

These notes were taken during the workshop given by Shawn Kinley ([www.shawnkinley.com](http://www.shawnkinley.com)) that I attended in Paris in October 2007. The workshop was arranged by the Improprofessionals ([www.improprofessionals.com](http://www.improprofessionals.com)).

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### **Shawn Kinley workshop**

*Shawn looks like a naughty little kid. He somehow managed to make us feel secure and comfortable through the workshop.*

#### First exercise – Fooling around

- *Playing with hands and thumbs (noticing stress)*
- *Drawing a triangle and a square in the air at the same time (work in pairs)*
- *Up and down on your toes (with elimination)*

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

Get rid of fear. Be like children. 14 year olds are fearless.  
Allow yourself to do poorly.

#### Second exercise – Maffioso / Far West game

- Played “until the end”, i.e. until one dies.
- Final duel: 2 on 2, “bang” when the number “7” comes out, otherwise, take a step.

#### Third exercise – “South American exercise”: Chain movements / words (or Ali Baba and the 40 thieves in pairs)

- Upon claps, move on to the next word / movement

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

Sometimes, it’s harder for the leader.

#### Fourth exercise – Gibberish with emotions

#### Fifth exercise – Mirror scene with emotional sounds

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

Use mistakes, make sense of them.

#### Sixth exercise – Speak in one voice

- Start with a sound everyone shares.
- Make sentences.
- Go faster.
- Behave like a person.

- Allow yourself to make mistakes and allow anyone to start again at anytime if that happens. And everyone repeats the sentence together until everyone is satisfied with it.

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

We want to see happy people but not to the point that we forget our partners.

Watch your partner, force him to go faster at times. However, remember that this is just a suggestion for playing with partners you feel comfortable with. If you want to challenge your partner and you know that they are open to it, then by all means "push them" a little.

Keith says that if you master 5 games, you master improvisation (but Shawn forgot the last two). But you never master the games, there is always to be learned. The games are:

- Word at the time
- Speak in one voice
- Endowments
- Stage directions / He said, She said [*Shawn remembered after the workshop*]
- What comes next [*my guess... Ian*]

Seventh exercise – Dolphin training

- One person on stage: competition between trainers.
- Then, training one-on-one.

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

They train dolphins by giving positive feedback. Don't be isolated on stage, when you watch your partner, there's a connection that's made.

Pay attention to:

- The complexity of actions (divide and simplify them, as a trainer)
- The diversity in trainers / directors
- What it feels like being a dolphin (the frustration)

Eighth exercise – Create a scene your partner likes

- Situation: Breakfast
- The other must show support when the "challenger" takes good actions (through emotional sounds mostly, but talking is ok)
- Others can tag out the one trying to please the other to compete to make the other happy.
- Same exercise, but not one-on-one, anyone can come anytime, any number of people, and support what he or she wants in the scene. As soon as the person you try to please breaks contact or show discomfort, leave and try again.
- When the person has had what she wants, that person leaves and the scene becomes a different scene about what the remaining person wants.

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

At some point, just ask.

You got to be willing to make mistakes.

Don't overdo. Don't overpower the person. She might just want to "be there" and might want you to "back off".

Ninth exercise – *Do you remember when*

- Switch control between two people remembering things.

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

A good sign: both improvisers are mirroring each other.

If you're good, you can make the audience mirror the performers.

Tenth exercise – *Tag out storytelling*

- Someone tells a story. Anyone can tag the person when he or she wants to save her.

*Random quotes or things I remembered:*

When you're telling the story, you have to show if you're feeling bad. Another indicator is if the audience feels bad for the performer. Become the improviser that saves his partners, the expert at finding what others want on stage.

*Final notes:*

In improvisation, you have to recognize what is garbage on stage, and acknowledge it: tell the performers and the audience that it was garbage if it was. That can be a difficult area to step into. We are often biased by our own fears and self doubt. Often we react in a way that is not in line with the audience's feelings. If they like a scene and we say, "Whew - that was a stinker", then they will be less responsive in the future because they won't want to put their opinions on the line anymore. And if we praise our selves for a scene that was not so good, then the audience will think that we are arrogant and out of touch and we will have a more difficult time reaching them... How we deal with the "value" of the show is sometimes a delicate balance.

Games are made to solve problems: that's what Keith did.

As a coach or director, you can either use directness or trickiness to make the students go in the direction you want. For ex: you can say "Speak louder" or you can pretend to go at the back of the room and say "What did you say? I can't hear you."

Emotions / Physicality.

Improv is great, but you have to recognize that you are not alone, and you have to give up control.