

Workshop: Character Discovery

How you are, is who you are. Character is not a grocery list of attributes. Character is a deeper sense of self, desires, and actions.

Description

This workshop looks at discovering the different versions of you that you can bring to the stage to fully embody a character that is genuine and grounded. This approach helps you discover characters that you can easily maintain across the duration of a full-length improvised play, without constraining you to a shallow stereotype or caricature.

You will learn a variety of techniques to help you quickly establish true-to-life characters, and to embody the character in such a way that they do most of the work for you, responding naturally to offers, and allowing you to remain fully in the moment and engaged.

These techniques form the basis for my popular long-form improvised play, “Strangers”.

Despite the name of the show, “Strangers” is really all about relationships, but unlike many other forms we get to discover those relationships from their very first moment.

What You Will Learn

Playing a version of you

You are who you are, and you are enough. This workshop will help you discover different versions of you, allowing you to fulfill any character role that comes your way.

Character discovery techniques

You will learn a variety of techniques to help you discover character. We will primarily focus on outside-in techniques, where we take an internal sense of character and bring it to life through characterisation.

If time allows we will also look at some outside-in techniques, where we take an external, physical stimulus and use this to inspire an internal sense of character.

Objectives

A great way to know your character is to know what they want. We'll look at how having a sense of objective helps ground your character in a way that brings a greater sense of depth.

Monologues

Character monologues give us time to discover who we are as a character in our own time without the pressure of creating a scene. They're also a lot of fun to perform.

Stage picture

To show our characters off in their best light we need to understand how the audience sees us. We'll learn some of the basics of stage picture, and how to leverage it to best effect.

"Strangers" show format

We will use the "Strangers" show format to provide a framework for our scenework. In particular we will learn how to create an engaging scene between two characters who do not know each other.

Experience Level

Intermediate and above.

This workshop is best suited to participants who already have some experience in improvisation OR acting. An experienced actor should be able to quickly adjust their skillset to work within this framework.

Participants

Number of participants: 6 to 16

Note that the show, "Strangers" has an intended cast size of 6 performers. If the show is going to be performed, then not all participants will be able to be cast.

Workshop Length

3 hours to 2 full days or more.

Character is foundational to our work as improvisers, and as such provides a huge range of learning opportunities. A longer workshop allows us to go deeper and broader.

If working towards a show, then at least 6 hours is preferred.

Workshop Requirements

There are no special requirements for this workshop. The space should be sufficient to allow for the number of participants.

Performance

This workshop can be used as preparation for a performance of the show “Strangers”.

“Strangers”, utilises the skills learned to create a long-form improvised play that explores the genesis of relationship.

The show is a great opportunity to play real-to-world, grounded, truly human characters. It comes across very much as a play. On many occasions, when I have directed this show, we have had audience members who thought it was a scripted play.