

Improvisational Movement and Theater-- Freeing the Instrument Professional Development for Educators

Curriculum Designed and Taught by Eliza Ladd

Freeing The Instrument is an experiential workshop that uses movement, improvisation, and dramatic play to create a fun and supportive environment in which the participants express themselves as well as learn how to listen to and support others. The techniques and exercises can help the participants resolve conflict, create trust, and vastly expand social skills and the ability to communicate and collaborate with their peers. The theatrical context of Freeing The Instrument provides participants with a forum to freely and appropriately express emotions and physical impulses while also focusing on how to listen and create a healthy group dynamic.

In this workshop/residency we will explore:

- creating a supportive **ensemble** that can focus, play, express, and create together as well as act as a springboard for the **individual** to shine.
- freeing the **body** and **voice** so that we can **communicate** in outlandish ways, using exaggerated expression as a way of discovering stories.
- using theater and movement exercises as a way of **seeing** who we are and what we do as well as **freeing** who we are and what we do.

In using the form of theater to cultivate **heightened awareness** -- **seeing, listening, responding, and expressing** -- we can discover truths about **relationship, conflict, others, and ourselves**. We will use the forum of performance, the existence of actor and audience, as a way of looking closely at what our habits are, how to transform them, and most importantly how to create a supportive and playful environment. Also, we may create some great theater.

The workshop will cover **some** of the following exercises:

Section 1:

1. Name and Brag

2. Sound and Movement:

A. Whole Group Circle

- Pass object

- Pass sound

- Pass sound and movement, then two or three at once

B. Small Group Perform in Line, one, pass it, another in contrast, pass it

C. Each individual makes up sound and movement on Common Theme

- pass around circle, each does own, group repeats back

- pick one, all learn it

D. 1/2 group performs learned one

- pass it, enlarge

- pass it, minimize

E. Individual creates sound and movement for self, what you need to say to world,

with beginning-middle-end

- whole group circle, individual says name, performs sound and movement,

whole group responds by repeating it in unison

3. The Flow (Viewpoints)

Walk The Space -- Spatial Awareness and Kinesthetic Response

Stop/Go - notice distances

Grid -- right angles

The Vocabulary: Stillness and Movement, Tempo (slow, medium, fast), Change

Direction, Activating the Space Between People, Following an Other, Level (low, middle, high)

4. Group Action

A. Group counts to ten, only one person speaking at a time

B. 1/2 group walk floor and miraculously form a circle, a diagonal line, a clump, and a square with a dot in the middle of it

C. 1/2 group run in circle and change directions 3 times, jump and change direction 2

times, stop all in unison

D. 7 stand in a line, 3 up 4 down at all times, eyes forward, eyes closed?

Section 2:

1. Rhythm Ensemble

Listen, Distinguish sounds, learn rhythmic pattern vocally, and or on body, call

and response of rhythm, walk 4/4 and voice rhythm, 1/2 groups back and forth, pass

around circle, group voice rhythm and individual solo

2. Partner Mirrors

Visual awareness, partners, notice three changes, mirror movement with feet

planted, one lead, one follow, switch, both lead and follow at same time, add moving

in space. Luxuriate, specificity, concentration

3. Flow Review

4. Flocking

1/2 groups, one leader whole group in simultaneous movement, if pelvis turns,

new leader, then two leaders, different tribes develop, move around room, shift

groups, spatial awareness, contrast, occupy the quality of the leader

5. Walking the Floor - Character

A. Strings on Body Parts

B. Feet - outside/inside

C. Opposites - wide/narrow, tall/small, forward/ back, discover body and sound of

each, interactions with others in room,

D. Conditions, body and voice response to story impulse i.e.: just won lottery,

grandmother died, . . ., freeze in sculpture of condition, and discuss

E. Walk Forward in characters with drum rhythm

6. Conversations in Pairs

A. Sea Weed and Water -- one feet planted, other gives impulse of breath, then touch, then feet can move

A. 1 sounder, 1 mover

B. In front of group, opposites, contrast each other, respond

7. Small Group Theme Sculptures

A. Small group create sculpture on theme, present to group, discuss

Things to Consider:

-Check In / Warm-Up: A time to get present, to share or reveal whatever is needed to let go of pre-occupations, a time to enter the group awareness and identity.

-In the world of improvisation, there is no right and wrong only commitment, clarity, specificity, and risk.

-What does it mean to take stage?

-Everything we do is an opportunity to practice our awareness and readiness. What does it mean to be ready?

-Everything we do is an opportunity to concentrate, to play, and to perform.

-How can we create an actor / audience relationship?

-We can work alone, in partnership, in small groups, as a whole group, all of these configurations provide performance opportunities.

-The Theater --the stage and the audience -- is a poetic meeting of space and time – can we take care of where we are (spatial awareness) and when we move (kinesthetic response)?

-No right and wrong, Ready Position, Impulse, Beginning - Middle - End, Contrast, Exaggerate, Minimize, Embody, Call and Response, Unison, Solo, Energy, Eyes

-Include time for Reflection