

The Amazing Imagination Machine

(The play begins with a single block upstage center. The Narrator stands on stage left, and the team of performers crouch—half on stage right and half on stage left.)

Narrator: Ladies and Gentlemen, The Amazing Imagination Machine!

(One cast member enters and stands center stage. She/he immediately begins performing a rhythmic mechanical action while making a mechanical sound. E.g. The actor pumps one arm up and down while saying “Beep...beep...beep...etc. One at a time the other cast members enter and add to the machine with their own mechanical actions and sounds—taking care to interact with the parts of the machine already in place, and making sure to add a variety of actions, sounds, rhythms, and levels. The block can be used to help with levels. When the entire cast has assembled into a single working machine, the Narrator speaks again.)

Narrator: And there you have it! The Imagination Machine. But that’s not all. *(He mimes removing a remote from his pocket.)* I can control the machine with this imaginary remote.

(The Narrator aims the imaginary remote at the machine and mimes pressing it on and off. Whenever he presses it and says “Off,” the actors forming the machine freeze. When he presses it and says “On,” they begin running again.)

Narrator: Off...On...Off...On...Off... On...Off. *(The Narrator points to a spot on the side of the machine.)* I can also control the machine’s speed with this large invisible wheel.

(He aims the remote at the machine.) On!

(The machine starts running again. The Narrator puts the imaginary remote back in his pocket and mimes taking hold of the control wheel. He begins to turn it. With every turn, the machine runs a little faster and louder.) Faster...faster...faster! *(The Narrator mimes spinning the wheel very quickly.)* All the way to eleven!

(The machine reaches a crescendo of sound and movement and then runs down---each cast member sagging over at the waist and making the sound of a machine running down.)

Narrator: Oops. Sorry about that, folks. Luckily, the machine also has an imaginary hydraulic lever for emergencies just like this.

(The Narrator mimes taking hold of a long lever and pumps it up and down. With each push of the lever, the cast members act as though a little puff of air has been pumped into them. As they inflate back into position, they start performing their sounds and actions again. Once the machine is running at full speed, the Narrator mimes taking the remote out of his pocket.)

Narrator: *(aiming the remote at the machine)* Off! *(The machine freezes.)* Now, not only can the machine stop and go, run faster, run down, and start again—but because it’s made from one

hundred percent pure chunks of federally approved imagination, it can make anything in the world I ask it to make. Imagination machine, I'd like to see...a piano!

(The Narrator aims the remote at the machine pretends to press a button. The cast immediately reforms into the shape of a piano—with several cast members standing side by side and making “keys” with their fingers and others making the body of the instrument. One cast member gets on hands and knees to create the bench; and one stands to the side to become the pianist. During this change, one cast member can also clear the block from the stage.)

From this point on, whenever the Narrator calls for the machine to make an object, he uses the remote to start the sequence.)

Narrator: Maestro [INSERT ACTOR'S NAME], will now play Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

(The pianist takes a bow, sits at the piano, and mimes playing the opening chords of the symphony. As she plays, the piano actors sing the appropriate notes.)

Piano Cast: *(singing)* Dun, Dun, Dun, Dun...Dun, Dun, Dun, Dun....

Narrator: *(leading polite applause as the pianist takes a bow)* Oh—Bravo! Bravo! Imagination machine, I'd like to see...a tree. *(Narrator aims and clicks the remote.)*

(The cast reforms into a tree—with one tall cast member forming the trunk, and all the other cast members circling the trunk with their backs pressed against it. All the actors lift their arms up and out at a 45 degree angle to form the branches. Their fists are closed.)

Narrator: The Nature Channel now presents The Annual Life Cycle of the Tree. In the springtime, the rains fall and the tree blossoms.

(All the cast members pop their fists open and make a happy sighing sound.)

Tree Cast: Ahhh!

Narrator: Then the hot summer sun shines, and all the leaves on the tree wilt.

(The cast members let their fingers and hands droop as they making a sad sighing sound.)

Tree Cast: Ahhh.

Then the autumn winds blow, and all the leaves fall from the tree.

(The cast members lower their arms slowly to their sides, letting their hands flutter like falling leaves. The actor playing the trunk leaves one arm and one hand in the uplifted position. The Narrator notices one leaf hasn't fallen.)

Narrator: *(slightly annoyed, speaking to the tree)* I said **all** the leaves. *(The Narrator blows a puff of air toward the remaining leaf and it flutters down.)* And the tree stands naked and cold all winter long!

(The cast members try to hide their bodies with their hands and arms, as they shiver.)

Tree Cast: *(as though cold)* Ooooh...

Narrator: Till the spring comes and the tree blossoms once again.

(The cast members once again lift their arms up and pop their fists open, making a happy sighing sound.)

Tree Cast: Ahhh!

Narrator: And that is the Life Cycle of the Tree. Imagination Machine, I'd like to see...a dog!

(The Narrator aims and clicks the remote, and the cast reform into a dog shape. One cast member kneels to become the head and mouth; one stands behind the head and makes the ears with their open hands; two others kneel down on either side of the head to become the front legs, placing their palms on the floor to represent paws; and the other cast members crouch down behind the head to become the body, with one using an arm to create a wagging tail. One final actor stands slightly to the side to become the dog's owner.)

Narrator: Ahh...he's friendly. Look, his tail's wagging. *(to the owner)* Is this your dog?

Owner: Yes.

Narrator: Can he do tricks?

Owner: He can! Sit up boy...sit up!

(The cast members playing the front legs lift their palms off the floor and assume a begging position.)

Owner: Good boy. Down! *(The "legs" return to their original position.)* Now shake hands.

(One "leg" lifts up again, and the owner shakes hands with it.)

Owner: Good. Now speak boy...speak!

(The actor playing the head barks.)

Narrator: That's great. You got any more?

Owner: Play dead!

(Every cast member except the owner rolls over on to their backs. They end up as separate “dead” dogs, with their paws in the air.)

Narrator: Oh dear. That’s unfortunate. Imagination machine, I’d like to see... an elephant.

(The Narrator aims and clicks the remote and the cast reform into an elephant. One cast member bends at the waist to become the head, using their arms to form the trunk. A second actor stands behind the first and extends their arms forward on either side of the trunk to become tusks. Two other actors stand on either side of the head and use their arms to form large ears. The rest of the cast hide in a tight group behind the head to create the body. Once formed, the elephant raises its trunk and the cast or the Narrator makes a trumpeting noise.)

O.K.! *(to the audience)* How about a suggestion from the audience. What would you like to see?

(The Narrator waits for an audience suggestion.)

Audience Member: [SUGGESTED OBJECT]

Narrator: Imagination Machine, I’d like to see a [SUGGESTED OBJECT].

(The Narrator aims and clicks the remote and the cast improvises the suggested object. The Narrator can offer helpful suggestions from the side if necessary.)

Great! Imagination machine, I’d like to see...a car.

(The Narrator aims and clicks the remote and the cast reform into a car. Four actors crouch down on their hands and knees to represent the tires and one actor kneels and forms a circle over their head to become the steering wheel. Another actor stands at the back of the car facing away from the others and bends at the waist, using their arms to create the lid of the trunk. One final actor steps off to the side to become the driver. The driver mimes opening the car door, steps inside, and starts the car—then grabs the steering wheel and mimes steering. The cast make engine noises.

For an extended mime scene, you can follow these additional directions, with the Narrator adding sound effects on a microphone:

- 1. One of the front tires blows out with a bang and flattens out on the floor. The car screeches to a stop.*
- 2. The driver gets out of the car, walks to the trunk and opens it, and mimes taking out an air pump.*
- 3. The driver walks to the flat tire, mimes connecting a hose from the pump to the tire, and mimes pumping the tire back up.*
- 4. The driver heads back toward the trunk when a second tire blows out. The driver again uses the imaginary pump to re-inflate it.*
- 5. The driver heads back toward the trunk when a third tire blows out. Frustrated, the driver mimes kicking the side of the car and the car falls apart.)*

One last one. Imagination machine, I'd like to see...a roller coaster.

(The Narrator aims the remote and clicks it. The cast reform into a roller coaster by lining up in pairs, one pair behind the other. When each actor mimes grabbing a safety bar in front of them, they appear to be people sitting in a roller coaster car. The following action will be greatly enhanced if the Narrator can add sound effects with a microphone.)

The actors lean back as though the coaster is heading up the first hill. Then they mime going into the first drop by crouching down in sequence front to back, following the lead of the first car. The effect should be similar to people in a stadium doing "the wave." They can add additional hills and drops—again by crouching and standing, following the lead of the actors in front. The group can also mime going around curves by leaning left and right, with the front car leading. The coaster then starts down one final hill, with the actors lifting their arms and screaming. In the middle of the drop, the Narrator mimes snapping a photo of the coaster.)

Narrator: Click! *(The coaster actors freeze instantly in mid scream.)* Ladies and Gentlemen, this souvenir photo will be available for only \$29.95 at the booth by the gate on your way out of the park this afternoon. *(turning to the frozen cast)* Great job, Imagination Machine! *(He leads the audience in a round of applause.)*

Now, not only can the imagination machine make objects...it can also make stories. Imagination Machine, I would like to see ***The Story of the Three Little Pigs!***

(The Narrator aims the remote and clicks it and the cast break from their freeze and exit.)

NOTE: In place of ***The Three Little Pigs***, ***The Amazing Imagination Machine*** can be used to introduce any story the cast has rehearsed.