

PHILIPPE PETIT

Biography

Philippe Petit, universal poet laureate of the high wire, was born in France and took his first steps on the wire at age 16. He learned everything by himself while being expelled from five different schools. Performing on five continents, he taught himself Spanish, German, Russian and English, and developed a keen appreciation for architecture and engineering. Using his wire to extend the boundaries of theater, music, writing, poetry and drawing, he has become an inimitable High Wire Artist.

On August 7, 1974, Philippe accomplished what may be the most astounding “artistic crime” of all time. He walked a high wire illegally stretched between the rooftops of the Twin Towers of the World Center, making eight crossings over the course of an hour, a quarter mile above the sidewalks of New York. Philippe’s book, *To Reach the Clouds* (re-titled *Man On Wire* in paperback), which recounts that adventure, was the basis of the 2009 Academy Award-winning documentary film, *Man On Wire*, as well as the upcoming 3-D Robert Zemeckis film, *The Walk*, which will be released on October 2, 2015.

In the four decades since the World Trade Center walk, Philippe has performed on the high wire more than 100 times around the world including Paris, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Jerusalem and New York City where he has been an Artist-In-Residence at The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine for more than 30 thirty years. On August 7, 2014, Philippe celebrated the 40th anniversary of his World Trade Center walk in a show entitled, “Look Up!” with Paul Winter on the soprano saxophone and Melissa Leo giving dramatic readings from *To Reach the Clouds*.

Philippe is the recipient of the first Action Maverick Award, the New York Historical Society Award; the prestigious James Parks Morton Interfaith Award; the Byrdcliffe Award; the National Institute of Social Sciences Gold Medal; he is a laureate of the Fondation De La Vocation Par Marcel Bluestein-Blanchet and, the French Ministry of Culture bestowed upon him the title of Chevalier Des Arts & Des Lettres. He has been a featured speaker at the national TED Conference.

Philippe’s most recent book—his tenth!—*Creativity, The Perfect Crime* was published by Riverhead Books in the spring of 2014. He is currently writing his 11th, *The Key West Diary*.

Philippe’s new high wire project is: *Rapa Nui Walk*, on an inclined cable set on Easter Island in homage to the Rapa Nui and their giant stone statues known as Moai. Among Philippe’s most cherished goals is the continuation of his first series of High Wire Master Classes: *Tightrope! An Exploration Into The Theatre Of Balance* and the development of his one-man stage show: *Philippe Petit: High Definition!*

In addition to walking the high wire, Philippe Petit gives lectures and workshops on creativity and motivation, writes, draws, performs close-up magic, practices lock-picking and 18th century timber framing, plays chess, studies French wine, and was sighted bullfighting in Peru. Also, he has been arrested over 500 times...for street juggling!

When he’s not traveling, Philippe shares his time between New York City and a small hideaway in the Catskills.