

## **STANDING DOWN STRAIGHT**

Jump Rhythm Technique's rhythm-driven,  
gravity-directed approach to movement learning

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### **Introduction**

“Stand up straight!” So countless boys have been told to keep them focused in gym class, countless girls have been told to keep them from slouching, and countless dance students have been told to keep them on the path to dancing beautifully. To individuals who have been taught that the way to be strong, or feel confident, or look beautiful is by “standing up straight,” a class in Jump Rhythm Technique can feel odd. It can feel odd or even shocking because its approach to movement learning teaches people to stand *down* straight.

Standing down straight means standing on two feet with both stability and relaxation. The human body realizes this apparently paradoxical condition by stacking its three principal weights – the head, torso, and pelvis – on top of each other, gathering them toward the body's axis of gravity,\* and dropping them through the legs and feet into the supporting earth. From this fully grounded state, the body is able to move vigorously outward into space without doing injury to itself. Standing down straight may not help a person achieve idealized strength, confidence, or beauty, but it does free

\*The axis of gravity is the imaginary plumb line running vertically through the skeleton that joins the top of the head, balanced on the spine, to a point on the ground equidistant between the centers of the two arches of the feet, or, when standing on one foot, the center of the arch of that foot.

the body to perform with the power and efficiency that thousands of years of evolution have built into it.

In using standing down straight as the foundation of all class work, Jump Rhythm Technique offers a fresh alternative to conventional systems of dance study. Instead of developing exercises constructed upon a partly or fully uplifted posture, it bases its pedagogy on three behaviors that have been in existence for as long as people have moved and danced from their deepest impulses. These are:

1. Grounding the body so that it can move with power and efficiency.
2. Singing as well as dancing the rhythms of movement.
3. Using rhythm-driven group and partner dancing to build community.

By focusing on movement efficiency and rhythm-driven performance, Jump Rhythm Technique guides students toward the goal of *full-bodied rhythm-making*. This process transforms the dancing body, accompanied by the scat-singing voice, into a dynamically expressive, rhythm-accurate percussion instrument.

Part One describes each of the technique's three behavior-based practices; it concludes with a discussion of how standing down straight serves full-bodied rhythm-making. Part Two reflects on further distinctions between standing down straight and standing up straight.