

Your body is your instrument is a creative dance exercise for students ages 5-8. Students will work on spatial awareness, coordination and rhythm while examining their own movement potential. This exploration of the connection between imagery and movement could be done in five to ten minutes or be rehearsed and developed into set choreography.

Artists use paint brushes, musicians have instruments but all we need to make a dance is our own body.

This exercise works well with musical accompaniment:

I like to use a song with a strong beat: Funkytown by the Lipps Inc, Stand by REM, Machine by Regina Spektor are a few of my go-to choices. If you don't want lyrics Mirando by Ratatat works.

If you drum, play a cow bell, or clap to the beat, that will work too.

Start by counting the beat of the music in 8s.

1) Have the students start by crouching down (knees bent in squat, hands on floor) and then count to 8 as the dancers stand and reach for the ceiling.

2) Stay for 8 counts

3) Take 8 counts to lower back down to crouch, encourage the dancers to take the entire time.

4) Hold for 8 counts.

Repeat 1-4 until the dancers are comfortable with this pattern and are hearing the beat. Alternately you can leave out the holds and just work on going up and down with the music.

5) From the crouch take 8 counts to get up as if you were a liquid

6) optional -hold for 8

7) take 8 counts to go back down "like a liquid"

8) optional -hold for 8

Continue substituting different cues for the type of movement: a robot, a lion, like you're stuck in mud... ask your students for suggestions of other ways you could move.

You can perform this dance by setting 2-3 different types of movement in a row, ex: up and down like an elephant, up and down like you're very cold, up like you have ants in your pants, freeze and hold a final upright pose!