

# PLAYING BY AIR

A SYMPHONY OF ACTION & COMEDY



**OFFICIAL STUDY GUIDE**

**INSPIRE YOUR STUDENTS WITH CREATIVITY, LAUGHTER & JOY!**

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

## Welcome to the Show!

Get ready for an action-packed experience filled with laughter, music, juggling, and circus!

The award-winning performers of Playing By Air share their creativity and breathtaking feats in a production enjoyed equally by adults, families, and children alike.

## Variety Arts

Throughout the show you will see a variety of skills and artistic disciplines. This style of performance is known as "Variety Arts" because it combines elements of many different art forms and skills.

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The title "Playing By Air" is a pun based on the musical concept of "Playing By Ear" (which refers to improvising or playing without sheet music). The name highlights the elements of the show: fun, humor, music, creativity, improvisation, and filling the air with flying objects.

### NAME GAME

What are your two favorite activities or hobbies? Create a name for an imaginary band or show that features elements of your unique combination.

**WHERE TO LOOK?**  
The performer balances the violin on his head by keeping his eyes focused on the bridge of the violin (the thin wooden piece under the strings).

## Juggling & Circus

Juggling is more than just throwing and catching using your hands. The performers will balance, spin, flip, swing, and bounce objects of all sizes.

## Physical Comedy

Not all jokes use words. The performers use their faces, bodies, and props to share their playfulness and laughter with the audience. Can you make your friends laugh without saying a word?

## Music

Several unusual musical instruments are used in this show to play notes and create rhythms. Playing By Air's performers even play songs while juggling and balancing at the same time!



# HONE YOUR OBSERVATION SKILLS

## Tip for Watching the Show - Have Fun!

In some theatrical performances it is polite to wait for the end of the act to applaud. Not in this show! The performers feed off of your energy and love to hear your laughs and cheers throughout the show. If you feel the urge to laugh out loud, don't hold back!

On this page you will find several more ideas of what to look for when you watch the show.

## Musical Instruments

Can you name all of the musical instruments and references? Try to list them all with your friends and classmates after the show.



## Choreography

Watch how the performers choreograph the movement of their bodies and props to the music. How are the moves similar and different from dancing?

## Colors

Colors are an important theme throughout the show. Pay attention to how the colors are used to tell a story and highlight each character.

## Multitasking

Many of the acts combine multiple skills at the same time, including juggling, music, balancing, and more. What combinations did you notice?

What skills can you do at the same time? Start by patting your head and rubbing your belly, and then create your own ideas!

### THE DIDGERIDOO

The didgeridoo is an Australian instrument that is played by "circular breathing." The performer plays a note, without stopping to catch his breath, by blowing air out with his cheeks at the same time he breaths in with his nose.

Try it yourself by blowing gently through a straw into a glass of water-but not at the lunch table!

# HAVE FUN WITH EXERCISE!

## A Fun Workout

During the show, you'll notice that the performers will sweat a lot as they have fun moving around the stage!

Juggling and physical comedy are great ways to be physically active and have fun while exercising. The more fun you have, the more you will want to stay in shape!

Juggling also is excellent training for developing hand-eye coordination, patience, and teamwork that leads to success in sports.

Think of other activities that get you moving and are fun to do.

## Homework Breaks

Take a five minute break from doing homework to practice juggling. It's a great way to move your body and clear your mind before getting back to work.

### IT'S ALL IN THE RHYTHM

Running and juggling both have natural rhythms. The secret to running while juggling is to time your hands and feet together: Every time your foot hits the ground, a ball should land in your hand.

### TRY IT WITH ONE BALL!

While walking, toss one ball in the air from hand to hand. Try to catch the ball every time one of your feet touches the ground.

## JOGGLING: JUGGLING WHILE JOGGING!

The sport of jogging and juggling at the same time is called "Joggling." Competitions held each year include sprints, relays, and more, with jogglers from around the world.

Jogglers have completed entire marathons while juggling 5 balls! Playing By Air's "Team Catch It Early" program brings jogglers to run in cancer awareness 5K races throughout the year.



# GIVE BACK CREATIVELY

## USE YOUR CREATIVITY & TALENTS TO SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

### Anyone Can Do It!

Playing By Air's performers love juggling and love to make people laugh and smile. They use their talents to support charities by visiting hospitals, performing in benefit shows, and running while juggling in charity races.

You don't have to be a professional entertainer to give back to your community. Do you like to draw? Jump rope? Tell stories?

What is a project using your talents that can help others in your community?

### GUIDE TO GET STARTED

Make a list of the activities that you enjoy and how you like to spend your time.

Make a list of charities that you support and the types of people and programs you want to help.

Learn about those charities and programs and make a list of the types of help they need.

Now, look at the three lists together and be creative to find ideas that match well across all three columns!

### Group Brainstorming Exercise

Come up with creative ideas for how the following activities can be used to support a cause, build awareness, convey an important message, or raise money for a charity:

Drawing Cartoons  
Playing Piano  
Collecting Stamps  
Ballet  
Building with Legos

Cooking  
Running  
Making Movies  
Science Experiments  
Photography



"Playing By Air Cares" uses juggling and comedy to support cancer awareness with "Catch It Early" programs around the country.

# MEET THE CAST

## A Partnership of Playful Creativity

In 2009, three award-winning performers teamed up to create Playing By Air.

A formally trained actor; a homeschooled free spirit; and an academic community leader. Together, Michael, Ted, and Jacob all share a love for juggling, circus arts, and inspiring audiences through laughter and creativity.

Each member of Playing By Air has followed their own path to discover and apply their passions for the arts, education, and the community.

Based in Nashville, Tennessee, the trio enjoys performing together as partners and friends for audiences around the world.



## JACOB

As both an entertainer and academic researcher, Jacob developed a model for combining circus arts and community service while completing his Ph.D. at Vanderbilt University.

Jacob works with artists and city leaders to bring people together and to build healthy communities through creativity.

Jacob grew up playing basketball and wiggling his ears, a skill he learned from his grandmother, which likely led to his current career.



# MEET THE CAST

## MICHAEL

Ever since he was young, Michael has been interested in all things kinetic – from roller coasters to monorails to waterwheels to robots!

With a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in acting, and years of experience as a dancer and puppeteer, Michael is respected worldwide for his ability to create new ideas from multiple artistic disciplines.

He is a recipient of three first place awards from the International Jugglers Association.

In his spare time, Michael enjoys designing original T-Shirts and exploring rarely seen New York City subway stations.



## TED

Hailing from Parry Sound, Canada, Ted brings an unparalleled technique to Playing By Air with his mastery of the Chinese Yo-Yo. He was awarded the Most Spectacular Award at the annual Atlanta Juggling Festival.

As a homeschooler, his non-traditional education allowed him to nurture his interests in music, travel, and juggling. Ted is passionate about inspiring students, and teachers, to follow their talents and creativity, wherever they may lead.

When not on the road, Ted enjoys time at home with his wife, their cat, and the spiciest hot sauce he can find.

