

## THE CIRCUS

Music	Christel Lekkerkerker and Carolien de Gijdt
Arrangement	Ton Vennix and Casper ter Beek
Dance	Maria Speth, Christel Lekkerkerker and Carolien de Gijdt
Time	2/4 and 6/8 (tightrope dancers) and 4/4 (clowns)
Prelude	4 bars
Formation	free use of space; during each refrain the pupils circulate in the 'big ring'
Equipment	circus themed: rope or tape, umbrella for tightrope, red clown nose, etc.
Target group	suggested 4 - 9 years

### ***Explanation***

- This dance explores different circus acts such as agile tightrope walkers, dancing horses, and clumsy clowns. With each refrain, the artists parade round and round in the 'big ring'.
- In each dance lesson present only one new act and rehearse the parade. This provides ample time to work in depth with the equipment and give the pupils the time to try out their own ideas. In the following class the next circus act can then be worked out as well as repeating the previous one. In this way you can gradually work towards the final product as a whole.
- After every interlude you'll find a 4 second interval in the music meant for the ring master or mistress to announce the next act.
- The music in this dance is divided over 4 tracks. This enables the various parts of the dance to be studied separately.

### ***Dance Exploration***

- Allow the pupils to listen to the music and ask if they know what today's lesson will be about and teach the circus song.
- Discuss the theme with the pupils. What is special about the circus? Who has already been there, what did they see? Make use of visual materials, symbols, or any other material for the youngest pupils. That works best when using visual materials that illustrate the different acts.
- When presenting the different acts encourage the pupils to bring out their own ideas. You can stimulate this by asking questions and actively doing something with their answers. 'Who can show me how a tightrope walker goes from here to there?' It is better to let them show their ideas themselves. In doing so you create an opportunity to bring more depth and integrity into the dance.

- Active listening enriches the sharing of ideas and the quality of the dance. While observing the pupils verbalize what you see :‘look how Bob carefully puts each foot precisely in front of the other without wiggling, that’s great!’ Three things happen:
  1. The pupil performing the movement hears your commentary, experiences acknowledgment, and will then be more aware and precise in executing the movement because he wants to perform well. Your attention and approval encourage intrinsic motivation to exceed in performance.
  2. The other pupils’ (those observing) will sharpen their focus on the movement through your commentary. Through your modelling they refine their own observational skills.
  3. At the same time the pupils learn that there are many different possible outcomes for one idea, appealing to both cognitive and creative skills! This stimulates them to explore deeper than their initial responses. This is a way to bolster curiosity, which also leads to more depth in their exploration and knowledge!

Explore the different acts:

- **Tightrope walking** is very precise work. You must take small steps, putting one foot in front of the other (marking the floor with small pieces of tape is very helpful in order to provide each pupil with their own tightrope). Next to the walking (forward and backward), one may try some variations like balancing on one leg, making little leaps, turning, etc. Invite the pupils to demonstrate their own ideas, but also, let them observe each other.  
Practice music #4
- **Performing horses** in a circus are quite different from horses on the racetrack: they dance! And because they wear beautiful plumage on their head, they proudly hold their heads up high and they can lift and reach up with their long elegant legs. Together with the pupils you can make your own ‘horse-dance’. The steps written down in the description below are only an example.
- The **clowns**  
Clown themes often entice silly, chaotic behaviour. Start by asking about the special characteristics of a clown. How do you recognize a clown? Answers such as giant size shoes or a red nose then offer great dance possibilities:
  - The red nose. A clown always follows his nose. Sometimes straight ahead, sometimes with a winding path, sometimes suddenly turning around in the opposite direction or crossing the room in a zigzag pattern. Sometimes they dive to the ground like a real detective. Can we do that too? Get ready with your nose in the right direction so I can see immediately where your nose wants to go. Younger pupils will need you to provide the examples, but don’t change the movements too quickly! Tip: And sometimes... a spot of lipstick on your nose does wonders to help you follow your nose!

- The giant shoes. They are very difficult for walking in a normal manner and clowns don't do that, anyway. But with these giant shoes they can waddle like a duck. They can walk with their feet pointing towards each other or away from each other. They can walk with strange hops or leaps and so on. Let the pupils experiment with this themselves. It can be helpful to bring a pair of swimming flippers along and let the pupils experience the challenge of walking with 'huge shoes'. How does that feel?

Variation I: After the first exploration let the older pupils work in partners in which number 1 demonstrates the movement and number 2 copies. After that change the sequence and switch the leaders.

Variation II: Insert an observation moment in the lesson in which one half watches the other half. What did they see? Which nose or shoe was especially interesting and why?

Variation III: In addition to travelling in the space, playing a musical instrument with these clowns can be very interesting. For example: they play different body parts with the violin bow as if they were, themselves, huge violins or even cellos. And when they play piano it seems like the keyboard is floating around them. Explore all of the different and new possibilities together with the pupils. Also think about how large or how small an instrument is that the clowns play.  
Practice music #2 or #12



## *Dance Structure*

### Bar

A a  
1 - 16 The Circus Parade. All of the pupils march round and round in the 'ring' while singing the circus song. Each in their own way, they can be comical clowns with huge feet, or prancing horses or composed and confident tightrope walkers.

### interlude

1 - 8 everybody finds their own spot to start the tightrope-walking act, during the 4-second interval, the Ring Master announces the next act

B b  
1 - 16 'the spectacular Tightrope act'

### interlude

1 - 4 the pupils are getting ready for the Parade

A a  
1 - 16 the Circus Parade, repeat a

### interlude

1 - 8 all pupils gather together for the horse-dance standing in front circle\*, the Ring Master announces the next act: 'The Spectacular Dancing Horses'

C c  
1 - 4 8 steps clockwise with knees lifted up high  
5 - 8 in 8 counts a  $\frac{3}{4}$  rotation on one's own axis ending in front circle  
9 - 10 4 steps to the center with knees lifted up high  
11 - 12 4 steps backwards with knees lifted up high  
13 - 16 in 8 counts a full rotation on one's own axis ending in front circle  
17 - 32 repeat measures 1 - 16 from C in the other direction

### interlude

1 - 4 the pupils are getting ready for the Parade

A a  
1 - 16 the Circus Parade, repeat a

\* Front Circle: the children stand in a circle facing inwards towards the centre.

interlude

1 - 8

all pupils stand, solo or in pre-arranged pairs for the clowns' act, the Ring Master announces the next act: 'The Spectacular Clowns'

D

d

1 - 8

The clowns (solo or in partners) dance through the room either following their noses or dancing with their shoes. When dancing with a partner, number 1 is the leader while number 2 follows.

9 - 16

Vice versa, now number 2 leads the movements. When dancing solo, pupils switch between following their nose or their shoes.

prelude

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff is a prelude. The second staff has the lyrics 'E-very- bo- dy's dan- cing round and round The' with chords C and F6 above it. The third staff has the lyrics 'cir- cus is in town' with chords G and G7 below it. The fourth staff has the lyrics 'Hor- ses, dan- cers and a fun- ny clown We're' with chords C, G, and F6 above it. The fifth staff has the lyrics 'jum- ping up and down!' with a C chord below it. The music is in 3/4 time and G major.

E- very- bo- dy's dan- cing round and round The  
cir- cus is in town  
Hor- ses, dan- cers and a fun- ny clown We're  
jum- ping up and down!

### Lyrics

*(to be sung during the Parade)*  
Everybody's dancing round and round  
The circus is in town  
Horses, dancers and a funny clown  
We're jumping up and down!