

**Positive
Stories
For
Negative
Times**

Season 5
2026/27

Presented by

**WONDER
FOOLS**

The Butterfly Tap

by Ned Glasier



The Butterfly Tap

A play about happiness

Written by Ned Glasier

Developed with the Wonder Fools Youth Board, in particular: Cara Stevenson, Cieran Low, Cora Isabella Ditta, Gregor McMillan, Haniya Rehan, Lucy Mei-ling Ho, Morgan Ferguson, Ross Thompson, Rowan Sharp, Star Lamond and Taya Sian.

With special thanks to Eve Kerr for introducing us to the butterfly tap.

Characters

Seeker

A teenager searching for happiness. A version of the performer who plays the part. Uses their real name.

Everyone else

The other members of the company. They play versions of themselves, the other characters below and any other incidental roles and characters that appear throughout the play.

Broadcasters

A team who tell the story of teenage happiness. They are based on figures in a live TV broadcast: an Interviewer, Host, Announcer, Reporter, Analyst and Instructor, each with their own personality and style. They are played with the joy of make-believe and costumed as if from a dressing-up box.

Storytellers

Seven members of the company who tell stories about real moments of happiness they have experienced recently. Each one is supported to tell their story by a different Happiness Character.

Happiness Characters

Seven human embodiments of Contentment, Joy, Peace, Delight, Excitement, Elation and Hope. They are like coaches or makeover experts on daytime TV, each supporting a different Storyteller. Like the Broadcasters, they should be played with the joy of make-believe. They

should be costumed flamboyantly to represent their strand of emotion, as if from a dressing-up box.

Contentment supports Storyteller One

Joy supports Storyteller Two

Peace supports Storyteller Three

Delight supports Storyteller Four

Excitement supports Storyteller Five

Elation supports Storyteller Six

Hope supports Storyteller Seven

About the text

When performers are playing a version of themselves, feel free to tweak the lines to better fit the way they speak and the words they use. For example, you might change ‘yeah’ for ‘aye’ or ‘nice’ for an appropriate slang word.

- indicates an unfinished thought
- / indicates an interruption
- [] is an invitation to change the word for one of your own

Prologue: Anticipation

Change SEEKER to the performer's real name (or a made-up name, if required).

Before the show starts. House lights.

SEEKER is on stage, swishing a butterfly net around. Practising catching.

Warming up. INTERVIEWER comes on and stands next to SEEKER.

INTERVIEWER has headphones and a microphone.

INTERVIEWER holds up their hand to count down from five.

INTERVIEWER	OK, in five
	Four

They show the remaining countdown from three to one on their fingers, like they do on TV.

So [Seeker] thanks for talking to us.

It's just a few minutes before the show starts.

What we all want to know is.

How are you feeling?

SEEKER	Erm. Well. Obviously I'm -
	I'm excited. I'm nervous. But, mainly excited.
	I just can't wait to get started.

INTERVIEWER	You've been working on this for a long time -
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SEEKER	Yeah, since [month when rehearsals started].
INTERVIEWER	And now – the big moment. Is everyone ready?
SEEKER	I think so. We've put loads of time and energy into it. And yeah. We're ready.
INTERVIEWER	What are you most looking forward to, personally?
SEEKER	Just the whole show, to be honest
INTERVIEWER	Any part in particular?
SEEKER	Well – I guess - There's this bit at the end -
INTERVIEWER	Is this the scene everyone's talking about?
SEEKER	Yeah, it's –
INTERVIEWER	I've heard it's something pretty special
SEEKER	Yes -

INTERVIEWER A revolutionary moment!

SEEKER I think so

INTERVIEWER Tell us all about it

SEEKER Well, I can't because -
I mean I don't want to spoil the –

INTERVIEWER Give us a little taster

SEEKER I guess I could tell you what it's called –

INTERVIEWER That's a good start

SEEKER OK
The scene at the end of the show is called
'[Three and a Half Minutes] of Pure Happiness and
Joy'

INTERVIEWER Wow
That / sounds –

It's SEEKER's turn to gush

SEEKER / Incredible. I know. I mean you can see why we're
so excited about it. It's everything we've been
working for - these last few months. All the thinking
and talking and practising and now -

I mean I just can't wait to feel -

SEEKER pauses

INTERVIEWER Feel what?

SEEKER Happy

A beat

INTERVIEWER Are you not happy now?

SEEKER Well no, don't get me wrong, I'm not *unhappy*.

But just because someone is not unhappy it
doesn't mean they're happy.

INTERVIEWER How do you mean?

SEEKER A lot of people think it is, but it isn't.

You'll see. I promise.

The performers in Scene One start to come on stage.

INTERVIEWER speaks to the audience

INTERVIEWER And it looks like we won't have to wait long for that
Because here are the other members of the cast,
which means –

SEEKER *(excitedly, to no-one and everyone)* Oh my gosh
we're starting!

SEEKER looks around in awe

The performers in the next scene enter and take their positions.

ANNOUNCER speaks as a voiceover.

ANNOUNCER And we're go

In five

INTERVIEWER Are you in this scene, [Seeker]?

SEEKER No

ANNOUNCER Four

INTERVIEWER Should you go then?

SEEKER Yes

ANNOUNCER Three

SEEKER doesn't move

INTERVIEWER starts backing away, calling out to SEEKER

INTERVIEWER Will you come back and talk to us later?

SEEKER Of course

ANNOUNCER Two

INTERVIEWER Have a really happy show!

SEEKER I will!

ANNOUNCER One

NOSTALGIA TWO [Seeker]!

SEEKER Sorry!

SEEKER leaves.

The lights change. Music, or sound.

The show starts.

Scene One: Nostalgia

Use the devising guide to create the descriptions of the photos.

Five performers hold up photos to look at, without showing them to the audience. Each photo is of each person as a child, in a moment of simple happiness. One by one, they describe what they see, simply and naturally, as if looking at the photo for the first time in a while.

The descriptions happen in chronological order, so the first image is of NOSTALGIA ONE as a very young child and the last of NOSTALGIA FIVE around eight or nine. This last one includes a reference to NOSTALGIA FIVE dancing.

NOSTALGIA ONE So this is a photo of me when I was [age]
 I'm [they describe the photo]

NOSTALGIA TWO *[Describes their photo]*

NOSTALGIA THREE *[Describes their photo]*

NOSTALGIA FOUR *[Describes their photo]*

NOSTALGIA FIVE *[Describes their photo]*

It feels like a long time ago.

Look at me.

I look so happy.

Scene Two: Small Children

Use the devising guide to choreograph the dancing in this scene.

The music changes. Upbeat. The five performers put their photos aside. They start dancing, gently.

EVERYONE ELSE is on stage, dancing too. The dancing feels gently joyful, as if each person is in their own happy bubble.

HOST appears in the middle of them, talking directly to the audience. They are like a daytime TV host – upbeat, smiley, in control.

HOST Have you ever noticed how happy small children are?

How the smallest things give them so much joy?

A blue pencil

A cat chasing a spider

A muddy stick that you find in the park.

On average, small children laugh three hundred times a day.

That's a lot of laughter

Do you know how many times adults laugh?

I'll tell you.

It's fifteen.

Not fifty.

Fif-teen times a day.

So be careful, because this show has some pretty good jokes in it and we don't want you rupturing something because you've laughed more than you're used to.

If they laugh

That's one already.

If they laugh again

And another. You be careful now.

Now it used to be that people in their forties were the least happy people out of everyone.

We have no idea why that would be.

But it doesn't matter, because it's not true anymore.

People in their forties aren't the least happy out of everyone.

Can you guess who is?

Everyone pops out of their bubble to perform a very joyful, synchronised dance move – as if to say 'it's us!'

That's right. It's us.

Teenagers across the world have been getting less and less happy since 2012.

Everyone performs another synchronised joyful dance move.

British teenagers are the least happy teenagers in Europe.

Another joyful dance move.

And it's getting worse every year.

A final, joyful, synchronised dance move. Everyone returns to dancing individually, facing towards the audience.

Why is that?

When did we stop laughing so much?

Where did all that joy go?

The question hangs in the air.

REPORTER, ANALYST and INSTRUCTOR all step forward and stand with HOST. The dancing becomes a pulse, still joyful.

HOST

For the last few months, we've been doing something unusual.

We've been thinking about happiness.

It's important to say right from the start that when we say happiness, we don't mean *unhappiness*, even though that's all some people want to talk about.

Four of the DANCERS become caricatures of patronising adults.

ADULT ONE It's normal to be sad when you're a teenager

ADULT TWO It's such a difficult journey

ADULT THREE You have to get through it as best you can.

ADULT FOUR It'll all be better in about ten years' time.

HOST No.

 We've been thinking about *happiness*.

 Teenage happiness.

HOST, REPORTER, ANALYST and INSTRUCTOR say the next line together.

BROADCASTERS Our happiness.

REPORTER We've been discovering different types of
 happiness -

ANALYST Exploring how it comes and goes -

INSTRUCTOR And learning what it really looks like

HOST

At the end of the show, we're going to put everything we know together to create the most incredible [three and a half minutes] of happiness and joy that you've ever seen.

And here's someone who cannot wait for that moment.

Please welcome [Seeker]

SEEKER appears within the group, like the star guest.

SEEKER Hello! Thank you!

 I am SO EXCITED to be here.

HOST And we're so excited that you're here.

Turns back to the audience.

We'll be checking in with [SEEKER] as we get closer and closer to the end of the show.

But right now, we're going to start with something simple.

Something that people don't do enough.

Noticing happiness.

Capturing it.

And sharing it.

Like this.

Interlude: Happy Story One

Change STORYTELLER ONE to the performer's real name. Use the devising guide to create their happiness story.

CONTENTMENT brings STORYTELLER ONE to the middle of the stage.

CONTENTMENT uses a series of questions to help STORYTELLER ONE tell the story of a moment of contentment that they've experienced recently.

STORYTELLER ONE speaks in the first person and the present tense, as if they are present in the moment they're describing. The energy is calm, supportive and intimate, as if it is just the two of them working together.

CONTENTMENT Are you ready?

STORYTELLER ONE Yes

CONTENTMENT gives STORYTELLER ONE an item of clothing from the costume they are wearing – a scarf, or a blanket.

CONTENTMENT Where are you?

STORYTELLER ONE *[Describes where they are, as if they are in that place and time]*

CONTENTMENT Look around. What can you see?

STORYTELLER ONE *[Answers]*