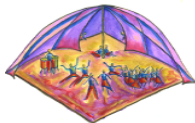


OUT OF THE PLAYGROUND

Child Soldier workshop & drama by David Pollendine

A Partnership between

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1. Introduction to Child Soldier Workshop/Performance

The aim

This resource is geared to engage children and young people in the issues surrounding the conflict in Kitgum, Northern Uganda and child soldier slavery in general. The performance is put together through improvisation workshops designed to last about 1hr 30 minutes, where all the ideas are created and performed by the cast.

The role of the Teacher/Leader

Is that of facilitator, but some directional skills are needed and a knowledge of good stage- craft practice. A basic understanding of the situation in Northern Uganda is also essential. (See CMS Break the silence campaign on www.cms-uk.org)

The medium

Mime and physical theatre techniques are the focus and can be juggled around. Techniques such as group freeze frames, individual Mime, and physical story telling are all used

Create the Performance in two easy steps.

1. Start by referring to the, **“Outline for Child soldier workshops”** to take the group through the creational process of creating the mime and movement.
2. Then referring to the **“Outline for child soldier performance”** add the scripts to the performance with a run through rehearsal

The performance can take anything from between 15 to 30 minutes

2. Outline for Child Soldier workshop

1. **Warm up: 15 mins** to teach play ground scene
Walking around room get group to experiment with play, introduce entering in sequence to Moyoni music and drum, (see page 4) then teach a basic African dance step

2. **Group scenes – 20 mins** split in to 2 groups
 - Group 1
 - **Tom's story, (see scenes 2 and 3)** – Shout out commands to Mime or build a physical image to (they can create these images on their own or together.) but they must react on the spot
 1. Sweep and clean
 2. Big Truck
 3. Play (hide and seek/ tick)
 4. Build Kitgum
 5. Park the car
 6. Grandmother
 7. Sell palm oil
 8. Ridicule (group of children pick on Tom)
 - Group 2
 - **Marching scene and Eat work sleep, (see scenes 4 and 5)**
Teach marching rhythm and step pattern then enter in one by one. Get group to mime out Eating, Working, Sleeping, killing, running on spot, and collapsing and exiting from stage

- Break 5 mins**

- Rehearse finale of Moyoni song** (entrance, African dance and finish position)
- Teach Tom Physical theatre** piece to perform as a solo. In rehearsal help him to react to the text with the first image that comes into his head and repeat images where there is repetition in the text. – 20 mins

3. **Run through 30 mins**

3. Outline for Child Soldier performance and script

Out of the playground

Scene 1 The playground –piece-showing children at play to drum beat
Then Moyoni is sung in Swahili and everyone dances in a basic African dance step

“Moyoni (C), Moyoni (G), Mini (D) Pata Yesu (G), Moyoni (C)” – Jesus is in my heart (verse repeated over and over)

Mojoni

The musical score for 'Mojoni' consists of two systems. The first system is for Piano, showing a melody line with lyrics 'Moj - o - ni - Moj - on -' and guitar chords G and C. The second system is for Pno., showing a melody line with lyrics 'i - Min - i - Pa - ta Je - su - Moj - on - i' and guitar chords D and G. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated above the first measure of the Pno. system.

Scene 2 Tom’s life before (Physicalised by group 1)

“Hi my name is Tom. In the morning my Mother would ask me to sweep and clean. My Father drove a big truck. When the moon was full I would play with my companions. We would bounce a ball and play hide and seek in the moonlight. We lived in a town called Kitgum. The vehicles used to park there outside my house. My Grandmother sent word from her village that she needed a child to help her. So I was sent to her. She gave me cassava and sim sim to go and sell.”

Scene 3 Narrator (Physicalised by some of Group 1)

“ One day Tom’s life was changed for ever when he bumped into a group of children who were not like his friends. They weren’t interested in play and had fear and hate in their eyes. At gun point he was forced to join their army”.

(Group 1 exit)

Scene 4 The marching scene (In sequence Group 2 enters stage and march to beat of drum with text read in background)

“Every day children are taken by force out of the playground

There are an estimated 300,000 child soldiers in some 30 countries around the world including Angola, Columbia, Lebanon, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda. Physically vulnerable and easily intimidated, children make obedient soldiers. Many are abducted or recruited by force, some join to escape from poverty or even join militia groups to seek revenge for family members killed. These children often follow orders under threats of death and are fed with drugs to help them overcome their fear or reluctance to fight. Schooled in war, former child soldiers are often drawn into crime and become easy prey for future recruitment. Is there any hope for these children to be set free again to play?"

Scene 5: Eat work sleep kill. Sergeant barks out Orders and all react by miming the order, Eat, Work, sleep, kill. Sergeant shouts Runner and everyone freezes except for one who runs on spot. Eventually he tires, collapses and is taken away. Then sergeant shouts out orders quicker and quicker until all die and collapse with only Tom left standing.

Narrator: Tom got lucky, one day on a raid into some villages he found himself alone, he had lost his group in the confusion of the night, and he fled for his life. At last he was Free. Tom is free.

Scene 6: Tom's freedom. Text below performed through mime by Tom,

"After the war I tried to find my family, but they have disappeared. I dare not return to my Grandmother's village for fear of being captured again. So now I live near a roadside store In Kitgum. That's where I live and sleep. I am haunted by what we did during the war: My heart is constantly joshing me. I have lost the ability to feel. You can cut me with a knife and I won't even feel it. I cry but only when I'm happy. I dream I have a gun and I'm killing, I feel afraid thinking again perhaps that these things will happen again to me. The drugs we took made me feel very light, I worry I am not as intelligent as I was before. I talk to my friends from time to time, but I don't feel comfortable. Everyone fears me. Yes up till now they are all afraid of me. I guess it's because my heart is not really clear with people. I don't really like to go around people. I'm sure that one day God will make a way for me to sit down to a better place."

Scene 7 Finale song "Moyoni" Everyone enters and performs dance with a freeze finish position

4. Improvisations and Questions

The following improvisations and questions are designed to help individuals make connections between the situations in N Uganda and their own lives here in the UK. Even though we may not see the scale and nature of destruction committed by the LRA here in Britain, the same seeds of power and manipulation are still as prevalent.

Suggestion for preparation work

1. Start by getting the group to brainstorm all the types of work and professions we have in society. (5 mins)
2. Then explain you are going to focus in on two in particular. Ask the class to walk around the room and take on the walk and movement of a Teacher. Imagine how they might stand, point, gesture, turn etc. (5 mins)
3. Then ask the group to try speaking an instruction as a Teacher, for example "Jimmy would you please sit down!" Get the class to invent their own instructions. (5 mins)
4. Ask half the class to sit down and watch the other half as they walk around and act as Teachers and give their instructions, then swap over.
5. Now introduce the scenario of the improvisation and give each pupil enough time to work on their own producing their scene. (15/20 mins) Instruct each pupil to picture the scene they are in so they can see their classroom, where the window is etc.
6. Then pair everybody off to work with a partner on their scenes and to offer feedback and direction to their partner's scene. (10/15 mins)

The pupils are now ready to perform their pieces to the group. As this is a work of improvisation they will never feel completely ready, but that is fine. Encourage them that this feeling of the unknown will help to give spontaneity and realism. Use the same process for the other characters and it may help to explore the characters in their piece as well, i.e. the classroom pupils.

Football coach improvisation

You are an Under 13 football coach giving a half time team talk. You are mad with your team because they are losing 3-0 in the county cup final. Winning this game is everything to you, it is more than life and death. So you give the team a severe telling off before sending them back out. It is up to you how you end the improvisation but bring it to some point of resolution.

Follow up questions to consider

1. Do you think the coach has any justification to behave in this way?
2. Can you draw any parallels from this scenario to the conflict in Kitgum, North Uganda?
3. If you were a player sitting in that room how would you feel or react?
4. Have you ever been in a similar situation?
5. Have you ever been in the position of the coach?
6. In life can you think of other similar instances where this might happen?
7. How could the Coach better have dealt with the situation?
8. Can your observations here help in solving in any way the situation in Kitgum, North Uganda? Or in life in general?

Teacher improvisation

You are a Teacher starting a new term with a new class. You are teaching a lesson on the theme of “Mutual respect”, but you quickly realise that the class are very lively and aren’t really interested in what you are saying. The mutual respect of class and Teacher rapidly goes down hill. Think about how you bring the improvisation to a conclusion.

Follow up questions to consider

1. Have you ever been in such a class?
2. Can you draw any parallels from this improvisation to the situation in Kitgum?
3. Who was to blame for the chaos in the class?
4. How could the Teacher have created a better atmosphere?
5. Do you think the class have any responsibility to comply?
6. If you were in the place of the Teacher how would you feel?
7. How would you feel in the place of a member of the class?

Can your observations here help in solving in any way the situation in Kitgum, North Uganda? Or in life in general?