

TRUE!IMPROV

Improv as a Ministry

Improv is the artform of making it up as one goes along. It is what we do everyday. Improv can "...create character-driven comedy and dramatic improvisation—even tragedy. It's perfectly possible to tell stories of sacrifice, growth, love, and hate, in addition to stories of pure fancy" (Acting on Impulse, 2002). Because of its very nature, Improv is an interactive, creative method for ministry! The leaders of the Improv Church at Walla Walla University note that "Improv is a communication tool that is engaging, experiential, and non-didactic" (Guldhammer, Cafferky, 2004). It has boundless Christian ministry potential to connect individuals to Christ and to share the gospel.

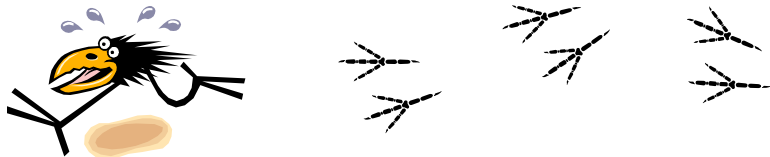
Key Elements of Improv

Acceptance—A Two-Way Street

- Trust and support are at the heart of acceptance. One must be able to *give up control*.
- Accept what your fellow player offers you.
- There are NO bad ideas! If a player turns your pencil into a wand—then it's a wand!
- Respect other's choices.

Story Structure—A Scene Framework

- Focus on the structure of the story; the content will take care of itself.
 - Every story establishes a routine, interrupts the routine, and establishes a new routine.
 - Basic structure includes: Once there was a..., Everyday..., One day..., Because of this..., Because of this..., Because of this..., Until finally..., Ever since that day...
- Establish CROW:
 - C = Characters
 - R = Relationship
 - O = Objective
 - W = Where
- Take the active choice to forward action. (Truth in Comedy, 1994). Don't just tell what is happening, SHOW what is happening.
- Start scenes in the middle of a story.
- Focus on the story, not the funny.



Commitment—A Quality Investment

- Use your intuition and invest all of self into the story, the character and the environment. Commit to yourself and become comfortable with yourself. If you don't invest in the scene, your audience won't either.
- Commit to your fellow improvisers. If you are there for them by accepting their ideas, justifying their moves, supporting them, then your scenes will be great. Trust and Support.
- Commitment will help you keep a straight face and stay in the moment of the story.

Raising the Stakes—A Risky Business



- The stakes in the scene are what the characters stand to lose. They imply some sort of risk, progress or enrich the story, and engage the audience.
- Stakes should naturally escalate
- Build interest by making specific/strong offers with details. A homeless man who used to be an accountant is more interesting than a ‘homeless man.’ It’s the difference between saying, “I like you,” and “I love you,” or “You’re on probation,” and “You’re fired.”
- Make the stakes personal. The most interesting *game moves* affect the characters’ relationship.
- Because the stakes are personal, the characters should *react* to the stakes.

Characters—A Personality

- Creating a character helps move a scene, create interest and leads the relationship.
- Establish an emotional basis or pursue an objective to develop a character. Are you needy, joyous, sorrowful? Desperation to make a friend, win your affection, be as rich as possible, etc.
- Consider your status. Are you high—confident, high posture, purposeful, good eye contact, comfortable in close proximity. Or are you low—shifty, fearful, hesitant, quiet, poor posture, weak tone, uncomfortable close to people.
 - Status can help contribute to raising the stakes of the story or the interest level of the characters.

Stage Presence—A Presentation

- Avoid wearing detracting clothing. Keep comfortable.
- Project the voice to be audible and clear.
- Focus on action at front of the stage, be aware of the imaginary props you’re using.
- Practice “blocking” scenes or doing dual scenes at the same time.
- Practice “wiping” a scene.
- Be aware of your imaginary environment or risk killing the story reality. If a car is in your scene, walk around it, not through it! If you’re holding a cup, set it down, don’t drop it! If it’s a short table, it needs to stay a short table, if it’s a revolving door, it stays a revolving door.
 - Practice the *5 miming skills*: Focus, Reach, Take, Accent—do something with it, Release.



References & Bibliography:

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Websites:

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