

This activity sheet explains how to get your class ready to begin playing a character. We talk through the activities detailed in the video so you can revisit them in your own time or develop them further. Everything below can be adapted to your other drama work.

WARM-UPS

The first thing we encourage in a Snappy Opera rehearsal is to get warmed up together. Warm-ups can sometimes feel silly but they're doing really important work. They help the group relax, connect and focus, and lay the groundwork for the session ahead.

GIVE THE CAT A BATH

This exercise is a great way to get young people connected to their body as a story telling instrument. When I learnt this warm up it was called Give The Cat A Bath because, when having a wash, a cat always makes sure to take care of its whole body.

1. Rub your hands together to build up some nice buzzy energy between them.
2. Working from the head to the toes wake up the body by giving it a rub.
3. Stop every so often to build more energy in the hands. Can your young people focus enough to know when to come back to energy building without being told?

If you have their attention for the stopping and starting of energy building, why not see if you can get the group to all clap together with you at the same time?

In the video I also added in a small shape and big shape to get them thinking about space. Try asking them to create small and big shapes at different levels (floor level, low level, mid-level, high level and beyond).

SHAKE 8

You may well have come across this exercise before but it's a good way to get the group coordinated and working together. I've used a cry of 'Magical Music Tree' at the end, but it can be anything you like here.

- 1) Shake 8 times each of the following limbs: right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg. Get the class to count with you and ask them to stay in time together. No speeding up.
- 2) Repeat the cycle reducing the number of shakes each time from 8 to 6 to 4 to 2 to 1.
- 3) After the final shake of 1s shout 'Magical Music Tree' and create a final pose

You can practise your ensemble skills here by getting everyone to stay together in time as well as practising balance!

Try speeding up or slowing down the count to work on pulse or make it more challenging.

Try adding in an emotion or motivation like: you've got something sticky and disgusting stuck to your hands and feet and you want to get it off.

You could warm up different parts of the body by tapping head, shoulder, knees and toes instead.

NUMBER EMOTION

This is a good way to think about how we show emotion in the face and body. In our video I did all of this to camera but what works really well is to select a different space in the room for each emotion. This means your class also have to think about a point of focus. Your young people can be involved in the decision making of where to look and what to express.

- 1) Pick a space (or object) in the room and label it Number 1. Attribute an emotion to that space. Get your young people to create a personal freeze frame of that emotion focusing on that direction.
- 2) Pick a new space (or object) in the room and label it Number 2. Attribute a different (contrasting) emotion to that space. Get your young people to create a freeze frame of the new emotion in that direction. Get them to move between the two by calling out the numbers. Ask for a quick change and a strong freeze at the end.
- 3) Pick another space (or object) in the room and label it Number 3. Attribute a different (contrasting emotion) to that space. Get your young people to create a freeze frame of the new emotion in that direction. Get them to move between all three.

This is a great way to get attention back for a class. Just calling out the numbers can get a rowdy space focussed again.

Ask them to think about how each freeze frame could occupy a different space or level and to focus on how the way they carry their changes in the body (from open to closed or big to small).

You could add in greater motivation by asking the class to fill in the gaps – why are they happy? What are they looking at? (you've just seen your best friend arrive back at the airport after living abroad etc.)

FINDING CHARACTER

The warmups have primed everyone to think about how to demonstrate character and mood in their body, face and thoughts. Once you've tapped into these skills it's a great time to explore specific characters. In the video, I've given the young people a different movement quality for each magical creature but it's really fun to workshop this in the space and see the ideas they come up with themselves. I've detailed how you might try this below:

- 1) Explore the Fish in the magical music tree. Get your class to share any fish facts they might have.
- 2) Talk together about how they think a fish might move: what words can they use to describe it? Think about speed, direction (do they change direction suddenly or do they move quite smoothly), the rules of the environment they usually move around (water, sky and earth). What levels might they occupy on stage to show all of this?
- 3) Finally, are there any words to describe the personality of the creature? (Graceful, shy etc).
- 4) On their own (maybe with some musical accompaniment) give them 30 seconds to try out some of these ideas.
- 5) Repeat steps 1-4 with the Unicorn and Dodo.
- 6) Split your class into smaller groups and ask each of them to explore one of the characters in more detail. Get them to pick 3 of the describing words and, picking their favourite ideas from the movement task, come up with a group way of moving.
- 7) Get each group to show their ideas back to the rest of the class.
- 8) Explore relationship by seeing what happens when these different groups come across each other in the space.

Just because all the animals might move in the same way, doesn't mean they can't have their own personalities. You could have a forgetful fish who always gets left behind, or a really brave unicorn ready to save the day.