



HIPPODROME
EDUCATION
NETWORK



Introduction to Pantomime

Education Pack
For Secondary

INTRODUCTION

Aim:

To learn key features of Pantomime

Resources:

Whiteboard for displaying images and facts (optional)

History:

- Pantomime is about 2,500 years old
- Roman Emperor Nero was so jealous of his favourite pantomime performer that he had him put to death
- It was during Pantomime the first time women were allowed to perform on stage.

Performance Rules:

1. Villain Characters always enter from stage left.
2. 'Good' Characters always enter from stage right.



3. Fairy Godmother enters stage right; this is because it is the audiences left and the side of their hearts.
4. Traditionally, the fairy should hold the wand in one hand when she is silent and the other when she is speaking.



CHARACTERS

Stock Characters:

Principal Girl: Often the title role as in Cinderella, Snow White or Goldilocks, or the main subject as in Sleeping Beauty / Beauty and the Beast. Always played by a female.

Principle Boy: The romantic hero of every pantomime is played by a female. Characters include Prince Charming, Colin Goose, Jack (of the beanstalk) Aladdin.

The Dame: The most popular pantomime character of today; characters include Ugly Sisters, Mother Goose, Widow Twanky; always played by men.

The Villains: The Sheriff of Nottingham in Babes in the Wood, King Rat in Dick Whittington, Abanazer in Aladdin, Captain Hook in Peter Pan. The characters we love to hate usually end the show as reformed characters.

Fairy Godmother: Tinkerbell in Peter Pan, Fairy Nell in Dick Whittington. Always played by a female, a character the audience love.

Animals: The Cat in Dick Wittington, the Cow in Jack and the Beanstalk and forest animals in Babes in the Wood; fantastic opportunities for costume and character roles.



WARM UP

Warm-up:

Finding space in the room the group must walk around without bumping into anyone. Call out speeds 0-5 where 0 is still and 5 is walking fast (no running!)

Facilitator calls out a number and class change speed.

Then introduce the characteristic of good and evil with 0 being very good and 5 being evil. Ask the class to move around and use their body language to show goodness or evilness.

Then ask them to choose good or evil characteristic and walk around the room and introduce themselves to everyone in the style of that characteristic.



ACTIVITY 1

Activity 1: Divide the class into groups of five and assign each group a stock character and have them define what their key indicators are. (Posture, mannerisms, costume, interactions?) Once you have a solid idea of your character—have your whole group create a scene where you act out who your character is without words for the entire class. Then present any additional information about the character after the performance. Make sure every member participates in some way.



ACTIVITY 2

Activity 2: FREEZE: Tell the students we will be playing the game freeze with a little twist. Ask for two volunteers. Have them pick a stock character. Ask the class for a place and situation where they would interact. (e.g. Break-up at the cinema). Have the student improvise a scene in their character. After a little while invite the rest of the class to join the scene by yelling out FREEZE. When a new person enters the scene they must change the location and scenario by taking the persons exact position who they are replacing. Have multiple students participate in this activity.

Slapstick Elements: Close in style to Children's Theatre as it has to appeal to younger audiences. Slapstick and gags are utilised to entertain and bring the comedy elements into the production.

ACTIVITY 3

Activity 3: Devise a chase or fight sequence to the Benny Hill / Pirates Theme. 1 person has something that the other 2 want possession of, or the final scene between Captain Hook and Peter Pan. Over the top gesture and facial expressions are vital to soften the aggression.



ACTIVITY 4 & 5

Double Acts:

The double act works by having one person who delivers the comic lines (as they were traditionally male they were known as the “funny man”) and the other, who helps set up the gag (known as the “straight man”). They often involve the Pantomime Dame.

EXAMPLES:

A: Have you put on weight?

B: Well, I’ve had a lot on my plate.

A: Our dog’s got no nose

B: How does it smell?

A: Awful

A: Every time I’m down in the dumps, I buy myself a new hat.

B: I wondered where you got them from.

A: My parents worked in the iron and steel trade

B: Oooh very nice

A: Yes, my mother ironed and
my father stole!

A: You’re one step away
from an idiot

B: I do beg your pardon,
I’ll move back a little
then (taking step back)

Activity 4: In pairs, devise your own comedy double act.

Activity 5:

In groups, devise a short pantomime scene based on a story you know well (Robin Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, Peter Pan etc).

Include elements that you have learnt today:

- Choose 2 or 3 stock characters
- Include at least 1 double act routine
- Include either 1 physical gag, chase sequence, or fight scene
- Voluntary: Include a running gag; she’s behind you!

Oh no it isn’t! etc.

