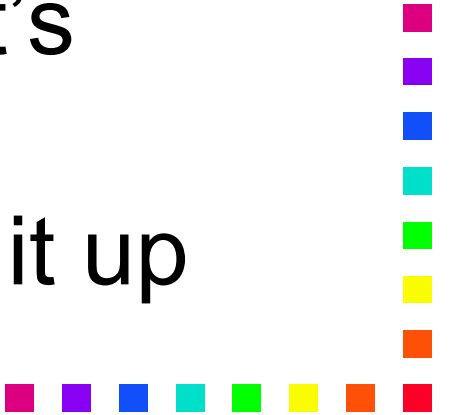




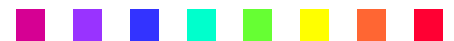
Improvisation!

To improvise is to act without benefit of written dialog. It's sometimes described as ad-libbing, or just making it up as you go along.



Improvisation - it's triple life in the theatre

- n Sometimes improvisation is used as a specific tool by the director during rehearsals for a play.
 - n The director might ask members of the cast to act out a scene which is not part of the script - perhaps something that happened before the action of the play begins, or something that happened off-stage. The purpose of this kind of improvisation is to develop a more complete characterization and a better understanding of the relationships between characters in a play.
- n Improvisational Comedy is a form of theatre in itself.
 - n Most of us have heard of the t.v show *An Evening at the Improv.*, or even *Saturday Night Live*. In these programs actors depend on their quick wits and ability to work together to create an instant comedy sketch.
- n Improvisation can also be used as a technique to learn acting. In this unit we will explore this technique.



Improvisation is used three ways in the theatre: as a rehearsal technique, as a form of instant entertainment and as an excellent tool for developing in student actors a sense of reality on stage.



Hints for Improvisation

n Get into the scene immediately

n try to achieve your specific goal

n Do not chatter aimlessly

n say only what must be said. Words should make contributions to the objectives of a story.

n Keep the scene going.

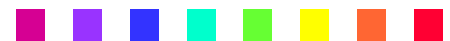
n React from moment to moment. If something doesn't work - try another tactic.

n Be spontaneous.

n Limit pre-planning.

n Do not work to entertain the audience.

n Work with the other actors to become sensitive to changes in their feelings and attitudes.



Preparing an Improvisation

n Some important terms for your first try at improvisation are:

n Platform

n Offer

n Explore

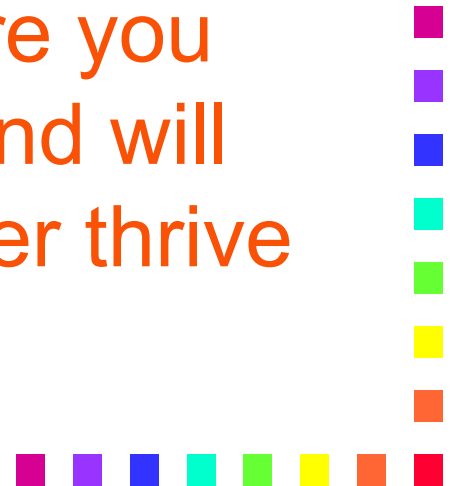
n Blocking

n Canceling



Platform

- n Who? What? Where?
- n These are three items to establish the foundations of scenes. What helps a scene is establishing 'who you are', 'what you are doing', and 'where you are' will give life to the scene and will help you and your scene partner thrive within the world you create.



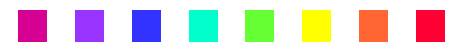
An **offer** is any verbal or physical suggestion made by another actor.

To **explore** refers to the act of accepting an idea offered by a fellow actor, and then exploring the natural consequences of that idea.



n In improvisation, **blocking** refers to the act of rejecting information or ideas offered by another performer, and, " **canceling** is the act of one performer making the actions of another performer irrelevant.

n **Focus** is the act of making sure that the audience's attention is only in one place at any given moment.



Preparing an Improvisation

n More important terms for your first try at improvisation are:

n who

n when

n where

n independent activity

n objective

n conflict

n enter

n discovered

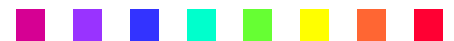
n props

**n You will need a partner for the following activity.
Choose one now.**



WHO

- n Decide on **WHO** you are. It is probably easiest to begin by *naming the relationship* between the two characters. (brothers, mother-daughter, boss-employee, neighbors, husband-wife, almost any relationship is acceptable as long as the two people are not strangers with nothing in common)
- n Naming the relationship is not enough. You must supply some details about the relationship. How old are the sisters? How do they get along? What do they fight about (*everybody disagrees about something*) Do they love each other? Be as specific as possible.



WHEN

- n You need to decide WHEN the scene takes place.
- n Again, be specific. Decide on the time of day, day of the week and month, and the year. This is important, because people react differently at 5:00 am on Christmas morning than they do at 8:00 p.m. on the fourth of July, and from weekends.



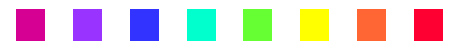
WHERE

- n Where does the scene take place?
- n Be specific. If it's in the living room, where is the house located?
Suburbs, inner city, rural area? Is it a house or an apartment? Large or small? New or Old? What part of the world is the house in?



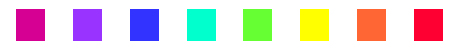
Responsibilities

- n You and your partner have different responsibilities in getting the improvisation started. One of you will be **discovered**. That is, you will already be on-stage when the scene begins.
- n The other will enter the scene by coming in from off-stage. Decide which of you will be discovered and which will enter.
- n At this point in the process, you and your partner must **STOP** talking to each other. It's important that your partner not know exactly what to expect when the scene starts, so don't share what you decide next.



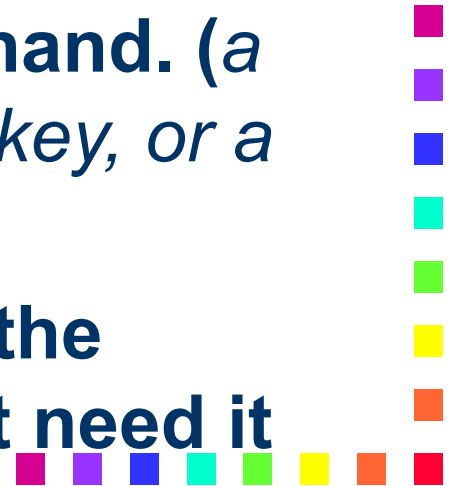
Independent Activity

- n If you are being discovered on-stage, decide upon an independent activity. This is something you are doing that is, in all likelihood, unrelated to the scene.
- n This activity must involve you both mentally and physically, and you must have an important reason for completing the task.
- n Props are objects used by actors on stage. No imaginary props are allowed. For this exercise, whatever activity you decide to be doing - you must have real props. (if your independent activity involves memorizing the Gettysburg address for a class, and it is due to be memorized in 45 mins.. - you had better have a copy of The Gettysburg Address, and really be working to memorize it!)



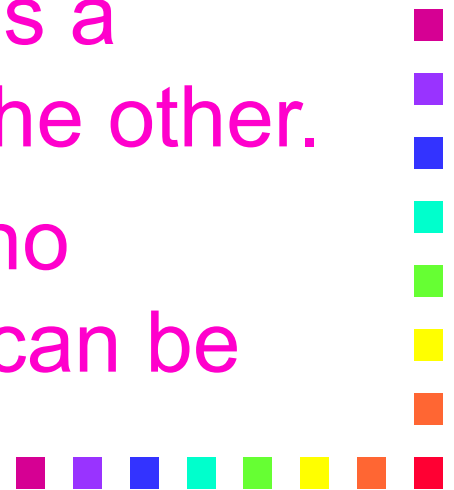
Entering

- n If you are entering from off-stage, you must decide on a different kind of **objective** (*remember, an objective is what your character wants*) You must enter the stage wanting something, and knowing why you want it. In this exercise you must want something tangible. Something your partner can actually put into your hand. (*a pencil, for example, or a shoelace, a key, or a book.. or a....*)
- n Your reason for wanting whatever the object is must be urgent. You must need it right now.



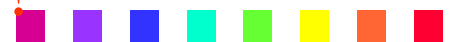
Conflict

- n Now you are ready to improvise. You and your partner have created a fertile ground for **conflict** ; two specific characters, in a specific place, at a specific time, each of whom has a specific objective unknown to the other.
- n Without **conflict** there can be no drama. Without **conflict** there can be no good acting.



Performing an Improvisation

- n The worst thing you can do when you perform this type of improvisation is to ACT. Instead, you must simply do. Why? Because if you're acting, you'll likely concern yourself with such things as a time limit for your scene, or you will try to determine how the scene should end. These concepts may be important when you are writing a script, but they destroy improvisation.
- n Remember that the idea here is to be alive and awake-in-the-moment while you are on-stage. Spontaneity will die if you concern yourself with anything other than your who, when, where, what-you-want-and-why-you-want-it.
- n There is no time limit, but make sure you are engaged in CONFLICT - without it, your scene will die. Try more than one tactic (or action) to get what you want! Keep the scene interesting, and DO NOT STOP LISTENING OR REACTING !



A WORD OF CAUTION

- n DON'T FEEL TOO SAFE ON-STAGE.***
- n If you and your partner have prepared correctly, and you are both alive and awake in the moment, the conflict may become more real than you bargained for. While it is never permissible to injure another actor, and although I may yell "FREEZE" if it looks like things are getting out of hand, it is your responsibility to duck if your partner starts swinging!***

