

Creative Movement for OPERA –

Introduction:



What is creative movement? It is an exploration of different ways ones body moves. This exploration is important in the development of a child’s creativity, movement, poise and confidence. Children enjoy creative movement. It is fun and physically and mentally challenging. Creative movement in opera makes it all the more powerful and inclusive of all the arts. It will improve rhythm and coordination boosting confidence and self-image.



Objectives:

Students will be able to show events, emotions, setting, and character through their use of dance and creative movement in their opera. They will learn and do movement improvisations, engage in creative problem solving, and grow in social and emotional ways.

Emotion
Action
Beat,
Body, and
Spatial
Awareness,
Level,
Pattern,
Time,
Space
Energy,
Loco motor
movement

They will know and understand the following terminology: *emotion, action, beat awareness, spatial awareness, level, pattern, time, space, energy, and loco motor movement*. They will be able to use these words in appropriate context in discussion and in creation of their dance and movement.

Process:

It doesn’t take long to include movement in the opera. The same way that a song and action can streamline the storytelling in opera, movement can enhance and heighten action. IMPORTANT THINGS to encourage as we go through the process:

1. Use their body to show the Story

Show don’t
Tell

Their body is an instrument of expression (showing emotion and characterization). Have the students be specific about his own character.

The more a class exaggerates the characters and their differences the better.

Have your students try some simple dramatic actions as the different characters. Have them make each movement mean something.



Example:

Wolf = He is goofy, stupid, but mean.

How will he move? What does he do that shows he stupid and mean in his body? How does the performer show that he is a wolf?

Townsperson #1= A baker who is very brave. He would attack the wolf with a wooden spoon- if he had a chance.

How will he move? What will show that he is brave?



2. Interpret and move to different rhythms (beat awareness)



The class created the melodies for their opera; they suggested what rhythms; and mood for the action music. They decided the setting. All these are a part of the opera. They need to listen to the music and move how the beat makes them feel.

3. Enjoy freedom of movement (improvisation, body and spatial awareness, loco motor movement, and choreography)

Improvise movement and enjoy the feeling of moving through space before deciding what the actual “dance” will be. The “dance” may remain a free improvisation each time including performance. The students may want to have a more polished dance. They can work on developing it together (choreograph). They will experiment with how and where the body can move. How the body moves through exploring loco motor movement. They will decide if their dance should be alone, with a partner, in a small group, or a whole class. Different moments of the opera will suggest these choices.

4. Levels and patterns

The discovery of these elements will bring variety and interest to their movement and will be essential in any dance session whether they are improvising or choreographing their dance.



5. Maintain lack of inhibitions



The spontaneity of improvisation (improv) can be lost when choreographing a dance. Encourage participation at all levels and make sure that everyone is enjoying the created dance. Remember they should feel ownership in how they move. Let them be themselves. There is no wrong answer unless they continue to run into everyone else (then again, it may be what they want)! Remember to let them decide how they will move:

Ask questions-

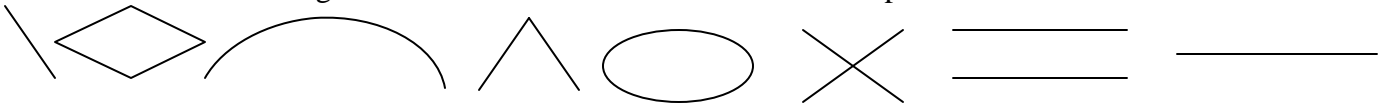
- ~What mood or emotion do the characters need to communicate?
- ~How does the music make you feel?
- ~How does the music make you want to move?
- ~What is your character doing in the story?
- ~What are you singing about?
- ~Can you act it out slowly to the music and make it into a dance?
- ~Would it be better to move quickly to show the emotion or action?
 - ~ Can everyone do the same motion or would everyone do something different?
 - ~ Could you combine both options?

EXAMPLE: Farmers are singing about planting their field- they can all do a different motion to show their individual work and then an action together of plowing rows at the same time.



During staging, find places that need characterization movement, action to songs, or extra movement to tell the story. Have the students identify where they would like an actual dance. Remember to KEEP IT SIMPLE! Here are some good suggestions to help with this:

1. Have a group opening shape- i.e. a rainbow or a grouping
2. Change levels
 - a. High
 - b. Medium
 - c. Low
 - d. A combination of levels
3. Have the students decide on a pattern and return to it throughout the music
4. Encourage variety in tempo
5. Have them work in partners, individually, and in groups
6. Change formations to enhance movement. Examples of formations:



7. Encourage a variety of steps (loco motor movements)
 - a. Walk
 - b. Run
 - c. Skip: step-hop-step-hop
 - d. Hop
 - e. Jump
 - f. Slide
 - g. Gallop
 - h. Swing
 - i. Sway
 - j. Leap
 - k. Swing
 - l. Ball change: step-ball of other foot behind-step
 - m. Balance: Same as ball-change except much larger
 - n. Running man: Lunge-hop one foot-lunge-hop one foot
 - o. Side Running man: Side lunge-jump feet together
 - p. Chasse- gallop any direction
 - q. Twist: Twist torso
 - r. Turn: Turn clockwise or counterclockwise
 - s. Twirl
8. Pathways (Where they go and how):
 - a. Different directions
 - b. Curved
 - c. Winding
 - d. Zigzag
 - e. Straight
 - f. Snake
9. Encourage the use of arms to enhance their dance movements
 - a. Arms on waist
 - b. One arm up and one down (switch)
 - c. Both arms up

- d. Both arms down
 - e. Both arms at side: one up, one down
 - f. Ballet arm positions
 - g. Jazz hands
10. Ending shape-with levels or one level formation

In your movement session:

What, Where, In relation to, How Help create a sense of what the end dance or improv will look like by giving them structure to work within. Watch and observe their movement several opera sessions before. Define their movement within: A clear beginning, middle, and end, sequence of movement, actions and communication of character. Ask questions as discussed before to help the students discover “what”, “where” and “in relation to” as they develop the dance. The key for quality is the “how” of movement:

- Control of FLOW
- Control of WEIGHT
- Control of TIME
- Control of INTENT IN SPACE

Help the students understand that all space needs to be filled, not to use others space. Introduce the concept of PLACE: self-space. Tell them to get on the dot- your starting spot!

Creative visualization: where students envision themselves moving before they actually do the movement. This increases their confidence and chances for success. **Positive encouragement for all effort is a must!**

A PRACTICE SESSION:

How would you help a group of students create an opening number for this chorus:

Chorus: Welcome to our town.
 Welcome to our town.
 It's peaceful here so please sit down.
 It's peaceful here so please sit down.
 We have our cows.
 We have our ducks.
 We have bad times and then good luck.

Solo: We have our girls. We have our boys.
Solo: Hey what is that? What is that noise?
Chorus: It's Mamma pig and she is sad.
 Well what is wrong?
Solo: I want my dad!



Evaluation:

Refer to the three rules often throughout the process and especially at the end. Ask if the rules were followed to create the dance. Ask if there is anything they would change? Did everyone participate? Did the class learn new dance terminology and use it as they created their dance?