

Introduction

Welcome to *The Juggler's Anthology of Venerable Veracities*, which compiles several early and rare instructional books on juggling, manipulation, and equilibristics; plus articles, interviews, and excerpts by-and-about jugglers from 19th and early-20th-century public domain materials. Whenever possible, the selections are digitally-restored page images from rare copies in the Vaudeville Restrospective Collection, while other selections are typographic facsimiles. The 24 selections, spanning from 1821 to 1956, are illuminated with context, commentary, and endnotes.

This book is a companion to *The Juggler's Trilogy of Timeless Techniques*, which compiles in one 320-page volume all three major works in English on early 20th-century juggling artistry: *The Art of Modern Juggling* (1907) by Anglo (Thomas Horton), *Juggling Secrets* (1911) by Will Goldston, and *Juggling* (1921) by Rupert Ingalese. The three rare books, now in the public domain, are reproduced from digitally-restored page images, and introduced with context, commentary, and new research findings.

This introduction (1) presents an overview of the selections and their organization; (2) explains the compiler's rationale and point-of-view; (3) supplies some context for more than a century of changing public perception of juggling; (4) notes particular parallels, contrasts, and idiosyncracies among the selections; and (5) provides notes on the digital restoration and graphics.

An overview of anthologized selections. *The Juggler's Anthology* presents its selections chronologically. Each selection begins with a cover image, publication details, biographical sketch of the author, commentary, any new research discoveries, and endnotes. The first selection is essayist William Hazlitt's philosophical rumination, *The Indian Jugglers*, on the defining qualities of "craft" versus "art." The last selection is from retired vaudeville juggler Jack Greene, an exhortation to all performing jugglers to keep polishing their act, entitled "Are You Satisfied?" The motivated juggler will find that the first *and* last selections are still thought-provoking and relevant.

The earliest selections anthologized are more observational, such as excerpts from Henry Mayhew's *London Labor and the London Poor*, and provide a glimpse of itinerant street jugglers – and public perception of juggling – a few decades before theatrical vaudeville and variety for the middle class became a mature industry.

The selections published at the turn of the 20th century reflect the variety genre as it came to the fore and legitimized circus, acrobatic, and juggling specialties formerly relegated to the fairgrounds. Authors of the turn-of-the-20th-century selections in this volume tended to view juggling as a close cousin of refined “conjuring” ... rather than in the category of sweaty athleticism and circus acrobatics. For instance, the 24-page instructional book published in 1901, *New Juggling Tricks*, was written by magician, dealer, and author Ellis Stanyon, for whom his sincere interest in juggling nevertheless ranked among his specialties somewhere below making funny paper hats and casting hand shadows.

From the halls of the gymnasium comes *One, Two, and Three Club Juggling*, an excerpt from a 1900 book by a career YMCA physical director Frank E. Miller. Although he was known to perform in gymnastics exhibitions, his instructional material is strictly health-and-fitness oriented. The “art or sport?” dichotomy is not new.

Among the selections published in the first two decades of the 20th century are three complete books, six newspaper and magazine articles by-and-about jugglers who attained celebrity status in international vaudeville, excerpts from *How to Enter Vaudeville* for starstruck tyros, and *Marvels of Strength and Skill*, a chapter excerpt from an astute observer of the big-time vaudeville scene in the U.S., Caroline Caffin.

In the research for the context and commentary, new information came to light about several of the performers and authors. In most cases this was information “hidden in plain sight,” waiting to be discovered. Let this be encouragement to future researchers, and a reminder that research subjects – even *jugglers* – are people, too, with lives, interests, families, friends, and foibles ... off the stage.

In comparison with the three instructional books in *The Juggler's Trilogy*, the selections in *The Juggler's Anthology* may be more valuable for their insights on the juggler's art and craft, rather than for anything specifically instructive. Remarkably, some of the words of jugglers from more than a century ago will come across like a still-relevant pep-talk to jugglers of today ... and tomorrow.

All selections in *The Juggler's Anthology* are in the public domain, with the exception of the last two by Jack Greene, published in the *Juggler's Bulletin Annual* (1950, 1952). They are included thanks to publishing rights granted in 1983 by *Juggler's Bulletin* founder, editor, and encouraging friend, Roger Montandon (1918-2017).

Rationale and point-of-view. The aim of *The Juggler's Anthology* is to aggregate in one volume the several shorter instructional books on juggling, along with articles, interviews, essays, and excerpts by-and-about jugglers and juggling now in the public domain, in English.

Although some selections in this anthology are available individually from various sources, your compiler (that's *me*) believes there is value in (1) bringing the selections together in a hard-copy *book*; (2) approximating the original reading experience when possible by using original page images; and (3) sharing context and commentary informed by my long and sometimes parallel careers as a performing artist and museum/history professional.

As for point-of-view, in my performance career I worked far-and-wide for 35 years in nearly every kind of venue as an acrobatic juggler, comedy tap dancer, and jazz/ragtime musician. As a researcher my roots are in my pre-showbusiness career as an journalist and editor. During my performance career, it was the journalist's curiosity that drove the study of my on-stage specialties as well as the study of early-20th-century American popular music, vaudeville, and circus. As part of a proactive plan to exit showbusiness with all body parts still functioning, my later-in-life graduate studies provided the foundation for work in the museum and history field.

But along with the alleged wisdom that one accumulates, there are also a few biases, and they are acknowledged here in advance.

For instance, with my stage background I tend to place more value on the ability of a performer to connect with an audience than on a performer's technique alone. And as an athlete and juggler, though retired from the demands of my old acro-juggling repertoire, the continued joy of accomplishment in the immediate physical world sustains aversion to stunts solely dependent on a magician's fakery.

As a researcher/historian and old-school journalist, I admit to maintaining a well-calibrated "baloney detector." Therefore when probing early-20th-century showbusiness sources, the detector tends to activate upon encountering excessive hyperbole or flabby press agent fiction. And as the author of a book on research methodology, I admit to advocating the discipline's best practices.

Vaudeville context. Most of the selections included are from the early 20th century when vaudeville was nearing its peak. From today's perspective, with vaudeville obscured by decades of misconceptions, it is difficult to fathom its prominence on the cultural landscape. In the late 19th century, vaudeville grew from a simple concept: A respectable general audience variety show of "acts" unconnected by plot. Aided by technological advances, entrepreneurs commanding networks of theatres built the genre into a dominant form of leisure. Vaudeville homogenized popular tastes in entertainment, and vestiges of its influence persist today.

A harsh reality for jugglers to understand is that in the 1880-1930 vaudeville era, even supremely talented jugglers were assigned the least desirable spots on the bill. Because most juggling acts were non-speaking acts, they were ideal to open or close the show. They could carry on, working to music, while arriving or departing theatre patrons shuffled about, ignoring the artistry and clattering their seats. There were exceptions, however – those elite juggling artists whose undeniable appeal merited a spot in the middle of the bill.

Parallels, contrasts, idiosyncracies, deficiencies. The early-20th-century selections reflected the trends of the time, so there are plenty of hats, canes, cigars, plates, and bottles in the instructional works – the foundation of the "gentleman juggler" repertoire that, in the right hands, retains its appeal today. As for contrast, at least three "camps" are represented: Gimmicky magicians, athletic purists, and in the middle, flashy performance artists. As for idiosyncracies, common to many jugglers in this anthology were confusing name changes, which prompted research leading to surprising new discoveries. As for deficiencies, there is only one woman represented, though Caroline Caffin's voice is loud-and-clear.

Graphic production note. For selections using original page images, broken letters and imperfections of age were fixed to aid readability. For selections rendered as facsimiles, both typeface and layout aimed to subtly reflect each selection's period and origin.

May *The Juggler's Anthology* inform, entertain, provide insight into juggling in earlier times, and comfort you in *your* place along the continuum of juggling history. My reward is the quiet satisfaction of giving back to the art that has enriched my life immeasurably. Happy reading.

– **Reginald W. Bacon**
Newburyport, Mass.
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