

# Laughing Allowed!



*A How-to Guide for Making a  
Physical Comedy Show to Build  
Neighbourhood Resilience*

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# Introduction

In the fall of 2014, a group of people in Victoria, Canada who shared both an interest in their neighbourhood and a quirky sense of humour were brought together to explore a question: Could they turn their experiences of the ups and downs of neighbourhood leadership, activism and volunteering into physical comedy sketches? Project participants were trained in theatre and physical comedy techniques over six weeks and collaboratively developed a show called **Laughing Allowed!** The Slapstick World of Neighbourhood Activism. The one-night-only performance drew one hundred and fifty audience members, most of whom stayed for a focused conversation afterwards to explore the show's themes.

**Laughing Allowed!** was such a success that, as the facilitators, we've developed this guide to support and encourage others to develop similar creative projects that can help increase neighbourhood resilience by combining timely and locally-relevant issues with participatory research and physical comedy.

Our project was part of a broader engagement effort in Greater Victoria led by Building Resilient Neighborhoods (BRN), an organization that launched in 2012 with the aim of helping to create and promote social, cultural, economic and environmental resiliency through neighbourhood-based, citizen-led actions. (For more information, see <http://resilientneighbourhoods.ca/>) **Laughing Allowed!** provided powerful evidence that the arts can be used effectively to engage people who don't typically become involved in community activism,

and can offer new ways of exploring, discussing and resolving shared challenges. Both the development process and the show itself created a vibrant space for people to talk freely about their common challenges. The post-performance conversation with the audience and project participants had nearly as much shared laughter and applause as the show itself, with people eager to talk about what resonated most for them personally in the different scenes. Looking at the problems in light-hearted ways led to different kinds of conversations about how to bring about changes. A full-length video and shorter clips of the show were posted for free online, and they too have subsequently been used by other groups to prompt reflection and discussion at their own gatherings.

This guide is organized into three main sections. First, we describe the basics of our approach: Why to do a project of this kind, how to choose a topic or theme to explore, and an overview of the creative method that we used. Second, we provide a day-by-day how-to guide for running your own project from start to finish. Third, we offer more detailed notes for each workshop day that include tips, reflections, reference materials, and insights from our own experiences.

What we've written here is intended only as a guide, so please feel free to alter or adapt it to fit the particular needs of your own project and the unique creative abilities of your team!

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## Our Theatrical Approach:

# “Clown in Trouble”

We developed **Laughing Allowed!** by combining elements of participatory research, resilience building, and physical comedy. This approach can readily be used with almost any group of people to explore a wide range of topics.

Starting on the very first day of a group’s participatory research project on a locally-relevant issue, participants are introduced to some basic elements of physical comedy: red clown noses, what sight gags are and how they work, etc. When the focus shifts to addressing the topic at hand, the key is to avoid asking who’s to blame for problems or what’s wrong with the way things are. Instead, participants are invited to ask themselves and to ask each other, what do people want or hope for in relation to this issue, and what is it that blocks them? This line of questioning leads to answers that are good source material for creating physical comedy, in particular for a mode of physical comedy known as “Clown in Trouble.” When a clown tries earnestly to achieve something while being thwarted by an obstacle, that’s a Clown in Trouble.”

After collaboratively generating some answers to their questions, participants begin to apply their newly acquired knowledge about physical comedy. Working in small groups, they experiment with comic metaphor to find an exaggerated equivalent for each of the aspirations and the obstacles they have identified. Essentially, they begin to invent clowns who run into trouble.

In the next phase, participants develop their ideas further and refine them, combining their expanding skills in research, physical comedy, and mutually supportive collaboration. They discuss whether each scene effectively and truthfully captures the nature of the aspiration and the challenge or obstacle. Based on their personal experience and first hand knowledge, they offer each other feedback and make adjustments to the scenes. As they discuss and subsequently refine each scenario to make the exaggerated physical metaphor ring truer to their actual experience, the comedy routines become funnier. In the process, these experiments may lead them to make discoveries about the nature of the challenges people face. Naming the different

barriers enables participants to identify opportunities for building resilience to overcome those barriers. Whether it is shared only within the group or presented for the public, their creative work together ultimately leads to performance material that captures and conveys their collective insights in more nuanced and compelling ways than lectures or discussion alone can achieve. Additionally, comedy that is not mean-spirited creates a non-threatening atmosphere for people to consider our own human foibles. The light-hearted metaphors of physical comedy offer diverse groups of people a framework to explore shared challenges and uncertainties in ways that can break tensions, lighten spirits, lift energy, and engender trust between people—all important elements for reinforcing social cohesion and resilience. Comedy can give us permission to laugh at ourselves, which is why we called our show, “Laughing Allowed.”



## Combining Resilience Building, Participatory Research, and Physical Comedy

In our project, we found that resilience building and participatory research can form a natural and very effective partnership with physical comedy. Building Resilient Neighbourhoods defines resilience as our ability to respond and adapt to change (to take action) in ways that are proactive, build local capacity, and ensure essential needs are met. Instead of seeing themselves as being at the mercy of events or decision-makers outside of their community, resilient communities take charge of their own futures by engaging local organizations and citizens in co-creating the neighbourhood they want to see. In participatory research, participants become both the researchers and the subjects of their own research. Through their sharing and co-learning, they can develop new understandings about their own situations and formulate fresh avenues for social change.

Adding clowning and physical comedy to the mix supports and encourages more creative, playful experimentation with a range of possibilities and solutions.

“...physical comedy offer[s] diverse groups of people a framework to explore shared challenges and uncertainties ...”

## Before You Begin

### *Deciding if a Physical Comedy Project is Right for You*

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You want to create a fun space for people to reflect playfully on issues of common concern.

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You hope to engage people who have different perspectives and draw on their lived experiences to enrich everyone's shared understandings.

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You wish to initiate dialogue within the group and among the general public in a creative way, in hopes of fostering new insights or suggestions for changes to important behaviours, policies or practices.

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You have access to a theatre director and other facilitators for the project who can inspire confidence and create a safe place for people to take risks.

## Before You Begin

### *Identifying a Good Theme*

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It's important to identify a compelling topic or theme that will guide the direction of the collaborative research and scene building.

You can draw on your own research into resilience or generate ideas by inviting suggestions from those who are knowledgeable about the community where you will be working. A theme will lead to rich material for a comedy performance if:

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It is closely connected to immediate concerns in the community. (As opposed to events or policies that do not have direct impacts on the people involved).

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It is an appropriate topic for inviting people to laugh at their own behaviours. (Some topics may be too sensitive or difficult to make light fun of.)

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It involves people trying to overcome obstacles. (This is key to building scenes using the "Clown in Trouble" approach that we describe in this guide.)

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It will readily prompt people's memories of events, emotions, encounters with others, and real-life situations that they have experienced. (These all provide good source material for developing scenes).

# Before You Begin

## Recruiting Participants

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Once you have decided upon a theme for the show, the next step is to invite your community collaborators who will work with you to research, develop and perform it. It's helpful to develop a spoken and a written "pitch" to invite people to participate. We recommend that the pitch have the following elements:

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A clear and concise description of the project.

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An intriguing explanation of the theme or premise—with a dash of playfulness!

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Some information about the leaders of the project to inspire confidence that it will be well facilitated.

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Clarification about who you are inviting to participate, and what levels of experience or ability are, or are not required. (We suggest making it as open and accessible as possible.) The potential value of participating, including opportunities for learning theatre and comedy skills, contributing meaningfully to the community, and having fun.

A list of some different options for participating. Some people may want to research and write but not act, others may wish to help backstage, etc.

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A clear statement about the time commitment. People like to know how much is going to be expected of them, and whether it will be okay for them to miss some sessions etc.

*Once your pitch is ready, here are a few approaches to get it into circulation:*

Post a flyer or leave a stack of them in well-attended community locations.

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Circulate a digital version via email, online forums, and any e-newsletters produced by local groups.

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Contact community leaders, groups and organizations to ask if there is anyone in particular they know who might appreciate an invitation to participate in this kind of creative project.

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Try to get invitations to attend meetings or events where you can give your brief pitch about the project.

# Part 1

## Developing the Show

### General Notes About All Workshops

- To create a 40-minute show, we recommend as a minimum holding six weekly workshops, each one three hours in length including a break.

- We strongly recommend having snacks available at breaks during the workshops, either by providing them or by encouraging participants to bring in snacks to share with each other. Eating lightly during breaks is a great way for the group to relax, re-energize and connect.

### Items Needed for All Workshops

- ✓ Note taker with an eye for 'good comedy material.'
- ✓ Large enough rehearsal space to accommodate both the entire group working together and small groups working independently.
- ✓ Snacks and beverages for breaks, plus necessary utensils and serviettes, etc.
- ✓ Marking pens and a flip chart or large sheets of paper that can be taped to the walls.
- ✓ Electronic devices to play music selections and video clips (e.g. iPod, laptop computer, speakers, digital projector if available). *See the appendices for music and video suggestions.*
- ✓ Enough chairs for everyone to sit and also to use in scenes as needed.
- ✓ Slips of paper with "gests" written on them (see "The Gest Exercise" pages 18-19) and a small basket or container to keep them in.
- ✓ A red clown nose for each participant. (Either wash the noses between sessions, or label each participant's red nose for ease of re-use from session to session.)

- With any luck at all, compelling ideas for scenes and hilarious lines will constantly be emerging as you work, so it is important to have one of the co-facilitators assigned to take notes during each session and record these gems for further development as the work progresses.
- Brief closing circles at the end of each workshop can help keep the group on track. Participants can be invited to share some of their favourite moments from the day, and to voice any emerging concerns so that they can be addressed right away.

## Getting the Lay of the Land

### Objectives

- Get to know each other and begin to feel comfortable.
- Develop a shared understanding of the project and expectations.
- Share some basic understandings of physical comedy.
- Get an introductory sense of how physical actions can convey meaning, especially through gests, and of how scenes can be developed from them.

### Outline of Activities

- Introduction to resilience, the process, and the facilitators.
- Inform participants about what they can expect to happen over the ensuing weeks.
- Participant introductions and “asset mapping”.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves, to share what made them want to be part

of the project, and what they are hoping to get from their participation. Find out what some of the unique skills and experiences are that the participants are bringing with them.

- Discussion: What are our own measures of success?

Open a discussion about what everyone feels would be a measure of success for themselves and for the show. Develop a sense of group unity of purpose.

- An introduction to creating physical comedy.

Explain the value and importance of using red clown noses. Introduce common sight gags and techniques. Elaborate on the “Clown in Trouble” approach to building scenes. Introduce the concept of gests. (See pages 18-19 for more details).

- Snack break.
- The Great Game of Power.

Place six movable desk chairs randomly together in the middle of the room. Invite

participants to re-arrange them in any way at all that shows one of the chairs as appearing to be “more powerful” than all of the other chairs. Highlight how physical relationships can convey dramatic meaning.

- The Gest Exercise.

Invite all participants to select a slip of paper that has a description of a gesture written on it. Instruct participants to find a partner and create two scenarios that incorporate both gestures so that they clearly convey a relationship, place, and situation. Bring the group together to share their creations.

- Closing.

Discuss how the workshop went, and address any emerging concerns.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

## Workshop 2

# Brainstorming Prompts

### Special Items Needed

- A list of questions for helping participants brainstorm ideas related to the show's theme.

### Objectives

- Develop a list of ideas or dramatic “prompts” related to the show's theme.
- Establish the basic approach to the creative development process.
- Become more comfortable together and practiced in making scenes with gests.

### Outline of Activities

- Lead the group in a physical warm-up exercise, accompanied by a selection of comedic music.
- The Gest Exercise.

Using the list of gests as prompts, continue this skill-building exercise.

Review what was learned at the previous session.

- Reflect on last week's introduction to physical comedy techniques. Emphasize that the comedy for this show will be light-hearted and based on identifying universally familiar situations where hopes and aspirations encounter obstacles.
- Brainstorming a list of prompts.

Gather everyone to brainstorm “prompts” to help begin developing the show. Create two separate sheets of paper for the “aspirations” related to your show's theme and for the “obstacles” respectively.

- Snack break.
- Begin to develop possible

“gests” for the prompts.

Invite everyone to begin to come up with ideas for gests related to the prompts—physical actions or images that encapsulate particular ideas on the list.

- Closing.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

## Workshop 3

# Trying Out Some Comedy Sketches

## Special Items Needed

- Handout sheets for participants with the list of prompts from the previous week's brainstorming session.

## Objectives

- Increase skills for translating social issues into physical comedy scenarios.
- Practice giving and receiving constructive critiques of each other's work.

## Outline of Activities

- Remind everyone of the purposes of warm-up exercises, and consider inviting one of the participants to lead the group.
- Physical warm-up with comedic music.
- The Gest Exercise.

- Develop gests and scenes from the prompts.

Review the basic steps of building a comedic scene again. Continue from where the group left off last session, using the brainstormed list of prompts to work together in groups developing gests and scenes.

- Discussion: Providing feedback on scenes.

Open a discussion of how to provide constructive feedback about scenes to each other. Emphasize stepping away from evaluations of "good" and "bad," and instead focusing on a collaborative, constructive process of trying to refine each scene to make it an even better reflection of what the actors were trying to achieve.

- Share scenes and offer feedback.

Invite the groups to share the scenes they have developed, and facilitate group discussion, feedback, and experiments in refining each.

- Snack break.

- Develop gests and scenes from the prompts.

Switch up the working groups, and continue using the list of prompts to develop gest ideas and scenes.

- Share scenes and offer feedback.

- Closing.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

## Workshop 4

# Developing More Material

### Special Items Needed

- Handout sheets for participants with the list of prompts from the brainstorming session.

### Objectives

- Continue to develop physical comedy routines based on the prompts.
- Assess the material developed so far and determine which prompts have yet to be explored.

### Outline of Activities

- Physical warm-up with comedic music.
- Gest Exercise.

- Develop gests and scenes from the prompts.

Participants can be given more freedom to incorporate elements of dialogue, props, or extended plot or action, as long as they support their scene's main gest.

- Share scenes and offer feedback.
- Snack break.
- Get into new groups to develop gests and scenes from the prompts.
- Share scenes and offer feedback.
- Identify the strongest scenes developed to date.

As a group, develop a list identifying the scenes explored over the past few weeks that are showing the most promise. Note any important issues or prompts related to the show's theme that haven't yet been addressed in a scene.

- Closing.

- Post-workshop script development.

Set aside time before the next workshop to consider both a provisional order for the show's scenes, and ideas for a through-line that will tie all the individual sketches together. Develop working scripted versions of the strongest scenes that have been selected for development.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

## Workshop 5

# Developing a Structure for the Script

### Special Items Needed

- Handout sheets for participants with the list of prompts from the brainstorming session.
- Provisional list of the order of the sketches.
- Copies of the scripts for the sketches created to date.

### Objectives

- Develop and refine the script for the performance.
- Identify the music, props, costume and scenic needs.

### Outline of Activities

- Physical warm-up with comedic music.
- Distribute scripts.
- Provide all of the participants

with written drafts of the sketches that the group identified as the strongest.

- Refine existing scenes. Practice all of the existing scenes and, based on any important gaps identified previously, generate new scenes. Ask participants to ensure all the individual scenes have their own arc by asking themselves a key question as they work: “No matter how long or short it is, does this scene have an identifiable beginning, middle and end?”
- Share scenes and give feedback.
- Snack break.
- Show run-through.
- Perform a rough run-through of the comedy sketches in order.
- Orientation with the stage manager.
- Give the stage manager time

with the whole group to take note of props, costume and scenic needs for the pieces that have been created.

- Closing.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

## Workshop 6

# Final Rehearsals

### Special Items Needed

- All necessary props, costumes, and other stage needs.
- Stage manager's "map" of the performance area showing where the individual props, costume accessories and scenery need to be pre-set.
- Copies of the script with staging and dialogue for the cast.
- A large sheet, posted off stage, with the list of sketches in order.
- The final selection of music clips, in order, on a device connected to the stage sound system.

### Objectives

- Continue to refine the script for the performance.
- Begin to feel comfortable in roles and responsibilities for the show.

### Outline of Activities

- Physical warm-up with comedic music.
- Orientation with the stage manager.

The stage manager should set props, costume and scenery pieces in place and share the map of where they are with the cast.

- Show run-through.
- Facilitator/Director offers guidance and feedback.

- Snack break.
- Show run-through.
- Facilitator/Director offers guidance and feedback.
- Closing.

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*

# The Performance and Post-performance Conversation

## Introduce the show.

Before the show begins, describe for the audience some of the reasons for creating it, how the actors are members of the neighbourhood, and how the show was developed. Indicate that there will be a post-show conversation between the creators and audience.

## Perform the show!

## Conduct the post-show conversation.

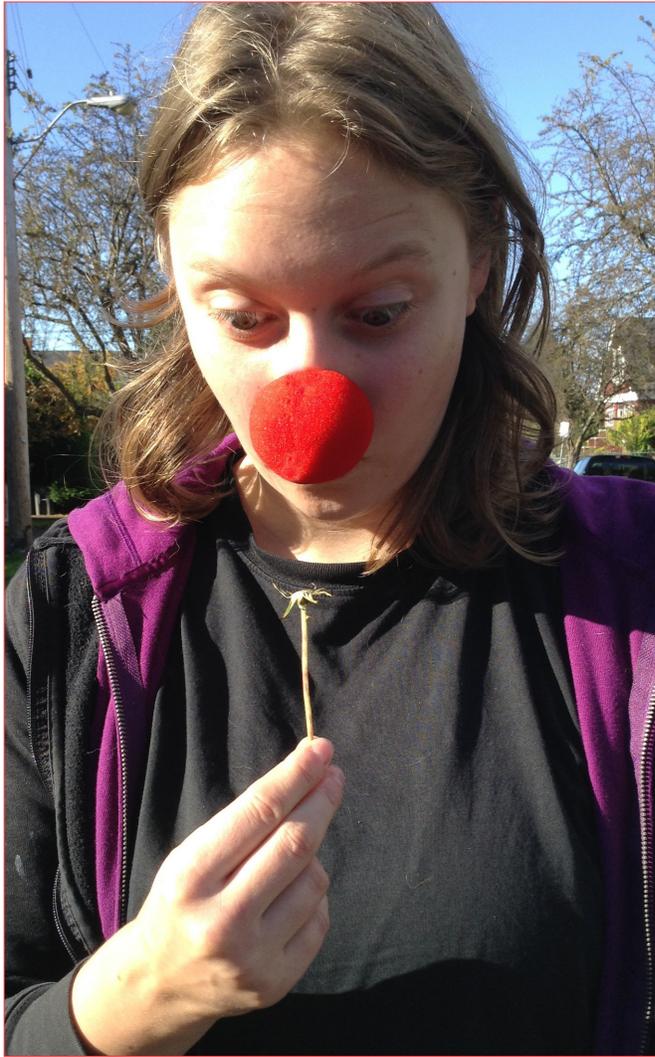
Ask relatively simple questions of members of the cast, and of the audience, to get the conversation going, such as, “Did anyone recognize themselves or see a familiar situation in any of the sketches? If so, did seeing it treated humorously change your perception of the situation in any way?” As the conversation advances, ask more probing questions like, “Considering any of the obstacles presented in the scenes, what would need to happen for that obstacle to be overcome?”



## Follow-up activities.

Video clips of the show can be useful tools to leave behind for others to use as icebreakers at meetings. Cast members can perform scenes at meetings or events, and then discuss their experiences exploring important community issues through comedy. Or anyone can distribute red clown noses at meetings to see what happens next!

*For more detailed instructions and tips, see Part 2.*



## Part 2

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# *Extended Instructions and Notes for All Workshops*



## Extended Instructions and Notes

### Introducing the project

At the opening workshop some participants may already know each other, while others may be meeting for the first time. People will have chosen to participate for a variety of reasons and there will undoubtedly be a wide range of experience with performing on stage or with comedy. It is unlikely that anyone in the group will have undertaken a project quite like this before, so a good way to start is to generate some clarity about who is in the room and what they can expect in the weeks to come. While you won't be able to describe just what the final show will look like, you can certainly spend a little time talking about the overall vision for the performance. One point to emphasize is that developing a compelling story on stage with consistent characters and a narrative arc is too difficult for this kind of project and timeline. Instead, the group will be developing a collection of short, varied comedic sketches linked by the main theme. It should also

be made clear that although this is a collaborative project, all final creative decisions will rest with the main Facilitator/Director – there just won't be enough time to reach consensus on every decision, especially as the performance date approaches. (One might describe it by saying, for example, that the project will start as a “participatory democracy,” but will in the later stages become a “representative democracy” with the designated leader making choices based on his or her assessment of what will serve the best interests of the entire constituency.)

Most of the participants in our theatre project came with strong pre-existing interests in social causes, environmental concerns, community activism or other issues related to resilience; however, you may find that providing some introductory orientation for your participants about resilience will be helpful for fostering group cohesion.

*(For resources and materials on resilience, visit our website at [www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca](http://www.resilientneighbourhoods.ca).)*

### Getting to know each other

Invite participants to introduce themselves, to share what made them want to be part of the project, and what they are hoping to get from their participation. Emphasize that a group of people with diverse experiences and interests is ideal because of the richness it will bring to the collaboration. A show built around a series of diverse comedy sketches means that there will be plenty of room to accommodate different needs and abilities.

Once people have said who they are and why they've come, you have an excellent opportunity to open a more focused discussion about what people feel would be a measure of success for themselves and for the show. Would it be enough for them just have fun and learn how to do physical comedy? Or do they want to learn more about the proposed theme?

Or perhaps they would like to see some productive dialogue in their community in a conversation with the audience after the performance? Maybe they will be satisfied if they are simply able to create a show that is genuinely funny and makes people laugh. Ask a volunteer to list everyone's measures of success on a flip chart. By taking a few minutes to examine this question together, a cohesive sense of group purpose will begin to emerge. Naming the measures of success will not only fortify the participants' enthusiasm throughout the process as they see that they are indeed achieving these things, it will ultimately help lead to their collective satisfaction at the conclusion.

## Building ensemble

As part of building a communal sense of purpose among the participants, you can ask, "Are there any personal concerns you have about being part of the project, and what do you feel you are able to bring to the work that we'll be doing together?" This will allow people to express any anxieties they may have about

rehearsing or performing, as well as to share whether they enjoy singing, play any instruments, or have any special skills like juggling, ventriloquism, voicing characters, or storytelling. This miniature version of mapping assets in a community enables everyone to appreciate all the skills the group will be able to draw upon when it comes to creating the comedy sketches.

## What's so funny?

Next, it is time to turn the participants' attention to comedy, asking the big question: "What makes something funny?" Invite everyone to share at least one story about a part of a performance (live or on TV or film) that they found to be hilarious. Follow each story with a collaborative investigation asking, "And what made that so funny?"

It is likely that this line of inquiry will segue naturally into a conversation about some basic principles of comedy based on the participants' own experiences. Facilitators can then introduce four foundational elements that will both literally and figuratively come into play in the weeks ahead: 1) the benefits of a red clown nose, 2) familiarity with sight gags and a three-step approach to creating physical comedy, 3) the concept of "Clown in Trouble," and 4) the concept of gestic.

## The benefits of a red clown nose

Red clown noses can be liberating. Wearing them gives performers licence to be goofy and to feel unusually free to be honest. "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person," wrote Oscar Wilde. "Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth." And according to renowned theatre-mask teacher Jacques Lecoc, "A red nose is the smallest mask in the world." Theatre director John Wright notes that a red nose helps an actor step into the clown's realm. He writes: "A red nose amplifies expression, especially the expression of being baffled, which is the primary world of the clown." Beyond the freedom it gives to the person who wears it, the red nose also gives the audience permission to find the performer funny. It signals that it's okay to laugh at the person who is wearing it. For all of these reasons, it is important that the participants get comfortable wearing red clown noses during the workshops in anticipation of wearing them also during the performance. On this first day you can hand out the noses for everyone to try on, and explain the role of masks and clowning in comedy.

## Some common sight gags

Common “sight gags” are useful for helping to develop scenes. Explaining how each works and inviting participants to try demonstrating them for the rest of the group (while wearing a red clown nose) can help inspire confidence in the participants about the simplicity and effectiveness of these kinds of comedic moments. Here are a few examples:

- **A Take:** In a moment of disbelief, you turn to the audience as if to share your disbelief with them and then turn back to the object of your attention.
- **A Double Take:** This is a delayed reaction. You turn your head and see something but don’t register the meaning at first glance so you turn away. Suddenly it dawns on you what you may have just seen and you quickly look back at it again.
- **A Comic Stop:** You start in control of your own body but seeing something so shocks you that it jolts you out of control.
- **A Fishhook:** Instead of looking right at something, or taking hold of it, you look or reach or move in the opposite direction first and then you “fishhook” toward it. By going in the opposite direction first and then moving in, you call the audience’s attention to the object of your attention.
- **A Reversal:** You have an expectation of what you think the object of your attention is, but it abruptly turns out to be not at all what you thought it was and you react accordingly.
- **A Slight:** Someone seems to be extending you a gracious welcome, an invitation of some kind, and you start to accept -- but then at the last minute it unexpectedly switches into a rejection and you are left looking foolish.
- **An Unexpected Twist:** Another class of common visual gags are unexpected physical twists, where objects or people often become funny by behaving in unexpected ways, being in unusual places, or being an unexpected size.
- **“Clown in Trouble”** There are many different ways to be funny and many different kinds of humour that people will find funny. This project is based on the belief that great humour can be found by creatively revealing unmistakable truths about

situations in comic ways. Physical comedy can generate a sort of tortured empathy when an audience feels badly for some poor clown who just can’t seem to get a break. This mode of physical comedy has been called “Clown in Trouble.” It operates on a very basic premise. A clown is trying to achieve, obtain, solve, or build something, but there is something that always gets in the way, foiling the clown’s persistent efforts. This premise lends itself well to explorations of what members of a community aspire to achieve and what barriers they face when they try. On this first day of workshops, a good way to explain and help anchor this concept for participants can be as easy as showing some video clips featuring a “Clown in Trouble” premise and discussing why each one is funny. What is the aspiration and what is the barrier?

*See Appendix 3 for suggestions of these kinds of comedy routines available on YouTube.*

In his book *Why is That So Funny? – A Practical Exploration of Physical Comedy*, John Wright describes a three-step process that is very useful for creating “Clown in Trouble” scenes.

Wright’s steps are these:

**Step 1:** Make a choice. Just go ahead and try something that you have an idea for. It can be anything that involves an effort against an obstacle. Ask yourself, “What is the character in this scene trying to achieve, and what is getting in the way?” Then show it in action.

**Step 2:** Exaggerate it. Take that choice you made and expand it into a clown’s world. Note that “expanding it” doesn’t necessarily mean making it “bigger.” It means carrying the impulse further in the same direction. For example, if your character suddenly sees a scary bug crawling up onto your shoulder, exaggerating the reaction might mean slowing down in terror after seeing the bug.

**Step 3:** Tidy it up. Take out all the extraneous actions, movements, and reactions. Keep only the most essential bits. A lot of what makes something funny, Wright explains, comes down to the accuracy of one’s observations.

Showing what you see happening with precision, clarity and economy is usually going to be much funnier than random crazy movement.

## The Great Game of Power

After these introductions to physical comedy, it’s time to get everyone on their feet to try some exercises. “The Great Game of Power” was created by Augusto Boal and appears in his book *Games for Actors and Non-actors*. The activity provides an excellent demonstration of how simple physical images on stage can convey surprisingly clear meaning and often inspire the laughter of recognition.

Place six easily-moveable chairs together randomly in an area of the room. Invite participants to take turns stepping forward and arranging the six chairs in such a way that it is obvious which chair has more power than the other chairs. Explain that the chairs may be re-arranged or upended in any manner, but all six must be included in the final arrangement that is created, and one chair must clearly be seen as having more power than the others.

After the first volunteer sets up an arrangement, invite other participants to offer their observations on which chair seems most powerful, or to provide any suggestions for tweaks that they believe will

elevate the power of the “most powerful” chair. Then, invite anyone else to step forward to disassemble and reconfigure the chairs to create an entirely new way to show one chair holding power over all the others.

When new ideas stop coming to the group, point out how this game aptly illustrates that “economy” is a key to making a dramatic or comedic impact on an audience. There was no extraneous movement, no “acting dramatic” or “acting goofy” to make an impression or to get a laugh; it was the singular clarity and recognizability of the image that captured the group’s imagination every time. This leads naturally into an introduction to working with gests.

## The Gest Exercise

The German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht used the term *gestus* to refer to a physical action that quintessentially embodies a relationship, a change in understanding, or an emotional state. In English, the term *gestus* is translated as *gest*. Gests are a rich source for effective physical comedy. Our project’s theatre

director Will Weigler developed this exercise as a good way to help actors begin working with gests:

Before the session, prepare a basketful of little strips of paper. Each strip should have a description of a physical action, such as “lean in close to another person,” or “cover your mouth with one hand,” or “fall to your knees.” (See Appendix 5 for more suggestions.)

All participants reach into the basket and pull out a single strip. Working in pairs, the participants’ task is to create two separate, brief scenarios. They should not use dialogue or create a complicated storyline. Instead, in each scenario they should simply perform their respective gestures at the same time or one after the other. Yet, it should become absolutely clear to the audience what is going on and what the two characters’ relationship is to each other. For example, one strip might read, “point at something,” while the other strip reads, “put your hand over the other person’s eyes.” There is no obvious meaning to be found in the combination of these two randomly selected instructions. But if one performer gets on his knees to become the size of a child and points straight ahead while grinning with open-mouthed fascination, and the other performer becomes a mother, alarmed at what her little boy is seeing and clapping

her hand over his eyes to shield his innocence, these two simple gestures clearly establish relationship and circumstances. In their second scenario the two performers create a different situation and relationship, while still using the same movements. After just a few minutes of coming up with ideas on their own and practicing them, each pair of participants is called back and everyone shows both of their scenes to the group. Invite the viewers to describe what they saw. Did everyone understand what the actors were trying to show happening in the scene? As a follow up, participants can be invited to consider whether or how they might strengthen or sharpen the clarity.

## Closing

During the closing, point out that everyone now has a good foundation in key basics for constructing physical comedy, and in the following weeks these techniques will be used to develop scenes for the show. Invite everyone to share any moments when smiles or laughter spontaneously erupted during the workshop.

“ Showing what you see happening with precision, clarity and economy is usually going to be much funnier than random crazy movement.”

## Workshop 2

# Extended Instructions and Notes

Begin the session with a physical warm-up accompanied by upbeat comedy music. Do a round of the Gest Exercise to get back into the swing of the work from the week before, and to continue skill building.

### Review the premise

Having explored what makes something funny during the previous week, review the basic premise of the project. Emphasize that the comedy can be based on identifying the particular nature of how hopes and aspirations run into barriers, rather than being based on naming or criticizing actual people, organizations or places. This will ensure that the show will be accessible and funny to everyone even when it grapples with serious issues and concerns.

### Brainstorming prompts

Gather everyone into a circle to brainstorm “prompts” to help begin developing the show. Create two separate sheets of paper for the “aspirations” related to your show’s theme and for the “obstacles” respectively, like the positive and negative sides of a ledger. For example, in our show, we listed things that made us enjoy or commit to volunteering in our neighbourhoods, and things that made us dislike or avoid volunteering.

Use various questions to assist participants in thinking about the theme of the show. On the “positive” side, offer questions like, “What makes you want to do that? What needs are you trying to fulfill? What rewards or benefits are you hoping to achieve?” On the “negative” side, offer questions such as, “What are the challenges or conflicts that come up when you do that? What concerns hold you back? What barriers do you have to overcome



along the way?” You can pose even more specific questions like, “What is the worst/best thing you ever experienced when you were engaged in that?” A single person’s unique experience can lead to group discussions and

broader generalizations about how that experience exhibits an underlying, more universal theme. Encourage participants to think specifically about situations, feelings, emotions, experiences, and snippets of phrases or dialogue that are often spoken in such situations. Any of these can potentially become elements of scenes.

## Begin thinking about gests

Moving forward, these lists will be used as “prompts” to develop ideas for “Clown in Trouble” scenarios juxtaposing aspirations and obstacles. Either during the workshop or for a homework assignment, invite everyone to begin to come up with ideas for gests related to the prompts—physical actions or images that encapsulate the ideas they have been collecting. While developing material related to our theme, for example, the idea of glancing at one’s watch while waiting for an unreliable volunteer to arrive was exaggerated into a woman



View full scene from “Where is everybody?”: <https://vimeo.com/115137012>

on stage (wearing a red clown nose) holding an enormous clock. As she stood there alone, the volunteer she was waiting for was flitting around the audience chatting people up. Similarly, the idea of trying patiently to endure an endless meeting was embodied as a person (wearing a red clown nose) trying earnestly to stay awake while being overcome with the desire to fall asleep.

After this workshop, facilitators can transcribe the brainstorming lists generated by the group onto handouts to give to the participants at the next meeting. Some minor editing of the prompts for duplication or clarity, and some grouping of similar or related ideas may be warranted.

## Workshop 3

# Extended Instructions and Notes

Start with a warm-up of physical stretching and movement accompanied by fun music, and then a quick round of the Gest Exercise using the slips of paper.

## Merging content and comedy

In this session, it's time to merge the content and the comedy. Invite participants to look over the handouts and pick a few of the ideas or prompts that are especially resonant for them personally. Divide the participants to work in groups of three in different parts of the room. Instruct them to select a few prompts from their lists to work on together, and to translate or express each prompt in terms of a dynamic relationship of physical actions—a gest or sequence of gests. Remind them not to try to develop long, complex storylines,

but simply to 1) make a choice, 2) exaggerate it, 3) tidy it up. Advise them that they are permitted to employ a little dialogue or other action to help set up or resolve scenes, so long as the meeting and unfolding of the aspiration and the conflict is expressed in the gest itself.

Five to ten minutes should be enough for all of the groups to develop two or three brief scenes. Reconvene the whole group to show each other what they've come up with.

## Giving feedback

After each presentation, invite everyone in the group to give feedback on the scene. However, be sure to emphasize that for this kind of work, it's not helpful for a viewer to comment on whether a sketch seems "good" or "bad." Instead, group discussions should be a collaborative, constructive process of trying to refine the scene to make it an even better reflection of what the actors were trying to achieve.

Viewers can describe what they saw, how they reacted, and what they understood to be happening in the scene. Viewers report on what they found funny, or vividly clear, or striking and surprising. If something was vague, muddy or unclear, they report on that. If a viewer has a burning desire to offer a suggestion for how to change the sketch, she or he may say, "I have an idea for how to change the sketch; would you like to hear it?" The performers are then put in the role of accepting the suggestion as an offering to their work rather than being informed by somebody else about what they should do to "fix" their piece. Meanwhile, for their part, the presenters should clarify what they were trying to show and convey, so that the viewers can consider if they effectively met that goal,

or if they can think of a way to help them better achieve it. This approach to offering feedback is elaborated further by the community-based choreographer Liz Lerman and John Borstel in the book *Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process: A Method for Getting Useful Feedback on Anything You Make, from Dance to Dessert*. Giving feedback in this manner grounds the participants' relationships in mutual respect and appreciation of differences.

## It's funny because it's true

It's also important to remind everyone that the goal is not necessarily to produce a scene that is "funny" right off the bat. Instead, we're trying to produce a gest or sequence of gests that accurately reflect the reality of our experiences. When a complex interaction is reduced to a gest it becomes easier to define that interaction, and the group can start to consider whether the actors have really pegged the true nature of the aspiration and the challenge to it. So the question should not be, "How do we make this scene funnier?" but "How do we make it even more accurately capture the aspiration and the thwarting of that aspiration that we've experienced?" The closer it gets to sincerely reflecting—albeit in exaggerated form—what actually happens, the more likely it is that the audience will

recognize the truth in it and the funnier it will become. For example, we created a scene of neighbours at a community meeting in which two people were paying more attention to their mobile phones than to what was being said at the table. It began simply with the idea of not being present, and then was developed further to include all sorts of variations: how other people at the table reacted, the phone users' reactions to the reactions, etc. The initial observation of an experience was turned into a gest and then expanded to a whole routine.



If the feedback from the group generates useful ideas for adjustments, the performers may present their sketch a second time. A facilitator may also choose to play a piece of recorded music to accompany the work based on the mood or feeling of the sketch to help heighten the comedic elements.

View full scene from "They're here, but they're not here":  
<https://vimeo.com/115137015>

## Workshop 4

# Extended Instructions and Notes

By now, the entire group has a good sense of how to develop and refine scenes from the list of prompts using a collaborative process. This workshop is intended simply to hit the ground running by breaking into small groups, trying out more ideas, and exploring more potential scenes together.

### Add new elements

Now that they have been working with this comedy-making process for a few weeks, some participants may have come up with new prompts or gestications on their own and they should be encouraged to try out these new ideas. Alternatively, some people may wish to return to ideas from

the previous week to refine an existing piece with a fresh angle. Encourage everyone to feel a sense of shared ownership of the scenes that have emerged from the group's work so far, allowing those who are keen to develop scenes further to freely do so, no matter who originally thought the scene up. Participants can also be given more freedom to incorporate elements of dialogue, pantomimed or real props, or extended plot or action into their scenes. A facilitator can continue to experiment with adding comedic music to scenes where appropriate. At this point, note taking of particularly effective gestications or fun snippets of dialogue and so forth can become a group effort, though the primary note taker can also record them during the sharing of scenes.

During the feedback sessions, it will be useful to remind everyone to attend to the clarity of the gestications that are at the heart of the scene. Is the gestication accurately summing up the gist of the character's aspiration and the way that

aspiration is thwarted? If not, what adjustment can be made so that it becomes more precise and accurate, even as it is brought into the exaggerated world of a clown in trouble?

### Identify the strongest scenes

At the end of the day, the group can develop a shared list of which scenes are showing the most promise, and which important issues or prompts related to the theme haven't yet been addressed in a scene. The facilitator-note taker can remind everyone of scenes that may have been forgotten. For this purpose, it can be helpful to give simple, descriptive names to scenes.



You may find at this point that you have generated a collection of scenes that, with a bit of rehearsal, are virtually ready for performance. However, it is possible that you will have some good beginnings of ideas and compelling elements, which have not yet been fully fleshed out into comedy sketches. Some further development work may be required. This can involve collaborative work by everyone during the fifth workshop, or the facilitators can take the lead in refining some of the loose material prior to the next meeting.

Facilitators may also want to set aside time to meet on their own before the next meeting to consider both a provisional order for the show and ideas for a through-line that will tie all the individual sketches together. Depending on the confidence of the cast, this work may be carried out by the whole group during workshop 5. These tasks are described in the following section. In any case, it will be useful for the facilitators (or for volunteers from the cast) to spend some time in the interim between workshops to type up the scripts for each individual comedy sketch (dialogue and descriptions of staging) to distribute to all the participants at the next workshop.

## Workshop 5

# Extended Instructions and Notes

### Finesse the sketches

After the physical warm up, it's time to turn attention to your catalogue of the comedy sketches you have created so far and decide what you need to do to round them out. The facilitators or participants will have typed up each scene and you can now pass copies out to everyone for group discussion. Ask for volunteers to get up on their feet to perform the scenes. Ask the question: No matter how long or short it is, does each scene have a beginning, middle and end?

A single gest can capture a comedic take on something recognizable, but to make it into a sketch, you'll need a series of gests that start by establishing the premise and then serve to transition from one to the next until it concludes. For example, following a discussion about the frustrations of complicated, overlapping e-mail exchanges that involve many people sniping and bickering (compared to

a moderated conversation in person), we played with the image of two people reading messages and rapidly typing angry responses to each other while taking out frustration on their keyboards. It was funny, but in itself was not yet a sketch. We then tried putting the scene to music and adding more people to the mix. We chose Edvard Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" from his Peer Gynt Suite, which proved to be an apt accompaniment to typing. The musical piece had its own built-in momentum that moved inexorably toward a dramatic

conclusion. We took clues from the music so that the piece began with only one person typing and sending an initial message, and then another quickly reading, typing and sending, and then another quickly reading, typing and sending, until gradually there was a symphony of five people angrily typing and sending crazily, timed to Grieg's bombastic musical finish with everyone leaping away from their computers in a huff. It was a simple sequence of events but it gave the key gest a satisfying story-like frame to make it all work as a sketch.



View full scene from "Email Trail": <https://vimeo.com/115130460>

This is not as enigmatic a process as it may at first sound. Explain to the participants that the task is just to ensure that the character's aspiration is first established on stage in the scene as clearly as possible, and then the intense challenge or thwarting of the aspiration is shown next, and then a final resolution demonstrably and rewardingly must arrive (even if it leaves the character still thwarted). That will create a sense of a mini-story with a satisfying completion for the audience. So the final development and scripting of each scene is, in a sense, just a process of "sharpening" these three stages.

## Consider a through-line

It's also time to begin developing a provisional order for the sketches. The challenge is to invent an overarching through-line that will tie the scenes together. Again, this can be created by the facilitators working on their own, or developed in collaboration with the whole group. A good through-line can help the audience make sense of what the show is all about and why it is moving from sketch to sketch. The most basic (and perhaps most clichéd) format is to have a Master of Ceremonies who introduces the show and each scene. An easel with title placards can signal the movement from one sketch to the next. By all means, feel free to be inventive



View full scene from "Welcoming": <https://vimeo.com/115130456>

in your search for a through-line. Perhaps there is a small group of recurring characters who are involved in an ongoing journey of some kind that takes them through different scenes. A single prop might show up in each scene. Anything is possible. In our show, we made use of an old fashioned, hand-cranked phonograph record player and a cardboard box labelled "Songs About My Neighbourhood" that was full of records. The premise – that each person went looking through the box for a song she or he knew and then put the record on the turntable to play it – not only served to link the scenes, but it gave us a way to introduce each new scene with a title, explain the presence of the accompanying music, and reinforce the idea that our scenes were theatricalized presentations and not slice-of-life realism.

## Rehearsals

After practicing the sketches and giving each other more feedback, do a run-through of the entire show. If you haven't already done it, this would be a good time to assign a stage manager who will ensure that props, costumes, lighting, sound, entrances and exits, and other issues are in order and ready for the live performance. If there were community members who expressed interest in being involved but didn't wish to perform, they could be good candidates to help with these things. During rehearsal you can check again to be sure that the sketches all have robust beginnings and endings, and refine them if they still need tweaking.

## Workshop 6

# Extended Instructions and Notes

You will be rehearsing many different sketches during the workshop. There may be some scenes that participants can practice with each other on their own time between workshops. For more complicated scenes, this may be a necessity. For example, one of our sketches was about the collision of two conflicting, unacknowledged agendas at a community meeting. The gest was grounded in which of the two facilitators got to set the priority for the agenda using a series of cards. The sketch involved a relatively complex routine of placing and removing cards on a board, all timed to fit the music of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer." The actors met on their own time to practice the timing until they got it just right.

During this workshop, the stage manager should be very involved, continuing to take notes on where all the props and costumes need to be pre-set at the start of

the show, where they get moved during the performance, and what cast members need to know about their entrances, exits, cues, and the locations of their props and costumes. The stage manager can also create a large backstage list of sketches in the designated order, so that the cast can quickly confirm what scene is coming next without having to memorize the whole show.

*(See Appendix 5 for an example of a stage manager's map.)*

## The Performance and Post-performance Conversation

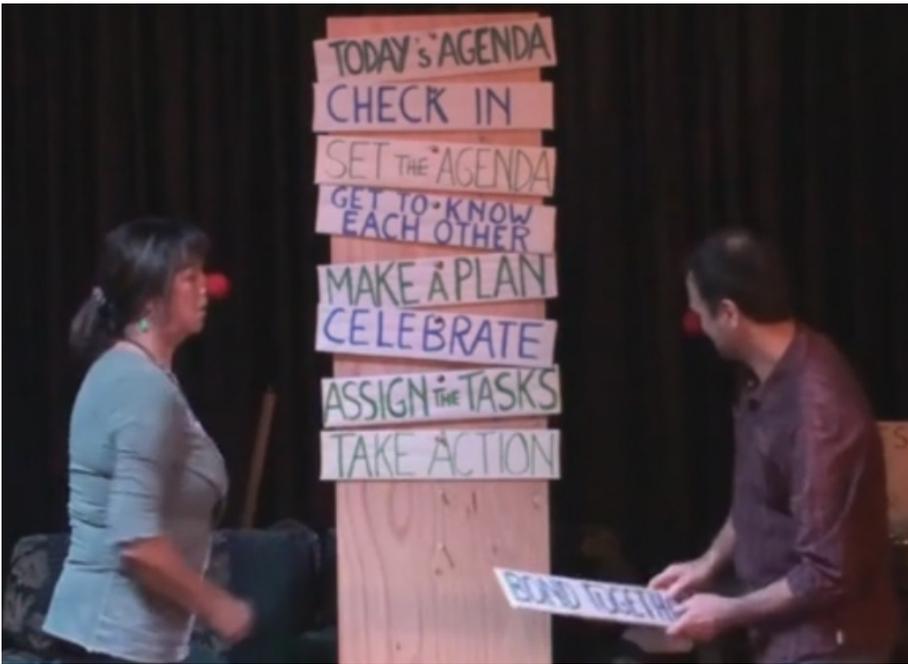
Before the performance starts it can be helpful if a facilitator introduces the show to the audience, describing some of the reasons for creating it, how the actors are members of the neighbourhood, and how the show was developed. Establishing the context in this way will serve as an invitation to the audience to see themselves as participants in the ongoing

community dialogue that the show is intended to promote. Make it clear that everyone should just sit back and have fun, but that after the show the cast and facilitators will welcome their responses to what they saw and will value hearing their perspectives.

## Facilitating the post-performance public dialogue

Assign someone from the show who has a warm, engaging stage presence to facilitate the post-show discussion. It's useful to frame this as a conversation between the performers and the audience, rather than as a question and answer session. This facilitator might consider having a few questions on hand just in case the audience is feeling reserved—perhaps something as simple as asking what stood out for anyone, or what was surprising. It's perfectly acceptable to offer a question to the performers, too, such as asking what stood out for them in the process of creating the show, or if any surprises emerged during the performance. The facilitator can invite the audience to raise their hands to share their own thoughts at any time.

Beforehand, the facilitator of the conversation may want to meet with the performers to ask



View full scene from “When Worlds Collide”: <https://vimeo.com/115130459>

what it is that they want to know from the audience. In one sense, the post-show conversation can be regarded as continuing the process that the participants themselves went through, opening their inquiry to the broader public by asking them what they saw and whether any new insights emerged for them in the process. Other possible questions for the audience (some of which could be asked by members of the cast themselves) include whether anyone in the audience recognized themselves or saw a familiar situation in any of the sketches and, if so, did seeing it treated humorously change their perception of

the situation in any way. Or, considering any of the obstacles presented in the scenes, what do they feel would need to happen for that obstacle to be overcome?

In summary, use the post-show conversation as a way to encourage the audience to see familiar conflicts without being defensive or aggressive about them, and without taking sides. Seen through the lens of physical comedy, the show presents the audience with an opportunity to understand the nature of a conflict, barrier, or obstacle in a new way, and potentially come up with new approaches to responding to it. That’s the reason we called our show *Laughing Allowed!* – to remind us all that sharing laughter about ourselves can be an important part of the serious task of building more resilient communities.

## Follow-up and legacy activities

A video recording of the show, divided into sketches, can be a useful tool to leave behind for others to use as icebreakers at meetings, or perhaps to start conversations about group processes and balancing different interests. Some members of our cast distributed red clown noses at meetings, and watched how the whole atmosphere changed as the group worked through routine business items. Even more ideally, though, participants in your show could perform scenes at meetings and events of various kinds, and then stay around to discuss what they got from their six-week exploration of an important community issue through a comedic slant.

And the best-case scenario would be that participants from your show, with the help of this manual, feel inspired and empowered to bring everyone in their own group or organization together to use physical comedy to help build resilience. Feel free to contact us if we can help you with any such projects!

## Appendix 1

# Tips on Promoting the Show

You may wish to start promoting the show well before it's ready to perform. There are many aspects of a show of this kind that make it relatively easy to promote to local news outlets, and via email and social media. Here are some tips:

- Summarize the key elements of the project concisely and clearly, and with a little creativity. The goal is to make people feel that they're going to have a fun night out, but also see a show that touches on significant issues and themes. A one-page press release should include contact information as well as links for further background on the organizers and the idea of the project, and should include some brief quotes from leaders or participants. For email or social media, something even shorter is usually better, though attachments or links to further information can be included as well.
- Find an accessible location for the show's performance and emphasize that it was made by, for, and about the local neighbourhood/community and the people living in it. This will intrigue news media with a mandate for local coverage, and engage people on social media who care about their own geographic community.
- Explain that though the show is strongly local in flavour, the point is not to name names, spread gossip, or target specific groups; rather, it's an attempt to understand and explore common, recognizable challenges and universal themes. This will speak to a broader audience, with people knowing that they will be seeing a thoughtful and engaging performance, not a neighbourhood mudslinging party.
- Photos of cast members wearing clown noses, especially if they are well known around the neighbourhood as volunteers or community activists are inherently playful and often funny, so images like these will be a good help for promotional efforts.
- Be sure to reach out directly to groups and organizations that have email lists and other means of connecting with people in the neighbourhood or community and solicit their assistance in promoting your event.
- Though box office income from tickets can go toward supporting the financial costs of mounting a production, it may be more helpful for this kind of event to regard affordable ticket sales as part of the promotional effort. We suggest having a ticket price that is "by donation" so that it's clear that you intend the show to be accessible to everyone. Inviting a donation rather than simply making it free also reminds people that real effort and costs have gone into the production to make it worth their time and money.
- Note on the poster and press release that the event will be followed by a conversation with the audience and the cast. This highlights that the event is about shared exploration and learning.

## Appendix 2



# Online Video Examples of a “Clown in Trouble”

Online examples of physical comedy sketches with a “Clown in Trouble” premise:

- A YouTube search for **Teatro Hugo & Inés** will lead to some marvellous comedy pieces. The two performers are Hugo Suarez (from Peru) and Inés Pasic (from Bosnia-Herzegovina). Based in Peru, they tour internationally.
- “**Lucy and the Chocolate Factory**” from the episode Job Switching with Lucille Ball & Vivian Vance from the television program I Love Lucy.
- Look on YouTube for French magician **Yann Frisch** doing his famous routine “Baltass.”
- The Montreal International Comedy Festival has a clip from a very funny act by **Otto Wessely** struggling to do a magic act.

*For general insights and resources on physical comedy try these:*

- **Chris Michael** has an online site called [newslapstick.wordpress.com](http://newslapstick.wordpress.com) with the tagline “Making Visual Comedy for the 21st Century.”
- **John Townsen** has an online ‘blogopedia’ called “All Fall Down: The Craft & Art of Physical Comedy.”
- **Tony Zhou** has an excellent online video series called “Every Frame a Painting.” Look for his 8 ½ minute piece on Buster Keaton: The Art of the Gag.

## Appendix 3



# *Examples of Comedic Accompaniment Music*

These musical selections can be found on CDs, iTunes and YouTube. There is quite a range here, suitable for many different kinds of comic underscoring. These are, of course, only suggestions. The possibilities are virtually limitless. The ideal scenario is to have actual musicians who can supply live musical underscoring at the performance. We discovered when using these recordings that in some cases

it was useful to cue the music to start several minutes after the selection begins since the most familiar or iconic parts of many pieces don't always come at the opening. The well-known strains of the Blue Danube Waltz, for example, aren't heard until a minute and a half into the composition. By contrast, Tchaikovsky's Russian Dance from the Nutcracker Suite starts right off with a bang.



Aram Khachaturian

**Sabre Dance**

Quincy Jones

**Soul Bossa Nova**

Herb Alpert

**Spanish Flea**

Raymond Scott

**The Toy Trumpet**

Allen Toussaint/Alvin Tyler

**Java**

Pat & Patachon

**Whirlwind (Theme)**

Scott Joplin

**The Entertainer**

Bill Conti

**Gonna Fly Now (Rocky theme)**

Rossini

**William Tell Overture Finale**

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Nutcracker Suite Russian Dance**

Jacques Offenbach

**Orphee aux Enfers-Galop Infernal**

Georges Bizet

**March of the Toreadors**

Edward Elgar

**Pomp and Circumstance**

Johann Strauss II

**Blue Danube Waltz**

Johann Strauss II

**Voice of Spring**

Johann Strauss II

**Also sprach Zarathustra**

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

**The flight of the bumblebee**

Johannes Brahms

**Hungarian Dance no. 5**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

**Rondo Alla Turca**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

**Symphonie n. 40 K550**

Amilcare Ponchielli

**Dance of the hours**

Clément Léo Delibes

**Pizzicato**

Antonín Dvořák

**Humoresque**

Edvard Grieg

**In the Hall of the Mountain King**

Richard Wagner

**Ride of the Valkyries**

Carl Orff

**O Fortuna**

Max Steiner

**A Summer Place**

Julius Fucik

**Entry of the Gladiators**

Elmer Bernstein

**The Magnificent Seven**

John Williams

**The Raiders March**

Al Caiola

**Big Noise from Winnetka**

Billy May

**Music to Watch Girls By**

Billy May/ Henry Mancini

**Baby Elephant Walk/Java**

Richard Marino

**Rots-O-Ruck**

Enrico Morricone

**The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**

Vangelis

**Chariots of Fire**

## Appendix 4



# A List of Gests for the Gest Exercise

See pages 18-19 for an explanation of the Gest Exercise.

---

Hug another person

---

Hug yourself

---

Kiss someone on the back of the hand

---

Check the time

---

Get another person to look at something

---

Put your hand on someone's shoulder (or shoulders) while facing each other

---

Put your hand on someone's shoulder (or shoulders) while standing behind the person

---

Close your eyes and then turn your head

---

Close your eyes and then lower your head

---

Back up

---

Fall to your knees

---

Cover your mouth

---

Cover both your eyes with one hand

---

Cover both your eyes with both hands

---

Cover both your ears with both hands

---

Cover another person's eyes with your hands

---

Look straight ahead and then turn suddenly to the side

---

Walk toward another person

---

Lean in close to another person

---

Lean away from another person

---

Raise one hand

---

Raise both hands

---

Put your finger in front of your mouth

---

Point your finger at someone

---

Close your hand in a fist in the air

---

Close your hand in a fist in front of your chest

---

Start by standing up and then sit on the ground

---

Start by sitting on the ground and then stand up

---

Sit on a chair and cross your legs

---

Snap your fingers once

---

Snap your fingers three times in a row

---

Start by looking straight ahead and then tilt your head at an angle and look down

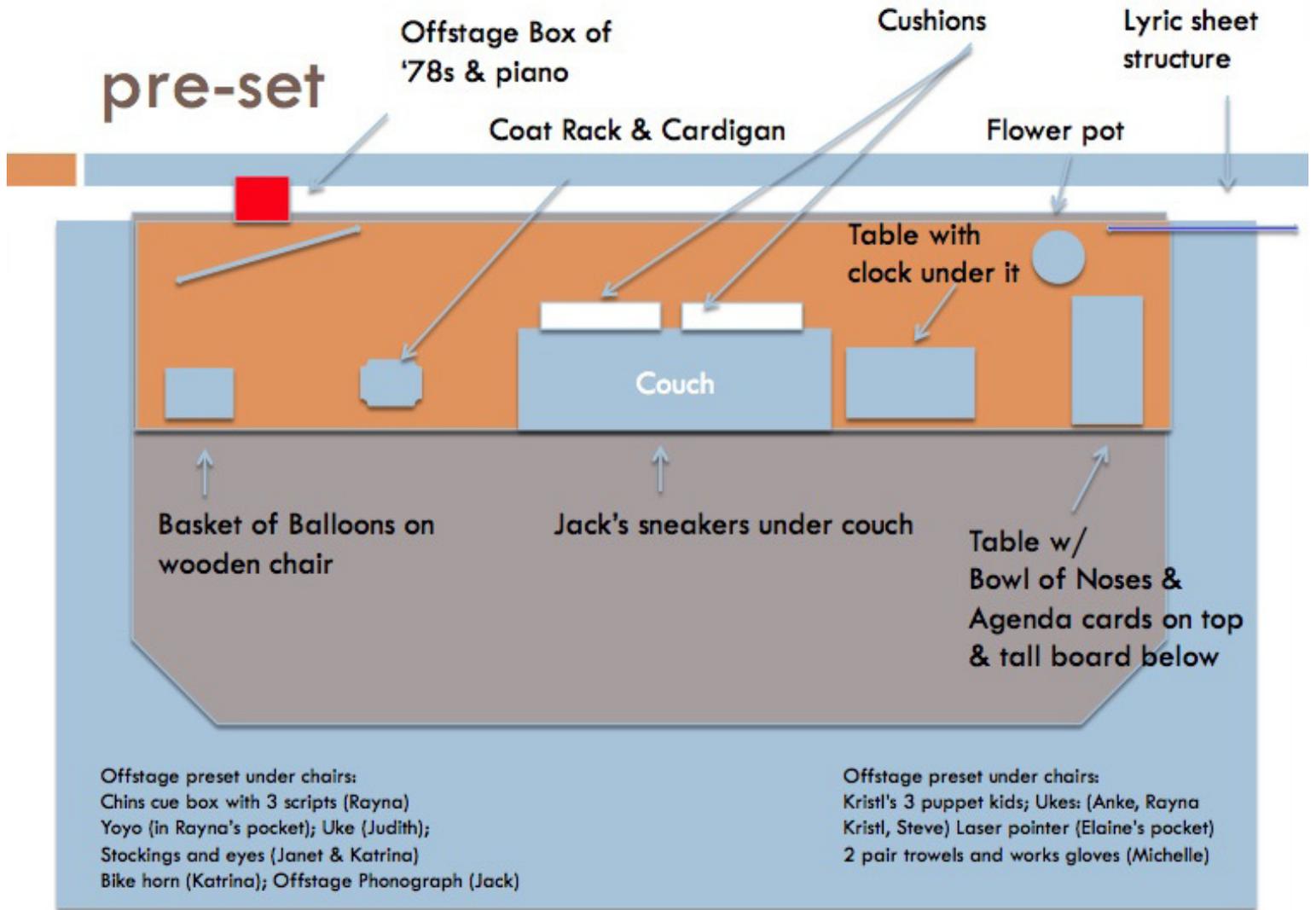
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Look down at your own body and then look straight ahead.

# Appendix 5



## Stage Manager's Map



## Appendix 6

# Acknowledgments

The original stage production of *Laughing Allowed! The Slapstick World of Neighbourhood Activism* was part of a collaborative project led by Building Resilient Neighborhoods. Organization partners, sponsors and volunteer contributors to the theatre project included the following:



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Book design: Kit Maloney

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