

Freeview –

Suggested materials / exercises for the one hour Improv Freeview class. *Times to watch for are noted given an average class of 10 – a smaller class will be able to get through more reps of each exercise; a larger class may have to forgo one of the final lessons.*

Introductions (7:05):

- **Here to get a taste for improv and HAVE FUN.** Improv is playing and the improv community is the greatest community in the world. Today's your free taste to get you hooked; we'll go through exercises from our classes program. *Know availability and schedule of 101 classes.*
- **Trust and support are critical.** As we collaborate to together build something out of nothing, we need to be able to trust each other and support one another; "Make each other look good" is a key improv mantra. Don't judge anyone, including yourself; let go of ego.
- **Foster a safe environment. Be respectful.** Students should be physically gentle and appropriate with one another. Strive not to offend or to be offended. Students should be conscientious of subject matter that people find offensive and/or insulting. Treating each other positively, on and off stage, should be everyone's goal. Students need to feel that they can try and fail without discomfort.
- **Don't have to push to "be funny."** The funniest improv is born out of emotional reactions to details imagined in-the-moment. Following each other and collaborating in more satisfying for the audience than one player striving to stand out as "the funny one."

Warm-ups / Get to know you (7:10):

- **Crazy Eights / Shakedown.** Standing around a circle, we often start by shaking it out as it gets us physically warm, gets us to check in and shake off our days. We shake our right arm above our head for eight counts as we count aloud, then we do the same with our left arm, then our right legs and then our left legs. Then we do the whole thing again to a 7 count. Then six. Etcetera. Don't count faster than you can shake. Make eye contact with everyone around the circle at least once as we go through.
- **Name Thumper.** Going around the circle, each person (teacher included) associates their name with an action or adjective – "Punching Patrick," or "Pouting Patrick." Go around once more so everyone knows everyone else's name and action. Then play progresses with an individual doing their name/action and then another person's name/action; that person then does their name/action and then another person's name/action; etc. *You can introduce them to the starting chant – Everyone pats their thighs. You say, "I'm going to say, What's the name of the game?", and you'll say, "Thumper." Do it. You say, "I'm going to ask, Why do we do it?", and you'll say, "To get warmed up." Do it. You say, "I'm going to ask, how do we do it?", and you'll say, "Fast!" Do it.*
- **Awesome!** Around the circle, students say something about themselves and/or their day to which the rest of class enthusiastically responds, "Awesome!"
 - **Acceptance is fun** – don't waste time judging; the audience wants to see you enjoying one another.

Focus Outward (7:15): There is a ton of material for us to mine in our improv if we are committed to *seeing it, hearing it and embracing it*. We don't need to be in our heads worried about *making* something happen once we learn how we can *follow* what's already happening to a collaborative end.

Suggested Exercises:

ACTION PASS – In a circle, a player turns to his left and executes an action, any action. The next player observes that action and attempts to recreate it EXACTLY in turning to the player to their left.

Progression:

- Do it once through. Then immediately have them do it again focused on slowing down and really noticing all the nuances of a player's action and working to repeat the action *exactly*.
- Call out people that are in their head and not focused outward
- Call attention to what makes them laugh – straight repetition, embracing something "accidental"
- Call out when someone tries to force the evolution for a laugh – this will happen after they get comfortable with a few "successes" under their belts

Lessons:

- **See head to toe** – take the time to really see all that players are giving you; Where are their toes pointed? How are their shoulders squared? What face are they making?
- **See more than you're given** – the things a player does subconsciously or accidentally should be noticed and repeated; What did they do before and after the action?
- **There are no mistakes/There is no "right"** - there is only "what has happened" and "what's happening now."
- **Repetition is heightening** - we don't *need* to create unrelated information when there is already material at play to mine. Collaborative evolution is a fun enough; don't force difference for difference's sake.
- **Repetition clarifies**. If they start playing real slow and concentrated, the first few passes won't get laughs; remind them how important it is to set up others for the laugh so we can succeed as a team.

Collaborative Building (7:20): We are building something out of nothing. It helps for us to be building in the same direction – instead of arguing/negotiating made-up reality. "Yes and" is *the* staple of improvisation; you say something, I agree to it and I add to your idea to make it "our" idea.

Suggested Exercises:

"YES AND" OBJECT DESCRIPTION – Everyone's in a circle. The first player – designated by the instructor – looks into the empty space inside the circle and says, "I see a [blank]." The next player around the circle says, "Yes, and it is [blank]." And the play continues with each player building in turn on top of *all that came before*. The first player is the last to contribute some semblance of "Yes, and it is [blank]" to his/her initial object; then that second player begins a new "I see a [blank]."

Lessons:

- **The sooner everyone can “see” it, the sooner we can blow out the details –** Get specific
- **Build in the same direction –** Follow the group: if the [blank] is an *old* toaster, build out all the things that make it “old”; don’t give an old toaster new features. Avoid contradictions.
- **The “jokes” made by building off of each other’s contributions will be funnier than those we force out to make ourselves look individually funny**

Progression:

- **EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE –** Somewhere around the midpoint of the exercise, focus players on having the SAME EMOTIONAL PERSPECTIVE toward the object; if the first player hates this toaster, we ALL hate the toaster
 - It’ll be easier to heighten the details when we agree to an emotional perspective and “see” the object through that emotional perspective

Emotional Initiations (7:30): Emotion should be at the core of all improvisation – the audience loves seeing us care about imagined things and characters on stage. *The Coalition’s 201 class focuses on developing Characters and Relationships through EMOTION.*

When we try to screenwrite in-the-moment - trying to come up with clever twists or engaging in conflict, plot – we’re never going to be as good as screenwriters with the time to edit and rewrite. The best we can hope for then is for the audience to say, “That was amazing *considering you made it up on the spot.*” We want just “That was amazing,” without the qualifiers. We can get there by making our scenes “about” characters that react in-the-moment and relationships forged in-the-moment. A staged actor’s job is to make you believe the reactions they’ve rehearsed are in-the-moment. We have a leg up here: We’re in-the-moment and unrehearsed.

Suggested Exercises:

EMOTIONAL CASCADE – [Continued from above] ... So, let’s react around the circle – real quick – everyone just has to have an emotional reaction. Everyone’s doing it so don’t worry about what you look like. You don’t need a motivation – you don’t need to know why you’re feeling like you do – you just need to have an emotional reaction. I’ll give you a feeling – Happy – and you’ll just feel that way, let it affect your body. Then I’ll give another – Afraid - and you’ll all change. If I say to feel it more, I’m not saying be louder. I’ll start. *Whatever they do –* Great!

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENT CIRCLE – The sooner we identify how a player feels the better – because that *feeling* can be heightened by the player and played *to* by the player’s teammates. The sooner we can identify how a player feels about *a something* the better – because that something can be heightened by the player to heighten the player’s emotion and that something can be referenced/heightened by the player’s teammates to force *the player* into a *reaction*. We want to “feel something about something.” Around a circle, everyone makes a Self Contained Emotional Statement. It can be as simple as “I love it here,” “I hate the arts,” or “I’m uncomfortable.” *Note:* the SCES might seem stiff but damnit it works.

Lessons:

- **It's a statement.** Not a question shifting the responsibility of providing information to your partner. There's a period. It's definitive.
- **It's an *emotional* statement.** Emotion is one of our three key tools; let's get to it.
- **It's establishes an emotional *reaction*.** You need to feel and, for the *reaction*, you need to give that feeling a direction. Give X the power to make you feel Y.
- **Being self-contained, the statement places you on solid ground without dictating the scene to your partners** - Mick Napier urges us each to "take care of yourself" without confining the scene. Allow your partner the choice of whether to mirror you in some fashion or to take on something entirely their own. Give them the gift of freedom. Being self-contained is increasingly an imperative the larger a group you have on stage.

Scenes on Stage (7:35): Let's break out of the circle and get you all some chances to start and start building scenes on stage.

Suggested Exercises:

AGREEMENT LAY-UPS – Split the group in two and have them form separate lines on either wing of the stage. Designate one line as the Initiation Line. One player from the Initiation Line enters stage with a Self Contained Emotional Statement. The player at the head of the other line also enters – same time – and immediately AGREES with the first player's perspective. "This Justin Bieber concert is awesome!" "This is the greatest night of my life!" Then the players go to the end of each other's lines.

Lessons:

- **Agreement to imagined stimuli is funny.** Agreement is so satisfying and it doesn't have to be any harder than that.
- **Engage the environment** – With your SCES you "feel something about something"; now try and see – and react to – that "something" on stage.
- **Don't rush off stage** – Just because the exercise is two line lay-ups, players should not deliver their lines as they're running past each other.
- **Emphasize SC in SCES** – With a SCES, we don't have to wait for someone to join us on stage before initiating, and we don't have to speak every line toward our scene partner.

"A SCES OF ONE'S OWN" LAY-UPS – The player from the Initiation Line still enters stage with a Self Contained Emotional Statement. The player at the head of the other line though – while s/he CAN STILL AGREE – is able to come up with a SCES all his/her own. Then players are allowed a couple extra lines back and forth to heighten their SCES and to react to each other. "This Justin Bieber concert is awesome!" "My ears are bleeding." "You're being a baby." "I can't hear you; there's too much blood in my ears." Then the players go to the end of each other's lines.

Lessons:

- **No questions** – questions are invitations for information; statements *are* information. Get to the information. Instead of asking "What do you do?" say "I'm a lawyer."
- **Just do more of what you're doing** – Don't worry about where the scene's going. Don't force conflict because that's what you think a scene "should be about." Just double down on how you feel – reacting to what you "see" and to your scene partner.

Pattern Into Game (7:45 – if late feel free to skip in favor of Freeze): The Coalition’s third class is all about building collaboratively as a group using Patterns. Some people are less comfortable jumping into emotional decisions and reacting in-the-moment; for them, this pattern work can feel like the key that unlocks improvisation. For some people, pattern work is hard stuff they’d prefer not to think about. The reality is the best improvisers learn how to both access their emotions *and* leverage patterns.

Good news: We’re hardwired to follow patterns. As children – before we hit puberty and started filtering everything through reasoning and fear – we learned by trusting, following and reacting to cause-and-effect. The 301 class is all about working to engage your innate pattern brain.

Tonight I’m going to just give a quick taste of the pattern material based on our Self Contained Emotional Statements.

Suggested Exercises:

“OFFER, SET, CEMENT” GROUP GAME EXPERIENCE – With a blank improv stage we can do anything. Any choice works. This first choice is our Offer – the first flag we plant on the blank improv stage. There are myriad choices we could make based on that first choice. The choice we do make is the Set move – a second point with which to draw a line from the first choice. Our job then is to follow the progression that line infers – as “second move” relates to “first move” so should “third move” relate to “second move.” We know we’ve nailed a progression with a Cement move when everyone’s clamoring at the bit to build on.

Example #1 - Offer: I love Virginia. **Set:** I love Richmond. *Have students tell you what’s next?* Ex: “I love Cary Town.” “I love Galaxy Burgers.” “I love those milkshakes.” “I love the liquor in that milkshake.”

Example #2 - Offer: I love Virginia. **Set:** I love the USA. *Have students tell you what’s next?* Ex: “I love North America.” “I love Earth.” “I love the Milky Way.”

Example #3 “Moves are defined in retrospect” - Offer: I love Virginia. **Set:** I love Richmond. **3rd Move:** I love Delaware. *Have students tell you what’s next?* The Offer/Set pairs builds an Offer/Set progression of its own. Ex: I love Dover. I love Providence. I love Rhode Island. (*progression is up the east coast to smaller states*)

Lessons:

- **The first move is ANYTHING. The second move seeks to establish a relationship with the first move. The third move seeks to heighten the relationship between the second and first moves through its own relationship with the second move.** The *progression* of moves define the rules to the relationship between nodes in the pattern sequence.
- **The sooner a pattern is clearly established, the sooner everyone can play** – when players feel *compelled* to continue a pattern you know it has been established with a clear progression. *SEE: “How to build a movement” TED Talk*
- **Trust simplicity** – stick the same language; don’t allow being personally-clever and making A-to-E connections ground the group in confusion.
- **Serve the group** – *you* don’t have to be funny for the group to be hilarious; be willing to *set* the pattern for another to spike; the 2nd move will never be as funny as the 1st or 3rd but it is necessary to facilitate the big payoff.

Play (7:55 – if running late feel free to skip Patterns in favor of Freeze):

Suggested Exercises:

FREEZE – Two players start a scene given an audience suggestion. From the wings, Player Three says, “Freeze,” and the Players One and Two **freeze** in the physical position they’re in. Player Three confidently tags out the player s/he wants to replace and s/he assumes that physical position as Player One/Two goes to the wings. Player Three initiates a brand new scene transporting their physical positions to a new location/situation/relationship/etc. This new scene continues until Player Four shouts, “Freeze!” And repeat.

Lessons:

- **Confidence sells** – Don’t worry about making “sense” with your stage picture. Whatever you do *confidently* appears purposeful.
- **Acceptance what you’re given** – If joined on stage, confidently follow your joiner’s initiation, don’t make conflict unnecessarily.
- **The bigger the physical choices you make in one scene, the more fun the next scene will be right off the bat.**
- **Patterns?** Where applicable, point out where they heightened characters and details with patterns – agreeing / repeating, heightening emotions, details, characters and relationships.
- **Vary it up** – The last scene was low energy? Go high energy! The last scene as about children? Be old people!