



Meet [Marjolein Wagter](#), Dutch acrobat and (youth) circus teacher. She is the designer and coordinator of the PEYC Masterclasses. In this document you will find her findings and solutions she has come up with when organizing them. Please read what she has to tell you, and if you have any questions contact Marjolein at peyc.masterclasses@gmail.com.

Third PEYC Masterclass on circus technique – Acrobatics –

Theme: cohesion and teamwork in circus training and teaching

The third masterclass was about my favourite circus technique: acro-balance and acrobatics. In order to make sure that the definition of 'acro' is the same for all participating countries we named it floor & partner acrobatics. (Chinese pool could be acrobatics or aerial acrobatics – we did not count it into our program however.) The high expectations I had also made me a bit nervous.

I started by sending all the information the participants sent me to the teachers and we made an inventory about all the wishes of the participants and the things they had to offer. From there we made clusters of questions to be answered and possible workshops to be offered. Unfortunately the Finnish acro-teacher was sick. We asked two participants from Finland to replace him and they give a workshop about: fundamental movement skills, and motorial development on everybody's own level in a mixed group. The circus space where we worked was great and so was the coordination and food etc. The apartments were far from the training space and so travelling up and down was quite time consuming.

The program started with an introduction and finalizing the program, and creating a safe learning environment. Working again with the same teacher who was involved in the previous masterclasses was helpful because with the input from the participants we could plan the program more in advance and initiate co-teaching en co-creating workshops from the beginning. It is challenging because you have to trust on the teaching skills of the participants, give them space but keep the time limit as well. The group functioned very well. We found a good way to share information and work on group safety in the very beginning. Most games we shared were about cohesion and teamwork. There was a need for more 'organized' informal exchange. We started out with a fun acro exchange, initiated by me and taken over by participants. When not initiated it was hard for some participants to create exchange themselves.

This now will be a challenge for me personally in the last masterclass, because how do you organize free time? I think a mix of obligatory exchange and see what happens in the free time? And more difficult, how do you capture the outcome of this exchange?

The practical part of the masterclass, where participants make workshops sharing their knowledge with each other and guest teachers from the hosting country was more developed than it was in previous masterclasses. We asked them to give feedback at the end of each workshop and use the feedback to change the next workshop. Also, at the end, we did a small evaluation and the external participants also evaluated together and gave us feedback in the end. This is valuable because it gives an external eye on our work.

I learned from the second masterclass that it is important to make sure that gathering the information for the resource centre is done during the masterclass as part of the program, if not you spend 80% of our time afterwards to get 20% of the information you need.

We also shared good practices in small groups. This gave interesting outcomes, some were very practical, like 'use a sock between the chin and chest for kids to hold when learning a front role', while others were more about changing the atmosphere in the group or questioning your role as a teacher and your approach to teach a trick , such as 'there are different approaches to teaching and learning the cart wheel, and you should put your habits aside and encourage diversity.'

All these good practices you can find [here!](#)

In general I can say this masterclass had a lot of advantages for me as the coordinator: all the circumstances were good, nice weather, good coordination at the site, a co-teacher for the whole periode, holiday before and after the activity, so enough time to prepare and recover.