



Strand:	DRAMA
Grades:	8
Content:	45 minute broadcast + hands-on activity

# *The Skills of Improvisation with Johanna Bundon & Jayden Pfeifer*

## **Overview**

Join theatre artists Johanna Bundon and Jayden Pfeifer as we explore the skills of improvisation! Exercise your improv muscles by practicing availability, listening, accepting, supporting, and creative expression in a supportive group environment. This is a physical workshop that takes an embodied approach to learning, prioritizing the felt-experience of harnessing one’s moment to moment impulses through body, breath, and gesture.

\* Please see pages 4-6 for a **Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity**. This activity will give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned during the broadcast.

## **Artist Bio’s**

**Johanna Bundon** is an independent artist whose practice includes dance and theatre performance, choreography, and teaching. She is a 2005 graduate of LADMMI (Les Ateliers de Danse Moderne de Montreal), and a 2008 graduate of the Globe Theatre’s Actor Conservatory. Currently, Johanna is an Artistic Associate of Curtain Razors Theatre and one half of Dream Agreement, a creative venture with artist Jayden Pfeifer. Curtain Razors presented Dream Agreement’s most recent creation project, Live Duet, in Fall 2016. As a choreographer, New Dance Horizons, Globe Theatre’s Sandbox Series, the National Arts Centre’s Prairie Scene Festival, and the 2014-15 Prairie Dance Circuit have presented her work. Johanna frequently teaches dance and movement practices through New Dance Horizons Dance Core, as a faculty member of the Globe Theatre’s Actor Conservatory, and as the director of Globe’s Start Up training for emerging artists. Johanna is currently studying the Feldenkrais Method as a student in the San Diego 4 Feldenkrais Professional Training Program.

**Jayden Pfeifer** is a Regina-based improviser, teacher, and performer whose work in improvisation, as creator and performer, has spanned the last 20 years. He was the host and creator Red Hot Riot with Jayden Pfeifer, a comedy variety show which ran 7 seasons in Regina, and hosts TALKIES, a monthly movie-commentary show at the RPL Film Theatre. He teaches improvisation at the University of Regina, where he recently earned a Masters degree studying Improvisation and Group Facilitation. Much of his creative and community-based work is rooted in collaborative partnership with movement and improvisation artist Johanna Bundon, and their company Dream Agreement. Together, Jayden and Johanna created and performed Live Duet in October 2016 for Curtain Razors Theatre. Jayden is also an Artistic Associate for Curtain Razors Theatre, and most recently appeared in their 2017 production of Bad Blood.

## **Curriculum Aims & Goals**

### **Creative/Productive:**

Students will generate their own ideas during the exercises

### **Critical/Responsive:**

Students will respond to the directions and offerings by their classmates

### **Cultural/Historical:**

Students consider using contemporary social issues when making suggestions.

## **Pre-Broadcast Preparation**

Make some space in your classroom for students to form a circle and also break out in groups.

### **Materials:**

No special materials are needed

### **Post-Broadcast Resources**

All resources are provided in the teacher guides.

## **Saskatchewan Curriculum Outcomes:**

### **Grade 8**

CP8.4 Demonstrate how dramatic characters interact in relationships within the drama and/or collective creation.

CP8.5 Investigate how theatrical elements (e.g., story, character, design, space) are combined to achieve dramatic purpose.

CR8.1 Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions.

CH8.1 Research and share insights about arts expressions that incorporate social commentary.

## **Broadcast Program (45 min)**

### **Timeline of Broadcast**

0:00-7:00:

#### **Artist Intro / 2 Video Bios**

4:00-7:00:

#### **Warm-up**

- Open Space exercise – Stirring the Space & Secret Handshakes
- Circle game - “Whooah!”

7:00-13:00:

#### **Discussion of 5 Improv Skills**

- Availability, Listening, Acceptance, Support, Expression

13:00-22:00

#### **Pass Clap (around a circle, switching directions) - Circle Exercise -**

- Add Rhythm Repeat, offers from each person
- Combine the two exercises

22:00-31:00

#### **Circle-Sound Compositions - Circle Exercise -**

- Names
- Picking up on offers of others to inspire your own choices

31:00-40:00

#### **Open Space & Pairs Exercise**

- Labelling/Unlabelling (whole group) and Word Association (in pairs)

40:00-45:00

#### **Wrap up**

- Artist Conclusion: Q & A (5min)
- Thank-you. Great job.
- Coming up next you will have a special session where you get to try improv in your classroom with your teacher! Make sure you take all the great skills you learned in the broadcast into the class with you.

## Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity (30min-1 Hour)

NOTE: The teacher should participate and lead these exercises at the same time.

### Here are some tips for you:

- It's not important to get everything right the first time
  - Try it for a while, pause and add any needed motivation or encouragement. Include feedback to enhance their commitment between games. It is important to let students try for a while before giving them help, so they don't mistakenly think they did something wrong. Let them try it before you direct them.
  - Play is the point. Don't look for the perfect ending. Once the students are committed to the game and you observe them genuinely connecting to each other, considering moving to the next exercise. The goal is to be spontaneous playful. Students should be enjoying it. If they are not, move to the next exercise, and the challenging exercise at a later time.
- Connect the character to your **curriculum content** or **theme** right away.
    - **Social Issues: encourage students to make offerings and suggestions to the game that involve present social issues.**
    - **For example:**
      - **1. Yes Let's "Let's build a pipeline"-divide characters opposing and supporting. "Let's all go on social media".**
      - **4. Zoom In: Location "Protest camp at Provincial Legislature". "Walking asylum seekers from Central America going North".**

### 1. Yes Let's

- Have the students take a place in the room.
- Ask a volunteer to call out an activity for everyone to embody, preceded by the word "Let's" (ie. "Let's go fishing", "Let's build a bridge", "Let's cut each other's hair").
- All other students accept this offer by replying "Yes, Lets!".
- As a group, the students physicalize the activity, using their bodies, sounds, and voices (ie. playing pretend).
- Continue with this activity until another student suggests a new activity.
  - Encourage students to accept their classmates offers with enthusiasm.
  - Encourage students to commit to the offers boldly, and to continue the imaginary activity until a new one is suggested.

## **2. 1 – 2 – 3**

- Have the students find a partner, and have them face each other. The task is to count to three together, one at a time.
- Person A says “One”, Person B says “Two”, Person A says “three”. Repeat this a few times.
- Now, have them replace the number one with a finger snap, then replace the number two with a clap, and number three with a foot stomp.
  - Encourage the students to listen to each other closely and maintain eye contact to ensure they are connected as partners.
  - Once they’ve had a chance to work with these simple actions, you can ask them to come up with other actions or sound-action combinations to replace 1-2-3.
  - If they’re really adept, increase the number to Five and assign actions to those numbers as well.

## **3. Dance Diamond**

- Stand in a group, in a diamond shape, with everyone facing the same direction.
- Assign one person to stand at each point of the diamond (4 people in total). These four people will act as leaders when the group eventually faces in their direction.
- The leader starts to move slowly. The rest of the group copies the movement by following the leader (and those around them).
- When the leader is ready, they turn to one of the other three directions of the diamond, thus passing leadership onto a new person.
  - Try getting students to try different kinds of movement (fast and slow, small and large)
  - Ask students to switch out with the leaders every few minutes, so everyone gets a chance to lead.

## **4. Zoom In**

- Get the group to suggest a location for everyone to help create (ie campsite, kitchen, playground)
- One person steps forward and describes in detail one object or element of that location.
- One by one, the remaining group members will step forward and add more details of the other objects, items, or features of this environment until everyone has contributed to describing the location.
  - Students can go up in pairs to cooperate in describing something if they want
  - Ask them to provide as much detail as possible (sounds, smells, colours, shapes, history)
  - Remind the students to accept the offers previously made when adding their own ideas.

## **5. Blind Counting**

- Have the group sit in a circle, as close as is comfortable (shoulder to shoulder is ideal), facing away from each other.
- Ask them to count to 20 as a group, one voice at a time, without setting any patterns.
- If any two people say a number at the same time, take a breath as a group and start over at 1.
  - If the group can reach 20 easily, increase the range of counting (ask them to count to 100).
  - If the large group has trouble focussing on the task together, separate them into smaller groups of 5-8.