

Improvisation:

A Guide To Unlock Your Acting Power

A Workbook for Teachers

By Rod Martin

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IMPROVISATION

A sequential structure of lesson plans for teaching acting through improvisation to a class of students, youths or adults, in a school setting or in a workshop situation. Five weeks of lessons are provided. Basic improvisation, mime, pantomime, physical and vocal warm ups and cool downs, improvisational games and exercises, scene structure, rules for improv, theatrical etiquette and many more topics are covered in the comprehensive book. It also gives you the essentials for creating an improvisational theatre troupe or program. The many games and situations will get your students on their feet and performing. This is the fastest growing form of theatre around! Loads of information in appendices.

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DEDICATION

To *Jane Smith-Martin* for her loving support of my creative pursuits.

Special Thanks to John Wood-Ingram of Australia for suggesting I start the Honolulu Improvisational Theatre Company.

Thanks to *The Loose Moose Theatre Company* of Canada for the germinal ideas for many of the improvisations suggested in this book

Thanks to the members of the *Honolulu Improvisational Theatre Company* for working with me on the improvisational games, making them work, and offering suggestions for improvement

Thanks to *Hawaii's Alliance for Drama Education* for suggesting I begin collecting drama ideas into book form and for their suggestions for "Performer Fitness and Audience Readiness"

Much Thanks to *Michael Perry* for suggesting this book and helping to provide the curriculum framework for teachers.

All My Best, Rod Martin

PREFACE

Participating in improvisation is fun...it has to be for students to be so enthusiastic about it. But what do they learn? They learn to have the power to create. They move from puppet to playwright; they no longer mimic the words and ideas of those theatre "greats" who came before them but find a language of their own; they initiate and shape the ideas of their scene; they create the characters, the comedy, the conflict. They are empowered; they take ownership; they are set free to experiment with ideas and language and relationships.

In improvisation, students can test out what works and doesn't work in the realm of human interaction. If a scene doesn't work, they can change it. If a theme is incomplete, they can expand it. When their imagination sparks inspiration and creates magic, they can recapture it, discuss and analyze it, videotape it, write it down, tighten it up, rearrange it...until they are satisfied with the final project.

Occasionally they'll test the limits of what's proper, but that can lead to a discussion of values and social norms. By giving students the freedom to express themselves through improvisation, the teacher can explore with them the dynamics of the interaction and help them gain insights into what they believe and what they care about. Drama can be a rehearsal for life, a way to try out ideas within the safety of "the scene," where students can learn as much from their mistakes as they can from their successes.

I've seen what a powerful tool for learning improvisation can be. I've seen the shy student find his voice, protected by the security of characterization, comforted by the excuses, "I was only acting." I've seen the light of inspiration flash in the eyes of a student who finds she has something to contribute to a scene in progress. I've seen the surprise on students' faces when they make their fellow students laugh, and I have sensed their pride when they receive applause.

End of Freeview

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