

"I know one of these guys, so at least half of this book is pretty good. Yes, And is for anyone looking to be more creative in their work and in their life." —Stephen Colbert

Lessons from *The Second City*

# Yes, And

How Improvisation  
Reverses "No, But"  
Thinking and  
Improves Creativity  
and Collaboration

Kelly Leonard  
&  
Tom Yorton

## Yes, And; Using Improv to Improve!

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Facilitator: Jonathan  
Boyar

- Judson Park, Executive Director
- Leadership CEU's, Side Hobby

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# My Credentials



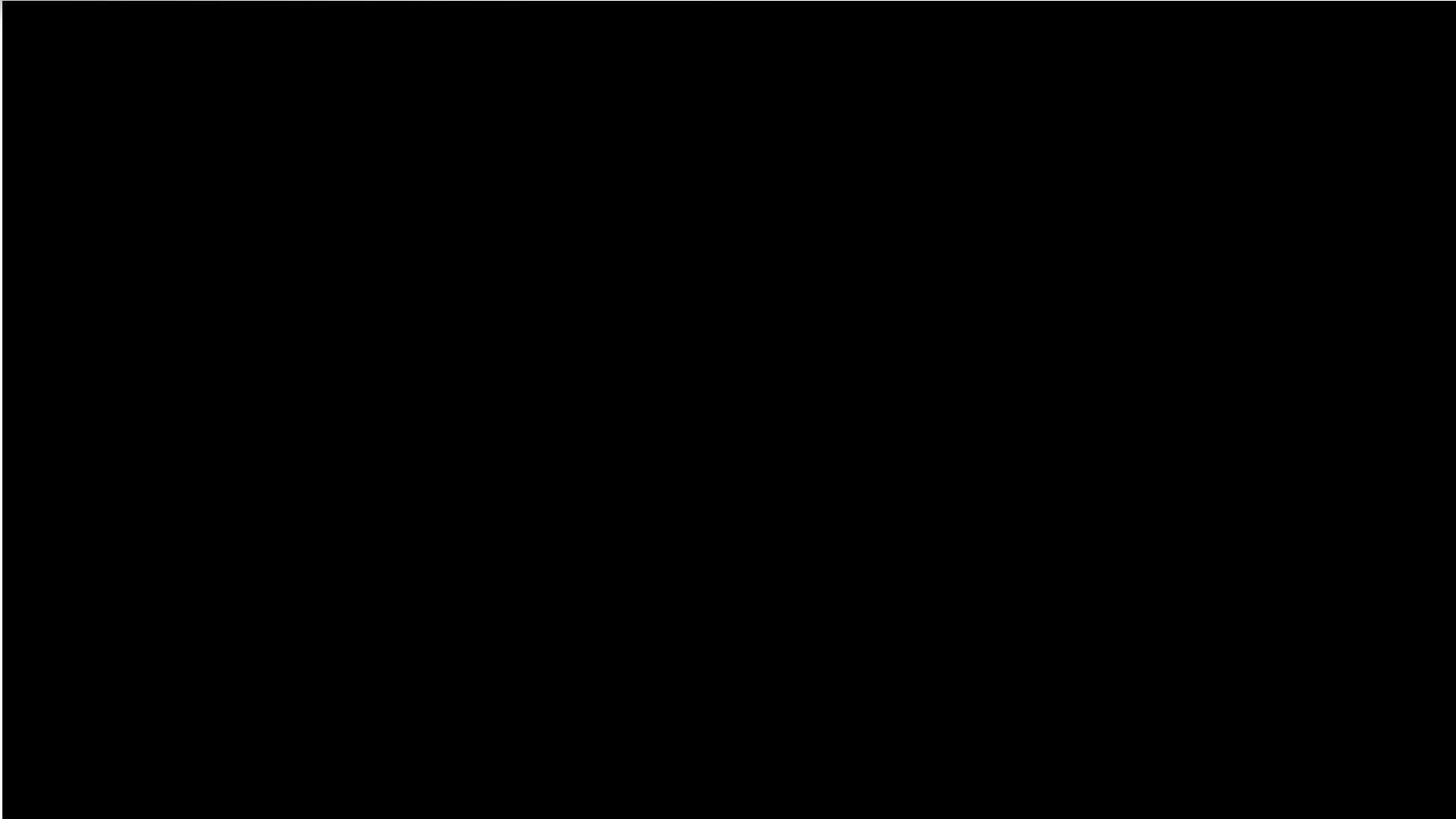
# Agenda

- A little bit about Improv
- A little bit about the book/Second City
- The Yes, And strategy
- A bunch of games
- Review & some take-a-ways

# What is Improv

- Improv is a form of live theatre in which the plot, characters and dialogue of a game, scene or story are made up in the moment
- Improv games are activities designed around participants acting or role-playing a scene spontaneously and without a script. Improv has its roots in schools of acting and comedy, and has often been used to warm-up actors and to build collaborative skills.
- Improv games encourage creativity, quick thinking, and communication skills and are a great tool for breaking the ice, having fun, and building team spirit. They are great at breaking down barriers to collaboration and getting groups prepared for more involved tasks and processes.

# An Example...



# Some Well Know Improv Troupes

WHOSE LINE  
IS IT  
ANYWAY?



UPRIGHT  
CITIZENS  
BRIGADE

The  
Second  
City®



# Who Is Second City?

- Started in Chicago in 1959
- Now in Chicago, Toronto and Hollywood
  - Theater
  - Touring Groups
  - Workshops
  - Etc
- Has become one of the most influential and prolific comedy theatres in the world

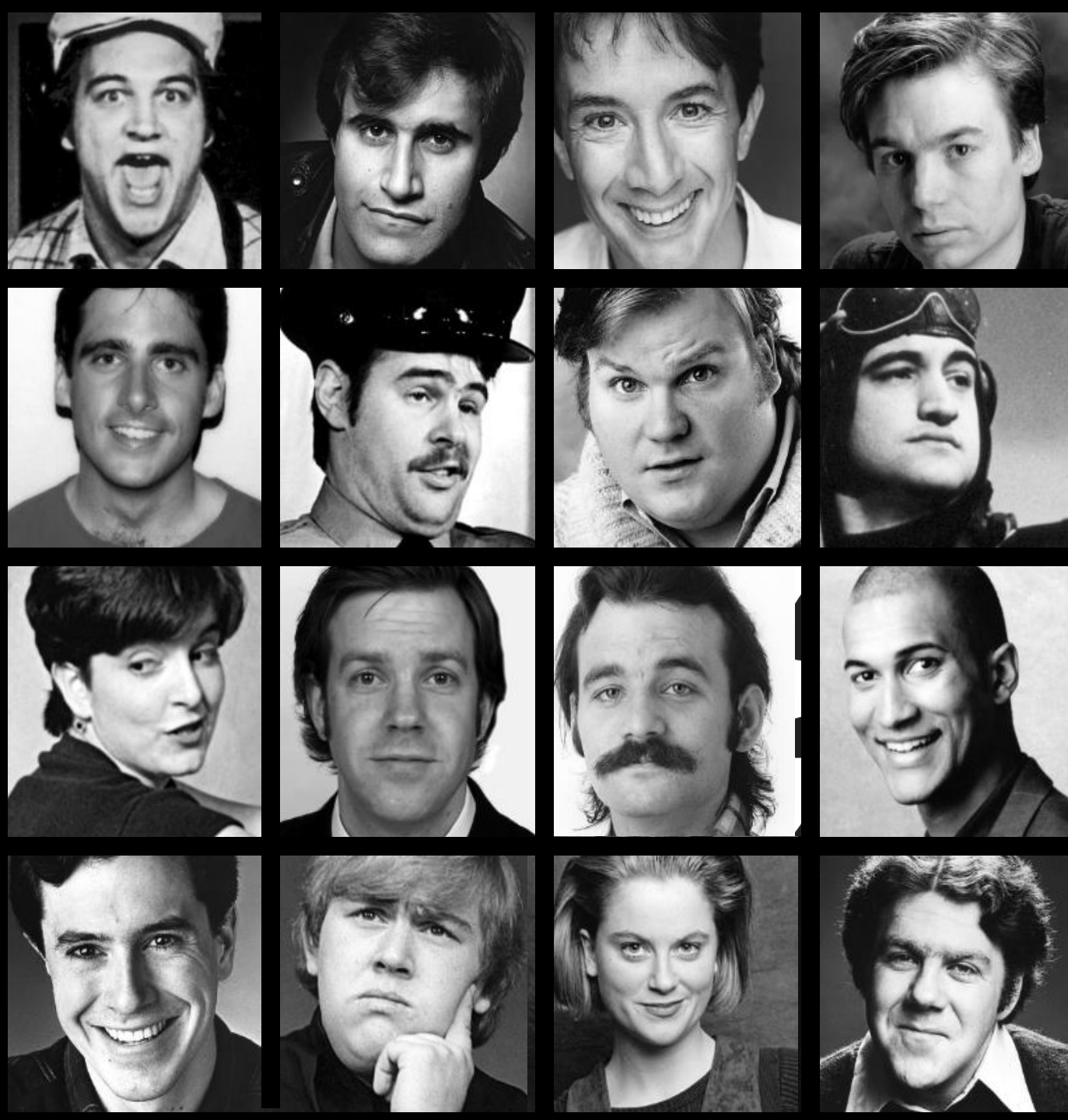
The  
Second  
City®



# Who Is Second City?

## Some Names you might know:

- Joan Rivers
- Mike Myers
- Tina Fey
- Steve Carell
- Keegan-Michael Key
- Jordan Peele
- Jane Lynch
- Ryan Stiles
- Jerry Stiller
- Amy Poehler
- Stephen Colbert
- Dan Aykroyd
- Andy Dick
- John Belushi
- Chris Farley
- John Candy
- Bill Murray
- Bill Hader
- Shelley Long
- Tim Meadows
- Martin Short
- Ed Asner



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# Yes, And

How Improvisation  
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## About the Book

Written by executives from The Second City

Reveal improvisational techniques that can help any organization develop innovators, encourage adaptable leaders, and build transformational businesses.

Some Key Points:

- Yes, And... strategy
- Build an ensemble, not a team
- Co-Creation & Collaboration
- Comedy in the Workplace
- Embracing Failure
- Follow the Follower
- Listening!!

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# The “Yes, And” Strategy

- In Improv, actors have no script and must guide the scene.
  - To do this, actors use Yes, and... (a concept of receiving and building)
- For example:
  - One actor might say, “Wow, I’ve never seen so many stars in the sky”
  - What if the other actor said, “I can’t see a single star...it’s broad daylight”
  - Or, what if the other actor said, “I know. Things look so different up here on the moon”
- This strategy opens up the possibility for creation and new ideas, but it also makes everyone feel heard and respected.



# Let's Play Some Games

# Some Rules to Start

- Real names/titles don't exist here
- Don't judge
  - No right or wrong
- Don't overthink it
  - Doesn't have to be funny
  - Just go with it
- Have Fun
  - (smile, laugh, etc.)
  - This isn't an audition
- Try not to "Kill the dog"
- Extroverts/Introverts
- Don't hog the stage

# To Get Us Started

- Anyone have a fear of public speaking?
- Let's play a game called:

## Exposure





# Exposed (in review)

- How'd you feel when you first came up?
- How'd you feel while counting?

## Take-a-ways:

- When we concentrate, we're able to distract ourselves from our fears
- Don't speak to the crowd, speak to people

# Yes, And...

## How It's Played

One player starts a story with a sentence.

The next player responds, “yes, and...” finishing the sentence by adding to the story to keep it going.

So on and so forth

## Example:

“I bought a new car today”

“Yes, and we’re taking it out for a spin”

“Yes, and we can pick-up dinner while we’re out”

“Yes, and...”

# Yes, And... (in review)

- How'd it go?

## Take-a-ways:

- Was it hard?

- Listening

- Anyone “Kill the dog”?

- Accepting & Nurturing Ideas w/o Judgement



# Fortunately, Unfortunately

## How It's Played

One player starts a story with a sentence.

The next player responds, “fortunately, ...” and gives a sentence with a positive aspect of the topic to keep the story going.

The next player responds, “unfortunately, ...” and gives a sentence with a negative aspect of the topic to keep the story going.

So on and so forth alternating between fortunately and unfortunately

## Example:

“I just won the lottery”

“Fortunately, I opted for the lump sum:

“Unfortunately, I don’t know what to do with it”

“Fortunately...”

# Fortunately, Unfortunately (in review)

- How'd it go?
- Was it hard?
- Anyone "Kill the dog"?

## Take-a-ways:

- Listening
- Accepting & Nurturing Ideas w/o Judgement
- Seeing 2 sides; for and against/pro & con

# More Games

# Some Additional Games:

Last Word Response

ABC

The All Knowing  
Machine

Gibberish/  
Translator

World's Worst/  
Scenes from a hat

Questions

# Last Word Response



# Last Word Response

## How It's Played

One player starts a story with a sentence, (or a few)

The next player's response must begin with the previous person's last word.

So on and so forth

## Example:

"I love summer. I can't wait to jump in the pool after work"

"Work has been hard lately. I'm struggling to do all I need to do"

"Do..."

# Last Word Response (in Review)

- How'd it go?
- Hearing story vs. focusing on last word?
- Any redirects?
- Take-a-ways:
  - Increased listening (the sentence, the story and the word)
  - More in-depth story telling → piecing together



Things to Take With  
You

ABC

# ABC

Hint: try to listen to the story and not focus on the next letter

## How It's Played

One player starts a story with a sentence, but the first word must start with the letter “a”.

The next player’s response must begin with the letter “b”.

So on and so forth

## Example:

“Attendance in low today.”

“Baseball is not as popular as it once was”

“Can’t you see they’re playing football?”

“Don’t you know the difference?”



A B C D E F G H I J K L

M N O P Q R S T U V

W X Y Z

# ABC (in review)

- Was it hard to keep the alphabet going?
- Anyone too focused on the next letter?
- Anyone get a good response for Q or X?

## Take-a-ways:

- Listening
- Multi-Tasking/2<sup>nd</sup> lvl processing



Things to Take With  
You

# The All Knowing Machine

# The All Knowing Machine

## How It's Played

The players make up the All knowing machine

A question is asked by the audience

The players must answer the question using one word at a time, taking turns until the question is fully answered.

## Example:

Question: "Where does rain come from?"

Player 1: "Rain"

Player 2: "comes"

Player 3: "from" ...

And so on



# The All Knowing Machine

- How'd it go?
- Did we like our answers?
- Anyone frustrated with someone else's answer?

## Take-a-ways:

- Easier if a known answer
- Need to “lead”



Things to Take With  
You

# Gibberish/ Translator

# Gibberish/Translator

## Hint:

Since we won't understand what you're saying, exaggerate yourself (e.g. body language, tone, facial expressions, etc.)

## How It's Played

- A language is chosen by the audience (e.g. German, Italian, Klingon, Swahili, etc.)
- The group is divided into groups of 4
  - Player 1, Translator 1
  - Player 2, Translator 2
- The players start acting out a scene. As each line is spoken by a player in the chosen language, the translator must translate what the player just said.

## Example:

Player 1 speaks a line  
Translator 1 translates the line

Player 2 responds to the line  
Translator 2 translates

Player 1 responds to player 2  
Translator 1 translates

And so on

# Gibberish/Translator (in review)

- How'd it go?
- Players, how'd it feel to hear your translation?
- Translators, how'd it feel to translate?

## Take-a-ways:

- The power of cues
  - Tone
  - Inflection
  - Body language
  - Animation
  - etc
- What's said, or not said is not what's heard, or not heard

Things to Take With  
You





# World's Worst/ Scenes from a hat

# World's Worst/Scenes from a Hat

## Hints:

- Meant to be fast paced
- Have fun with it

## How It's Played

The group is split into 2 teams

A world's worst/scene from a hat statement is read

A player from team 1 must step forward and share their response

A player from team 2 must step forward and share their response

Each team takes turns given a response until a new statement is read, in which additional rounds are taken

## Example:

Statement: "World's worst excuse for being late"

Player from team 1: "My car ran out of gas"

Player from team 2: "My helicopter GPS broke"

Player from team 1: "My shoes were untied"

And so on

# World's Worst/Scenes from a Hat (in review)

- How'd it go?
- Anyone struggle to come up with something?
- Anyone too eager to share?
- Anyone have their idea "en"?

## Take-a-ways:

- Quick thinking
- Adaptation



Things to Take With  
You

# Questions

# Questions

## Hints:

- Meant to be fast paced
- Don't just repeat what was said as a question

## How It's Played

The players split into 2 teams

A player from each team face off, they must have a conversation asking each other only questions.

When a player makes a mistake, or can't think of an answer, another player from that player's team steps up and a new conversation begins.

## Example:

Player 1: "Have we met?"

Player 2: "Don't you remember me?"

Player 1: "Did we work together?"

Player 2: "Weren't you my boss?"

And so on.



# Questions (in review)

- How'd it go?
- Anyone have trouble coming up with questions?
- Anyone get stuck repeating?

## Take-a-ways:

- There might some actual take-a-ways, but I just think this one's fun



Things to Take With  
You

# Things to Take With You

# Things to Take With You

- Improv (like conversations) requires truly listening
  - You can't just think of what you're going to say
- You have to pay attention to more than just what's being said
- Through repeated interactions, you begin to get a "sense" for people and how to interact
- Some of these can be used as icebreakers with team members, residents, etc.
- Get the book

# Questions



Some Resources:

The Google logo is displayed in its characteristic multi-colored font. The letters are: 'G' in blue, 'o' in red, 'o' in yellow, 'g' in blue, 'l' in green, and 'e' in red.