

THE **Little** HOO HAA!



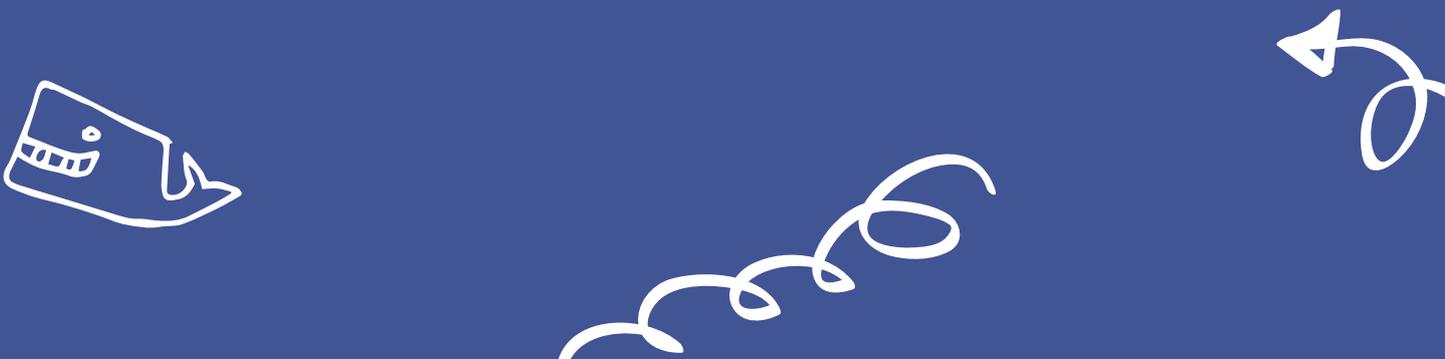
Teacher Resource Pack



Presented by The Big Hoo Haa!



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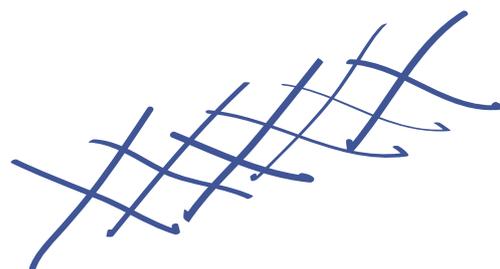
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In this Resource

Improvisation is a key Drama skill for students K-12.

It can be used to explore both the Making and Responding stands in the Drama syllabus K-10. Specifically, deep reference can be found in the K-10 Scope and Sequence, with Exploring ideas and improvising with ways to represent ideas; Developing skills and processes; Sharing the arts through performance, presentation or display for an audience; and Responding to and interpreting the arts all explicitly requiring improvisation skills and exploration.

Improvisation underpins Year 11 & 12 ATAR/General Drama content areas of Drama processes and the elements of drama; Drama forms and styles; and Drama conventions. Further, improvisation is the basis for the most practitioner- based processes in the senior school Drama courses.



Act 1 - Improvisation

One key skill of improvisational performing is using the first idea that comes into your head. This is an activity that helps to warm up students to this concept.

1. Students stand in pairs
2. Students are to physically represent pairs of objects that the teacher calls out. The aim is to do this as quickly as possible. For example, for knife and fork, one student may stand with their hands in the air and their partner with their hands by their side, thereby representing a knife and a fork.
3. The skill of yielding is also introduced in this game. When both students are representing the same object (e.g. two forks), one must yield (change) so the activity is complete.
Examples of paired objects: knife and fork, koala and gumtree, shoe and sock, TV and remote control, tap and sink, clothes hanger and jacket, monitor and keyboard, ship and ocean, etc.
4. Variations include combining pairs to form groups of four and repeating the activity with bigger and more complicated objects. For example a desktop computer, a car, the Sydney Opera House, a helicopter, etc.





Act 2 - Storytelling 1



Students are often afraid that they won't be able to come up with anything interesting while improvising. This activity helps enable students to turn their own experiences into a vibrant story, by using exaggeration in the acceptance of offers.

1. Students form pairs.
2. Each student retells a true account of something that happened to them. Ask for what they did on the weekend, last Christmas, getting ready for school this morning, etc
3. Students then retell each other's stories in the most ridiculously exaggerated and detailed way possible.

Example: Yesterday I walked to the shops to buy some chocolate.

Becomes: I rode my elephant Monty to the shops yesterday to buy some chocolate. After a long and arduous journey battling wild jungle thieves, I arrived at where the shops should have been. But there were no shops! Instead, a massive purple dragon sat licking his lips. I could hear the cries of the shopper coming from his belly- if I wanted my chocolate, I would have to go in. Monty and I jumped into the dragon's mouth and into his stomach where the shops lay... etc.



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4. These stories can be rehearsed and presented to the class. Alternatively, they could be written out as play scripts, short stories or descriptive pieces, or painted, depending on the age group and ability of your class.
 5. EXTENSION: Perform your story as a radio play! A radio play is exactly as it sounds: a play that could be broadcast on the radio- so it only requires voices. Don't forget to make sound effects! There are three main ways to make sound effects:
 - a) Lots of everyday items can make the sound effects you are looking for- for example a marble rolled along a non-carpeted floor can sound like a roll of thunder;
 - b) Download free sound effects from the internet;
 - c) Make them yourself using your voice



Act 3 - Storytelling

Shared storytelling is an easy way to take off the pressure of being funny or clever during improvisations. When two students share the load of recounting a narrative, stories organically become complex, surprising and entertaining.

In pairs, ask students to improvise dictating a postcard home from a holiday, line at a time.

The first line must be "Dear family, we arrived safely in [teacher assigned place]"

All subsequent lines must begin with "Yes, and..."

The final line must be "Love from [name] and [name]."

E.g.

A: "Dear family, we arrived safely in Paris."

B: "Yes, and we went to the Eiffel Tower."

A: "Yes, and we went to the top level."

B: "Yes, and I got a bloody nose because it was so high up."

A: "Yes, and we had to go to the hospital."

B: "Yes, and we had no money to pay the doctors."

A: "Yes, and we snuck out and robbed a bank."

etc



Act 4 - Generating Characters

A warm-up activity designed to get students thinking outside their preferred character choices, and to yield control to other players.

Helpful for senior school students devising original work, middle school students stuck in safe ruts, and primary school students needing to expand stories and ideas.

In pairs, one student says to the other

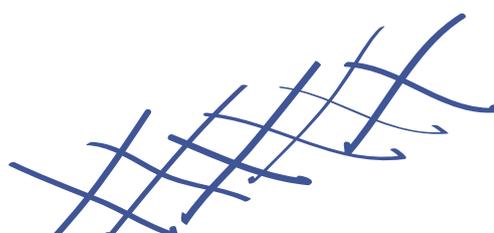
"Well, well, well, if it isn't my [adjective] [relationship to me]"

E.g. "Well, well, well, if it isn't my excited postman/ glamorous principal/ nosy neighbour"

The other student takes on this character physically and responds with one line of dialogue

E.g. "So great to see you, here's your amazing parcel/ Enter the assembly wearing feather boas, students/ I saw you making a cake through the window, is it your birthday?"

Students then switch, taking turns to give and accept offers.





Act 5 – Improvisation Games



The following are some rules and structures for many improvisation games that you will see in The Big HOO-HAA!. Most have been around the traps for a long time in various guises, including TheatreSports and ComedySportz. However, nearly all of them began as theatre warm up and play building exercises.

It is important that students understand the key skills of improvisation before the games become a major focus. These skills include

Using first ideas

Making offers

Accepting offers

Not 'blocking' an offer

Yielding

Advancing

Extending



Two texts that are excellent sources of activities to cover these areas are Lyn Pierse's Theatre Sports Down Under (Players Press, Sydney, 1997) and Michael and Angela Sanderson-Green's YES LET'S! (Papercut Media, Perth 2003).

Viola Spolin and Keith Johnstone also have key texts that you may find useful.

The best source of games rules and structures can be found online at <http://www.improvencyclopedia.org/>



Act 6 - Oracle



Three players: one is the interviewer, and the other two are an expert on a subject chosen by the audience. The expert is really one person, with two heads, and answers to the interviewer's questions are provided word by word, one word at a time per player. Alternatively, the two-headed expert speaks at the same time.



Act 7 - Blind Line



Before the scene, ask the audience to write simple sentences on slips of paper (make sure the actors cannot hear). Each actor is given two of these slips of paper. They do not look at these lines until they use them.

A scene is played, and at random moments the players don't just invent a line of dialogue, but use a line off a piece of paper. The line must be justified in the scene.

VARIATION: Lines from plays from a particular theatre history period can be used instead of audience suggestions, such as famous Shakespearean quotes.





Act 8 – Slow Motion Commentary

Two players are world class athletes in an everyday event (eg doing the dishes, making breakfast). They compete in slow-motion mime as one to two other players act as commentators, speaking at a frenetic pace. The athletes will be giving non-verbal offers and commentators verbal offers.



Act 9 – Switch

Three players improvise a scene. At any time a player, referee or teacher calls "Switch!" and any player onstage at that time must swap characters. They then continue the same scene, as their new characters.

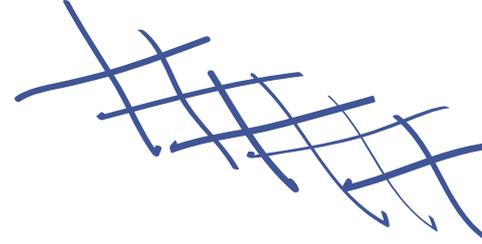


Act 10 – Countdown

Players improvise a scene that goes for exactly one minute. They then replay the exact same scene in thirty seconds, then in fifteen seconds, then in seven and a half seconds, and so on.



Act 11 - New Choice



Three players improvise a scene. At any time, the referee or teacher can call out "New choice!" and the player that just spoke must change that line. For example, "let's go to the shops" may become "let's go to Disneyland" or "let's go to the underworld". The referee can call "new choice" as many times as it takes for a satisfactory response from the player.



Act 12 – Audience Sound Effects



Players improvise a scene using mostly their voices. They call upon the audience to provide sound effects en masse, for example, "I'll just open this squeaky door".

Act 13 – Foreign Film



Two players play a story in Gibberish, two others translate each line as it is said. The idea is to build the story together: the 'actors' give offers to the translators through actions and tone, and the translators can help steer the action for the 'actors'. Also known as Subtitles.



Working with Senior School Students

Improvisation features heavily in the Drama processes outlined in ATAR and General Drama.

Try this extension on Hot Seat to encourage exploration in devising: After hot seating a character (in which an actor answers questions the role as a character), students offer three pieces of information: a location, the action and one line of dialogue.

The student then creates a twenty-second solo opening to a scene using this info and any other information gleaned from the hot seat. There is an emphasis on establishing time, place and situation. No dialogue is to be used except for the one line that was given to them.



Working with Early Childhood Students

Very young students often have a natural disposition to improvisational activities.

Here is one suggested pathway to exploring these skills.

1. Yes Let's- accepting offers

Teacher calls out actions and the class responds in unison with "Yes, let's!" before doing the suggestion. E.g. "Let's jump like kangaroos!"

Extension: Start to add emotion and/or character suggestions, e.g. "Let's act scared!" or "Let's be a doctor!"

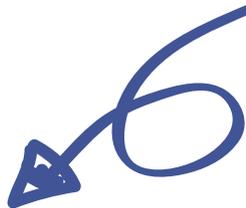
Classes working especially well in this activity may be able to share the suggestion giving amongst the students.

2. Tell the story of The Three Little Pigs, or other narratives you are working with

3. Students retell the story with emotional reactions by the characters- large groups for characters

4. Students in small groups come up with alternative endings

5. Teacher-led discussion their reactions to each others' work





BIO: Sam Longley

The Big Hoo Haa!

Sam has been working as an actor, comedian, writer and director since the late nineties. He has performed everything from a Shakespearian drunkard to an eight-year-old delinquent. Some of his highlights include Hoods and Stones for Barking Gecko Theatre; The Adventures of Alvin Sputnik: Deep Sea Explorer for The Last Great Hunt; Horse Head at The Blue Room Theatre; DIY: Disaster Movie and The Spaceman Cometh at The Awesome Arts Festival, Frankie's for Variegated Productions; A Midsummer Night's Dream for Black Swan State Theatre Company; Not Like Beckett for Deckchair Theatre; Where The Wild Things Are with Spike Jonze; and Bindjareb Pinjarra Australian tour.

On returning to Perth in 2002 Sam created The Big HOO-HAA! an improv comedy show that has been playing to sell out crowds in Perth for sixteen years. Sam has also written plays, hosted TV shows and performs stand up comedy.



More Info

A comprehensive list of games can be found here:

<http://www.improvencyclopedia.org/>

And for high school teachers, both Complicite and Frantic Assembly have great teaching resources that explore devised theatre through improvisation:

Complicite:

http://www.complicite.org/media/1439372000Complicite_Teachers_pack.pdf

Frantic Assembly:

http://fod.infobase.com/http/49800/49817_guide.pdf



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