

ELEMENTS OF A SCENE WHO – WHERE – WHAT

When one performs a play or musical, the actor must analyze the script and determine these elements that are the heartbeat of any story. In improvisation, the actors have to create these elements. Various stories place greater importance on one or the other but all are always present. Creating strong WHO-WHERE-WHAT in one's improv work helps all stay in the moment and create scene that are far more meaningful and memorable. These are basic introductions. It is recommended reading books on acting that go further into the subjects.

THE WHO - The WHO has two parts. The character you create and the character's relationship to other actors on stage. Both require commitment and determine the direction of a scene. Mastering these skills will help you in your scripted work as well. Before taking stage, making a choice about character and relationship will help you jump into a scene. Focusing on the characters' needs (Yours and other actors) helps deepen your commitment to the scene.

CHARACTER – Many times in Improv, like TV/FILM acting, you just be yourself and focus on the relationship. Many elements affect character. In improv we do not have time to dive deep into preparation. However, too often Improv actors settle for a caricature/cartoon. Become these other people. Here are some great tips to consider. How does this character differ from you? How is the character similar? Age? Weight? Height? Work Status? Social Status? Physical Stature (Strong/Meek)? Emotional Center (Easily moved/The Walls are up all the time)? What do other characters say about you? What clothes are worn? Is there a hat or other article that defines the character?

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS – Friends, Coworkers, Teacher – Student, Parent – child, Boss – employee, Service/Sales - customer

RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS – Beyond the above obvious choices, there are three basic type of relationship dynamics. Two actors should always be considered equals on stage, but characters can vary. **EQUALS** – the two characters share an equal social, economic and power status. The perfect couple. Two best friends etc
Dominant – Subordinant – One character has more power or social status
Struggle for dominance – this is a great source of comedy. The classic **STRAIGHT MAN – COMIC** dynamic (Abbott & Costello, Chris Farley & David Spade, etc) involves two very different characters in a constant struggle to prove or assert their dominance.

THE WHERE - The WHERE is the environment in which the characters live. Pay attention to how being inside or outside changes your characters. Regions of the country/world. Living room versus the kitchen. School versus grocery store. How big is the room you are in. Is the space cluttered or open? Who is in the room besides the actors on stage? Hot or Cold? Dry or Wet? Dark or Light? All of these factor effect us in life and should be a part of your characters life. Paying attention to these elements anchors you in a scene and gives inspiration for countless improv scenarios.

THE WHAT - What is the scene about? The Plot. Every great scene has an activity. More about this when we discuss the ARC, but if the WHO & WHERE are strong, the WHAT in an Improv scene flows. Make choices. Create an activity. What are the characters doing? What are they trying to accomplish?

ASSIGNMENTS for further study and development:

- 1 - Watch people in school, on the street, on the subway etc. How do they walk, talk, breath? Inspiration for characters exist everywhere in the real world.
- 2- Watch groups of friends, coworkers and family members and how they relate to each other. Who are the leaders? Who are the followers? How do they relate to one another? How do they sit/stand?
- 3-Pay attention as you go through life the next few weeks how various locations change you. School, Home, Restaurants, Subway, outside... Notice temperature, lighting, how much space is around you, and notice how these factor effect others.