



## IMPROVISATION

Simply, improvisation (or 'improv') is acting without a script. There are certain viewpoints and exceptions to this, but in its most pure form improv can be anything as long as it is not scripted. A bit like life really!

Since the early 1940s & 1950s Improvisation has been at the heart of Theatre training and is considered the core of an Actor's skill base. Improvisers have to convey who they are without the assistance of costumes, sets and physical objects, and therefore the stimulation of a great imagination for both the audience as well as the improviser is essential.

Taking part in an improvisation exercises, or joining an improv group has many benefits that can enrich our life in many ways.

- Increased Confidence
- Improved Public Speaking Skills
- Enhanced Performance / Presentation Abilities
- Gained Comfort in Social Settings
- Refined Brainstorming Abilities
- Improved Listening and Observation Skills
- Enhanced Creative and Thinking Abilities
- Improved Decision-Making Skills
- Stronger Team Development Skills

Relationships - socially, sexually, professionally, in business, in sport, in families - are improvisational. You can plan all you want, but in the end, life is about building relationships and adjusting to change as fast as it happens.

So whether you are an Actor, or any other human that engages with others of their own species, it is easy to see how vital improvisation can be in making us more successful communicators and more successful within our relationships.

One of the biggest misconceptions about improvisation is that it has to be funny. It is true most improv does turn out to be comedic and is always great fun for participants and audience alike, but it can take absolutely any form - comedy, mystery, serious drama, or even musical. Thankfully it is not only fun, but also rewarding and deliciously liberating.



## IMPROVISATION (cont'd)

When I was training as an Actor we were very fortunate to have some improvisation classes taught by the world's very best exponents of modern improvisation - Chicago's Second City Theatre Group (Alumni includes Joan Rivers, Bill Murray, John Candy, Dan Aykroyd, Mike Myers, John Belushi) - and what amazed, energised and enthused me most was how exhilarated and terrified I felt all at once! It was like a first date, an amazing cup final where your team wins in the last minute, or the seconds before and after skydiving out of a plane.

Here was a way of thinking, a way of being, a way of behaving that never required perfection as its ultimate goal. In fact you could never be wrong. Better still one of improvisation's mottos which I discovered later on was "We suck, and we love to fail!" It was only through failing that we learnt to increase our chances of having better outcomes. Like a child with a new toy I just wanted to have more and more turns, more and more occasions to have fun, more and more opportunities to become really good at something.

I now realise that as adults, many people have forgotten how to have fun. Many have put aside their wish for 'more and more turns', and focus with great seriousness about having the ONE perfect turn. Not only is this absurd, it is impossible to sustain for any length of time.

Bad Actors, selfish lovers, inept leaders and poor communicators are very quick to become self obsessed and think that it is all about themselves. They create a bubble around their 'mission', and they forget that there is always an audience, a partner, a team and a listener whose lives they have an opportunity to enhance.

Improvisation broadens the bubble to include everything around you. Improvisation encourages, uses and depends on the terms 'creative', 'humour', 'awareness', 'responsible', 'inclusive', 'spontaneous', 'open minded', 'assured', 'think on your feet', 'natural', 'fearless', 'inventive', 'visionary'... etc. If one, some or all of these words were used to describe you, you'd be thrilled. If you allow the improvisation skills that you learn on this course to come with you to parties, meetings, dates, presentations and interviews, you'll begin to notice very quickly how much more enjoyable your experiences become, and because of this how much more others enjoy your company.

Finally, have you noticed that if you take the first letters of the above list of words you can spell out Charisma? Sometimes things just work out, and it looks like you meant it. Funny that!