

Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People

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I THINK I CAN

I THINK I CAN

CO-CREATED BY FLORENCE GIBSON
AND SHAWN BYFIELD

STUDY GUIDE

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FRONT: L-R TANGARA JONES, KYLE BROWN, MATTHEW BROWN, EVERETT SMITH, KARLA JANG,
ALLISON BRADLEY, TAMMY NERA. PHOTO: DANIEL ALEXANDER

LIVE THEATRE IS AN ACTIVE EXPERIENCE!

GROUND RULES:

As members of the audience, you play an important part in the success of a theatrical performance. Please review the following theatre rules with your students prior to your LKTYP visit.

- Food, drinks, candy and gum are not permitted in the theatre.
- LKTYP is a nut-free zone. Many children have severe life-threatening allergies; NO PEANUTS or NUT products may be brought to our theatre.
- No electronic devices are permitted in the theatre because they affect our sound system. Photography, audio and video recording during a performance is prohibited by the Canadian Theatre Agreement.
- Students are not permitted to leave the theatre unless they are accompanied by an adult.

THEATRE IS A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE:

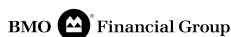
Actors are thrilled when the audience is engaged and responsive. We want you to laugh, cheer, clap and really enjoy your time at the theatre. However, please be considerate audience members. Talking, whispering and excessive movement during a live performance is distracting for the actors, and disruptive for other audience members.

Enhance your visit by encouraging your students to look at different aspects of the production. Before the show, identify tasks for your class. Have one group of students looking at the set, another listening for the music and sound effects, a third watching the lighting and a fourth, the costumes. Compare notes after the show about what they observed. Your students will be more informed and they'll be surprised by how much they noticed. Ask them to be prepared with one question for the actors after the show. Brainstorm with them about possible topics to get the most out of the experience!

SEASON PARTNER



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THE STUDY GUIDE

THEMATIC OVERVIEW

This Study Guide will help you to prepare your students to see the play and to work the performance into your curriculum. In addition to the general areas listed below we have identified curriculum expectations that relate directly to *i think i can*. Often activities will satisfy two or more expectations in content and form. For example, a Drama activity can be used to explore science phenomena and a Science activity can be used to initiate a drama scene. It is our objective to suggest ideas for the creative, intellectual, social, physical and emotional development of your students. We believe that live art appreciation and drama/dance activities are vital to a child's development!



STRANDS AND CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

-  CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: Dance, Science, Social Studies
-  CHARACTER EDUCATION CONNECTIONS: Empathy, Respect, Teamwork
-  THEMES: Bullying, Cooperation, Overcoming challenges

In addition to DRAMA **A** and LANGUAGE ARTS **L**, *i think i can* directly relates to student development in the areas of:

- ST** SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY: Understanding Gravity, Kinetic Energy and Motion
- SS** SOCIAL STUDIES: Relationship, Rules and Responsibilities

THE COMPANY

THE CAST

Alexander/Big Boots 2	Kyle Brown
Newton/Big Boots 1	Matthew G. Brown
Biow	David Cox
Teacher/Dad	Melody Johnson
Frufie	Tangara Jones
Joule/Big Boots 3	Jamie McRoberts
Faraday	Tammy Nera
Belle	Jennifer Stewart
Tip	Tosh Sutherland

CREATIVE TEAM

Co-created by	Florence Gibson and Shawn Byfield
Director	Conrad Alexandrowicz
Choreographer	Shawn Byfield
Set and Costume Designer & Projection Collaborator	Julia Tribe
Projection Artist/Technician	Jacob Niedzwiecki
Original Music & Sound Designer	Cathy Nosaty
Lighting Designer	Bradley A. Trenaman
Dramaturgy	Stephen Colella and Allen MacInnis
Dance Captain	Kyle Brown
Stage Manager	Giselle Clarke-Trenaman
Assistant Stage Manager	Dustyn Wales

SYNOPSIS

Told through red-hot, urban tap, *i think i can* is set in the turbulent world of classroom cliques and schoolyard politics. Tip, a boy with a disability, and his friends, struggle with the class bully and the ambitions of their science teacher. With the grand prize at the science fair on the line, friends and enemies vie for dominance. This award-winning show returns to LKTYP due to overwhelming demand after its sold-out run in 2007.

NON-VERBAL THEATRE

i think i can joins Canada's rich body of non-verbal theatre creation, a tradition that is not easily categorized due to the blending of different theatrical forms. Also known as movement theatre, dance theatre and theatre of acrobatic movement, non-verbal theatre strives to tell stories through means beyond the text. Canadian theatre companies like DynamO Théâtre and Theatre Gargantua are leaders in the international tradition of non-text based creations. It is the work of the body, unique movement sequences and the use of sound

that ultimately become the language of these physical pieces of theatre. The plays' structures and stories are often developed through a collaborative process, rather than by a single author. *i think i can* is the creation of a playwright, a choreographer, a director and a team of tap and modern dancers. Together they have crafted a work that uses minimal text and relies heavily on non-verbal cues to weave the play's solid narrative structure. The result is a dynamic addition to the Canadian canon of non-verbal theatre.

I THINK I CAN COMMISSION THIS!

The development of *i think i can* began with a phone call I made to Florence Gibson, a playwright whose work I admire, asking her if she would be interested in writing for young audiences. She practically said, "I'll be right over". She brought me an outline of a story that would explore schoolyard bullying, the individuality of all of children, and the thrill of science, especially the laws of motion and the theory $e=mc^2$. What startled me in her presentation was her desire that the story be told entirely in tap dance.

Discovering that Florence was a lover of tap who had only briefly explored it in some beginner tap classes, I realized her idea needed a collaborator. And I really had trouble imagining tap as a good vehicle for storytelling. Could I actually commission a play that could not be fully written down on paper but had to be "written" in movement? Despite my doubts, I asked around to find someone who might have the background to create, in tap and rhythmic dance, the kind of show Florence was proposing.

Shawn Byfield was recommended to me by choreographer Nicola Pantin, with whom I had just worked on our 2003 production of *Jacob Two Two*. Uncertain of what to expect, we organized a three-day workshop led by Shawn and six dancers – including Nicola, David Cox, Karla Jang, Jane Johansson, Randy Ganne and Allan Craik.

This adventurous and energetic group of people explored several scenes in Florence's outline. After awhile, we brought our staff in to watch and give us feedback. They said, "I think I saw a disabled boy", and "something about homework", and "was that something about science?" We felt encouraged but we knew we had to be more specific. So the rest of the workshop was spent on just the opening scene.

Again, we brought staff in to watch what had been created and this time they seemed to get every action in the scene, even though there was no dialogue. Buoyed by this, we commissioned both Florence and Shawn to co-create, through many more workshops (and meetings), this very physical and imaginative new work for theatre.

The road of creation is often daunting because it requires constant adaptation, learning, cooperation, and a willingness to go beyond your previous experience. What I have admired about the large group of people who have collaborated on this project is their ability to keep the faith: to be daring, to debate and to believe in power of movement (and the sounds it can make) to express complex and lengthy conversations. I hope you will be as impressed by their work as I am.

Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director of LKTYP

EXERCISES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Please remind your students to be sensitive to the personal nature of some of these questions to make the classroom a safe space for discussion.

FOR DISCUSSION BIOW, THE BULLY

i think i can presents the bully scenario and its predictable outcome in an original manner. For one, Biow is a gifted student who seems to have little cause for bullying.

Discuss the following with your students:

- Biow is a bully, but he clearly isn't insecure. Why does he bully Tip and the other students?
- At the end of the first scene in the schoolyard, Biow causes Tip to fall down without actually touching him. How does Biow make Tip fall?
- Biow threatens the others students with his actions. How are threats different from actual violence?
- Why is Frufie the only one who tries to stop Biow when he bullies Tip?
- Who are the bullies who are powerful enough to bully Biow?
- Why do you think Tip and Frufie help Biow when he was so mean to them?
- What role does the Teacher play in the classroom bullying?

TIP'S ABILITIES

i think i can also presents the issue of people with disabilities in an empowering way. Tip has a disability and is also very talented.

Discuss the following with your students:

- Why is it important to learn about people with disabilities?
- Do you know someone with a disability? Does it make you feel differently towards them?
- Are disabilities always visible?
- In what ways does Tip excel in the classroom and in the schoolyard?
- Who are the two people that help Tip feel more comfortable with himself?
- How is Tip excluded or included in the classroom and the schoolyard?

IMAGE THEATRE

Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology includes a substantial number of games and techniques that focus on visual communication through a complex use of dramatic tableaux. Sub-titled "image theatre", this branch of popular theatre is especially suited to exploring issues of power struggles and inequality. The following are adapted exercises* that will help you and your students to "discuss" the topics in *i think i can* non-verbally.

* See Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* for a comprehensive study of Image Theatre.



COSTUME DESIGNS BY JULIA TRIBE

THIS IS NOT A BOTTLE

In *i think i can*, the children play a game where a baton is transformed into different objects simply by the way it is used by each character.

1. Ask your students to sit on the floor facing an open space that will serve as “the stage”.
2. Step into the space with a plastic bottle, announce, “This is not a bottle” and use the bottle to suggest another object. Ask “What is it?”
3. Prompt the students to say “It’s a _____.”
4. Hand the bottle to another student who will say “This is not a bottle” and use the bottle to suggest another object.
5. The other students will reply “It’s a _____.”
6. Continue until each student has had a turn. Students may go up more than once if they have more ideas. The game should move along quickly to encourage “visual thinking”.
7. Once the bottle ideas have been exhausted, introduce a chair and play, “This is not a chair.”
8. Lastly, introduce a table and play, “This is not a table”
9. After the game discuss the plethora of objects created: e.g., the bottle became a pipe, a comb, a flute, a gun, a shovel, the chair became an umbrella, a house, a motorcycle, a shoe, the table became a surfboard, a bed, a movie screen, etc.

SCULPTING

Use this exercise as a warm-up for more complex image exercises. There is no talking during the exercise.

1. Ask your students to work in pairs and decide who is A and who is B.
2. A will be the sculptor and B will be the clay.
3. A sculpts B into a statue by gently manipulating B’s limbs or silently showing her/him how to pose. Facial expressions should also be included.
4. Ask all the B’s to stand in a group, maintaining their poses, as an “image”.
5. Discuss possible relationships between the statues.
6. Introduce the notion of “power”. Which is the most powerful statue? Which is the least powerful statue?
7. Switch A and B roles and repeat 1. to 6.

THE IDEAL IMAGE

i think i can has several scenarios where a character is oppressed by another character. In this exercise, students will create an “image of oppression” and, through dynamization of the image, will transform it into an “ideal image”. Depending on the maturity level of your students you may choose whether or not to use the word “oppressed”. Emphasize that physical and emotional safety must be observed at all times. Image creation should be done quickly to encourage “visual thinking” – students should not have time to think in words (verbal language) and then translate into images (visual or non-verbal language). Finally, remind your students to be still with energy so that the image is “alive”.

1. Create a space in the classroom that will be “the stage”.
2. Ask your students to think about a scene in the play where one character is bullied by another.
3. Without talking, one student will lead other students onto the stage area and gently sculpt each person into an image that represents the scene (e.g. Biow intimidates Tip and mocks his disability.)
4. The student who is sculpting the image will place her/himself as the character who is bullied.
5. Ask the students to hold the image for a few seconds and then, through five distinct movements, they will create an image where the oppressed character is in a position of power. This will be the “ideal image”.
6. To dynamize the image of oppression into the ideal image, the teacher claps five times.
7. Discuss the change from the initial image to the final image. Ask your students how it could be achieved in the world of the play.
8. In your own school, and assuming that scenes like this play themselves out in the schoolyard, what steps could be taken to effect this “magical” change?

WORDS AND FORMULAS FOR WORD WALL (see page 8)

$$d = v \times t$$

$$f = m \times a$$

science

Mach I = 340.3 m/sec

gravity g

Mach II = 680.6 m/sec

$$g = 9.8 \text{ m/sec}^2$$

Mach III = 1020.9 m/sec

centripetal force

quantum leap

mass m

$$e = mc^2$$

acceleration a

science fair

force f

first prize

inertia i

detention

velocity v

c = 299,792,458 m/sec

distance d

**approximately
300,000,000 m/sec**

speed of light

3×10^8 /sec

WORD WALL

Using the following words and formulas (page 7) from *i think i can*, create a “Word Wall”.

Ask your students to group the words and the formulas into two categories. Then, working in groups, they can create a glossary of the terms and write original sentences using one term from each category.

Ask them to share their work with the class.

NEWTONIAN GRAVITY

Though Newton’s theory of gravity deals mainly with planetary bodies, and though gravity using general relativity has proven to be more correct, the basics of Newton’s theory of gravity can be expressed in this simple manner:

Every planetary body, including the Earth, is surrounded by its own gravitational field, which exerts an attractive force on any object.

The following activity is a means to demonstrate this theory.

WATER FALL

Materials:

Disposable coffee cup with a lid, water

1. Poke a hole in the bottom of the cup.
2. Cover the hole with your finger, fill the cup with water and then cover the cup with the lid.
3. Hold the cup up high over a sink, uncover the hole and the water will gush out. Now ask your students what would happen if the cup was released: Would the water flow faster or more slowly out of the cup?
4. Refill the water in the cup, hold with your finger and release.

What happens?

The water will remain in the cup as you drop it. In the first instance, gravity pulls on the cup and the water, but the cup is held in place, hence the water falls. In the second instance, the gravity acts equally on both and neither is held, hence they fall at the same rate.



KINETIC ENERGY

The term kinetic energy comes from the Greek word kinesis, which means motion. While there are many types of energy in existence, such as gravitational energy, chemical energy and heat energy, all forms of energy can be grouped into two main classes: potential energy and kinetic energy.

Potential energy is defined as an object waiting to become energy. Any object that exists within the gravitational field of the earth can be said to have potential energy.

Kinetic energy is defined as an object with some mass in motion. Any time an object is moving, it has kinetic energy.

The following activities are different examples that will allow your students to identify potential and kinetic energy.

RUBBER BAND RELEASE

Materials:

Rubber band

1. One way to demonstrate potential energy is using elastics. Stretch a rubber band and hold it. The rubber band in this state is displaying potential energy.
2. Aim the rubber band at a wall and release it. The rubber band shooting forward at the wall is an example of kinetic energy.
3. Ask your students to identify at what point the rubber band has potential and kinetic energy.

BOUNCE

Materials:

Basketball or other bouncing ball, hard floor to bounce ball on

Hold a basketball in front of you and then release it on to the pavement. Kinetic energy is created by gravity as the ball is pulled toward the earth. As soon as the ball hits the ground, the kinetic energy is converted into potential energy, which allows the ball to bounce back up into the air. This process will repeat until only potential energy is left.

Ask your students:

- to identify what type of energy the ball possesses at any specific point in the process, especially when it hits the ground.
- the height to which the ball bounces lessens each time. Why doesn't it bounce back to the same height?

PENDULUM OF PERIL

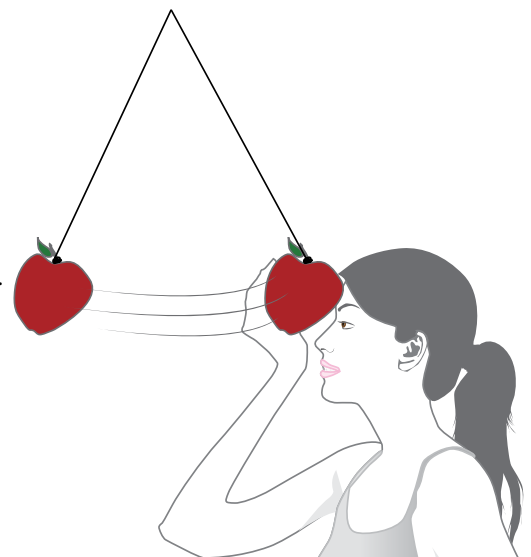
Materials:

A small apple with a stem, string, a high place to tie the string

1. Tie the string to a high place and then to the stem of the apple, (or any other item you can easily tie a string to).
2. Ask a student to place their back against the wall and ensure they don't move.
3. Ask them to take the apple on the string, bring it up to their forehead and release it. Even though it will look as if the apple should come back and touch their face, it won't.

Before releasing the object, ask the students if the object might hit the person releasing the object.

- What is creating the potential energy?
- Where are the points along the journey that the energy changes from potential to kinetic energy? When does it change back?



LAWS OF MOTIONS

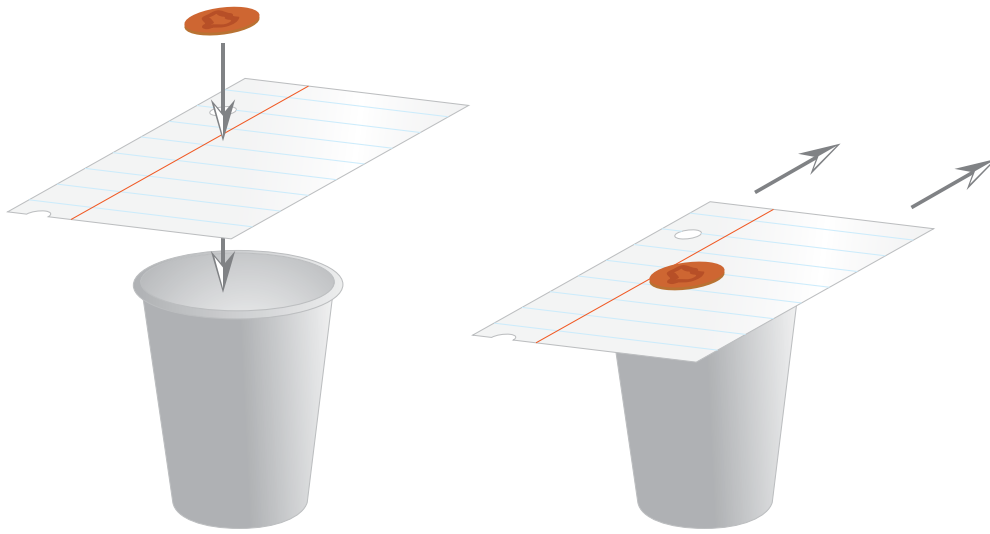
LAW OF INERTIA

Materials:

A cup, an index card, a penny

1. Place the card on top of the cup.
2. Take the penny and place it on the center of the card.
3. Without lifting the card, try to get the coin into the cup.

Ask your students what is the best procedure to get the coin to fall in the cup. Ask them what makes that method work best.

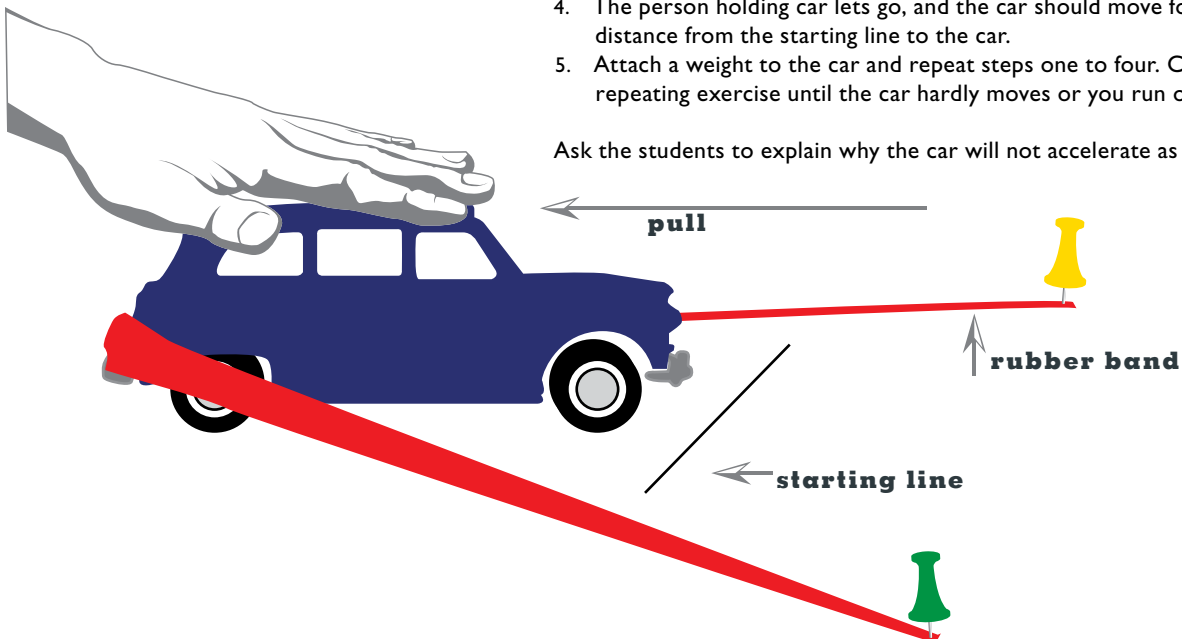


LAW OF ACCELERATION

Materials:

A small cart or toy car, small weight, rubber band

1. Loop the rubber band around the back of the car.
2. Mark a starting line for the car on a flat surface.
3. Place the car at the starting line. Have one person hold the car in place, while another person pulls the rubber band as far ahead of the starting line as possible.
4. The person holding car lets go, and the car should move forward. Measure the distance from the starting line to the car.
5. Attach a weight to the car and repeat steps one to four. Continue adding weights and repeating exercise until the car hardly moves or you run out of weights.



Ask the students to explain why the car will not accelerate as far.

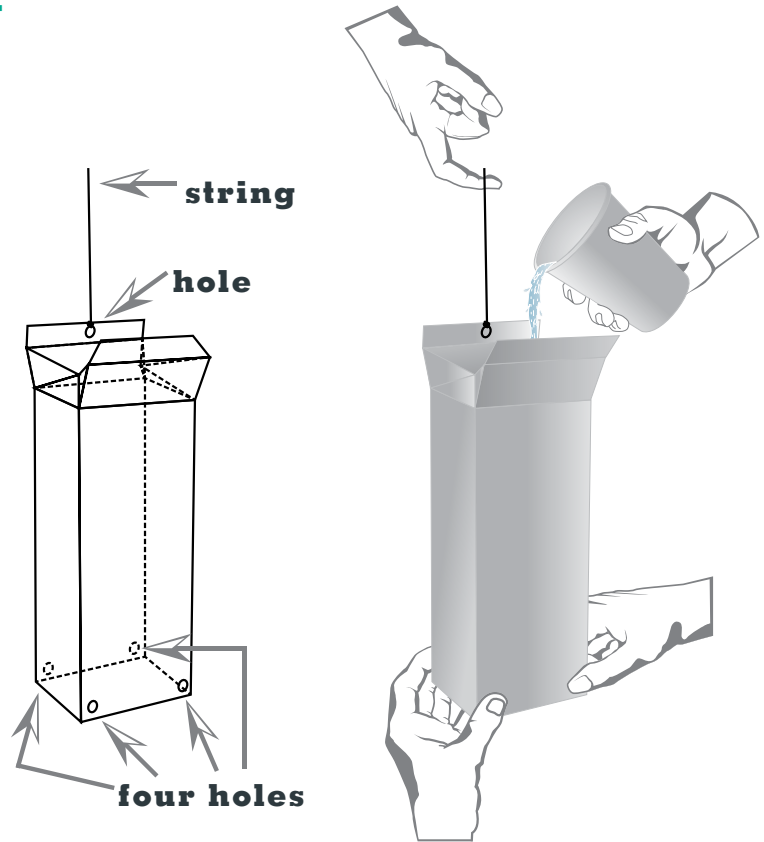
LAW OF RECIPROCAL ACTION

Materials:

An empty milk carton, a string, a pin, water

1. Using the pin, poke a hole in the bottom left hand corner of each of the four faces of a 2-litre milk carton.
2. Now poke a hole in the top flap of the milk carton. Tie a string through this hole.
3. Get a volunteer to cover the holes with her/his fingers. Once the holes are covered, pour water into the carton.
4. Suspend the carton over the sink by holding on to the string only.
5. Now have your volunteer remove her/his fingers from the holes. The carton will begin to rotate as the water escapes.

Ask your students to explain why the carton spins.



DANCE MOVES IN A CIRCLE

This group choreography exercise will teach your students to connect separate movement pieces into a whole choreography.

1. Ask your students to stand in a circle, arms' length apart.
2. One student creates a movement; all the students repeat it.
3. The next student repeats the first movement and adds her/his own; again the entire group repeats the sequence.
4. Continue this pattern, with each student repeating all of the movements made by the others and adding her/his own until the "dance" makes its way around the entire circle.
5. Once the full sequence is complete, ask the group to dance the choreography once more.
6. Ask your students what it made them think of. Could this choreography tell a story?

Movement and Sound:

To make a further connection between movement and sound, repeat the above exercise asking each student to add a sound to their movement. In the end, the group will have a choreography with a soundscape. Again, ask your students to discuss the narrative possibilities of this seemingly random piece.

You may want to try this exercise in smaller groups and share with the class.

TELLING A STORY THROUGH DANCE

Begin by allowing your students to create movement or dance sequences with popular songs before you progress to instrumental music and more abstract expression.

1.
 - a. Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5.
 - b. Play a song (or part of a song) that has a clear narrative for your class.
 - c. Ask the students to discuss the story of the song.
 - d. Once they have a story, ask them to tell the story without using words (remind them of all the tools they have: movement, gesture, tableaux, dance and sound).
 - e. Have each group present their story to the class.
 - f. Discuss the different methods used and how the story was shown.
2.
 - a. Repeat the exercise above with an instrumental piece of music that is open to narrative interpretation.
 - b. Discuss the difference between working with a song with lyrics and an instrumental piece.
3.
 - a. A third variation to this exercise is to read a piece of text and ask your students, in small groups, to create a movement or dance sequence that presents the story without the text.
 - b. Discuss the different interpretations offered by each group.

THE INTERPRETATION

NOTES FROM THE CO-CREATORS

My interest in science goes back to the very beginning of life on this planet. Like many others, my existential crisis when I was in grade thirteen was to understand 'the meaning of life'. When I was introduced to the process of evolution at the cellular level by my very cool biology teacher, Mr. Beck, I had what can only be described as a spiritual awakening. I understood my place in the universe because I came to understand the basic, yet profound, chemistry of life.

So you can appreciate my delight when Artistic Director Allen MacInnis asked me if I had any ideas for a play for young people. Did I ever. He asked me to write down a proposal. Instead, I scurried down to his office and 'soft-shoed' my way across his carpet with the idea of a little boy who couldn't walk like other kids. A little boy in tap shoes. From there, the long, arduous and delightful dance of discovery of this play, *i think i can*, began. In the chemical soup of theatre, in the darkness of the great unknown, we mixed the elements: the dancers, the set, the lights, the costumes; we added the workshops, the re-writes, the sweat, the exuberance and the mysterious 'x' factor that makes a play a living, breathing organism. The beginning of life. A new world.

This is a story told largely without words, through the rhythms of tap and percussive sound. The metaphor of dance carries the themes, tells the story and illustrates the laws of motion. Through applied science, particularly the equation $e=mc^2$, the play examines bullying and aggression on the schoolyard; it also demonstrates the use and misuse of power. This is the equation that defines the relationship between mass and energy in the atom bomb. But it also says that, if we move our mass fast enough, at the speed of light squared to be exact, we become pure energy, the energy contained in our mass. When we tap dance at the speed of light squared, we are transformed; we redress the very nature of energy itself.

Every new theatrical experience creates a world. This play invites you to take a step, in this case a tap step, into the world we have created for you.

Florence Gibson MacDonald

When Florence Gibson approached me with her ideas for this story, I was immediately interested. Not often do you see tap dance in today's theatre. And the theme of science and expressing scientific principles through footwork, movement and body language would be a fun task.

My most difficult challenge was to tell the story without using words. The actors' feet are essentially their main method of communication, enhanced with body language, laughter, facial expressions and the occasional grunt, snort and other fun sounds. Throughout the rehearsal period, director Conrad Alexandrowicz and I had to always assess and reassess how the movement helped to tell the story.

Only the adult characters in the play use words. Every child character has signature steps they use, just like we all have different voices and dialects when speaking to each other. Tap dance is their language. Each child has a different way of speaking to each other that can be heard in the different rhythms and accents in their tap steps. Even the amount of force they use with their feet - be it a more passive "tap" or "flap" step, or an aggressive "stamp" - helps to communicate who each character is, and how they relate to each other.

It's been such a learning experience to watch and allow the actors to be expressive in their movement, to give them freedom of choice - as they would have in a play that uses dialogue - and to translate that into dance movement. They have to become certain characters, communicate their role in the story, remember tap dance steps, keep in perfect time, and interact with the other actors on stage... it's not an easy job!

This show is a great opportunity to get young minds interested in dance, to lose the stigma of tap dance being "un-cool", and to show that tap dancing isn't just something "that our grandparents used to do!"

Shawn Byfield



COSTUME DESIGNS BY JULIA TRIBE

A NOTE FROM THE SET, COSTUME AND PROJECTION DESIGNER

The inspiration for my design of *i think i can* was found in the wonders of science, the dynamic art of graffiti and the expansive language of modern tap.

The set, an open schoolyard, offers maximum movement and percussive potential. Above, the universe floats, magically illuminating the principles of science. At its centre, a large clock orders the structure of time and space. We travel from schoolyard to the classroom using interactive set elements to continually transform the stage. Surface textures of chain link, brick and graffiti, work together with a floor grid to render the shifting locales. The colour palette ranges from these surfaces to the infinite illumination of the universe above, creating continual motion throughout the play.

The costumes are closely linked to the set palette, capitalizing on its suggestive tones to establish strong colour and pattern play. The kids' costuming embraces their charismatic energy and individual style, while also linking them to their science projects. The adult costumes are earthbound and clumsy, evoking clown-like qualities through exaggeration and simple comic style.

I hope this design offers creative stimulation and opens our minds to the infinite possibilities of collective vision. Enjoy!

Julia Tribe

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

This show is quite special, because it brings together things that don't usually occupy the same time and space. It's a play, but it's mostly told through dance. It's about ideas that are hard to understand at first, but much of the story is told through the feet, so it also brings together things that are easy and things that are difficult. It's a story about science— about wanting to know something— and also about NOT wanting to know; but it's also about what it means for an individual to be marked by having some kind of disability, and trying to live and work with a group. It brings together the problem of bullying and the joy people experience when they truly collaborate together. And perhaps most of all it's about using the knowledge that people discover in a responsible way. We hope you enjoy it!

Conrad Alexandrowicz

A NOTE FROM THE SOUND DESIGNER

i think i can is a story where characters listen with their ears and speak with their feet! Tap dancing is the language of most of the characters in the play and I hope the audience will be active listeners from the very beginning of the play. Tap dancing is a completely musical language – sometimes it's loud, sometime's it's quiet, but it's all about RHYTHM!

As the composer and sound designer for *i think i can*, I want the music and sound to help to tell the story of the play. Some things to think and talk about are:

- different sounds that you hear throughout the play (ie. tapping feet, the teachers voice, big boots stomping, music and sound effects).
- which sounds are made by the performers and which sounds are recorded. The recorded sounds are called 'sound cues': some sound cues in the show are sound effects (like the school bell): others are short pieces of music
- how the sounds of the taps and music cues express how a character is feeling
- where the sounds come from (ie. from the feet of the performers on stage or from a speaker up high above the stage or around the audience)
- which sounds are heard by the audience acoustically (sounds coming from the performers) and which sounds are amplified (coming from speakers)
- the sound levels (whether a sound is quiet, loud or some volume in between)

I really enjoyed working with everyone at LKTYP to create '*i think i can*' and hope you enjoy seeing and hearing the play!

Cathy Nosaty

REVIEWING A PLAY

JON KAPLAN'S INTRODUCTION TO STUDENT REVIEWERS

Theatre is, for me, an art form that tells me something about myself or gets me thinking about the world in which I live.

Whether going to the theatre as a reviewer or simply an audience member, I think that watching a play is an emotional experience and not just an intellectual one. I always let a show wash over me, letting it touch my feelings, and only later, after the show, do I try to analyze those feelings.

That's when I start to think about some of the basic questions you ask when you're writing a review – what did I see (story, characters, themes); how did I respond to what I saw; what parts of the production (script, performances, direction, design and possibly other elements) made me feel and think what I did; why was I supposed to respond in that fashion?

When you go to the theatre to review, take a few notes during a show if you feel comfortable doing so, but don't spend your time writing the review during the show; you'll miss what's happening onstage.

Writing a review doesn't mean providing a plot summary. That's only part of the job; you have to discuss your reaction to what you saw and try to explore some of the reasons for that reaction.

I don't believe that there's any such thing as a totally objective piece of criticism. We are all individuals, bringing our own backgrounds, experiences and beliefs to a production. In some fashion, every one of us sitting in the theatre is a critic, no matter whether we're writing a review or not; we all react to and form judgments about what we see on the stage.

When I go to a production, I always keep in mind that the people involved in putting it on have worked long and hard – weeks, months, sometimes years – getting it onto the stage. Even if I have problems with the result, it's important to respect the efforts that went into the show.

Jon Kaplan is senior theatre writer at NOW Magazine, where he's worked for the past 30 years.

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i think i can

Told through red-hot, urban tap, *i think i can* is set in the turbulent world of classroom cliques and schoolyard politics. Tip, a boy with a disability, and his friends, struggle with the class bully and the ambitions of their science teacher. With the grand prize at the science fair on the line, friends and enemies vie for dominance.

THEMES:

Bullying, Cooperation, Overcoming challenges

BOOKS:

Amelia's Science Fair Disaster by Marissa Moss (For grades 5-8)

Jake Drake, Bully Buster by Andrew Clements (For grades 4-5)

Hoot by Carl Hiassen (For Grades 6-8)

Egghead by Caroline Pignat (Teen)

Getting Revenge on Lauren Wood by Eileen Cook (Teen)*

Fat Cat by Robin Brande (Teen)

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Arts Impact: Making a difference in the lives of students

LKTYP is proud to have **Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life** as lead sponsors for its Arts Impact programme, which provides opportunities for schools in low-income areas of Toronto to participate in quality arts education. Arts Impact's goal is to deepen students' understanding of theatre, allowing them to be inspired by the material presented on stage and to think in ways that challenge their own perceptions.



Connections: Addressing the pattern of poverty

There is empirical evidence that children who live in poverty are at greater risk of dropping out of school. Studies have also proven that exposure to the arts improves scholastic ability and attendance. Thanks to the generosity of **CIBC Children's Foundation**, LKTYP can offer special subsidized tickets to qualifying schools.



CIBC Children's Foundation



Allen MacInnis
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LORRAINE KIMSA THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(formerly Young Peoples Theatre) is the largest Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA) company in Canada and a significant institution in the Canadian professional theatre community. Over our 45-year history we have produced many of the most important works that now form the canon of plays for young audiences in this country. At the heart of founder Susan Rubes'

idea for Young Peoples Theatre (YPT) was a belief that children deserve a theatre of their own – with resources and standards no lesser than those for adults. She believed – as we do today – that young people deserve good theatre because theatre is good for young people.

Through the communal experience of the theatre we create for them, children can receive indications of what is important, funny, trivial; positive, negative, wrong, right, rightish, wrongish; frightening, reassuring, empowering, unavoidable; familiar, new, eternal ... We strongly believe that even through the most playful of plays, we are speaking powerfully to children about the community and the world in which they live.

Therefore, at the centre of the artistic policy of LKTYP is a desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people. We want children

to be imprinted with experiences that will increase their access to the world, in order for them to grow into the unique and wonderful people they were born to be. To do this, our programming is drawn from the world classics of children's stories, from contemporary works, from the new plays we develop, and from productions showcasing the most innovative and accomplished theatre for young audiences by other Canadian and international theatre companies.

At LKTYP, because we are serious about child development through theatre art, children can experience our work as either audience members or theatre creators. We extend the learning opportunities of our professional productions through our substantial Education & Participation Department. The Department's services for teachers and students helps connect curriculum objectives and learning outcomes to the content of our professional productions; its Community Participation projects link our theatre skill with the educational aspirations of partners who are dedicated to the growth of young people; our interest-based Drama School offers young people the chance to engage deeply in the excitement of theatre art; and our Community Volunteer programme offers everyone who wants it, the opportunity to participate in the mission of LKTYP.

LKTYP is not only a professional theatre for young audiences but a vital community-based centre of arts education.

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