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## Improvisational Theatre

Improvisation is a state of being and creating action without pre-planning. This can be when an individual or group is acting, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, talking, creating artworks, problem solving, or reacting in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one's immediate environment and inner feelings. This can result in the invention of new thought patterns, new practices, new structures or symbols, and/or new ways to act.

Improvisation can be thought of as an "on the spot" or "off the cuff" spontaneous moment of sudden inventiveness that can just come to mind, body and spirit as an inspiration. No preparation or training is needed. However, improvisation in any life or art form can occur more often if it is practiced as a way of encouraging creative behavior.

Improvisational Theater, often called improv or impro, is a form of theater where most or all of what is performed is created at the moment it is performed. In its purest form, the dialogue, the action, the story and the characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds.

Improvisational Theater exists in performance as a range of styles of improvisational comedy as well as some non-comedic theatrical performances. It is sometimes used in film and television, both to develop characters and scripts and occasionally as part of the final product.

Improvisational techniques are often used extensively in drama programs to train actors for stage, film and television and can be an important part of the rehearsal process. However, the skills and processes of improvisation are used outside of the context of performing arts, as well. It is used in classrooms and businesses as an educational tool and as a way to develop communication and brain-storming skills. It is sometimes used in psychotherapy as a tool to gain insight into a person's thoughts, feelings and relationships.

The earliest well documented use of improvisational theatre in Western history is found in the Atellan Farce of Rome circa 391 BC. From the 16th to the 18th centuries, Commedia dell arte performers improvised based on a broad outline in the streets of Italy and in the 1890s theatrical theorists and directors such as Russian Stanislavski and the French Jaques Copeau, founders of two major streams of acting theory, both heavily utilized improvisation in acting training and rehearsal.

Modern theatrical improvisation games began as drama exercises for children, which were a staple of drama education in the early 20th Century thanks in part to the progressive



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education movement initiated by John Dewey in 1916. The exercises were developed further by Viola Spolin in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, and codified in her book *Improvisation for the Theater*. In the 1970s in Canada, British playwright and director Keith Johnstone wrote *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, a book outlining his ideas on improvisation, and invented Theatre Sport which has become a staple of modern improvisational comedy and is the inspiration for the popular television show *Who's line is it anyway?*

## Why is it improvisational theatre nonformal education?

The skills gained from improvisation can apply to many different abilities or forms of communication and expression across all artistic, scientific, physical, cognitive, academic, and non-academic disciplines. For example, improvisation can make a significant contribution in music, dance, cooking, presenting a speech, sales, personal or romantic relationships, sports, flower arranging, martial arts, psychotherapy, and much more.

Thus, the skills acquired through improvisational theatre techniques serve not only in the professional life but also to improve one's relationships with others. Improvisation helps participants to develop spontaneity, imagination, intuition and flexibility to think positively, to gain confidence in themselves and to strengthen relationships with others. All this happens in a fun, free from competition environment, where everyone can explore their artistic side.

Other skills improved through improvisation:

- **Stimulating creativity:** Where do ideas come from? Can little things turn into big ideas? What is innovation? How can we overcome prejudices and develop creativity? Improvisation techniques and exercises help people explore even the most daring ideas.
- **Teamwork:** simulations, role plays help participants relax, learn trust, to open up, to overcome their fears, to cooperate, to solve problems a lot more easy, to put aside their pride, to work for a common goal ... and have fun!
- **Communication:** mastery of body language, awareness, listening, spontaneity, improving communication skills in general for the day to day life. As people better understand how to communicate the more they will be able to work more efficiently

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