

FUZZY IMPROV

Mindset

Lesson 101-03



Playing in Space

CW4SP.com

Cls 3 Spring

04/25/2026

Class Rules

CLASS RULES:

To Do:

NAME TAGS

CHECK IN WITH TEAMMATES

HELP CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

BE KIND: NO ISM, NO POLITICS. Do not be offensive or insulting to your teammates.

BOUNDARIES - PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL. Be gentle and appropriate.

NEW CHOICE AND TIME OUT. Use these to steer the scene away from (or stop) anything you find upsetting or out of bounds.

The Improv world abounds with venues for R rated material. But this class will always be G rated and family friendly.

Class Structure: The first 45 minutes of the class we be doing exercises and games that focus on the concepts presented in this handout. The last 30 minutes we will be creating scenes using the concepts we learned.

Note: [G X] at the beginning of an item indicates the page of [Improv As Improv Does Best Curriculum](#), Introduction to Improvisation, *Patrick Gantz 2020* at which the topic can be found.

[HD] at the beginning of the topic indicates materials that I have added.

HAVE FUN! Harold Dreibelbis

Objective for this session:

See, touch, smell and REACT to the active imagined elements your environment. Then the audience can also.

3.1 Mime (Object Work) G22 : Weight, Volume and Tension are the key characteristics of a mimed object. Express these characteristics to help TMs and the audience “see” the object.

Find Reference Points for Mime Object. Because our improvised reality is thin air, it can be difficult to confidently engage imagined objects your TMs interact with.

The Keys are:

- **Note where TMs’ feet are when they interact with the imagined object.**
- **Note how high TM’ limbs rise to interact with imagined objects.**
- **Multiple TMs can engage with the same objects.** Too often you may mime in solo. Get confident engaging in the objects/environment that someone else creates.
- **If something’s not clear to you, don’t avoid it;** feel the responsibility to make it clearer for everyone else. Go slower. Give “it” more Weight/Volume/Tension.
- **With practice, mime work becomes instinct – So practice.** When you’re engaged in an everyday action (brushing teeth, doing dishes, etc.) be conscious of your movements and the objects’ characteristics. Then try to mime those activities without the physical objects in hand.
- **Really picture what you’re creating.**
















Weight, Volume and Tension are the key characteristics of a mimed object.

HD NOTE on TENSION: I was unfamiliar with Gantz’s concept of tension as a characteristic of mime. Thinking of what that might look like, I came up with these examples:

Tension exists because of a mimed object’s assumed “physical” characteristics. There also is an emotional tension, depending on the object and situation. Play with these when interacting with an object.

HD

Weight & Volume and *Tension* are the key characteristics of a mimed object.

Attribute	Low	Medium	High
Weight	Weightless  Small balloon	1 person job  Dining room chair	Immoveable  Brick barbeque
Energy	Almost none  Bump with atoms	Intentional effort  Grab and go	Extra-human effort  Powerful tractor beam
Tension	<i>A little</i>	<i>As expected</i>	<i>Massive straining</i>
Volume	Microscopic  Nanoparticles	1 person job  Bread box	Gigantic  Saturn including rings
Tension	<i>Delicate</i>	<i>As expected</i>	<i>Intense</i>
Size	Tiny  Doll house door	Normal  Closet door	Oversized  Troll's front door
Posture	Scrunch down	As expected	On tippy toes
Tension	<i>Awkward position</i>	<i>Normal</i>	<i>A long stretch</i>
Texture	Soft and gushy  Slime ball	Normal  Basketball	Hard and spiney  Medieval mace
Reaction	Disgust	Normal	Fright
Tension	<i>Avoidance</i>	<i>Normal</i>	<i>High danger</i>

DO WHAT YOU DO WHERE YOU DO IT – G23 Engage in a mimed activity based on your life.

Lessons:

- **Leveraging your personal life will make being specific easy.**
- **What you do / objects you have inform your character** – Strive to find an **emotional perspective** through your actions and details.
- **“Sense Memory”** – Greg Travares of SC’s Theatre 99 talks about sense memory; that if you really concentrate on “seeing” and “feeling” what you’re engaged with on stage, then you can channel the emotions you’ve felt while engaged with those things/actions off-stage.

Lessons: G24

- **If you commit, it doesn’t matter what you’re doing** – Three TMs can all be doing very different things but if each TM’s move is accepted in each other’s space, then the audience accepts it. If you’re okay with it, they are.
- **Commit harder in the face of uncertainty** - Don’t know how to fix a carburetor? Fake it with commitment and at the audience will follow you whether you get it wrong or right; they want to see you try, the more boldly the better.
- **Give and take** – Follow the TM in front of you. In Tug-Of- War, the sequence of following looks great – it’s really a two TM scene with the two TMs facing each other in the lead for making decisions (though they also must follow each other).
- **Funnier when you lose** – Giving way is funnier than forcing someone to your will.

3.2 *You Are Not What You Do:* G24

Mime supplies Improv's scene props: *Miming (object work) is not what the scene is about. Miming inspires a scene but should not dictate the scene.*

When you and a friend engage in an activity, do you only discuss that activity?

Do you talk about doing the dishes while doing the dishes? **Mime gives you scene props to interact with so you 're more than talking heads.** Object work should free you, not confine you.

Lessons:

- **Activities gain weight from your dialogue –**
 - 🦴 Don't undermine subtext (what you are not saying out loud) by making it explicit.
 - ★ Let the audience make connections between what's being done and what's being said.
- **Stage pictures make scenes more interesting –** Move around your space and engaging in your environment. This will make TMs engaged in dialogue and will be more interesting to watch.
- **Engage environment, rest your tongue –** If you have something to do, you don't have to rely so hard on your words.

3.3 *Beyond Objects:* G25

Environment is about more than objects. What sounds fill the space?

Ambient noises? Loud music? A series of unexpected explosions?

What about the atmosphere? Is it hot? Raining? Low gravity?

3.4 *More Rhythm and Pacing:* G26

The Short Form games you have been working on have mechanics that lend an inherent rhythm. To create tension and interest, you can ramp up, slow down or otherwise oscillate pacing.

Adding pacing to your object work allows you confidence.

Your silent engagement with objects creates tension in your scene.

Sharing that tension gives your team focus rhythm and pacing.

HOMEWORK – G26

Pay attention to what you do where you do it: Take a moment during your life interacting with everyday objects to:

- **Feel the weight.**
- **Notice the dimensions.**
- **Play with the tension.**
- **Extra credit to putting the thing down and trying the same action in mime.**

Pay attention to Atmosphere and how it affects how you carry yourself: Our environment shapes our posture. Notice it to use it on the improv stage.

Go see shows! Report back to me next week with examples of a moment that really came to life because TMs with engaged in their active environment.

IN CLOSING:

HD

Overcoming fear, a summary of pages from *Overcoming Fear, A guide for Budding Improvisers*, by Colin Thornton and Jon Ulrich. Visit the Fuzzy Improv page on CW4SP.com for its Amazon link.

> **Fear happens to everybody.** > You may fear several things: the unknown, losing control, public speaking, past negative or critical experiences or not being accepted.

> Three expressions of fear that are toxic to improvisors are *Fight, Flight and Freeze*.

*Fear Expression #3, **FREEZE**.*

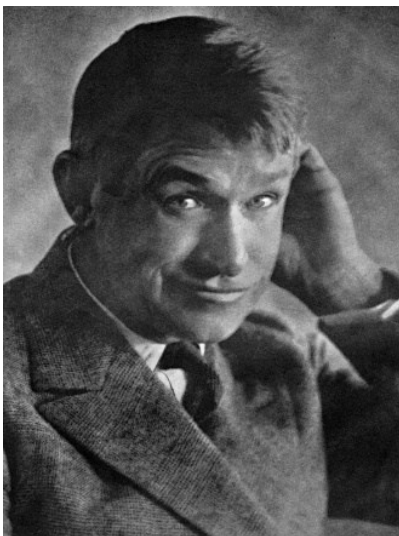
Freezing is not responding or not building onto a partner's ideas

Research shows that our minds can be blank from 5 -20% of the time!

Students freeze because nothing comes to their mind. They can't think of anything to say or do in their scene because the imaginative part of their brain has shut down.

Improv's warm-up exercises and games can help us overcome freezing on stage.

"Eventually you will reach the point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it." — Will Rogers



Lessons are based on:

Improv As Improv Does Best Curriculum

Introduction to Improvisation

Patrick Gantz 2020