



Long Form Performance Class – *Core Lessons*

In 401 We Learn That: The Harold format provides focused practice on the elements crucial to any successful long form format: An Opening, A Beat Progression, and Thematic Group Games.

The expectation is that at the end of 401 students can execute the following:

- **Being An Ensemble** – There is extra emphasis in this class on the importance of an improv group knowing one another and being aware of and playing to our individual strengths and weaknesses.
- **The Opening** – The ensemble takes one audience suggestion and blows it out into complimentary, exaggerating and contrasting themes, freed by abstraction to contribute sounds and single words instead of dialogue.
- **The First Beat** – Our best Two Person Scene Work. Two dynamic characters and a rhythm between patterns of emotional behavior.
- **Group Games** – The ensemble explores ideas connecting scenes. While narrowing on themes they are expanding the world that connects scenes.
- **Subsequent Beat Initiations** – We seek to serve a personal or scenic game from the initial beats. Heighten the details that inspire reactions. Prioritize getting an emotional reaction from the initiation over following a plot detail.
- **Subsequent Beat Pacing** – Focused on heightening emotional triggers, second and third beat scenes should employ the range of tertiary moves.
- **Thematic Triangulation** – If we're each following – repeating feelings, setting progressions, making callbacks, heightening behaviors and patterns – SUPPORTING – we narrow in on each other and can create in-the-moment collaborative acts of genius.
- **Recognizing that Whatever Harold You Did Was “The Perfect” Harold** – The audience is following you, not ‘Truth In Comedy.’ It’s more important than an ensemble commit to accepting, following, heightening and progressing, than adhering to the mechanics of a dictated form.



Long Form Performance Class – *Instructor's Outline*

In this class, students will learn to build a cohesive long-form performance piece as an ensemble, expanding from an audience's suggestion and heightening characters and themes through interwoven scenes.

This class will focus on the classic long-form *The Harold* (*Wikipedia it*). As said best in Truth in Comedy, "*The Harold is like the space shuttle, incorporating all of the developments and discoveries that have gone before it into one new, superior design.*" The other way around, Harold's learnings pack in the lion's share of what you need to know to do any other long-form.

Through this class, students will learn:

1. How to expand material from a single suggestion through an Opening utilizing the full ensemble
2. How to initiate and sustain two-person scenes inspired by the Opening
3. How to heighten characters' and scenes' games through subsequent scenes involving two or more players
4. How to narrow a performance's focus by heightening and interweaving themes through group scenes

On Note Giving:

1. **Focus notes on the key lessons you outline for each class.** It's understandable to want to address all the issues you see but too much instruction will be counterproductive to students' engaging the moment. **While, yes, in the end, you want a cohesive product, it'll be most productive to focus early class lessons on discrete skills that benefit the whole class and save notes individual notes for the back half of the class.**
2. **Highlight the positive.** Pointing out good moves helps build the actor's muscle memory and gives observers a model. **Draw attention to how good reactions lead to more successful outcomes.**
3. **Just Say "Do This -".** Prompt students with instructions to "do" something, not "don't do" something." *Especially* if side-coaching, remember that your explanation of why your note's applicable is less effective in instilling good behaviors than is improvisers experiencing a scene that "feels right." **Give them the activity; let them feel the effect.**



4. Use **their** examples wherever possible. The curriculum provides examples, but the instruction will be more meaningful if you can base your lessons on their attempts.
5. Give the students that crave notes the notes they deserve. The expectation should be set and met that students will get individual notes. Instructors should always focus on constructive notes. And the expectation should be set that students should at least try to embrace notes; they can do what they want outside of class.

On Preparing Classes:

There are a lot of exercises listed; choose which ones you want to teach, adding your own where necessary. **Bottom line: In the showcase, students need to show they can commit to following the group's attempt at a Harold.** Remember there is no "perfect" Harold but that which they commit to together. The only mistake they can make is acknowledging and/or ignoring "mistakes" rather than accepting them and adjusting to them.

Know what you want to say, and when you want to say it. Sometimes it works best not to give students too much instruction prior to running a particular exercise. Some instruction can seem abstract and put players too far in their heads before the exercise. It can therefore help to throw students into the exercise and then they can build the muscle memory from iterative instructions (such as with Subsequent Beat Initiations). **Tell them what to do. Let them feel the value.**

On the Progression to 401:

401's focus is on the mechanics of building a cohesive long form. Improvisers should be expected to bring to this new work the prior work they've focused on in 101, 201, and 301. Emotion remains the core of our improvisation. Patterns and Games help us establish rhythms that keep us reacting instead of thinking and connect us with our live audience. If we have to spend time in 401 perfecting our Two Person Scene and Group Game work we are doing ourselves a disservice. 401 Students should be expected to bring what they've learned from previous classes to their 401 work.

On the "The Harold":

The Harold is not the be all end all long-form format. BUT. It does explicitly call focus to the myriad skills that hold a long-form format together and progress it to a satisfying end. Note that many improvisers buck against the Harold's format, but mostly that's because they can't do a good Harold. A group than can do a solid Harold together is much more likely to "succeed" in any other long-form format they attempt.



Week 1 – Getting Together & Revisiting Scenework

For the group to be successful, individuals need to commit to collaboration. You need to show your fellow players that you respect and love their ideas, and trust that you can make a bold move and have your group respect and love it. “I trust you – I’m going to follow your ideas whatever they are, wherever they go, and I’m going to launch into my ideas and trust that you’ll follow me.”

With collaboration holding us together, Emotion should be what drives our improvisation forward – the audience loves seeing us care about imagined things and characters on stage. We strive to make our scenes “about” characters and relationships driven by emotional reactions and perspectives.

Key Teachings:

- **Collaborate and Care -**

RE: Collaboration

- Group Mind is about immediate, enthusiastic acceptance.
- Trust is surrendered, not withheld until earned.
- The sooner everyone is on the same page, the sooner we can heighten and evolve collaboratively. Our main tool of simplification is *Agreement* - the more players mirror/agree, the less different stuff there is on stage to negotiate.
- Our main tool of clarification is *Repetition*. The first time something happens, it’s random; the second time is purposeful; the third time is expected.

RE: Caring

- “Feeling something about something” is most conducive to setting the scene up for success
- When that second “something” is active on stage you set yourself up better for reactions – Engage your environment, not just the other player.

Week 2 – From Openings Into Two Person Scenes

An Opening is the first piece of a long-form performance presented to the audience. Every show has one. Not every show uses one. There is tremendous value in using an Opening to introduce a show, establish a tone and develop material to explore in the long-form.

The Opening takes the Suggestion and blows it out – going wide and deep with inspired details, emotions and characters. From the Opening, each improviser commits to taking away “one thing” – a detail, an emotion, a character, etc. – to bring into the Two Person Scenes.

Key Teachings:

- **Use The Opening to set the stage**, establishing the tone for the show and introducing the audience to the ensemble and its energy.
- **Pay attention to the elements of stage picture can help focus a group scene and facilitate quick collaborative heightening.**



- **Use the Opening to explore and expand the suggestion.** A series of different tableaux can be strung from one suggestion, providing more opportunities for heightening during the Opening and a wider expanse of material to draw on in the scenes following the Opening.
- **Remember One Thing** - All a player needs to do is remember *one* thing from the Opening to use in initiating a long-form performance's first scenes.
- **Feel First** - Positioning that "one thing" in an Emotional Statement can help set up first beat scenes for success by quickly establishing personal and scenic games.

Week 3 – Building In And On Top Of Two Person Scenes

The Initial Scenes of a long-form performance are the most important as the rest of the form flows from them. In this week's class, students will work to establish and develop two-person scenes around patterns of emotional behavior. Restricting the Harold's First Beat to Two Person Scenes helps enable grounded, emotional starts with characters and relationships that can be known and fleshed out.

In any scene you have at least two different emotional perspectives to play from: Your Personal and Scenic Emotional Perspectives – How you feel about "I" and How you feel about "You." Your Personal Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who I am, where I am and what I'm doing. Your Scenic Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who my scene partner is, where my scene partner is and what my scene partner is doing.

Players watching from the wings have two jobs:

1. Watch each individual scene for patterns of emotional behavior of and between characters that can be heightened in the subsequent beat of the scene
2. Identify a theme connecting two or more of the first beat scenes that can be leveraged in initiating the first Group Game

Key Teachings:

- **Let emotion be our scene guide** - All an improviser needs to decide is :
 - How to feel about "I": How I feel about who I am, where I am and what I'm doing.
 - How to feel about "You": How I feel about who my scene partner is, where my scene partner is and what my scene partner is doing.
- **Feel Something About Something "Active" On Stage With You** - "Active" Scene Elements are the who, what, where, when, why, etc. that exist *in-the-moment* of the scene and can therefore evoke in-the-moment reactions from emotional players
- **Make Your "What" About Emotional Reactions to Active Elements** - Commitment and repetition are the only "why" we need. But "Because" can elevate the emotional stakes of a scene with context.
- **When in doubt, React!**
- **When in doubt, Repeat!**



- **Watching from the wings, come up with Subsequent Beat and Group Game initiations**
 - Subsequent Beat: what pattern of emotional behavior can be heightened
 - Group Game: what theme can be turned into a Self Contained Emotional Statement
- Group Game #1 – To The Ether: <http://improvesbest.com/2013/05/01/1-4-to-the-ether-games-2/>

Week 4 – From Openings Through Second Beats

Students will take a Suggestion from the audience. Opening uses Suggestion to inspire details, characters and emotions. Students take (at least) one element from the Opening to leverage in initiating Two Person Scenes.

Group Game #1 is initiated with a Self Contained Emotional Statement inspired by a theme that at least 2 of the 3 first beat Two Person Scenes have in common.

Second Beat Scenes heighten patterns of emotional behavior from First Beat Scenes. And where natural, the theme from Group Game #1 is woven in.

Group Game #1 Key Teachings:

- **The Offer is anything. The Set move seeks to establish a relationship with the Offer move. The Cement move seeks to heighten the relationship between the Set and Offer moves through its own relationship with the Set move.** The *progression* of Offer, Set and Cement moves define the rules to the relationship between nodes in the sequence.
- **Trust simplicity** – stick the same language; don't allow personally-clever 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.
- **The sooner a pattern is cemented, the sooner everyone can play** – when players feel *compelled* to continue a pattern you know it has been established with a clear progression
- *Remember Poles, Categories, Resetting and other 301 lessons*

Second Beat Key Teachings:

- **Onus for initiating Second Beat Scenes should fall on those not on stage for the First Beat Scene.**
- **Second Beat Scenes can contain one, both or none of the First Beat Scene characters.**
- **Elevate the Details** – A player who fears action figures can be terrified of *all* little versions of things. A player obsessed with her eyebrows can obsess over everything she trims. A tenant complaining to her absentee landlord can also complain to an absentee God.



- **MATCHING: Being a bigger version of Player One; Do what Player One did bigger** – always a trusty default (You were excited by snails? I’m going to be *really* excited by snails).
- **Any new Player should also be an interesting character** – While your job in Subsequent Beats is to heighten a character perspective and/or a relationship dynamics, you can and should also be dynamic and have emotional perspectives of your own.
- **Keep it Active / Avoid Being a Psychiatrist** – we don’t want to rehash the previous scene (“Tell me about your feelings for snails?”/ “Remember? In the last scene when you liked snails?”). Initiate with active elements that can affect characters emotionally in the present moment.
- **Wherever You’re Taken, Trust In You** – If Player Three takes Player One’s snail lover to see the animated movie Turbo, Player One is expected to heighten his *excitement*. Player One can relax in knowing that wherever he’s transported he just needs to trust in his emotional reactions.
- **Have more than two players** – Wanting to ramp up pacing we should get more than two players into each Second Beat Scene.
- **Use Tertiary Moves** - Wanting to ramp up pacing we can use Walk-Ons, Pivots/tag-outs, Split Screens, “We See,” and other off-stage and environment moves.
- **Run a Series** – A second beat “scene” can be a series of tag-outs. If they do, they should keep the same pivot character in place. For consistency if Player Three keeps Player One on stage, Player Four should tag-out Player Three, not Player One.

Week 5 – The Back Half: Group Game #2 & Third Beats

If the first half of the Harold is about setting yourself up for success – with thoughtful initiations heightening patterns of emotional behavior and themes – then the second half is all about following those set patterns through to success.

Group Game #2, like Group Game #1, is initiated around the themes that have emerged. This Harold will leverage the Hey Everybody Game template (<http://improvesbest.com/2013/05/01/1-7-hey-everybody-games-2/>)

Whatever the Second Beat heightens from the First Beat, the Third Beat also heightens, following the progression.

Group Game #2 Key Teachings:

- **The Key is the Sequence and Silos.**
 - **Sequence:** Though everyone may rush on to stage together, someone speaks first then someone speaks second, then third, etc. **The first time it’s random, the second time it’s purposeful, the third time it’s expected.**
 - **Silos: Everyone’s first responsibility is to have A reaction** – agree, disagree, comment, be disparate – it doesn’t matter what as long as there is a what. The



series of “whats” defines the sequence. Then, **let your what define you** – that’s your thing; your silo. Your agreement with your thing and your repetition of your thing breeds simplicity and clarity. For example, if in reaction to “Hey everybody, staff meeting time,” you say, “Oh, I was expecting donuts,” in the next pass of the sequence, heighten your exact thing (“I imagined there’d be sprinkles”) or a tangentially related thing (“Whaaaat? No coffee either?”). Remember that repetition alone is heightening; first response is “Can you speak up?” second response can be “Can you speak up?”

- **Facilitate, don’t dictate** – the game’s facilitator is just another player, who happened to start the scene. The facilitator can and should find a personal filter and not feel the need to speak any more than anyone else.
- **Define the sequence in retrospect and don’t ignore mutations** – If one person contributes twice in the first pass, that’s okay; they should stick that sequence. If one person falls out of order the second pass, that’s okay; they should seek to clarify with the third pass.

Third Beat Key Teachings:

- **Whatever the 2nd Beat heightens, the 3rd Beat also heightens.** Follow the progression set by the 2nd Beat. *For example, if a 2nd Beat scene chooses to heighten Billy’s bias and ignores Sally’s anger, then we also want the 3rd Beat to prioritize Billy over Sally. For example, if the 2nd Beat elevates a relationship in the first beat as being between superheroes, it would be wrong in the 3rd Beat to have a less exciting relationship. As with our other pattern work, if the progression is clear then the 3rd Beat can throw the progression on its head, but that’s a move that is dangerous to force.*
- **3rd beat scenes don’t have to be distinct.** 3rd beat scenes can overlap or exist as a mash-up. *For example, everyone ends up the same party. For example, a character representative from each thread shows up at the same news conference.*
- **3rd beat scenes can be quick.** A black-out joke line will suffice, especially if in the prior scenes an emotional game has been heightened to a fine point.

Week 6 – Practice

Myriad standard improv moves (Walk-Ons, Cut-Tos, Pivots / Tag-Outs, Split Screens, We-Sees, etc.) and other assorted polish moves can increase a performance’s pacing and instill more energy in scenes as performances progress.

Key Teachings:

- **Let the Harold’s structure help not hinder** - Students that feel “confined” by the order, should think of themselves as “focused” to be more creative given some provided direction.



- **Understand that Edits are a “feel” thing and will be easier with an audience -** Players though should edit a scene when the scene needs it, not just when the player has a great idea for the next scene. Be patient and serve the show.
- **Remember the ‘Tertiary Player Good Faith Mantra’ -** I will only enter a scene in progress to serve what has already been established. And I will react to those who enter my scene in progress on the assumption they seek to heighten what has already been established.
- **Use tertiary moves to *serve the show* -** Sometimes the focus should be on serving what’s been established in the *scene of the moment*. Sometimes the focus should be on serving what’s been established in the *show up to the moment*.
- **Remember that the First card played is trump.** A “We see the boy has long arms and hairy knuckles” and a snobby teenage girl Walk-on both serve to heighten a scene about a chimpish child, but they do not heighten off *each other*. Both can coexist in the scene, and a tight pattern *could* incorporate both “We see” and Walk-on elements moving forward, but it’s an unnecessary complication when right off the bat we could heighten the *progression* of tertiary moves.

Weeks 7 & 8 – Practice / Performance Prep

Run through the group’s “Class Action” showcase set with notes.



**Long Form Performance Class –
Class Curriculum**

Week 1 –

Sample Introduction

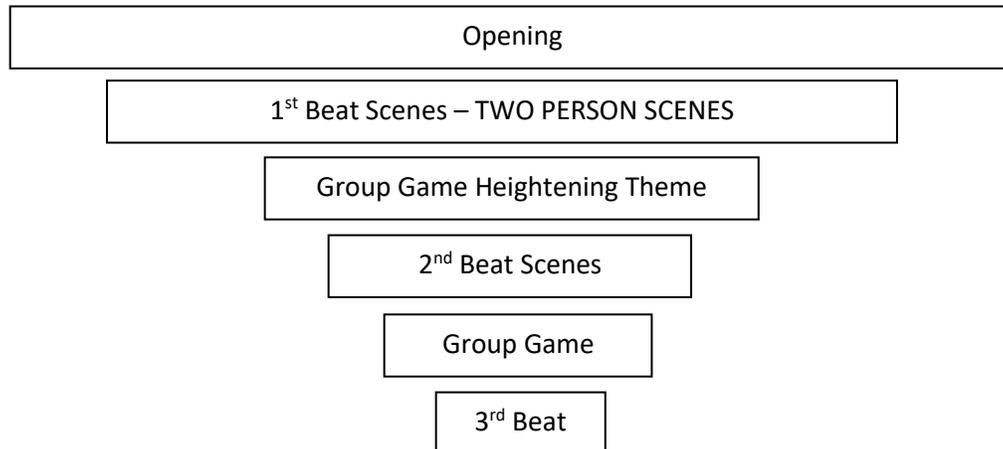
*“In this class, students will learn to **build a cohesive long-form performance piece as an ensemble, expanding from an audience’s suggestion and heightening characters and themes through interwoven scenes.***

*“There are many different types of long-form performance. This class focuses on **The Harold**, the grandfather of long-form formats imagined by the grandfather of improvisation, Del Close. As said best in Truth in Comedy, “The Harold is like the space shuttle, incorporating all of the developments and discoveries that have gone before it into one new, superior design.” The other way around, **Harold’s learnings pack in the lion’s share of what you need to know to do any other long-form.***

“Through practicing The Harold, you learn:

- 1. How to expand material from a single suggestion through an Opening utilizing the full ensemble*
- 2. How to initiate and sustain two-person scenes inspired by the Opening*
- 3. How to heighten Personal and Scenic games through subsequent scenes involving two or more players*
- 4. How to narrow a performance’s focus by heightening and interweaving themes through group scenes*

Drawn, the long-form performance should resemble an upside-down triangle (See full structure in appendix) –





Class Expectations:

- **Foster a safe environment.** Students should be physically gentle and appropriate with one another. 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.
- **Respect your group by showing up** on time. Please let your instructor know if you are going to be late or miss a class. To respect students' time, the instructor will strive to finish class on time; so the later it takes to begin, the less time anyone has to play.
- **Students are allowed two absences.** A student who misses three classes will be asked to drop out of the class.
- **Come to class physically prepared to participate.** You want to wear clothing that will enable you to do whatever anyone else does on stage.
- **See shows! You get in free! Watching is essential to learning.** While attendance at shows isn't mandatory to passing classes, it should be. Go see shows. And see them with your fellow improvisers. It WILL make you better. Big Bosses typically performs a Harold-esque show and once a session a group of teachers will perform The Harold.



Week 1 – Getting Together & Revisiting Scenework

Objective: At its core any good long-form format is based in commitment to group collaboration and to emotional perspectives.

“Tonight We’re Going to Focus On” -

- *Connecting with our ensemble and revisiting the tenets of good scene starts.*

1.0 Introduction: Introduce yourself and your background. Have students give their name and improv experience.

Note: Ask students to identify what they personally want to work on in this class, identify information from previous classes they struggle with, previous class material they particularly liked, etc. This can provide you reference for personal notes throughout the class.

Suggested Exercises:

CRAZY EIGHTS – Together (teacher included) everyone shakes out their limbs – right arm, left arm, right leg, left leg – in descending counts starting at 8 each and ending with 1 each. EYE CONTACT around the circle is encouraged to foster group connection.

1.1 Concentration: A lot can get lost on a crowded improv stage. We have to commit to ensuring we HEAR and ARE HEARD – focus outward, listen and project. This also works as a Name Game exercise.

Suggested Exercises:

CIRCLE OF SEQUENCES NAME GAME – A player points at another and says any word. That player points at another player and says another word inspired by the first. This continues until every player says a word and points to another player, with the final player to contribute pointing back to the first player to contribute. This is Sequence One; repeat it continuously until the group is comfortable with it. Establish a Sequence Two the same way, and then a Sequence Three. When players are comfortable with each Sequence individually, tell them that they now will be keeping them all going at once. Start with Sequence One and then tap the player starting Sequence Two on the shoulder, then tap the player starting Sequence Three on the shoulder.

NAME GAME Variation: Make Sequence One “Your Name” and Sequence Three “Their Name” to add to potential confusion so as to force increased concentration

Lessons:

- **Focus outward** – can’t be in your head freaking out; have to be ready and waiting for your turn



- **Be sure you're heard** – enunciate, make eye contact, and pointing helps
- **Each individual is 100% responsible for the success of the group** – if a sequence is dropped, even if you didn't drop it, pick it up

1.2 Heightening What's There: Remember, 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*. *You can get through this fast if students are adroit at it.*

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 accidently 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.



1.3 Group Mind: Having Group Mind is about immediate, enthusiastic acceptance. You need to show your fellow players that you respect and love their ideas, and trust that you can make a bold move and have your group respect and love it. “I trust you – I’m going to follow your ideas whatever they are, wherever they go, and I’m going to launch into my ideas and trust that you’ll follow me.” It is, however, not up to the group to *earn* this trust. You must surrender to the group. Give it your trust. Only then will the group get anywhere.

Suggested Exercises:

I AM SUPERMAN – Everyone stands in a circle. One at a time, each player will enter the circle, say “I am [NAME] and for the next 30 seconds, I am Superman” at which point the teacher will start a timer and the player does whatever they want until the time is up at which point everyone claps and the next player takes the circle. Players around the circle are NOT to interact with the player in the center. The player in the center should be encouraged to do engage in something they care about. Do mime. Be emotional. Stand still. Doesn’t matter. But do try to care.

Lessons:

- **Surrender to your group** – let go of ego, let your team know that you’re ready and willing to commit to being awkward in front of them.
- **You don’t need anyone** – you can be on stage alone for 30 seconds or for five minutes. Commit to yourself. Don’t rely on meeting your scene partner center stage before the scene starts. You can be alone.
- **It sucks to be alone** – don’t let your fellow players suffer on stage alone. Get out there and support each other.

1.4 Character Building: All we need to start a scene is ONE THING, one choice to base other choices on. Choices about our characters’ and relationships’ who, what, where, when and why can help inform our emotional perspective. And our emotional perspectives can help flesh out those character, relationship and environmental details. It’s a virtuous cycle of emotions building details building emotion building details building momentum.

Suggested Exercises:

CHARACTER BUILDING EXERCISES – Instructor, you can do as many or as few of these as you’d like. More detail on this exercise can be found here:

<https://improvesbest.com/2016/09/29/5-round-character-creation-warm-ups/>, or search “round” in the Search bar at improvesbest.com.

The group gets in a circle and contribute in no particular order. In short, the rounds are as follows:

1. **Friends and Family** – think of someone you know. One at a time, for 30 seconds or a line of dialogue (Instructor’s Choice) be that person. Don’t comment on that person, rather think about embodying them where they are now doing what they’re doing now.



2. **Impressions and Occupations** – Think of a celebrity impression you can do (however well). Now think of an ordinary occupation (frycooker, banker, etc.). One at a time, for 30 seconds or a line of dialogue (Instructor’s Choice) be that celebrity doing that job.
3. **Animals and Attributes** – Think of an animal. Go around the circle and say what animal each player was thinking about. Now, shift left; each player has the animal of player on their right. Go around the circle and review players’ new animal. **In this round you are going to personify that animal.** This isn’t [Richard Scarry](#) – you are not a humanoid animal – you are a human with the animal’s characteristics. Posture? Voice? Facial expression? **“Now, think about something you personally care about.”** Anything – as long as you *feel* about it. One at a time, for 30 seconds or a line of dialogue (Instructor’s Choice) **personify the animal while sharing your perspective on that something you care about.**
4. **Name, Story and Embodiment** - **“Player One gives a name** – for example, Pepper van Diesel. **Player Two gives a story inspired by the name** – for example, Texan oil fortune heiress. **Player Three then enters the circle and for 30 seconds or a line of dialogue (Instructor’s Choice) embodies that character and does a monologue** – for example, *(with a sassy southern accent and a cowboy’s posture)* ‘No body’s smarter, faster nah-oar coarser than this gal...’
5. **Accent, Aspect & Occupation** – Player One gives an accent – ex: “southern.” Player Two gives an aspect – ex: “has a lisp” “is paranoid” “is a vampire” etc. Player Three gives an occupation – ex: “telephone repair person.” And then Player Four does about 30 seconds as that character - they introduce themselves and talk about their life etc. Then then the previous Player Two offers the next accent....

Lessons:

- **Expand your character range**
- **Push yourself out of your “go to” characters**

1.5 Making Our Scenes “About” Emotional Reactions: Emotion should be at the core of all improvisation – the audience loves seeing us care about imagined things and characters on stage. We strive to make our scenes “about” characters and relationships driven by emotional reactions and perspectives. We make sustainable scenes and shows by establishing and leveraging patterns of emotional behavior.

When we try to screen write 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.



We don't need conflict. All we need is emotional reactions.

Suggested Exercises:

REACTION CIRCLE – [Continued from above] ... **So, let's react around the circle – real quick – everyone just has to have an emotional reaction.** 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. Happy, sad, whatever. I'll start. *Whatever they do* – Great!

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENT CIRCLE – **You don't have to initiate with statements. You can start with any choice: A sound, an object, an action, an environment, an atmosphere, etc. But the sooner we get to feeling, and feeling about something active on stage with us the better.**

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 if that something actively exists on stage with us then **more of that something can force us to feel more**, making our improv more Pavlovian. 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.

Example:

- I love this cat
- I hate pulling weeds
- Des Moines, you're impressive
- I'm proud of my shoes
- I'm afraid of my face
- I'm sad I have no friends

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.
- **It's active.** If I say, “I love cats,” I'm just emoting. If I say, “I love *this* cat,” I'm emotionally reacting. If we make the object of our emotion *active* in the scene – actually tangible/ observable/ repeatable on stage – then we have something to *react to* instead of just *talk about*.
- **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.

We also have our scene partner to endow and react to. *The danger is when improvisers rely only on their scene partner – as they are the only other tangible presence on stage.*

SCENIC ENDOWMENT CIRCLE – One by one around a circle, each player turns to the player to their left, engages an emotion and makes explicit what it is about the player to their left’s character that is evoking that emotion.

Example:

- I love your hat
- I hate how smug you are
- You dead-lifted 200 pounds? Impressive.
- I’m proud you’re my son
- I’m afraid of your soul
- I desire your friendship

Lessons:

- **Give gifts** – it’s much more fun to be endowed with information (“Ugh, you got fat”) than to be burdened with requests for information (“What are you doing?”).
- **Endow your scene partner with power over you.** Go farther than “I’m mad at you;” instead, a line like “Your persistent optimism makes me mad” gives your scene partner something s/he can do that will force a reaction out of you.
- **Want something? Feel the absence** – to avoid head-butting, don’t “demand,” focus on “desire.” You can want something from your scene partner, but you don’t want to become hog-tied fighting for what you want. How does not having what you want *right now* make you feel?
- **Give the gift of freedom** – if you tell me, “I hate how smug you are,” I don’t have to directly respond to your feeling; I can focus on what I’m smug about (“I’m a golden god”) or I can do anything I want (“I’m tired of this wallpaper”). You don’t want your scene partner to feel constrained to address or discuss your feeling (which is more likely the case with “Stop being smug,” “Why are you so smug?” or “Let’s talk about your smugness.”)
- **Give the gift of dynamite** – If you say, “Your tap dancing makes me so horny,” you better believe I’m going to tap dance.

1.6 Establishing Scenes on Emotional Perspectives: In any scene you have at least two different emotional perspectives to play from: Your Personal and Scenic Emotional Perspectives – How you feel about “I” and How you feel about “You.” Players don’t *need* to engage more than one emotional perspective, but doing so helps keep scenes more dynamic and sustainable.



- Your **Personal** Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who I am, what I have, where I am and what I'm doing.
- Your **Scenic** Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who my scene partner is, what my scene partner has and what my scene partner is doing.

*Basically this exercise in Week One is to understand your student's current capabilities in Two Person Scenes. Have them run lay-ups (of just first lines, then of a few lines). Side- and Post-Coach to get players on the same page. **Students don't have to be perfect at Two Person Scenes (or back to their 201 strength) before moving on. Scenework will be a returning focus throughout class.***

“How we feel about who we are, where we are and what we're doing,” and “How we feel about who our scene is, where they are and what they're doing” should be our focus in improv scenes. Let “How we feel” trump all else, especially plot and “sense.”

Establish an emotional perspective, heighten the emotional perspective through reaction to active details, and edit – That's scene.

We want to avoid negotiation, conflict and the tepid, talked-out “discovery” that stagnates scenes' growth.

Suggested Exercises:

SELF CONTAINED EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS AND 4 JOINS 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 either a Self Contained Emotional Statement. The player at the head of the other line also enters – same time – and engages with one of the 4 Joins that were explored in the 201 and 301 classes:

Engage with Agreement – *“I love the stars.” “They're so bright, sparkly and perfect.”* Agreement allows players to collaboratively heighten one emotional perspective.

Engage Tangentially – *“I love the stars.” “I'm more a planets man myself.”* Tangential heightening enables juxtaposition of emotional perspectives and exploration of theme

React – *“I love the stars.” “Your astronomy prowess isn't getting me in bed.”* Emotional reactions establish a Scenic Game to heighten

Disparate Initiation – *“I love the stars.” “Whoa, you hear that?”* We don't have to “make sense” of disparate initiations we can heighten through repetition of the emotions; first time is random, second time is purposeful, third time is expected.

Given more lines of dialogue beyond the Initiation and Join, players should focus on heightening the emotions they established and further endowing the active elements they are reacting to.



Lessons:

- **Feel something about something** – the initiation most conducive to success.
- **Agreement to imagined stimuli is funny.** Agreement is so satisfying and it doesn't have to be any harder than that.
- **Engage the environment** – Don't let your scene partner be the only other active element on stage. "See" those active elements to evoke deeper details. React to those active elements.
- **Don't know what to do next? Do more of what you did** – Boy Scout Motto says, "If you're ever lost in a wood – hug a tree – hold onto the last place you knew you were."
- **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.
- **We define our characters with emotional reactions, then find the scene by following those characters' emotional perspectives.** For example, Sue is excited to see a dog that turns out to be vicious, though she shrugs off the warnings; the scene continues by heightening the dog's viciousness and Sue's willingness to claim it's all okay.
- **We craft sustainable scenes by finding the rhythm *between* perspectives.** For example, Billy is frustrated that he can't make a toy work, Jane is annoyed by Billy because she's trying to read, Billy is awed by Jane and quiets down, Jane returns to her being titillated by her book, and then Billy grows more frustrated over his toy...

HOMEWORK –

- **Review The Harold Structure:** Look at the provided diagrams from The Coalition and UCB Theaters.
- **Watch Some Harolds: Check out** The Reckoning's "Perfect Harold," The Coalition's Big Bosses's Harold and 401 classes' Harolds
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0582CB929B4DF2E1>
<https://improvesbest.com/2015/11/14/a-harold-video-example/>
<http://improvesbest.com/2015/12/28/harold-class-shows/>
- **Compare and Contrast:** How did the different video examples compare? Which do you prefer? Why? Any questions about how the written Harold structure and the videos line up? Things you liked / disliked about the video performances?
- **Go see shows! What inspired you?**



Week 2 – From Openings Into Two Person Scenes

Homework Discussion: *Did students review the PDF of The Harold structure? Did they watch the video examples?*

How did the different video examples compare? Which did they prefer? Why?

Any questions about how the written Harold structure and the videos line up?

Things you liked / disliked about the video performances?

Note: *“The Perfect Harold” video is the “perfect” Harold because it was taped and is generally good throughout. There is a basic structure of The Harold, but the perfect Harold is the one your group does where you trust each other, follow each other, build collaboratively and heighten scenes based on emotional perspectives. All the rest is window dressing.*

Feel free to assure confused students that things will become clearer to them over the course of the class – rather than trying to over explain.

Objective: **Practice an Opening to The Harold. An Opening is the first piece of a long-form performance presented to the audience.** Every show has one. Not every show uses one. **There is tremendous value in using an Opening to introduce a show, establish a tone and develop material to explore in the long-form.**

The Harold’s Opening traditionally involves the full cast. Other show’s Openings leverage more tailored group games. We’ll stick to having everyone start on stage.

The skills learned in 301 – Simplify with Agreement, Clarify with Repetition, Heighten through Pattern Progression – are invaluable in an Opening.

“Tonight We’re Going to Focus On” -

- *Taking one suggestion and blowing it out through collaborative explorations of emotional perspectives, details and themes*

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: *While I believe every class should do the “2.1 Focusing Scene Picture” exercises, whether to do the “Form Of...” and “Structured Openings” exercises is up to you. I will typically go straight from 2.1 to “Organic Openings.” REGARDLESS, please read through each section’s “Lessons” for reference.*

2.0 Warm-Ups: Revisit names, build energy and concentrate energy

Suggested Exercises:

CRAZY EIGHTS

CONCENTRATION CIRCLE OF SEQUENCES (with names)

21



2.1 Focusing Stage Picture: Staging an environment with EVERYONE on stage breeds potential complications as players abandon pattern for roles and over-prioritize explaining who they are and what they're doing. But attention to the elements of stage picture can help focus a group scene and facilitate quick collaborative heightening.

And we want to avoid the “Bandshell of Death” – try to avoid arranging in a half circle on stage.

The sooner everyone knows where we are, the sooner we can heighten and evolve collaboratively. Our main tool of simplification is *Agreement* - the more players that mirror/agree, the less different stuff there is on stage to negotiate. Simply by mirroring each other physically and each other's emotional perspectives. Arguing, we never go anywhere; We build collaboratively through enthusiastic acceptance.

The more people you're playing with the clearer you have to be. Our main tool of clarification is *Repetition*. The first time something happens, it's random; the second time is purposeful; the third time is expected.

Suggested Exercises:

STAGE PICTURE TABLEAUS – Group is divided on wings. Instructor gives group a suggestion of a location, for example, “Apple Orchard,” “Beach,” “Race Track.” One by one, players enter stage, fleshing out a picture with static poses and/or repetitive motion.
Teacher

Progression/Lessons:

- Players tend to want to fill in all the possible roles in a location. An orchard has pickers, trees, baskets, landscapers, squirrels.
- Ask “Where's the focus?” They won't know.
- **Build deliberately with agreement** – There's no reason we can't all be trees. A scene about five trees and one squirrel will be easier to find and heighten faster than a scene where six separate entities struggle for reason to exist.
- Ask “If you were to speak in this scene, would it be a One Person, Two Person, or Three Person Scene?”
- Ask “Who should talk first?”
- Have them point out the groups, defining focus. Point out Upstage/Downstage distinctions for focus. Point out who can see who, and so who has to take their cues from who
- **Seek symmetries; empower asymmetries**

Variations:

- Push them to define more and more abstract environments; i.e., NASA, Hell.
- Speed loading – have everyone crowd the space quickly upon hearing the suggestion, making bold choices and seeking symmetries faster.



ONE PERSON SCENES – Now once the players have established their tableau, they are allowed to speak. They are all to share one emotional perspective – despite any differences in their poses or repeatable actions.

One player can start with a Self Contained Emotional Statement or an emotional sound – the sooner the emotional perspective is clear the easier it'll be to share and heighten.

Agreement can be done through lines of dialogue or just words – nouns, adjectives, verbs. **Or just sounds.**

Choruses of shared emotional sounds are lots of fun.

Players should look to elevate a theme out of the specific context of the tableau; for example, players that start angrily playing cards can heighten to angrily addressing addiction.

Enthusiastic agreement should drive collaboration toward heightening emotion and elevating themes. These can be quick. Get on the same page and focus on building up that page.

Maintain physical poses and repeatable actions – physical morphing can stifle building to climax. Players' miming/activity/pose makes the stage picture interesting and gives them something to appear occupied with between lines of dialogue; it is NOT what the tableau is about.

Lessons:

- **A group building on one idea will reach an apex higher and faster than a group divided (discussing or debating) disparate perspectives**
- **Simplify and find focus through agreement in stage picture and emotional perspectives**
- **AGREEMENT is awesome** – If you can, I can more. If one person is pregnant, you can all be pregnant
- **There's no reason we can't always do One Person Scenes** – even if our physicality is different
- **When you do have groups, don't fall to negotiations, arguments or other lines of questioning** – exploring juxtaposed emotional perspectives is all the scene we need
- **The clearer the *emotional* perspective the better** – if you don't think it's clear, clarify it by heightening the emotion
- **Don't rush to speak** - You have something to do with your hands. You also have an emotional perspective to fill your face with.
- **Agreeing to the *emotion* is more important than heightening the details with words** – remember an enthusiastic “yeah” will always be funnier than a rambling monologue



- **There are no questions in agreement**
- **Share the air space** - Put periods at the end of your sentences.
- **Agree despite “sense”** – If someone has a tumor, each person can have a tumor. If someone’s pregnant, each person can be pregnant.

2.2 Stringing Together Tableaus And Shared Perspective Scenes: In addition to heightening one world based on a suggestion, a series of different tableaus can be strung from one suggestion providing more opportunities for heightening during the Opening and a wider expanse of material to draw on in the scenes following the Opening.

The following “Form Of” & One Person Scene exercises are essentially a way to have students string together tableaus of One Person Scenes. If students are getting it, you can move to “We See” structured openings in the next section.

Suggested Exercises:

FORM OF – All players are on stage. One player says, “Form of...(anything),” and the group quickly moves to forge that (anything) with their bodies. The (anything) can be concrete (“lips,” “bowl of noodles”) or abstract (“peace,” “trust”). Once all the players have contributed to establishing the stage picture, then another player says, “Form of...(anything),” and play continues through repetitions.

Lessons:

- **It doesn’t matter what you do, just do something – fast!** The “form” doesn’t have to actually resemble the spoken word at all, as long as the group is deliberate and committed to its choices.
- **Seek symmetries**
- **Find inspiration, not just in the last move, but in the sequence of moves to that point.** When contributing a “Form of...” to the group, fill in your blank inspired by all of the “Form of...” tableaus preceding your turn. Remember your Word Association and Offer/Set/Cement skills.

“FORM OF” ONE PERSON SCENES – Players “form” tableaus and then get initiate and heighten a One Person Scene. *For example, “Form of...Lips!” and students lay down, bend and mirror each other to make a pair of lips, then one person speaks, “Oh, mercy, I’m so chapped,” and others heighten the emotional perspective (“Sweet lord all mighty, I need some lemonade.”)*

Once an emotional perspective has been raised to an apex, a player initiates a new “Form of...” and with it a new One Person Scene. And repeat.

Lessons:

- **Align through agreement to the first emotional perspective**



- **Emotional sounds are powerful** and are often more conducive to a group's emotional cohesion than words
- **Repetition is the only justification you need** – If emotional offers are not aligned (“It’s so beautiful”/ “I’m so depressed”), don’t waste your time negotiating which feelings are valid; just heighten the juxtaposed feelings (“The colors in this sunset – breath taking” / “So much pollution”; “The deep reds, bright purples...”/ “The black in our lungs”).
- **Repetition of sounds and words is powerful** and can keep a whole cohering even if other pieces lose connection
- **As the tableaux progress, so too should the emotional perspectives progress or oscillate.** For example, if the “Form of Turkey” is scared, the “Form of Thanksgiving” could be either more scared or unabashed. Then follow whatever decision is made.
- **Don’t bail** – Did you make a very energetic choice as a repetitive motion and now you are exhausted? Too bad. Keep it up. Even if you flag, if you seem like you keep tiring the audience will support you; if you give up on it, so will the audience on you.

2.3 Structured Openings: Structured games can help students grasp the collaboration and heightening needed to navigate Harold Openings.

Suggested Exercises:

WE SEE – [Like “The Perfect Harold”] Instructor gives Players a location. One by one they flesh out the stage, saying “We see...” and adding a physical detail to the world, verbally and through mime. For example, Player One says, “We See a sad dog in a rickety doghouse,” while tracing a shoddily made roof in with his palms; Player Two says, “We See a sign where ‘Beware Dog’ is scratched out and ‘Hard Hat Area’ is penciled in.” Students should be encouraged to also embody the inanimate and living objects – Someone can be the dog and another person can be the doghouse; they can both still contribute “We See”s.

When Players have heightened the location sufficiently, one Player sweeps across stage to establish a new location with a clear “We See.” For example, “We see fancy stables above a proud horse.” All other players shift to flesh out / inhabit this new location.

Let Players string together at least three.

Lessons:

- **Share an emotional perspective!** – Don’t just describe. Describe through the lens of a shared emotional perspective (For example: We’re all sad about the dog and we’re super snooty and proud about our horse)
- **Get specific!** – We want to hear specific details. You’ll help yourself if you “see” it; “see” it, say it.
- **Get physical!** – Paint with your arms/hands/body as well as with your mouth. Assume the form of the objects.



- **You don't need to spike, you just need to touch the ball** – Contribute. The longer you wait, the more important your line becomes as all eyes drift to you. Terrified? Be sure to be one of the first to contribute.

INVOCATION – Players stand in a half circle. On the count of three, a “god” appears before them that they will worship in three phases: First, they will describe it physically; “Oh, God, with your fowl beak.” Second, they will address its less tangible qualities; “Oh, God, who tastes like everything.” Third, they will ask it to do unto them; “Oh, God, henpeck my enemies.”

NOTE: Don't worry about students achieving a “perfect” Invocation. **The purpose of the exercise is to show the breadth of available contributions** (sounds, abstract descriptions, themes, etc.) beyond the focus on dialogue that dominates One Person Scenes.

Lessons:

- **Be clear about what “it” is** – don't be vague for artsy sake; the sooner everyone knows what “it” is the sooner everyone can dig deep into the details
- **Unite behind an emotional perspective on “it”** – “what we hate about Microsoft” will collaboratively heighten faster than “what we know about Microsoft”
- **Simplify with mirrored language** – switching between phases is clearest when there's a defining cadence to phase one (“Oh, God”) and a new cadence to phase two (“Sweet, Jesus).
- **Callback** – What does a detail from phase one signify in phase two and can be used for in phase three?
- **Establish rules of reaction** – Y follows X: “...*who is never afraid,*” “*You're a chicken who's not chicken;*” “...*who never stops going,*” “*You're a chicken who'll always win at chicken.*” I'm the guy who: *said, “Eyes as red as flames” so I'll say, “Heart as black as coal.”*
- **There are no mistakes** - seek to fold in everything; don't drop things that seem out of place

2.4 Organic Openings: If we're focused on how a game builds through subsequent moves - keeping To The Ether, Help Desk and Hey Everybody mechanics in mind - we can confidently navigate any game, following its *organic* evolution together as a group.

The mechanics are: Mirror the group's physicality. Share an emotional perspective – through an emotional sound or statement. Heighten the shared perspective To-The-Ether-style, though the progression can be broader Invocation-style. Do more of what you're doing and then, once heightened to an apex, change it. Repeat.



Suggested Exercises:

ORGANIC OPENINGS – Most Harold teams start their show with an organic group game, which essentially entails **a game that begins abstract and can go anywhere**. A player enters stage with an emotional perspective and physicality that all other players hurry on stage to mirror and heighten. When that tableau has reached its apex, a player breaks ranks with a clearly different emotional perspective and physicality which all other players hurry to mirror and heighten. And repeat.

The Reckoning puts a little structure into their organic Opening with Scene Painting, but a team can find and use whatever physical/language conventions that help them pull together as a group and heighten collaboratively.

Example:

- The suggestion is “Zombies.”
- Player One enters stage walking like a zombie and moaning, “Brains.” Every body enters stage walking like a zombie and moaning, “Brains.” (**One Person scene**)
 - I need someone with brains (**Offer**)
 - I need an intellect I can really bury my teeth into. (**Set**)
 - I’m hungry for a smart girl. (**Cement**)
 - *Someone who does crosswords.*
Yum!
Someone who listens to NPR.
YUM!
Someone who reads the WSJ.
YUM!
Someone who knows not to say, “Irregardless.”
YUM! Brains! BRAINS!
 - *Why is it so hard to meet someone these days?*
- A player breaks away from his fellow zombies to become an angry survivor with a shotgun, saying, “Get away, ugly monsters. Bang!” All players break away from being zombies to become angry survivors with shotguns, establishing a One Person Scene with their own “Bang!”
 - *I want someone who makes me feel safe.*
I want a partner who protects me.
I want a living situation I can relax in.
I don’t want to hear any more cross words.
Damn it.
I can’t handle any more crying.
DAMNIT.
I can’t carry any more dead weight.
DAMNIT.
I’m sick and tired of people blowing up on me.
DAMNIT. BANG!
What happened to this world?



- A player breaks away from her fellow survivors, raising a mimed vial into the air and says, “*Eureka! With this serum, no one will ever die!*” All players break away from being survivors to become excited scientists with vials, establishing this new One Person scene with their own “Eureka!”
 - *I’ll have my family with me forever.*
I’ll always have my friends.
I’ll never be lonely again.
I’ll be on the cover of the New York Times.
EUREKA!
I’ll win the Nobel Prize regardless of who else is nominated.
EUREKA!
I’m the smartest girl in the world!
BRAINS!
- And everyone turns back into zombies and devours the smartest girl in the world.

2.5 Inspired Initiations: All a player needs to do is remember *one* thing from the Opening to use in initiating a long-form performance’s first scenes.

NOTE: Throughout the earlier explorations of Openings (One Person, Tableaus, Invocations, Organic Openings, etc.) drill players on remembering *one thing* from the Opening.

Ask them: “What’s one thing you’d pull from the Opening to use as inspiration for a scene?”

Ask players to provide an example of how they might use that inspiration –

- **An object.**
- **An emotional perspective.**
- **A location.**
- **An activity / action.**
- **A reference (i.e. a name said, a joke made, etc.).**
- **Assume a posture**
- **Engage an action**

As pulling inspiration from an Opening to inspire scenes will be fleshed out more next class, we only want to talk here about how we *WOULD* initiate a scene – **have students share exactly what they would do / say to initiate the next scene.**

In pulling from an Opening, pull a wide variety. It’s the start of the show, we don’t want to narrow our focus too early. **From the Opening’s suggestion, we want to pull wide.**



HOMEWORK –

- **Read This:** Openings, What, Why and Examples:
<https://improvesbest.com/2013/12/23/openings-what-why-and-examples/>
- **Go see shows! How did you see groups expand on audience suggestions? How did that suggestion and its inspirations filter through the shows?**



Week 3 – Building In and On Top of Two Person Scenes

Objective: From The Opening we each strive to take **One Thing** on which to establish and develop two-person scenes around patterns of emotional behavior that can be leveraged for rich subsequent beats. Restricting the Harold’s First Beat to Two Person Scenes helps enable grounded, emotional starts with characters and relationships that can be known and fleshed out. The Harold’s First Beat Two Person Scenes are the form’s load-bearing pillars.

SCENE WORK RECAP: In any scene you have at least two different emotional perspectives to play from: **Your Personal and Scenic Emotional Perspectives – How you feel about “I” and How you feel about “You.”**

- Your **Personal** Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who I am, what I have, where I am and what I’m doing.
- Your **Scenic** Emotional Perspective = How I feel about who my scene partner is, what my scene partner has and what my scene partner is doing.

We build scenes by heightening our emotional reactions – to our worlds and to our scene partners - thereby establishing patterns of emotional behavior for our characters and our relationships.

Players watching from the wings have two jobs:

1. Watch each individual scene for patterns of emotional behavior of and between characters that can be heightened in the subsequent beat of the scene
2. Identify a theme connecting two or more of the first beat scenes that can be leveraged in initiating the first Group Game

“Tonight We’re Going to Focus On” -

- *Building Two Person Scenes on Personal and Scenic games and using those scenes to inspire Sequent Beats and a Theme through Group Game mechanics.*

3.0 Warm-Ups: Build and concentrate energy.

Suggested Exercises:

CRAZY EIGHTS

21



3.1 Starting With Emotion: You don't have to initiate with statements. You can start with any choice: A sound, an object, an action, an environment, an atmosphere, etc. You can just express an emotion without context. The sooner we get to feeling, and feeling about something active on stage with us the better.

The following exercises each explore a different path toward initiating with emotion.

Suggested Exercises:

EMOTIONAL CASCADE – Players in a circle. One Player, designated by the Instructor, starts with an emotional reaction, *any emotional reaction*. ***It doesn't need to be verbal. It can have words, but they should be minor.*** Then the next Player, clockwise, repeats that emotion – at LEAST hitting same level if not heightening it. Then play continues around the circle, with each player heightening the emotional reaction. When it gets back to Player One, s/he also has to heighten her/his emotion. Then Player Two can start a brand new emotion and the cascade goes again.

Lessons:

- **Push it past comfortable** – being vulnerable enough to share big emotions can be hard, but we have to trust each other and the safe place to “go big” in practice. Support each other with applause.
- **Being bored or unaffected is hard to heighten** – care
- **Exude the emotion physically** - 11 in sadness is rolling on the floor and weeping

PERSONAL ENDOWMENT CIRCLE – One by one around a circle, through a Self Contained Emotional Statement, each player engages an emotion and makes explicit what it is that is evoking that emotion. Ideally more of the *thing* will *make you* feel more of your emotion.

Example:

- I love this cat
- I hate pulling weeds

SCENIC ENDOWMENT CIRCLE – One by one around a circle, each player turns to the player to their left and, through an Emotional Statement, engages an emotion and makes explicit what it is about the player to their left's character that is evoking that emotion. Ideally more of the *other player's thing* will *make you* feel more of your emotion.

Example:

- I love your hat
- I hate how smug you are



MIRROR, ACTION, OBJECT - Get three players on stage, standing in a line facing the audience, at least an arm's span apart. **Player One (most stage left) is tasked with looking into a mirror and feeling about what they see. Player Two is tasked with engaging in an activity and feeling about what they do. Player Three is tasked with defining an object through mime and feeling about that thing.** (Yes, the Action position can use an object and the Object position can engage an action.) These are three separate vignettes that start in silence. I first ask each player for “an emotional noise” – some vocalization (not words though) of how what they’re engaging makes them feel. Then I ask each person in turn for a “Statement” - a Self-Contained Emotional Statement defining how what they’ve imagined makes them feel – for example, by position, “I love my gut,” “This job is killing me,” and “Silly putty gives me the giggles.” Then Player One sits down, Player Two moves to the Mirror position, Player Three moves to Action position and Player Four enters to take the Object position.

Lessons:

- **Feel about what you imagine; allow more of what you’re imagining to make you feel more.**
 - The player in the Mirror position, for example, loves his gut; **when he pushes his stomach out to make more of a gut, we see more love in his expression.** When we watch him discover his “love handles,” we see **even more love** fill his face. When he shakes the whole mess,... you guessed it... **more love.**
 - The player in the Action position, is not just miming typing while being miserable at the same time; **with each typed word, misery further inhabits her hunched posture. Each successive word is harder and harder to type** as each requires more struggle from her soul.
 - The player in the Object position connects his giggles to the putty’s stretch. Not just giggle and stretch. **He shows the audience the cause and effect. Stretch. Giggle. Stretch further. Giggle longer. Stretch further still. Giggle further still.**
- **Establishing “rules” of cause and effect gives the world we’ve imagined power over us. What we imagine *makes* us feel. Capitalize on the power of patterns with clearly defined cause and effect.**
- **A player who imagines something active on stage with them and feels about it doesn’t *need* another player on stage to make it a scene.**

JUST SOUNDS - Two players on stage. They are given a generic interaction with stakes (Ex: a job interview, a first date, a doctor’s appointment, etc.). Players are to perform only in emotional sounds, deprioritizing words (though words like “Jeez” will pass through the gray area of this exercise).



Lessons:

- **We can establish and heighten Personal and Scenic games based entirely on emotional reactions without words.**
- **Patience and Commitment Make The Moment** – In real life we don't often rush to explain our feelings to an audience. We just feel.

BE DYNAMIC USING EMOTION CARDS - Two players. Each picks two cards from the provided stack (APPENDIX A); each card has an Emotion written on it. Instruct students to each start their scene with one of their two emotions (focused either on themselves or their scene partner) and have them at some point transition to the other emotion (reacting either to some aspect of themselves or their scene partner).

Lessons:

- **React** – don't just feel; react to something active in the scene. Have the emotion *caused* by an endowment. Watching your emotions changed by outside stimuli enforces that the scene is truly in-the-moment and not just something contrived in your own head.
- **Follow your feelings** – have any “what,” “where” and other Details flow through your emotional perspective; they come easier that way.
- **Feel the rhythm** – the oscillations between emotional perspectives will vary wildly between scenes; maybe you'll be angry at the traffic for a while before hearing the song that makes you happy, maybe you'll have quick swings between anger and happiness.

3.2 Two Person Scenes Heightening Emotion: Establish an emotional perspective, heighten the emotional perspective through reaction to active details, and edit – That's scene.

We want to avoid negotiation, conflict and the tepid, talked-out “discovery” that stagnates scenes' growth.

Suggested Exercises:

ENDOW AND HEIGHTEN LAY-UPS – Player One initiates from stage left. Player Two initiates from stage right. They can start with anything. But they should strive to establish at least two emotional perspectives apiece: A Personal Emotional Perspective toward who they are, where they are and what they're doing on stage that doesn't involve the scene partner. And a Scenic Emotional Perspective toward what their scene partner is doing and what defines their character.

Given more lines,...

Players invest in what they initiate with more detail and/or emotional reaction. “If this is true, what else is true?” I love this cat and I LOVE this tiger. I abhor my



scene partner's fashion sense; I really hate the plaid of his bowtie against his lime green frilly shirt.

Players who found their Personal Perspective should ensure they have a Scenic Perspective. Players who found their Scenic Perspective should ensure they have a Personal Perspective.

Your Instructor eyes should be focused on identifying the rhythm between perspectives; there is no right or wrong rhythm, but how cleanly students find *their rhythm* may dictate how comfortable they feel in their scenes. Did they each invest in one perspective before deciding on their other perspective? Did they quickly decide both perspectives and then oscillate between them?

After a few lines back and forth, teacher calls "Scene" and two new players start the exercise.

Probes:

- After a run where everyone has been through the exercise, have them talk about what they liked – whether they were in the scene or just watching.
- Have them identify what felt fun and easy
- Have them identify when they were uncertain of what to do next

Lessons:

- **Unsure of what to do next? Do more of what you were doing** – Invest more emotion, identify more details, expand the environment, etc.
- **Don't give up your thing** – heightening our individual choices together is all we need to move the scene forward. Trying to "figure out" how our things mesh, fighting each other's thing or dropping our thing in favor of our partner's thing robs scenes of their potential.
- **Keep it active!** - Engage in the environment to "see" details you can react to. Being affected by something on stage with you makes the scene energetic – and you need to have more than just your scene partner to react to.
- **Commitment avoids justification** – explaining why two people are on stage often saps the energy from a scene. When two players commit to simply heightening their choices, no one will question the juxtaposition of even the most mismatched initiations.
- **Reactionary statements avoid negotiation** – when we're not comfortable with and/or don't understand what's happening on stage, we revert to asking questions that often bog down scenes. Simply making choices moves us forward and making *emotional* choices helps statements stand without defense ("What do you mean, I'm a pig?" versus "Oh, I'm a pig. You're a chicken.")
- **Heightening avoids conflict** – "I want to kill you"/ "I want to kiss you." If these are the initiations, we don't want to debate or argue – *heighten the feelings*. You don't have to address the disparity between feelings right away if ever. Heighten conflict/tension by heightening your part of it. Addressing/discussing conflict/tension takes the dynamite out of the scene.



INSPIRED TWO PERSON SCENES – All Players on the wings. Point to one player and ask for a word. Ask the next player for a word that the previous player’s suggestion makes them think of. Ask the next player for an occupation/adjective/sound/etc that the previous words make them think of. Repeat some variation until every player gives a word. This acts as an unofficial “Opening” providing players a litany of words/ideas to use as inspiration for their scenes.

With the set of “Opening” words in mind, a Player One initiates from stage left. A Player Two initiates from stage right. Players heighten what they initiate. Have players decide BOTH how they feel about “I” and “You” – engaging an active endowment about themselves AND about their scene partner. The instructor can call “Scene” whenever s/he chooses and then a new set of players initiates based on the initial set of “Opening” words.

Lessons:

- **Bored? React!** – don’t know what to do in a scene? Have an emotional reaction to an active element.
- **Lost? Repeat!** – I scream. Why? I don’t know. So I keep screaming, heightening the emotion of the scream. Don’t stop what you’re doing to make “sense” of it; Find “sense” through continuing doing what you’re doing.
- **Be affected** - There's power in reacting in-the-moment to another player's perspective/actions/choices. When we don’t react to a fellow player’s move that deserves a reaction we risk pulling the rug out from under the scene.
- **Feel first, understand second (if ever)** – don’t wait to “understand your motivation” before making a choice about how to feel
- **Never trapped by your choice** – while players should be encouraged to push their heightening before changing course onto a new thing, players should never feel trapped by the things. “I love my teddy bear.” I heighten why I love my teddy bear (“He doesn’t judge”) but I don’t have to react only to teddy. “I really love my fluffy duck.”/ “He doesn’t give a shit.”

3.3 Wings Jobs: While on the wings, watching the first beat scenes, players are tasked with coming up with Second Beat and Group Game initiations

- Second Beat: what pattern of emotional behavior – Personal or Scenic Game - can be heightened?
- Group Game: what theme that connects at least two of three Two Person Scenes can be turned into a Self Contained Emotional Statement?

After a run of 3 Two Person Scenes inspired by a set of “Opening” words, prompt players to think about how they’d build on what’s been established:



- Prompt non-playing students to discuss how they could heighten individual Two Person Scenes Second Beat Initiations.
- Prompt students to identify Themes that connect at least two of three Two Person Scenes with which to initiate Group Game #1.

Second Beat Scene Initiation Lessons: Players watching a two-person scene unfold from the wings should seek to answer these questions:

How is each character defined by his/her emotional reactions? For example, he is a neat freak.

How is the relationship defined by their emotional dynamic? For example, they hate each other but need each other to survive.

What's the theme of this scene? For example, lamenting the oppressiveness of the man.

In Subsequent Scenes, we want to focus on heightening emotional perspectives and dynamics instead of following plot. The Subsequent Scene initiator aims to present a new catalyst/situation that can heighten the emotional reactions of the initial scene.

For example, the neat freak who was previously shinning his trophies is now meticulously grooming his trophy wife. For example, the married couple that hates and needs each other is mirrored in the relationship between Presidents of Cold War Countries. For example, the idea of two professionals feeling powerless beneath their CEO is heightened by a scene of two children complaining about the oppressive rule of the hall monitor.

We want to avoid Rehashing, wherein a character or characters just revisit the same situation and react the same. While “repetition is heightening” this can get stale. **Things that help: Adding new dynamic characters, Using entirely different players/characters, adding more characters/bodies, elevating the situation, elevating the behavior.**

MATCHING (Being a bigger version of Player One; Doing what Player One did bigger) is my favorite go-to Second Beat move. You were excited by snails? I'm going to be *really* excited by slimy things.

Group Game #1 Initiation Lessons: Initiating a group game in service of a theme a player sees emerging from the preceding scenes can help focus the performance's progression.

Ideally, the Group Game helps ramp up the pacing and narrow the focus of The Harold as it proceeds.

Players should be watching the first set of scenes looking for something that at least 2 of the 3 scenes have in common. It can be as simple as, “take place in foreign places” or “involve young people.” It can be elevated to theme level like, “people pretend to be people they're not” or “friendship is great.” Players should try to think up a game initiation that speaks to whatever “something” they saw (a SCES is most conducive to



organic group building). All that matters is that they are thoughtful about the initiation – even if no one else gets it.

Example:

- **1st Beat:** 1A – Kid tries on Halloween costumes; 1B – Grandpa goes back to college; 1C – Wife is convinced that husband is living a double life.
- **Group Game #1:** Player initiates, facing the audience and saying, “I play a doctor on TV, but in real life I’m in rehab.” Play continues To-the-Ether style (“I run like a hero on the field, but in real life I run a cock fighting ring”), exploring the themes of costumes and double lives.

3.4 Group Game #1 – To The Ether: Group Game #1 is initiated with a Self Contained Emotional Statement inspired by a theme that at least 2 of the 3 first beat Two Person Scenes have in common.

Focus Group Game #1 on a To The Ether-style game. To The Ether games are the simplest in terms of pattern components but are the most varied in terms of their final form.

Suggested Exercises:

3 TWO PERSON SCENES INTO RUN OF TO THE ETHERS- Have students run 3 Two Person Scenes and follow up with a run of different To The Ether games inspired by those three scenes. All that’s necessary for initiating a game is a Self Contained Emotional Statement that has some relation to an established Theme. Have EACH PLAYER initiate a new To The Ether, ensuring that everyone gets practice coming up with an initiation line based on a theme they saw emerge across the first beat.

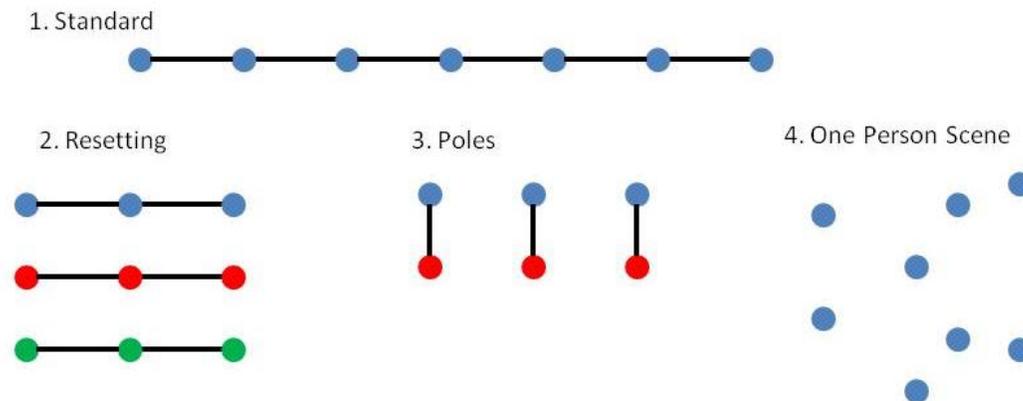
Lessons:

- **The Offer is anything. The Set move seeks to establish a relationship with the Offer move. The Cement move seeks to heighten the relationship between the Set and Offer moves through its own relationship with the Set move.** The *progression* of Offer, Set and Cement moves define the rules to the relationship between nodes in the sequence.
- **Trust simplicity** – stick the same language; don’t allow personally-clever 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.
- **The sooner a pattern is cemented, the sooner everyone can play** – when players feel *compelled* to continue a pattern you know it has been established with a clear progression



- **Poles** – when two extremes are juxtaposed (hot/cold; love/hate) it can be difficult to find a contribution to continue the progression; upon hearing “poles” players should seek to *set* up another poled pair to establish a progression across pairs.
- **Categories** – related contributions that do not heighten/progress; can be reordered without consequence (“Coke/Kleenex/Band-aid” vs. “Kleenex/Band-aid/Coke”).
 - **A run of categories typically necessitates a “resetting” pattern pass**
- **Resetting** – when a pattern’s trajectory has reached an apex, players should think to start a second related pattern so that the game is heightening iterations of patterns
 - Womb/World/Heaven; Testies/Sweat sock/Hell
 - “I hate school”...“I hate prison”; “My teachers...”...“My guards...”
- **Rule of 3s is not mandatory** – while the rule of 3’s does facilitate funny, you don’t need factors of three; patterns don’t have to be played all the way down the line before they are edited
- **Pattern Ending Edits** – ideally a pattern heightens to a beautiful point and earns an edit; not-ideally a player makes a move at the expense of the pattern and fails to earn an edit leaving a dead scene; but there are moves that can successfully earn an edit while disrupting the progression
 - **Contextual Alignment** – when it becomes *clear* what the whole pattern to that point has been about
 - “My nose ring hurts,” “My ink hurts,” “My brand hurts,” “My *fixed-speed bike hurts.*”
 - **Throwing a Pattern on Its Head** – if the pattern is heightened in a *clear progression* subverting that progression can be funny
 - “I love it,” “I love it,” “I love it,” “*I loathe it*”
- **Don’t forget emotion** – if nothing else heighten emotion/character; that can earn you an edit even if all else fails to cohere.

“To The Ether” Variations





HOMEWORK –

- **Read This:** To The Ether Games:
<http://iaidb.wordpress.com/2013/05/01/1-4-to-the-ether-games-2/>
- **Read This:** Subsequent Beats:
<https://improvesbest.com/2013/05/01/3d-2-subsequent-beats-2/>
- **Dissect Character Arcs** – Most comedic shows are defined by an arc of a character feeling something, being affected by that something heightened over time, and then dealing with the impact of that feeling/something. And next episode they'll reset to the audience's expectation of their emotional behavior. Notice that in the shows you watch.
- **Dissect Your Expectations As An Audience Member** - Look for triggers set up in first beats that are played to in subsequent scenes. For example, George tells Jerry he's intimidated and enamored by doing crossword puzzles with his new girlfriend. So later when she wants George to take an IQ test, he both hates to and has to.
- **Go see shows! How did you see a character or relationship heightened in a subsequent beat? How did Group Games relate to and/or heighten established themes?**



Week 4 – From Openings Through Second Beats

Objective: Take a suggestion from the audience, blow it out through an Opening from which elements will be used to inspire different Two Person Scenes that will have their themes explored in Group Game #1 and their characters and/or relationships and/or themes heightened in Second Beat Scenes.

How we Set up Subsequent Beats weighs heavily on the “success” of our Third Beat. **We want to** leverage Improv’s unique strengths, prioritizing collaboration and in-the-moment reactions over in-the-moment plot writing, by seeking to **heighten Personal and Scenic Games from the initial scene in our Subsequent Beats.**

“Tonight We’re Going to Focus On” -

- *Practicing The Harold’s first two-thirds: From Suggestion, through Opening, through First Best Two Persons Scenes, through the first Group Game to narrow on theme, and through Sequent Beats that build on First Beat scenes through the filter of the first Group Game if applicable and leverage the power of pacing with group scenes and tertiary moves.*

4.0 Warm-Ups: Build energy, concentrate energy and emote boldly.

Suggested Exercises:

CRAZY EIGHTS

21

STORY STEALING – We have to listen and *retain* so we can return to and heighten established information. Memory is a muscle to exercise. Everyone in a circle. One at a time, players enter the center and tell a true, personal, 30 Second Story. Once everyone has told a story, the teacher tells the class that players now have to enter the center and recreate someone else’s story. Every story should be revisited once by another player.

Lessons:

- **Don’t mock; mirror** – this is not about making fun of each other, it’s about making each other look good by remembering their story
- **Remember specifically** – remembering a few specific details will be more powerful than remembering everything generally
- **Remember reactions** – our emotional reactions are improv gold; focus on those when setting other player’s stories to memory
- **See what’s not shown** – recreating what our fellow players initially did subconsciously is great fun. How do they stand? How do they move? What do they sound like?



4.1 Subsequent Beat Initiations: We want to focus on strong initiations that endow personal and scenic games and leverage those quickly defined games with subsequent beat initiations that heighten characters and relationships.

INSTRUCTOR: Read through these “Revolver” exercises to understand how you will lead them and flow between them. Using just initiating statements, we’re looking at how to heighten characters’ emotional perspectives and relationships’ emotional dynamic with subsequent beat initiations. See how – focused on either Personal or Scenic perspectives – we build from single statements to heightening them in Subsequent Beats.

Suggested Exercises:

PERSONAL Game Revolver: Everyone stands in a circle. The First Player provides a Self-Contained Emotional Statement toward an active element – what s/he is doing (“I love filing”), what object s/he shares space with (“Ugh, this ice cream has icicles”), or what s/he is (“I’m super snazzy”). The Second Player around the circle then provides a brand new, unrelated Self-Contained Emotional Statement (SCES). Play continues with each player providing their own SCES.

When everyone around the circle has provided an unrelated SCES, the First Player now has to provide an SCES that heightens the character choice of the Last Player (i.e. “I loovvee alphabetizing,” “Gross, this popsicle droops like my PopPop,” “I’m radically rude.”) Then the Second Player in the circle provides an SCES that heightens the First Player’s *initial* character choice. Then the Third Player heightens the Second Player’s original SCES with his/her own SCES, and so on and so on.

Lessons:

- **Memory is critical.** This exercise is contrived to make each improviser *have to* remember what the player before them in the sequence provided, and forced targeted remembering builds muscle memory. The more we remember, the more we have to leverage moving forward.
- **Heightening is the goal; repetition will suffice.** Simply repeating the player’s SCES will be funny; repeating the SCES with heightened emotion will be funnier still; and heightening the originating SCES by changing just one word To-The-Ether style reaches a higher ideal of this exercise; but **repetition alone is heightening.**
- **Subsequent Beats avoid rehashing by elevating away from the individual and/or the specific situation.** If Gary initiates his original scene smugly with “I’m the most powerful exec on the board,” we can certainly heighten Gary the Exec in subsequent beats but we *really* have to heighten Gary or risk retreading the same material which can get old. If Bill initiates a second beat super smugly with “I’m the most powerful hero in the League of Justice,” then immediately there’s no risk of retreading and Bill’s heightened the *idea* of smugly powerful people among powerful people. An improviser’s default is too often to make subsequent beats “all about Gary”; this exercise helps forge the muscle for



making subsequent beats about “people like Gary” and/or “situations like Gary’s.”

Variations:

- After playing this exercise through (having gone around the circle twice), have players shuffle up their positions so as to be standing next to new people.
- If you started the exercise going clockwise, have the next round of the exercise go counter-clockwise.

SCENIC Game Revolver: Everyone stands in a circle. A player reacts emotionally toward an active endowment of the player to his/her right – what s/he is doing (“I love watching you file”), what object s/he shares space with (“Oh, wow, your mansion is intimidating”), or what s/he is (“You are one sexy garbage man”). The endowed player has their own emotional reaction to the initiating player, either reacting to the endowment (“I love watching YOU file,” “Yes, I had these golden statues put in *to* intimidate”) or reacting to a new endowment they give the initiating player (“Your breath makes me desire death”). *Essentially, these are 2 line scenes.* The endowed player then turns to the next player to his/her right and initiates a brand new, unrelated scene. Players continue until each Player has been on the initiating and receiving end of a 2 line scene. *To clarify, Player 1 and Player 2 do a scene, then Player 2 and Player 3, then Player 3 and Player 4, ...then Player 6 and Player 1.*

Having completed the circle to where it is again the first player’s turn to start, this player initiates a scene to his/her right that heightens the 2 line scene s/he was just in with the player to his/her left. *To clarify, Player 1 and Player 2 do a two-line scene heightening the two-line scene between Player 6 and Player 1, then Player 2 and Player 3 heighten the first two-line scene between Player 1 and Player 2, ...then Player 6 and Player 1 heighten the scene between Player 5 and Player 6.*

Lessons:

- **Memory is critical.** This exercise is contrived to make each improviser *have to* remember two different 2 line scenes in order to successfully participate in heightening them with subsequent beats. Forced targeted remembering builds muscle memory. The more we remember, the more we have to leverage moving forward.
- **Heightening is the goal; repetition will suffice.** Simply repeating a line will be funny; repeating the line with heightened emotion will be funnier still; and heightening the originating 2 line scene by changing just one word To-The-Ether style reaches a higher ideal of this exercise; but repetition alone is heightening. “You think I’m an idiot”/”Yeah, you voted Republican” to “You think I’m an idiot”/”Yeah, President *Dubya*, I do.” Or “I’m impressed; you’re hired”/”Happy to join up” to “I’m horny, let’s have sex”/”Happy to join up.”



- **Subsequent Beats avoid rehashing by elevating away from the specific relationship and/or the specific situation.** A scene where a nerdy teenage tries to attract a girl who's clearly not interested in him, can certainly be heightened in subsequent beats by the boy trying different ways to attract that girl, but if too focused on plot the string of beats hinges on the resolution to that plot and aspiring to be in-the-moment sitcom writers is a risky gambit. If instead a subsequent beat has the boy trying to connect with a puppy that's clearly not interested in him, *then* we heighten the behavioral pattern of the character which requires only exploration, not resolution. If instead a subsequent beat has a Third World country attempting to get the attention of the United States, *then* we heighten the theme of being overlooked by social "betters." In improvisation, we are not confined to one set of characters or a limited selection of set pieces. We can be anyone anywhere in service of heightening the situational, behavioral, relationship and thematic games of our scenes. Too tight a focus on the specifics of an originating scene can stunt the potential of subsequent beats.

Variations:

- After playing this exercise through (having gone around the circle twice), have players shuffle up their positions so as to be standing next to new people.
- If you started the exercise going clockwise, have the next round of the exercise go counter-clockwise.

4.2 First and Second Beat Runs: Play 3 first beat two-person scenes (1A, 1B, 1C), followed by 3 subsequent beat scenes (2A, 2B, 2C) to practice both memory and heightening of first beat games.

As a proxy for the Opening, I'll point to each Player and ask for a word – they don't have to be related but relationships can be prompted (Ex: an occupation/adjective/sound/etc that the previous word makes you think of). **Then Players try to remember *one* of the words/ideas to use when initiating their first beat scenes.**

While on the wings, watching the first beat scenes, players are tasked with identifying what patterns of emotional behavior can be heightened. What is it a character is reacting to and how can that reaction be heightened with new context? What is the relationship between the characters and how can that relationship be heightened with new context?

NOTE ON EDITS: We should sweep at this point because it's clearest – cross from one wing to the other briskly across stage between the players and the audience. The sweeper does NOT have to start the next scene generally, but for this exercise we want to encourage it. We can edit liberally so as to get to the next scene initiation quickly. *We'll talk timing and more sophisticated edits later.*



Instructor can call the edits if players are missing them. Edits on the quick side will ensure that the group can do several runs-through.

Side coach during scenes where necessary.

Lessons:

- **Whatever happens, happens.** The thoughtful initiation of a subsequent scene is only a starting point, not a blue print for the rest of the show. Wherever the scene is inspired to go, it should go.
- **Subsequent beat scenes are more narrowly focused than the initial scenes.** While initial scenes blow out at least two personal and two scenic games, the subsequent scene focuses on heightening one of those games.
- **Subsequent beat scenes are great opportunities for three or more person scenes.** Assisting in ramping up the pacing of a long-form performance, greater numbers of players on stage enhance the energy.
 - **Do a Tag-Out / Pivot Run** further heightening a character’s emotional perspective through multiple lenses during the same “scene”
 - **Leverage Help Desk mechanics** – repeat and heighten language
 - **Do Series of Split Screens** further heightening a relationship’s dynamic through multiple pairings/groupings during the same “scene”
 - **Add MORE MATCHING** – If Character X is funny, what about a room of character Xes?
 - **Remember that if Player Three mirrors Player One, we don’t necessarily want a Player Four to come out and mirror Player Two.** Imbalance can be more interesting than balance; if Player Three mirrors Player One, it’s best if Player Four also mirrors Player One.
 - **Leverage ONE, TWO, THREE Person Scenes and Hey Everybody Game tools**
 - **Add Walk-Ons, We Sees, etc.** [See Bag of Tricks Appendix]
 - **Walk-ons** – we can enter a two player scene in progress as another character, offering a move that contributes to the progression of the game(s) at play. Two high school boys are feeling self conscious in the hallway so Player 3 enters as a mean girl to point out their foibles. Two players are arguing over the value of the movie they just left, so Player 3 enters to agree with one of them and rile the other. If there is one tertiary move an improviser knows, it’s the Walk-on. Unfortunately, too few improvisers know to Walk Off. *You’re a tertiary character; the scene’s not about you.* A Walk-on should only be used to heighten/sharpen a game already at play. An entering character must acquiesce to those already on stage and strive not to be the focus of the scene.
 - **Focus on one Tertiary Move** – Follow one Walk On with more Walk Ons, not new Cut-Tos.



NOTE: You can certainly prompt students to think about how they might continue a progression, flip an emotional reaction or otherwise follow 1st and 2nd Beats into a 3rd Beat. Assure them though that they will have more time later to explore 3rd Beats.

4.3 Run the Harold from Opening through Second Beat Scenes:

Suggested Exercises:

OPENING INTO 1st BEAT INTO GROUP GAME #1 INTO 2nd BEAT – Get a suggestion. Perform an Opening. Wipe to the wings everyone. Then 3 sets of two players perform back-to-back scenes with some connection to the Opening – call these scenes (1A, 2A, 3A). Then, initiated using a SCES inspired by a theme running through the first beat scenes, perform Group Game #1. Then execute three second beat scenes in the same order (1B, 2B, 3B) as the first beat. *Bonus points to the second beat scenes that also leverage the Group Game’s theme.*

Instructor can call the edits if players are missing them. Edits on the quick side will ensure that the group can do several runs-through.

AS REMINDERS – here are quick summaries of the Harold pieces in play so far.

OPENING Lessons:

- **Seek Symmetries and Empower Asymmetries** – In forming stage pictures, seek to minimize with agreement and mirroring. Players who are weighted differently or positioned down/center stage should feel empowered.
- **Trust Enthusiastic Agreement** – find that shared emotional perspective and blow it up with sounds, words, abstract statements and dialogue.
- **Serve the group** – *you* don’t have to be funny for the group to be hilarious; be willing to *just contribute* to keep the Opening moving.
- **Elevate themes from the context of the vignette** – while you call could be physical playing cards, you can drop “cards” from your dialogue and heighten to explore where “greed” leaves you.

FIRST BEAT Lessons:

- **Come Away With One Thing From The Opening** – If every player strives to remember one thing from the Opening – an object, location, feeling, joke, word – we’re good. Let that one thing be your inspiration for a Two Person Scene.
 - Your scene partner may come on with their own “one thing” – they should feel encouraged to – they may just follow your thing.
 - That “one thing” provides just the basis for your emotional perspective. Don’t make the scene “about” that one thing.



- Strive to pull wide from The Opening – if the first scene chose a quiet setting, you choose to reference an intense emotion. The initial scenes should be unconnected beyond their inspiration from The Opening. *And beware too many connections to The Opening – move on.*
- **The audience loves seeing how their one seed grew your many branches.** Don't feel tied to the suggestion after it inspires your Opening.

1st GROUP GAME – To The Ether Lessons:

- **Initiate with a Self Contained Emotional Statement inspired by a theme that at least 2 of the 3 first beat Two Person Scenes have in common.**
- **The Offer is anything. The Set move seeks to establish a relationship with the Offer move. The Cement move seeks to heighten the relationship between the Set and Offer moves through its own relationship with the Set move.** The *progression* of Offer, Set and Cement moves define the rules to the relationship between nodes in the sequence.
- **See pages 29-31 for an additional refresher and lessons**

SUBSEQUENT BEATS Lessons:

- **Be A Catalyst for Emotional Reactions** – What about a character or a relationship can you heighten with new emotional stakes? How can you initiate using new details while making clear you're seeking a heightened reaction of an established emotion?
- **Add More People** – Subsequent beat scenes are great opportunities for three or more person scenes. Walk Ons. Tag-Outs. "We See..."s And all the Tertiary Moves.
- **Serve the group** – *you* don't have to be funny for the group to be hilarious; be willing to *just contribute* to keep the Opening moving.
- **Elevate themes from the context of the vignette** – while you call could be physical playing cards, you can drop "cards" from your dialogue and heighten to explore where "greed" leaves you.

HOMEWORK –

- **Find Examples of Heightening Characters** – Find and share examples of characters defined by a trait or tic that remains constant as we follow the character over time
A commercial example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=petNZnevFPA>
- **Find Examples of Heightening Relationships** – Find and share examples of how relationships are depicted through a series of situations. The core actors can be the same or change from situation to situation.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCijeRxPUBe>
- **Go see shows! How did improvisers heighten characters and relationships? How did they explore themes with group games?**



Week 5 – The Back Half: Group Game #2 & Third Beats

Objective: If the first half of the Harold is about setting yourself up for success – with thoughtful initiations heightening patterns of emotional behavior and themes – then the second half is all about following those set patterns through to success.

Group Game #2, like Group Game #1, is initiated around the themes that have emerged. This Harold will leverage the Hey Everybody Game template

(<http://improvesbest.com/2013/05/01/1-7-hey-everybody-games-2/>)

Whatever the Second Beat heightens from the First Beat, the Third Beat also heightens, following the progression.

By the end of today, the group will run through at least one full Harold from start to finish.

“Tonight We’re Going to Focus On” -

- *Following our Beats’ progressions and narrowing in on theme.*

5.0 Warm-Ups: Build energy and concentrate energy.

Suggested Exercises:

CRAZY EIGHTS

21

THAT’S THE WAY WE GET DOWN: Players stand in a circle. Player One says, “Hey, [Player Two’s name].” Player Two says, “Hey, what?” All players say, “Hey, [Player Two’s name].” Player Two says, “Hey, what?” Player One says, “Show us how to get down.” Player Two says, “No way.” All players say, “Show us how to get down.” Player Two says, “Okay.” Then Player Two proceeds to dance in whatever fashion while singing, “D-O-W-N. That’s the way we get down.” Then everyone copies Player Two’s dance and sing, “D-O-W-N. That’s the way we get down.” Then Player Two says, “Hey, [Player Three’s name].” Repeat. ***The Lesson:*** Boldly go and boldly follow. Without self consciousness or judgement.

5.1 Cascade of Beats: Run beats sequentially without an Opening or Group Games. Have students edit scenes. You can Side Coach, but have them edit and initiate.

Subsequent beat work is going to be stronger if built on a heightening pattern of emotional behavior instead of an object or location.

NO-OPENING OPENING: Instead of doing a full Opening, I’ll point to a student and ask for a word, then ask another student for a word that word made them think off, then another student for a place you might find that word, and so on – asking each player for a one word contribution. And then players take ALL of those words as inspiration for their Opening-Less Harold.



TEACHER HOMEWORK/PREP: Watch this scene - <http://improvdoesbest.com/2015/12/28/two-person-scene-example-playing-with-status-and-physically-engaged/>. Chris is high status to Shah, he directs her around, and yet Shah is his enabler, getting him into fighting and stealing pain killers. Chris has a powerful job, but his life off stage has fallen apart. Chris also likes destroying as a hobby what he fixes as a job.

What second beats can you dream up based on those games? Imagine a 2nd beat with a 4 star general in Iraq who, thanks to a private, is enjoying terrible war crimes. Does thinking about that scene as the 2nd beat bring a 3rd beat to mind?

Imagine a 2nd beat where a bunch of construction workers discovered the joys of demolition. Does that inspire a string of tag-outs in your mind? Maybe then the tag-out run exhausts the "destruction is more fun than creation" game so then a 3rd beat is ripe for throwing the game on its head. Imagine a group of sad kids picking through their broken toys – the rush of destruction gone leaving them nothing.

Suggested Exercises:

SUBSEQUENT 3rd BEATS – Three two-person scenes (1A, 2A, 3A), followed by three subsequent scenes in the same order (1B, 2B, 3B), followed by three subsequent scenes in the same order (1C, 2C, 3C). **Run this a lot.** Scenes can be “edited early” to facilitate getting reps in, but not too quick as we want to see characters and relationships heighten. The more they practice, the more students will feel comfortable dealing with whatever that Third Beat brings.

Lessons:

- **Whatever the 2nd Beat heightens, the 3rd Beat also heightens.** Follow the progression set by the 2nd Beat. *For example, if a 2nd Beat scene chooses to heighten Billy’s bias and ignores Sally’s anger, then we also want the 3rd Beat to prioritize Billy over Sally. For example, if the 2nd Beat elevates a relationship in the first beat as being between superheroes, it would be wrong in the 3rd Beat to have a less exciting relationship.* As with our other pattern work, if the progression is clear then the 3rd Beat can throw the progression on its head, but that’s a move that is dangerous to force.
- **Subsequent beat work is going to be stronger if built on a heightening pattern of emotional behavior instead of an object or location.**
- **3rd beat scenes don’t have to be distinct.** 3rd beat scenes can overlap or exist as a mash-up. *For example, everyone ends up the same party. For example, a character representative from each thread shows up at the same news conference.*
- **3rd beat scenes can be quick.** A black-out joke line will suffice, especially if in the prior scenes an emotional game has been heightened to a fine point.



5.2 Group Game #2 - Hey Everybody Games: The Hey Everybody rubric game illustrates how we can come together in a mess and work out order. **In the Harold, a Hey Everybody is a useful game because A) it enables a mass of people to get on stage quickly, elevating pacing, and B) can be focused on a type of character/object/animal/etc, or group of people, or location that emerged as a focus of the long form to this point.**

So get out there Everybody, create some chaos confidently! Hey Everybody game mechanics allow a group to quickly build a focused direction out of disparate parts.

Remember, the Key is the Sequence and Silos.

Sequence: Though everyone may rush on to stage together, someone speaks first then someone speaks second, then third, etc. **The first time it's random, the second time it's purposeful, the third time it's expected.**

Silos: Everyone's first responsibility is to have A reaction – agree, disagree, comment, be disparate – it doesn't matter what as long as there is a what. The series of "whats" defines the sequence. Then, **let your what define you** – that's your thing; your silo. Your agreement with your thing and your repetition of your thing breeds simplicity and clarity. For example, if in reaction to "Hey everybody, staff meeting time," you say, "Oh, I was expecting donuts," in the next pass of the sequence, heighten your exact thing ("I imagined there'd be sprinkles") or a tangentially related thing ("Whaaaaat? No coffee either?"). Remember that repetition alone is heightening; first response is "Can you speak up?" second response can be "Can you speak up?"

IN THIS HAROLD, think about a type of character or a location that has been prominent to this point in the show and use that to initiate the Hey Everybody Group game. Initiate with an emotional perspective. For example, "I love being a vampire," or "I hate malls." You don't need a contrived "Hey Everybody..." initiation because we know it's Group Game #2 time and any initiation you do can be turned into a Hey Everybody if everybody rushes the stage, jumps in with a contribution and then repeats the sequence of contributions while heightening their silos.

Suggested Exercises:

HEY EVERYBODY – Everyone starts on the wings. A player initiates to bring a crowd on stage; "Team, take a knee." Players **immediately** join and players make choices quickly in succession – reacting, agreeing, emoting – to establish the sequence of contribution. The initiating player restarts the next sequence by heightening through the filter of their initiation. Players contribute in the order of the initiating sequence, heightening through their personal filter.



The more chaos at the top of a Hey Everybody the more fun it is to use Hey Everybody skills to navigate that chaos. Don't start these games cautious – FEEL/ REACT/CHOOSE!

Lessons:

- **Don't wait; react** – wait and nothing will happen or you'll be stuck negotiating. The sooner a player reacts, the sooner they're taken care of, and there's one less player to "figure out."
- **Facilitate, don't dictate** – the game's facilitator is just another player, who happened to start the scene. The facilitator can and should find a personal filter and not feel the need to speak any more than anyone else.
 - If the facilitator contributes a line that begs direct acknowledgement ("What'll we call our product?"), know you don't have to engage his/her conversation; you can and should stick your silo first and foremost.
- **Play your part** – trust that if you continue heightening through your personal filter/silo at your established place in the group's sequence then an edit will be found. You may not be "the funny one" this time, but your consistency will allow what is funny to pop. (*see Improv Does Best "Pattern Save" videos*)
- **Define the sequence in retrospect and don't ignore mutations** – If one person contributes twice in the first pass, that's okay; they should stick that sequence. If one person falls out of order the second pass, that's okay; they should seek to clarify with the third pass.
- **For more than contrived scenes** – any scene where a group needs to focus chaos can be aided by Hey Everybody dynamics. Have one player initiate a scene with a SCES and have a crowd join that scene quickly, and quickly establishing a sequence of contributions. Restarting and repeating a sequence of contributions can focus even the most disparate parts.
- **Break free from the Bandshell of Death!** – don't just stand in a half-circle and talk; engage environment, change your posture and levels, etc.
- **Be active; avoid waiting** – With so many people on stage, if we're not engaged in our physical space then we just look like we're waiting for our turn to speak. If we find something static or repetitive to engage in actively, then the audience's attention isn't drawn to idleness.
- **Remember tableaux** – outside of the band shell it's easier to miss each other's contributions and/or contradict each other. Remember with tableaux how to cede attention to those who are more centrally positioned.

5.3 A Word on "Edits": At its core, a "successful" edit need only *clearly* communicate that people on stage must leave stage and a new scene is starting. Students can rely on Sweep Edits, but beyond that there are myriad ways to execute an edit.



Edits are a “feel” thing and will be easier with an audience. Players though should edit a scene when the scene needs it, not just when the player has a great idea for the next scene. Be patient and serve the show.

Key Teachings:

- **The most classic is a Sweep Edit wherein a player either from inside the scene or on the wings runs across players’ field of vision in a rush that says, “Get off stage; this scene’s over.”**
- Rather than *sweep* across the stage, a player entering stage from the wings with a bold initiation line that clearly is different (in subject, tone, etc.) from the current scene can also be used to alert improvisers of the desire to start a new scene.
- A player on stage engaged in the current scene can also execute this sweep-less edit, by simply breaking cleanly away from his or her current position, posture, character, etc.
 - *Danger: Don’t use this to bail on a scene*
- **Being the one that edits does NOT mean you HAVE to be the person to start the next scene.** Don’t miss a needed edit because you can’t think of how to start the next scene.
- **If you’re building your scenes on patterns of emotional perspective, you don’t ever have to worry about a missed edit.** Hit a funny height? If you’re on the wings, trust that players will continue investing in their pattern and another height will come. On stage, continue investing in your pattern; don’t freak out and make a change.
- **You can edit from within.** This is allowed and can be necessary, especially in a large group game where most of the cast is on stage. BUT you must be present on stage; do NOT let being able to edit from within be an ejector seat when you’re not enjoying a scene. We MUST commit to what we’re doing on stage and only edit once earned.

5.4 Run Harold: Students know all the pieces, now put it together. You can start slowly with stage coaching. You can throw them into the fire and have them do one all the way through to prove they can. Do whatever you and your students are most comfortable with.

Key Teachings:

- The Harold’s structure should help not hinder. Students that feel “confined” by the order, should think of themselves as “focused” to be more creative given some provided direction.
- Magic happens when we blow out the suggestion wide and deep through an Opening only to then, by heightening patterns of emotional behavior and themes, bring the form back to a crescendoing point. Work to integrate Group Games’ themes back into the beats.

Example:

- **Suggestion:** Book



- **Opening:** Everyone's studying and it's hard. Everyone's in a lab and there's been a breakthrough. Everyone's devising really complicated evil plans.
- **1st Beat:** 1A – Two recent college grads feel overwhelmed; 1B – A dog and a cat are on an Incredible Journey; 1C – Bowser's architects study blueprints to stymie Mario.
- **Group Game #1:** Player initiates, looking around agape and saying, "New York City is so complicated." Another player initiates as a mouse, saying, "This maze is so complicated." Another player initiates as a sperm, saying, "These fallopian tubes are so complicated," etc.
- **2nd Beat:** 2A – Lazy grads complain about feeling "lost" while frustrated parents try to give them directions; 2B – A married relationship is mapped onto the Incredible Journey as the cat complains that the dog will never stop for directions; 2C – Getting through Bowser's castle is incredibly easy for Mario and Luigi despite the architects' efforts.
- **Group Game #2:** People go to the Baby Store seeking returns because their babies didn't come with directions. Turns out God doesn't accept returns.
- **3rd Beat:** Lazy grads and Frustrated Parents are among group that all don't know how to proceed in life while Jesus shouts unheard that he's provided a Book to show them the way. Dog finds himself with Jesus who tells him that he and cat died; of course, all dogs go to heaven while cats... Cat is in Hell and wants to escape the flames; Mario appears to lead the way and defeat the Devil/Bowser.

"CHEAT" FOR THE END OF HAROLD: If students need more stability in thinking about the Third Beats, share this "cheat" with them.

- Look back to the Opening for something **physical** to connect to it (i.e. a shared character from the Opening, moves like Scene Painting, a location, etc.)
- Redo part of your Opening

"The End Is The Beginning." Other parts of the show will start to permeate through your repetition of the Opening. Showing the Opening again with the new lens of the full show looks like a magic trick for the audience.

HOMEWORK –

- **Go see shows! How did improvisers heighten characters and relationships? How did they explore themes with group games?**
- **Go see shows with your teammates! Hang out after the show and talk about what you liked and disliked.**



Week 6 – Practice

Objective: Run, run and run the Harold.

Consider a “Speed Harold” wherein players are told to “play patient but edit fast.” Not only will this help ensure the class gets through more Harold runs but students will also rely more on their developed instincts with less time to be in their heads.

If the class is weak in particular areas, refocus them using exercises dedicated to those skills: Openings, Two Person Scenes, To The Ether Games, Subsequent Beats and Hey Everybody Games.

Below are:

- **Tag-out/Pivot and Split Screen exercises that will practice heightening characters and relationships along a progression to focus on the mindset of initiating Subsequent Beats.**
- **Tertiary and Polish moves to work into The Harold to assist with pacing and energy.**

6.1 Heightening Personal & Scenic Games – Subsequent Beat Practice: The following exercises will get the class practice leveraging first beat games in second (and subsequent) beats. Character’s Personal Games will be heightened using Tag-Outs / Pivots. Characters’ Scenic Games will be heightened with Split Screens.

During the actual Harold, Tag-outs/Pivots and Split Screens should not be used in the First Beat scenes, but they can be used in second and third beats to add players, heighten energy and do runs.

Running these exercises practices putting the onus for heightening games on the Players on the wings; the Players in the initial scene need only focus on heightening their characters and relationships through emotional reactions.

Suggested Exercises:

HEIGHTENING THROUGH TAG OUTS – A “tag out” allows the audience to see how a character from a previous scene will react to another character/scenario/etc. We want to execute tag-outs in service of heightening the *emotional* stakes.

To perform a tag out, a player enters a scene in progress and literally tags the player that he/she will replace on stage.



Two players engage a normal scene while other players watch from the wings. They watch to understand what characters react to, so as to be able to heighten that character's reactions in a new scene through a Tag-out.

We seek to **elevate characters' patterns of emotional behavior** –

- Player One is an enthusiastic baseball commentator; Have him do color commentary at his accountant day job; Have him narrate as he video tapes his son's birthday.
- Player One is an obnoxious tourist in France. Bring him to a series of more Third World, destitute countries.
- Player One is good at fixing cars but doesn't like to. Take him on a space walk to fix a space station.

To practice, have players force a Tag-out onto a Two Person Scene. As Subsequent Scenes in The Harold, the related scenes will not piggy-back, but this gives students practice heightening character's emotional behaviors, without necessarily having to wait for a full-length initial scene.

Lessons:

- **MATCHING: Being a bigger version of Player One; Do what Player One did bigger** – always a trusty default (You were excited by snails? I'm going to be *really* excited by snails).
- **Avoid Rehashing**, wherein a character or characters just revisit the same situation and react the same. While “repetition is heightening” this can get stale. **Things that help: Adding new dynamic characters, Using entirely different players/characters, adding more characters/bodies, elevating the situation, elevating the behavior.**
- **The added Player should also be an interesting character** – While your job is to feed Player One's emotional perspective with your Tag-Out, you can and should also be dynamic and have emotional perspectives of your own.
- **Keep it Active / Avoid Being a Psychiatrist** – we don't want to rehash the previous scene (“Tell me about your feelings for snails”/ “Remember? In the last scene when you liked snails?”). Initiate with active elements that can affect characters emotionally in the present moment.
- **Wherever You're Taken, Trust In You** – If Player Three takes Player One's snail lover to see the animated movie Turbo, Player One is expected to heighten his *excitement*. Player One can relax in knowing that wherever he's transported he just needs to trust in his emotional reactions.
- **Elevate the Details** – A player who fears action figures can be terrified of *all* little versions of things. A player obsessed with her eyebrows can obsess over everything she trims. A tenant complaining to her absentee landlord can also complain to an absentee God.
- **Run a Series** – A second beat “scene” can be a series of tag-outs. If they do, they should keep the same pivot character in place. For consistency if Player Three

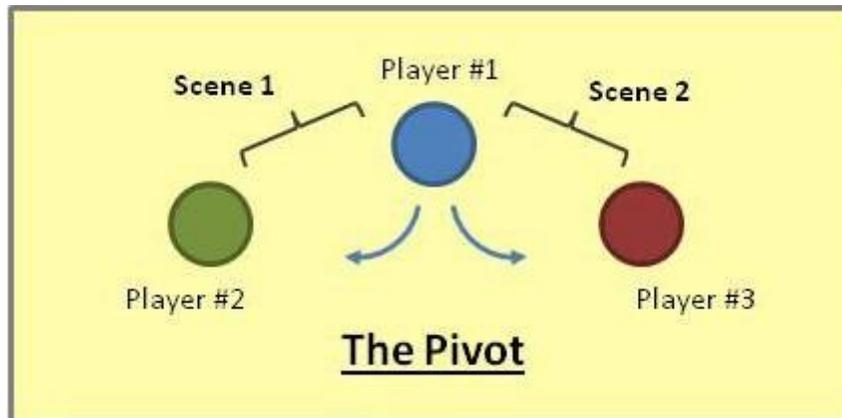


keeps Player One on stage, Player Four should tag-out Player Three, not Player One.

- **Third Beats?** – What is the progression from initial scenes to tag-out scenes that could be heightened in a third scene?

Variation:

- **Pivot (Swivel/Barn Door) instead of Tag Out** – Rather than Tag Out and Tag Back In, the Pivot allows two scenes to happen without players having to leave stage. For example, Player 1 is telling Player 2 all about his success in last night's date. Player 3 enters stage on the other side of Player 1 from Player 2 to initiate a look into the actual date. Player 1 can *pivot* between scenes from his central position – turning to Player 3 to do the date scene and then turning back to Player 2 to continue exalting his date prowess. Players 2 and 3 do not have to leave stage when they're not in play, they just have to remain frozen or neutral.



HEIGHTENING THROUGH SPLIT SCREENS – The Split Screen enables a team to heighten relationship dynamics in a way that makes for a sexy stage picture. Several different scenes can coexist on the same stage. **We want to execute split screens in service of heightening the *relationship* stakes.**

To perform a split screen, Player 3 and Player 4 start a new scene in a different area of the stage from Players 1 and 2. This new scene should heighten the relationship stakes of the initial scene with new characters and/or circumstances. For example: In the initial scene, Democratic campaigners remain optimistic despite clearly being in a red state. In the split screen, two Apostles remain naively optimistic about what people in Sodom are willing to give up to follow Jesus.

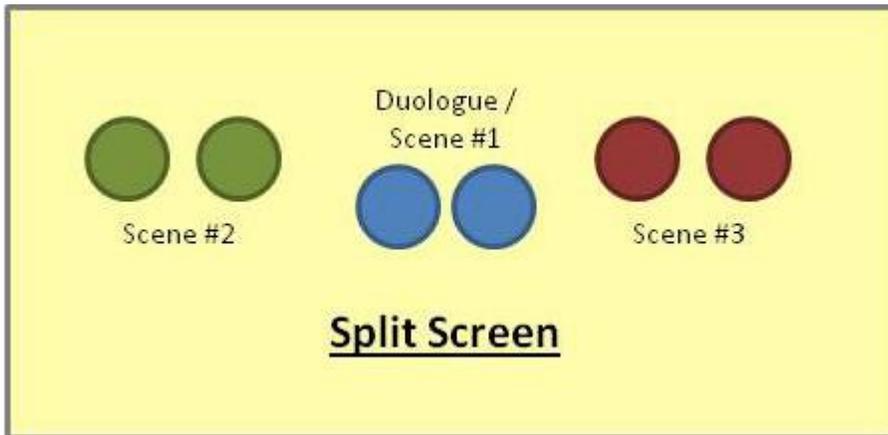


To practice, have players *force* Split Screens onto a Two Person Scene. Again, inside *The Harold*, scenes that heighten relationship dynamics and/or themes will not be back-to-back, but this exercise helps us practice those initiations.

Third Beats? What is the progression of relationships / themes?

Lessons:

- **Elevate the situation** – Spies stealing secrets? Have mountaintop-sitting, spiritual gurus stealing life’s secrets. Have Moses steal the Commandments.
- **Elevate themes** – In lifting the *reactions* from the originating scene’s players and situation, we give those reactions wider applicability and telegraph to our fellow players that we are heightening the *theme* represented in those reactions. (A sailor’s wife awaiting her husband’s return would have a great scene with a dog awaiting his master’s return from the store).
- **Mapping** - Lay the dynamic structure of one genre over the particulars of another genre to heighten thematic and narrative depths. Two male improvisers talk about cars or sports while really talking about women and/or sex. Play the emotional dynamic of a young man asking a father for his daughter’s hand over the particulars of a teenager asking his dad for the car keys – “Boy, what are your intentions with my sedan?”





6.2 Tertiary Scene Moves – Vocabulary and Mechanics: Practice seeing the opportunity and deploying tertiary moves. Myriad standard improv moves (Walk-Ons, Cut-Tos, Tag-Outs, We-Sees, etc.) can be used to turn any scene into more of a “game” scene. This bag of tricks as well as assorted polish moves can increase a performance’s pacing and instill more energy in scenes as performances progress.

Tertiary Moves

Walk-ons – we can enter a two player scene in progress as another character, offering a move that contributes to the progression of the game(s) at play. Two high school boys are feeling self-conscious in the hallway so Player 3 enters as a mean girl to point out their foibles. Two players are arguing over the value of the movie they just left, so Player 3 enters to agree with one of them and rile the other. If there is one tertiary move an improviser knows, it’s the Walk-on. Unfortunately, too few improvisers know to Walk Off. *You’re a tertiary character; the scene’s not about you.* A Walk-on should only be used to heighten/sharpen a game already at play. An entering character must acquiesce to those already on stage and strive not to be the focus of the scene.

“Cut-to” – when players doing a scene refer to a particular moment (from the past, future, etc.), a player comes onstage and announces “Cut to: that moment” and we see the moment. A comfortable ensemble can perform the “cut-to” (also called *flashback*, *show me*, etc.) without telegraphing the move by shouting “Cut to.” As with walk-ons, a “cut to” should be followed by a “cut back.”

Tag out / Pivot – a “tag out” allows the audience to see how a character from a previous scene will react to another character/scenario/etc. To perform a tag out, a player enters a scene in progress and literally tags the player that he/she will replace on stage. As with walk-ons, a “tag out” should be followed by a “tag back in.”

Embodying the Environment – we can be set pieces; we can be crowds.

Scene Painting/ “We See” – we can come in from offstage to describe (and physicalize) a previously unseen “visual” aspect of the scene. For example, a pompous character is painted with a monocle, “#1 Boss” button, etc. For another example, a scene with a child bemoaning having to do his/her chores is painted with a window showing a beautiful day outside, an Everest of dishes to clean, etc. This type of move is typically executed by a player entering the scene, not as a character, but, with a verbal aside directed at the audience. “These people are in clown costumes.” “We see this man has a hole through his torso.” These are *Detail* moves, but they work best when they are delivered emotionally and when they connect with a character’s emotional behavior. Sometimes, while contributing his verbal add-on, Player 3 will wave his hand generally over or toward the area of stage he’s referring to; but a better Player 3 will often define what he’s describing in *mime* as well as words. In conjunction with “We see this man has a beard,” this Player 3 shows how big and bushy the beard is by cupping and fluffing it with his hands before exiting the scene.



Suggested Exercises:

TERTIARY OPPORTUNITIES – have two players start a scene. Force a third player to enter the scene to heighten the game you’ve identified with a tertiary move. Repeat and encourage them to vary the different tertiary moves.

Lessons:

- **Tertiary Player Good Faith Mantra** - I will only enter a scene in progress to serve what has already been established. And I will react to those who enter my scene in progress on the assumption they seek to heighten what has already been established.
- **Follow what’s chosen** – If Player Three is the first to enter stage with a Walk On, then you can’t come on next with your great We See (let it go). You can do another Walk On.
- **Find the rhythm** – A Two Person scene goes on for a while, then Player Three does a funny Walk-On, then immediately Players Four and Five want to rush on to do their funny Walk-On. BE PATIENT. You have to ride the rhythm of the game; if a bunch of time passed before the first tertiary move, you have to wait some time for your turn. Even better – wait for the trigger from Player One/Two that inspired the Walk-On to clarify the moves into a pattern.



Week 7 & 8 – Practice / Performance Prep

Objective: Run through multiple Harold sets with notes.

Suggested Exercises:

HOT SEAT – One student in a chair on stage. Another student from the audience says what s/he “likes about playing with” her/him. Both Complimented and Complimentee now do a scene together. The Complimentee now takes the Hot Seat. And repeat.

Lessons:

- **Zack Arnold said** about Improv Instruction, “**Look at The Fantastic Four. They were all exposed to the same radiation. All came out different. Together a fantastic fighting force.**” Let’s appreciate how our differences support our whole.

REVERSE HAROLD – Harry Potter explained his successful Patronus Charm thusly, “The reason I knew I could do it is because I assumed that I had.” The Reverse Harold is built on the same principle; students start with the assumption that the show will connect.

Start with the Third Beat. Work back to The Opening. End with Instructor giving the show’s Suggestion. Students often start right off the bat with crazy ideas, as opposed to starting nervously, concerned about establishing a clear foundation to build on. **We want to feel free to play with the assumption that the show will connect.**

Students also then start with the more energetic improv moves and games. The Reverse Harold inspires moves they could re-use moving forward, like doing Reverse Time Jumps.

Lessons:

- **We want to feel free to play with the assumption that the show will connect.**
- **Relax** – Rather than cautiously building, players in the Reverse Harold end up energetically playing. They know the parts and trust it to flow backward more easily than they trusted themselves to build it forward.
- **Fun Details are more easily remembered** – Details of the Third Beat are assumed to be important; students care more about fewer particulars as the Beats typically go on. Playing this way, students engage immediately in making the Details matter emotionally. And then they are more easily remembered throughout Harold’s course.

IMPORTANT SHOW NOTE: Tell students not to wear flip flops, hats, or clothing with logos/etc. on them. Players shouldn’t wear anything that would keep them from being able to follow and do anything any other player does.



APPENDIX A

angry	joyful	proud	impatient
exhilarated	optimistic	fearful	jealous
excited	bad	suspicious	disappointed
relieved	satisfied	delighted	ashamed
afraid	hopeless	nervous	brave
hurt	amused	assured	miserable
sad	aroused	worried	insulted
bitter	embarrassed	happy	sympathetic
frustrated	shy	amazed	sick
exasperated	distrustful	threatened	calm
eager	mad	heartbroken	disgusted
hopeful	intrigued	intimidated	sorry