

WWI Performance Pack: Dance Resources

1. Countdown to war

Richard Lloyd King: Hello – it's Richard here with the first of three *Dance Workshops* marking the one hundred year anniversary of the start of World War One. Today we're going back to the summer of 1914, immediately before war was declared, when life in Britain was very different to today...

But first, check you're standing in a space, ready to warm-up with some popular music of the time. Lift your knees high and swing your arms by your sides as you march on the spot with the beat. Listen out and follow me.

It's...march, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Keep marching on the spot!

Lively and energetic!

Now take it round the room! March through the spaces with big, energetic steps! And march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Keep going...

Hold it! Move to a space and relax a minute down on the floor.

World War One marked the end of a time of peace, wealth and prosperity created by the British Empire and the process of industrialization. But although the upper and middle classes had benefited from this wealth and prosperity, the lives of the working class had remained hard: they worked long hours, for low wages, and often in poor conditions. Stay where you are and listen...



Workers in the countryside had a very hard life. Tractors were still being developed – so many farms still used horses for heavy work like ploughing, and did everything else by hand.

Harvest was the busiest time of year when everyone available was called upon to help. That's why schools closed during the month of August – not for a holiday like today, but to let the children help bring in the harvest!

Without machines, the crops were cut by hand using a scythe – a long wooden pole with a sharp, curved blade at one end. The scythe had two handles – one at the opposite end to the blade, and the other half way down the pole.

Holding both handles with out stretched arms, the farm-worker twisted their bodies round from one side to the other – slicing through the crop with the sharp blade as they went. It was a long and very tiring job!

There's a picture of a farmer using a scythe in the teacher's notes online.

Everyone stand up!

Imagine you're holding onto the two handles of a long, wooden scythe. Keep both arms straight as you twist your body round to the right side...

Then slowly and smoothly, twist your body round from the right side to the left – swinging your arms round at the same time, to cut the imaginary crop...

Twist your body back round to the right side – swing your arms back round too...and relax.



Your teacher might like to pause now and choose a few confident people to demonstrate that scything action again.

Usually, the harvesters started round the edge of the field and moved gradually in towards the middle. Quickly get into a big, spread out class circle, standing one behind the other, ready to travel round the edge of the room together. Pause now to get into position.

With the music, walk slowly round the edge of the room - twisting your body and swinging your arms from one side to the other in a smooth, controlled harvesting rhythm. Take one step forward after each crop-slicing action. Starting positions everyone! Arms and body twisted round to the right...scythes ready! Let's get harvesting!

Swing round and slice...

Step forward and swing back...

Swing round and slice...

Step forward and swing back...

Keep going!

Smooth and controlled...

And stop. Sit down where you are and listen...

During in Edwardian times, many people moved to the towns and cities to work in the growing number of factories.



These factory workers often had to work very long hours, performing quick, repetitive actions, to operate noisy and sometimes dangerous machines. Everyone stand up!

Imagine you're operating one of those noisy factory machines – pushing and pulling, twising and turning, imaginary buttons and levers. Go on!

Hold it!

OK. Half the class are going to be farm workers, walking slowly round the edge of the room with that strong, slicing harvesting action. And the other half, factory workers, performing their own mechanical sequence of quick repetitive actions in the middle of the room.

Your teacher will choose one person from the class circle to go into the middle of the room now.

If every second person in the class circle joins that person in the middle of the room, we should have our two performance groups. So pause now to get organized.

Factory workers – spread out a bit, so you've got plenty of space around you, and then freeze in your own factory-worker pose. Farm workers – you're moving first, so quickly get into your starting position! Hold your imaginary scythe...and twist your body round to the right. Don't forget to tense your muscles and really show how hard you're working! Follow me...

Swing round and slice...

Step forward and swing back...

Swing round and slice...



Step forward and swing back...

Keep harvesting!

Farm workers freeze! Factory workers - show off your own mechanical sequence of quick, repetitive actions!

Factory workers freeze! And everyone relax.

If there's time, swap groups and replay the music to try those farm and factory worker sequences again. Really exaggerate the differences between the slow, strong harvesting moves and the quick, repetitive factory actions.

Sit down just where you are and listen.

Today's next sequence takes a more light-hearted view of the period before the War – looking at the contrasting lives of masters and servants in a grand Edwardian house.

The masters of the house were so rich that they didn't need to work. Often, they entertained themselves with glamorous parties where they could show off to their friends and try out the latest dance steps!

It's a dance called 'The Castle Walk'! A simple dance taking four steps forward and four steps back again, stepping lightly on the balls of your feet.

The Edwardians would have danced 'The Castle Walk' with a partner – but today, you're going to try it... with an imaginary partner! People around the edge of the room – stand up! Stand straight and tall with your head held high and turned slightly to the side.



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Imagine you're a very rich and important mistress or master of a grand Edwardian house. Raise your arms out in front of you as if you're holding a partner – so hold one hand raised as if it is resting on your imaginary partner's shoulder or waist and the other hand out to the side.

Hold that posh upright pose as you step lightly on the balls of your feet to the beat of the music...wait for it!

Step forward 2, 3, 4.

Step back 2, 3, 4.

Again, forward 2, 3, 4.

And back!

Keep going – rich and important!

Sit down masters...and relax!

People in the middle of the room – you've guessed it – you're the servants! And while the masters of the house were having fun, the poor servants had to do all the work! When you hear the music dash through the spaces with small, busy steps – stopping every now and then to polish the silver, or scrub the floor, or dust the chandeliers. Get busy servants! Off you go!

Servants freeze, masters it's back to you!

Step forward, 2, 3, 4.

Step back, 2, 3, 4.

Keep going!



Hold a posh pose to finish...and everyone relax down onto the floor. If there's time, swap groups and replay the music to try those sequences again.

In August 1914 war was declared between Britain and Germany. At first, everyone thought the war would be over by Christmas – and excited young men all over the country volunteered to fight. But before they could join the battlefield, they were sent off for army training!

Everyone stand up straight and tall! Get ready to lift your knees high and swing your arms by your sides as you march enthusiastically around the room like the excited young volunteers. Wait for it...

It's march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Keep marching! Smart and energetic!

Stop and salute!

Quickly join someone nearby and stand next to each other side by side.

When in marching formation soldiers had to be an arm's length away from each other. So hold your right arm out the side at shoulder height, to check that distance now...and relax your arm back down by your side.

When you hear the music again, stay next to your partner as you march through the spaces together. After the salute, take seven marching steps forward, then both turn a quarter circle to the right, before marching forwards again. Listen out and follow me! Attention!



WW1 Performance Pack - Dance

It's march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Keep marching partners!

Stop and salute!

And march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – turn and march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – turn and march! Keep going!

And stop!

Quickly join another pair nearby to make a group of four, standing one pair behind the other. Check you're standing an arm's length away from the person by your side and the person in front of you!

Get ready to march together in your group of four! Remember, after the salute, it's seven marching steps forward, then all turn a quarter circle to the right, before marching forward again. Wait for it! Attention!

March 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Keep marching!

Stop and salute!

And march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – turn and march 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – turn and march! Keep going!

And stop!

If there's time, you could replay that music to try marching in different formations, using quarter and half circle turns to change direction. There are endless possibilities to experiment with. But for now, walk away from your group to a space of your own with small, slow steps...



Stand up straight and tall...and stretch your arms out to the sides to help you balance. Really concentrate and keep your back straight as you slowly and carefully lift one knee as high as you can and balance! Relax your foot back down on the floor...and lift the other knee. Balance! And put your foot back down.

Next time, we'll be following those poor young soldiers to the terrible trenches and battlefields of World War One, as well as finding out about munitions workers back on the homefront.

Remember all of today's dance sequences feature in our special commemorative play called 'Archie Dobson's War' which you can find online at the school radio website. It's your chance to put on an entertaining and thought provoking performance about World War One. Goodbye.

