
BIG CHOICES – BIG VOICES

When you break it down, Improv becomes a series of choices. After years of training and performance, these choices become second nature. Writers make choices every day as they create new works. Everyone makes choices every day as we navigate life. When you have a conversation with friends, family, co-workers, bosses, enemies... we make choices on the words we speak. We react to our environment. We move forward.

In Improv we start with nothing. So no choice is wrong, as long as it is supporting previous choices in the scene (remember that whole “YES! And...” thing, right?). Unlike life, after a scene ends, the consequences of those choices go away. We have total creative freedom.

So try doing scenes where every statement you make is a new CHOICE that forwards the scene.

WHO

Make a choice about character and relationship. Every scene starts with WHO choices. Some are spoken, some are reflected in our physical performance. Some are inner monologue, never revealed but simply connect us to the scene and strengthen our performance. No choice you make is wrong if you commit to it. After basic choices established about characters/relationship, continue to explore the history of these characters as you move forward in the scene. Don't sit/stand there and tell us about what happened – BORING. Reveal backstory in the course of the scene.

WHERE

Make a choice about setting. Every scene starts with WHERE choices. But continue making WHERE choices throughout the scene. Discover the world in which your characters live. React to stimuli of the five senses. What do you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Experience your character's world the way you experience yours. Again, some are spoken while some choices are revealed through physical performance. And some will be made just to make your character stronger and never noticed by the audience.

WHAT

We need to make things happen. Some Improv is a simple conversation. BORING. The WHAT can be simple reactions to WHO & WHERE choices. Early on make a big choice about the WHAT. In real life things happen. Even in Seinfeld, a “show about nothing”, things happen. So Make Things Happen. Make a choice, then live with it. Create a conflict. Create a challenge. Create a traumatic event. This is where comedy needs to think more like a drama. The scene will be funny because we are comedians thrust into dramatic situations. But when you play the scene for real you will discover great things about your character, world and situation.

BIG VOICES

You do not have to scream. BIG VOICES is more about being confident in your choices than volume of voice. The voice is always full, though. Even when our characters are scared or whispering, we need to be heard by all. Unless you have a camera and/or microphone in your face, you need to project those words and choices to the back of the room.

DON'T FORGET TO HAVE FUN (but never at anyone else's expense) and “YES! AND...” as you make BIG CHOICES and use BIG VOICES! The more energy you commit, the more focus required... MORE TO COME...