

## Move with Imagination!

### *Creative Movement Exercises to Help Young Actors Develop Characters*

#### **Objective:**

In this exercise students will learn to use Michael Chekhov techniques to create well-defined acting characters using movement.

#### **Provided Materials:**

Activities, founded upon Michael Chekhov technique, which promote creative use of the body in expressing characterization in acting.

#### **Required Materials:**

Space students can walk through as they learn movement techniques.

#### **Terms:**

**Michael Chekhov:** A Russian-American actor, director, and author, who created an acting technique used by many famous actors, including Clint Eastwood and Marilyn Monroe.

#### **Activity:**

Instruct students to **move around in the classroom** in a natural way. Give them permission to explore the space freely.

Get the students to be more creative as they move around the room by describing Chekhov's **four qualities of movement**:

1. **Molding** (earth). Instruct the students, giving them time to respond, "Move as if you are drawing power from the earth. Move like sludge, never losing contact with the earth. Now move like a boulder."
2. **Floating** (water). Instruct the students, giving them time to respond, "Move as though you are in a big tank of water. How would your arms feel? Do you feel waves pushing you? Is the water calm?"
3. **Flying** (air). Instruct the students, giving them time to respond, "How would it feel if you were flying through the air? How would your body move? How fast would you be moving?"
4. **Radiating** (fire). Instruct the students, giving them time to respond, "Move as if you're a candle flame. Now move like an inferno."

Introduce a **ball of light** to their movement by giving the following instructions:

- Say, "now imagine there's a ball of light coming out of the palm of your hand. It's vibrant and warm. Experience what it's like to have this ball of light in your hand. Can you feel it? What does it inspire you to do? Allow it to expand. Now squish it down. Can you feel how it responds?" Remind the students that they can interact with other students and other balls of light.
- Instruct the students to move the ball of light to different areas of their body. "Move the ball of light into your forehead. Continue to move in the space. How does the ball of light influence your movement when it's in your forehead? Think about how the ball of light changes your perception of others and room. Does it change your posture? Does it change the rhythm of your movement? What kind of character would walk with the ball of light in their forehead? Are they smart? Sensitive?"
- Have them move the ball of light again. "Move the ball of light down to your chest. Feel the energy and strength the ball of light gives to that part of your body. How does this change your movement? What kind of character holds the ball of light here?"
- Instruct them to move the ball of light to their ankles, shoulders, ears, and anywhere else that helps the students be creative!

Now you will **connect the ball of light to the craft of acting**.

Overwhelmingly, human characters move with one of three balls of light:

1. Head: Chekhov called people who move with energy from their heads "**Sticks**." Instruct the students to move the ball of light to their foreheads as you read or demonstrate the following: "A stick person moves like a stick! Their energy is in their head. They might be very straight, rigid, and tense, and make small, precise movements. What kind of character might move this way?" (Answers: a soldier, scientist, or doctor).
2. Heart: Chekhov called people who move with energy from their hearts "**Veils**." Instruct the students to move the ball of light to their hearts as you read or demonstrate the following: "A veil person moves in a free, flowing manner. They respond easily to outside influence and might move slowly, exploring their surroundings. Their arms might swing and their shoulders are loose. Think about ice-skating. What type of character might move this way?" (Answers: Captain Jack Sparrow, a diva, a fairy, a ghost)
3. Hips: Chekhov called people who move with energy from their hips "**Balls**." Instruct the students to move the ball of light to their hips as you read or demonstrate the following: "A ball person is very grounded. They have a place to go, and will go there in a hurry. They are motivated, driven forward from the hips, with their chest and arms back. What type of character might move this way?" (Answer: a cowboy, a gangster, a bully, a sumo wrestler).

Instruct the students to think about the character they are playing for the scene, play, or class. Allowing them to move through the room, have them experiment with the different ways of moving them have just explored. Ask, "Is your character a stick, a veil, or a ball?"

End the activity by asking students to **write a brief reflection** based on the following prompt: How is the way you move in your everyday life different from the way your character moves?