



The Super Safe Environment Compound: Movement Notes

1. Movement in your Play In A Day performance: a general introduction Video
2. TSSEC Video: Chorus and cut-outs

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. Chorus and Cut Outs

There are a lot of challenges to staging The Super Safe Environment Compound, but these provide some excellent stimulus for using movement to tell our story visually.

Chorus

A lot of my movement suggestions draw on the theatrical convention of using the whole ensemble (similar to the Greek chorus). In this style the main characters (in this case our teenagers) lead the action, but the world around them, as well as all the other characters, is brought to life by the remainder of the cast, who may have several jobs each throughout the piece, and can be any number of actors, from 5 to 25.

The Storm:

This is the first moment that the ensemble can be established – our teenagers sit on their sofa, facing forwards, whilst the storm is created by the sound effects outside – in the background we can have people walking across the stage with umbrellas, and newspapers and carrier bags blown across the stage (very simply puppeteered) to help the image come alive. The payoff here is that, after a peal of thunder, the teenagers can shake themselves on the sofa, whilst a member of the ensemble safely ‘puppeteers’ the tin of beans from a previously unseen shelf, to the actors head (with no risk of injury!)

This can work in exactly the same way in the storm at the end of the play, with some wind walking mime if your actors are up for it, and the same tin on head technique! It tells the story and should also be pretty fun for your audience too.

The world around us

In a similar way to the storm, the clock can be a member of the ensemble, creating the clock arms with their hands, spinning faster and faster.

The fridge could be mimed (maybe someone could flick on a torch light, like a fridge light, when it is ‘opened’, and turn it off when it closes... and even hold out the food?)

Alternatively you could create with your students cardboard cut outs of fridge and clock face – and any other props you need – painting them simply and clearly to help the audience understand.

A two dimensional fridge doesn’t need an opening door – the whole thing can simply swing open. Often, when we’re on stage, the simpler things are, the better...

Going down...

The lift could prove a confusing moment, if not done clearly – I suggest a very obvious pressing of a button, and a jolt from the actors when it starts and stops. Maybe someone in the ensemble could voice “going down”? If you’re feeling ambitious then two people with torches could stand either side, shining them on the actors, and flicking them up and down, to create the impression of passing floors.

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The rainforest:

The moments when the teenagers talk about the outside world and it is illustrated on stage are fantastic opportunities for the ensemble to have their own powerful moments. Trees can be represented by actors (or cut outs), reaching and waving in the breeze. When they are cut down they stagger and crash to the ground, and get up as refugees, who huddle together in the image of '*nightmarish migration*'.

These wordless sections can still have voice and breath – and really should do – giving something for the students playing the teenagers to really look at and respond to

Some fun:

There are three images I love, and think could be very fun. The first is travelators – get your students to experiment with different ways of moving on the spot – side to side, front on, etc. – see if they can come up with a funny way to show this? A little judder and jerk when they arrive will help matters immensely.

The '*fatter*' teenagers could show this though augmented costume (pillows up their shirts etc.) or through their physicality – leading from the hips, and rounding their bodies and arms as they move more slowly and heavily.

The pill popping tableau, and the other still images could all come directly from your students – think commercials, with fake smiles and frozen bodies.

The Bird:

The final image of the bird flying past is a very beautiful one. There are at least three ways you could show this:

1. With the sound effects of a bird singing they could simply mime it, all looking at an invisible bird – the challenge of this is that it is hard to look all at the same 'imagined' bird – but try this and see how it looks
2. A cut out or toy bird puppeteered... flying past... this is one of the most comic options, but could hold the audience without everyone bursting into laughter, if you find the right student to do it
3. By folding a piece of A4 paper in half, and putting index finger on the inside, thumb and middle finger on the outside you have a very simple puppet bird. This is a bit more ambitious, but very effective. The laws of puppetry require the student doing this to look at the puppet at all times, though – as soon as they look away, so will the audience! If this bit of paper emerges from a newspaper that was part of the 'storm' sequence then that could be particularly nice...

Good luck, and enjoy working on this – it's a great play, and should be an excellent challenge for your class!

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