

Key Stage 3: Exploring the professional work *MADHEAD*

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This resource is adapted from One Dance UK's *MADHEAD* scheme. The full scheme, with additional video clips of the work including warm ups led by choreographer Botis Seva, is available free to members on the One Dance UK website.



Introduction

Led by Sadler's Wells, National Youth Dance Company (NYDC) is England's flagship youth dance company. Each year approximately 40 young dancers aged 16-19, or up to the age of 24 for deaf or disabled dancers come together to create and tour brand new dance work. The dancers come from across the country and from diverse training routes. Each year the company works with a new Guest Artistic Director who leads the company- giving them an insight into their own professional practice. Whilst working with NYDC, London-born choreographer Botis Seva was inspired to create *MADHEAD*.

Lesson objective

Use repertoire and ideas from NYDC's dance piece *MADHEAD* to inspire students and create choreography.

Starter

Discussion around two questions: What is inspiration? What inspires you? Confirm the definition of inspiration in dance (an idea that motivates you to make something creative) and explain how this relates to 'choreographic intention' (the aim of the dance, what the choreographer aims to communicate).

Provide details of Seva's inspiration and the intention behind the work: *In creating this piece Botis Seva considered the things that he went through and had to deal with as a young person at school. He felt that these young people in NYDC were going through the same things. MADHEAD is about youth energy, about what they feel, truth in young people and trying to be heard. The theme of MADHEAD is youth's right to be heard, touching on aggression, vulnerability, community and individuality.*

Watch the *MADHEAD* trailer and identify where these themes can be seen: youtu.be/AU1rDXOzQ6M

Alternatively students could view this specially commissioned short film, directed by Ben Williams, inspired by the full-length theatre work: youtu.be/XFnhReSE_LY

Warm up

Explore jogging and skipping around the space in any direction to music. Use the rhythm of the music, picking out key accents to relate to, relaxing/shaking out the wrists, head, shoulders and arms. Progress to circling the arms whilst skipping. Move on to reach up and down, dropping the torso forwards on the downwards movement.

Combine the actions, stepping and dropping the torso forwards before releasing and circling the arms backwards. You could progress to adding in commands to stay on the spot for a few counts springing from one leg to the other.

Suggested music: *Exodus* by Bob Marley

Task 1

Learn a walking phrase from *MADHEAD*.

Step 1

Start with the feet close together in parallel.

Step 2

Walk forwards through the feet taking small steps, rolling through thinking about the contact the feet are making. Arms are out to the side as if you have a ball under each arm and chest is lifted, focus diagonally upwards. As you step the shoulders and body sway slightly.

Task 2

Develop the walking phrase in groups.

Step 1 – Walking phrase

- In small groups students devise a walking pattern. For example: 4 walks forwards, 8 walks on the diagonal, 8 walks in a curved line or a circle.
- Challenge students to create a formation in their group and stay in the same shape whilst walking.

Step 2 – Using stillness

- Find moments to be still together as a group within the walking pattern. For example: Be still for 4 counts after the first walks forwards, then 2 counts after the 8 walks on the diagonal.

Encourage your students to start simple and make sure they know what they are doing before adding complexity to their phrases.

Task 3

Creative challenge

Create an 8-count solo phrase using the themes for *MADHEAD*, focusing on exploring actions that use grabbing and letting go. Allow students time to rehearse the phrase so that they can remember it.

Peer feedback

In pairs, students show each other their eight-count phrase.

Partner to provide feedback. Students continue to work in their pair devising another eight-count phrase, this time focusing on 'powerful movement'. You could refer back to the trailer and identify movements that convey power before continuing with this task. Once students have created this movement, refer to it as the '*Powerful Phrase*'.

Task 4

Students rehearse the eight-count '*Powerful Phrase*' either in pairs or individually.

Group challenge

Returning to their groups from Task 2, students put together the '*Walking Phrase*' (Task 2) with the '*Powerful Phrase*'. Encourage them to consider how they could put the two phrases together to create a section of dance. Reinforce that that "anything goes" - there is no wrong or right answer!

Once the phrases are linked, allow students to rehearse in their groups to help them remember it and perform it accurately.

Task 5 (or extension task)

Creative challenge

To contrast with the '*Powerful Phrase*' create a '*Soft Phrase*'. Students improvise to create 'soft' movements with a partner. It may be useful to refer back to the trailer or for you to model some examples of 'soft movement' taken from the work. From their improvisations, students should select actions that they like and put these movements together to create a phrase of eight counts. Allow time for rehearsal and peer feedback. This will become the student's '*Soft Phrase*'.

Plenary

Share the work created with the rest of class. Students could share one, two or all of the phrases created. Questions to guide student feedback:

- What worked well in each group, what could be better and why?
- How does the dance reflect the inspiration for *MADHEAD*?
- What inspiration did you take from *MADHEAD* for your own work?
- What did you enjoy?
- What did you find challenging?

Cool down

Reverse the process of the warm up: include 'follow my leader' stretches to calm music, stretching upwards with both arms, making a circle with the arms to the side and then bringing the torso forwards hands touching the floor, jogging, then walking slowly around the room.

Further information

nydc.org.uk

[@nydccompany](https://www.instagram.com/nydccompany)

fromthenorm.com

[@FarFromTheNorm](https://www.instagram.com/FarFromTheNorm)