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STUDENT GUIDE

THE SECOND CITY

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Second City Today

As one would expect, The Second City of today is quite different from the tiny company that began in 1960's Chicago. The current second city has many aspects.

It is EVERYWHERE

In addition to having permanent theaters in Chicago, Las Vegas, Toronto, Detroit, Los Angeles, and New York, The Second City has a touring company that performs across the globe. New recruits begin their work in the touring company, and members may eventually be offered a position at one of the flagship theaters.

It is for EVERYONE

The Second City also has a variety of training centers where people can study acting, writing, and improvisation. All training centers adhere to the following mission statement:

The focus of the Second City Training Centre is to teach the skills that underlie the work on our resident stages. The classes, taught by professionals working in their fields, are dedicated to helping students develop their artistic voice, both individually and within an ensemble, and to provide the tools and techniques needed to express that voice. The Second City Training Centre draws from the company's history of ensemble improvisation, satire, and revue comedy as developed and practiced by its actors, directors, and teachers and serves as a laboratory for the exploration of the future of the art form.

Training Center alumni include Tina Fey, Mike Myers, Chris Farley, Bonnie Hunt, Stephen Colbert, Halle Berry, Sean Hayes, Hinton Battle, and countless other producers, directors, writers and actors. In addition, classes are offered for business professionals who want to improve their quick-thinking skills through improvisation. While reaching out to actors and non-actors, the Second City sponsors an outreach program to create community and foster dialogue among actors of color.

It is EASILY ACESIBLE

Between touring productions and SCTV on DVD, anybody can view The Second City's work on stage or in the comfort of their own home. Check out www.secondcity.com/id=tv-film/sctv to order DVD's or to become a "Second Citizen," and be informed of new and exciting Second City events.



SPECIALTIES OF THE HOUSE:

Improvisation, Comedy Sketches, and Satire

Perhaps the secret to The Second City's long success is that they know what works for them. This can best be summed up in one word: laughter. By making fun of politics, society, famous people, or whatever else, Second City makes people laugh. Most of The Second City's work focuses on three specific varieties of comedy: improvisation, sketches, and satire.

Improvisation: The Impromptu Art Form

THE BASICS: Improvisation can take the form of an acting exercise or an on-stage art form. According to the acting textbook *The Stage and the School*, improvisation is "the impromptu portrayal of a character or a scene without rehearsal or preparation." Let's break this down a bit...

IMPROMPTU means not prepared, making it up as one goes along

PORTRAYAL means presented upon the stage

CHARACTER means person in a play or onstage activity

SCENE means either a small part of a play (plays are divided into acts, which are further divided into scenes) or a small section of a play where characters relate to each other in one setting

Therefore, improvisation, or improv, as it is sometimes known, means making up a character or a scene without preparation. The actor or actors develop their roles on the spot, reacting to each other and developing a plot as they go along. There is no formal script – the characters, lines, and actions are developed spontaneously.

WHY IMPROVISE? Many actors use improv as an ice-breaker. Because it is unplanned and involves the unexpected, improvisation can be hilarious. Also, the quick thinking required seldom gives people the chance to become nervous. However, this same quick thinking requires the actor to develop a speedy thought and response process where his or her every word and action tells the audience who their character is, what that character wants, and how that character relates to other characters.

WHERE CAN YOU SEE IMPROV? Improvisation is sometimes done on the stage for pure amusement value, but more often it is found on television. Shows like *Whose Line is It Anyway?* that feature live improvisation give actors a chance to show off their best humor and quick thinking skills.

All the World's a Stage...

Think you might want to be an actor?

Then consider this advice from William Shakespeare, a multi-tasking playwright/actor/director, who's work is still relevant even though it is 400 years old. Although Shakespeare set down his code for actors in Act III, Scene 2 of the play Hamlet, the rules given here are stated in simple language.

- NEVER turn your back to the audience. If the audience can't see your facial expressions and body language, they won't understand your character.
- Speak loudly and clearly, and stick to what is written in the script.
- Exaggerate facial expressions slightly – a stage is not a movie screen, and people in the back row need to see things, too.
- Keep it real. Many directors say "Remember to act like a human being" as a way of encouraging their actors to avoid unnecessary movements or too-dramatic displays of emotion. The audience should believe you ARE your character, not just someone pretending to be that character.
- Become your character. Be able to show, not tell, the audience your age, social status, and likes and dislikes by the way you move your body and use your voice.
- Learn to do nothing effectively. A good actor knows that he or she must appear to be part of a scene even when he is not speaking. A good actor will also develop ways of remaining active but not taking attention away from the others on the stage.
- Avoid being a scene-stealer, or an actor who makes up things that are NOT in the script simply to get the audience's attention.

Also, remember that being an actor is not always a glamorous job. Before an actor gets to walk down the red carpet with flashbulbs popping, he or she must study their craft just like a carpenter, hairstylist, computer technician, or lawyer would. Many hopeful actors earn theater degrees in college, where they take part in many plays and participate in "workshops" where they interpret the rules for acting and critique performances. Any actor must compile a resume, which lists special skills (like dancing or singing) and performance experience (such as dates of plays, names of characters portrayed, etc.). In addition, an actor's resume tells the height, weight, hair color, and eye color of an actor. Resumes are accompanied by headshots, which are photos taken to show a detailed study of the actor's face. While people in many other professions go to interviews when they hope to get jobs, actors go to auditions, where they perform scenes and individual pieces called monologues for directors. A director may also have an actor engage in improvisational exercises as a way of judging her performance skills.

Finally, actors have to gain experience before they can expect fame or even job security. For instance, The Second City will not allow anyone to audition for them unless they have already completed a theater degree or studied in an acting workshop. Just as an ad for a secretarial job might state that experience is preferred, actors might also be more likely to get a Second City audition if they have previous experience in an acting company.

Even after an actor is hired or becomes part of a group like The Second City, his work is never done. A professional actor will often continue taking acting lessons from professional teachers. He or she must learn lines, be fitted for costumes, rehearse for performances and audition for new jobs. Actors must do exercises to keep their voices flexible and expressive, and many engage in some form of exercise to keep their bodies limber for performances. Sometimes, a role might require an actor to change his physical appearance, either by training his body or by applying stage makeup. An actor's day may not be typical, but it is work all the same.

If you are an actor looking for a way to start out, consider this. Many professional theaters, including The Second City, sponsor summer camps and training programs. More information on summer camps can be found at www.secondcitysummers.com. Or, a student who wants to work with a theater company and gain a look at the whole business might consider an administrative internship. The Second City selects interns to work behind the scenes at their Chicago hub. Interns work in graphic design, marketing, audience services, and theater management. Although interns are not paid, they may earn college credit for their work.

There are actually many options for a young actor looking for training. A community theater in your area may offer open auditions. Or, consider these websites.

- UL Lafayette's Performing Arts homepage, which lists expectations for student actors as well as information about college-level programming. UL sometimes offers student acting workshops. Reach the PFAR at <http://arts.louisiana.edu/degree/pfar/>
- Nationwide index of theater-training summer camps can be found at www.mysummercamps.com/camps/Arts_Camps/Theater/index.html
- UL Lafayette's Career Services Center: "What do I do with a degree in Theater?" is an interesting read. Check it out at <http://careerservices.louisiana.edu/students/majors/html/theater.htm>

test yourself

Are you a Second City expert?

Test yourself by providing an answer to go with each clue below. All correct answers can be found in the word search puzzle.

1. _____ The Second City alumni who makes a shagadelic splash as a movie star and provides the voice of famous ogre Shrek.
2. _____ The first Second City theater opened in this city.
3. _____ John Candy and Eugene Levy were originally members of the Second City group based in this Canadian city.
4. _____ A tip about characters, setting, and action used to start an improvisational routine is called an "improv _____."
5. _____ Type of comedy common in Second City routines; it pokes fun at people's habits, beliefs, and politics.
6. _____ The Vietnam War occurred during this decade; blue jeans and long hair also became popular on the Second City stage at this time.
7. _____ The Second City offers workshops in this acting technique to non-actors because they believe it can help business professional develop their quick thinking skills.
8. _____ One of the basic rules for acting is never turn your _____ to the audience.
9. _____ Second City material was presented at this festival in 2006.
10. _____ An improvisational actor must be _____ and able to respond to changes in scenario presented by other actors.

N Z B C F S D A E D X C D J C
X O D A B F M H J R B C M X H
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A A K T Y J F D Z A O T P H C
Z Z A L A L X M P V M R A H A
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{ see back for answers }

{ continued from page 1 }

SPECIALTIES OF THE HOUSE: Improvisation, Comedy Sketches, and Satire

Sketches: Comedy Quickies

THE BASICS: A sketch is the name for any short comedy piece that is not as formal as a play. However, while an improvisation is impromptu, a sketch is planned. Often, a series of sketches will be developed that somehow relate to each other or are intended to be performed by the same group of actors. Just as acts and scenes form divisions in a play, sketches can be performed one after another with stage lights going down briefly in between. An actor may develop a series of sketches about the same character or place.

WHY USE SKETCHES? A sketch allows actors to work on planned material, but not to tell a whole involved story in the manner a play would. They are often used for making fun of things or people.

WHERE CAN YOU SEE SKETCHES? Sketches are popular in television shows that feature variety and satire. *Saturday Night Live* and *Mad TV* are programs that are made up of many sketches. For example, a segment of *SNL* featuring a story about their androgynous "PAT" character is a sketch.

Satire: Making Real Life Funny

THE BASICS: Satire has been popular for many, many years. Before television existed, satire was used in plays. By definition, satire is "a humorous attack on accepted conventions of society or a humorous observation on the foibles and follies of humanity." What this long and wordy definition actually means is "making fun of things that people like, teasing people about things they think or the way they act, and laughing about the way that people live their lives."

WHY USE SATIRE? Since satire is based on real life, it includes jokes about habits, jobs, relationships, celebrities, popular fashions, politics, and other things that people encounter on a regular basis. Satire also tends to make fun of situations that people often find themselves in. Because satire deals with things that are known to everyone, everyone tends to find it funny. Also, a person can often see themselves or someone they know reflected in satiric characters.

WHERE CAN YOU SEE SATIRE? Once again, *Saturday Night Live* and *MAD TV* rule. However, don't forget Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show*. Also, if you happen see a re-run of *Seinfeld*, remember that many of the great plots in this show are actually satires.

never say die

a look at Second City through the ages

Although the average movie star, comedian, rocker, model, or NASCAR driver might consider their career a success if they stayed on top for ten years, The Second City can brag of an impressive history that spans nearly fifty years. In that time, The Second City has launched many careers, trained actors and business people, performed on Broadway and stages across the globe, and launched several television programs. Right now, Second City shows no sign of slowing down. Read on to learn more about the nearly 50 years that changed the face of the United States and sketch comedy forever.

Decade	Second City Facts	Historical Events
1950's	All great things take a while to get started. Second City began with what their webpage calls "innovative and hip University of Chicago Students" thinking ahead. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Compass Players, an early incarnation of the Second City Group, are established in May 1955. In December 1959, The Second City opens with a production called <i>Excelsior and Other Outcries</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cold War rages Baby Boom Begins Jonas Salk develops the polio vaccine Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus Alaska and Hawaii become US states Big cars and small television sets are fixtures in many homes
1960's	The tumultuous sixties were an environment ripe for social and political satire, and The Second City's popularity and renown exploded. The theater was transforming from a Chicago favorite into a national powerhouse. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvisational workshops are held at The Second City for the first time in 1960. The company creates a record album and appears onstage in Toronto, Canada, and London, England as well as in the US. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil Rights Movement is going strong President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert Kennedy, and Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. are assassinated Men walk on the moon for the first time Summer of Love & Woodstock become testimonies to the clothing, music, and lifestyle of young Americans
1970's	Times are changing everywhere... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second City actors begin to sport long hair and blue jeans onstage. Members of "The Next Generation" like John Belushi, who makes his debut in 1971, push this trend. The Second City's Toronto branch opens in 1973. Bill Murray and John Candy join the Chicago Second City branch this fateful year. In 1974, Dan Akroyd, Gilda Radner, and Eugene Levy join the Toronto branch of Second City. <i>Saturday Night Live</i> airs for the first time on NBC in 1975. There is an obvious link between this show and The Second City. Belushi, Akroyd, Murray, and Radner are members of early <i>SNL</i> casts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vietnam war rages and mass protests rock the nation President Nixon struggles with Watergate Disco and long sideburns gain popularity
1980's	Like hair and many other things, The Second City got bigger in the 1980's. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 1982, Toronto's Second City got its own television show, and the Second City e.t.c. (experimental theater company) was founded by the Chicago branch. Second City's 25th anniversary was celebrated on HBO in December of 1984 Mike Meyers and Bonnie Hunt joined the cast of Second City in 1988. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Reagan works on ending the Cold War with Russia Number of single parent families increases "Shop till you drop" becomes a way of life for some Sandra Day O'Connor joins the Supreme Court PUNK is in!
1990's	Growth was the 1990's way, and Second City grew. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performances are given as far away as Austria and Scotland In 1996, The Second City makes its Kennedy Center debut The 40th anniversary of The Second City is celebrated in 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation Desert Storm The World Wide Web is born in 1992 Grunge rock and grunge styles have their day Bill Clinton's presidency is marked by controversy
2000's	The Second City shows no signs of stopping... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performances have been given in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Japan In 2004, SCTV joined the DVD release craze and got rave reviews Second City continues to open better theaters, celebrate anniversaries of its shows (including a long-running one at the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas), and collaborate on new projects In 2006, Second City partnered with Lollapalooza and presented comedy on the festival's MindField stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downloading revolutionized the music industry Bill Gates becomes a household name George W. Bush and Al Gore battled it out to see who would become president War in Iraq

FAMOUS FACES of the Second City

You may know them for other things, but they got their start at The Second City. Play Who's Who and match these famous alumni to their descriptions.



A. John Candy



B. Eugene Levy



C. Mike Myers



D. Steve Carell



E. Amy Sedaris

- ____ Former mail carrier who met his wife when she participated in a Second City improvisation workshop he was teaching. Seen in *The Forty Year-Old Virgin*, and currently on television in *The Office*.
- ____ Chris Farley often cited him as an inspiration. Even though he played high school football and later owned a football team, he is perhaps best known for his work with The Second City and for his roles in *Uncle Buck* and the Michael Moore film *Canadian Bacon*. He died in 1994 of a heart attack. He was only 43 at the time, but had ignored a doctor's order to lose weight because he felt that his portly frame earned him roles.
- ____ "*It's Wayne's World! Wayne's World! Party time! Excellent!*"...the voice of *Shrek*...a very shagadelic spy... Need we say more?
- ____ Guest starred on *Sex and the City* as Carrie Bradshaw's publisher. Has co-written several plays about offbeat families with brother David, a popular essayist. Currently starring as Jerri Blank in *Strangers with Candy*.
- ____ Along with John Candy and Martin Short, he is one of the only three people to be awarded two stars on Canada's Walk of Fame. Developed a knack for playing nerdy characters and built a persona around this. He serves on the advisory board for Hubner College, which offers the world's only degree in Comedy. Although older audiences remember him from movies like *Splash*, younger generations know him as "Jim's Dad."

Do's & Don'ts OF GOOD THEATER BEHAVIOR

THEATER ETIQUETTE

The Basic rule of behavior: Theater behavior falls somewhere in between that expected for a church and a movie. If you wouldn't do it in one of the above don't do it here.

DO turn your cell phone off.

DON'T eat or drink in the theater unless refreshments are sold there.

DO sit in your assigned seat.

DO arrive on time.

DON'T disturb those around you (even if you are bored).

DON'T sing along at an opera or musical.

DON'T shout rude things at the performers. Treat them as you would want to be treated if you were onstage.

DON'T forget to enjoy yourself and learn new things.

DO remain in your seat until intermission.

DO clap at the end of an act, a scene, after a wonderful moment called a "*show-stopper*", or at the end of a production. If you are unsure, clap when others do.



Good Theater Behavior: Reviewing the 10 COMMANDMENTS



ACROSS

- Clap at the end of a _____.
- Good theater behavior falls between that expected for a _____ and for a movie theater.
- Always remember to _____ new things.
- Clap after an especially amazing part in the play called a "show-_____."
- The only time you should leave your _____ is during intermission.
- Your _____ should always be turned off.

DOWN

- _____ on time.
- If you are unsure of when to clap, clap when _____ do.
- Clap at the end of a _____.
- Never eat or _____ unless refreshments are sold in the theater.
- Pay attention during the production. Even if you are not interested, sit _____ to avoid disturbing others.
- Always remember to _____ yourself.
- Do not _____ along at an opera or musical.

THE SECOND CITY SPECIAL THANKS TO

IBERIABANK



Kenneth L. Entes, M.D., F.A.C.C.



Sprint

STUDENT PERFORMANCE
TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 26
10:30 AM

EVENING PERFORMANCE
SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 24
7:30 PM

ANSWERS TO
"Test Yourself"

- Mike Myers
- Chicago
- Toronto
- handle
- satire
- seventies
- improvisation
- back
- Lollapalooza
- flexible

ANSWERS TO
"Famous Faces"

1.D, 2.A, 3.C, 4.E, 5.B

ADD SOME
DRAMA

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