



The Chicken Temptation:

Movement notes:

Resources:

1. Movement in your Play In A Day performance: a general introduction video
2. TCT video 1: Style and Characters in The Chicken Temptation
3. TCT video 2: Actions and Sequences

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!

Its 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. Style and characters

The setting and style notes at the beginning of the script are a very useful tool, and the set up of using chairs for characters to sit on, instead of them having to leave the stage is now a very established style, and perfect for a piece like this.

Chairs:

They can be lined up at the back, or, for a slightly less in focus position they can equally flank the stage on its right and left.

It also allows you to inject some energy into your scene changes (a time when so often the audience are lost or distracted), having characters run back to sit like in a game of musical chairs, or to travel to their chair, still holding the emotion of their character (skipping happily, or slouching with embarrassment etc.).

But the most important thing to impress on your students is that when they are off their chairs they are IN character, and when they are sat down, but not in a scene they need to WATCH what is happening on stage, giving supportive focus and investment in the story. Nothing is more distracting than an actor looking somewhere other than the stage!

Have fun when making the sofa, class room and house out of the chairs, and let your students really get to know exactly who is moving what when – if they don't get a chance to rehearse these transitions then they will almost certainly end up with someone having nowhere to sit when they really need to! You can put some x marks on the stage with colored tape to help them remember positions if necessary (red for the sofa, green for the house, etc.).

Characters:

Anika introducing each character at the beginning of the play is a great moment to have some fun.

Give each character a quick and high energy movement, as they get up and show their poses – ideally created by the student playing the character. These poses really want to be simple, and funny. Don't be afraid of clichés here – we get more depth from our characters later.

Ask each student to pick one or two words to describe their character based on the script (or assign some of the following: Mum: clever/busy/wise, Dad: jolly/tired/funny, Ash: sporty/cool/popular, Jaz: smart/hard working/genius, Aunt Sarah: generous/confused/thoughtful, Uncle Mo: beaming/generous, Granddad: wise/thoughtful, Leyla: shy/dreamer).

Combine the word with an action the character does, and make a still image. Get your students to snap from relaxed into the still pose, like a photograph (clap your hands to cue it), and back again. Encourage as much energy as possible!

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The Classroom:

Once the classroom is established you can have some fun with these scenes – when the class ‘yawn’ have them all do it together, so Jazz stands out even more (make sure she is in the front row!).

When hands are put up, again, ALL together – these moments of **synchronicity** will be simple to organize – have one person as the nominated **leader**, some one they can all see, and everyone can follow them.

The Girls

When Jazz speaks to her ‘girls’ we can push the reality a bit for dramatic and comic value.

When each one talks about *Zumba*, *Pilates* and *Boot Camp*, have them add an enthusiastic movement (maybe a jump and arm move for Zumba, a press up or plank for Pilates and a running on the spot with a very stern face for Boot Camp?), that is very high energy, but is dropped immediately, when dismissed by the others. They can all find this very funny, too...

When the girls huddle together to make their plans, have them exclude the audience, deliberately – facing up stage – someone can look up to check no-one is watching, too... This can happen very quickly, like it is something they do A LOT.

Finally – the moment where the girls watch Ash from behind an invisible bench or cupboard could be straight out of a Shakespearian comedy. Squash them together, and have them jostle for position. To establish the bench you could also add one of them saying “quick, hide!” before they take positions... it is deliberately silly, and really should be enjoyed as such.

3. Actions and sequences:

There are several movement led sections in this play that require some attention and rehearsal to really do them justice:

Growing on the allotment:

This is a little vignette in its own right, where the characters involved can mime digging (maybe with a big shovel for dad, and a little trowel for Layla?).

Then seeds are planted with care, water is poured from an imaginary watering can.

Then imagining the hot sun everyone shades their eyes or wipes their brows, and finally they look at the spot where the seed was planted, and together imagine it growing larger and larger until they can pick and eat berries!

This is a physical script that needs to be learnt like lines – it can be performed all together, all doing the same action, in what will be more like a moment of dance OR it can be performed like a scene with no words, where one person plants the seeds, another waters, and all the while the other characters are watching, and nodding and are invested in the action of the others. Both will work – see which your group prefers?

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Jazz's room and the Cake:

Now no one is expecting a real cake here – but this should still feel like a tragedy of epic proportions. To help build to this moment have Uncle Mo treat the cake like a baby – being extremely careful with it, and protecting it from any knocks or bumps.

So, if you don't have a real door off set to be Jazz's room, then set up Jazz's room so that the door is mimed – and her chair is facing away from everyone else, but so the audience can see her... and witness her face as her anger at Ash grows and grows, building up to the moment of throwing the shoes.

For Mo and Sarah, as they are knocked back they can almost sit down in surprise, then fall back (much safer!), with the Cake landing on top of them (even if it is a cardboard cut out).

And the more they act the icing covering them the more the audience will see it in their imaginations... and whilst it is in some ways a humorous situation, for the characters it is a complete disaster, so it is extremely important they stay in character in this section.

This section and the next are going to want a good deal of attention in rehearsal, to really make them as effective as they can be – but it will be worth it!

The Fight

Keep any stage fight simple and pure choreography, so no one gets hurt. This is really important for your students to grasp. However high the level of their characters emotion, they need to match it with a higher level of technique, to be sure the actors don't get hurt, whilst we *pretend* the characters do.

As Jazz grabs Ash's hair have your student playing Jazz make a fist. By placing this on Ash's head he can then hold on to her fist with his hands and pull his own head back, and it will 'look' like his hair is being pulled – but should never really be pulled! If his hair is too short to believe this she could pretend she has grabbed his ear instead, in exactly the same way.

For Ash to put Jazz's arm behind her back he needs only loosely hold on to her arm, and must let her move it behind her back – never applying any real pressure. She then need only pretend it hurts. All the rest is acting. As they push and scuffle they need to be very controlled, no real force, only pretend... and as it is about to get more serious this is when Layla need step in.

Have your students rehearse this in slow motion first, like a scene from "The Matrix", so they really understand the control needed. You could indeed play this scene in almost slow motion, if you feel your students can keep the level of drama high, in this stylized mode?

But always with any stage combat, safety first – no one should really get hurt, and if you feel unsafe at any point, then have them mime the fight without even touching each other – the audience will still understand what is going on. Important for the students to understand is that if the audience ever think the actor is getting hurt, instead of the character, then they will forget about the play altogether!

This should and can be a very dramatic sequence, though, so enjoy rehearsing and directing it, and if it is safe then your students will enjoy it too!

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