IX YEARS AGO, Lucas Adverse, BCom ’17, saw a video of Japanese jugglers on YouTube and decided to look up juggling tutorials and give it a shot himself. Today, Adverse is bringing international attention to the arts of juggling and kendama (use of a traditional Japanese skill toy).

With a number of accolades to his name, he has performed around the world and represents the International Jugglers’ Association, the world’s oldest and largest jugglers’ entity. He has consistently ranked as one of the top 40 jugglers worldwide over the last four years (he was number eight in 2017) and recently became the second juggler ever to create a video for Instagram’s own Instagram page, receiving 5.9 million views.

Despite being one of the most well-known figures in the world of juggling, Adverse does it for pleasure: it’s a hobby, not his job. He’s reached this level simply by doing something that brings him joy, and sharing it with others.

“My dream is to have a retail store in Vancouver, selling imported products from Latin America,” says Adverse. To accomplish this dream, he decided to attend UVic. “I heard a lot about the business program, and it seemed like the best option for me.”

Thanks in part to the language classes he took at UVic, Adverse is able to speak Spanish, English, Portuguese and Japanese. “I like communicating with and meeting new people, and I love speaking a lot of different languages.” This will serve him well as he pursues a career with an international focus.

But Adverse has no plans to stop juggling or making videos. He claims that most juggling videos don’t reach people outside of the juggling community, and that not many people are aware of what modern juggling looks like. The Instagram feature was a breakthrough in this regard.

“I got so many messages from people who want to start juggling or playing kendama. That’s what I hope to do more. I hope to influence more people to try it.”

According to Adverse, people who are interested in other coordination-based activities can quickly learn to juggle. Growing up in Brazil, Adverse spent his free time playing the drums and learning magic tricks. When he was 14, his parents helped him move to Vancouver. It wasn’t until graduating from high school that he discovered juggling. “People think they need some sort of skill or gift to do it, and never give it a try. But you can’t really learn anything in life without trying, right?”

And Adverse has plenty of reasons why people should try.

“When you play any sport, it involves manipulating an object. When you play soccer, basketball or volleyball, it all involves manipulating a ball. Learning to juggle is just learning to manipulate one or more objects. It really helps you in other sports or games and anything that’s related to coordination,” he says, adding that it can improve flexibility and help develop quicker reflexes. “Modern juggling is about quality, not quantity,” he says. “Contemporary juggling focuses on your skill with those objects, rather than keeping as many as possible in the air.”

In the course of pursuing his passion and inspiring others, Adverse has almost accidentally become a digital influencer. Although he didn’t set out to build or capitalize on a personal digital brand, his Instagram account has 43,800 followers and he receives offers regularly from companies and individuals wanting to collaborate with him.

Reflecting on what he’s learned about building an online audience, Adverse says: “I don’t post too much. I don’t post too little. If you post in the same background, or similar tricks, people will think it’s the same thing and they’re not going to appreciate it. The more diverse you are, the better. It keeps me creative, and keeps me from doing the same things over and over.”

Adverse puts his marketing knowledge to work for the International Jugglers’ Association in his capacity as volunteer marketing adviser, making videos, translating text from Japanese to English and managing social media platforms for the organization.

Popularizing juggling and kendama may be his side gig, but he’s not planning to slow down anytime soon. With his accounts gaining new followers every day, Adverse is on track to expose modern juggling to more eyes than ever.

“The whole goal of my videos has been to reach people who don’t juggle. There are so many people that don’t really know about the benefits, but if they tried juggling, they might love it.”

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