



# DOGS DON'T DO BALLET

Education Resource Pack

# How did Little Angel Theatre start?



John Wright, the founder of Little Angel Theatre, was born in South Africa in 1906. He travelled to England in 1935 and worked as an assistant stage manager for the Ballet Rambert while studying at the Central School of Art and Design. During this time he saw a puppet performance by Podrecca's Piccoli and became hooked. John made his very first puppet in 1938.

In 1961 John and his troupe found a derelict temperance hall in Islington and transformed it into a theatre, designed for the presentation of marionette shows. It opened on Saturday 24th November 1961. This was to be the first purpose built puppet theatre the country had seen for many years and the only one with a permanent long string marionette bridge constructed backstage. The bridge was designed for puppeteers to stand on while they manipulate long stringed puppets who perform on the stage below leaving the audience unable to see the puppeteers. The original bridge is used to this day. The theatre has a traditional 'proscenium arch' and seats 100 audience members.

John Wright died in 1991 but the work of the theatre continued apace with family, friends and supporters working tirelessly to continue in his footsteps to make sure John's legacy would delight generations to come.

**“Over the next 30 years, the Little Angel team created and performed over 30 full-scale shows”**

# Dogs Don't Do Ballet on Stage

Dogs Don't Do Ballet is based on the popular children's book by Anna Kemp and illustrated by Sara Ogilvie. The idea to adapt the story for stage came from David Duffy (the director) and Andrea Sadler (performer and co-adapter), who read the story to their daughter and thought it would make the perfect puppet show.

## The Story

We highly recommend that you share the book with your class either before or after coming to see the show. The story of Dogs Don't Do Ballet focuses on a little girl (who in the book is nameless, but we've called her Anna) and her little dog Biff – who is not like other dogs. He wants to be a ballerina! Our version stays very true to the book – with a few additions for theatrical effect and added enjoyment.

We introduce Marjorie, the ballet class pianist, who Miss Polly (the ballet teacher) is forever nagging and who finally gets herself a job at the royal ballet, sadly not playing the piano. We also get the opportunity to see into Biff's imagination as he dreams (or is it a nightmare) about being a ballerina.



'Anna' and Biff illustrated by Sara Ogilvie from the book by Anna Kemp

Classical music in the production that you might recognise:

- The Street Awakens and The Dance of the Knights (used in BBC's The Apprentice) from Romeo and Juliet (ballet) by Prokofiev
- The Clog Dance from La Fille Mal Gardée (ballet) by Hérold -The Waltz of the Flowers from the Nutcracker Suite (ballet) by Tchaikovsky
- Pizzicati from Sylvia (ballet), by Delibes Les Sylphides by Chopin
- Boléro by Ravel (originally written as a ballet piece but made famous by Torvill and Dean at the 1984 Winter Olympics)

## Theatrical Influence and Music

As well as telling the story of the book using puppets David and Andrea were keen to explore other theatrical styles and performance devices. In the production you will see:

- Physical comedy and popular theatre/film of the past (Laurel and Hardy, Charlie Chaplin etc.)
- Eccentric dance (comedy routines and throwaway style dance that came out of music hall)
- Pantomime
- Early Disney films (Fantasia and The Pink Elephants on Parade from Dumbo which influenced Biffs nightmare) Classical ballet (the dance movements and music are all taken from classical ballet)

# Meet the Puppets

The puppets were designed and made by Keith Frederick. He wanted to make the puppets represent the illustrations in the book as closely as possible, but he also needed to make sure they could move well enough to do ballet!



The main Biff puppet is sewn from soft fabric and filled with lentils to create a soft squidgy feel and look but also to give him weight and movement. He is a rod puppet with rods on his paws to move him. His legs are jointed at the top so that he can dance!



Before Keith made the finished puppets he made practice puppets to try out ideas. These puppets (above) from Anna's class needed to perform ballet positions and movements at the barre all at the same time, so Keith needed to work out how to do that. He made these simple practice puppets using basic materials to work out the best way to achieve this before he made the finished puppets.

The Prima Ballerina puppet was inspired by a design by Bruce Schwartz who was a puppeteer who appeared frequently on the Muppet Show in the 1970s. Not only can she dance beautifully, her eyes snap open in surprise. Look out for it!



There is more than one Anna puppet as she wears different outfits during the story. She is a rod puppet with joints in her wrists, elbows, shoulders, feet, knees and thighs so that she can perform her famous arabesque!





# We can do Ballet!

## Ballet words and movements to try

A significant part of ballet terminology is in the French language, because ballet as a type of dance first became formalised in France.

The Paris Opera, originally known as the Royal Academy of Dance (founded in 1661 by King Louis XIV), features the oldest ballet company in France and probably the world.

Try out these movements in your PE lesson. Concentrate on balancing and holding the positions as carefully as you can.

### Arabesque

Standing on one leg with the other leg extended behind the body with the knee straight (sticking your leg out behind!) This one takes a lot of practice and good balance. Take it slowly.



### Plié

Bending the knees with your feet flat on the floor and knees facing out.

Can you spot any of these ballet movements in the show?

**Couru** - tiny, tiny, pitter-patter steps on point

**Pirouette** - spinning round and round

**Jeté** - a jump with one leg forward and the other back

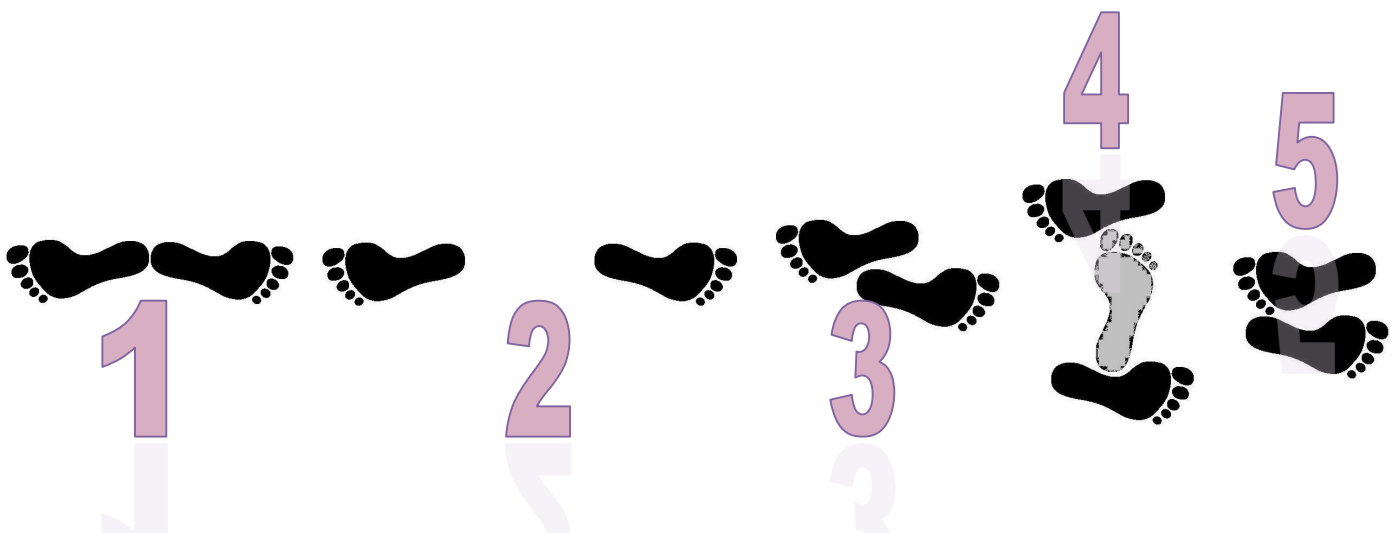
### Other words in the show

**Prima (ballerina)** - A title or honor given to the best female ballerinas in the world.

**Corps de ballet** - A large group of dancers on stage who dance behind the lead dancers. 'Corps' in French means 'body', so they make up the 'body of the ballet'.

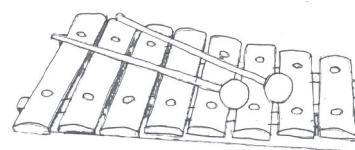
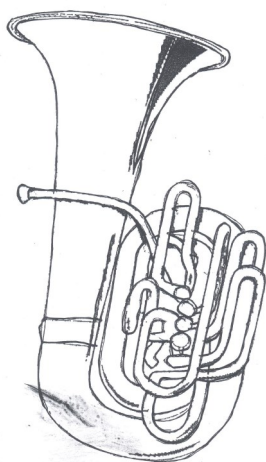
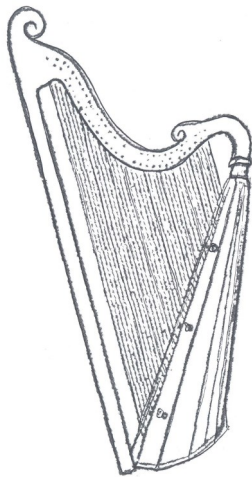
**Ballet barre** - A handrail that the dancers hold on to when practicing

The ballet positions for feet. Below you can see the foot positions 1-5. Try positions 1-3 first, and when you get really good move on to 4 and 5. The more you practice the easier they will be and your legs will be stronger.



Can you name the instruments from the orchestra that feature in the show when Anna goes to the Royal Ballet?

Colour in the pictures and write the correct name under each instrument



Choose from these words:

Violin

Tuba

Harp

Double Bass

Xylophone

Trumpet

# You can do Anything!

## Breaking Stereotypes

The main message of the story is to enforce the idea that anyone can do anything they want and not to be afraid to break the mold.

What hobbies do people in your class have? Which ones might be seen as 'for boys' and which 'for girls?'. Talk about jobs that children in the class want to do when they are older. Which ones might be seen as 'for boys' and which one's 'for girls?'. Does anyone want to do a job that they think might get the reaction "You can't do that..." Talk about why they CAN!

**Role Models Research:** Can you find out more about these inspiring role models?

### Carlos Acosta – Ballet Dancer

Carlos is one of the most famous male dancers in the world. Born in Cuba he has danced all over the world and joined the Royal Ballet in 1998. As well as being a choreographer (someone who makes up dances) and dancer he is also admired for his strength and athletic ability.



### Kim Little – Footballer

Kim plays for Arsenal LFC who are the most successful ladies football club in English women's football. They have won 38 major trophies to date.

Kim Little is one of Arsenal LFC's top goal scorers and also plays for the Scottish international team.



### Nicola Adams – Boxer and Olympic Gold Medalist

Great Britain's Nicola Adams is the first female boxer to win an Olympic gold medal. London 2012 was the first time female boxing has been allowed at the Olympics since 1904.

### Artem Chigvintsev – Ballroom Dancer

Originally from Russia, Artem has moved all over the world to pursue his dancing career. He was a featured professional dancer for 4 years on Strictly Come Dancing before moving on to the American version of the show Dancing with the Stars.

Can you find out about any other role models or do you know anyone who has broken stereotypes in sports, the arts, science, business or life and proved that like Biff anyone can do anything if they really want to!

# Make your own ballet inspired puppets

When you design and make a puppet make sure you think about these things: Decide on the character first (before you start drawing or making). Is it a person, an animal or a made up creature? Is it a character for a show you will be performing?

What is that character like? Match the character with a suitable puppet style (marionette, glove, rod, finger, shadow etc.) Decide what your puppet will need to do if it is performing in a show (walk, swim, fly, nod, wave or dance?) Which parts need to move or not?



## Peg Puppets

Simple ballerina puppets using old fashioned wooden clothes pegs and doilies for tutus. If you attach a rod firmly to the 'legs' they will spin beautifully if you roll the rod between your palms.

Use pipe cleaners for arms which you can then pose into different ballet positions.

## Materials

Remember that puppets have to be held up and moved by a puppeteer so choose light materials. If you make your puppet too heavy you won't be able to use it! Why not make an eco-friendly junk puppet using boxes/containers/ old magazines and wrapping paper/ tubs/tubes/wool/string/clothes/bottles etc. that would otherwise be thrown away?

**Draw a design for the puppet and remember to include:**

- What materials you will need.
- Which parts of the puppet will move – how? Will any parts be jointed? (elbows or knees)
- Don't forget to draw the rods/strings/controls etc that move the puppet so that you know where they will go.
- How will you fix the parts of the puppet together?
- How you will show your puppet's character? (facial expression, clothes, decoration)

As you make your puppet test it out as you go. Is it strong enough to use? Are the details clear (will an audience be able to see the face from a distance?) Does it move in the places it is supposed to?



## Finger Ballet!

Draw the top half of a ballerina puppet on thick card leaving space at the bottom for two holes for the legs. Insert your fingers through the holes and make your puppet dance!





When Anna visits the Royal Ballet we see the Corps De Ballet who dance behind the prima ballerina. Have a go at making your own chain of paper ballerinas to decorate your room or dance across the stage in perfect formation!

# Make a corps de ballet

## What you need:

Template (see next page)

Roll of paper (wrapping paper or similar works well – the length depends on how long you want your chain to be)

Pencil

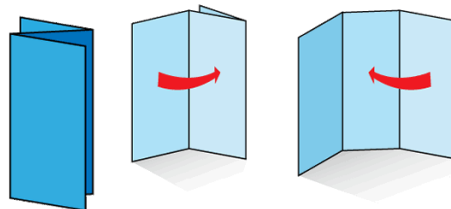
Scissors

Pens, paint or decorative materials

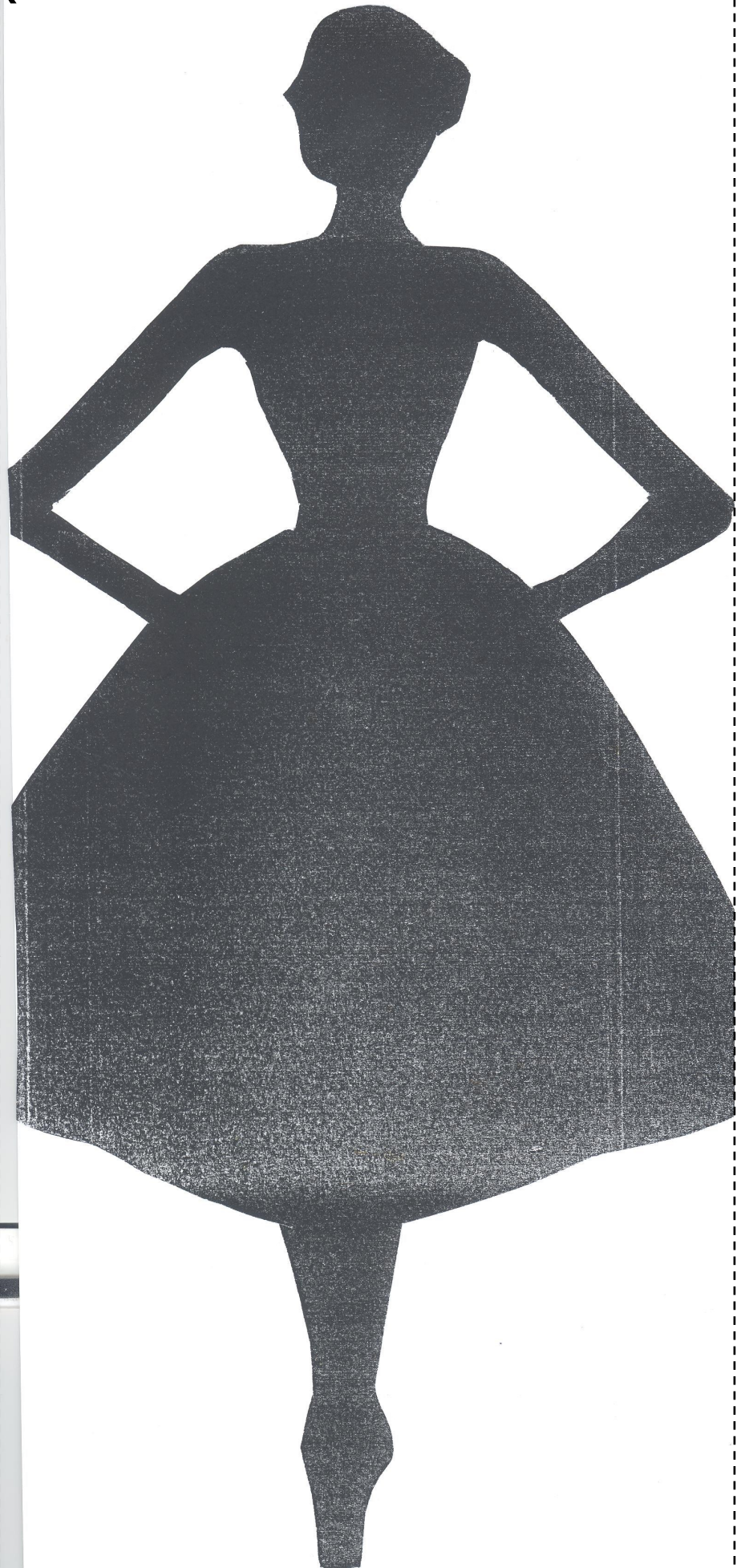


## What to do:

1. Photocopy and cut out the template.
  2. Cut a length of paper. The height should be able to accommodate the height of the dancer. The length will depend on how long you want your chain to be (tip – a length of 85cm will fit 4 dancers comfortably)
  4. At one end of the paper draw around the template – Make sure the flat edge of her dress and elbow on the left side is right up to the edge of the paper.
  5. Fold the paper in a fan or concertina so that each 'page' is the size of your drawing on the top and so that the ballerina's elbows touch each end of the paper.
  6. Cut around the drawing, cutting all the pages together.
- Make sure you DO NOT cut the edges of the paper where the elbows and skirt meet the edge, or your dancers won't be joined!**
7. Unfold the chain – they should all be joined together!
  8. Colour and decorate each ballerina in the chain. Think about making each character slightly different.



In order to create a joined chain both elbows and skirts must touch the edges of the paper and you must not cut where they do!



# Make your own **Dogs Don't Do Ballet** finger puppets

Use the templates below or draw your own dancing character here!



Anna

1. Colour the puppets
2. Cut them out
3. Stick the ends together

Get an adult to help with scissors!



Biff

# Useful Resources

More information about the history of the theatre and future puppet shows, teachers puppet making INSET and workshops, including our school menu of activities for educational settings can be found at:

[www.littleangeltheatre.com](http://www.littleangeltheatre.com)

## *Dogs Don't Do Ballet (book)*

Anna Kemp (Author), Sara Ogilvie (Illustrator)

Available at Little Angel Theatre during the run.



## Related film clips

Bruce Schwartz performing with his ballerina puppet, the inspiration behind our Prima Ballerina.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEVIDb43v-4>

The clog dance from the Royal Ballet production of La Fille Mal Gardee. The music is featured in Dogs Don't Do Ballet and it's fun ballet which children will enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT9naCq0fdE>

Charlie Chaplin – Table Ballet

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoKbDNY0Zwg>

Classic comedy dance routine Morecombe and Wise make breakfast

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFgdhZGLJrY>

## Related Websites

Carlos Acosta

<http://www.carlosacosta.com>

Arsenal LFC

<http://www.arsenal.com/ladies>

Nicola Adams

<http://www.nicola-adams.com>

Artem Chigvintsev

<http://www.artemchigvintsev.com>

