

## DRAMA GAMES IN FOLK DANCE EDUCATION

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### Abstract

This paper examines the effects of drama games on successful competency development in teaching and education, specifically within folk dance education. We also present the results of data drawn from two non-representative pieces of research done among educators (n=30) and students (depending on game n=19–39) regarding the effective use of structured drama activities in the folk dance classroom to strengthen group cohesion or trust between students. Finally, as a methodological recommendation, we introduce a collection of drama games and possibilities for their integration into folk dance education, with suggested variations presented according to the six age groups defined for the 12 grades of public education in Hungary. This paper aims to raise awareness of the possibilities and usefulness of integrating drama activities into folk dance education.

**Keywords:** drama-based pedagogy, drama activities, folk dance class, collection of drama games, methodological recommendation

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A majority of childhood learning processes take place through games. An infant of 3-4 months already plays games, and ancient tribal cultures created toys for children as well (Pukánszky & Németh, 1996). "What primarily differentiates games and other childhood activities from each other is the element of joy in games." (Mérei & V. Binét, 1997, p. 122) "Children's games are recreations of the world as an entity in imagination, skillfulness, movement, arts and crafts, song, and dialogue. Out of this joy of play and the accumulation of authentic experiences, an authentic interpretation of mature, intellectual, even historically accurate accomplishments of times past will eventually emerge." (Trencsényi, 2010, p. 8) Games also have a strong motivating effect on the educational process (Falus, 2003).

Drama-based pedagogy (the expression is still the subject of debate in our times) was first introduced in Hungary in the 1970s, a period of the rising importance of folklorism and neofolklorism. Important cultural innovations of the time included the spread of the *táncház* ('dance-house') method, which promoted folk dance and music, as well as arts and crafts and children's playhouse movements (Sándor, 2016).

Several of the early Hungarian representatives of drama-based pedagogy – Éva Mezei, Katalin Gabnai, and Tibor Debreczeni – emphasized the connection between children's folklore games and drama-based pedagogy. "*Red Rover* (or *Forcing the City Gates*)...taking a closer look at this game reveals that it is not only a game but drama in every sense of the word. Admittedly, a rather short drama, but it has every crucial aspect of one." (Mezei, 1979, p. 5) At its centre, we find that human action comes to life in a dialogical form, where characters present their intentions. The tightly knit fabric of their words vibrates with the tension of future actions. The game has a clear aim, power dynamics and a central conflict that always takes place in the present tense (Mezei, 1979).

These two artistic areas were integrated into public education in the first National Core Curriculum of 1995 under the heading *Dance and drama*. The curriculum content drafted by Katalin Gabnai dedicated a separate chapter to folk culture (NCC = NAT, 1995).

Several excellent programmes unite folk games and drama-based pedagogy, for example, the *Meseház* (house of fairy-tales) events of Gábor Körömi and Ildikó Sándor, which are combinations of live storytelling and drama activities. "Modern pedagogical ideas increasingly promote both the integration of learning into play as well as teaching with artistic tools – this is the opportunity we see in merging folk tales and folk games." (Körömi & Sándor, 2016, p. 329).

Beyond the above-defined possibilities, drama activities may also be useful for developing specific competencies.

Games of drama pedagogy and improvisational activities could have an active role in 1. the development of skills and abilities (movement and rhythm), 2. verbal and nonverbal communication, 3. creating body awareness, 4. the elimination of age group-specific problems, 5. helping the development of gender identity, and 6. handling cultural problems. (...) Through dramatic games, a sense of trust may strengthen between teacher and student, and additionally, they allow students the possibility of individual progress and self-acceptance (Mizerák & Demarcsek, 2013, p. 189).

Contrary to production and performance-centric views, drama activities shift the focus of attention onto the pedagogical process. Drama games are to be interpreted as integral parts of the complex teaching process (Eck, 2015). "Emphasis is on the process: this is a social activity, built on a multitude of voices and viewpoints, as well as on the act of stepping into roles. It concentrates on the task rather than individual interests, and it enables participants to view something with new eyes." (Cziboly, 2010, p. 17)

This paper examines the current state and further possibilities of including drama games in the folk dance classroom and makes suggestions for their implementation by presenting a number of basic games in age group-specific variations.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

As a point of departure, we aimed to map through a non-representative study the attitudes to drama games among folk dance educators and the interest in them

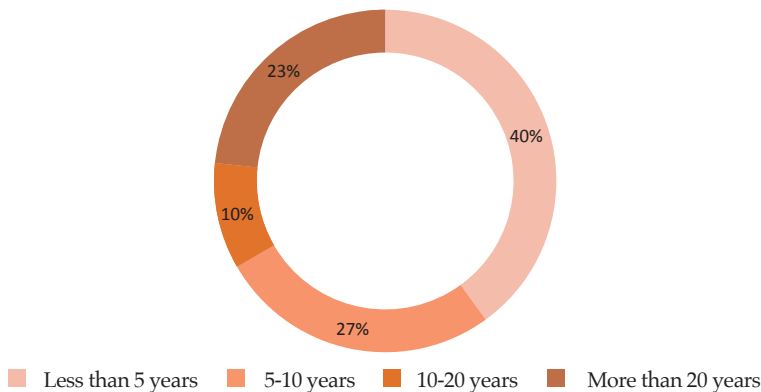
among students. The global pandemic impeded the organization of this research; consequently, we included fewer participants in the data collection than initially planned.

Our hypothesis was this: rehearsal coaches normally do not use drama games, either because they do not know these games or because they do not consider them appropriate for the rehearsal process; in other words, they do not see the point. This is how our idea was born: why not integrate these games into the process of rehearsals?

We reached out to folk dance teachers through an online survey. It contained the following question groups: a general question group (gender, teaching experience), a question group specifically related to the definition of drama activities and their usability during rehearsals (definition, current usage during rehearsals), and a question group dealing with the possibility of integrating drama games into folk dance classes (what age group it could be appropriate for, how it might improve students). In terms of question types, closed-ended questions were either dichotomous or multiple-choice, and open-ended questions were entirely open. The survey was aimed at educators who are currently active and deal with children. The target group and sample included both previously graduated students and students at the time enrolled in evening programs of the teaching faculty, all with some level of teaching experience. Thus, a majority of the respondents were students of the Hungarian Dance University, enrolled in the dance and rehearsal coach BA and MA programs, specializing in folk dance. Altogether, 30 answers arrived in the survey conducted in February of 2021. Some of the questions we were interested in included whether they are aware of the expression of drama activities, whether they make use of drama games, if not, why, and in addition, in what way such games might develop their students.

The distribution of genders among respondents to the survey was 50–50%; that is, the same number of women and men filled it out. To answer the question of how long they had been involved in folk dance education, the respondents were offered several options they could choose from. Each of these appeared among the answers given, which indicates that respondents ranged from novice teachers to educators with several decades of experience and were of all ages - these responses we compiled in a pie chart (*Figure 1*).

**How long have you been working with folk dance?**



*Figure 1. Educational Experience of Folk Dance Teachers (Csík, 2021)*

The student part of the survey we conducted in a primary school in Kecskemét until the January of the 2020/2021 school year. We aimed to assess their experiences with and views on drama games. On a Likert scale from 1 to 5, students could indicate how much they had enjoyed a certain game and whether they would enjoy playing it again in class. This survey was filled out on paper, and depending on the game, we received responses from 19–39 students (*Counting game* n=38, *Concentration game* n=19, *Musical chairs* n=39, *Trust games* n=38, *Switch places with someone who...* n=29 students responded).

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Results of the survey among teacher training students and in-service teachers

One of the main questions was whether educators could verbalize what drama activities are. 56.7% of educators, 17 of the respondents, thought they could not. One possible conclusion that can be drawn from this is that these teachers are not likely to use drama activities in their classes, or, alternatively, they might use them but are not conscious of the fact that they are using drama games.

The next question was directed at those who claimed to be able to verbalize in their own words what this expression means, that is, to express for what purpose educators might use drama games in their classes. Before we turn to the answers given, we must examine what the expression drama activities mean and how the literature on the subject defines it. We used the definition of Katalin Gabnai as a basis, according which:

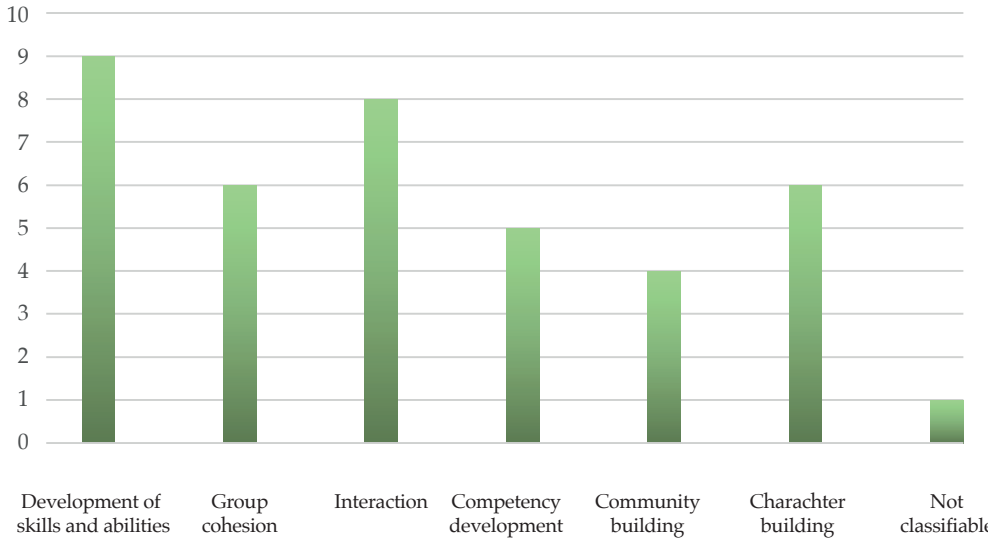
Each playful human interaction that displays characteristic elements of the dramatic process can be viewed as drama activity. Forms of expression of the dramatic process are: portrayal and imitation, its modes of portrayal are: remembered or current social interaction; its tools are: human and instrumental sounds, language, the body, space and time; its pillars are: structured human actions." (Gabnai, 2001, p. 9)

Several respondents referred to this definition quoted by us, or at least in part can be linked to this definition. For example, the ones below:

- "Social activity with character and community-building aspects, learning activities for development.
- Playful expression, in which some dramatic twist can be found.
- Drama activities are part of an educational methodology that develops a variety of individual and social skills in students.
- A kind of dramatic play in which the player's personality manifests. Often involves imitation."

We organized the responses based on developmental areas (*Figure 2*). The results aligned with our expectations, as respondents, connected the use of drama games primarily to the skills and abilities development area. However, it was astonishing that community building was not among the top three categories of developmental areas.

**What are drama games?**



*Figure 2.* Definition of Drama Games (Csík, 2021) (Depending on the complexity of the responses, some could be included in several categories.)

The diagram clearly shows that, according to respondents, drama activities can serve different pedagogical aims. As we can see, the majority marked the development of skills, abilities, and interaction. Group cohesion and character building were in third place, followed by competency development and community building. The developmental areas of group cohesion and community building may help forge a stronger class unity and may result in easier integration and acceptance in after-school activities. In addition, even in adulthood, they may facilitate group work and cooperation. Competency development and character-building follow us all our lives and appear in countless everyday activities. The use of drama activities offers an excellent opportunity to take character building to a higher level. Answers of the not classifiable category were those that could not be divided into smaller units (e.g., playful expression, which contains a dramatic twist) but can be viewed as complete answers nonetheless. 29.41% of the responses have a reference to drama games as part of a complex methodology.

To summarize, we created a complex definition based on the ideas of the respondents:

Drama activities are based on a kind of pedagogical methodology focused on community building that aims to develop students' individual and social skills, such as emotional intelligence, creativity, imagination, as well as improvisational skills and group cohesion. Drama games form a group of indispensable activities for self-discovery and living in a society. They support empathy, link children's independent thinking with movement, and positively impact character building.

The next question to educators was whether they take drama games to their classes. 53.3% of the respondents, that is 16 people do not. To the question of what reasons this has, they could choose from the following answers:

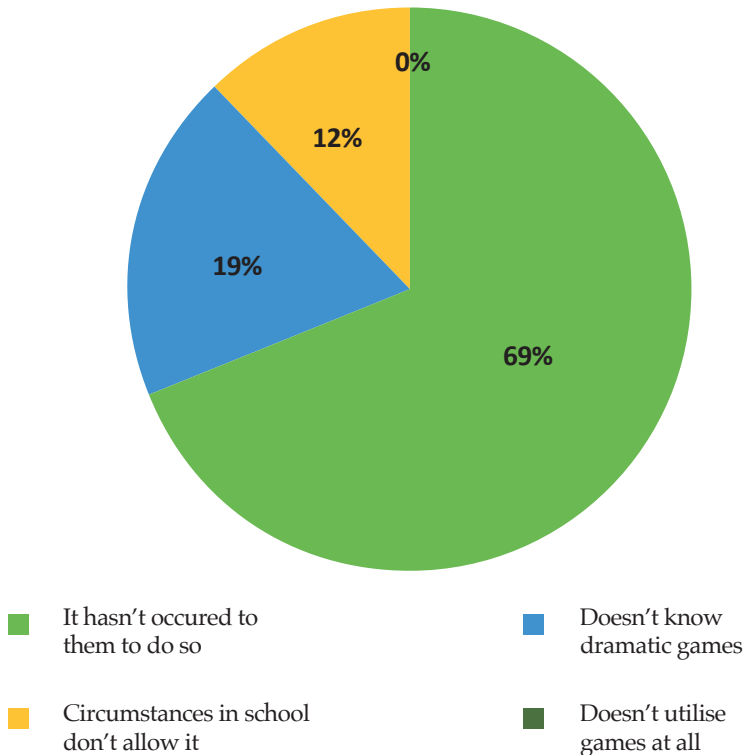
- I do not know any dramatic games.
- It has not occurred to me to do so.
- I do not utilize games at all.
- Other:.....

In this last category, the following answers were given by respondents:

- The circumstances of the school do not allow it.
- There is not enough time; no room is left for such activities. Only typical dramatic games can be included as preparation.

Since all these responses root in the same idea, we summarised it as the category: 'School circumstances do not allow it'. These answers are shown in *Figure 3* as a pie chart.

**Why don't folk dance teachers utilise drama games in their classes?**



*Figure 3.* Reasons for Not Utilizing Drama Games on a Regular Basis (Csík, 2021)

The figure clearly shows that 68.8% of the teachers (11 individuals) did not consciously link drama activities and folk dance education. 18.8% (3 individuals) indicated that they do not know drama games or do not know whether a particular game classifies as one. Presumably, 12.6% (2 individuals) know such games and can decide that they are indeed drama games; however, in their opinion, outside circumstances, for example, the possibilities available at their schools, hinder the use of such games. It is important to point out that no one claimed to use no games at all in class. This suggests that folk dance teachers see (or would see, given a chance) games in general as necessary and useful tools in folk dance education.

We asked those educators that had indicated that they regularly include drama games in their classrooms (46.7%, 14 individuals) to name three they know of. In the first place, they named the game, also included in this paper later, called *Switch places with someone who...*, the second and third were the games *Atom* and *Owl*, respectively. *Atom* (Kaposi, 1999) aims to create pairs or groups (see later: *Musical chairs*), and the game called *Owl* (Kaposi, 1999) is a space perception game to be played with eyes closed (see later: *Trust Games*).

To the question of whether drama activities might fit into the structure of folk dance education, we received a surprisingly unanimous answer. 96.7% of the respondents (so all except one respondent) thought that this topic might prove fruitful during folk dance classes.

The next question was partly connected to this, asking for which age groups they could imagine using drama games. To help answer this question, we provided three broad age groups: lower and upper grades of primary and secondary school. Respondents thought them usable without difficulty in the upper grades of primary school and throughout secondary school, but the answers varied in the lower grades of primary school. The majority still considered using drama games in the lower grades of primary school, but the distribution was 80–20%, while in the other two categories, it had been 96.6–3.4%.

One possible explanation for this is that folk games are already established tools in the lower grades of primary school since these are obligatory elements of the curriculum of primary art education. However, drama games could have a place in folk dance classes side by side with folk games and the culture of traditional peasant games since their beneficial impact on competency development is similar. In addition, as children mature, the attributes of drama activities comply with the characteristics of the age group and the expected educational and developmental aims.

We received holistic answers to the question of what area dance educators think drama activities can develop children in folk dance class. Out of the 30 responses, four were not interpretable. All of the other respondents thought that drama games could be valuable tools in children's development. Once again, categorizing answers according to developmental areas, the following results were born (*Figure 4*, one response could be part of several categories):



### What developmental areas could drama activities support in folk dance education?

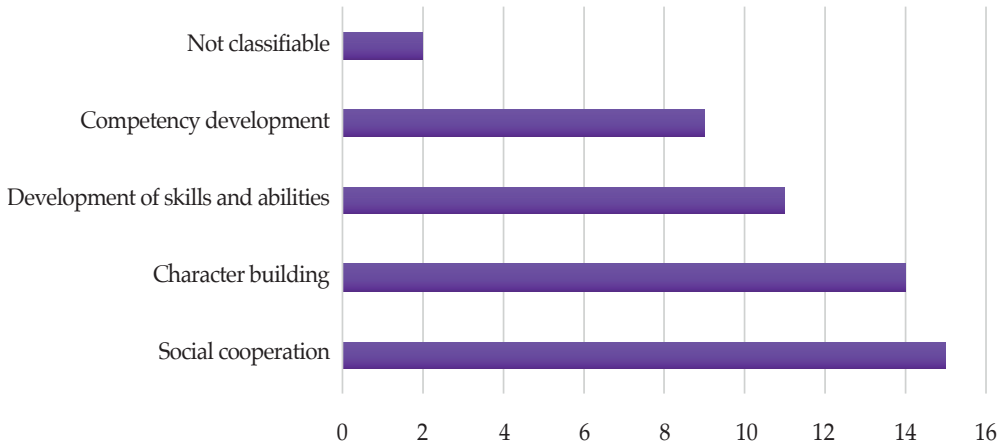


Figure 4. Possible Developmental Areas of Drama Games (Csík, 2021)

Out of 26 responses, we can see that 15 emphasized the importance of social cooperation, followed by character building, mentioned by 14 individuals. So we can assume that folk dance teachers primarily use drama games to develop collaboration and character building. A critical aim of drama activities is accepting the self and others. The possibilities for the development of skills and abilities are endless. A sense of rhythm, space and plasticity, and an understanding of tension and compression are all skills of primary importance in folk dance, which can be improved with the help of countless drama games (see later: *Trust games*). Many games target children's imagination, creativity and emotional expression; this can be aided by the category of competency development, which was included in one third (9 responses) of the responses. The not classifiable category contained answers that could not be included in separate groups, as they did not include information as to how drama activities can develop children in the folk dance classroom.

Though *Figures 2 and 4* contain fairly similar elements, the questions are different. It is interesting to note that when answering the question of what drama activities are, many respondents gave answers that focused on the developmental possibilities of drama games. (Since the question asking for a definition was at the beginning of the survey, while the one about possible developmental areas was at the end, the latter question did not influence the former.) That is the reason why we find both similarities and differences in the responses given to the two questions and the two figures. The main similarity is that the majority of answers can be divided into two main groups: developmental areas and social interactions in both cases. However, one difference is that in the question regarding developmental possibilities, social cooperation and character building were the two most often mentioned ideas, while in the answers to the question regarding definition, both of these categories were less prominent.

Once again, to sum up, we created a complex definition using the responses of our respondents concerning the developmental effects of drama activities:



Drama games can improve children's emotional intelligence, performance skills, orientation and fine motor skills, movement coordination, and their verbal and nonverbal communication. They can help overcome inhibitions, improve self-control, learn to accept ourselves and others, and facilitate group cooperation and getting to know each other. Moreover, they help social integration, and they are known to have anxiety-alleviating and stress-mitigating effects. They also help improve skills indispensable for dancing like tension-compression, memory, use of gestures, and sensibility to rhythm-dynamics-plasticity.

### 3.2. Results of the survey among students

The survey results among students showed that the games we presented and conducted in all different age groups were attractive to students (Figure 5).

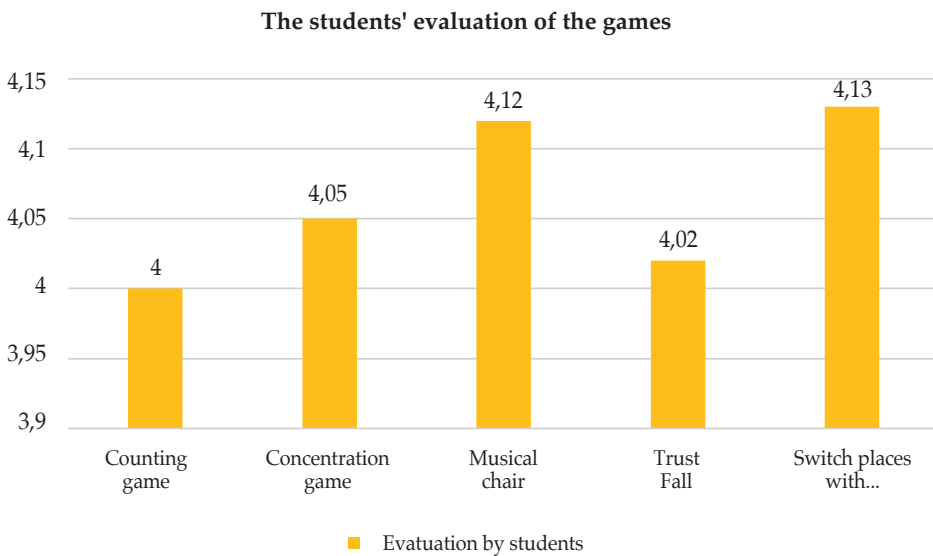


Figure 5. Scale-based Evaluation of Drama Games by Students (Csík, 2021)

The chart shows that each game received a rating of 4 or above. One of our priorities was to give children the chance to verbalize their opinions concerning these games; thus, we presented the opportunity to participate in an informal discussion after taking part in (ideally) all five games. One major positive feedback was that most students highlighted the refreshing aspect of being able to play, free themselves of the burdens of other subjects, and move. This reaction proves the importance of integrating games and game-based learning in classrooms. Some students preferred games based on movement, others rather games involving thinking, but negative feedback was not expressed at all. Therefore, based on the evidence of these oral responses, students enjoyed playing these games and would gladly participate in more games in the future.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research shows that a significant percentage of folk dance educators do not use drama games in their classes; however, they are open to the incorporation of them as integral parts of the broad spectrum of dance education. This conclusion can be drawn for all three age groups; whether we talk about lower or upper grades of primary education or students of secondary education. Drama activities may improve personal and social competencies, enhance students' sensitivity and mend or strengthen group cohesion. Children, too, are receptive and would welcome a wider and more cohesive, complex use of games in the future. These conclusions were supported by the responses to a survey based on the model of the Likert scale, as well as positive oral feedback from students.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION – ACTIVITIES

This section aims to introduce a variety of drama games that can be successfully applied in a folk dance classroom. Ranging from the first year of primary education to the final year of secondary education, we follow the National Core Curriculum's (NCC =NAT, 2020) system of age groups based on two year intervals (e.g., first and second grades – 1<sup>st</sup> age group, 11–12<sup>th</sup> grade – 6<sup>th</sup> age group). Though many of these games can be found in various game collections or educational aids, this system of examining a series of games with variations and combinations concerning age groups is the original work of Zsófia Csík, based on individual ideas and her own educational experiences. These games are basic exercises with specified rules and outcomes, so-called type A activities, according to Bolton's classification (1993), but due to their competency enhancing nature, and light, playful content, they contain a number of functional developmental areas in the folk dance class, too.

### 5.1. Counting Game

#### *Game Instructions:*

Students count as far as they can while articulating every number clearly in one breath. When a student runs out of breath (s)he makes a mental note of the number reached and waits for the others to finish counting. In the next breath, everyone attempts to reach a value five numbers higher than before; if a student reaches 20 in the first round, (s)he has to aim for 25.

The game takes roughly 3 minutes. To make this game a little more interesting, variations adapted to age groups can be implemented.

#### *Variations:*

1<sup>st</sup> age group (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades)

In the first year, use numbers from 1 to 20. In the second grade, even odd numbers up to 40 or even 60 can be used: have students use only even or only odd numbers as they count from one/ two upwards, or backwards from 40 or 60.

Another option is to link even and odd numbers to movements. While counting to 20, on odd numbers, students squat down, and on even numbers, they stretch. In this variation, the number of breaths does not count.

2<sup>nd</sup> age group (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades)

Play with the letters of the alphabet, similar to the even-odd numbers version above, but this time have students say the vocals and consonants of the alphabet. Another option would be to use values of a multiplication table in combination with clapping. Pay attention, however, that in grade three, students learn to count to 1000, and in grade four to 10000.

3<sup>rd</sup> age group (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades)

Link a motif to every number. Have students count to hundred by five and back, and to every value ending on five, have them do a + step. In the easier version, have them take a long break on the values ending on zero. In the more difficult version, have students say the following two numbers as well during a + step; this way, every number has a value. There is a break between the two motifs; the motif is danced continuously in the latter. *Figure 6* attempts to visualize these two variations.

<b>Easier version</b>	<b>Rhythm</b>	}}	♪♪	}}	♪♪	}}	♪♪
	<b>Numbers</b>	10	15	20	25	30	35
<b>More difficult version</b>	<b>Rhythm</b>	♪♪	♪♪	♪♪	♪♪	♪♪	♪♪
	<b>Numbers</b>	10	15	20	25	30	35

*Figure 6.* Presentation of Variations with the Help of Rhythm and Numbers (Csík, 2021)

4<sup>th</sup> age group (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades)

Moving away from the world of numbers, let us begin using texts. Choose both shorter, easier tongue twisters and somewhat more complex, longer ones, if possible, ones the children already know. (In case they are not familiar with the tongue twister to be used, dedicate time to teaching it.) First, all students say the text slowly together with the teacher, articulating clearly; then, they say it in one breath as many times as possible, paying attention to accuracy and clear pronunciation. The following two tongue twisters are examples of a relatively easy and a difficult version:

Easy: "If two witches would watch two watches, which witch would watch which watch?"

Difficult: "How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood? A woodchuck would chuck how much a woodchuck would chuck if a woodchuck would chuck wood."

See the website *1st International Tongue Twisters Collection* (1996–2018) for more examples of tongue twisters in many different languages.

### 5th age group (9th and 10th grades)

Use a folk song students are familiar with from any of their classes. First, have students say the lyrics simultaneously but at their own pace, in one breath. Since learners of this age group are already aware of their gestures, facial expressions can be included in the game. Different moods can be specified (happiness, anger, disappointment, etc.), which students then have to express with their faces while reciting the text.

### 6th age group (11th and 12th grades)

More complex texts may be used as well. Since Hungarian folk dance is closely related to the dances of nationalities living in Hungary, it may be interesting to include their languages by working with so-called "csujogatás" (a form of rhythmic chanting). Once students have learned the chant and mastered the pronunciation, just like before, have them say it in one breath as many times as they can, articulating clearly. This task is difficult due to the foreign language since students primarily learn English and/or German at school, and Slovakian or Romanian are relatively rare. Thus, the game connects them to an entirely new language where they have nothing to orient themselves by, so not just articulation but pronunciation can be a challenge, too. The following example is a Romanian "csujogatás" from the town of Elek (English translation added):

„Haida, fată, că să găă,  
 Și s – apucă ceielaltă!  
 (Come on, little girl, because it ends soon,  
 and the next will begin)” (Hegedűsné Farkas, 2002).

#### *Pedagogical Aspects:*

As long as students are familiar with numbers, this game can be played regardless of age, gender, and level of familiarity with dance. Even though it is played in a group, it is not a team game. Students have to pay attention and surpass themselves. The game can be played in music education or can be useful right before going on stage for a performance. It helps students warm up facial muscles used for singing and increases lung capacity. Moreover, since nervousness can be a problem for children before going on stage, and waiting for their cue in silence is tiring, often, they have already wasted much energy by the time they step onto the stage. This game can alleviate stress, children's attention can be shifted away from the stressful situation, and the mood can be lightened.

## 5.2. Concentration Games

#### *Game Instructions:*

For this game, some tools are needed; it may be useful to acquire tools that pose no accident risks, such as balls, bean bags, or bowling pins made of soft materials. This is a relatively simple game where the rules can be varied, modified and made more complex.

Have the students sit in a circle and throw a ball (in this case, a red one) to one another. At this stage, the goal is for students to catch the ball, stay focused, and, if possible, not throw the ball to the same person twice, which also challenges their memories. Once this stage is mastered, put the ball away for a while and use a bowling pin (pink), have students pass it on to the right, then introduce another bowling pin (blue) into the game and have students pass it on to the left. Combine the red ball with the pink and blue pins at the next stage. Make sure to start the two pins from different places in the circle to avoid them always meeting in the hands of the same student. Once this becomes relatively easy for students, a second ball (green) may be introduced, which students pass or bounce to each other similarly to the first one. The most challenging stage is the simultaneous usage of all four tools combined with music. When turning the music on, the movements (passing, throwing and bouncing) get a rhythm; thus, the game's difficulty can be altered by choosing a slower or faster song. When a student makes a mistake, that is, drops the ball or passes a pin in the wrong direction, stop the game and start again.

*Variations:*

1st age group

For the first age group, prepare to have two balls. First, use only one ball have the students throw it to one another while avoiding throwing it to the same person twice. Since motor skills are at varying levels among the children of this age group, this phase will take somewhat longer, about 4-5 minutes. Next time the game is played, the first phase will go more smoothly, and the group can move on to phase two, that is, using two balls. Have them play this second phase only for short periods and return to it from time to time; that way, interest and a sense of accomplishment can be maintained in the children.

2nd age group

The second age group also plays with two balls. Like in the first age group, start with one ball and have students throw it to one another (for roughly 2-3 minutes). Then add the second ball of another colour; this helps students connect a specific task with a certain colour. Students pass this second ball to one another by bouncing it once on the ground. This is a more complex task since throwing and bouncing a ball require different movements. Additionally, students have to create eye contact before throwing the ball. Keep the rule of not throwing the ball to the same person twice.

Before moving onto the second phase with two balls, it can be useful to have students first practice the movements separately by having students take turns throwing one ball, then bouncing the other; in other words, even though both balls are in play, only one ball is moving at any given time. This way, children will get used to the presence of two balls and internalize which task is linked to which ball, which helps them tune into the game. At the next level, both balls are in movement

simultaneously; however, have students wait after each turn in case one action is slower than the other. Once this seems to go fairly well, initiate a version where waiting is unnecessary, so both balls move continuously and without pauses.

### 3rd age group

The third age group uses one ball and two bowling pins and adds music to the game. The ball is always thrown (not bounced), and the pins are passed from one student to the other as explained in the game's description so that one is always passed to the left, the other to the right. Two phases are distinguished, depending on what tools are in play. Students only throw the ball to one another; this takes about one minute, so does the round where they pass the bowling pins around. Then bring all tools into play, so students have to pay attention to throwing the ball and pass each pin in the right direction. One interesting situation that may occur is that one student receives all three tools simultaneously. Once the children are well acquainted with all the rules and the movements are relatively automatic, the music can be turned on. In terms of tempo, it is advisable to use slower music (60 bpm) first, have them practice the quadruple metre with clapping or stomping, or a combination of both. Then combine the previous movements with the rhythm of the music, so the movement of the ball and both pins happens on . Make sure there are several pieces of music with varying tempos at hand. The difficulty of this activity can be increased by choosing a faster-paced song.

### 4th age group

For the 4th age group, prepare to have two balls and two bowling pins in class. From this age group upwards, use all available tools. Like in the case of the previous age groups, always start by practising the movements separately, so first just throwing the ball, then just passing the pins around. The next step is to combine the two tasks. Then introduce a second ball, but have students throw it (not bounce it). In this version, students have to pay attention to avoid two scenarios: one where the two students holding the two balls throw them to each other, and the other where both students throw the ball to the same third person. It is also preferable to avoid all tools meeting in the hands of the same person.

### 5th age group

In the case of the 5th age group, have students practice the processes in the same order, first all movements separately, then in combination. The difference in difficulty lies in the optional mode of passing the balls and the combination with music. It is up to the students whether they want to throw or bounce the balls at each other. Any music can be used, but initially use a slow tempo piece (around 60–70bpm), then eventually introduce a piece with a tempo of 80–90bpm. It makes no sense to use music with a faster tempo than this since the time it takes for the ball to move in the air cannot be sped up.

If needed, an additional rule can be introduced to the previous ones. Have students without any tools clap on every beat. This way, all students have an active task to focus on, rather than just paying attention to the movement of the tools. When a student receives one of the pins or balls, (s)he is exempt from this rule (stops clapping), but as soon as the tool has been passed on to someone else (s)he has to join the rest of the group again.

### 6th age group

Have the 6th age group move through the different phases just like before, and here too, prepare music of different tempos. As opposed to the other age levels, here, students get to move in space to a two-step csárdás. As before, students throw or bounce (optional) the two balls and pass the two bowling pins in opposite directions, while the students without tools clap every beat. In addition, have them start a two-step csárdás, which they keep dancing, even when receiving one of the tools. Thus, students pay attention to the mode of receiving and passing on the balls, the direction of the pins, the rhythm of the music, the dance steps and the clapping; moreover, they aim to direct the balls always at someone else.

#### *Pedagogical Aspects:*

The goal of this game is to keep a round going as long as possible. This requires good memory, fine motor skills, cooperation skills, a sense of direction, and musical skills from the students. The game can be used at the beginning of a rehearsal, or in case students have trouble concentrating, it can be included in the middle of a class instead of sending them on a break. It may also serve as good preparation for dancing since it can lay the foundations for the more complex tasks of memorizing choreography or dance moves.

### 5.3. Musical Chairs

#### *Game Instructions:*

Many variations of this game exist. The most well-known one is where two rows of chairs are placed with their backs to each other. Use one chair fewer than students playing. Any piece of music may be used, including music needed later for teaching new dance material. While the music is playing, students walk around the rows of chairs; when the music suddenly stops, students have to sit down on one of the chairs as fast as possible. The student who remains standing is eliminated from the game and leaves the playing space, taking one of the chairs out of the game too. This way, as the number of students decreases, there are gradually fewer chairs too. The last person remaining (the student who manages to claim the last chair) wins the game (e.g., Huszár Gál High School, Primary School, School of Art and Kindergarten, 2008).

A more complex version of this game is the *Strategic chairs game*, where instead of individuals battling each other, the group works together against one player. Place chairs in space at random, making them face in all directions. The number of



students and chairs is the same. Choose a player who begins moving in space from the spot furthest from the empty chair. The goal of this student is to reach that chair at an even pace and sit down. The goal of all other students is to prevent this by working together. A student can do this by standing up and quickly sitting on the empty chair before the standing player can do that. This, however, frees up the chair that the student had been sitting on before, so the standing player begins moving towards the newly vacated chair. If the standing player manages to sit down somewhere, then the student whose chair (s)he managed to claim becomes the next standing player. An important additional rule is that if a student stands up to change seats, (s)he is not allowed to sit down on the same chair as before.

*Variations:*

1st age group

With the first age group, play a version of musical chairs. Since it is important to pay attention to avoid possible accidents at this age, it is advisable to play without chairs since children of this age may not all know how to use this tool safely; or alternatively, occasional inattention may lead to minor accidents. Instead, have students walk around in space to the chosen piece of music, and when it stops, they have to find a pair as fast as possible. The one student remaining without a partner is eliminated. Since it is important to have an uneven number of students, be prepared to participate in the game in every other round. So make sure to have music on a device that can be stopped while playing (e.g., a smartphone).

2nd age group

For the second age group, use chairs and play according to the description in the general game instruction section above.

3rd age group

In the 3rd age group, students are walking around. Clap once to the beats to have children sit down, or clap twice to beats to change the direction of their movement. Naturally, a variety of rhythm schemes can be created from these two musical patterns, for example, + . In this case, first, the direction of movement changes, immediately followed by students sitting down. This means they first have to decode the rhythm scheme and then consciously follow the instructions connected to them. This kind of practice helps children recognize rhythm schemes and will later help them learn dance steps more easily.

4th age group

With the fourth age group, place the chairs in the middle of the room. Have the children stand in a circle, fill the space available, and improvise movement using already learned dance moves. This is still supposed to be individual dancing; so-called "ugrós" dances can be used if the children have that kind of previous

knowledge. So students move in a circle, dancing individually, and when the music stops, they try to sit down on one of the chairs in the middle of the room. An important additional rule is that they cannot move the chairs in any direction; thus, part of the activity is to assess which chair faces which direction.

### 5th age group

The strategic version of the game explained in the introduction is already suitable for the 5th age group. At this age, students can pay attention to each other and work as a team.

### 6th age group

For the 6th age group, first, place the chairs in rows and during later rounds, increase the difficulty by rearranging them randomly around the room, facing in different directions. Building on Péter Lévai's methodology (2019), prepare cut out signs for the class: a circle, a star, a square, a triangle. For easier differentiation, these can be of different colours. To each sign, Lévai connected a different motif as follows here:

Circle: 'lengető' (leg swing) to a beat with both legs

Star: step + close to a beat

Square: 'bokázó' to a beat

Triangle: + step

We have developed this further based on Lévai's sequence of colours for a number system (Lévai, 2019). Place the signs around the chairs so they are always positioned diagonally to the right.

Students have encountered these basic motifs many times over the years, but not the system of signs, so it is advisable to allow room for practice by simplifying the placement of signs, for example, by using the same sign several times. Naturally, substituting the signs with others is also a possibility. Students move to the rhythm of the music in a circle, and at the same time, they have to decode the basic motifs they are expected to dance to. When the music stops, they terminate the movement and run to obtain one of the chairs. The difficulty increases if the chairs are not placed in a row but at random places and directions in the centre of the room. In this case, the signs have to be placed in a wide, imaginary circle around the area occupied by the chairs.

### *Pedagogical Aspects:*

The game's primary goal is to pay attention to each other and work together. The selected player has to walk at an even pace, which for lower age groups may be a challenge, so it is better to play it in the upper grades of primary school and in terms of cooperation, in secondary school. To avoid passivity, it might be useful to add a rule that everybody has to stand up at least once within three rounds.

## 5.4. Trust Games with Trust Fall Exercises

### *Game Instructions:*

In preparation for the game, use an exercise demonstrating tension and compression. Students stand in pairs facing each other and join their hands (right hand to right hand). They begin to lean away from each other carefully. Once they find a stable position, they begin squatting down slowly, then stand up again. They switch hands (left hand to left hand) and do the same again.

The game has two phases. First, one student stands with eyes closed, arms loosely hanging down. The partner carefully touches the student's shoulders and extremely carefully begins to tip them back and back up again. This phase is crucial to developing natural trust between the two partners. Next, the leading partner takes a step back; that way, the 'falling' student has more room to move, to lean backwards. The game's goal is reached when students have enough trust to fall back without fear and catch each other securely. Students then switch positions so they can both experience each role. It is important to pay careful attention to form pairs according to assessed strength (e.g., Kindergarten in Kelenvölgy-Órmező, *Games*, 2020).

Another version of this game is when children stand in a circle, with a selected player in the middle, who has arms folded and eyes closed. The game aims to push the player to the opposite end of the circle and then back very carefully and slowly. In this game, it is essential to determine the setup of the circle based on the assessed strength of each student. In the case of groups of mixed ages, older students need to guide the younger ones, and the teacher should take part, too, to monitor the game carefully and avoid accidents. In this game, everybody is an active participant. Group cooperation can be strengthened by helping each other and paying attention to each other.

### *Variations:*

#### 1st age group

With the first age group, trust exercises can be played in the form of blindfolding games so that children are in pairs and one leads the other who has the eyes closed.

#### 2nd age group

Use a similar blindfolding exercise in the second age group, but the students are not physically touching. Have students lead each other only by voice. The leader gives clear vocal instructions to the partner: forward, left, turn, stop, backward and so on.

#### 3rd age group

In the third age group, the leader formulates non-specific instructions, so the person with closed eyes additionally has to decode what direction the sound comes from. For example, the leader might say: here, come here, a bit further, not that way and so on.

#### 4th age group

With the fourth age group, there is an option of trying trust fall exercises in pairs. It is advisable to have one pair do the activity at a time. One student leans backwards with eyes closed into the arms of the partner. This can be preceded by an activity where the partner initiates the movement, guides the student with closed eyes into being tipped backwards and then back into a stable standing position. Once children begin to feel they can trust each other, the difficulty can be increased. This time have the leaning student initiated the movement, but with the partner still holding the student's shoulders and helping to control the fall. The next version is even more difficult when the partner pulls the hands away and does not help guide the movement. Change the angle of leaning by adjusting the distance between the pairs, but the members have to discuss this beforehand in every case.

#### 5th age group

It is useful to separate the two grades making up this age group in this specific case. In 9th grade, students would do the activities of the 4th age group, while in the 10th grade, the task of the 6th age group can be started already.

#### 6th age group

In the 6th age group, students do not form pairs anymore but stand in a circle and create balance, as described in the game's introduction.

#### *Pedagogical Aspects:*

In pair-based folk dances, it is indispensable to have trust between the two members of a pair and a sense of tension and compression. Without the first, no enjoyable, joyful dance can be realized, and no couple dance can come to life without the latter.

This preparatory game aims to build a sense of tension and compression connection in children and enable them to remember that feeling during dancing. Like in the game where they have to crouch down holding onto each other, a couple of dances cannot be born if the pair members are not in harmony and balance.

The first version of the game is crucial to build and strengthen trust within the pair, while the second version, played in a circle, is designed to do the same within the group and enhance group cohesion. The composition of a group and the relationship between the members have a crucial effect on the personality of the individual, as well as on the development of social and learning skills.

### **5.5. Switch Places with Someone Who...**

#### *Game Instructions:*

For this game, students need to be sitting in a circle formed by chairs. Use one chair fewer than students playing. The one remaining student stands in the middle of the circle and comes up with a phrase (attribute, activity, characteristic, anything)

that not only characterizes them but (s)he thinks might be true for at least one other student. The student says the name of the game and the chosen phrase, then all sitting students who think that word applies to them stand up and swap places. The student in the middle attempts to sit down on one of the vacated seats, as do all the players who have stood up. The student who cannot find a seat starts the next round.

To name one example, the student in the middle of the circle might say: "Switch places with someone who likes Maths". This reveals several new details about the whole group: the student in the circle likes Maths, and so do those who stand up to switch places. Those that remain seated presumably have other preferences.

*Variations:*

This game is an excellent example that certain games need no variations and can be played by practically any age group. If younger students need prompting, define a topic such as colours, animals, subjects, or sports. Naturally, these can be broad or specific topics based on educational goals and the group.

*Pedagogical Aspects:*

Information about the stages of group formation can be found in Kovács's writing (n. d.). In connection with this game, it is essential to talk about the first stage, called 'forming'. This stage of forming allows children to get to know one another so that by overcoming initial insecurities (foreign environments and unknown children), they can begin to act as a group. Moreover, it may be helpful to try this game as early as the first grade because, in addition to helping children find out more about one another, it also provides valuable information for and also about the teacher, provided (s)he decides to take part in the game alongside students (e.g., Alma Mater Primary School and Primary Arts Education School of Újbuda, 2009).

This game allows participants to get to know each other playfully. It eases awkwardness and requires the ability to concentrate. Students need to focus on new information from their partners and decide whether it applies to them. Only if it does do, they have to move and find a new seat as fast as possible. This game can be played regardless of gender or age and can also be used at other group formation stages. The topics can widely vary and may serve as amusement, eliciting previously learned knowledge, or strengthening students' ability to express personal opinions.

This game can be placed at the beginning or end of the rehearsal time, depending on whether we see it as a warm-up or a cool-down activity and whether it has any content-based connection to the work done during the session. One round lasts roughly 30 seconds, and groups can play as many rounds as time and motivation allow.

By presenting these possibilities of modifying basic drama games to make them suit different age groups, we showed how selected games could be adapted to the skills and attributes of a given group. However, more complex drama activities involving role-play may also have a place within teaching or rehearsal work, which could be the topic of another paper.

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