceandbeanscoop.org. By Luis Lopez.

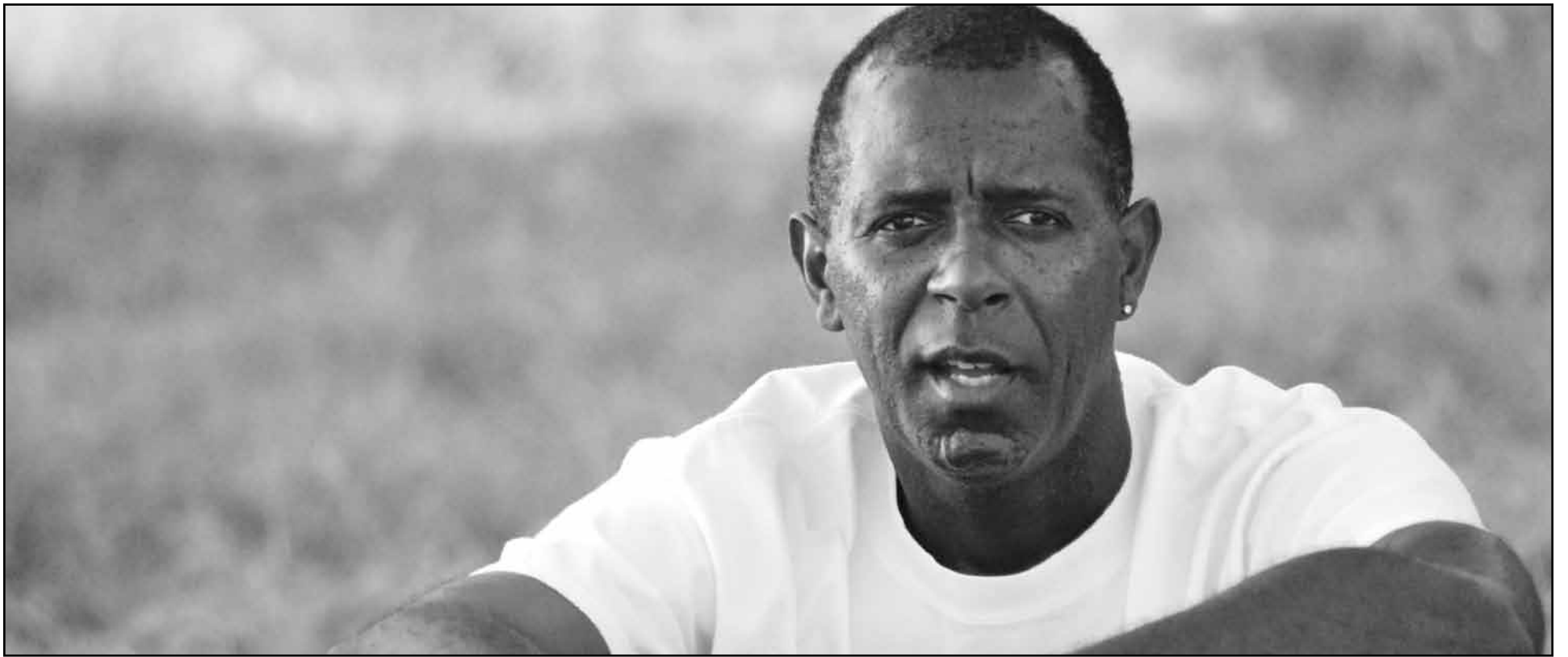


JOGO DE CAPOEIRA (GAME OF CAPOEIRA)

“Culture arises and unfolds in and as play.”*

Johan Huizinga, Dutch Historian

Capoeira is an African Brazilian art form, developed by African slaves in Brazil about 400 years ago. Capoeira is self-defense disguised as a dance because slaves needed to hide it from their slave masters. The combination of body movements, trickery, music, and songs make it not just a martial art, but a ritualized way of combat. Two *capoeiristas* (capoeira players) must follow the traditions and rules of the art. They must play capoeira, not fight. ■ —Samuel Domingos, Mestre Urubu Malandro, Capoeira Ijexa



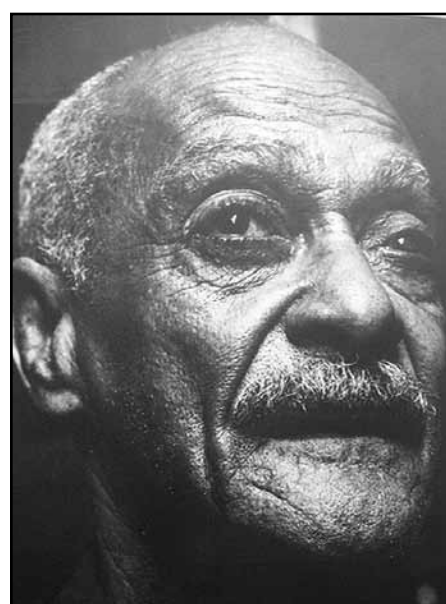
Manoel dos Reis Machado
Mestre Bimba



Known for his innovative approach to capoeira, Mestre Bimba is the father of Capoeira Regional; a style of capoeira known for its Afro-Bahian culture, folkloric dances, *berimbau*

(musical instrument) rhythms, fast kicks, acrobatics, and fighting aspect. In 1937, Mestre Bimba opened the first capoeira academy in Brazil. He is key to capoeira's expansion and global presence. ■

Vicente Joaquim Ferreira Pastinha
Mestre Pastinha



Founder of the first Capoeira Angola school in 1942 in Bahia, Brazil. Pastinha's school can be considered the most influential in shaping Capoeira Angola into what it is today. Capoeira

Angola emphasizes the art form's roots in African culture, maintaining its traditions, rituals and training methods. Mestre Pastinha wanted his students to understand its practice, philosophy and tradition. ■

* Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Boston, Mass.: Roy Publisher, 1950. Print.

• Photos: (Top) Mestre Urubu Malandro. By Jarrel Phillips. (Bottom) Photographers unknown.



PROJECT COMMOTION

Capoeira is considered a “game.” It evolved as a fight, a method of self-defense and a means for self-preservation. When we talk about capoeira, we say, “Vamos jogar capoeira, vamos tocar berimbau,” literally, “Let’s play capoeira, let’s play *berimbau* (musical instrument).” We don’t say, “Let’s fight” or “Let’s spar.” Capoeira can be used as a learning tool for children to increase gross-motor, social, cognitive, and language skills. Most importantly, capoeira provides children and adults with an opportunity to learn through play.

Practice of capoeira includes applying what you learn from class exercises and using it in the *roda*, which is the circle where two players enter to exchange movements. The game that follows is created by the spontaneous exchange of movements between players. It is not choreographed, rather it is created in the moment. This exercise itself, which is what playing capoeira really is, reinforces new patterns that the child has learned and really builds the idea of these movements into the child’s brain by forcing them to use their adapted responses in an instant. The learning that has taken place is strengthened and taken to a whole new level. Play in capoeira is just like play in life. ■

—Susan Osterhoff, “Professora Formiguiinha”
Co-founder of Project Commotion and Child Development Faculty, CCSF
www.projectcommotion.org

CAPOEIRA: MUSIC AND RITUAL IN THE RODA OF LIFE

“What we play is life.”

Louis Armstrong

Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art form. It is the art of a playful game combining dancing, fighting, acrobatics and live music. It was developed by African slaves in Brazil about 400 years ago. Capoeira is a self-defense disguised as a dance because the slaves had to hide it from their slave masters. The combination of body movements, trickery, music and songs make it not just a martial art, but a ritualized way of combat. Two *capoeiristas* (capoeira players) must follow the traditions and rules of the art. They must play capoeira, not fight.

—Mestre Urubu Malandro, *Capoeira Ijexa*, www.capoeiraijexa.org

Like rhythm and harmony, play is captivating, temporarily lifting us to an extraordinary realm where order is supreme. There are rules, or a way to play, and any deviation from this order spoils the game and robs it of its character.*

The order within the game of capoeira allows its players to preserve culture and traditions while building community that exists outside of the game. The roda where the game takes place starts and ends with music. Capoeira music is made up of rhythms and songs characterized by call and response. The *bateria* (battery) is found at the base of the roda where capoeiristas sing and play instruments like an ensemble. At the foot of the bateria is the source of the *axé* (energy). The full circle consists of other capoeiristas who encompass and amplify the energy by singing and clapping their hands to the rhythm. Lastly, the two players in the middle actively engage themselves and each other by applying their movements and knowledge, all to the cadence of the music. It's as if they are dancing. In capoeira, music is a life force. In life, music is universal and even it is played. ■

• Photo: “Jogo De Facao” (folkloric game) with Mestre Urubu Malandro and Contra Mestre Fabio. By Africano Fotografia.

* Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Boston, Mass.: Roy Publisher, 1950. Print.



ARE YOU TOO BUSY TO PLAY?

“To the art of working well a civilized race would add the art of playing well.”*

George Santayana, American Philosopher

The Zanzibar Stone Town Capoeira (ZSTC) crew is a group of self-taught individuals from ages seven to 25 who practice and perform what I like to call the ABCs of Play: Acrobatics (circus), Breakin’ (b-boying/break dancing), and Capoeira. I met the ZSTC crew during my first visit to Zanzibar, Tanzania in 2010. It was then when I began to realize that all three cultural art forms embody the essence of play.

In circus, the magic happens in the ring or on the stage; b-boys and b-girls get down in the cypher; and the *roda* (circle) is where I play capoeira. These are our playgrounds. As artists we thrive in our own little worlds and realities within communities that are unique to what we do. Our lives are consumed by our passions. Our world has become one giant playground.

Through the personal experiences of artists who live what they do, *How We Play* explores circus, breakin,’ and capoeira. Culture, community, and play are essential to their very existence. What they do demands discipline but this doesn’t mean they are too busy to play and have a little fun. They are all players. How they play—is How they live. ■

—Jarrel “Chumbinho” Phillips, Guest Curator and AVE Executive Director

* “Play Quotes.” The Strong National Museum of Play. n.d. Web. 5 Sep. 2014.

• Photo: Jarrel Phillips monkeying around in Ubud, Bali’s Monkey Forest. By Christine Joy Ferrer.

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“The beauty of sports is that it embraces the paradox of seriousness and play.”¹

Stuart Brown

Traditionally, people identify circus folk as nomads, traveling menageries of eccentric performers, wild animals and vendors who transform empty parking lots and fields into a giant, magical canopy of entertainment. The modern-day, urban circus now swirls outside the tent and has evolved away from ringmasters and animals exhibitioned in captivity. Instead, more focus is placed on circus artists and their phenomenal skills that defy gravity on flying trapezes, aerial hoops, or tight wires. Other talents that entrance are clowning, juggling, hand-balancing, acrobatics and contortion.

Circus artists create magic, blurring the limits between what is real and pretend and possible or impossible. Utilizing the body, imagination and object manipulation, their dramatic acts embody the extraordinary. Circus artists push limits, including their own, exhibiting great discipline in their work and play ethic.

Play is serious business. “Every child knows that she is only pretending.” says Johan Huizinga, one of the founders of Modern Cultural History. “Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play.”² Dramatic play also known as “pretend play” allows us to practice what we are learning by imagining and performing various acts to find what works and what does not work. Circus artists are serious about their training, which happens to involve imagining, exploring, and playing around with ideas to create their next act. They’re purpose is to perform. They have dedicated their lives to the act. The world is their stage and they play their part. ■

1. Brown, Stuart. *Play*. New York: Avery, 2009. Print.

2. Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Boston, Massachusetts: Roy Publisher, 1950. Print.

• Photo: Prescott Circus unicycle gang performing for their school, Prescott Elementary. By Jarrel Phillips.





CLOWNING AROUND

Clown stumbles and falls but always gets back up with no harm done or blame. Acrobat falls on purpose! Clown can say and do anything because there are no limits in the world of the clown—so long as the heart is there. Clown shows us how to joke, laugh, pretend, play with our world, make up our own rules, change our names, and be the person we want to be. When we laugh together, we are open to learning together, taking chances together and taking on really hard physical and emotional challenges as a group. Circus training is about exploring what's physically possible. Clowning is exploring your creative self emotionally with personality and character. We interact with the world from the stage. When our audiences and community see our children perform with this spirit, they are happy to see others able to be so free with themselves in such a giving way.

—David Hunt, Prescott Circus Executive Director and Circus Bella Co-Creator
www.prescottcircus.org

WHAT IS PRESCOTT CIRCUS?

Prescott Circus Theatre (PCT) is a non-profit organization that works with youth in Oakland, California. PCT's social development emphasis helps youth cultivate character, presentation, culture, community, teamwork, body awareness and their playful spirits. They are reminded that they are the stars and the world is their stage. One Drum. One Sound. One Circus. ■

- Photo: Prescott Circus performs their globe act. By Jarrel Phillips.

BREAKIN': CYPHER, CREATIVITY AND FREESTYLE

“Young children, especially, have enormous creativity, and whatever’s in them rises to the surface in free play.”¹

Erik Erikson

B-boys and B-girls are notorious for their creative, mind-blowing movements that are always changing and being re-invented. Breakin’ (break dance) emphasizes qualities of improvisation (freestyle) and self-expression (style).

A key characteristic of play is that it is something you choose to do. Play is voluntary and is therefore free.² This freedom breeds style and creativity, which in turn breeds innovation. Our impulse to express allows us to create, and through innovative ideas, create again. This process of re-creating allows us to freely reshape ourselves and our world through play. Hence,



recreation is play. Recreation can come in the form of work, leisure and hobby, or as an outlet for one’s creative and physical energies. It can provide satisfaction and pleasure to the individual while helping to fulfill the needs of society.

WHAT IS BREAKIN’/B-BOYING?

B-boying, stands for “Break Boy,” was created in the Bronx by youth who were looking for an outlet to express themselves while dealing with the harsh life in their underserved communities. It allows a practitioner of hip-hop to create their own way to communicate using their bodies. They create a character within themselves, which is why most b-boys and b-girls have aliases. Pioneers such as Crazy Legs and Prince Ken Swift created movements that we continue to use today, passed on to newer b-boys who embrace hip-hop and contribute to its scene and community. The cypher is the circle a b-boy uses to express himself or to battle another. For one to thrive in this art, one must be an active part of the hip-hop community as a whole. You have to live it. ■

—Edwin Johnson, **B-Boy Blakk, Renegade Rockers**

1. “Erik Erikson Biography (1902-1994).” *About Education*. n.d. Web. 4 Sep. 2014.

2. Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. Boston, Mass.: Roy Publisher, 1950. Print.

• Photo: Edwin “Blakk” Johnson, cyphering at AcroSports 20th Anniversary. By Jarrel Phillips.



SF CR8IVE

Our Cypher is our community. As b-boys we inspire our cypher to move freely and explore endless possibilities. We crash, create, build, and destroy. As we advance our knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, we commit ourselves to carrying on tradition.

—Robert Vicario, B-Boy Finesse, SF CR8IVE and Renegade Rockers

SF CR8IVE was founded in 2007 in order to share their wealth of knowledge through hip-hop's original dance form, more commonly known as breakin'. Founded by Robert "Finesse" Vicario, SF CR8IVE prides itself for assembling a team of instructors who are not only effective teachers, but contributors to their dance community, competing, performing and organizing, locally and abroad. Their mission is to provide a fun, safe, and exciting environment for students to learn, grow, and flourish with a hip-hop arts curriculum. ■

- Photo: Finesse (left) and Johnny "Ninja" (right) teaching the kids at the Bayview Opera House in San Francisco. By Jarrel Phillips.

My life as a b-boy didn't start out like where I am now. I had to learn a lot in the beginning. There are two ways a b-boy freelancer's life can turn out: fun or stressful. It can get overwhelming when it's too much like a job. The fun depends on whether or not you can stay cool, have confidence, pride and joy. You have to know your worth, spread knowledge, uplift, relate to people and most importantly, keep smiling. Be yourself. If you live like that you will always be happy with what you are doing.

—Shawn Hallman, **B-Boy Iron Monkey, Renegade Rockers**

Shawn Hallman better known as Iron Monkey (Shawn Supreme) is a legendary break dancer from the Renegade Rockers Crew. He has earned his reputation as a legendary b-boy/master performer and is sought after for his artistic talents worldwide. Originally from Alabama, Iron Monkey has been a mainstay in the breaking scene for the past two decades. Iron Monkey was first introduced to breaking at his San Diego junior high school in 1992, where he was captivated by a performance from legendary West Coast b-boys, Barmack and B-boy Ivan. Under their teaching and guidance, Iron Monkey quickly progressed to become one of the most greatest b-boys of all time. Iron Monkey is an innovator of power moves and known for his speed, agility and swift dynamic style. ■



Circus Center is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1984 by Wendy Parkman and Judy Finelli, as a project of the world-renowned Pickle Family Circus. For more than 30 years, Circus Center has inspired passion for the circus arts with programs and classes at all levels in: acrobatics, flying trapeze, hand-balancing, contortion, juggling, teeterboard, wire-walking, clowning, and anything in the air, upside down, backwards, and seemingly impossible.

XIAOHONG WENG

Xiaohong Weng started training in gymnastics at the age of seven, before he joined the famed Nanjing Acrobatics Troupe. He joined the circus and learned many traditional Chinese acrobatics acts, such as Chinese Pole, Chair-balancing, Hoop Diving, Chinese Lion Dance, and Partner Hand-balancing. As a skilled tumbler and hand-balancer, Xiaohong has performed extensively in China, the USA, and internationally. For the last decade he has been a senior instructor at Circus Center and runs its Youth Circus. Currently, Xiaohong performs with Jennings McCown in an elegant double hand-to-hand acrobatics act. ■



• Photo: Double hand-to-hand acrobatics with Jennings McCown (left) and Xiaohong Weng (right). By Acey Harper.

Regardless of whether you are privileged, poor, young, or old, circus speaks to the dreamer in all of us, forcing us to deny ego, and evolve into better human beings.

—Veronica Blair, Aerialist and Founder of The Uncle Junior Project

www.veronicablair.com

www.unclejuniorproject.com

An aerialist of elegance and true excellence, Veronica Blair has performed with world-renowned performance groups in various productions around the world including UniverSoul Circus, AntiGravity, Universal Studios Japan, and AFRIKA! AFRIKA! Blair's first professional performance was at the age of 17, making her one of the youngest professional African-American trapeze artists in the U.S. She started her training at the age of 14 and has studied under circus greats and pioneers, and Circus Center's Youth Circus. Blair is currently working on *The Uncle Junior Project* and teaches on staff as an aerial specialist for Circus Center's Youth Circus.

THE UNCLE JUNIOR PROJECT

The Uncle Junior Project follows Blair as she amazes audiences around the country. This film project unveils an important legacy in the long history of the American circus—the amazing African American circus performers who paved the way for her and so many others to wow audiences under the Big Top. Central to Veronica's inspiration is the legendary and largely un-credited circus performer Emanuel “Uncle Junior” Ruffin. This little-known pioneer has never been properly honored or acknowledged for his extraordinary contributions. Yet, he played a pivotal and historic role in the social and artistic revolution that brought entertainers of color into the mainstream of our life. ■

