Est. 1841 | YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

Birch, Paul (2022) The mechanics of spontaneous comedy: game verses scene in theatrical improvisation. Comedy Studies, 13 (2). pp. 151-160.

Downloaded from: https://ray.yorksj.ac.uk/id/eprint/6478/

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2022.2091690

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form. Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms governing individual outputs. Institutional Repositories Policy Statement

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorksj.ac.uk

The Mechanics of Spontaneous Comedy: Game Verses Scene in Theatrical Improvisation

Much of improvised comedy's appeal comes from the shared acknowledgement between performer and audience that the material is both spontaneous and unrepeatable. But can 'anything 'really happen? In the many and varied approaches of Short and Long-Form improvisation are performance structures which inform both the unprepared scenic material and the types of humour which can be produced. Fotis and O'Hara (2016) have argued that the evolution of Long-Form began with the abandonment of game in favour of relational scene. This helpful distinction warrants further discussion; especially since the practice of 'finding the game,' popularised by the Upright Citizens Brigade (2013), has blurred the boundary between game and scene. How do such scenic games function within these structures? How do they relate to other notions of game and scene to be found in the performance practice of other improvised traditions? I will explore the paradox of using rules, pre-planned formats and prepared methods of play to open up the ways in which spontaneous comedy is affected by both structure and approach. The research for this paper will come from the literature in the field as well as with interviews with professional improvisers who have trained and worked at Chicago's most influential theatres: The Second City, I.O & The Annoyance. It will also draw on my own training under some of Chicago's most established improvisers and personal experience of staging both Short and Long-Form work.

Keywords: Comedy, Improvisation, Short-Form, Long-Form, Spontaneity, Games

The poet Lucretius (Copley 1977, 4) wrote that,‘ we have learned that nothing can come from nothing, ’challenging the prevailing myth that improvisers conjure comedy out of nowhere. Seeham (2001, xx) observes that ‘Improv’s magic lies […] in the illusion of a comic scene created from thin air’. A novice audience watching an improvised comedy show for the first time might well assume that the performance they are watching has indeed come from nothing or at least has been entirely inspired by a single small suggestion. There are, however, other factors at play and this article attempts to unpick that ‘illusion’ by making a preliminary examination of the various elements which help to make comedic improvisation performances not only possible but also successful. It will also consider the complicated relationship between the concepts of *game* and *scene* and how these inform the spontaneous comedy that is generated by particular performance structures.

Short-Form Games and Microstructures

An improv team or company has a plethora of historical performance formats (e.g. *ComedySportz*, *Harold*, *Armando*) to choose from when considering what kind of show they might stage. Broadly speaking these frameworks fall into two categories: Short-Form and Long-Form. Short-Form structures focus on the playing of theatre games to generate the performance material whilst Long-Form works towards the creation of narratives or else a collage of scenes unified by theme. To give examples, the popular television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway*? would fall into the first category whilst the recent Netflix comedy *Middleditch and Schwartz* operates within the latter. In summarising the different appeal of the two approaches Leep (2008, 87) states:

> Long Form offers players more complexity and a greater challenge due to the lack of "game" structure or rehearsals that are found in other forms of improvisation. While games can certainly be challenging, there is a sense that short-form is more accessible to the public because it involves the audience more and is far more interactive.

When considering short-form structures, it is helpful to further define the nature of this interactivity in more detail; especially with regard to how it affects the resulting content.

A short-form audience is usually required to provide suggestions within the various theatre games. In the game Party Quirks, for example, each improviser is endowed by the audience with a particular objective or character trait which the host of the party tries to identify based on the performer's behaviour. This audience suggestion device serves two main purposes:

1. It offers the audience an acknowledged and active role in the performance;
2. It gives further evidence that the performance is not pre-planned adding to the sense of liveness within the event.

It may seem that this device is tokenistic, and we might question just how active the audience contribution truly is. Indeed, these audience suggestions off-stage appear to punctuate the 'real' show by interrupting the performance proper onstage. These starting points, however, play a major role in the creation of the comedic material itself through their contribution to the dramatic structures. If we consider the overall short-form format as the super-structure, then each individual game, with their different rules, form sub-structures. The audience, with their suggestions, then add further rules creating a sub-sub-structure or what I might call a

microstructure. The overall evening might appear to be a space where anything can happen but, in fact, there is a narrowing of performable choices using these multiple reframing devices. Each of these decisions: show format, choice of game and audience suggestion further restrict the choices an improviser can make. In short-form, therefore, the improvisers are both forced and freed to make spontaneous choices entirely within these microstructures.

The audience suggestions, as well as narrowing the scope of the improvised moment, also generate specific audience expectations and the means by which to fulfil them. In the Alphabet Game the improvisers must begin each consecutive line of dialogue in alphabetical order. The comedy here is derived from whether the improvisers succeed or fail in the task, as much as it is from any character, story or relationship that is formed within the scene. This means that each of the individual games played also sit within the umbrella of a constant larger game; that of whether or not the improvisers will triumph in each challenge. Salinksy (2008, 26) writes of the 'Two Stories 'which are in operation in short-form work; 'The first is the story the improvisers are telling within their scenes and games. The second is [the improvisers'] struggle for glory'. This 'struggle 'is the fundamental narrative at the heart of what is the constant dominant game of short-form theatre. It can be argued, however, that this prepotent game is one which is joyfully rigged. In a personal interview British improviser, Chris Mead (2021) observes:

> In short form, whether you succeed or fail at that game, as long as you do it with enthusiasm and with joy, you're ultimately going to win. Like, if you're amazing at Questions Only, or you are so poor [at the game] but you go in with wide eyed enthusiasm for it, you're still going to get the laughs…So you're bullet proof, really.

The comedy is not simply generated by the work within each short-form game but also by the continuous overarching game of whether the improvisers will achieve the challenge set by the emcee in collaboration with the audience. If a playful approach is adopted by the improvisers, then the comedy afforded using these game-structures is virtually guaranteed. We can see then that short-form formats establish an over-arching single 'Struggle for Glory 'game structure within which sits each short-form (e.g. *Comedysportz* or *Maestro*) format. Within those structures are the various sub-structures of each individual game (Questions Only, Alphabet Game et al.) and within those are also the dramatic microstructures created with the help of the audience suggestions. The emphasis on comedic or dramatic scene work, therefore, is always secondary to the rulings of games which are also part of the larger 'bullet-proof 'game focused on the skill, or otherwise, of the performers.

Salinksy (2008, 26) also suggests that short-forms are united by the focus of competition. In the 1980s and 1990s the influential director and teacher of improvisation, Keith Johnstone, created and developed three major short-form formats: *Theatresports*, *Gorilla Theatre* and *Maestro*. *Theatresports*, in particular, influenced the American comedian Dick Chudnow to create another short-form format, *ComedySportz*, which was in turn a primary influence on the genesis of *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* The importance of regular audience participation across these formats is critical. All of them rely on audience suggestions through the performance to inform the work which is produced onstage, but they also require the audiences to award points, give penalties, and even participate in the games themselves. It is interesting to note that this competitive element is often itself a joke or parody. A second over-arching meta-game played with the audience who are more than aware that the players are pretending to care about the absurd competition. This key idea again stems from the work

of Johnstone. Theresea Robbins Dudeck (2013), chronicles the key influence of British wrestling matches on his short-forms from as far back as 1965. Johnstone (1999, 1) explains:

> Theatresports was inspired by pro-wrestling, a family entertainment where Terrible Turks mangled defrocked Priests while mums and dads yelled insults, and grannies staggered forward waving their handbags (years passed before I learned that some of the more berserk grannies were paid stooges) […] Wrestling was the only form of working-class theatre that I'd seen, and the exultation among the spectators was something I longed for…

Johnstone's performance structures, inspired by the meta-games employed by wrestlers, both embrace and parody the competitive spirit. He expands the scope of the physical stage to incorporate the audience; essentially making them co-creators of the anarchic atmosphere offered by his formats. In *Maestro*, improvisers are gradually eliminated by the audience, from the field of play. In *Theatresports* audiences are encouraged to divide themselves and root for opposing teams. In *Gorilla Theatre*, Johnstone (1999, 44-45) speaks of engaging the audience not just from the scenic work within the theatre games but also from the meta-games operating in between the formal modes of performance:

> "Heat" is a wrestling term meaning uproar among the crowd […] Observe how professional wrestlers excite their audience by pretending to be bestial, and/or lunatically arrogant. If you can whip the audience into a frenzy, it's almost irrelevant whether the scenes are good or bad, but it has to be clear that the players are 'just

> teasing', and that their fake 'aggression' is an expression of good nature. It can take several performances before some players strike the right balance.

In Johnstone's formats further meta-games are being played between the actors, within the audience and between the actors and the audience. The overall game of success or failure is still in operation but here we also see the improvisers adopting the exaggerated personas of performers who are desperate to win at all costs. They are playing roles within roles. The audience, also aware of this meta-game, encourage the sport by exaggerating their own reactions to the results of any given theatre game. Their honest reactions are also performative. As with wrestling there is a deliberate blurring of the conventional boundaries of where the theatrical action begins and ends. The audience, even whilst they remain in their seats, become co-authors of the resulting spontaneous comedy with their various invited and uninvited responses. Chris Mead (2021) celebrates this idea noting that:

> It's not just about being spontaneous, it's about being co-created. So, if you're in the audience that night, even if you weren't the ones whose suggestions were taken, you are co-creating that show, because when you laugh, when you stay silent, when you sigh […] those things are markers, they're smoke signals to the performers that shape the performance […]. And [improvisation] is the only platform that can do that.

The enjoyment and appreciation of the show truly resides in the playing of various games over and above the qualities of any given formal scene. The opportunities for spontaneity, whilst restricted by the microstructure of the theatre-games, are simultaneously being expanded and informed by the various dynamics of the actor-audience, actor-actor and

audience-audience relationships offered by the multiple meta-games in play.

Long-Form: Game verses Scene

It is interesting to note that in the earlier quote, Salinsky (2008), separates the concepts of scenes and games. The pursuit of creating and mastering Long-Form structures which have, over time, largely rejected the competitive elements of short-form seem to increase that separation. Brian Stack, an alum of The Second City, states, 'I associate Long-Form with scene-work as opposed to fast paced games that involve lots of audience suggestions' Kozlowski (2002, 122). Long-Form Structures such as the *Harold*, the *Asssscat*, the *Spokane* and the *La Ronde* all begin with a single audience suggestion, often a single word, after which the remaining performance is generated without further recourse to the spectators. Veteran Chicago improvisers TJ & Dave (2015, 182) go further and take no suggestions from the audience at all; preferring to be inspired entirely by their scene partner. The diminishment of the audience-suggestion device, within Long-Form, along with an added emphasis on improvising relational scenes lessens, if not removes entirely, the short-form game focus of whether or not the improvisers succeed. This stems, in part, from the philosophical divide which came about in the very birthplace of North American improv and sketch comedy: Chicago's The Second City. In 1959, co-founder Paul Sills began using the theatre-games devised by his mother, Viola Spolin at the theatre. Spolin, herself, was soon training Second City actors by using these games to liberate the performers intuitive responses to rediscover spontaneity. Originally, these games were kept firmly within the confines on the rehearsal room. The focus on improvisation was not so much on performance but on process. The idea of process-games and improvisation became inextricably linked leading to skepticism that it should be used as performance at all. In fact, Second City co-founder, Bernie Sahlins (2001,

136), equates the whole notion of improvisation as itself a kind of game not fit for audience consumption:

> It is highly limited - momentarily interesting as a game but scarcely sustainable…
>
> when it does succeed its virtue most often lies not in its concise expression, not in relevant content or balance of scenic structure, but in its game aspect. The audience watch it as a display of skills…they know the rules and they are interested in how the actors achieve their goals.

Once again, we see the philosophical division between the concepts of games and scenes. Sahlins (2001) implies that the use of improvisation inevitably gamifies, and therefore detracts, from any substantial drama or comedy which it creates. In the 1980s Del Close, one of Second City's most influential directors and improv teachers, firmly rejected Sahlin's notion and joined forces with Charna Halpern at the Improv Olympic, a rival Chicago theatre, to pursue the goal of making improvisation work in performance. It was at the Improv Olympic, or iO, that the first Long-Form performance structure, the *Harold*, was finally realised. As we will see, despite Sahlin's objections and the establishment of Long-Form structures, improvisation's reliance on game structures was not to diminish.

As the name suggests the Improv Olympic began making short-form performances which were heavily influenced by Johnstone's fusion of theatre with competitive sporting tropes. Although Halpern, Close, and others disagreed with The Second City's belief that improvisation should not be used as performance they wanted to push beyond the explicit game playing of the short-form formats in pursuit of creating comedy that stemmed, not from jokes or the games themselves, but from truthful scene-work. Their book *Truth in Comedy*

(1994, 81) defines a scene as containing three elements: A relationship, an environment and an event. It is arguable that these same elements are also entirely present in many Short-Form games so perhaps it is more accurate to say that the emphasis in Long-Form scenes is the focus of depicting more fully realised characters and relationships over and above the persona of the struggling improviser aiming to succeed in a competitive, or mock-competitive, games. The *Harold* is a set structure that establishes three sets of scenes interspersed with three rounds of theatre games. The theatre games can be pre-planned or initiated by an improviser in response to the audience suggestion or inspired by the scenes which have just been improvised. They serve to provide variety within the performance and to generate and connect diverse ideas which have been inspired by the original suggestion. An initial audience suggestion of 'war', for example, might be explored through a Word Association or Pattern Game which, in turn, provides ideas for the scenes themselves. In a *Harold*, there are three distinct scenes established after this first game. Each scene will have taken a different connected idea from the Pattern Game; so, there might be a first scene about an arms dealer, a second scene revealing a war of words between a married couple and a third scene focused a veteran returning home. After this set of scenes a second game is played which uses the material from those scenes to inspire the next round (or 'beat') of scenes. These second beat scenes develop and deepen the relational nature of the three dramas by returning to at least one of the original characters from each of the previous scenes. This return, therefore, establishes a pattern and the creation of three distinct plot lines which will culminate in the final round of scenes. To achieve this the game mechanism is repeated one final time to inform the ending of each of the three plots. As the *Harold* progresses more and more connections are made between the distinct storylines beyond that of the original thematic suggestion. Characters, dialogue, locations, and ideas may be shared across the three

distinct dramas. The *Harold*'s distinct games and scenes, therefore, seek to abandon competitive game-play in favour of harmonising diverse thoughts, characters and stories within a single pre-planned format.

The laboured structure of The *Harold*, with its in-built emphasis on the 'rule of three', is, nevertheless, as rigid as any Short-Form game. Its design enables the improvisers to more easily consolidate patterns and connections that are discovered through the spontaneous game-playing and scene work. Second City teacher and Improviser Tim Paul (2021), in a personal interview, believes pattern-making to be fundamental to improvised work:

> It's all about variables and patterns, and finding those patterns and creating those patterns. And then heightening those patterns and exploring those patterns. I mean, that's at the core of improv […]. That's the game of the scene. It's just patterns.

The establishment of patterns in Long-Form could be easily considered another way of acknowledging that performance games are still occurring; albeit created spontaneously and masked within scenes. Close, Halpern and Johnson (1994, 28) in their explanation of the *Harold* structure describe the finding, establishing, and playing of these connections and patterns as a game in and of itself:

> Audiences appreciate a sophisticated game-player. When a player listens and uses patterns that have developed in a scene, it can elicit cheers from an audience which are much more intoxicating than the laughs that result from a few jokes…Connections are a much more sophisticated way to get laughs.

In Short-Form structures, then, the games are explicit, pre-planned and multi-layered; whilst in Long-Form the games, in the mode of pattern-making, are implicit and discovered through the pursuit of truthful scene-work. Improviser, Katy Schutte (2021) notes the various kinds of pattern-games that might be discovered and established in Long-Form performance:

> It might just be about an emotional dynamic […]. It might be a conversation topic […] And it could be a text game. It could be, like, how does this person react off this person? And maybe I'm going to heighten it and it's that game. Maybe it's just where you are on the stage [that] is interesting. And, therefore, you're playing a kind of game of 'let's work out what's a cool way of using the space that we have'[…] And I think the more experience you get the more of those [Pattern-Games] you're layering up on top of each other and the less you're thinking about all of them.

So, despite the emphasis on scenic work within Long-Form structures, the improvisers are constructing and playing multiple spontaneous games through repetition and pattern-making. They are essentially teaching the audience, in the moment and without explicit explanation, what the games of the scene are. In other words, Long-Form does not abandon games in favour of scenes but encourages the discovery and playing of them within the scenes themselves.

The Oxford English Dictionary gives one definition of a pattern as a 'regular and intelligible form or sequence discernible in certain actions or situations; esp. One on which the prediction of successive or future events may be based' (2021). In Long-Form it is the improvisers, and not the audience, who are forming the microstructures within which they

might create the extemporised material. If Close et al. are correct, this does not mean that the audience are less engaged but rather that the audience are invited to constantly predict the resolution of these patterns within a scene instead of enjoying the results of an explicit game that has been pre-established. Arguably, Keith Johnstone's work is focused on storytelling over scene-making but he makes a similar point with his concept of Circles of Expectation. In *Impro for Storytellers* (1999, 79) Johnstone writes, 'The spectators create a 'shadow story' that exists alongside the improvisers story. Storytelling goes well when there's a close match between the players' stories and the spectators' shadow stories.' The audience, upon hearing the start of a story, particularly within genre storytelling, create a 'circle of expectation' as to what might or should happen. Johnstone (1999, 80) encourages his players to avoid being too 'original' by stepping outside this circle with their improvised decisions. In other words, Johnstone (in Short-Form), as with Close & Halpern (in Long-Form), are encouraging improvisers to fulfil patterns rather than negate them with wild creative choices.

UCB: The (single) Game of The Scene

In 1996, the Upright Citizens Brigade, an improv team, left iO to create their own brand of Long-Form improv training in New York. This move, along with the eventual establishment of their own theatre venues, led to a more narrowly defined method of improvising comedy. The pattern-making game techniques they had learned improvising in Chicago led them to create their own style of improvised comedy (regardless of Long-Form structure) which is focused on finding 'The Game of The Scene' (Besser, Roberts & Walsh, 2013, 61). The UCB Comedy Improvisation Manual (2013, 71) states, 'Since the game is what is funny about a

scene, finding the game is your primary goal as an improviser' UCB's method, somewhat simplified here, begins with the improvisers establishing a 'base reality' (2013, 9) of the scene. This is similar to the three essential elements noted in *Truth in Comedy*: that of the relationship, environment and event. Most North American improvisers more succinctly define this base reality as the 'Who, What, Where.' For the UCB trained improviser the creation of the Base Reality is not merely the platform by which a truthful scene might be supported as might be the case with other schools such as the iO or The Second City; instead, it supplies a pattern of normalcy which is there to be disrupted by the 'First Unusual Thing'(2013, 71). The status quo of the Base Reality is created only to be subverted by an incongruity which will then be exploited through the playing of a comedic pattern. It is there to be broken and not built upon. Once the 'unusual' or 'absurd' behaviour or idea is introduced, it is then repeated to consolidate it, and then repeated again to form a game-pattern. Similar games and patterns can be found in sketch comedy and, indeed, the UCB manual references Monty Python's *Cheese Shop* and *Dead Parrot* sketches as key examples of playing a farcical game within a conventional scene. In these examples, the base reality is subordinate to the heightened absurdities that will follow. UCB's process, heavily influenced by Second City's earlier goal of creating sketch-comedy, firmly rejects Johnstonian notions of narrative:

> Comedic improv is not achieved by creating a plot or story. It is achieved by creating a Game […] our style of Long-Form improvisation is not about plot or story. What is funny is the Game, a pattern that is played within the context of that Who, What and Where […] the Game of the Scene is not beholden to the specifics of the scene.
>
> (2013, 62)

There is a subtle distinction here between Close and Halpern's notion that patterns can be found and exploited within truthful scenes and the UCB's use of scenes as platforms for improvised sketch comedy. The original Long-Form project sought to harmonise games, monologues and scenes in improvised performance. The UCB method establishes scenes so that they can be platforms for absurd humour. More than perhaps any other school of improv the UCB has created a prescriptive method which the notion of having a comedy 'manual' implies. Bernie Sahlins may well have doubted that strong comedic 'writing' could be consistently achieved in performance improvisation and the UCB may well have found a formula which enables even novice improvisers to prove him wrong. We have already noted in the North American and Canadian (Johnstone's work being largely developed there) traditions various formalised structures reduce the scope of spontaneous choice for the benefit of successful audience-satisfying improvisation, and we might now add the training, of the improvisers themselves, add further limitations by which the compass of the spontaneous moment might also be reduced in order to achieve consistent success onstage.

Breaking 'The Rules'

The UCB may well have formalised certain 'rules' in their approach to improvising material but all the improv schools and theatres advocate principles which are designed to help players improvise well. A common rule/principle is for characters not to ask questions. The idea here being that by asking a question, such as "What are you up to?" within a scene, the speaker is effectively deferring the act of imaginative creation to their scene partner. This is particularly damaging when you consider that time onstage is limited. In Long-Form Structures such as

the *Commando* or *Montage*, to give two examples, the scenes conventionally run between 2-5 minutes and a question can waste this stage time by effectively suspending the act of invention. In my own training at Second City and IO I learned to speak in statements rather than in questions to avoid this trap and to be a more effective scene-partner. Another principle is to avoid 'teaching' or 'transactional' scenes where the relationships between the characters are so functional that it potentially precludes the richer possibilities of changing the emotional dynamics of the characters in surprising and meaningful ways. Mick Napier (2015, 3-4), the Artistic Director of Chicago's Annoyance Theater takes issue with the ideas of following such things:

> Rules, rules. A list of rules. Rules of improvisation. There they are, and they're in a list, and they look good, and they even seem to make sense. So why am I so snitty about them? Because I don't believe they work […] the Rules do not help one improvise well […] as a matter of fact, I believe […] they are destructive.

The games, including the rules inherent within them, that Spolin and Johnstone created were designed, in different ways, to liberate the improviser. Napier (2015, 10) questions the conformity that can occur when improvisers play it safe by following rules noting that it often leads to 'boring' improvisation. Tim Paul (2021) suggests, 'I think a lot of people need that comfort […]. It's improv and so they're trying to find whatever safety net they can get'. Perhaps the games, performance structures and rules that were first created to release spontaneous comedy have now begun to imprison it? Chris Mead (2021) suggests that rules are:

> …giving them [the improvisers] sections of plate armour to put on, so that they can do this scary thing of walking out in front of an audience and making stuff up on the spot.[…] But the other thing about plate armour is it stops you moving naturally. It stops you doing most of the things you're capable of. And so, as quick as possible, you need to remove them again. You need to realise that they were a way to start on the process, but they don't serve you in the same way later on.

The Paradox

At the heart of performance improvisation, then, is a paradox. The creative freedom celebrated through improvisation is, in large part, made possible with the use of various mechanisms of limitation. The use of formats, sub-formats, multi-layered games and approaches to scenes create microstructures within which improvisers can create successful work. Within the improv community there seems to be both an acceptance and a rejection of some of those limitations as various artists and companies continually pursue new ways of creating spontaneous comedy. At the same time we might agree with *Hamlet* (Act 2, Scene 2) that improvisers' could be bounded in a nutshell 'still count ourselves 'king[s] of infinite space'. Chris Mead (2021) offers a powerful metaphor that might help us in reconciling this paradox: 'There's this lovely image of making sure that your structure is a climbing frame rather than [a] cage […]. It's whether you treat it as something that's a straitjacket or something that allows you to climb higher'. In conclusion, we might never fully move beyond games and scenes, or ever be able to truly create something from nothing, but that does not mean the practice and results of theatrical improvisation will ever be confined.

References

Besser, Matt, Ian Roberts and Matt Walsh. 2013. *The Upright Citizens Brigade Comedy Improvisation Manual.* New York: Comedy Council of Nicea LLC

Fotis, Matt and Siobhan O'Hara. 2015. *The Comedy Improv Handbook.* New York: Focal Press

Halpern, Charna, Del Close and Kim Johnson. 1994. *Truth in Comedy.* Colorado Springs: Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

Jagodowski, T.J., Dave Pasquesi and Pam Victor. 2015. *Improvisation at the Speed of Life* Chicago: Sola Roma Inc

Johnstone, Keith. 1999. *Impro for Storytellers.* London: Faber & Faber

Kozlowski, Rob. 2002. *The Art of Chicago Improv.* Portsmouth: Heinemann

Leep, Jeanne. 2008. *Theatrical Improvisation.* USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lucretius. 1977. *On the Nature of Things.* Translated by Frank O. Copley. New York: W.W Norton & Company

Mead, Chris. 2021. Artistic Director of *The Nursery.* Personal interview, November, online.

Napier, Mick. 2015. *Improvise: Scenes Fram The Inside Out.* U.S.A: Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

OED Online. *pattern, n. and adj.* Accessed December 6, 2021. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry138977rskey=7dwKVW&result=1#eid.

Paul, Tim. 2021. Improviser *Second City, The Annoyance, iO*. Personal interview, November, online.

Robbins Dudeck, Theresa. 2013. *Keith Johnstone: A critical biography.* London: Bloomsbury.

Sahlins, Bernard. 2001. *Days And Nights At The Second City.* Chicago: Ivan R. Dee

Salinsky, Tom and Deborah Frances-White. 2008. *The Improv Handbook.* London: Methuen,

Schutte, Katy. 2021 *Improviser & Director of The International Improv Station*. Personal interview, November, online.

Seham, Amy E. 2001. *Whose Improv is it Anyway?* Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi

Shakespeare, William, 1987. *Hamlet.* Edited by G.R. Hibbard. Oxford: Oxford University Press