

KING OF CHAINS: A MAGICIANS ESCAPE

Music	Falco Borsboom
Dance	Maria Speth
Time	4/4
Prelude	none
Formation	free throughout the room, laying on the ground
Target Group	suggested 6 to 12 years

Explanation

- The famous 'King of Chains' is a great magician known all over the world. He is locked up in his magical escape box and he is bound by numerous chains. His famous escape act commences when the music starts to play. First he has to free himself from his chains and finally he will need to open the magical escape box.
- Pupils will probably need guidance the first time the dance is done. This is due to the specific structure of the music. Once the pupils have become acquainted with the music, the dance will serve as an excellent warming up for other lessons, where verbal coaching of the teacher will suffice.
- It is important that the teacher is well acquainted with the music in order to be able to coach the children.
- The music in this dance is divided over 4 tracks. This enables the various parts of the dance to be studied separately.

Dance Exploration

- Illustrative photographic material of the escape artist Houdini or the illusionist David Copperfield is a good introduction to the dance. How did they achieve their impossible escapes?
- How can one see that a person is tied up by rope or chains and is trying to limb does one start their escape?
- Two kinds of movements can be made with joints: a rotating action* and a hinging** or bending action. Explain the differences to the pupils and let them explore which limbs can rotate, which can bend and which can do both.
- While seated in the circle one pleasant way of working is by asking a pupil to make a movement with his head only and continuing to do so. Then you ask the pupil next to him to do different kind of movement with the head. The same request is then done with two more pupils. Now you have four pupils all moving their heads differently. Continue in this manner while going around the circle naming various body parts that four or five consecutive pupils bring into motion. This approach can also generate new and surprising ideas. In a playful way this activity fosters concentration and participation.
- When lying on the floor it is easier to explore how the different limbs can be brought into movement through rotating and bending. The movements can be very small (slightly moving a finger), but they can be larger too (rotating both shoulders).

* Rotation movements: isolated movements in which a part of the body makes a rolling/turning motion. Often using a jointed body part such as the head, arms or shoulders.

** Bending/hinging movements: isolated movement in which a limb is moved back and forth. This body part often uses bending and stretching by nature such as arms and legs.

- Name one body part at a time and allow the pupils to try out as many variations of movement as they can think of. Side coaching*** by the teacher is very useful at this stage.
- Begin with slight isolation**** movements gradually working towards total movement. Try to extend one single movement to a second and maybe even a third one. Which movements are easily made together and which ones don't work at all?
- Strength is needed to break through the walls of the magical escape box. Pushing with strong movements from the arms, legs and back. Let the pupils experiment with this. They can push together in one direction, but also in opposite directions. Another good exercise is, while working in pairs, trying to push the other while standing back to back. Try other experiments with pairs.

Practice Music #4 and #8



*** Side-coaching: Providing suggestions and ideas while the students are dancing. It is especially useful for exploration and improvisation with the advantage that the coach/teacher may feed suggestions to dancers without stopping the dance or causing the dancers to lose concentration.

**** Isolated movement: movement of a part of the body, while the rest of the body remains stationary. For example, only moving the head, arms, shoulders, and so on. When speaking of total movement, the entire body moves.

Dance Structure

- This dance/warming-up is basically without structure. With respect to the music the structure is built up around 4 sections. The different fragments in the second part do not necessarily require change every 8 measures. In the second part the pupils are free to choose when they want to change to another isolation movement.
- In the beginning, it is convenient for the pupils when the teacher determines the order of the body parts. Once they are familiar with the dance, they would probably prefer to choose their own series of body parts.

Bars

- 1 - 8 An **introduction** in which the pupils carefully tense and release muscles throughout their body one at a time (using minimal muscle tension) to explore their options for escape from the chains. This is done individually with the teacher offering suggestions by side coaching.
- 9 - 64 7 **Fragments**: with each fragment one may choose a new section of the body to move. Each fragment consists of 8 bars and has its own recognizable change in musical character. The end of all the fragments from 1 to 5 is marked by a beat on the drum.
- 65 - 88 In the **middle section** the whole body is moving while lying on the ground. Think of turning, twisting and pushing movements that represent a wringing kind of action. One important aspect of the kind of movement here is the strength and tension involved.
- 89 - 98 The **finale**, complete with pounding drums! The King of Chains pushes himself out with all his might, slowly rising from his prison and proudly reaching out in victory!