

Program Name: Thinking on Your Feet

Artist: John Mulvey

## Special Requirements:

Four chairs or stools

## Special Points of Interest:

Professor Guy Claxton states that “today’s children face a future that will demand skills such as knowing ‘how to make sense, how to make meaning, how to make moral choices, how to invent yourself, how to craft your life’ in the face of uncertainties.”

Improvisational thinking is essential to solving these challenges.



## Workshop Description

Teaching Artist John Mulvey has spent a lot of time thinking on his feet. As a stage actor, teacher, and member of the improvisation comedy troupe, *Out on a Limb*, John quickly learned that having the ability to improvise was a great asset.

John passes along his techniques and experiences to give students control of their imagination, so that they can apply creative and improvisational thinking skills to any situation. The goal is to enable the students to spontaneously react in order to solve problems and create stories.

John invites the participants to take the stage with him to explore characters, environments, and develop problemsolving skills. The students will see that the three basic elements of improvisation—awareness, acceptance, and commitment—serve as a framework within which they can actively participate to make language arts come alive. In doing so, students can increase their ability to verbally and physically communicate, think imaginatively, concentrate, and cooperate in groups.

## Educational Objectives & Standards

Students will:

- Examine the three basics of improvisation: awareness, acceptance, and commitment
- Explore improvisation techniques as a vehicle for creative thinking and problem solving

Theater

- Understands how descriptions, dialogue, and actions are used to discover, articulate, and justify character motivation
- Interacts as an invented character in improvised and scripted scenes



John Mulvey holds a Bachelor of Theatre Arts degree from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas. He has performed in plays such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, as well as children's theater productions.

John has taught acting classes at Longview Community College and KCYA's Community School of the Arts, and currently teaches acting

classes for Theatre for Young America

John performs regularly with the improvisational and sketch comedy group *Out on a Limb*. His group headlines shows for the Stanford's Comedy Clubs. *Out on a Limb* has also been featured on KCPT's Marquee and on the FOX network.

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## Vocabulary

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### List of Resources:

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#### Books:

Playing Along: 37 Group Learning Activities

Borrowed from Improvisational

Theater by Izzy Gesell  
Whole Person Associates  
(January 1, 1997)  
ISBN: 157025141X

Training to Imagine: Practical Improvisational Theatre Techniques to Enhance Creativity, Teamwork, Leadership, and Learning by Kat Koppett  
Stylus Publishing, LLC.  
(June, 2001)  
ISBN: 1579220339

Dialogue : The Art Of Thinking Together  
by William Issacs  
Doubleday; 1st ed edition  
(September, 1999)  
ISBN: 0385479999

**acceptance:** a disposition to tolerate or accept people or situations; "all people should practice toleration and live together in peace."

**awareness:** knowledge gained through one's own perceptions or by means of information; knowledge gained through intuition or intellectual perception.

**commitment:** the trait of sincere and steadfast fixity of purpose; "a man of energy and commitment."

**critical thinking:** the mental process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion.

**improvisation:** a creation spoken or written or composed extemporaneously (without prior preparation.)

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## Post-Workshop Activities

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1. Create a *Taste Box* filled with harmless, edible items from home. Include items such as apple sauce, toothpaste, cheese, raisins, and pickles. Gather your friends and have them put on blind folds. Pass the items from the Taste Box around and have the participants the different tastes. Now pass around *imaginary items* and have the students describe how these items taste.
2. Pick a partner and sit on the floor across from them. Have your partner begin to make slow, deliberate expression with their face. Mirror their expressions as they make different faces. Now, add body gestures and more exaggerated gestures. Try to perfectly mirror your partner.
3. Experiment with mime. Using pantomime, try to convey simple activities to your audience: tying your shoe, emptying a garbage can, eating spaghetti, cracking an egg, and putting a coin in a vending machine.
4. Practice role-playing. Pick a partner and choose two characters to portray, such as a ball player and an umpire. Improvise a scene where the ump has just made a bad call. Then, switch roles and continue with the scene.

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

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