



IMPROVAGANZA
Impro Melbourne
Teachers' Resources
2015



The 2015 Education and Families Program is
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**CREATIVE
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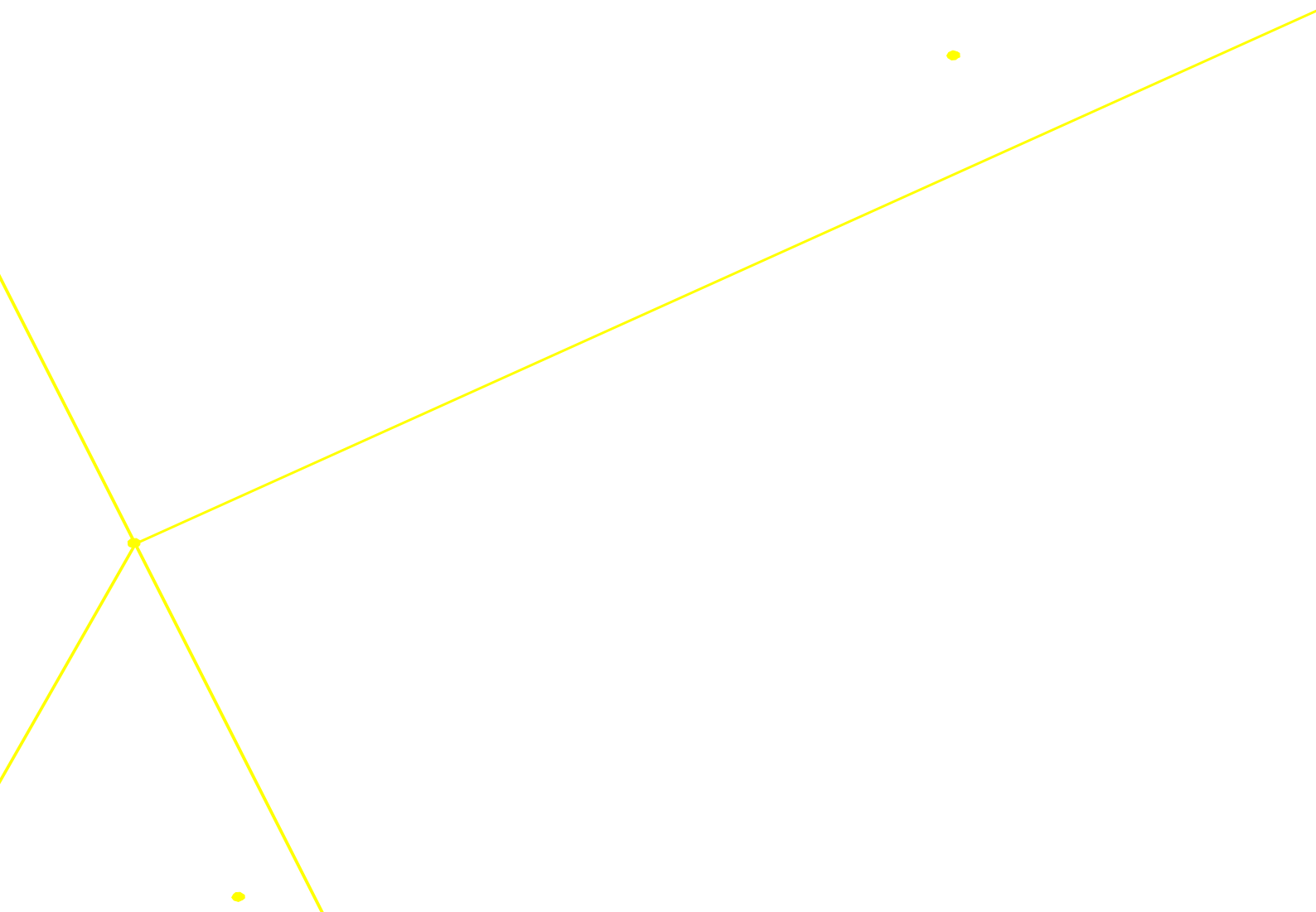
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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created to provide teachers with some preliminary ideas as to how to extend their experience of *Improvaganza* beyond the presentation and workshop. The activities are designed to be open-ended and multi-ability. They may need differentiation for your specific cohort.

The performances and workshops included in the Education & Families program are designed to offer students engaging performing arts experiences with strong links to AusVELS. Each Education & Families performance varies in its content and as a result the scope for integration across the curriculum varies. Please feel free to contact the Education and Families team on (03) 9644 1808 or at education@rav.net.au if you have any questions about this resource, its content or its implementation within your classroom.



ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

Regional Arts Victoria inspires art across the state. Through creative facilitation, touring, education, specialised resources, artistic projects and advocacy, we develop and sustain creative communities and artistic practice all over Victoria.

Regional Arts Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation working in long-term partnerships with every level of government, fostering contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice across five decades. We advise and impact on decision-making across multiple portfolios and levels of government.

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations, and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria.

Our artistic program

Regional Arts Victoria inspires creative communities, creative places and creative catalysts.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES	CREATIVE PLACES	CREATIVE CATALYSTS
Regional Arts Victoria stimulates and connects our state's communities of practice.	Regional Arts Victoria champions the places where art is made, experienced and discussed.	Regional Arts Victoria fosters current and next generation creative capacity and practice.
<p>Members and membership services: fostering active and engaged artists and arts organisations across the state; supporting arts professionalism through specialised resources and professional insurance</p> <p>Resources, workshops and events program of forums and activities through our Regional Cultural Partnerships Program</p> <p>Networks: hosting specialised state-wide and national networks (including Regional Cultural Network, Festivals Network, Arts Teachers); participating actively in regional development networks; accessing and developing New Networks at membership and organisational level</p> <p>Strategic partnerships with governments, universities, tourism, planning and development bodies as well as arts and cultural organisations</p>	<p>Performing Arts Touring: opportunities, tools and support for regional and remote touring across Victoria and Australia</p> <p>Education & Families: performances, workshops and projects in schools, accompanied by AusVELS aligned teacher resources</p> <p>State-wide place-making projects including –</p> <p><i>Home is where the hall is:</i> November's month-long celebration of arts events in regional community halls</p> <p><i>Eco-Cubby:</i> promoting the principles of sustainable design and architecture in schools, hands-on</p> <p><i>Small Town Transformations:</i> innovative projects of significant local and regional impact, combined with state-wide thought leadership on "How can art transform your town?"</p>	<p>Advocacy and leadership: leading state-wide arts conversations; creating exposure for regional artists; providing strategic advice</p> <p>Creative Leadership Program: annual program for emerging arts and thought leaders</p> <p>Creative Arts Facilitators: our regional staff team work directly with artists and communities, in close partnership with local and federal government</p> <p>Access and diversity including Indigenous engagement and cultural exchange</p> <p>Grants programs: facilitating and supporting high quality applications to quick response, presentation and project grants, administered on behalf of state and federal government</p>

EDUCATION & FAMILIES TEAM

Regional Arts Victoria's Education & Families team pride ourselves on providing relevant and exciting activities for children and young people that are complementary to both Victorian and Australian curriculums. All of our tours come with a free set of education resources to further enrich your arts experience.

Our team is available to provide local contacts and links to research, and offer advice on how to make the most of the arts at your school or centre. Our office is a resource for Victorian teachers, so we encourage you to make use of us!

We also provide significant subsidy assistance (up to 50% of program costs) to eligible remote and disadvantaged schools. Your school may be eligible so please contact us to find out more!



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CURRICULUM LINKS

Domain	Dimension
The Arts	<i>Drama</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring improvisation as a form• Creating and making: characters / character development• Exploring and responding: themes and issues raised• Responding to own and other's work <i>Music</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Singing, using voices <i>Visual Arts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing and designing character
English	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication• Speaking and listening• Expressing and developing ideas
Thinking Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Researching, problem solving• Reasoning, processing and inquiry• Creativity• Reflection, evaluation and metacognition
Interpersonal and Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building social relationships through group work and collaboration• Working in teams to create dramatic play
Civics and Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of viewpoints on a particular contemporary issue• Attentiveness to other points of view before making decisions in group and class activities

ABOUT IMPRO MELBOURNE

Impro Melbourne is Melbourne's most diverse improvisation theatre company. Formed by Russell Fletcher and Christine Keogh in 1996 it is now run by joint Artistic Directors Patti Stiles and Katherine Weaver, General Manager Rik Brown and the Impro Melbourne Committee.

Since 1996 Impro Melbourne has produced all forms of improvised theatre from short game/scene style formats through to full length 50 minute to two hour fully improvised shows, exploring genres like Shakespeare, musicals, film noir, murder mystery and non-naturalism. We currently produce the global impro format Theatresports™, as well as Keith Johnstone's two other competition formats Maestro™ and Gorilla Theatre™. These formats are licensed through the International Theatresports™ Institute and Impro Melbourne is the Victorian license holder. Celebrity Theatresports™ and Late Night Theatresports™ are regular features of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

In 2004 we developed a schools program which has now become a highly acclaimed series of demonstration shows and workshops for primary and secondary students managed by Regional Arts Victoria. This includes IMPRO ZONE, show and workshops, for Years 5-12 and FAIRYTALE COOKBOOK, show and workshops, for Prep to Year 6 to develop creative thinking and storytelling.

Impro Melbourne's reputation continues to grow as we travel across Australia and overseas. The company has performed and taught in Asia, Europe and North America. In 2005 we ran the first International Improvisation Festival in Australia, bringing in players from North America, Europe, Scandinavia and Japan. We continue to share our innovative techniques with the impro world and will never stop searching the globe for inspiration.

Key performers in the company have been working as actors and improvisors in Melbourne, Sydney and overseas for over 15 years, on the stage and in TV and film.

"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you. The children had a ball. The Fairytale Cookbook incursion was a great hit with children and staff."

- St Kevin's Primary

THE COMPANY

JENNY LOVELL – Coordinator, Schools Program

Jenny has been performing as an actor and director for over 25 years in theatre, film and TV. She is a founding member of Impro Melbourne.

She has been performing in improvisation shows since 1987 in Sydney and Melbourne, and has performed at international improvisation festivals in San Francisco, Seattle, Hong Kong, Wellington and Edmonton, Canada. Jenny has performed in all of Keith Johnstone's formats: *Theatresports™*, *Maestro™* and *Gorilla Theatre™*, and number of different 'long form' improvisation formats, including *Harold*, *Shakespeare Scared Scriptless*, *Unforeseen Stories* and *Sondheim Unscripted*. She has created or helped to create 8 different long form improvisation shows including her own successful genre shows *In the Parlour* and *What the Dickens!*

Jenny also teaches improvisation with Impro Melbourne, acting technique and Shakespeare text at the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Polytechnic and runs workshops in confident performance and voice in the corporate sector. She also leads professional development workshops for teachers through Impro Melbourne and Drama Victoria.

The Schools Players:

There are currently 12 performers who come out to the schools.

All of our schools performance ensemble are regular cast members of our productions of *Theatresports™*, *Maestro™*, *Gorilla Theatre™*, and perform and create new improvisation formats.

All performers attend regular training and seek to constantly improve the standard and quality of our work. Our schools cast is committed to promoting a passion for improvisation, performing and theatre among students.



THEATRESPORTS™ IN SCHOOLS

Improvisation has been around for many centuries and the skills that it teaches feature in many forms of performance. The name Theatresports™ is sometimes used by teachers to refer to all types of improvisation, however the two are not synonymous. Theatresports™ is a licensed performance format and only one way of bringing improvisation to the stage. So you are teaching improvisation in your classrooms, not Theatresports™.

Many of the game/scene structures seen in the show have been devised by Theatresports™ creator Keith Johnstone and renowned teacher of improvisational theatre, Viola Spolin - or have been created by players in the moment on stage. These activities can also be used in the classroom to further the students' skills in creative thinking, teamwork, confidence and support.

Impro Melbourne is now running a Theatresports™ In Schools Competition, encouraging secondary schools to enter junior and senior teams to compete in shows across metropolitan Melbourne for an interactive, inter-school connection to improvisation. For more details: schools@impromelbourne.com.au

INTRODUCTION TO PERFORMANCE

IMPROVAGANZA

The Improvaganza performance is a fun interactive way to both introduce and further the skills of your students in drama and improvisation. The show includes a high level of audience participation through audience suggestions and student volunteers.

The performance consists of a cast of three improvisers and has three sections:

- An entertaining demonstration of improvisation techniques
- Impro performance using game or scene structures often seen in improvisation
- Question and Answer session

The demonstration section covers the following:

Main principles of improvisation:

- Make your partner look good
- Accepting and building ideas within a team
- Constructive listening
- Respecting and valuing your partner
- Taking risks
- Sharing success
- Embracing failure as a means to growth
- Storytelling

Fundamental terminology:

- Offers (physical & verbal)
- Acceptance
- Blocking
- Wimping
- Hogging

Fundamental training games and warm-up exercises:

- Word At A Time
- Arms Expert (expert double figures)
- What Are You Doing
- Space Jump

TERMINOLOGY

The following are terms used in teaching improvisation which may be useful to you and your students. They can then give you a methodology to use in communicating, discussing and reflecting on your work in the classroom.

2.1 Offer

Something new added to the scene can be verbal, physical, character, emotion or environment.

Example:

A – I'm bored

B – Let's play hide and seek.

Offers: emotion - bored / verbal - hide and seek.

A – Look at that statue

Offer: environment – statue

B – It's my father (burst into tears)

Offer: verbal – father / emotional – tears

2.2 Blocking

Refusing to accept an offer, which prevents the story from moving forward.

Example:

A – Hi Sue, Happy Birthday!

B – My name isn't Sue it isn't my birthday.

The offers of Sue and Birthday were completely blocked by B.

Sometimes Blocking gets confused by defining Blocking as simply saying the word No.

This isn't necessarily correct.

Example:

A - (holdign gun held to B's head) You are going to tell me where you boyfriend is hiding aren't you?

B - No.

'No' in this situation actually raises the stakes of the scene and puts B in trouble.

2.3 Acceptance

Acknowledging, and using the offer to advance the story.

Example:

A - Is that the phone ringing?

B - Yup, I'll get it, it's the President?!

This accepts the phone ringing, advances by answering, and further advances by saying who it is.

TERMINOLOGY

2.4 Wimping

A form of blocking, one may be saying yes as if accepting but not really contributing or accepting fully. It allows improviser to not be responsible for anything in the scene.

Example:

A - Would you like to go to the zoo?

B - OK

A - Do you like animals?

B - Some

A - Can you see any?

B - Isn't that one there?

A - Look, it's attacking you.

B - Oh....ouch...

2.5 Hogging

A player takes over the scene and makes it all about them, ignoring other players and offers.

Examples:

talking all the time, ordering people about, taking over the scene.

ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

Improvisation is a scary prospect. Students will often experience some uneasiness when faced with the prospect of performing without a script. Some of the most common concerns include:

- What if I make a fool of myself?
- What if I am not funny?

Warm up exercises are a great way to start the impro ball rolling and begin to create the environment needed for improvisation to thrive. As an instructor you are aiming to remove fear and judgment, create trust, develop co-operation, focus on listening, focus on stories and to make your partner look good.

1.1 Yes Let's

Works on: Group co-operation and instant positive acceptance

Explanation:

1 person yells out an activity (e.g. 'let's jump up and down') the rest of the group yells "YES LET'S" loud and positively and then everyone does the suggested activity until the next suggestion is yelled out.

Tips:

- Any "No Go" zones should be stated before the game is played. For example: leaving the room, fighting, Yes Let's needs the sense of freedom so it is best to playfully establish ground rules ahead of time so you do not need to shut down activity. However, the unexpected may happen so in that case you can quickly yell out "Let's stop" or "Let's not".
- Remind class that the Yes Let's must be positive and enthusiastic regardless of the suggestion; for example: "Let's pick our nose" = "YES LET'S!" Teachers can yell out suggestions to open areas of thought. E.g. "let's be Thunderbirds", will make the class think movie themes or characters. "Let's be famous Hollywood stars", "Let's be mountains", "Let's be DNA cells". You can help guide by being playful and inspiring them with new strands of exploration.

ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

1.2 Applause for Nothing

Works on: Breaking the fear of being in front of the class performing

Explanation:

The whole class sits as audience, one student stands to the side of the stage area. When they walk on stage the class must clap and yell loudly. The student stops and faces forward, the audience goes silent, the student performs a very, very simple non-original action, the class goes wild with applause, the student leaves the stage. Next student goes.

Tips:

- The simple “non original” action is something like: winks, touches their nose, stands on one leg, tilts head to one side.
- In a large class this can be exhausting to yell loudly for so long. You can line 5 students up and have rapid succession, then switch to a different 5.
- Teachers should be ready to boost levels of applause and enthusiasm when it dips from fatigue or class dynamics. Do not leave any student with small applause.

1.3 Using an object for what it is not

Works on: Idea generation, acceptance and justification, not being precious about ideas.

Explanation: Take an object and use it for what it is not. For example: A Frisbee could be a contact lens, dish, hat, pimple, bar of soap, tub, alien vessel etc.

Variations:

You can play this in many ways:

1/ Have the whole class stand in a circle. Behind you have a table or basket of props. Pick out an object, use it and then pass it to the person on your right. This then begins its way around the circle. Each person receiving the object, using it and passing it to his or her right. Once that prop has gone by 3 or 4 people take out another prop, use it and pass it on. The benefit of it going round the circle is no one is actually watching anyone so it allows shy students or students who doubt their creativity a chance to do. It is good to watch these students and remember something they have done.

2/ In groups or as a class put an object on the floor and encourage students to jump in and use their idea to make the object what it is not. They can work in twos or groups if they wish.

3/ Team on Team: who has the most uses for. Issue the challenge and then place the prop and both teams compete. Or give one object to one team and watch, give another object to the other team and watch. Count ideas team with the most ideas wins five points. (losing team will always complain their object was not good).

Tips:

Look for props that are simple and have interesting shape. If the prop itself is too odd then it is difficult to use. Simple common props provide the most potential. Frisbee, skipping rope, feather duster, book, cricket or baseball bat etc

ACTIVITIES: WARMING UP

1.4 What are you doing?

Works on:

Trusting the imagination, not thinking, being in the moment, playfulness.

Explanation:

1 person begins an action (reading a book, making a sandwich, skating)

2nd person asks 'what are you doing?'

1 person keeps doing their action but replies by saying an action they are NOT doing

2nd person begins doing what 1 has just offered

Example:

A (action) playing violin

B (says) what are you doing

A (says while still playing violin) I am making a sandwich

B (action) making a sandwich

A (says) What are you doing?

B (says while still making a sandwich) I am horse riding

A (action) horse riding

Tips:

- Begin this activity slow and let students get used to the rhythm. Then encourage them to go faster, then faster. If they mess up the routine, if they do and say the same thing, if they make any mistake get them to yell "AGAIN" and they stop and start a new one.
- Nice to have groups of two all over the room doing this and then yell freeze!
- Switch partners! (let them run around finding a new partner) Go even faster!!!
- This exercise builds energy and releases nervous energy. It is safe for people to play with people they don't know so well or the sometimes awkward girl / boy time.

Note:

You may see students suggest things like pick your nose, go to the toilet, or sexual references. Improvisation does release what is considered forbidden like going to the toilet in public. The game goes quite quickly and often making a big deal or preventing such actions will make them more attractive and students will find a more secretive way of putting their partner on the spot. After it is suggested a few times with no response it is usually let go of.

ACTIVITIES: SCENES AND GAMES

Each game creates a scene. The term 'game' came into being because it is playful and has a sporting reference that makes sense in a competitive show structure. We find it helpful in teaching to remind yourself that each 'game' is a way of developing a skill and that improvisers are storytellers first and foremost. All scenes, however short, should have a story.

In our performance we cover:

3.1 One Word At A Time

Description:

Improvisers create a story each alternating speaking one word at a time.

This game is a fantastic training and performance game. It works on removing control and forcing improvisers to be in the present moment as they only have the word their partner says to go on. Neither can control, neither can tag along.

Tips:

The improvisers must remember they are the same person telling a story about them, right now. Dialogue such as hi/how/are/you/I/Am/fine is not the aim here.

They are creating a story, by playing a scene, and sharing this with us One Word At A Time.

Example:

A - Walking

B - Down

A - The

B - Street

A - I

B - Saw

A - A

B - Dog

A - With

B - A

A - Present

- Play the game in twos and have them act it out as they do it, it is much more fun.
- Remind players to get into trouble, to interact with whatever they bring into their story, to watch each other and to keep the pace moving along. Don't let them slip into taking lots of time thinking. It's impro, no thinking allowed.
- Interacting with what they introduce is important, if they find a beetle, have a duel, meet.

ACTIVITIES: SCENES AND GAMES

3.2 Space Jump

Description:

An evolution of Freeze Tag using physical offers. New scenes are created using freeze positions with players being added and then removed.

One player begins a scene, creating and using their environment. Teacher or offstage player claps/blows whistle and announces "Space Jump". Player One freezes and Player Two enters and uses the frozen physical position of Player One as the offer to start an entirely new scene, justifying the frozen image. Both players continue the scene until "Space Jump" is called again. Player Three enters and uses frozen tableau created by the two players as an offer for new scene. Player four would do the same with the tableau created by the three players currently on stage. Then the scenes begin to reverse with players leaving in the same order they entered. Each time "Space Jump" is called a player leaves, the remaining players must use their physical positions to justify what is now happening in that story/scene since we last saw it.

Tips:

- Encourage players to keep active in their scenes so that their physical positions change. New players will tend to use offers like gym class, playing some sort of ball game, etc which is just jumping around and not story or character creation.
- Encourage them to stop playing the game and start talking to each other so we get relationships.
- As the number of players onstage grows the scenes can become quite 'talky'. Encourage players to be active but silent in scenes, "you don't all need to talk in the scene". Or endow players as objects, animals, and architecture
- Encourage use of physical positions being used not ignored.
- Encourage player coming in to make the new offer.

3.3 Arms expert (Expert Double Figure)

Description:

One player stands in front of the other and places her/his arms behind their back. The player standing behind puts their arms through the hole between arm and torso of the person in front, giving the appearance of being their arms.

Tips:

- The arms and body need to relate and work together. Hands should do hand like things, fix clothes hair etc. The person in the front should find helpful offers for the hands 'when I was only this tall' and the hands should have fun offering for the person in front i.e. suddenly pointing at someone and shaking their fist.
- Although often demonstrated as an interview scene with people sitting. Arms can be played in scene form in a job interview, first date, and family scene. Once comfortable with creating the arms character any scene can be created.
- Respect and trust should be nurtured in the group before playing this game so there is no difficulty with boundaries. Fighting is to be avoided all together (and this will be an appealing idea to some age groups).

ACTIVITIES: SCENES AND GAMES

3.5 Moving Bodies (Puppets / Puppet Manipulation)

Original name:

Moving Bodies other variations Puppets or Puppet Manipulation.

Description:

One improviser can talk but cannot move, another player moves them as if they were a life size puppet

Tips:

- The 'mover' and the 'puppet' both need to be working together to create the scene. The mover can do small gestures like a smile, they can also pose the 'puppet' and leave them for a second to justify why they are in that position. Walking is accomplished with a gentle tap on the back of the leg you wish to move. Please avoid kicking.
- It is good to remind movers of the delicate nature of how people move and that heads don't spin around and establish the rule that you cannot use one 'doll' to hit the other. The doll tries to play the scene while justifying why they do what they do, however the mover needs to listen for offers like 'I'll get the book from the table over there'. Offers, and acceptance happen both ways. Watch for over talking by the puppets. Encourage players to slow down, watch, listen, react, and play the scene.



IMPROVISATION: WIDER USES

Remember what you are teaching is improvisation; Improvaganza is just an example of performing the art form. Allow yourself and your class to explore broader uses of improvisation in the following activities. Remember: Improvisers are storytellers who create from nothing and develop together in the moment.

4.1 Literature

Genres (Western, Sci Fi, Romance, etc.)

Discuss elements of a genre then play Word At A Time Story or Moving Bodies in a genre. You could use Arms to interview an author of a new book from a particular genre or play space jump where each jump has to be in a new genre.

4.2 Book review

Whatever book they are reading can be explored or re told through any of the impro games. A Word At A Time what happens after the book. An Arms Expert interviewing the characters from the book. A Moving Bodies scene from a part of the book.

4.3 Arts History

Improvisation is a skill. It is a skill that is developed and used in many other art forms such as Commedia dell'Arte, Jazz, and Contact Improvisation. You could look at the similarities and differences



FURTHER READING

WEBSITES

Regional Arts Victoria
www.rav.net.au

Impro Melbourne
www.impromelbourne.com.au
Local Theatresports news and event

Drama Victoria
www.dramavictoria.vic.edu.au
For teaching support and resources

International Theatresports Institute
www.theatresports.org
Information on International Theatresports

BATS
www.improv.org/school/resources/books.htm
Bay Area Theatresports Recommended book list

The Spolin Centre
www.spolin.com
About Viola Spolin and her work

PRINT

Impro; Improvisation and Theatre by Keith Johnstone
Published by Methuen (paperback) or Faber and Faber (hardcover)

Improvisation for Storytellers by Keith Johnstone
Published by Faber and Faber

Impro Wisdom by Patricia Ryan
Published by Bell Tower

Acting on Impulse by Carol Hazenfield

Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin
Northwestern University Press

Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin
Northwestern University Press

Improvisation by Lyn Pierse
Improcorp Australia

Contact the Education and Families team at education@rav.net.au with further questions or, even better, examples of your work!

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REGIONAL
ARTS
VICTORIA

EDUCATION & FAMILIES

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