

CHWARAE



Education Pack



Theatr Iolo is the leading Welsh children's theatre company, creating high quality experiences that are stimulating, surprising and meaningful for children and their adults.

Theatr Iolo has been at the forefront of theatre for children for over thirty years, delivering performances and workshops to babies, children, teenagers, parents, pupils and teachers across Wales, the UK and internationally.

We create and produce the best work for children and young people to help them make sense of the world around them and their place within it. We work with the best artists, writers and creatives, to ignite creativity and imagination in both English and Welsh languages.

Theatr Iolo's values are;

- **Trust:** When you come to a Theatr Iolo production, you can trust your experience will be of the highest quality. You can rely on us to feel included, be inspired and entertained.
- **Ambitious:** We would like you to feel challenged and hope to help you to explore relevant issues that you face and deal with. We want to help young people open up and learn about themselves and the world in which they live.
- **Collaborative:** We want to reach as many young people as possible and particularly those that have not had access to live theatre before. We want to create work that is relevant to young people and strive to understand and represent the diverse nature of those stories.
- **Creative:** We want to ignite creativity and imagination in all the children that we reach and work with, in both Welsh and English languages. We want to offer the most creative, stimulating and surprising opportunities that challenges expectations.
- **Authentic:** We aim to represent children from all backgrounds and life experiences and deal with current challenges our audiences meet in their lives. We aim to remove barriers to attendance and strive to offer genuine and inclusive opportunities.

Introduction

Theatr Iolo and Pontio present

CHWARAE

By Elgan Rhys

A boy plays with his Mam. The game they play is just for them. They get lost in a make-believe world and nothing else matters. Then suddenly the game changes...

He's about to embark on the biggest and more important game of his life. But no one has told him the rules and Mam is no longer around to show him the way. Is he brave enough to play? Can he find the answers he's looking for? And what will happen once the game is over?

Following a young boy's journey as he's unexpectedly catapulted from one world to another, **Chwarae** is a wondrous exploration of the joy and importance of play. Featuring live music and movement, this Welsh Language production explores how play can help children to navigate the challenges that life throws them. The audience will also be asked to join in the fun and be given their own opportunity to play!

Chwarae was developed collaboratively with Pontio and families from North Wales through Theatr Iolo's Platform programme.

We very much hope you enjoyed the show **Chwarae** and that it serves as a starting point for you to explore new games and learning through play.

This pack has been created to spark ideas for you to take back to the classroom as a follow on from watching the show. The suggested activities take inspiration from the themes that arise throughout the show and suggests ways of creating an inviting environment for children to play and explore emotions and difficult situations.

A little about Elgan Rhys

Elgan Rhys is a bilingual theatre maker based in Cardiff; working as a writer, director and performer. Elgan studied at the University of South Wales where he gained his BA Hons degree in Drama (Theatre & Media). Throughout a multi-disciplinary process Elgan explores the personal experiences and the human condition whilst questioning and celebrating our actions as well as the emotional consequences.

Elgan is the Co-Founder & Co-Artistic Director for Cwmni Pluen Company as well as being the Associate Artist for Cwmni'r Frân Wen.

The Importance of Child-led Play

Whilst creating the show **Chwarae**, there was an importance on giving agency to the children to lead the play and any activities, to encourage the adults to say 'yes' to the children, to have faith in the children's play and to allow space for the children to develop leadership skills. But more than this, to bring everyone to the same level, equally within the play.

Play can be a serious game for children and there is a responsibility on the adults to earmark this precious time for them, to create a safe and inviting environment for them to explore and also to join in in the play with them.

With the suggested activities in this pack, the children's creativity is at the heart of the play – as you make your way through them, try to encourage the children to make decisions, to take the lead and make suggestions.

*“Playing is vital to children for their fun and happiness
as well as for their health and well-being.*

Children benefit most when they are in charge of their play. When children choose what to play, who to play with, and how to organise their play, they have more fun and support their own learning, development and well-being.

Children tell us that having welcoming places, enough time and the company of others to play with every day, is important to all children and teenagers – as adults we need to foster environments that support this.”

Mike Greenaway, Director of Play Wales

A little about the show

The roots of this show come from how play can help to develop confidence, creative and communication skills coupled with being a useful practice to aid children to face problems or challenges, to work through difficult situations and to think for themselves.

At the beginning of the show, Elgan is happy in his familiar routine in his little world. When a change happens, he isn't quite sure how to deal with the problem, so he bravely goes on an adventure to learn by playing new games, with new friends.

The Characters

Elgan

Elgan lives with Mam and enjoys playing a game with her. Suddenly, he lives with Dad and Dad does things a little differently to how Mam did things. Elgan goes on a journey of discovery to understand how to deal with the grief of losing Mam and how to approach the new, slightly different world with Dad.

Mam and Dad

Mam's character represents safety – order and security. Dad's character represents the change that happens in Elgan's life, which brings a feeling of confusion and a fear of breaking tradition. This change forces Elgan out of his safe, small world and in to a universe of adventure to develop the ability to play a new game with Dad and to deal with the grief of losing Mam.

The Different Worlds

Foxy – In the first world, Elgan meets Foxy. Elgan's world is small and safe, nothing changes and he's happy that way. Foxy encourages Elgan to step out of his little world and helps him to develop the confidence to go looking for adventure – for a new game.

Themes: Adventure / taking risks / developing confidence

So-Ball – Elgan arrives at the busy, colourful and playful world of So-Ball. So-Ball doesn't speak like Elgan so they need to find a way of communicating with each other first. So-Ball is busy playing his own game and when Elgan tries to take the game for himself, So-Ball encourages him to think outside of the box, to use his creativity to create his own game and send him off to the next world.

Themes: Being unique / creativity / trying new things / communication without language

Lucas – In Lucas' digital world, Elgan learns about thinking outside the box – using his imagination. Elgan starts to feel lost by now and yearns to go back to his familiar world, but Lucas teaches him to lose himself in the joy of adventure and to grab new adventures by the hand.

Themes: Using imagination / thinking outside of the box / communication

Princess Seren – This is the final part of Elgan's journey through the different worlds. He meets Princess Seren, who encourages Elgan to deal with the problem that is upsetting him. This is where Elgan learns not to fear the big change that lies in front of him but to be ready to adapt as he goes from adventure to adventure.

Themes: Facing emotions / recognising change / adapting / flexibility

After watching the show

The Right to Play – Classroom Discussion

It's hugely important that children have the freedom, the space and time to play to develop vital skills like communication, problem solving, independent thinking, confidence and creativity. Using the show as inspiration, below is a short list of questions to encourage a conversation with the children around the right to play. This conversation could give you as the educator a better sense of what is important to the children whilst playing and perhaps identify things that are missing in their worlds.

Preparation

- Prepare an outline of a tree on a big piece of paper
- Ask the children to draw an outline around their hand on coloured paper to look like leaves

Questions about the show and the right to play:

- In the show, what stops Elgan from playing?
- What stops you from playing?
- What does Elgan like to play?
- What do you like playing in the house?
- Who does Elgan like playing with?
- Who do you like playing with? Why?
- What do you need to play?
- What makes a good game?

Ask the children to answer or react to these questions and to write their answers on the paper leaves. After asking the questions, encourage the children to come up with solutions to the things that stop them from playing. Afterwards adorn the tree with the colourful leaves.

Key Foundation Phase Curriculum Links*

Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity

- Range
 - Activities that allow them to solve problems and discuss outcomes
 - Different types of play and a range of planned activities, including those that are child initiated
- Skills:
 - Personal Development: Express and communicate different feeling and emotions – their own and those of others
 - Well-being: Develop a growing interest in the world around them and understand what their environment has to offer when playing alone and with others

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- Oracy
 - Element: Developing idea and presenting information and ideas
 - Speaking: Respond to drama they have watched and other creative stimuli
 - Listening: Retell a story, information or narratives they have heard
 - Collaboration and discussion: Participate in discussion with children and adults

Playing in the Classroom

Play can happen anywhere – in the home, in the classroom, outside or even in a little corner. Here is a short list of things you can do to create a nice atmosphere for play:

- A familiar space that is both safe and exciting
 - Resources that encourage improvisation and role play
 - A clean and organised space, where resources are easy to reach and maintain
 - Spaces where children can play together or by themselves
 - Playing music
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Warm Ups

Here are some examples of games you could play in school to warm up the body and the imagination.

Throw the Click

This is a physical game that also gets the imagination going! You could play this as a big group, smaller groups or in partners – you'll need plenty of space to move around.

- One person throws a click sound (or a clap) at another person
- The person who catches the click decides how and where they catch the click – for example they could catch the click high in the air, maybe it bounces on the floor or they could catch it down low and they can decide with what part of the body they catch it
- Then they throw it to another person
- Try and encourage the children to use different levels and to play with different ways of catching and throwing the click
- The more they play this game, the more confidence they will gain to improvise with their actions

Pass the Mystical Object

- Everyone stands in a circle and the person who's starting will pass something imaginary to the next person
- They must use their imagination and show through mime what the object is
- The object changes from person to person
- The object does not have to be real and people don't need to guess what it is

Things to think about when playing:

How does the mystical object feel?

What is the weight of the object? Is it light or heavy?

Does the object move? How?

Does the object move quickly or slowly?

How does the object smell or taste?

Walk like...

This is a fun game that encourages children to use their bodies and their imagination. You'll need plenty of space to move around.

- Ask the children to walk around the room
- The person who calls the commands will call out a way for everyone to walk, for example: 'Everyone walk like a... frog!' – then everyone walks like a frog
- The command can be to walk like any kind of animal, person or character and an adult or child can call the commands

Examples

a snake	a hero	a worm	a dancer	a crocodile
a fly	a mouse	a giant	an astronaut	a fish

Tableau

This game can be played in small groups or in two big groups. You will need plenty of space to move around. The game works best when you give a time limit, 30 seconds per round for example, so that the children work on their feet immediately and they need to listen to each other's ideas

- Call out a form for the groups to recreate with their bodies, for example a robot
- The groups must work as teams to create a functioning robot by using their bodies only – no props!
- One person could be the head, another to form the legs and another to create arms and so on
- When time is up, they must freeze in position or you could ask them to try moving as one!

Examples

a tree	a tractor	an elephant	a bus	a digger
a dinosaur	an aeroplane	a bike	a boat	a giant

Activities

The following activities have been inspired by the show **Chwarae** and the elements that Elgan explores throughout his journey. The activities aim to develop communication skills, invention, creativity skills and problem solving.

1. Create a Character

This is a role play and invention game. You could play this game as an individual, with a partner or in small groups. This game is geared to create a character out of nothing or with seemingly random objects. Try to encourage the children to see the objects as things beyond their original purpose.

What you will need:

- A box full of dressing up clothes (or a pile of coats, hats, scarves etc.)
- Different random objects (these could range from a plastic cup to a roll of sticky tape – anything you have to hand but the more random, the better!)

How to play?

Take one piece of clothing and one object, then create a new character based around these things! The items could be used in a different way to how they would usually be used. If playing in pairs or groups – ask one of the children to dress up the other and then swap. With their characters invented, they can play together to develop them further.

Ask the children to think about the following things:

What is the character's name?
What is their super-power?
What do they love?

What are they afraid of?
How do they communicate?
Where do they live?

Key Foundation Phase Curriculum Links*

Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity

- Range
 - Activities that allow them to adopt a range of roles, including leadership within a small group, paired learning or working within a team
 - Activities that allow them to use their senses, to be creative and imaginative
- Skills:
 - Social Development: Form relationships and feel confident to play and work co-operatively
 - Well-being: Develop a growing interest in the world around them and understand what their environment has to offer when playing alone and with others

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- Oracy
 - Element: Developing ideas and presenting information and ideas
 - Speaking: Contribute to role-play activities / adopt a role using relevant language /
 - Listening: Answer Who? What? Where? How? questions
 - Collaboration and discussion: Take part in activities

Creative Development

- Art, Craft and Design: Explore and experiment with a variety of techniques and materials
- Make choices when choosing materials and resources

2. Create a Movement

This activity focusses on using the body and mind. Movement is a key element of the show and is an instrument for characterisation, to convey feeling and to tell a story. This is a follow on from the Create a Character activity but you could also play it as a stand-alone activity. You can play this as one big group or in smaller groups.

What you'll need:

- Music
- Plenty of space to move around

How to play?

Ask the children to form a circle and to think about the character they've created. Challenge them to come up with a movement that physically describes their character. The movement could be small and simple or it could be a series of large movements. As you go around the circle, get everyone to copy the movement once a child has demonstrated their move. Once you've been round the circle, go around again so everyone remembers their movement.

Ask the children to think about the following things before you start:

What kind of personality does their character have?

How would they show this with their bodies?

Is the character energetic?

Are they lazy?

Would they move sneakily or bound around?

The next step is to put everything together – try to weave the movements together in one routine or series of motifs. Start to number the movements and rhythms so that everyone moves at the same time. You could perform the routine to a range of different musical pieces to see what works best.

Key Foundation Phase Curriculum Links*

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- Oracy: Developing idea and presenting information and ideas
 - Speaking: Contribute to role-play activities / adopt a role using relevant language
 - Listening: Answer Who? What? Where? How? questions
 - Collaboration and discussion: Take part in activities

Physical Development

- Personal
 - Development coordination and confidence
 - Control body movements
 - Link the basic actions in sequence
- Adventurous and physical play
 - Develop an understanding of how their bodies move
 - Link the basic actions in sequence

Creative Development: Creative Movement

- Explore and express a range of moods and feelings through a variety of movements
- Develop their responses to different stimuli
- Develop their control by linking movements
- Work on their own and with others to pretend, improvise and think imaginatively

3. Create a World

This is a craft and making activity. This can be done individually, in pairs or it could be a group activity. You can run it as a follow on from the first activity or as a stand-alone activity. It requires the children to be creative with seemingly boring looking materials, to problem solve with structure and building, working in a team and communicating ideas well.

What you will need:

- Colourless materials such as cardboard, white paper and newspaper
- Structural materials such as cereal boxes, egg boxes, toilet rolls and so forth. You could ask the children and their guardians to bring in recyclable materials with them to school or visit your local scrap store
- Masking tape and/or PVA glue

How to play?

Challenge the children to imagine where their character would live. They can use a variety of recyclable materials to create an environment where their character would live and go about their business. Once they have finished their structures, they can move on to painting and adding colour. If you're playing this as a stand-alone activity, you could ask the children to create a wacky or magical house!

Ask the children to think about the following things:

How would their world look?

What would the world sound like?

What would the world feel like?

How would the world move?

Encourage the children to try and solve any constructing challenges they might face by themselves or ask for advice from their peers instead of asking an adult to provide answers.

Key Foundation Phase Curriculum Links*

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- Oracy: Developing idea and presenting information and ideas
 - Speaking: Talk about things they have made
 - Listening: Answer Who? What? Where? How? Questions
 - Collaboration and discussion: Take part in activities

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Range
 - Learn about how and why people and places are linked
 - Investigate how places change
- Skills
 - Thinking creatively and imaginatively
 - Thinking about what might happen if...

Creative development

- Art, Craft and Design:
 - Explore and experiment with a variety of techniques and materials
 - Make choices when choosing materials and resources

4. Create a New Game

This is an invention game for pairs or small groups. The children will need to work as a team and use their imagination.

What you'll need:

- A bag of colourful balls or you could make balls out of crunched up newspaper
- Plenty of space to move around

How to play?

Ask the children to invent a new game involving the bag of colourful balls. The game must have 3 rules. It's important not to put too many restrictions on the play here so the children feel free to go wild with their new game inventions.

Ask the children to explain their new game to another group or pair by using sound and gestures only – without language. Notice how they communicate with each other.

Key Foundation Phase Curriculum Links*

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills

- Oracy: Developing idea and presenting information and ideas
 - Listening: Listening and responding to others
 - Listening: Listen to carry out an instruction
 - Collaboration and discussion: Take part in activities

Physical Development

- Personal
 - Development coordination and confidence
 - Control body movements
 - Link the basic actions in sequence
- Adventurous and physical play
 - Understand rules and elements of games and be able to play simple cooperative and competitive games
 - Solve simple problems with a partner, such as how to use, find, retrieve or carry objects, score points etc.
 - Link the basic actions in sequence

Creative Development: Creative Movement

- Explore and express a range of moods and feelings through a variety of movements
- Develop their responses to different stimuli
- Develop their control by linking movements
- Work on their own and with others to pretend, improvise and think imaginatively

Reflection

After playing these games and activities, it's a great opportunity to reflect on what they have done, learnt, played and explored. By drawing or writing with a simple pencil and paper or by feeding back orally, ask the children to document their reactions to the games and activities.

Ask the children to think about:

How did they feel after playing a game or activity?

What did they enjoy? Why?

What did they find challenging? Why?

What did they learn?

What did they think they did really well?

Useful Links

Play Wales

<https://www.playwales.org.uk/>

International Play Association (IPA)

<http://ipaworld.org/>

Children in Wales

<http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/>

Playful Childhoods

<https://www.playfulchildhoods.wales>

Nature Play

<http://www.nature-play.co.uk/>

*The Curriculum Links in this document seek to identify the key areas of learning and most relevant skills that can be developed. There is potential for these activities to cover skills in other areas of the curriculum and this is something you may wish to investigate further.