

The Gifts and Challenges of Online Improv VS In-person Improv

I have weighed the challenges of online vs in-person improv Play for months now. The greatest deterrent to in-person classes right now is the simple fact that I rent spaces who have other renters and children using the space. I do not feel comfortable enough to risk your child's exposure nor mine in a space that I cannot control. So, it is ZOOM-PROV through December.

Comparing social/emotional skills development

Here are a few differences that I have noticed between online play and in-person play after four months of ZOOM-PROV. Though the skill development of eye-contact between players cannot be a focus online, I ask players to look at the camera to communicate their dialogue to an imaginary audience. Actually, this is less intrusive than making eye contact with their partner and allows for more bravery in their play. Also, active listening, key to a collaborative scene with a partner, becomes beyond imperative online. Players must be in the moment their partner is speaking or they will not be able to add to the scene.

It also positively impacts the development of the give and take of focus with your partner; knowing when to allow your partner to take focus and when it is your turn to take it back.

I have, to my surprise, noticed that most players are more comfortable doing online play than they are in-person. To which I can only account for by the fact that they all look great on camera and do not need to use the "enhanced appearance" button like their teacher does. Also, they are in the comfort zone of their homes surrounded by familiar objects, pets and people. A safe environment is most necessary when asking players to take risks in their creative play and follow their fears instead of running away from them.

Finally, I have noticed that after a day of online school, the players come to improv mentally drained from the type of attention and concentration required for online learning. So, I am beginning this year's classes on Saturdays and will add as needed weekday classes in October.