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Group Improvisation: The Manual Of Ensemble Improv Games



Synopsis

Who would have thought that participating in group improvisation could be so enlightening and rewarding! Over 40 improv games for developing group chemistry are included in this concise book, organized into sections: Bonding, Focus, Awareness, Creation, Energy, Dynamics and more. Every group, not just improv teams, benefits from increased communication, and author Peter Gwinn reveals many secrets about how to facilitate this connection in fun and creative ways. The many improv games and exercises he presents here, appropriate for high school age or older thespians, help heighten awareness, break the ice, increase concentration and wire brains together. Gwinn and his colleagues at the iO Theater in Chicago developed the concept of "The Group Mind" to create a synergy between team members. With this increased connection, your actors feel part of a greater entity, with a sense of excitement, belonging and importance that takes teamwork to a new level.

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Customer Reviews

Peter Gwinn is the founder of the musical improv group Baby Wants Candy. After over a decade of improvising and teaching in Chicago, he moved to New York in 2005, where he played with The Stepfathers and Arsenal at the UCB Theater. Peter has taught at the Improv Olympic and UCB Theaters. He is currently a writer for the Colbert Report in New York. Variety called her one of the top ten women to watch in entertainment. Mike Myers named her the Uta Hagen of Comedy. Charna Halpern, the co-creator of long-form improvisation with her partner, the late Del Close, has

changed the face of improvisational comedy forever. Halpern and Close created their famous signature long-form piece, the Harold, a meta-game that "ate" short-form improvisation and became popular worldwide. Halpern and Close have been responsible for creating the talents and sensibilities of some of the biggest comedic stars in show business. Together and apart, their alumni include John Belushi, Bill Murray, Gilda Radner, Mike Myers, Chris Farley, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Andy Dick, Andy Richter, Adam McKay, David Koechner and many other illustrious cast members and writers of Saturday Night Live, MADtv, Late Night with Conan O'Brien, The Daily Show and The Colbert Report. As director of i.O. in Chicago (formerly ImprovOlympic), and i.O. West in Los Angeles, Halpern recently celebrated her twenty-fifth year in business with the return of all of her alumni in a star-studded celebration in Chicago that will soon yield a DVD and a television special. Under Halpern's guidance, i.O. is producing the next generation of artistic geniuses. In addition to directing and teaching at i.O., Halpern travels the world teaching seminars in improvisation. She was hired by The American Embassy in Cyprus to teach her philosophy of agreement to the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in an effort to bridge their communication gap. Her first book, Truth in Comedy, is considered the bible for improvisation in the entertainment industry and is mandatory reading in theatre departments on most college campuses.

This book is a great list of exercises and does an excellent job of explaining clearly how to play them.

This is a great little book for newbies to the improv comedy world. It is easy to use and the games are fun. It gives great ideas on how to use them and is helpful for anyone wanting to take up improv or teach a beginner class.

I expected more... a bit shallow...

Great, thorough descriptions of lots of great group warm-ups and scene exercises. It's not a vast new continent of never-before-seen improv, but it's the clearest map I've ever seen of the very tricky terrain of group dynamics, which can make or break a performance group (or any group, for that matter). Peter Gwinn writes in a fun and playful conversational tone and the accompanying retro-tastic photos of improvisers at play are, frankly, adorable. I have met folks who trained with Gwinn, and now I join them in their wish to hug him for this contribution to the craft. Gracias!

...to Charna Halpern's "Truth and Comedy." Gwinn takes an actor-centric approach to long-form improvisation, developing characters the way Del Close intended them to be. He grounds his games in terminology befitting any advanced acting technique, exploring emotion and motivation over the tricks and gimmicks synonymous with shows like "Whose Line is it Anyway?" Gwinn has been performing and teaching at Chicago's Improv Olympic for nearly a decade, so he knows his stuff. That being said, as articulate as this book is, it should serve as a supplement, not a substitute, for first-hand experience or training in long- or short-form comedy improvisation.

This book is great for teaching the support and trust actors need to perform any form of theatre...invigorating games with levels of difficulty so they can be used for most any group. I've used it for aged 7 to 18 but it is great for adults as well, especially the more challenging games. Bravo!

I have many books on Improvisation and thought there might be something "new" in this one. I can't say I found a single "new" idea or improv that is not in a previous book. If this was the first improv book you every bought, you might find it useful- but not for anyone who has done any improv or taught improv even at the beginners level. I found the writing very immature as well. Many of the improv listed seemed to be slanted at being entertaining rather than used in creating a character/scene or working on the basics of improvisation.

For anyone coaching/directing or if you're playing on a team where you need to break into new territories and develop new forms, these games are a perfect start. This book explains what the important parts of each game are so that you bring the actual lessons to stagework, not just horse around and forget. I highly recommend the book.

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