

Working: Circus

Movement Objectives



Dynamics

Elephant – heavy, stumpy
Lions – fierce, proud, strong
Horses – graceful, elegant

Body parts
Facial expressions

Pairs

Contact work – giving weight
Directions – going away and towards

Warm up

Call out different circus acts for the children to demonstrate...

- **Clowns** – pull funny faces and throw custard pies
- **Tightrope walker** – balance along an imaginary tightrope
- **Trapeze artist** – swing forwards and backwards
- **Strong man** – flex muscles
- **Jugglers** – throw and catch imaginary balls

Ask the children for other suggestions

South Rampart Street Parade -
Sounds of the Circus South Shore Concert Band



Elephants

Mahalageasca - Mahala Rai Banda



Discuss the types of animals that circuses used to feature in their shows, and why they are no longer included.

Ask the children to stand in a space and move like an elephant around the room. Try out heavy, stomping feet, swinging the trunk and squirting water.

Teach the children a short elephant trick dance, such as....

- Start on all fours and lift front two legs, as if standing on back legs
- Stand on one leg
- With a partner – one elephant balances on the back of the other by kneeling on each other. Swap over.
- Marching procession – holding onto their partner's tail and move around the room, travelling standing up or on all fours.

Ask the children to rehearse the elephant dance with their partner, still using the movement qualities of an elephant – big, heavy feet. Choose a pair that look like effective elephants to demonstrate to the rest of the group.

Lions

Get the children back on their own to improvise moving like a lion. Try out crouching down still and pouncing out, fierce prowling and roaring in different directions.

Teach the children a basic lion trick dance – they will need hoops for this

- Start on all fours, looking fierce and proud
- Walk along a very thin plank of wood – like a tightrope
- With a partner, one jumps through a hoop, then swap over
- With the same partner, one goes on all fours. Their partner must pounce over them, either by crawling or jumping over their back.
- To finish, ask the children to play sleeping lions – who can be the stillest?

Get the children to rehearse the lion dance with their partner – can they do all the actions with a fierce and proud face? Can they look strong whilst pouncing and jumping? Choose a pair who have captured these qualities and ask them to demonstrate their lion dance to the class.

Horses

Ask the children to move like a horse. Try out trotting, cantering, galloping and kicking the front legs in the air.

Teach the children a dance based on horse and dressage actions, such as...

- Start on hind legs and then trot around the room leaping over imaginary fences.
- With a partner, gallop around in a circle together going in one direction, and then change direction
- Standing next to their partner, trot going sideways away from their partner and then back towards their partner
- Finish by bowing towards partner – one front leg forward stretched, other front leg bent, leaning downwards

Get the children to rehearse the horse dance with their partner, focusing on moving with elegant and light qualities. Ask one of the pairs who look like effective horses to demonstrate their duet to the group.

Choreography

Thunder and Blazes - Sounds of the Circus South Shore Concert Band



In their pairs, the children need to create an animal circus act for the Big Top Performance. Ask them to choose one of the animals from the session and create a short duet. Depending on the children's age and ability they can just practice one of the duets they have been taught, or they could use their own ideas to create a new dance based on circus lions, elephants or horses. Ensure they have a starting and ending position and ask them to rehearse the facial expressions and movement qualities of the animal they've chosen.

Performance Opportunity

Sit the children in a circle – this is the Big Top and the children are going to perform inside it. If it is a big group, there could be more than one circle, although ensure there is a member of staff for each one. Take it in turns for the pairs to enter the big top and perform their animal duet. Continue until all groups have had a turn. Ask the children to watch whilst they are sitting in the circle.

Appreciation

At the end of the big top performance, ask the children to discuss their favourite acts – which pairs created a clear duet together? Who really looked like the animal they were portraying?

Other Working Animals

Discuss what other animals work...

- **Sheepdogs** – create commands together using sounds and gestures
- **Guide dogs** – in pairs, one could close their eyes, whilst their partner carefully guides them around the room.
- **Dolphins** – provide therapeutic work for poorly children – how might a child ride on a dolphin's back?

Love Theme - Moby



Cool Down ↓

Create a big top shape with their partner. Make it smaller and smaller until they end up on the floor. Fold themselves up into a small shape, as if they are the material of the big top. Repeat a few times. Keep really still until they are tapped on the shoulder to stand up.