

FUTURE PERFECT

EDUCATION PACK

**'Funny and clever, this play has lots of big ideas about friendship, making mistakes and, of course, time travel...
Absolutely brilliant.'**

Primary Times

TALL STORIES BRINGS GREAT STORIES TO LIFE FOR AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES

The company is a registered charity which has become internationally recognised for its exciting blend of storytelling theatre, original music and lots of laughs.

Tall Stories was founded in 1997 by joint artistic directors Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell, who have co-created all the company's shows since then.

'Tall Stories sets the benchmark for children's theatre'

Sunday Times

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THE SHOW

Tall Stories co-directors Olivia Jacobs and Toby Mitchell wanted to create a show for children in Year 6 – who will shortly be making the **transition** to secondary school. They decided to work around the themes of decision-making (as secondary school is when children really start making some of their own decisions) and time travel.

Olivia and Toby came up with an idea for the show – that a 10-year-old wishes he could go back in time to change a really bad decision he made a week ago. They then worked together to make the idea into a story – and held a week-long workshop with five actors, a set designer and a sound designer to develop the story for the stage.

Then Olivia (assisted by Natalia Scorer) spent two weeks directing Toby and his 10-year-old son Dominic in the original version of the show, which played for two weeks at the 2016 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, enjoyed by audiences and critics alike.

Finally, the creative team rewrote the script for two grown-up actors to perform in schools, and developed it with a new cast during three weeks of rehearsals prior to the first schools tour.

DISCUSSION POINTS

As part of the show, students create their own personal Time Machines – double-sided cards which contain moments (good and bad) from their past on one side and on the other side, dreams to make their future perfect.

Revisit the cards in class.

Get the students to add more past memories (good and bad) and future dreams to them.

Ask what they could do (or could have done) to make the bad moments better. And discuss what would make them happy in their future. Ask questions like:

- What is in store for your future? If you travelled forward in time, what would you want to see – and what would you not want to see?
- What will your life be like a year from today? How will things be different?
- What choices will you have to make in the next year / five years / ten years?
- Which decisions do other people make for you, and which do you make for yourself? How might this change in the future?



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FROZEN IN TIME

Re-tell the story in pictures

Get into groups of 3 or 4. Choose your favourite four or five parts of the show and turn them into freeze frame pictures / tableaux.

As a group, rehearse joining the four pictures together in a sequence, one after the other. And then perform it to the other groups.

The challenge

Every Freeze Frame needs to include all 4 people in the group! As there are only two actors in Future Perfect (and sometimes a volunteer from the audience!), how will you fill the picture using every team member? Maybe you could create the entire scene of the bus stop that Dominic sits at – is there a tree? A lamp-post? The bird that poos on Dom's shoulder?

Things to consider

Levels

Freeze frames work well if someone or something is on every level in the picture. Try to be sure that there is someone low, medium and high in every picture.

Characters

How can we tell who is who or what in the picture? How do we know you are Dominic or the Time Agent? Think about your physicality and exaggerate any character traits you remember.

Facial Expressions

Make your expression larger than usual so that we can understand what's happening just from that single snapshot in time! For example, is this a moment when Dom is feeling shocked (to meet a Time Agent!)? Or frustrated (because his younger self can't hear him)?

Freeze!

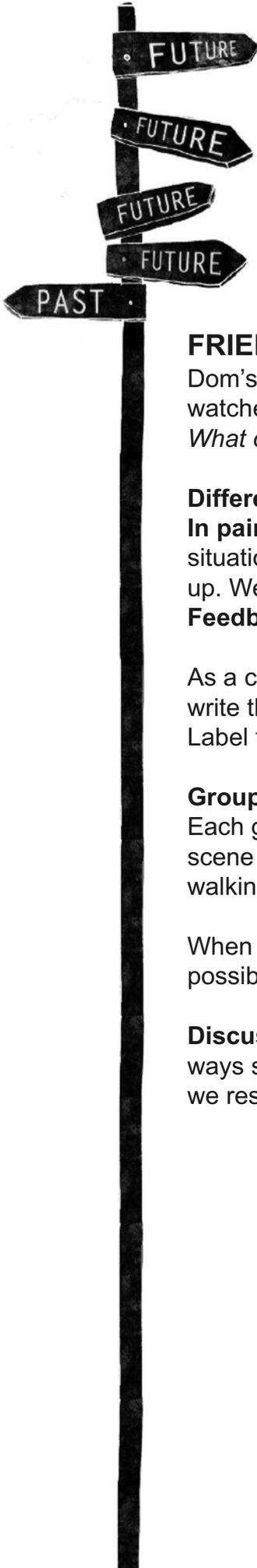
The clue's in the name! Any actor will tell you how hard it is to be REALLY still. How frozen in time can your team be?

Transitions

Can you get from one picture to the other smoothly? Maybe you could add a sound effect to the movement – like with the Time Tunnel?

Perform

When performing your snapshot version of the show to the group, can everyone tell which moments from the show you chose?



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FRIENDSHIPS

Dom's friendship with Ali is really important to him. In the story, he initially watched Ali be picked on and simply stood by.

What other things can go wrong within friendships?

Different Outcomes

In pairs, think of a situation when a friendship is in trouble. It might be a situation you've been in, a situation you've seen or it could be completely made up. We won't ask whether it's a real story or not, that's for you to know.

Feedback some of the scenarios to the class.

As a class **choose three** of these scenarios. Give them a short summary and write them on the board / on sugar paper, e.g. seeing a friend being picked on. Label them Scenarios A, B and C.

Groups of 3 or 4

Each group is given one of the scenarios A, B or C to consider. Rehearse the scene in your group and give it a possible ending / solution (e.g. saying sorry, walking away, etc). What happens to the friendship in your version?

When you **perform**, you will see each scenario a few times but with different possible endings.

Discuss as a class the different ways we can deal with situations. Do different ways suit different people? Different friendships? Does the timing affect how we respond? And so on...



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DECISIONS, DECISIONS...

We make decisions all day, every day. Some of them without even thinking. *Which socks shall I wear today? Shall I put them on left then right? Or right then left? What to have for lunch? Shall I sign up for the football / drama club? Which word shall I choose in my story? Shall I be nice to my friend and let them choose the DVD...?*

Some decisions are somehow bigger though. What kind of decisions are you making at the moment that are important?

Chat to a partner about the kind of decisions you are making right now that are important. E.g. What to do for your birthday party? Who to be friends with? How much time to spend practising an instrument / doing homework / watching TV? Why are some decisions harder than others? **Feedback to the class.**

DECISION MACHINES

Wouldn't it be great if these decisions could be put into a machine and an answer popped out the other side? Create your own Decision Machine...

Teams of 4 or 5. Choose one person to start the machine. Standing in one spot, physically make a movement that can be repeated over and over. Try to make it creative and unusual, and like a machine. Now add a sound to this.

Once they are going, the next person stands next to them and adds a different move and sound. Then the next person and so on.

The Movement. Be sure that the move is in some way connected to the first person's move. Maybe their hand knocks your leg each time? Or as the body turns, your head lifts at the same time? Watch and listen to each other's rhythm in the group. The aim is to create one big machine in your group – not four separate ones.

The Sound. Be sure that the machine sounds don't all come at once. The challenge is to complement the sound that comes before. Use the silences in between and fill the gaps. And vary the sound types and dynamics; if the person before is doing a long sound, try a short sharp sound. Think about actors on a stage – if everyone talks over the top of each other, we wouldn't understand the story.

Rehearse your machine.

Things to consider:

- The movement needs to be rhythmic and repetitive
- The physical action is what affects the next persons physical action, and so on...
- Be sure the sounds fill the gaps and don't overlap too much
- Give your machine a name

Now **Perform** your Machine.

Maybe the class can put a decision that needs to be made in one side, and a decision can pop out the other side of the machine!



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CHARACTERS (1)

At Tall Stories, actors love to create new characters. Often we do this by walking around the room and finding out how a character moves physically, before we know anything else.

Finding a walk

- In pairs, walk around the room NEUTRALLY. Try to do your most natural walk.
- A then copies B, walking behind. Looking at details.
- A then exaggerates B's walk. Keep thinking about those specific details, but make it really big!
- B steps out and watches this new walk that has been invented.
- Swap and repeat.

Now talk about the characters you saw. Changing a walk and mannerisms can really change a character. For example, if they walk really quickly, is this character always running late? Or always excitable with lots of energy?

Create a character

Just like a writer or an actor in a rehearsal room, you are now going to create your own character. It's usually more fun if the character is absolutely nothing like you – it can even be of the opposite gender! *The only rule is that your character has to be the same age as you.*

In **pairs**, thinking about the exaggerated walks you did, start to invent a character. Describe their walk. What kind of energy and personality do they have? What do they like / dislike? Do they have a big / small family? What hobbies do they have? Give your character a name.

Now **draw** your character. You could **write** a short account of who they are and what an average day is like for them.

Moving forward in time!

What does your character want to be when they're 21? Remember – this is the character you have created – not you!

Sometimes our interests lead us to the jobs we do when we're 21. For example: if someone likes Art, then maybe they'll become an interior designer. Or if they like food, then maybe they will become a chef in a restaurant. Someone who likes sport doesn't necessarily become a footballer – they might become a coach or a physiotherapist?

Brainstorm as a class and add some more interests and connected job possibilities to this list.

Choose what your character wants to be when they're 21. Think about what it is they like to do and try to give them a specific job not just a generic one, e.g. If they want to be a doctor, what kind? A surgeon, a midwife, etc?



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CHARACTERS (2)

THE GALLERY OF HUMAN CLAY

We are used to seeing statues made out of marble, stone or bronze. But now, we will sculpt some fabulous statues made out of... Human Clay!

In pairs name yourselves A and B.

A is now an artist – a sculptor.

B is a big lump of human clay!

Challenge

The Artist (A) moulds the clay (B) to look like their character (the character created above) at age 21. Think about all of the details just as an artist would. Where are their arms / hands? What are they wearing? How do you mould the clay so that we can tell what job they have?

When all of the statues are set – the artists can walk around the gallery and view the other statues. Can we tell what jobs our characters have at age 21?

INTERVIEWS

Bring the character statues to life!

In pairs, take it in turns to interview the *21 year olds* about their life.

Things to consider

Interviewer: Make a list of good questions before the interview. How did they get here? What do they love about their job? What decisions did they make which led them here? Do they remember what they were like at school? Did their friends like the same things or different things when at school? Did they have to practise any specific skills?

Character: Try to stay in character throughout the interview. Think back to the 'walks' you did and how it affected your whole body. Does your character have a particular voice? Remember what they like and dislike. Are they shy or confident? How have they changed from when they were 10?

HOT SEATING

If anyone is brave enough – the class could meet some of the characters you've created. Maybe the characters could bring along the picture of when they were 10 (the drawings from earlier). Ask them questions about the decisions they made to get here? What job do they do now? What were they like at 10 years old? Did they choose to work hard at a specific thing? Did they get advice from anyone? Do they wish they could change anything...?