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BACKSTAGE PASS

STUDENT GUIDE

## Diavolo 101: History & Basics

- Diavolo was founded in Los Angeles in 1992.
- Jacques Heim, the creator of Diavolo, wanted to use dance and other art forms to explore the “funny and frightening” ways that people interact with the things around them.
- Compared to some large, Broadway type dance companies, Diavolo is small – it has only ten very versatile members (including dancers, gymnasts, and actors) in its company.
- Everyday items such as doors, chairs, and stairs form some of Diavolo’s backdrops.
- Sometimes large geometric shapes also become part of the playground for Diavolo’s actors.
- Director Jacques Heim is concerned about the way that technology effects people’s lives more and more each year. Some of his works deal with the need for people to maintain their humanity.

### The Craftiness of Diavolo

Diavolo prides itself on its fluid, ever-changing nature of its shows. Performances are always subject to change – someone who sees the same Diavolo show twice might not see exactly the same thing. This craftiness, wit, and change is embodied in Diavolo’s choice of a stylized fox as its logo. Just as foxes are trickster creatures who can change and play tricks on others in old stories and myths, Diavolo’s performances are the result of constant change and motion in rehearsals and performances. Therefore, the audience must be constantly alert to see what lesson Diavolo, just like the foxes in these old stories, is trying to teach them.



One heroic trickster fox is Reynard. Reynard is popular in France, the country where Diavolo founder Jacques Heim was born. Look at the two images of Reynard the



fox, as a popular illustration from the 1800’s and a 1985 animated series, “Moi Renart”.

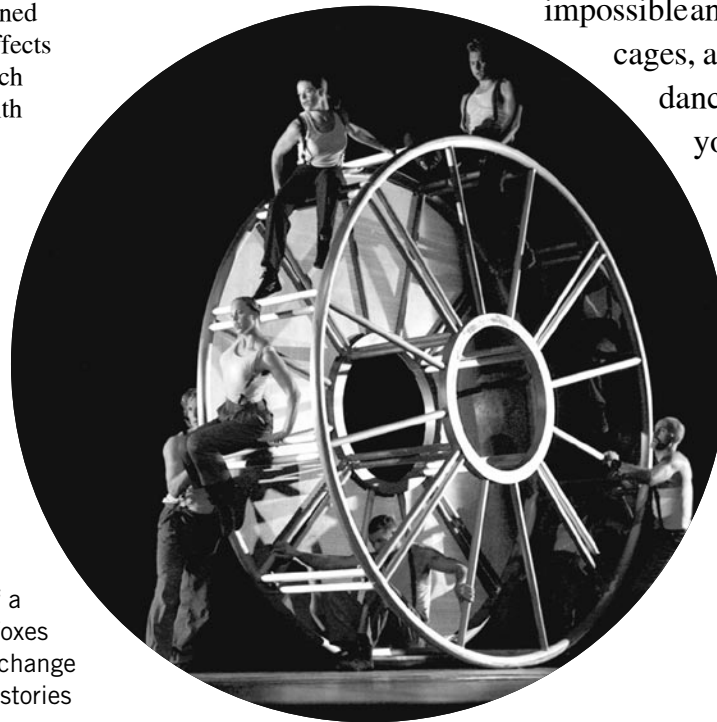
Compare them to Diavolo’s logo. Why do you think Diavolo choose a stylized fox instead of an icon like these?



JACQUES HEIM’S

# DIAVOLO

Diavolo, a unique Los Angeles-based dance company founded in 1992 by Jacques Heim, has garnered serious attention from critics since day one. Leaping from tall structures, flying through open spaces, balancing the impossible and tumbling with ladders, doors,



cages, and spring-loaded chairs, these dancers and gymnasts will amaze you with their stunts. Diavolo returns to the PASA series for a delightfully out-of-this-world performance.

### DIAVOLO’S MISSION STATEMENT

“Diavolo redefines dance through dynamic movement, enlightening communities through trust, teamwork, and individual expression.”

## DECONSTRUCTING DIAVOLO

What, you might ask, does all of this mean? Basically, Diavolo is saying that they don’t accept that this is only one way to dance.

To the members of Diavolo, dance is a way of using the body to express what a person thinks, feels, and says. However, instead of using words, Diavolo creates a variety of innovative body movements that might, but might not, look like the jazz, ballet, tap, hip hop, or ballroom moves that people are used to.

In addition to developing new and innovative ways to move the body, Diavolo is committed to helping people learn to work together. One of the main things people must learn to do when they dance or do gymnastics together is to trust each other. Your safety, and the outcome of your performance, depends on your ability to trust and rely on the person or people you are working with. Diavolo has developed a series of lessons and workshops, “Learning to Fly,” that teach people to trust each other by having them do a variety of movement-related exercises. These exercises require all group members to trust, listen to, and work with each other.

In addition, Diavolo instills in people a better understanding of the language of dance.

Want to try something like this on your own? Gather a group of friends – those that you really trust -- and ask them to form a circle around you. They will all stand with their hands out. You will stay in the center of the circle. Keep your feet planted to the ground, but allow your body to go limp. Your friends should be able to move your body around the circle like a pendulum. But be warned – if you don’t trust your partners, your body will never be moveable enough, and you will stand up like a pole! Or, stand back to back with one partner. Reach back and join hands with your friend. Then, allow yourself to slowly begin leaning forward. If you and your partner can work together gently and gradually, you will balance each other. However, if either partner cannot support the other, you will plummet towards the ground.

Modern dance is, in a word, modern. Unlike other forms of dance, such as ballet or ballroom dance, which have existed for centuries, modern dance is relatively young. It was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is considered, like recent art and music, to have developed in response to the unique conditions of modern life. At first modern dance was a rebellion. The pioneers of the modern dance movement were tired of the firm rules that controlled ballets and other stage shows. They began to develop a new dance style that encouraged the audience to consider new realities about themselves and their world. Although this new dance form was based on an absence rather than an abundance of rules, a few distinct styles and influences can be identified that have nurtured and defined modern dance as we know it today.



**HISTORY QUICKIE** Isadora Duncan died a rather tragic, yet famous death. She was fond of riding in open convertibles and wore long neck scarves that trailed behind her in the wind. One day, Duncan's scarf caught in a wheel while the convertible she was traveling in roared down a French highway. Duncan died of a broken neck, and her unfortunate story has been famous ever since.

# ALL ABOUT MODERN DANCE

## THE EARLY DAYS

One early innovator was Isadora Duncan. Duncan shocked audiences by appearing onstage in a simple Greek tunic and doing a series of natural movements that made up what she called "free dance." Although Duncan performed to the music of serious composers, she was known for improvising her dances onstage. In fact, Duncan improvised so much that she was often the only dancer who could perform her routines.

Duncan's work was followed by that of Loie Fuller, who used dance to illustrate the natural world onstage. Fuller created dance moves like the flame, the flower, and the butterfly. She also experimented with stage lighting and costumes.

Meanwhile, Dancer Ruth St. Denis and her husband/creative partner Ted Shawn founded the Denishawn company, which is known taking its dance inspiration from ethnic sources. Asian religions were one source of inspiration, and Native American tribal dance was another. Like Fuller, Denishawn dancers created a picture onstage. Denishawn is credited with increasing the popularity of modern dance in the United States and spreading it to Germany, where dance innovators stubbornly kept the movement alive by restarting schools after they had been closed by the Nazis.

## MORE REBELLION

At the end of the 1920's the modern dance world changed again. Dancers began to reject elaborate settings, costumes, and music. They believed that the purpose of dance was to help the audience look inward. Martha Graham developed dances based on simple life functions like breathing. Although they explored classic themes like Greek mythology and the Old Testament in their work, they believed music was only a frame for dance and ignored elaborate sound accompaniment. Humphrey eventually rejected music and performed in silence or to "everyday sounds" like bursts of laughter. Martha Graham's influence was so far reaching that a company based on her dance philosophy and bearing her name is still in existence today.

## AND EVEN MORE REBELLION

The 1960's and 70's were known as a time of social and political unrest in the US. Things were no different in the modern dance world. In fact, they were changing again. A new wave of dancers entered the scene who questioned formalities more than ever. Amongst these are Paul Taylor, who stood along onstage making small changes to his posture when the voice of a telephone operator sounded at 10 second intervals, and Twyla Tharp, who removed distracting music and moved performances from the stage to public spaces like a museum staircase or a city park. Another notable event of this era was pop artist Steve Paxton's attempt to remove the barrier between life and art by performing a duet with a chicken.

## BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

By the late 20th century, distinctions among modern dance, ballet, and show dancing were not as rigid as they once had been. Ballet technique and choreography have remained more formal than those of modern dance, but their themes and stage effects are often similar. Important modern dancers have been invited to perform with and create dances for ballet companies, and in 1990, Mikhail Baryshnikov joined with dancer-choreographer Mark Morris to form a new eclectic dance company. In addition, Paul Taylor performed with the New York City Ballet in a work created for him by George Balanchine, Taylor himself created dances for Rudolf Nureyev, and Tharp's dancers joined the Joffrey Ballet to perform her *Deuce Coupe* and *As Time Goes By*. No doubt modern dance will continue to grow and change in the future. Keep watching, and see what the 21st century brings.

**CHECK IT OUT** If you want to know more about this or another other type of dance, visit Wikipedia, the free web encyclopedia at [wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com) or go to [about.com](http://about.com). These sites feature loads of information on different dance styles, even give instructions on how to perform salsa, rumba, and other steps.

## Di-a'-vo-lo: What's in a Name?

In *Romeo and Juliet*, which is arguably one of the most famous plays in the world, William Shakespeare poses the question "What's in a name?" In other words, does it really matter what we call something?



If we called this a dog, would that make it a different thing? Or does it still have the same properties and characteristics? Although Shakespeare's lovers reach the conclusion that names do not matter, the members of Diavolo might argue with that conclusion. Whether it is looked at in parts or as a whole, Diavolo has very special meaning.

### CONSIDER THIS:

- The name Diavolo is related to the French word "Diablerie," which refers to comical pranks played by a child or clown.
- Diavolo was also the name of a unique Russian circus performer of the 1920's. He performed outrageous stunts on a bicycle.
- "Dia" is Spanish for "day" or Greek for "through, across, from point to point."
- Dia is also the first syllable of the name Diagilev, leader of a ballet troupe and great-great-grand uncle of Diavolo founder Jacques Heim.
- "Volo" is Latin for "I fly"

Put it all together and you get a flying tribute to a great-great-grand uncle and a Russian circus performer, somehow brought from point to point in a day. Or something like that...

### GET WEBBIE

Research your own name and discover its meaning and background. Go to [www.behindthename.com](http://www.behindthename.com) to learn the background of your moniker. Or, check out about.com's dictionary of last names at [http://genealogy.about.com/library/surnames/bl\\_meaning.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/library/surnames/bl_meaning.htm) to learn a bit more about the name you share with your family.

### HERE'S A HOBBY

If exploring family backgrounds and name origins interests you, you might want to take up genealogy. Check out [http://genealogy.about.com/library/surnames/bl\\_meaning.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/library/surnames/bl_meaning.htm) for more information on this profession. If you like asking people about family history, doing research with books or computers, or creating charts and diagrams, genealogy's for you!

TYPE OF DANCE	MODERN	BALLET	TAP	BALLROOM	HIP-HOP
<b>Where to See It</b>	Onstage during Diavolo's performance	Every Christmas when <i>The Nutcracker</i> can be seen onstage and on television	On old movies and television shows (like <i>Singing in the Rain</i> or <i>The Little Rascals</i> )	Just watch ABC's hit <i>Dancing With the Stars</i>	Turn on some music videos
<b>Where is it performed?</b>	Onstage or in a performance space	Dancers require a smooth, highly polished stage	A firm, hard floor is needed	In the ballroom, of course!	In the club, in the street, on the stage...the possibilities are endless
<b>The Clothes</b>	Costume are often simple and fitted to increase emphasize the dancers' bodies	Tutus and tights	Fred Astaire, one of the best tappers ever, always wore a suit. Many other have since followed suit. (Pun intended)	Suits and formal gowns	Anything cool and baggy
<b>The Shoes</b>	None – modern dancers do it barefoot!	Pointed “toe-shoes” that lace on the ankles	Flat soled lace-ups with taps attached	Dressy flats for men and heels for women	Tennis shoes are preferred, but sometimes a diva keeps her heels on
<b>The Music</b>	Any sort of sound – or none at all	Classical	Jazzy beat or Broadway-type musical number	Instrumental tunes are common	It's gotta be hip hop or pop

## What's Your Diavolo I.Q.?

It's time to check your knowledge. Grab a pencil and answer each of the questions listed below. Write your answer in the blank provided. Then try to find it in the crossword puzzle below. All ten correct answers are in the puzzle.

1. What is the name of the famous French fox who is known as a trickster? \_\_\_\_\_
2. A lady named Isadora \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the pioneers of modern dance. She liked to improvise dances and wore a Greek-inspired tunic onstage.
3. Who is the father of geometry? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In what country was Diavolo's founder, Jacques Heim, born? (Hint: Reynard the fox lives there.) \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the name for someone who creates dances for stage productions? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many performers are in Diavolo's company? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What animal appears on Diavolo's logo? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which geometric shape is a set of points equally distant from one central point? \_\_\_\_\_
9. “Volo” is Latin for “I \_\_\_\_\_.”
10. The large geometric shapes and everyday objects that Diavolo performers interact with onstage are called the \_\_\_\_\_.

D F R R A D F E S E E L V K C  
C M V J K B L Q L X N Q L A H  
C L R Q R C S S G C T F U N O  
Q K C G R V E X I P R Y M H R  
F Y J I D T C B Z E Q L S D E  
E O C F X I L N Y O O F F U O  
C G X L F N L N N A C N U D G  
N K Z Y N D A C F U Q Q H C R  
A I X T A R R S U F K N L F A  
R E F H D X I I Q E G O X I P  
F F T T Y D D H L S I D V X H  
Z O M F F R G F W B E G K V E  
E O R P K M G Y E Z T E N W R  
C X J B S R K E D Q M N Q U F  
W F H D D L O T K O X V Y W M

## the creative process

If you think that Diavolo's creative director, Jacques Heim, creates all of Diavolo's pieces sitting at a desk by himself, think again. Heim says, “When asked about my process, I often think of a quote I once read by essayist Roger Rosenblatt: ‘The best in art and life comes from a center, something urgent and powerful - an idea or emotion that insists on its being. From that insistence, a shape emerges and creates its own structure out of passion. If you begin with structure, you have to make up the passion. And that's very hard to do.’”

Hard is a good word for it! Many stage shows are created by a few dancers or artists in a studio. They develop a piece and teach it to the group that will perform it onstage. Diavolo's process is very different. Heim says that no two Diavolo pieces are created identically, but that all pieces are born out of a passionate idea. Then, the basic process is this:

1. Jacques Heim sees something that moves him mentally or emotionally.
2. Heim decides on the set for the piece.
3. Heim invites his company to do improvisational workouts with the set piece. He watches and explores possibilities for it. This might take as much as six weeks.
4. Some pieces stop here and are never developed further. Others take a new direction, and some develop fully and go on to the stage.
5. After improvisations, Heim makes a script to tell his cast what to do. Often, movements are created first and music is later chosen to go with them.
6. After the final form of a piece is rehearsed, it goes on to the stage and is seen during performances. However, no Diavolo piece is ever final. If no ideas or feelings evolve, the piece is adapted. Heim says that sometimes a piece will change more than once a year.

**CAREER CONNECTION** Think that a career in theater might be for you? Everyone knows that actors, dancers, and other performers appear onstage, but consider these jobs. All involve planning and design of a production.

- Lighting directors design the stage lights and special effects for a show. They create a light plot, work with technical and electrical equipment, and either operate a lightboard or oversee a technician who does so. If you want to know more about this, read the interview with Cirque du Soleil's lighting designer, Luc Lafortune, at <http://theatrejobs.com/Everyone/resources.htm#realjob1>.
- Choreographers make up the dances that are seen during dance performances and plays and teach them to the dancers who will perform them onstage. Check out these links to learn more about choreography ([www.iseek.org/sv/13000.jsp?id=100271](http://www.iseek.org/sv/13000.jsp?id=100271)) and famed modern dance choreographer Twyla Tharp ([www.twylatharp.org/home.shtml](http://www.twylatharp.org/home.shtml)).
- Scenic designers collaborate with directors, lighting designers, and others to develop plans for and build sets. Learn more about this job and famous designers at [www.answers.com/topic/scenic-design](http://www.answers.com/topic/scenic-design).

# SPOTLIGHT

ON Jacques Heim



Jacques Heim, the founder and artistic director of Diavolo, was born in Paris, France. He studied at various universities in the United States and England before founding Diavolo Dance Theater in 1992. Heim's talents have gotten him noticed by several awards boards, universities, and publications. He has been named one of the "Faces to Watch in the Arts" by the *Los Angeles Times* and one of the "100 Coolest People in LA" by *Buzz* magazine. Recently, Jacques Heim taught intensive movement for actors at UCLA and California State University at Los Angeles.

Due to his innovative work with Diavolo, Heim has been noticed and hired by other companies to create pieces for them. He will serve as artistic director for the 2005 Taurus World Stunt Awards and was hired to choreograph a piece for Cirque du Soleil called *Ka*, which is part of the avant garde circus' permanent Las Vegas show.

### CHECK IT OUT

Want to know more about the other members of the Diavolo troupe? Go to [www.diavolo.org/fs\\_main.html](http://www.diavolo.org/fs_main.html) and click on "Who we are" and then "People" to see photos and biographies.

**HISTORY QUICKIE** A Greek named Euclid is considered the father of Geometry. Although very little is known about Euclid, he is believed to have been a member of a wealthy family. He went to Plato's school as a child, and later discovered Geometry, wrote a thirteen volume book called *Elements* about the principles of this new math, and founded a school. Without Euclid, math as we know it would not exist.

## Do's & Don'ts OF GOOD THEATER BEHAVIOR

**The Basic rule of behavior:** Theater behavior falls somewhere in between that expected for a church and a movie. If you wouldn't do it in one of the above don't do it here.

# THEATER ETIQUETTE

**DO** turn your cell phone off.

**DON'T** eat or drink in the theater unless refreshments are sold there.

**DO** sit in your assigned seat.

**DO** arrive on time.

**DON'T** disturb those around you (even if you are bored).

**DON'T** sing along at an opera or musical.

**DON'T** shout rude things at the performers. Treat them as you would want to be treated if you were onstage.

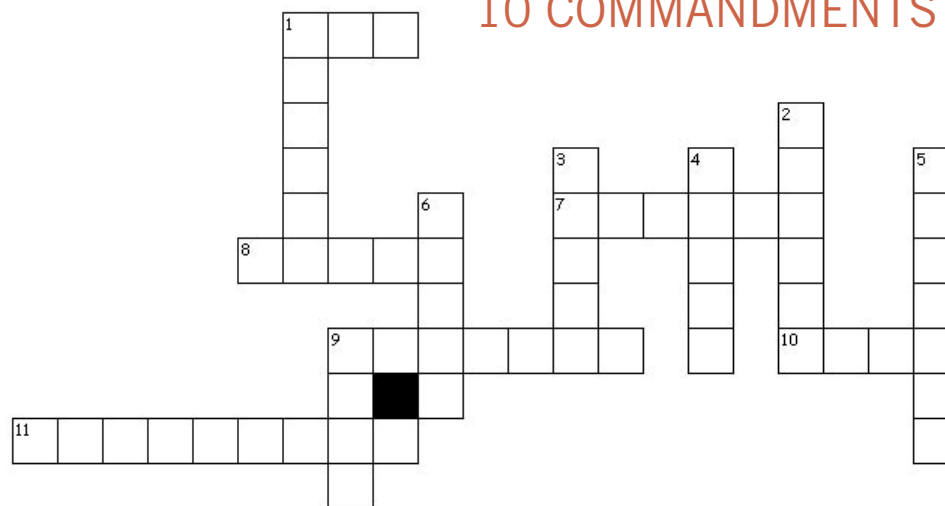
**DON'T** forget to enjoy yourself and learn new things.

**DO** remain in your seat until intermission.

**DO** clap at end of an act, a scene, after a wonderful moment called a "show-stopper", or at the end of a production. If you are unsure, clap when others do.



## Good Theater Behavior: Reviewing the 10 COMMANDMENTS



- ACROSS**
- Clap at the end of a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Good theater behavior falls between that expected for a \_\_\_\_\_ and for a movie theater.
  - Always remember to \_\_\_\_\_ new things.
  - Clap after an especially amazing part in the play called a "show-\_\_\_\_\_."
  - The only time you should leave your \_\_\_\_\_ is during intermission.
  - Your \_\_\_\_\_ should always be turned off.
- DOWN**
- \_\_\_\_\_ on time.
  - If you are unsure of when to clap, clap when \_\_\_\_\_ do.
  - Clap at the end of a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Never eat or \_\_\_\_\_ unless refreshments are sold in the theater.
  - Pay attention during the production. Even if you are not interested, sit \_\_\_\_\_ to avoid disturbing others.
  - Always remember to \_\_\_\_\_ yourself.
  - Do not \_\_\_\_\_ along at an opera or musical.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE

WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 1  
10:30 AM

## EVENING PERFORMANCE

WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 1  
7:30 PM

## ANSWERS TO "Diavolo I.Q."

- |                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| 1. Reynard       | 7. Fox    |
| 2. Duncan        | 8. Circle |
| 3. Euclid        | 9. Fly    |
| 4. France        | 10. Set   |
| 5. Choreographer |           |
| 6. Ten           |           |

## SPECIAL THANKS



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