

Improvisational Exercises

Make a Shape; Fill a Space (Positive/Negative)

- Duets- Each student chooses a partner and designates an A and a B. Dancer A makes a shape, any shape. Dancer B makes a shape related to the shape A just made using the negative space around A's positive space (fill a space). Then A moves out of his/her shape and reshapes in the negative space in relation to B's shape. Then B steps out and reshapes in relation to A's shape. And, so it continues.
- The students move smoothly and slowly, but directly, from one shape to the next without stopping to think, plan, decide, or muse. Each shape happens in the moment.
- Group Variation: The students enter the space one at a time and either make a shape or choose to fill a space related to the other dancers who are already in the space. Students hold the shape until all students are in the space and part of the "sculpture." After all students have arrived, the students who have been holding their shapes the longest begin to peel away and exit the space until all of the students are on the sidelines. Then it immediately starts over. Like a kaleidoscope – the students enter and create a sculpture of shapes, and then exit, only to start all over again.

Locomotion

- Brainstorm about movement that travels: walking, running, crawling, slithering, hopping, sliding....the list is endless and the students can be creative!
- Experiment with movements that travel. Have all the students begin on one side of the space. They must cross the space with a locomotor movement. They could begin by just walking, then running.
- Now mix it up. Set parameters, create guidelines. You could tell them that the ceiling is only 2 ft high. They must now move across the space as if the ceiling is very low. Or, the ground is very hot, they must move quickly with their feet on the ground as little as possible. Or, they are crossing a river and must jump from stone to stone. The idea is to get them to try new ways of moving that they may not have thought of before.

Wind and Reed

- Duets – choose an A and a B. Dancer A becomes the wind and B is the reed. Dancer A gently initiates movement for dancer B. Dancer A gives a gentle push to the shoulder, an arm, or leg, and B reacts to the suggestion. B can choose to complete the initiated movement or freeze the movement in space. For example, if A gives a little push to B's wrist, B's arm might float forward and then fall back to the original position. Or, after the push, B might choose to let the arm freeze in the space at the top of the movement. A continues to gently effect B's movement, and B continues to react. After this

exploration, have the partners switch roles so each has a turn at being the wind and the reed.

- Have A try moving B without using the hands. Can you use your shoulder, your elbow, your back to initiate your partner's movement?

Mirroring

- Have the students sit facing a partner. The students bring their hands up, palms facing partner's palms without touching. One of the students begins to initiate the movement, becoming the leader, while the other student mirrors the movement. After this goes on for a while, have them switch without stopping, and so the transition is not noticeable, as the other person becomes the leader.
- The next shift in this exercise is to see if the students can move without any clear leader and follower. Can they move together without any one person being the leader or follower? Can they move simultaneously, creating the movement together as they go?
- Now try this same exercise standing. The movement can reflect the whole body – legs, torso, arms, and head. Start with a clear leader. Each student gets a turn to lead and follow. Then experiment with no leader, no follower.

Place

- Have the students find a place in the room and memorize their spot. Have them notice landmarks in the room - doors, windows, clocks, posters, or marks on the floor - anything that will help them remember their spot. Clap and count to fifteen. During those 15 counts the students can move anywhere in the room, they just have to be back to their spot by count 15.
- Now the same thing in 12 counts/claps. See how much the students can do in those twelve counts. Ask them: "How much space can you cover?" "How much air in this room can you touch and still get back by 12?"
- Add more layers: have them try this in 20 counts, but ask them to make shapes, move on the floor, in the air, exploring the many possibilities of shape and space. Then again, with these additions, in 15 counts.
- Variation: have the students stay on their spot just experiencing with shape. Direct the students to think of all the parts of the body they can move. They can make shapes, change levels, bend, twist, stretch, reach. You can direct them to explore moving fast and sometimes slow, but that they should not leave their spot.
- Mini-dance: Have students choose a partner and stand on spots right next to each other. Decide who is A and who is B. Again, you will count/clap to 15 as dancer A travels through the space, going around the room, making shapes, exploring movement, and dancer B explores movement without leaving his/her spot. Dancer A must return to the original spot by count 15. Now switch. A new count of 15 begins immediately and dancer B moves all over the space, as dancer A moves in place with dancer B returning by count 15.