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ACT

2

Handbook for Theatre Professionals

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ACT **2** Handbook for
Theatre
Professionals

**Developing Improvisational
Theatre as a New Approach to
Young Audience Development
in Theatre Arts**

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Introduction

Active involvement in the process of impro can be of great benefit for one's work, artistic practice, and sense of wellbeing. Practicing Impro has the power to bring out our best qualities such as cooperation, teamwork, respect and creativity. It gives a unique space that teaches the values of democratic process, equality, and shared responsibility that helps develop courage, risk-taking, acceptance and commitment. And one of its greatest virtues is that it teaches the value of failing and how to fail better. In this, Impro has one of its most important applications: as a way of learning.

This is why the Young Theatre Project was initiated. Its primary goal is to spread distribution of the knowledge and practice of impro process - a process that can be applied to many different areas and fields, not only as a form of performance art: from business training to alternative teaching models, communication, public speaking and therapy. The process is especially useful for the young as it offers fun and engaging ways to learn and develop individual and social skills and engender essential values.

This handbook offers a collection of games that can be used for many different purposes. For example, they can be used as an additional educational practice for existing youth programs, or as an outreach and development method for programs in theatre for people of all ages. It can enrich existing acting techniques, provide new creative ways to prepare performances and plays, and can help ensembles to develop playfulness, focus, and deeper involvement in the artistic process.

This project is primarily aimed at three focus groups: the young - especially 12-15 year olds, teachers, and theatre professionals, with the ultimate objective to inspire the young and all who work with them, to appreciate and love the art of live theatre and to encourage theatre attendance. By sharing these fun and inspiring Impro games and methods we hope to create real and lasting enthusiasm for the art of theatre.

Lastly, we hope that you will take this introduction to Impro process to explore the practice more deeply and to develop your own improvisational techniques, invent your own games, and develop the confidence to apply improvisation in teaching, performing and all aspects of your life and work.

I. Basic exercises

The point of basic impro games is to introduce the general idea of theatre improvisation (impro), which we define as ‘the art of spontaneous creation from group mind’ in a way that is fun and enjoyable. The idea is to create unscripted performance without extensive scene work, costumes or props. The main rule of impro is to practice the expression: ‘Yes, and...’ This means acceptance of what has been stated or introduced by other improvisers and then taking the offer and adding our own offer to it, allowing others to build upon the collective work. Even if the rule is sometimes broken for all the right reasons, we believe it’s best to stick to this simple idea and emphasize it - especially when teaching.

When starting, it is best to say a few words about the general idea of the process of impro, and then jump right in with warm-up games to activate the body and voice and free the mind. Practice makes perfect and students quickly engage and understand by starting with the games right away. Then you can continue with more advanced practice such as the making of scenes.

Some of the main skills and values that are developed in basic impro games are: listening, observing, eye contact, reaction, relaxation, togetherness, playfulness, speaking loudly and clearly, body control, focus, acceptance, cooperation, involvement, engagement, risk taking, and shared responsibility. Remember, failing can and should be fun!

1.1 Names in a circle

1. Position: o/O (everybody in the circle - sitting or standing up)
2. Goal: to relax and to learn about the names of others.
3. How to play? First player who starts says his own name and points at someone else. Next one says her name and points at the third player, etc. This is stage one, you can play it for a short while. When people are a bit more relaxed, you can introduce stage two - when you point at someone, you should tell his name, he should point at someone else and tell her name. The last stage starts, when one of the players points at someone and the chosen one should tell the name of the first pointer.
4. Variations: Instead of names you can have other lists and maybe just have first two rounds.
5. Idea: Safety, connection, listening, relaxation, learning names, etc.

Very safe, simple game for noticing others, especially good for new groups who don't know each other and as an icebreaker.

1.2 Name and designation/The original name game

1. Position: o/O (everybody in the circle - sitting or standing up)
2. Goal: to learn names and start warming up and using the body.
3. How to play? Each player says his name and adds a word that starts with the letter of their first name and adds a movement (e.g. 'Tom as trumpet' and mimes playing the trumpet). Others repeat after him all together and then it is the next player's turn to say a name and a word.
4. Variation: Instead of the word that starts with the first letter of your name, you can choose a specific category, e.g. adverbs, animals, or whatever else you decide on.
5. Idea: Safe exploration of words and movement, supporting others, inventing/mirroring, deciding - try to stop the group from 'helping' and giving ideas for other than themselves and take some more time if needed.

1.3 Walking names

1. Position: O (everybody in a circle)
2. Goal: to learn about the names and start connecting movement and words/sounds.
3. How to play? One player (A) starts by calling another player's name (B). At that point, A starts walking towards B. Before A gets to B, B needs to call another name (C), so B frees her spot in the circle, for A to take. C then needs to call yet another name and start walking, so B can take C's spot.
4. Variations: Instead of calling names, players can pick another player by making eye contact (and nodding to acknowledge that eye contact has been made). You can add a rule that B should say 'Go!' when A says her name or that the player who is walking can tag out the person he is walking to, if she is too slow to leave. This game is also a very useful tool for building your own games (Build your own!). You can play with pace of the game and walking.
5. Idea: Eye contact, walking, allowing/accepting, warming up the mind, etc.

1.4 Zombie

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle, one in the middle)
2. Goal: to avoid to get eaten by a zombie by relying on others for help.
3. How to play? One player is the zombie and stands in the middle of the circle. Zombie starts to move towards one person standing in the circle, zombie-style. Before reaching that player, that player needs to save himself, which he does with an intense stare at one of the other players in the circle. When the third player realizes the victim is looking at them, they have to save the victim from the zombie by yelling the name of any other player in the circle, which redirects the zombie. The zombie then heads towards that player. If the zombie reaches a player before he is saved by someone, that player becomes the zombie.
4. Variations: Whatever creature or selected character that is scary in any way can be chosen, together with all its physical characteristics. For younger participants you can have the version when the victim saves himself by saying some other name, but the original idea of not having all control all the time is definitely worth practising.
5. Idea: Attention, eye contact, responsibility, taking care of your partners, character work, the importance of tempo, playing for real (not hesitating before 'eating' a person), etc.

1.5 The cowboy game/The shootout

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to be the fastest and most persistent Cowboy in the group and to learn names.
3. How to play? The game starts with someone (usually MC) saying someone's name. That player needs to drop to the floor (squat) as fast as he can. His neighbours shoot at each other; because he is in the middle of them, if he's not down fast enough, he dies. If he's down before the gun is fired, the neighbours have a duel between them and the one who fires last, dies. Sometimes they shoot at the same time, so they should recharge the gun and try again (click-bam!). One dies - sits on the ground or leaves the circle. Repeat until only two players are alive. Place those two back to back in the middle of the room. The one who died first can lead the last battle. She selects a category and starts naming things from that category (e.g. fruit, drama play titles, colours, etc.). For every item, the two cowboys make a step forward (apart from each other). When

she names something that does not belong in the chosen category (e.g. a shoe), they turn around and shoot each other. At least one dies, and if they're not sure who shot first, they should both gladly die.

4. Variations: Use your imagination!

5. Idea: Speed, reaction, focus, failure and fast recovery after failure (that is why names are usually said by the people who 'died'), fun, etc.

1.6 Names in two circles

1. Position: O O (two circles are formed)

2. Goal: to play it incredibly fast, to fail, to change circles a lot and to learn names.

3. How to play? Two circles are formed. We play passing names with the clap, when one player claps towards another and says that person's name. The point of the game is to play it as fast as possible, we encourage failing a lot. When failing - e.g. saying the wrong name, taking too much time to think or hesitating before saying the name, one changes the circle and plays the game in the new circle (until the next failure).

4. Variations: start with one circle - when making a mistake, the first person just waits outside of the circle for other people to make mistakes and to create a new circle.

5. Idea: Speed, reaction, failure, recovery, eye contact, etc. Super liberating game when played on the verge of capabilities, not knowing your own name in the end!

1.7 Throwing associations/Free association game

1. Position: o/O (everybody in the circle - sitting or standing up)

2. Goal: to listen to the word that is given and to respond with the first thing that comes to one's mind.

3. How to play? One player starts by saying a random word and looking at someone in the circle (or pointing at them). That player repeats the word and says the first thing he thinks about when he hears that word (or sound, in some variations) and look at someone else who repeats and passes a new word, etc.

4. Variations: This game has numerous variations and is one of the most basic and core elements of impro. The game can be played alphabetically or only one category allowed, it can become a memory game if we repeat the whole chain (and learn that one of the easiest way to create the long

chain people can remember is with most of words following naturally and some odd ones here and there). It is also a good base for multi task exercises and can be done with movement, sounds or mix-and-match style (when associating in mixed techniques, e.g. verbally-nonverbally, be careful not just to say what one sees, but saying that in your mind and then associating on it and vice versa).

5. Idea: Spontaneity, listening, responding, reacting, deciding, naming, making association chains, memory, breaking patterns, etc. You can also introduce the rule that the words cannot repeat themselves and talk about a circle of expectations - what is possible and what is probable (even though all associations could go, even the most personal and odd ones). If the whole impro should be portrayed with one game, this would be it.

1.8 Throwing sounds

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to throw/make and catch/repeat sounds as similarly as possible.
3. How to play? One player starts by yelling, screaming, whispering, squeaking, etc. - so passing whatever voice-sound to another person in the circle. That person has to repeat the sound as similarly as possible and pass new sound to the next player.
4. Variations: The game can be played with additional rules of your choice and imagination (only emotional, animal or any other category of sounds).

The original game has an additional rule that players mime throwing and catching a ball when throwing or catching sounds, which is very useful tool that can help (shy) beginners with the volume of the voice as well. 'Balls'/the movement can be changed with different balls (they can be bigger, heavier, not even balls, the imagined object can be rolled, thrown in different ways with related sounds, etc.)

5. Idea: Voice warm up, reaction, fun, etc. As the game progresses we can sometimes notice the patterns (similar length, volume, type of sounds, a rhythm), but want to avoid and break them, so encourage variety, playfulness, taking inspiration from others, precision with repeating, etc.

1.9 Mexican wave

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to repeat the movement and sound of the chosen player as similarly as possible.
3. How to play? One player starts by making whatever movement and sound he chooses (it doesn't matter what, it just has to be a voice-sound connection), and the left neighbour repeats the exact same movement and sound, then the next and the next until the circle is finished (as dominos, the first one then repeats the original movement and sound so the circle is really finished). Then the next makes up his own movement and sound and everybody repeats it one after another.
4. Variations: You can play the game with amplifying/enlarging the movement and the sound or choosing only emotional sounds and movement, animal sounds, etc. One possible variation is also to copy the same sound and movement of the first player all the time with extra attention to every little detail of neighbour's movement and to copy it exactly - if we copy every laugh, every additional scratch, etc. the movement changes organically, without any invention (which is a good message for the scene as well - we do not need to invent all the time, we need to see what's already there).
5. Idea: Warming up the body, the voice and the mind, speed, reaction, accepting, deciding, feeling goofy and even weird, especially because we encourage everything but pre-existing words (gibberish appreciated), etc.

1.10 Monkey in the bushes

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: whole group creates the group energy by 'singing' (it can be more of a chant) the song and making the movement together in the same rhythm and then adding their own monkey ideas.
3. How to play? The MC starts by saying/singing rhythmically: 'Monkey in the bushes' and mimes the movement of the monkey with the hands swinging in rhythm in front of the body. The group is encouraged to repeat everything they hear and see, so the rhythmic song and movement will grow. So they do: 'Monkey in the bushes.' MC: 'Monkey in the tall grass' (accompanied by acting as a monkey climbing in rhythm). The group moves and sings: 'Monkey in the tall grass.' MC: 'Monkey is swimming' (doing whatever swimming technique mentor monkey chooses to). The

group: 'Monkey is swimming.' MC: 'Monkey is on fire!' and has hands on the head and mimes running/jumping on spot in rhythm as if fire was on the floor underneath his feet. The group repeats: 'Monkey is on fire!' MC says: 'Monkey is sleeping' and again chooses whatever sleeping position he chooses to or just do the good old head on one side with hands together underneath the ears. 'Monkey is sleeping'. When the song is over, MC makes up new activity that monkey is doing (e.g. Monkey is dancing) and adds movement, which everyone repeats, then the next player in the circle shows and tells a new activity and everybody repeats it and so on and so on. At the end the original song is performed one more time (the pace of the song can be higher at the end).

The original song:

Monkey in the bushes, monkey in the bushes,
 monkey in a tall grass, monkey in a tall grass,
 monkey is swimming, monkey is swimming,
 monkey is on fire, monkey is on fire,
 monkey is sleeping, monkey is sleeping.

4. Variations: You can create your own song.
5. Idea: Listening, mirroring, rhythm, group mind, creativity, multitasking, energy, etc.
 (The game was created by Domeka Parker and her group and presented on one of the impro workshops in Slovenia.)

1.11 Samurai

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to warm up body and voice and to create common rhythm.
3. How to play? One player is the Samurai, who starts by lifting the imagined Katana (sword) and making a loud fighting noise (e.g. HA!). When player's sword is still up in the air, the two neighbours swing their imagined swords into her sides (as to cut her), again making sound enthusiastically. When the neighbours retract their swords, the Samurai lowers her sword towards another player and makes a sound (HA!); while doing this she makes eye contact with another player, which then becomes Samurai and lifts the Katana: HA!
4. Variations: The rhythm can be slow at first and can be gradually increased and faster.
 Instead of the constant sound (e.g. HA), you can add other sounds or dif-

ferent sounds (e.g. Ha-He-Hi-Ho-Hu). You can play the game with dropping out (other remaining players clap their legs twice, clap their hands twice, then pretend to use their Katanas and say HA! or invent some other ritual so that the samurai who made the mistake or was too slow can pretend to die and leaves the circle).

5. Idea: Group mind, energy, voice, action, reaction, rhythm, diaphragm practice (encouraging connection between voice and breath).

1.12 The scream

1. Position: o/O (everybody in the circle - sitting or standing up)
2. Goal: to make an eye contact and to scream loudly.
3. How to play? On the sign (e.g. 1,2,3), everybody lifts their head and either looks left or right. Whenever two players look each other in the eyes, they scream as loud as they can (as if they are startled) and then leave the game. Repeat till only one or two players are alive and have them seated with backs together. On the sign, they either turn their head left or right. If they look at the same direction, they scream.
4. Variations: People can look at whomever in the circle they want. You can change places after each round so it's harder for the group to preconceive their actions/where they are going to look. You can play the game with the winner (odd number of players) but be careful if this is the case of the whole group not wanting to share eye contact with one person - MC can join the game to make it even.
5. Idea: eye contact, voice (as loud as you can, using diaphragm), connection, fun, etc.

1.13 Fruit salad

1. Position: O d b (chairs) in the circle, one player standing in the middle of the circle without a chair)
2. Goal: to find an empty chair and sit on it and remember as many words as one can when in the middle.
3. How to play? The player in the middle calls out a category (e.g. fruit, vegetables, favourite book, reasons to be late, things you are scared of, etc.). All players tell their answer one at the time and after everyone is done, the player in the middle tries to repeat as many answers as he can, and in the end, says 'Go' and tries to find an empty chair to sit on. When a player hears his word being repeated, he must leave the chair on 'Go'

and find another one. Person that doesn't find a chair becomes the next in the middle. None of the answers should be exactly the same (favourite colour - blue and aquamarine blue, for example)

4. Variations: There is another game called 'Fruit basket' which is similar, except that the player in the middle yells the category or description (everybody who is afraid of spiders, everybody who wants to travel the world, etc.), and all players who match the description or fit in the category have to leave the chair and find another one.

5. Idea: Group mind, listening, memory, deciding, speed, etc. Very good for getting to know each other or learning about group's way of mind (what are the biggest world problems, associations with Shakespeare, etc.)

1.14 Clap game

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)

2. Goal: to be focused and follow the clap with the eyes, whole body and focus (and to clap when it is your turn).

3. How to play? One player starts by throwing a hand clap to another player in the circle and she passes the clap to another player. This is gradually played as fast as possible, while still retaining the rhythm and control. We can have more than one clap, but it is best to start with one.

4. Variations: Next step is synchronised clap, where one player looks at neighbour's eyes and they clap simultaneously. The neighbour then turns to her neighbour and they repeat the simultaneous clap. Play this till the clap really flows nicely around the circle. Then tell the group that players may decide to pass the clap back to the neighbour they got it from. MC can then add more than one clap (first in one direction only, later mix-and-match freely). Player can also decide to look at any other player in the circle and clap with him - while still trying to maintain the constant rhythm of the clap. Players can send out more than one clap - try clapping twice, three times or four times when you pass the clap. You can also play 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 variation in which first couple claps once, second couple twice and then accordingly (without counting out loud!).

5. Idea: Focus, speed, reaction, eye contact, connection, playfulness, etc. Be careful that the tense focus that is usually created with the game does not translate into tense bodies. In general, try to introduce the rule of taking care of oneself - if something is uncomfortable - don't complain, change it.

1.15 What an ass

1. Position: O (everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to create and keep the common rhythm, adapt to changing numbers, and fail happily (while still trying to play the game at your best)
3. How to play? One player is What an ass. The others, going clockwise, are numbered: 1, 2, 3 and so on. Now 'What an ass' establishes a four-beat rhythm, saying 'What an ass' four times (some groups add 'aha' at the end instead of the last 'What an ass') - and repeat this until everyone in the group got the common rhythm. The game then goes as follows: 'What an ass' passes the turn to someone else, saying 'What an ass - number 7' (this takes two beats) Number 7 then passes in two beats to, e.g. number 2, saying: '(number) 7 (to) (number) 2'. It then continues until someone makes a mistake: if and when that happens everyone says (in 2 beats): 'Oh Shit'. After that, the player that made the mistake becomes 'What an ass' and everyone's number changes, after which we repeat the beginning - What an ass (four times) and the game starts again.
4. Variations: Instead of 'What an ass', some groups use 'Big booty'. A base for a lot of other games when one has to say his/her name/number/something first, and then calls someone else in the circle by their name/number/something. Games that are similar are for example Lemons and Peter-Paul.
5. Idea: Ritual, connection, fun, movement, rhythm, focus, etc. Have fun with it and make it your own!

1.16 Where are things in space

1. Position: LL Walking exercise
2. Goal: to improve observation of the environment and play with our attention.
3. How to play? Players start walking around the space. Tell them that they should stop and close their eyes every time they hear a clap (and 'Stop!' if you add it). When this happens, the MC asks a question, e.g.: 'Where does Mike stand?' Everybody should keep their eyes closed and try to point to the direction where Mike supposedly stands. When everybody has decided (everyone should at least guess), tell them to open their eyes and see if this is true or not - but it doesn't matter if we failed, just so we learn how good we are at observation. This should be repeated with different categories of questions (Where does the person with red sweater

stand; How many people in this room wear glasses (show with your fingers, eyes still closed); Where does the trash can stand; How many tables are there, etc.)

4. Variations: Everybody silently chooses one other player from the group and has to know at all times where this chosen person is when walking around (preferably so that you do not walk backwards to keep him in sight all the time, but risking, turning the back sometimes and relying just on the feeling as well). When 'Stop' or clap comes, they close their eyes again and show it. Then we add the second player that everybody has to choose silently (on whom we point with the other hand), and then the third (players will use one of the legs to show where their third chosen player stands) and lastly, the fourth, on which players point with their nose.

5. Idea: Space orientation, attention, observation of everything in the room/scene/situation, can be combined perfectly with other space and walking exercises (the group walking - stopping together, or when one stops, we all stop, for example) you know and use.

1.17 Yes, let's!

1. Position: undefined

2. Goal: to cheerfully accept and give offers.

3. How to play? One starts by saying what the whole groups should do to which the whole group must respond 'Yes, let's!' and do it. Someone else proposes something else, again: 'Yes, let's!' etc.

4. Variations: This can be played totally random (players yell whatever they want) or you can build the story/scene together (e.g. pirates). It can be played with the whole group at the same time or divided into smaller groups.

5. Idea: Supporting others no matter what, taking up the responsibility yourself, movement, energy, following, etc. Sometimes groups refuse to say 'Yes, let's' - does not have to be said, as long it is practically done. It is very important for all to support every idea - even if one does not like it, first accept, then change.

1.18 Freeze/Stop

1. Scene: I I (half of players on one side of the stage facing the other that are on the opposite side, the middle is empty) - the position can change with variations, scenes

2. Goal: to start the new scene out of the frozen picture - body position of players in the previous scene.

3. How to play? Two players start the scene. They can start with the inspiration of a suggestion (a location, their occupation or relationship, a problem, etc.) or even invite two volunteers to put them into body position from which they will start the scene.

At any point in time during the scene any side player can call 'Freeze/Stop', which makes the two players to stand still in whatever body position they have during that time. This player then tags out one of the two players and takes his place and his exact body position (and facial expression). Both players then start a completely new scene, with new character and in new location, justifying their positions and changing their meaning.

4. Variation: The one who is tagged out, can suggest one of the aspects of the scene (location, emotion, problem, etc.), which may or may not suit the body position the other players are in.

Blind Freeze/Stop: One player turns his back to the scene and counts to 30 and says 'Freeze/Stop' (useful with excited groups that have problem with patience and observing). He turns around and takes place of one of the two players and continues the scene, while the third player turns his back to the scene and counts to 30, etc.

Blind freeze/stop can be played so that all players turn their backs to the scene and say 'Freeze/Stop' without seeing what the body positions are.

5. Idea: Body association, character work, cooperation, listening, responding, basic scene work, etc.

1.19 Square

1. Scene: Four players stand in a square position; two in the first part of the stage, two behind them

2. Goal: to have four different scenes, of which we always watch the one which is in the first part/in front of the stage.

3. How to play? Audience suggests some contextual information for the two players in front (e.g. a location where the scene will take place, a relationship between the characters, situation, historical era, etc.) Then

the players are asked to turn the square (to the right or to the left - players move for one spot in the square in that direction). So now there is a different combination of players in front. These two get another audience suggestion. We do that until players take their original position.

The two players in front start improvising a scene. Players play until the MC yells 'Left' or 'Right' (or even: 'Two times right/left!'), and square turns accordingly. The two players in front start playing a scene based on their suggestion (and which has usually no connection to previous scene) until MC calls again.

This is repeated. When two players are up in front for the second or third time, they continue their previously played scene. They can either plainly continue it or continue at some time in the future (a day later, a year later, a century later).

4. Variations: This game can be a good base for variations, as it is also possible to have the scenes connected, play the same story or have the players play the same character in both scenes they are in, or to give any other addition missions or limitations (every scene has different level of emotion played in the scene, every scene is played in different genre - movie or theatre, every player has different technique - gibberish, silent, etc.).

It can be played as a triangle as well (one in the back, two in the front) and can be played without the MC - one of the players on the stage initiates the turn of the triangle/square (could be without saying as well, just clear intention and fast change of places).

It can be played with extra suggestion of common theme that connects all scenes (e.g. holidays).

Two players that are in the back can become background statues or objects that change according to the scene's atmosphere and location.

5. Idea: Inspiration, spontaneity, cooperation, decisions, one of the starting points into the exploration of the rhythm and pace on stage, development of the scene, etc.

1.20 Who/where/what

1. Scene: I I (everybody in 2 lines)
2. Goal: to build a platform for a scene and practice acceptance (Yes, and).
3. How to play? First person from one line starts doing (miming) a silent activity (e.g. fishing). First person from the second line observes the silent scene, decides on the character and situation and approaches the first

player (e.g. 'Honey, I brought you some lunch'). Usually only beginnings of the scenes are played, then the mentor uses 'Thank you!' to encourage first two players to walk at the end of the line - and then a new pair of players builds a new platform (with different activity).

4. Variations: One sentence rule can be introduced (so each player can only give limited amount of information, which is useful, when trying to learn about shared responsibility) or trying the same activity for different scenes, to explore the circle of possibilities.

5. Idea: It is all about platform, naming, adding information, showing, not only telling, listening and responding with rich and useful information - great for more experienced actors and improvisers as well, especially as a warm-up.

1.21 This is not a stick/Unknown object

1. Scene: I I (half of players on one side of the stage facing the other that are on the opposite side, the middle is empty)

2. Goal: to use an object/prop for some other use than it is primarily used for and instead of another (usually in at least somewhat connected and similar) object.

3. How to play? MC puts an object/a prop on the stage - this time the real, material one (e.g. a drumstick). One player starts and uses drumstick for anything else except for drumming (e.g. start the scene with drumstick being used as a microphone, or a whistle or a lollipop, etc.). Next player says 'Freeze/Stop', takes the object and uses it for something else.

4. Variations: It can be done in couples and with the added possibility of more players in the scene. It can be done as a series of not connected ideas but can be upgraded into a flow - longer improvisation where the object is slowly transforming.

5. Idea: Show, don't tell - you can discourage naming the object (whereas naming invisible objects is encouraged to some extent), exploring the possibilities, association, creativity, etc.

II. Nonverbal communication

- Body movement

Nonverbal communication is a very important element in impro theatre because of the 'naked stage' - playing without costumes and props that would define character, scenery and objects (except chairs/cubes). This demands intense mime work to offer audience enough of the hints and clues about the space, to offer them fuller and deeper picture of the character, setting, scene, location and atmosphere. Sometimes there is also the difference between the intended picture (what the improviser wanted to portray) and what is visible to the audience (what they think the improviser represents) so we learn about different perspectives and accepting and including the audience as well.

Since it is quite hard sometimes to pin down improvisational theatre's rules, aims and objectives, body expressions can represent an important focus, because they can help to break the 'talking heads' scenes. These are unfortunately very common even among experienced improvisers - improvisers just stand and talk without doing anything, usually without the scene moving forward as well, most often than not trying to outsmart or 'outfunny' each other - lacking listening, acceptance and other important impro process elements. Therefore, nonverbal exercises are really important - silent scene exercises, gibberish and talking and doing at the same time (multi-tasking).

Some of the main impro skills that are promoted in nonverbal games are reaction, relaxed and controlled body, cooperation, touch, exploring personal space and feelings of comfort/discomfort, body communication, observation, mirroring, embodiment of different characters, thinking about gestures, walk, body position of them and what emotion do they bring, etc.

2.1 Walking as ...

1. Position: LL Walking exercise
2. Goal: to imagine and embody different characters and think about what they do, how they do it, how their body position look and feel, etc.
3. How to play? Players start walking around the space. The MC yells, for example: 'Let's walk as detectives!' Everybody starts to act as they think a detective does, with emphasis on variety of characters and individual actions that can lead to non-verbal communication between different detectives. After a while MC says 'Let's walk as...' again and chooses

another being, creature, object, whatever imagined.

4. Variations: Silent/gibberish/words

5. Idea: Movement, transformation, multi-tasking, listening, creativity, intention, character work, etc.

You can have people walking while explaining the rules - listening and walking at the same time can be already challenging for some. Every time people walk neutral in exercises, you can also check body positions - encourage hands next to the body (not in the pockets, or crossed over), relaxed, looking forward, chest up, noticing others as well, not walking in circles and breaking patterns.

2.2 Walking on ...

1. Position: LL Walking exercise

2. Goal: to imagine different surfaces to walk on and try to walk just as if the surface would be underneath/around us.

3. How to play? Players start walking around the space. The MC yells, for example: 'Let's walk on the hot sand!' All players start to act as if there would be hot sand on the floor. After a while mentor changes it again. Possible surfaces: quicksand, grass, honey, mud, water of different depths, anthill, rocks, ice, concrete that is drying - so the whole group should have the same pace of walking and being stuck until they all freeze simultaneously.

4. Variations: You can perform the version of this game as a scene with two or three players on this surface or combine the game with any other by your choice.

5. Idea: Sensorial exercise, imagination, variety, movement, interaction, etc.

2.3 One part of the body guides you

1. Position: LL Walking exercise

2. Goal: to explore different movements and walks that can help us with the building of different characters.

3. How to play? Players start walking around the space. MC names one part of the body which will lead the movement of the characters and their body position and players start to walk around in different manners and thinking about what kind of character could walk like this. After a while, a new body part is called out.

4. Variations: It can be an individual exercise as well and after the player is walking around and has found a manner of walk and character type, he can be asked questions to which he responds as a character, which can help with the background of the character and their story.

It can be also done only with three main centres of energy: head, chest/heart and pelvis.

5. Idea: Fast character building exercise, especially when the psychological characteristics derive from physiological traits (e.g. if nose guides it, the character could be nosey and curious), body awareness and exploration, movement, imagination, fun, etc.

2.4 Atoms

1. Position: LL Walking exercise

2. Goal: to make different frozen pictures/statues according to the rules.

3. How to play? Have people walk around the stage/room. When you yell a number, and name a body part, players should immediately form groups that fit the number and are all touching each other with the named part of the body (e.g. '3, elbow' means players have to form groups of three, where all three members of the group are touching with their elbows). Instead of a body part you can also yell the title of the frozen picture (e.g. Little red riding hood and the wolf, Royal family of 4, Bad date, etc.). Instead of the title you can also yell forms, objects or machines, e.g. 3, square - groups of three people have to form a square with their bodies - 4, car, etc.)

4. Variations: Play as much as you want by adding different rules and categories. You can also use the name of the picture and the number of players more than once to find the forms that are not just the obvious ones (you can yell '3, square' three times in a row and encourage players to find as many different ways of being/portraying a square with three bodies as possible). You can encourage moving objects to leave the frozen form and to move (if they have to form a car or a machine that makes something, encourage them to move and to be as synchronised as possible).

Use it for the start of a scene - different body positions are a great inspiration for the action.

5. Idea: Variety, imagination, movement, communication, connection, body control, group mind, cooperation, etc.

2.5 Tableaux/picture

1. Position: LL Walking exercise - the position can change with variations
2. Goal: to form a still/frozen image based on a suggestion.
3. How to play? Tableaux games are a great tool to play with and can have a variety of forms. The main rule is that together, players form a frozen picture of some sort and stay still for a while as we comment on the picture. It can be played with the whole group together (e.g.: 'the beach' - we encourage diversity - from people doing different activities, to animals and objects) or in smaller groups.
4. Variations: Vacation photos (with storyteller or not), tableaux as a start of the scene, story in 3/6/x pictures, different groups pick what they are going to show, the others guess, etc. A great game for the message that what I want to portray does not always match with what the audience/storyteller thinks I portray. With younger children, it is still sometimes necessary to ask them what they had in mind when the description is over.
5. Idea: Cooperation, body control, embodying, imagination, stillness, etc.

2.6 Clap-stomp

1. Position: O (Everyone in a circle)
2. Goal: to create rhythm that does not stop even when you introduce disruptions, pauses and changes.
3. How to play? Look around the circle and find a way to visually divide players into two groups (gender, dark/light shirt, glasses/no glasses, dark-haired/light-haired, etc.). Decide on which player will have clap and which player stomp (e.g. women have stomp, men have clap). Decide on the person who starts. E.g., if it is a woman, we will all stomp and if it is a man, we will all clap. The circle continues clockwise - the whole group clapping once if it is man's turn or the whole group stomping if it is woman's turn. We are trying to establish a rhythm that is fast, but still controlled. When we master that, we can add some rules to make the game more challenging.
4. Variations: You can add the possibility of ducking/squatting, where one ducks ('rests') which means that when it should be this player's turn, there is a pause in the rhythm. You can also add the possibility of switching places in the circle, which changes the rhythm and brings new chal-

lenge. (For beginners it is enough to switch places with the neighbour, if the circle is big enough and the group is synchronised, you can advance to switching with whomever you like). For younger groups it can be done only with the basic version, but can be, for example, done with eyes closed.

5. Idea: Rhythm, pause, change of rhythm, taking care of the group, group mind, focus, etc.

2.7 Mirror games

1. Position: 1 1 (everybody in 2 lines facing each other) - the position can change with variations

2. Goal: to be as synchronised with our partner in movement, gestures and expressions as possible (only mirrored - if first player lifts his left arm, his mirror lifts the right, etc.)

3. How to play? The basic mirror game has players on one side, who start with random movements and their partners on the other side watch them and mirror them as closely as possible. After a while, they switch - the ones who were leading, are now following, mirroring. The last stage is where no one is leading or following but rather do it as synchronised as possible with careful focus, with one of the partners maybe leading a bit, than the other takes over, and the smallest movement can be a hint of where to go next.

4. Variations: There are a lot of variations and possibilities, and it is a good base for multi-task exercises as well. One of the variations is, for example, one where 'mirror-couples' stand anywhere in space, some close, some far apart and do the mirroring. After a while, one can start looking at someone else and starts to mirror them, so we can switch and move around the space and explore. We can even have one player play a scene and the other mirror everything.

5. Idea: Follow the follower, observation, transformation, body control, action, mirroring, multi-tasking, etc.

2.8 Half time

1. Scene: usually for two players

2. Goal: try to repeat the same scene again and again in shorter and shorter time and thus finding the main point and action of the scene.

3. How to play? Two players play a short scene (1 minute long). Then

ask the players to repeat the scene in 30 seconds. Third time they repeat it in 15 seconds, then 7,5 seconds, 3 seconds and 1 second.

4. Variations: Starting a scene in the middle of the action.
5. Idea: Recognising and identifying the basic/most important actions in the scene, memory, character, mime, action, body memory, etc.

2.9 Expert Gibberish

1. Scene: usually for three players
2. Goal: to create a TV (or some other) show with all of its rules in which the main focus is on the expert that only speaks gibberish - the language he makes up as he goes and its translation.
3. How to play? We are watching a tv show, where one player is the host and one player is a guest in the show - an expert on a chosen subject, usually provided by the audience. Furthermore, he's from a foreign country (perhaps also supplied by the audience, but not necessarily). The host interviews the expert, but the expert does not speak the language since he speaks in gibberish and so the third player translates.
4. Variations: As mentioned, gibberish can be based on the sounds of a real language or is made up entirely. There can even be two experts (with even two translators or just one) who have a debate.
5. Idea: Nonverbal communication, emotions, commitment, exploration of gibberish language, character, body movement, etc.

2.10 Interpretation for the deaf

1. Scene: usually for three players
2. Goal: to create a TV (or some other) interview, which is accompanied by the translation for the deaf.
3. How to play? One of the players will be an expert on a topic provided by the audience, another will be the interviewer. The third will provide simultaneous interpretation for the deaf, using 'sign language' (e.g. uses different gestures and body movement for interpretation - creating silent language by repeating the same gestures/movement for the same word).
4. Variations: A possible tool for some other scenes with talking.
5. Idea: Putting words in the body, consistency, energy, nonverbal communication, big gestures, spontaneity, etc.

2.11 Helping hands expert

1. Scene: usually for three players
2. Goal: to have two players act as one and another to host the interview with that person.
3. How to play? Two-in-One character consists of one player, who does the voice, holding his hands behind his back. Another player stands behind this player and provides characters' 'arms' or 'hands'. Another one is the interviewer who questions the first character (the interview is usually connected to some sort of activity of occupation of the expert). In this variation of Helping hand games, the arms are the ones that lead the story and the voice follows (which means that before every verbal answer, arms should make a movement/a gesture, which inspires the voice to tell the story accordingly).
4. Variations: The cooperation between hands and voices is a give and take. There is also Helping hands storyteller, where only one character that consists of two players, performs and tells a story, with hands/gestures following the speaker.
5. Idea: Emotion, character work, cooperation, exploring relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication, leading/following, exploring hand/arm gestures, etc.

2.12 3 Location, Occupation, Object

1. Scene: Guessing scene - usually for four players, three leave the room
2. Goal: to raise the stakes of the mime game and see how the meaning changes during different scenes and how well can we communicate with each other non-verbally.
3. How to play? One player on stage, the audience provides a location, an occupation and an object that are not connected to each other, only known to the player on stage. Second player enters and a three-part scene is played in gibberish. Player 1 needs to communicate/show the location to player 2; as soon as player 2 thinks he's got it, he makes a sign. Then player 2 needs to guess the occupation; and at the end, the object needs to be revealed. As soon as player 2 looks like he silently guessed the last - the object (which he usually proves with 'using' the object), the player 1 has to 'kill' player 2 with it. (The object chosen for the murder weapon should not actually be weapons, but rather everyday objects that

are mimed and, in the end, used for 'death' of the other player)

Player 1 goes off stage and the next player is invited in the room/on stage and the game repeats - now player 2 is miming what he thinks is correct to player number 3. This is repeated until all of the players have played. Afterwards, line up the players and ask them one at the time where they think they were, what their occupation was and what the murder weapon was. The order of the players guessing is usually from player 4 to player 1.

4. Variations: The game is more often played with gibberish than in total silence, so choose, whatever suits your purpose, you can also play it with more people than four and stress the importance of every player finding its own way to mime, not only copying what was shown to him.

5. Idea: Cooperation and communication, scene is more important than guessing, actions speak (showing location by showing what is happening there), happy failing, etc.

2.14 Exotic sport

1. Scene: usually for four people, positioning as desired, usually two in front, two in the back

2. Goal: to present a not-yet-existing sport to the public with video footage of that sport.

3. How to play? One of the players is a host of a show, another is the expert in a new sport, defined by audience (e.g. speed ironing) - they are usually in the front of the stage. In the back, two players are representing the video footage of the sport in the slow motion. Interview in the front should inspire the movement of the players in the back and vice versa - there should be direct comments on the footage in the interview.

4. Variations: You can have more than two players doing the video footage (teams, etc.). The host/expert can play with speed (fast forward, rewind, etc.) or focus (zoom in, zoom out) or whatever else you can think of.

5. Idea: Use of the body, mime, gestures, exploring slow motion, cooperation, etc.

III. Storytelling

Understanding stories, their structure and meaning is sometimes hard to grasp for the young and hard to teach as well, so to start it is enough to focus on spontaneous storytelling (e.g. Story in line) and communal storytelling (e.g. One word at a time). Sometimes, speed is better than meaning, so it is even good to have a few failed stories to learn that simpler is sometimes better, circles of expectations are here to help us (the balance between believable and unexpected/crazy) and especially that we mostly do not have to intend and premeditate anything - we say the first things that come to mind, because it usually makes the most sense (excluding the forementioned inventions and funnies). That is why free association games are useful (with associations by categories, alphabet and other limitations).

It is also advised to combine storytelling exercises with movement (e.g. Writing machine) and portraying what is said.

Sometimes stories can feel/become boring, so try to raise the stakes and importance of events/motives of the characters (and try to use different voices, sounds and other elements to make told stories more interesting). Action, emotion and detail is useful exercise as well to show different elements that help make story more vivid, lively and invested.

Some of the main improv skills that are promoted in storytelling games are listening, accepting, spontaneity, failure, learning about genres and intentions of stories, learning about the importance of all of the elements of the story, etc.

3.1 I am a tree

1. Position: O (Everyone in a circle)
2. Goal: to make a picture - a start of the story.
3. How to play? One player steps into the middle, says: 'I am ...' (e.g. a tree), takes the form of a tree and freezes. One of the other players steps in and joins him by saying: 'I am ...' - something that fits (e.g. a lumberjack) and steps next to the tree and makes a frozen picture of lumberjack, who wants to cut the tree down. Third player enters and completes the tableaux/picture by saying 'I am ...' - something that connects both previous players and completes the story, e.g. an environmental activist (steps between the tree and the lumberjack and freezes). When the tableaux/picture is completed, first player says 'I take...', e.g. a lumberjack, which means that 'the tree' and 'the lumberjack' join other players in the circle and the player remaining in the circle repeats 'I am an environmental activ-

ist'. New tableaux/story is then built with new players coming in (e.g. the whale and oil stain).

4. Variations: You can have different number of players in the circle. You can have three things that fit together in some other way, even though it is not the obvious start of a story (a tree, a three, a bee). You can promote that instead of just objects, players portray emotions and other abstract elements as well.

5. Idea: Platform building, finding connections, accepting and adding, naming, speed, rhythm, exploring circles of expectation and probability, etc.

3.2 Common word

1. Position: o/O (everybody in the circle - sitting or standing up)

2. Goal: two players say the same word at the same time.

3. How to play? One player starts by saying '1', someone else says '2' - just to find who is playing the game - they look into each other's eyes, say '1,2,3' and each say one random word at the same time - e.g. one says 'light' and the other says 'cat'. Then someone who has an idea what could join those two words (in this case cat and light) says '1', someone else in the circle who has an idea for word says '2', they look each other, count 1,2,3 (counting is for the rhythm - if one of the players forgets his word while counting, he can stop the counting and they can start again) - and say two new words (e.g. eyes and night) and someone else who has an idea, what could join 'eyes' and 'night' says '1', someone else says '2', etc. We play this as long the two people say the same word at the same time. After success, we cheer and usually change places of the players in the circle.

4. Variations: The game can be played in pairs as well.

5. Idea: Group mind, rhythm, playfulness, excitement, association, connection, etc.

3.3 Emotion, action, detail

1. Position: o o - two people facing each other

2. Goal: to tell a story (this time individually) with different emphasis on different aspects of the story.

3. How to play? Two people face each other - one will tell the story/monologue and the other will help him. The helper marks three spots in

front of him and/or chooses three objects that will represent emotions, actions and details (e.g. a book, a spoon and a scarf). When the storyteller starts, the helper listens to the story and lifts in the air whatever object - element of the story - he misses or would like to hear more of (E.g. if he lifts the book in the air, it means the storyteller should put more focus on the emotional state of character, if he lifts spoon, the action/the general story line should be moving forward and if he lifts scarf, the storyteller should include more specific details in the story.

4. Variations: There can be one storyteller and the whole group moves from action to detail or to emotion - it is important to know that not all audience members are the same - some prefer more action, some emotion, etc. But if most of the group stands on the same spot, it is quite clear what is missing in the story. In similar game, you can throw your partner random words he needs to insert in the story.

5. Idea: Tools for storytelling, spontaneity, reaction, presence, speed, focus, etc.

3.4 One word at a time story

1. Position: o/O sitting or standing in circle or standing in line - the position can change with variations

2. Goal: to tell the story with every player in the circle saying just one word at a time.

3. How to play? Select the number of players or sit in a circle and tell the story one word at a time.

4. Variations: If there is a smaller number of players, especially when in pairs, you can encourage players to stand close to each other and use their bodies to mime the story a bit - in that way they can help each other with showing more that they can say in one word - use of variety of emotions can be encouraged as well.

You can have the audience suggest a title of the story or just jump in without any suggestions.

5. Idea: Spontaneous communal storytelling, failing, focus, group mind, etc. Great exercise for stressing the importance of every piece in the puzzle ('the' is an important word as well!). Do it several times and discuss successes and failures - some stories can be magical and unique and groups treasure them as their lore, but most of them are mostly great learning opportunities and fun at nonsense and failing.

3.5 Story in line

1. Position: Players stand in line (usually 4-5, but can be done in bigger groups as well)
2. Goal: to tell a story together by MC showing who should currently be telling the story.
3. How to play? Four or five players stand in a line. MC has something to point at different players with (a broom, a pen, an umbrella, an arm), and he also picks the suggestion for the title of the story from the audience (and sometimes type of genre of the story as well). MC points at someone who starts the story. As long as he is pointing, the player talks, when he moves the object and points to another player, the next player should continue the story and the previous player stops talking. MC also changes pace and rhythm of the switches.
4. Variations: There is a variation of the game, where you introduce 'Drop dead', which is something audience (and mentor) yells cheerfully, when a player has made a mistake (stutter, too long pause, confusion, etc.). The audience then decides on the object or reason for the player's death (which is never a weapon by itself, so no guns, etc.) and he has to act it out (he has to play a solo scene where he has to play a character who dies because of, e.g. the post stamp/too much homework/love/ etc.).
One variation is also to play the game with background noises and emphasis on voices.
5. Idea: Group mind (be very exact - if one player was in the middle of the sentence, the player who is next should finish the sentence), listening, spontaneity, storytelling, association, etc.

3.6 Tap out

1. Scene: I I - scene, half of players on one side of the stage facing the other that are on the opposite side, the middle is empty
2. Goal: This game is very similar to Stop/Freeze and its goal is to improvise short scenes, which are connected to each other by different characters.
3. How to play? The middle of the stage is empty, players stand on each side. Two players up on stage, they start a scene (usually with suggestion from the audience of some sort). After a while one of the side players can step into the scene, taps on the shoulder one of the players on stage and

replaces him. The player that remained on stage, plays the same character as in the previous scene, so now we see him interacting with a different character, connected to him - storyline may continue or not (e.g. if first scene was about doctor and the nurse, one player can tap out the nurse and play doctor's wife).

4. Variations: Can be played without keeping the body position of previous players or with it.

5. Idea: Tool for presenting the background of the character, different behaviour in different situations, showing patterns, practicing pace and tempo, building longer stories - great game for impro long forms preparation.

3.7 Word at a time expert

1. Scene: usually of 4 players, with three chairs together and one apart (o ooo/d bbb)

2. Goal: to have a most usual and informative interview as possible, with the fact that the person being interviewed consists of three players who talk one word at a time.

3. How to play: One player is the interviewer, and the other three are an expert on a subject chosen by the audience. The expert is really one person, and answers to the interviewer's question are provided word by word, one word at a time per player.

4. Variations: The hardest version is to have three players talk at the same time (one mouth). In all versions, it works best if the experts all mirror each other in movement and have the same character as well, with the beginner version of one player leading (the middle one, or the one that sits closest to the host) and the advanced version of doing it simultaneously without the chosen leader.

5. Idea: Group mind, pace, practicing interview - getting information, character building, storytelling, etc.

3.8 Typewriter

1. Scene: one player (narrator) sits in the chair on one side of the stage (sometimes has a microphone as well), the middle is empty

2. Goal: for the narrator to tell a story, which other players are acting out meanwhile.

3. How to play? One of the players is the Narrator. He can have a

(mimed) typewriter and starts the scene by reading aloud as he types. As soon as the Narrator has given a few elements, the players take over and start playing the scene, first in silence simultaneously with the storytelling, but they can also talk, when the narrator is quiet. At any point, the narrator can take over again, perhaps switch to another location, introduce new character, provide tilts or flashbacks or continue the story in any other desired way.

4. Variations: When a scene goes bad, the Narrator can also mime ripping a couple of pages of his story apart and restart the scene (or the story). The game can be played with the chosen genre as well.

5. Idea: Communication, reaction, use of the body, combination of verbal and non-verbal communication, building of a story, character work, etc. The ideal typewriter scene is a communication between the narrator and other players, when players try to portray the words as creatively as possible (if we have forest, players can vividly portray it) and with that inspire the narrator to take the story in new, unexpected directions.

3.9 Alphabet game

1. Scene: usually for two or three players

2. Goal: to say all of the lines in a scene in an alphabetical order.

3. How to play? This is a scene consisting of 26 lines of dialog. (or e.g. 25, depending on the number of the letters the alphabet of the chosen language consists of). The first line starts with a given letter (say 'R'). The reply to that line must start with an 'S', and so on, until the whole alphabet has been covered. After 'Z' comes 'A', the scene has to end with line that starts with 'R' again.

4. Variations: The lines can be of different lengths (A: How are you? B: I am wonderful, just got married and it was wonderful. How come you did not come? A: Just stop pretending that the invitation got lost, etc.), but you can limit them to one sentence, for example.

5. Idea: Listening, focus, multi-tasking, spontaneity, reaction, helping, etc.

3.10 3 monologues

1. Scene: three players standing in a line in the middle of the stage

2. Goal: to listen to three different monologues of three different characters who attended the same event and listen how they perceived the

same events.

3. How to play? Audience suggests a location or event that all three characters attended. One player starts by starting a monologue of a chosen character (e.g. a child who talks about the best day she had when she went to the theme park). After a while another player steps forward and 'the child' steps back, the new player tells the story of a new character (e.g. old lady talks how she got lost on her usual walk and wandered into the theme park). Later, the third steps in the front (e.g. the security guard) and they randomly trade places in telling their side of the events of the day. The stories do not have to be synchronised in time but should be connected through some core actions and details of the story, which are perceived differently by the characters.

4. Variations: There can be more than three characters; instead of three characters, we can also have one monologue, where one player only talks about emotions, second about actions and third about details of the same monologue.

5. Idea: Listening, accepting and adding new information (yes, and), focus, tempo, breaking the patterns, etc.

3.11 Chinese box/Scene replay/Style replay

1. Scene: usually for two or three players - it can change depending on the variation

2. Goal: to play a short scene and then repeat it with some changes in the scene according to chosen genre, emotion, or anything else you choose.

3. How to play? Ask two players to play a short scene (usually around 1 minute long). Then ask the same two players to replay the scene, based on some audience suggestions for movie genre, changing the aspects of the story according to the genre, but still sticking to (at least some aspects of) the original plot.

4. Variations: You can have different couples of players playing the replayed scenes or two players (usually those that are not the players playing the game) can make a trailer for the genre that will follow by re-enacting similar scenes as in some famous movies of the genre or try to show one of the typical scenes of the genre.

Instead of movie genres you can also choose emotions, historical eras, theatre styles, etc.

5. Idea: Playing with genres and talking about their characteristics, recognising the main events and actions, memory, observation and repeti-

tion, finding variations, etc.

3.12 Book worm

1. Scene: three players (usually) play the scene
2. Goal: one of the players to use only words and sentences for a selected page of a chosen book and for the other two players to justify what is said and play the scene as if everything is ordinary.
3. How to play? Three players start a scene, one of them has an open book in his hands and reads only sentences and words from the selected page. Other two players have to justify what is said and play the scene. The reader can read the whole sentence or just a word or two.
4. Variations: Two can read from books and one or two justifies.
5. Idea: Focus (on the person who reads from a book), justification, emotion, non-verbal communication, reaction, accepting, creativity in limitations, etc.

IV. Emotions and forming the character

Emotion is on the one side one of the most appealing elements for actors and improvisers equally (young as well), but sometimes neglected in impro (especially in short form, where improvisers often lack time to invest emotionally, while at the same time spontaneously creating a scene together with others, be directors, writers and all other roles at the same time). That is why we complemented our impro exercises with sensorium exercises and encourage more work in this direction.

For the young it is especially important to name the emotion and talk about them with examples to connect name and the emotion with their experience. We advise to use different levels of emotion portrayal to learn how to act out emotions with different energy levels (depending on what the situation needs - strong emotion can create tension and importance, but can stop the story from moving forward, so it is good to play and mix and match), portraying emotions silently, with sounds/gibberish and verbally. Emotion is also a great base for the forming of character and helps with dynamics of the scene, atmosphere of the scene, engagement of improvisers and the character they portray.

Some of the main impro skills that are promoted in emotion games are sensibility, empathy - understanding other people's perspectives, feelings, attitudes and states, taking care of each other, trust, learning about motives and relationships and statuses between and among characters, emotion in connection with the body, etc.

4.1 Gestures: Open/close; Push/embrace

1. Position: LL (walking exercise)
2. Goal: to experience different energies that we feel, based on different body positions.
3. How to play? Everybody walks around the space. When MC gives the instruction, e.g. 'Open!' everybody walks openly, no matter what this means to them, usually players open their bodies very naturally, have their head and look up. We encourage meeting others openly and feel how this makes us feel, what kind of emotion come with the pose. Similarly, we repeat with 'Closed!' and again test how it makes us feel if we have

our body closed (looks go down, people tend to turn inwards, meeting others does not feel good). Then we add 'push' - we can first try pushing the air away and then try to push the invisible energy out of us and to push others away. Last one is 'Hug!' where we can start by hugging ourselves, later hugging just with the energy of the body and at the end hug each other.

4. Variations: Use your imagination (e.g. adding character)!
5. Idea: Awareness, feeling, imagination, energy, interaction, etc. You can encourage participants to try and repeat the gesture a couple of times before they go into space and meet others with it.

4.2 Sensorium / imagination exercises

1. Position: LL (walking exercise)
2. Goal: to imagine different environmental elements that can affect the character and help players to experience different emotions and feelings, which they can use for the scenes as well.
3. How to play? Players walk around the space; the mentor guides them. It can begin e.g.: 'Imagine the sun is shining.' So first the imagined sun is warm and pleasant. Eventually it shines harder and stronger, we try to imagine how it would feel for real if the sun would shine that intensely. MC asks different players what emotion they feel - a lot of times some surprising answers rise and the technique can become a tool for remembering and deeper embodiment of different emotional states. Instead of the sun, we can have other weather or some other conditions.
4. Variations: Use your imagination!
5. Idea: Finding ways to display real feelings and emotions, imagination, power of the mind, concentration, focus, etc. Players can stand still or walk, it depends on their emerging emotion.

4.3 The circle of trust

1. Position: O (Everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to pass one player around the circle safely, with him being as relaxed and heavy as possible.
3. How to play? Everybody stands in the circle very closely together - even touching. One player steps in the middle, closes the eyes and slowly and relaxed, but with strength and straight body posture, leans back, until player/s in the circle catch him with their hands and push him gently

towards other side of the circle. After a while and if it is possible, the circle can even lift the person in the air together. Later, someone else steps into the circle.

4. Variations: One of the most widespread variations is to have one lean back and another, who stands behind, has to catch the first player and does not allow him to fall.
5. Idea: Making other partners look good, safety, trust, body movement, courage, relaxation, etc.

4.4 The circles of attention

1. Position: undefined
2. Goal: to learn about and to experience different energy levels and attention levels that we can have as performers.
3. How to play? Everyone finds the spot that suits them best in whatever body position, just let it be as relaxed as possible. The MC guides the game by starting with turning attention inward - into oneself. Relaxing all parts of the body, one should be focused on his inner world. This is our first circle of attention. After a while, the MC guides players to expand attention onto one object in vicinity or another person in vicinity, so the focus, attention and energy still remain quite small - only on oneself and the chosen object/body. Next expansion of attention is to the whole space/room and the last one is to send the attention throughout the whole world, into the sky, to the centre of the world, our attention expands everywhere.
4. Variations: Use your imagination, e.g. you can repeat it backwards or slowly mix and match (now go into second circle, fourth, etc.).
5. Idea: Emerging emotions, energy, relaxation, imagination, trust, attention, etc.

4.5 Bibbity bibbity bop

1. Position: O (Everyone in a circle, one in the middle)
2. Goal: to respond to a task given by a player in the middle in given time - if you fail, you replace the one in the middle and he becomes one of the players in the circle.
3. How to play? Players in a circle, one player in the middle. This player picks a player in the circle and says/yells 'bippety-bippety-bop' at her. If he manages to get to 'bop' before she says 'bop', she becomes 'it'. Some other elements are:

Just say 'bop', on which others should not do anything - if the person reacts, says or does something, that person becomes 'it'.

- Say 'Anti-bop', and the person who you are pointing at should mime a penguin (hands on the side) and make a farting sound (if he is too slow, he becomes it)

Other elements are pictures, where three people are involved - the picked one and his left and right neighbour:

- Say 'Elephant' after which three players build the elephant: the middle, chosen player does the trunk (hold your nose and put your other arm through the hole of the first hand) and her neighbours do the ears. If any of the three players does not react or makes a mistake, he or she becomes it.

- Say 'toaster': the player in the middle becomes a slice of bread, and her neighbours become the toaster, by holding their hands around the bread. The slice of bread pops up and down and makes a noise (e.g. make a crunching sound or says 'I'm ready!')

4. Variations: There are a lot of figures more and you can make up your own (e.g. objects, story titles, famous people/characters - e.g. the Pope - the middle one is waving as the Pope, the left and the right player go to their knees and pray, etc.). You can introduce elements gradually.

5. Idea: Speed, reaction, pronunciation, body movement, focus, failure, playfulness, fun, etc.

4.6 Numbers for words

1. Scene: usually for two players

2. Goal: to play a scene where the players do not use words, but consecutive numbers instead.

3. How to play? Two players on stage. Their main mission is to use numbers instead of words in the scene. The numbers follow each other consequently (A: 1,2,3,4,5 6,7,8? B: 9,10,11,12! 13!).

After the scene, audience members can be asked what was the story about in their opinion, and the last ones to explain their points of view are the players, who performed the scene.

You can ask audience for the suggestion (relationship, location, situation, random word, etc.) or you can experiment with diving in the scene without anything, with players following the impulses and reacting accordingly. Discussions after no previous preconception of what the scene is about, are especially interesting and valuable.

4. Variations: We can also use random numbers.

5. Idea: Nonverbal communication, emotion, breaking the patterns, reaction, body movement, voice intonation, etc.

4.7 Jumping emotion

1. Scene: two players (usually) play the scene, one MC changes emotions
2. Goal: to play a scene and react accordingly when MC introduces/says an emotion.
3. How to play? Two players up on stage. Audience suggests 10 different emotions/emotional states, which are written down on a paper and handed to MC. Players start a scene, during which MC yells (or uses the microphone) one of the emotions and players have to continue the scene in that emotion (and try to justify the sudden change of emotion). All 10 emotions should be yelled out at least once and can be used more than once.
4. Variations: Instead of emotion, characteristics or some other personality traits can be set (e.g. tidy, funny, drunk, etc.).
5. Idea: Thinking about what triggers an emotion (emotion as a response), reaction, trying to move story forward, same character in different emotional states, building the relationship, etc.

4.8 Status pictures

1. Position: Two players on the stage
2. Goal: to look at a picture, where and how a player stands - in high or low status - and try to have higher/lower status, depending on the rule we introduced.
3. How to play? One starts with making a pose e.g. low status pose. The other player observes and tries to make a pose that will be of lower status than the first one. We check with the audience if this was successfully put through and the lower stays on the stage, next one tries to go even lower, etc. We do the same with high status and discuss what are some signs of both status positions.
4. Variations: You can also explore stage status - if we stand in the front to the left, what kind of status do we hold, if we stand in the back, what changes, etc.
5. Idea: Observation, body expression, discussion, exploration, reaction, etc.

4.9 Passing the object in the circle - status game

1. Position: O (Everybody in the circle)
2. Goal: to practice status-based interactions.
3. How to play? All players stand in a circle. One starts and mimes passing an invisible object to the neighbour, choosing whether the character of high status to pass it on, or low status. The receiver should accept the object in the opposite status that he got it (if the first passes in the high-status manner, next one receives the object in low-status manner) and then pass it on in opposite status again (if he received it in low status, the object should be passed in high status).
4. Variations: The game can be played with mixing statuses as well (so if you receive it low, you can pass it low, or do whatever you want). You can add words and context to the game.
5. Idea: Introducing the concept of status (can be discussed beforehand), using different body positions to show status, observation, reaction, etc.

4.10 Status transaction

1. Scene: two players on the stage
2. Goal: to start the scene with clear status relationship, which should be turned around at the end of the scene (e.g. the boss ends the scene with lower status than employee).
3. How to play? Two players on stage. Audience decides on their roles and relationship, which should be a status one (so there is a difference in power between both characters), e.g. a teacher and a student (maybe say out loud statuses of both, to start clearly, so teacher with the high status and student with low status). They play a scene during which they should find ways to switch - teacher should be looking for the elements that can help them to lower their status and student finds ways to rise.
4. Variations: Use your imagination!
5. Idea: Playing with status, multi-tasking, observation, reaction, discovery, deciding, playing with energy, emotion, character work, etc.

4.11 Numbers - status/emotions

1. Scene: three to five players usually on stage
2. Goal: to play with different levels of emotions or statuses and to ex-

perience different manners of acting.

3. How to play? Three players go up on stage - usually each of them gets the paper with one number written on it (1, 2 or 3), looks at it and remembers it, but does not say it out loud. This is the level of e.g. emotions that everybody should play - so if first one gets 3, that means he portrays the emotions in a bit over-reacted manner, second one gets 1 - acts the emotions on very basic level (e.g. if the emotion is fear, one can be almost brave) and the third - number 2 - is somewhere in the middle - quite a big portrayal of emotions without overreacting. At the end of the scene, audience can guess who had what number.

4. Variations: Status numbers variation can be played with up to five players - everyone gets one paper with a number between 1 and 5 on it - this is their status in the scene (5 is the highest, 1 is the lowest). Slowly, one by one players are entering the scene (audience usually suggests location) and choosing the appropriate role based on their number and try to discover what number of status others have.

5. Idea: Focus, silent portrayal of emotion/status, relationship, guessing, reaction, etc.

4.12 Emotional virus/Emotional party

1. Scene: usually for four players

2. Goal: to play a crazy party scene where players infect and get infected with/affected by different emotions.

3. How to play? For three of the players audience chooses one emotional state for each. Player 4 is a host of a party of some sort (the reason for the party can be given by audience) and the other three are her guests. First, the player 4 is alone on stage (in any emotional state he chooses to be, he has no limitations while performing solo), preparing the party. Then one of the other players enter (the order is players choice) and 'infects' the host with her emotional state. They continue with the scene and third player enters, infecting both that are already on stage with his emotion. The last one then infects all of the party with the last emotion and after a short while leaves the stage (by finding a reason for leaving). The party is now again in an emotional state that third player brought, and after a while he leaves the party as well. The remaining two players perform the last part in first emotion and after the last guest has left, the first player ends the scene.

4. Variations: Instead of emotions can players bring different commu-

nication/acting techniques, genres or manners (silent acting, gibberish, singing, dancing, etc.).

5. Idea: Focus, moving the story forward, variety in displaying emotions, narrative structure (climax when the last comes), etc.

4.13 Crazy date

1. Scene: usually for four players

2. Goal: three players take turns in playing one character in different emotional states and for the fourth player to help to move the scene forward and to give and accept offers.

3. How to play? Four players will play two characters. Player 1 is 'ordinary', and other three players represent the second character. Members of the audience suggest three different emotions for three players. A location for the date can be chosen by the audience as well.

Player 1 and one of the 'personalities' of the second character - start the scene. After a while, player 3 or player 4 yells 'Stop' or 'Freeze' (which freezes only player 2), puts himself in the same body position as his predecessor and replaces him (same as in stop/freeze game) and continues the scene in his emotional state. Player 1 does not have to freeze and can pretend he doesn't notice anything. This continues throughout the scene.

4. Variations: Instead of the date, players can perform a visit at the psychiatrist, where one player is a patient and three players play a doctor; you can choose any other occupation.

5. Idea: Precision with playing the same character in different emotional states, not three different characters, pace, reaction, inspiration from others, acceptance of what has already been stated, etc.

IDEAS: Feel free to combine exercises with other group/acting methods/techniques/practices/games, etc. (Stanislavski, Chekhov, Viewpoints, etc.) It is very good to start with games that encourage physical contact and/or failing together. Helping others is one of the key focuses, which usually means supporting them, not doing things for/instead of them. We also encourage status play at the level of teaching as it is a great tool to bring out responsibility and action among students as well.

Improvisational theatre is joyful, happy, welcomes risks, failures and mistakes, emphasises effort, experience, team-work, equality, spontaneous reactions, confidence, creativity, imagination. It can be a here-and-now mindfulness practice and can ignite the fire of passion for the art of theatre in general.

Glossary

- Impro process: Active practice of impro games and impro philosophy, especially for learning without knowing
- Impro game: A game with specific set of rules that usually promotes one or more impro values
- Warm-up game: Games used for the start of the practice to warm-up the body, the voice and the mind
- Offer: It can be any inspiration that happens during performance - partner's words, movement, ideas, audience sounds, accidents - that could be accepted and included in the story of the scene
- Association: First word/idea/thing that comes to person's mind when hearing/seeing/smelling/experiencing something
- Suggestion: Usually from the audience, something to base the scene on (a location, a relationship, a problem, a historical era, an emotion, etc.)
- MC: Someone who leads the practice or a show - can be a mentor or the host of the show that connects audience with players on the stage
- Side player: With a lot of games it is useful to have players on both sides, facing each other with middle of the stage empty for scenes or action - side player usually means the player that is not an active performer in the scene, but readily waits on the side to help the scene if needed or to join the game

Why include impro process in your work?

- To connect
- To engage yourself and others
- To find playfulness, relaxation, openness, fun
- To build courage not only for performing, but to activate oneself and to identify and defend one's values
- To find new sources of/for inspiration
- To connect more deeply and profoundly with people and environment around you
- To find new ways to inspire the young to visit and practice theatre more
- To listen and hear voices of others (and your own) better
- To learn to commit fully
- To learn that failure is inevitable part of life and to learn how to use it as an inspiration and learning opportunity
- To discuss and embody status differences, equality and relations of power
- To give the voices to the young
- To learn to accept more
- To learn about the power of the supporting group
- To live theatre and to play life
- To be more present
- To stay alive
- To be free