



8 IMPROV MASTERCLASS – PART 2

IMPROV COMEDY is all about creating stories as a team. This part of the class will focus on scene work. Every play (or novel, short story etc) starts with the exposition. We learn about the characters (WHO) and setting (WHERE) for the work. Then, the story starts to move. The action (WHAT) rises to a climax. We get a brief (most of the time) relaxing time and then the story is over. This plot (ARC) can take 3 minutes to 5 hours – 1 page to 1000+ pages.

THREE LINE EXCHANGE – This game is all about starting a scene. In Improv we need to establish character, relationship and setting. We need to make choices. Big bold choices at the beginning of the story will lead to a great scene. **PLAYER ONE** starts a pantomime – without speaking, start an activity (work, play, chore, hobby, sport etc). **PLAYER TWO** enters the scene with the first line of dialogue. With the first statement establish relationship and setting. “Hey dad, your burnt my toast again” We now know we have a dad and son/daughter in the kitchen. Now, **PLAYER ONE** can talk. The two players **LISTEN** and **RESPOND** adding details to support the first statement, building the story and making something happen. Remember **YES AND**. Accept everything given to you and add details supporting and moving forward. Avoid **QUESTIONS** and **BLOCKS** (Saying **NO**). Make statements that support your scene partner and create a reality on stage.

NOTE: Character v Relationship In the script of the Improv, the actual relationship is more important than individual character. But each player should be making choices developing their character. How old are they? How tall? Where do they live? Do they have a job? Friends? Enemies? Family? If you find yourself disconnected to a scene make some key choices to strengthen your character. As an actor we identify (from a script) objectives and problems a character will have. In Improv we create these from scratch. Make your characters imperfect. Problems to solve will lead to funny scenarios and interesting scenes.

COLUMNS (AKA HUMAN MAD LIBS) – Two players perform a scene. Two other players (OR Audience volunteers) sit in chairs at the downstage corners of the stage. Start the scene with an activity. Establish **WHO** (characters/relationship) and **WHERE** (location / setting). As you build the **WHAT** (plot /action) from time to time use your **COLUMNS** (people in chairs) to add details. “Right, I just came back from the _____ (POINT TO COLUMN).” Whatever they say **REPEAT** and **JUSTIFY**. The crazier the detail, the more you have to do to make the detail make sense in the story. **YES AND** the column.

SWITCH – Two Players perform a scene. Start the scene with an activity. Establish **WHO** (characters/relationship) and **WHERE** (location / setting). As you build the **WHAT** (plot /action) the teacher will call “**SWITCH**”. The last player to speak changes something about the previous statement (As we never ask questions). You can change one word, a phrase or the whole statement. Maybe you change the inflection (changing the sound of the statement to alter an implied meaning).

NOTE: THE MAGIC THREE – Since the days of Greek Tragedy through Shakespeare through today, audiences respond to lists of THREE. When you write a book report, teachers often tell you to give THREE examples to support you opinions before your closing statement. The MC should call SWITCH TWO TIMES to create a list of THREE (the original and two switches). Of course all rules are meant to be broken. Once you establish the rhythm of THREE, try calling one switch. Try calling five. The actors and audience will react in funny ways to the shift in rhythm. Comedy is all about timing. Playing against the expected timing - on purpose - leads to great discovery.