

Procedural Knowledge of Improvisation as Outline By Close et. Al, Johnstone

In "ideal" Improv, this seems to be the approximate process.

1. There is a gauging of status. By status, one must include the following factors:
 - what game/scene is being utilized
 - roles played by the actor and other performers
 - setting and props
 - Language (spoken or body)
 - status of the characters
 - whether he/she or another performer is driving the action or whether they are equally responsible for moving the story forward (this is game/scene dependent)
 - What proposals have been made

2. Once the status of both the scenario and performer have been gauged and taken into account, the performer has to make a choice in regards to the previous performer's suggestion or proposal. According to Close and Johnstone, the choice is almost always agreement, though of course refusal or blocking is possible.

Agreement does not necessarily have to come about as a variation of the "Yes &" model. Agreement can still occur even if the performance makes it appear as though the performer has accepted grudgingly, if for example agreement causes the performer to drop in status.

As Close notes "Nothing is ignored. Nothing is forgotten. Nothing is a mistake." Along with agreement with the situation, a connection with the other performers has to be made. Close talks further about this connection. In this agreement, the performer must take in the status information and from the agreement of the experience is where the creative process begins.

3. Once the agreement decision is made, the performer must now expand the scenario based upon the set constraints:

- the game
- the status gauged in step 1
- the decision to the proposal in step 2

The expansion is where the "rules of spontaneity" appear. Here the performer can expand the scenario, make clearer the scenario that is taking place, and offer a new proposal. This is also where referents as expressed by Johnstone (p.91) can be utilized. Close describes these associations as something that cannot be forced and should be based on information given by previous actions in the scene. Johnstone elaborates by showing a pedagogical game(105) that teaches students not to force these associative connections.

4. Once the expansion, new connections, and new proposal is made. The action moves to the next performer, who must repeat the steps with the new information in mind.

This process for improvisation seems very similar to the way many games are played. I wonder if it is worthwhile to explore Bernie DeKoven's notion of flow in games as a model for how improve may work in a non-ideal scenario, say when a skilled performer is paired with a newbie?