

HISTORY of IMPROVISATION

Edited and summarized by Walt Frasier. Go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/> to discover more amazing information on the following companies and key figures in Improvisation Theater History.

Viola Spolin was an American drama teacher and author. She is considered by many to be the American Grandmother of Improvisation. Author of "Improvisation for the theater" still respected as one of the best books on the subject.

Paul Sills was a director and improvisation teacher, and the original director of The Second City, Playwrights and Compass Players. Paul was the son of teacher and writer Viola Spolin.

Mike Nichols (born 6 November 1931) is one of America's most important television, stage and film director, writer, and producers. Nichols is one of the few people to have won all the major American entertainment awards: an Oscar, Grammy, Emmy and Tony Award. Started as an Improv Actor/Comedian. Toured with Elaine May in the popular team act "Nichols & May". Recently directed SPAMALOT on Broadway.

Del Close is considered one of the premier influences on modern improvisational theater. An actor, improviser, writer, and teacher, Close had a prolific career, appearing in a number of films and television shows. He was a co-author of the book *Truth in Comedy* along with partner Charna Halpern, which outlines techniques now common to longform improvisational theater and describes the overall structure of "Harold" which remains a common frame for longer improvisational scenes.

The Compass Players (or Compass Theater) was a 1950s cabaret revue show started by alumni from the University of Chicago.^[1] The troupe was active from 1955-1958 in Chicago and St. Louis. Several of the members went on to form The Second City Theater in 1959.

The Second City is a long-running improvisational theatre based in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood. Many of the most important and famous comedians and actors have passed through their doors in the passed fifty years including the founders of Saturday Night Live.

The Groundlings is an improvisational comedy troupe based in Los Angeles, California, USA. The troupe was formed by Gary Austin in 1974 and uses an improv format influenced by Viola Spolin to produce sketches and improvised scenes. The most important name in West Coast Comedy. Many cast members have appeared on SNL, MADtv, and movies.

Improv Olympic (iO Chicago) has performances of, and teaches improvisational comedy. It was founded in the 1980s by Del Close and Charna Halpern. iO concentrates on "long-form" improvisational structures. The iO's signature piece is the "Harold". In the late 1980s, iO replaced Second City as the premier source of talent for Saturday Night Live and now considered to be the international leader of modern Improv. IO is the primary inspiration for most NYC Improv Companies (UCB, THE PIT etc)

Eight Is Never Enough is one of New York's busiest short-form Improv Comedy Troupes performing regularly in Times Square and touring schools, theaters and events nationwide.

Famous Actors & Comedians that started in Improv Comedy: Tina Fey, Vince Vaughn, Bill Hader, Mike Myers, Amy Poehler, Will Farrell, Chris Farley, Tim Meadows, Steven Colbert, Seth Myers, John Candy, Stephanie Weir, Bonnie Hunt, Jennifer Coolidge, Adam Carolla, Jon Lovitz, Phil Hartman, Kathy Griffin, Kristen Wiig, Chris Kattan, Michael Macdonald and hundreds more....

Look up some of these famous names at www.imdb.com