

# WWI Performance Pack: Dance Resources

## 2. Over by Christmas

Richard Lloyd King: Hello again – it's Richard with another *Dance Workshop* marking one hundred years since the start of World War One.

Today's sequences are inspired by the experiences of soldiers in the cold and terrifying war trenches, the munitions factory workers back on the home front and the Christmas truce of 1914.

One of the first jobs soldiers had to do when they arrived near a battlefield was to dig the long, zigzagging trenches, where they sheltered from enemy bullets and high-explosive shells.

Check you're standing in a space...

Let's warm-up with some energetic trench-digging actions. Imagine you're holding a big shovel. Bend over as you dig the shovel into the ground...and stand up straight as you throw the earth over your shoulder. Ready everyone?

It's dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Keep going!



Hold it! Wipe your brow with the back of your hand to show how hot and tired you're feeling. Walk to a new space with tired, heavy steps. And dig again!

It's dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Dig and throw!

Keep digging!

And stop! The trenches were built in a zigzagging pattern to contain the impact of explosions and to make their position less predictable to the enemy. When you hear the music, hunch your shoulders forward a bit to stay low, as you follow a zigzagging pathway with small, careful steps. Imagine you're walking along the cold, muddy trenches of World War One. Off you go.

Hold it! Quickly join one or two people nearby and sit down together in a space.

Between battles, the soldiers lived in these terrible trenches – eating, sleeping, playing cards, telling stories, writing letters home – doing anything they could to relieve the boredom and temporarily escape the cruel, harsh realities of war.

In a minute, I want you to work with your partner or small group to create a short sequence based on one of those trench-life activities. Select one key movement for chosen activity that you can repeat and develop throughout the sequence – that's called developing a 'dance motif'.



Pause now to work out your short trench-life sequence together. Remember, you could share a meal, play cards, read or write a letter home, or even share a funny story to cheer one another up.

Let's put both parts of that sequence together. This time stay close to your partner or group as you travel along the zig-zagging trenches. Then, when the music stops, perform your trench-life sequence together. Starting positions everyone. Hunch your shoulders to stay low as you walk along those zig-zagging trenches with small careful steps. Ready? Off you go!

Hold it! Perform your trench-life sequence together.

Walk together along those zigzagging trenches!

And freeze in a crouched, huddled-over position to finish...

And relax a minute down on the floor.

You're going to try that whole sequence again but this time, listen carefully and let the music and sound effects cue your movements. Don't forget, when the music stops, perform your own trench-life sequence with your partner or group. I wonder if your teacher can spot each group's 'movement motif'?

OK. Everyone stand up! Hunch your shoulders forward a bit to stay low. Keep close to your partner or group as you walk along those zigzagging war trenches together...

Hold a crouched, huddled-over position to finish!

And relax!



If there's time, divide the class into two roughly equal groups, and replay the music to take turns watching each other's performance.

Pause now while you get into groups of four, then quickly sit down in a space together.

With so many men away fighting the War, women were encouraged to do all sorts of jobs back on the home front. Many women worked in munitions factories – producing the bullets and high-explosive shells that were needed throughout the War. It was dangerous work and the machines used on the munitions production line were extremely precise and accurate. They had to be – mistakes cost lives!

Stand up, side by side, with the rest of your group.

You're going to create a munitions factory production line – with each person in the group performing an action to represent a different stage of production.

There are four actions to choose from: push, pull, jump or turn. So pause now while each person in the group chooses one of those four actions. Remember, it's push, pull, jump or turn.

The way you perform your chosen action is up to you! You can push, pull, jump or turn in any direction you choose, but always come back to your original position so you can repeat your action again and again. First you're going to perform your chosen action, one after the other – in 'canon'. So listen carefully to get the timing with the music and join in when you're ready.

It's...push!...pull!...jump!...turn!



Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Again! Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Hold it! Replay the music if you want to practice that again.

You've performed your own action, one after the other with the rest of your group, in canon. So this time, try performing all four actions at the same time as the rest of your group – that's called moving in 'unison'.

Remember, it doesn't matter which direction you perform the actions in – just perform them at the same time as the rest of your group – and always come back to your original position. Ready everyone? Together this time!

It's...push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Keep going!

Faster now!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Keep going!



And stop! OK – time to put it all together! So start the sequence performing your own chosen action, one after the other – in canon. And then, when I say, everyone perform all the actions at the same time – in unison. Sounds tricky? You can do it! Just listen carefully and follow me.

OK. Get ready to perform your chosen action, one after the other, to start!

It's...push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Keep going!

Everyone - push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Push!...pull!...jump!...turn!

Keep going!

And collapse down onto the floor to finish! If there's time, replay the music to practice that sequence again. This time, really concentrate on the timing of the different actions to give it a jerky, mechanical, production-line feel.

For today's last sequence, you need to divide the class into two roughly equal groups, with each group sitting down along opposite sides of the room. So take a pause and do that now.

Over the Christmas of 1914 an amazing thing happened – soldiers on both sides of the War put down their weapons and came together. For a few days the fighting stopped and instead they sang Christmas carols, shared food, and even played football together!



When you hear that Christmas music again, I want both lines to slowly stand up and walk towards each other with small, silent steps.

It's step...step...step...step...keep going...

When you're close enough, reach out and shake hands with a person from the opposite line...

Relax your hands back down by your sides and walk to a space together.

I want you to choose one or two of your favourite football moves to create a short, slow-motion sequence – you could pass the imaginary ball to one another, show off your keep-uppy skills, or even try a header – but keep it simple and don't forget, perform all those moves in slow-motion. Pause now to practice that sequence.

Get ready to show off your slow motion football sequence with the music – go on!

Now shake hands with your partner again...and turn to walk back to your own side of the room...turn to face one another again...hold that direct, forward focus. And relax.

Let's put that all together now with the music. Remember the Christmas truce sequence needs to look and feel really slow and controlled, with every move performed in slow-motion.

Ready everyone? Walk towards your football partner with small silent steps...shake hands and perform your slow motion football sequence together...shake hands with your football partner again...and slowly walk back to your own side of the room...



Face one another again to finish...hold that focus...and relax!

Walk away from your group lines to a space of your own with slow, quiet steps. It's step, step, step, step, keep going...

Stand with your feet hip-width apart...

Keep your legs straight and bend the top half of your body forwards, so your hands drop down towards your toes...only stretch down as far as it's comfortable...

Now bend your knees and use your hands to help you sit down on the floor...stretch your arms above your head and your legs straight out in front of you...lift your body up from the waist... and slowly lower your arms down towards your legs...keep that stretch nice and gentle...and everyone relax.

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.

