

**Swindon Dance  
And  
National Holocaust Memorial Day**

**Context:**

Swindon Dance was commissioned by Swindon Borough Council to create a 3½ minute dance for performance at Swindon arts centre on National Holocaust Memorial Day 2004. The performers comprised of six children from Oaktree nursery and primary school (years 5 and 6) and six children from The Commonweal secondary school (years 7-11).

This resource gives brief information about Holocaust Memorial Day, its aims and an approach towards creating a dance piece or scheme of work utilising this theme.

**Project written and choreographed by:  
Helen Ganberg (2004) Education and Access Officer, Swindon Dance**

**Project documented by:  
Louise Blake (2004) undergraduate student on placement at Swindon Dance**

## **Holocaust Memorial Day**

27<sup>th</sup> January each year is Holocaust Memorial Day. It aims to:

- Recognise that the Holocaust was a tragically defining episode of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a crisis for European civilisation and a universal catastrophe for humanity.
- Provide a national mark of respect for all victims of Nazi persecution and demonstrate understanding with all those who still suffer its consequences.
- Raise awareness and understanding of the events of the Holocaust as a continuing issue of fundamental importance for all Humanity.
- Ensure that the horrendous crimes, racism and victimisation committed during the Holocaust are neither forgotten nor repeated, whether in Europe or elsewhere in the world.
- Restate the continuing need for vigilance in light of the troubling repetition of human tragedies in the world today.
- Reflect on the recent atrocities that raise similar issues.
- Provide a national focus for educating subsequent generations about the Holocaust and the continued relevance of the lessons that are learnt from it.
- Provide an opportunity to examine our nation's past and learn from the future.
- Promote a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice, racism and other forms of bigotry.
- Support the Government's commitment that all citizens – without distinction – should participate freely and fully in the economic, social, and public life of the Nation.
- Highlight the values of a tolerant and diverse society based upon the notions of universal dignity and equal rights and responsibilities of all its citizens.
- Assert a continuing commitment to oppose racism, anti-Semitism, victimization and genocide.
- Support our shared aspirations with both our European partners and the wider international community centred on the ideas of peace, justice and community for all

## **The Holocaust**

The Holocaust was the murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. The Jews were not the only victims of Hitler's regime, but they were the only group that the Nazis sought to destroy entirely. The word Holocaust is the large-scale sacrifice or destruction, especially of life, especially by fire. The word genocide is a legal term for the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of natural groups. As well as persecuting the Jews, other groups were also victims of the Nazis, these included Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, people who were disabled, and people who came from other ethnic origins than white European. Children and adults from these groups and others were put into Ghettos, small areas of cities that were sectioned off from the other people who lived there. In these ghettos, there was very little food, and very poor sanitation, as a result, there was a lot of illness and disease.

For further information about the Holocaust, refer to the further reading list.

## **The National-Curriculum**

The choreography and performance of the final piece was made with children from Key Stage two and three and delivers part of the National Curriculum for PE and History.

Throughout the process, the participants were asked to:

- Perform actions and skills with more consistent control and quality
- Plan use and adapt compositional ideas for pairs and small group activities
- Identify what makes a performance effective
- Create and perform dances using a range of movement patterns
- Respond to a range of stimuli and accompaniment  
(KS2 PE)
- Modify and develop their plans
- Create and perform dances using a range of complex movement patterns and techniques
- Use compositional principals when composing their dances (for example, motif development, awareness of group relationships, special awareness
- Apply performance skills in their dances  
(KS3 PE)

Through working on the theme of the Holocaust, cross-curricular links can be made with both KS2 and KS3 history.

Participants were taught about

- Characteristic features of the period, including the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of men, women and children
- The social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the society studied  
(KS2 and KS3 History)

KS3 History includes

- The study of the significant individuals, events and developments from across the twentieth century, including the two world wars and the Holocaust, and their impact on Britain and the wider world

## Themes

The theme that was used for the stimulus for the piece was children and hiding. The following was discussed with the children.

### Children and Hiding

- Hide and seek
- Hiding because they were in trouble
- Hiding to save themselves

The group discussed how many Jews went into hiding to try and escape persecution. It was then discussed what it would be like being in a ghetto. A list of words included:

Scared  
Lonely  
Trapped  
Manipulated  
Pushed around by someone  
No freedom  
Isolated  
Victimized

The following story was read to the dancers

The story of Alex and Mela Roslanis a significant lesson from the Holocaust. They were a non-Jewish Polish couple who his three Jewish children during the German occupation of Poland.

The couple had two children, Jurek and Mary. Most of Alex's customers were Jewish, and his business suffered when the Jewish population was ordered into a ghetto after the German invasion.

Alex Rosian wanted to know what was happening to his customers, so he got a Jewish friend to smuggle him into the ghetto through a tunnel. There he saw starving children whose parents had been taken to work camps. When he came home, he and Mela decided that they must do something to help.

The Rosians brought the children into their home shortly before the Warsaw ghetto revolt in 1943. They took a huge risk in doing this and faced death if caught. They treated the children like their own and made every sacrifice for them, including moving home to ensure their safety

Alex, Mela and their daughter latter immigrated to the US. It was not until 1963 that they saw Jacob again, and not until 1980 that they were reunited with David. Alex and Mela saved the lives of those children by hiding them. They refused to stand by, as children were persecuted. How can we learn from their actions?

As a group, we discussed how we should stand up for people who are being treated unfairly, such as those who are bullied at school.

The analogy between children's cruel behaviour and games to the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust was discussed.

The following poem was written by a German man who was fighting for the Nazi party, although he disagreed with what they were doing. The Nazi party discovered that Pastor Niemoller did not agree with what they were doing, and they sent him to a concentration camp. This poem was spoken over music for the final piece.

### **First They Came for the Jews**

First they came for the Jews  
And I did not speak out –  
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for the communists  
And did not speak out –  
Because I was not a communist

Then they came for the trade unionists  
And I did not speak out –  
Because I was not a trade unionist

Then they came for me  
And there was no one left  
To speak out for me

Pastor Niemoller

## Lesson Plan

Although the Holocaust is not covered at KS2, the following lesson themes, ideas and plans, can be adapted along different themes, for example working with the theme of being bullied, or victimised.

The following lesson plan was carried over the period of a day, it could however be adapted to span several lessons, or a few of the creative tasks could be covered in one lesson and the final sharing could be shorter.

### Warm up

Tag/it, Stuck in the Mud, Velcro assault course.

Creative tasks were given to the group in order to generate movement material for the final piece.

### Taught Motif

A set sequence was taught to the group. The sequence lasted for 8 counts (slow tempo) and included pushing movements, and movements of being trapped, and reaching out. The older children in the group also worked on this set sequence at double time.

### Task 1 'Move Around'

In pairs, one person stands behind the other and gently moves the other from side to side the. They go on to completely manipulate the person into different and unusual shapes (there is no verbal communication between the pairs). The dancers were encouraged to use different levels and directions.

The pair swaps over, and the exercise is repeated. The exercise is repeated, but instead of manipulating your partner into a chosen shape, they are manipulated into the Taught Motif.

### Task 2 'Trapped Circle'

In groups of six, the children were asked to make a circle, and to imagine that one person was trapped in the middle. They were asked to create movement for 16 counts that used unison and canon movement, and to stay in the circle shape. They were encouraged to use movement that conveyed the sense of trapping someone, and to 'make barriers' with their bodies.

### Task 3 'Mime'

In trios, the children explored miming playing playground games, e.g. hop scotch, paper scissors stone, clapping games, and skipping games (with a skipping rope). The dancers were asked to make noises that would be heard in the playground, such as laughing, talking.

### Task 4 'Skipping Rope Trio'

Each trio were given a skipping rope and was asked to create a movement phrase for 16 counts, using the skipping rope that included: Unravelling, Stretching, Turning, Trapping and Travelling.

### Task 5 'Movement Choir'

All the dancers standing close together in a clump, with taller people at the back and shorter people at the front. The person at the front slowly reaches out (arm, leg) in any direction, and the rest of the group follows. The group then turns to the right side and the person who is then in front repeats. This is repeated to the back, and then to the other side.

## The Final Piece

### Counts

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 8 counts  | The group begins in trios, and holds its starting position   |
| 16 counts | The trios perform the playground games, whilst making playground noises (Task 4)   |
| 16 counts | The middle group perform the creative trio, the other groups sit and watch (Task 5)  |
| 16 counts | The dancers move to different parts of the stage. Six of the dancers perform the circular section centre stage. Three others perform movement based on triangular shapes, and the other three dancers perform the set sequence. (creative task 3 ) |
| 8 counts  | The dancers that performed the circle sequence go to stage right and sit. The other six move to centre stage in pairs.   |
| 8 counts  | In these pairs, one person (standing behind the other) manipulates the other to perform the set sequence (creative task 2)   |
| 8 counts  | Three of these dancers move to the side of the stage (stage left) The other three dancers hold starting positions.   |
| 16 counts | This trio performs the creative section that uses the skipping rope. (creative task 5) The older of the six dancers sitting on stage right repeat a rapid sequence of movements that convey fear, being trapped and vulnerability.                 |
| 16 counts | The older children move to centre stage and perform the set sequence. They repeat it at double speed. The younger children stand and they join together in a clump. (creative task 1)  |
| 16 counts | The group stretches forwards and upwards. Those at the front of the group sit as they reach upwards, and those in the middle kneel. (creative task 6)  |
| 16 counts | Trios of playground games (task 4)   |
| 16 counts | Creative trios with skipping ropes (task 5)  |
| 16 counts | Each trio joins with another, perform circular section (task 3)  |
| 8 counts  | Into partners, one manipulates the other into the set sequence (task 2)  |
| 4 counts  | Set sequence at double time (task 1)   |
| 12 counts | Move into one group, stretch to the side, and upwards. (task 6)  |

Depending on the number of students in the class the circular section could be done with more or less people in each group.

**Music:**

Barry Ganberg Productions Tel: 01793 491060  
Chris Benstead Tel: 0181 854 0668

**Suggested Music:**

The following list of music is by composers that were persecuted during the Holocaust, however any slow music with a sad, sombre tone with clear regular timing (preferably 4/4) could be used.

Ervin Schulhoff *Five Pieces*  
Ervin Schulhoff *First Quartet*  
Gideon Klein *Adagio* from the *Piano Sonata*  
Hans Krása *Dance* for string trio,  
Berthold Goldschmidt *Retrospectum*

## **Further Reading**

David Cesarani, A History of the Holocaust (Holocaust Educational Trust, 1995)

David Cesarani, Britain and the Holocaust (Holocaust Educational Trust, 1998)

Jane Clements, Jonathan Gorsky and Rosie Boston, The Holocaust: Faith, Morality & Ethics (Holocaust Educational Trust, 2000)

Anne Frank, Diary of a Young Girl (Penguin Books, 1997)

Martin Gilbert, The Holocaust (HarperCollins, 1987)

## **Holocaust Survivors' Testimony**

Leon Greenman, An Englishman in Auschwitz (Valentine Mitchell, London, 2001)

Hugo Gryn, Chasing Shadows (Penguin, 2001)

Kitty Hart, Return to Auschwitz (House of Stratus, 2001)

Further information about the Holocaust and Holocaust Memorial Day can be found at [www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk](http://www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk)