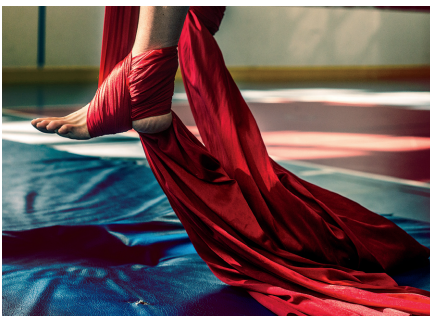


Flying through the Air with Less Than the Greatest of Ease

*Aerial dance
takes off*



Dance student Theresa Racicot is suspended 10 feet in the air in aerial silks.

CAROLYN HARPER WAS SUSPENDED sideways six feet off the ground, her body held in place by a draped band of red nylon. With one leg wrapped tightly in the fabric, she stretched her other leg to form an arabesque.

“Are you in?” asked her partner, Alissa Rickborn (GRS’16). Harper (SAR’15) nodded and gave the OK for Rickborn to take hold of her back leg and gracefully run around in a circle. Harper spun elegantly through the air.

The women are among the five students enrolled in Aerial Dance Silks Skills, a noncredit FitRec class that teaches dancers from BU and the general public how to climb, swing,



Marin Orlosky-Randow says aerial dance is a relatively new and exciting art form.

drop, flip, spin, and perform using material suspended from the rafters of the FitRec gym. When done correctly, dancers give the illusion that they are dancing in midair.

Aerial dance developed from traditional circus arts like the trapeze and corde lisse. The art form is fairly new, says class instructor Marin Orlosky-Randow, who trained in classical ballet. The aerial silks material, first developed in the 1980s, is not actually silk, she says, but closer to industrial-strength spandex.

Orlosky-Randow credits Cirque du Soleil with demonstrating that circus arts can be transformed into a fully choreographed show with characters and an emotional arc. In addition to silks, the aerial dancers use trapezes, aerial ropes, and aerial hoops. Students take the classes for a variety of reasons: a desire to experiment, a chance to develop choreography, the opportunity to master the daring skills that circus arts demand.

Many of the more complicated moves require a dancer to first perform a foot lock, a stabilizing move where one foot is “tied” to the silks in a figure-eight knot. This knot gives dancers peace of mind as they dangle as much as 30 feet in the air (the large cushioned mats below offer some reassurance, too). With that skill mastered, dancers move on to more complicated climbs, inversions, and rotations.

While Rickborn acknowledges that flipping in the air can be scary, she says the class has quickly become the highlight of her week. The triathlon athlete also says it’s her best workout yet. **AMY LASKOWSKI**

WEB EXTRA
Watch a video of students demonstrating the moves they have learned in FitRec’s Aerial Dance Silks Skills class at bu.edu/bostonia.

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President Robert A. Brown (far left) and Menino at the standing-room-only press conference.



CYDNEY SCOTT

Former Mayor Thomas Menino a Welcome Addition to BU

Two decades of hands-on leadership seen as invaluable asset

STUDENTS AND FACULTY WELCOMED THE NOVEMBER announcement that the outgoing Boston mayor, Thomas M. Menino (Hon.'01), would join BU in February as codirector of the Initiative on Cities (IoC), a new center that will invite leaders of cities around the world to share their hands-on knowledge with academics and scholars from BU and other universities.

Lucy Hutyra, a College of Arts & Sciences assistant professor of earth and environment, who has written often about the growth of cities, said the initiative “will provide an opportunity to bring together science and policy in potentially transformative ways.

“As a major research university in Boston, we have a responsibility to connect our scholarly research with the needs of our community,” said Hutyra. “With 20 years of experience running Boston, Menino understands how policies are developed and implemented and can help take our science to the streets and community in an effective manner. The knowledge, leadership, and innovation from this new Initiative on Cities can spread to other cities to make smarter and more efficient cities.”

The IoC will also tap academic expertise in disciplines across the University, among them engineering, education, health care, law, economics, and environmental studies, and will sponsor symposia, convene meetings to support policy makers, and hold an annual meeting, where city leaders from around the world will discuss such things as urban governance and the impact of climate change. It will be affiliated with BU’s Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future and will study the governance and organization of the world’s swelling urban areas. Graham Wilson, a CAS professor and chair of political science, will codirect the IoC. **→ more**