

Keith Johnstone

Keith Johnstone is one of the few internationally recognized authorities in the field of improvisation, great chunks of which he created, including improvisation forms that include Theatresports, Micetro Impro (or Maestro Impro), Gorilla Theatre, and The Life Game.

Keith Johnstone was born and raised in England and worked for many years at the Royal Court Theatre. He currently teaches at the University of Calgary and is a founding Artistic Director of the Loose Moose Theatre. He is the respected author of two very famous books: "Impro" and "Impro for Storytellers."

Keith Johnstone's philosophy of acting is simple. He means to create a warm and friendly atmosphere while reaching the potential acting and creative ability of the actors.

Keith Johnstone came about "Impro" while watching "WWF Wrestling" with his good friend. He took note of how enthusiastic the crowd became when the wrestlers threw in a knee drop or a punch here or there. He wondered why the audience grew wild with excitement even though they could see that the wrestlers were merely acting. Then he wondered if an audience would have the same reaction if the wrestlers were replaced with practiced actors, and the contest was based on wit rather than muscle strength. That got him to thinking about what we all know now as improv. It is a battle of the wits where teams or individuals broadcast their improvisational talents in front of an audience usually feeding off of the audience's reactions.

Keith Johnstone's methods are still incorporated in theatre training today. Through improvisation exercises, actors come closer to developing more authentic characters based on natural responses to dilemmas and problems presented in the script. This experimentation phase is very healthy in the actor's quest for "finding the character." With so much pressure on stage to do everything right, it is a relief to know that Keith truly encourages failure. He is known to have said things like "You don't have to be good," "Don't think," "Be obvious" and "Don't be clever." This is a fresh new way to look at theatre and it opens an actor's mind up to truly become a real character. (Real people screw up! !)