

**Take the Leap**  
**By Patrick Hagan**

*[background talking + movement]*

**BEVINE**

*[background talking]*

OK uhhh. To be or not to be, that is the question whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them. Good?

**HAGAN**

That is good. I don't want to stop you

**BEVINE**

(laughs)

*[theme music]*

**HAGAN**

I'm Patrick Hagan, and this is Onomatopoeia, a podcast about the people and places of New York City.

In this episode: Victor Bevine. An actor, writer, director, teacher, and pioneer.

*[theme music fade out]*

**BEVINE**

So when I was five, we did an Easter dinner, at one of my aunt's house and on TV, there was this movie about old time vaudeville, and there was an act with this guy who had all these dogs. And so I got it in my head that if I was an actor, I could have dogs. So I went to my parents, and I said I'm going to be an actor and they laughed.

**HAGAN**

But Victor Bevine did become an actor.

*[music 1]*

Now 68, he landed his first movie when he was just 16.

Attended the Yale Drama School.

Spent a decade in off Broadway theaters,

before flying to LA to try his luck on TV.

He got on a few shows. One of them, Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

### **BEVINE**

I played it majoran and I had to have a funny thing on my face. And it was fun because I was a huge Star Trek fan as a little kid of the original series. And so just getting dressed up as a Starfleet officer and carrying a phaser and jump running around these incredible sets. It was like I was 10.

### **HAGAN**

Turns out that all that running around the best part of being a TV actor. The rest of it wasn't so fun.

### **BEVINE**

I remember being on the set of one of them and thinking this is really boring. And so I decided at that point, I wanted to move on the other side of the camera.

### **HAGAN**

He wrote, directed and produced all kinds of stuff over the next few years.

But show business is a tough business.

To make some extra money on the side, he taught playwriting to kids at a non-profit.

He kept teaching when he moved back to the east coast a few years later.

### **BEVINE**

I was working with this really tough group of kids in Queens and I was very frustrated. I'm driving back, at the time I was living in New Jersey,

*[fade in NPR]*

and I turned on NPR, and there was a piece on parkour. This was like 2006.

### **ARCHIVAL-NPR**

...that's called Parkour. Lou Olkowski went out of the streets of New York...

*[fade out NPR]*

*[music 2]*

And when I was a little boy, when I was like four years old, I used to have this recurring nightmare that I was being chased by a T Rex. And the only way I could get away was my arms would lengthen and I would push myself like a monkey.

And they started talking in the NPR show, they started talking about this move in parkour called the Kong vault, which is exactly that. It's like King Kong, you know, plant your hands down, and then bring your legs through. And I said, holy shit that's what I used to dream.

And then they started saying how the kids were getting the metaphor, that by overcoming physical obstacles, they could overcome other obstacles in their life as well. And I said, this is a calling I've got to do something with this.

*[fade out music 2]*

I called my partner in LA the guy that was teaching with me David Thompson and he had lived in Paris for five years and so I said do you know about Parkour?

### **THOMPSON**

And I said, well, I know what parkour means. And, you know, the "parcours" in French.

And so he told me what it was. And I said, Oh, I've seen those guys!

### **HAGAN**

The very next day, Bevine found out about a jam – or "meetup" in parkour lingo – taking place at Riverside Park in Manhattan.

So he hired a cameraman on craigslist, filmed some of the athletes, and collected their phone numbers.

### **THOMPSON**

And he called me back and he said, You know, I think if we can develop something around this, that we really can help a lot of people, and help save some of the kids that we weren't able to help teaching. We pitched it to the third partner that we at that point we were developing shows with and I think within a year and a half or two years, we had a we had a show on MTV.

### **ARCHIVAL-MTV**

*[rock music]*

Hey, I'm your host, Todd Richards and welcome to MTV is first ever ultimate parkour challenge.

(...)

This is the first ever Parkour contest on US soil. It's three rounds of competition, eight parkour athletes from around the world and 10,000 bucks on the line.

*[reverb tail]*

### **HAGAN**

The show aired in 2009, and lasted two seasons. Bevine is proud of it.

### **BEVINE**

It's still the biggest parkour event in history. It's 3.5 million viewers.

### **HAGAN**

Plus, the show was just the start of what would become a lifelong project.

*[music 1]*

### **BEVINE**

So we had said to the athletes, what do you need besides the TV show? And they said leadership, nobody is looking after the overall good of the sport. And we said we can do that.

### **HAGAN**

So Bevine and Thompson – two former TV actors – founded the World Federation of Freerunning and Parkour, or WFPF.

### **THOMPSON**

One of the things I would tell people because they are like why do you guys and how did you get into this? And, and I tell them I said well, you kind of have to be a little bit of a knucklehead to move to Hollywood to be an actor. So we didn't know what we were getting into when we started the Federation.

## **BEVINE**

We found mentors to help us and say, well, in order to get the insurance, you've got to have a teacher certification. So we started a certification program. Then we started, you know, people were using homemade equipment and kids were getting hurt or homemade equipment. So we started an equipment company. Then we, you know, people didn't, there was no consistent curriculum. So we started a curriculum program.

## **HAGAN**

The two also set up a non-profit, The International Parkour Federation, or IPF. It provides funding and other forms of support to parkour athletes in places like Ukraine and Afghanistan.

*[music 2]*

## **BEVINE**

I joke around that I wish I'd never turned on the radio that day. But, you know, it's, I think sometimes how many people listen to that radio program? And they said, Oh, that's interesting. And somehow, because of that dream because of the stuff in my life, my life story, it just I had to do something with it.

So, I sometimes think how incredibly random this is.

I just always believed in magic and I think life without magic is just about magic and meaning is just you know it's just sort of indulgence and pointless.

*[theme music]*

This episode of Onomatopoeia was created by me, Patrick Hagan. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Other music by Blue Dot Sessions. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Libraries.