



The Lament of the Green Bean:

Movement Notes

Resources:

1. Movement in your Play In A Day performance: a general introduction video
2. LOTGB video 1: Movement, Chorus and Characters in *The Lament of the Green Bean*
3. LOTGB video 2: Sequences and Set Pieces

1. Movement in the 'Play in a Day' performances:

Transcript of *introducing movement* video

Introducing movement:

The movement elements in our plays in a day can seem intimidating, on the page, but I'm here to reassure you that they couldn't be simpler. These sections are about telling the story with the pictures we make on stage, rather than the words we say, and for both primary and secondary age groups it's an ideal way to get ideas across, whilst keeping our school audience attention. And of course they can be great fun for you to lead, and your students will love expressing themselves physically, too.

Leading and Teaching movement:

When leading and teaching movement it is important that you enjoy it too – model what you want the students to do, so they can copy you. Make it fun, and use the music included with the play. All our bodies are different, so allow for individual expression, and for students to interpret movement in their own way. Having a clear signal for stopping is also important (a raised hand, a whistle etc.), as these group sections can sometimes be noisy!

Fitting it in:

Movement sections are a great way to pick up the energy after lunch, or after a long period of time learning lines. Rehearsing them little and often, as a warm up, is an ideal way to fit them in.

Keep it simple:

Even if the movement sections will be different every time you practice them, they will still need some rehearsal, so it is important to keep it simple, and repeat, rather than doing something complex only once – I know from experience, this is where even professional performers forget everything!

It's up to you:

I'll give a few options here and there, so if dance, movement or theatre is something you love, or you are just feeling ambitious, then I'll give you ways you can make more of these elements, if you want to give them more time leading up to the Play In A Day performance, but there will always be a simple version too, that will work just as well.

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2. Movement, Chorus and Characters in *The Lament of the Green Bean*

Overview:

This is a great play to really have fun with the movement aspects of theatre, and staging a story, with many elements of the story being told visually. We are going to cover specific characters and elements in this section, and look at the sequences, like *aging*, and the *forest being chopped down* in the next.

The chorus of the Green Beans:

The Green Beans fulfill a very ancient theatrical function of the 'chorus', as in the theatre of the ancient Greeks.

They see the story, narrate sections to us the audience, and even intervene to change the outcome. As such they have a vital role.

In addition to being dressed in green, with as much or as little costume as you would like to use, they want to always remain together in a group, like literal peas in a pod.

When they are not involved in a scene they are still present, and watch, adding their focus to the action – this is a challenge for any performer, but as soon as they are distracted and look away they will in turn distract your audience, so really impress upon them the vital nature of their interest in everything that is happening!

As characters they begin positive and open, chests up, eyes wide. Their opening Tableau should be energetic and positive.

Like the finale of a big dance number, with a sense of "Ta Da" about it!

And as the family meal begins they can step away and begin to watch the scene with interest, perhaps moving to one side of the stage to give it space.

Let your 'green bean' students have fun when they tumble into the bucket or bin, groaning, and rolling, and if they can be safe and not hurt each other, then they could end up in a messy pile.

The Orangutan:

Our poor Orangutan watches his forest destroyed. He is an ape, and can move between all fours and standing, with chest forward, and bum out, or sitting with head forward. Adding some quiet "oos" would be great, and he or she really wants to have a very innocent face, and some orange costuming would help too.

Ugly Fruit :

I love the Ugly fruit. They're awkward, clumsy, happy, and ultimately good. Think Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy. They can be off-balance at times, making themselves squat or bend over to one side slightly... a lovely little set of roles.

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Ageing:

Our characters ageing, and becoming Grandma and Grandpa is a great theatrical challenge – and a lovely bit of storytelling to boot.

Start by getting them to build up the body shape of the older characters: maybe a bend in their backs and knees, beginning to curl their hands, moving more slowly with smaller steps... next tell them that when you clap your hands you want them to turn back into normal children. *Clap!* And again, back into the older characters. *Clap.* Help them find the older bodies again, if you need to – then tell them: “now I want you to change from a child to the characters of the older grandparents, whilst I count to 10, slowly. Try to take the whole time to do this” then count, and let them try. It might need a few goes to get it, but by breaking down the sequence like this you give them the best chance of learning it.

And to finish off maybe one of the Green Beans can bring in a walking stick for Grandma or Grandpa. Do give this some rehearsal, as it may take a little while for your students to really get this in their muscle memory.

Transforming into a bird:

There are three ways to approach this magical moment – pick one, or try them all and let your class vote, if you have the time:

1. Bird hands: you can have your Green Bean create a bird with their hands, crossing their thumbs over, and flapping their palms like wings, flying over to the grandparents (smiling?)
2. Bird body: the Green Bean shakes him/herself, shudders, reaching out with their arms, flapping them like wings, and ‘flying’ around on tip toes, pulling their chest up. If you have a young dancer in your class, this is a great moment for them to shine
3. Bird Puppet: if you take a sheet of A4 paper, fold it in half, and then place your index finger in the crease, and thumb and middle finger either side, then by gently flapping it up and down you have a bird – that can fly and land and is a more poetic representation. This will take a student capable of quiet focus. The golden rules of puppetry? Keep it moving, gently but constantly, and when the puppeteer looks at it so do the audience. This is all you need to know!

Pick the version you like most, and suits your class. Versions 1 or 2 are the simplest, with version 2 (bird body) being the most straight forward and quick to learn and stage.

3. Sequences and set pieces

This piece has several key sequences that are movement led. The moment where one scene freezes and another continues should be straight forward, as should the creation of the choc bar; running on to create a line of marching, in time if possible, and pass it down bit by bit, with your Orangutan looking on, dismayed... but here are some more meaty bits:

The Shrinking Space:

In the script there is the wonderful image of the square of space, which shrinks and shrinks on your characters.

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You could represent this with a green or brown ribbon, or if you can get some thick hempy rope this may look good too – but it is important it can be clearly seen by your audience.

The four students who hold the four corners have a big job – that will require them to concentrate, and learn when to shrink the space and how much...

The two at the front of the stage, nearest the audience could sit when they don't need to move, so they don't block anyone standing behind them from the audiences view.

As soon as you start rehearsing have these guys in place, with their ribbon/rope, so they can learn their moves. You don't want to rehearse something and then realize there is a big ribbon in the way!

Water Trickling Away:

This is a short moment, but a key one – have the characters cup their hands, as if about to drink, then open them looking down at the floor, and then one could touch the ground to see if it is wet... then sigh, as they realize it is gone –

Building and Destroying the Rainforest:

Actors can become trees, running or swaying on, arms out stretched like a canopy.

Have them learn good positions where they are well spaced out, but won't block your important scenes (or put some X shapes on the ground in coloured tape for them to go to).

As the trees are cut down, with large chopping movements the actors playing the trees can break and fall, in a staccato fashion – until they all lie dead – as the next scene begins they can then leave the stage if they need to, but leaving the image of the dead trees will be powerful, and also means, as the rainforest returns, they are already in the correct positions to regrow (reaching up again, breathing deeply, stretching and swaying again).

Rewind:

The final, fun sequence we have to look at is the rewind.

Retracing steps backwards always looks fun, add some jerky movement, and a sound effect (or even some made up 'backwards talking gobbledygook' and you have a good comedy moment!

This will need rehearsal – especially making it clear to everyone when to start moving, at the same time.

To help this, have your Green Bean who presses the remote stand where everyone can see them, and make the gesture of pressing the button much bigger than necessary, flicking out their whole arm like with a fishing rod, before they press that button!

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