Merlin works
Narrative longform improv formats

Formats

- Triptych

  - Three rounds of three scenes. Get suggestions for each scene pair. In the first round, the scenes are unrelated. In the second round, the scenes are tangentially related. In the third round, the scenes and strongly interrelated.

- Six Degrees/La Rhonde

  - The name is based on a novel by Arthur Schnitzler in which a series of characters sequentially bed each other, from first to last back to first. The format is fairly simple: we play scenes in which at every scene switch, the 'oldest' character disappears and a new scene is played with the remaining character, and a new one. The form ends when the circle closes and the last and first characters do a scene. The idea is to see different aspects of a character, in different situations, interacting with different characters.

- Tag Team Narration/Scene Painting/Get Up

  - Open with tag team scene painting and cinematic narration not in character but as improvisers. Pop in and out of characters at will.

- Double Feature

  - In the opening scene start one story. After a few scenes, begin a separate unrelated story. Continue to cut back and forth between these two stories, keeping them separate all the way through. You may highlight how the stories are alike or similar or related by creative edits between the two stories. Can also be played with three story lines, in a Triple Feature

- One Location

  - Focus on a location with many smaller locations inside. If the scenes in the show also takes place on the same day, then it has the useful limitations of many scripted plays.

- Tag Outs

  - Everyone plays one and only one character. Two people begin a scene. Anyone can yell freeze or simply tag out a player in the scene. Then you tag in as your established character and begin a scene with the remaining character.

- Guest Game

  - One improviser plays the role of the guest, who is visiting a friend's house . . . but the friend doesn't seem to be there. In the show you get to explore a household, its residents and rooms.

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- Chapters

  - Get the title of the story and play the scenes from the story out of order.

- Cut to/Go There

  - At any time during a scene someone can say "Cut to that" or "Go there" and the ensemble automatically edits to that point in time.

- Yesterday/Tomorrow

  - In any scene, if somebody says "Yesterday" or "Tomorrow" you immediately cut to that day. Alternate Version: whenever anyone mentions any time/place, you immediately go there.

- 5 4 3 2 1

  - 5-4-3-2-1 can be played with 4 to 12 players. In this format the audience provides 5 different themes, objects, emotions, locations or situations. Then, the game is played in 5 rounds. In the first round 5 scenes are played, each based on one of the audience suggestions. These scenes are totally unrelated. After the first round the audience decides which of the 5 scenes seen should be discontinued. In the second round, the 4 remaining scenes are continued, and links start to appear between these scenes. Again, after this, the audience decides which scene to dump. This continues until after 4 rounds there are only 2 scenes left. In the fifth round these scenes come together in one final scene.

- A Moment in Time

  - Get a suggestion for a big life event: a graduation, a wedding, etc. Then every scene begins with a time stamp in relation to that event. ("5 hours before graduation" "20 years after graduation") We never see the actual event.

- Typewriter/First Person Narration

  - One person serves as the story's narrator, looking back on their life as the cast acts it out.

- Answering Machine/Cops in the Head/Hotseat

  - Start with the hero of the story giving a monologue, hopefully about something important to him or a life goal. Then have brief monologues/messages from all the people in the hero's life, like listening to his answering machine or hearing voices in his head. Then play out the story from there.

- DVD Special Edition

  - Start off with a trailer, narrated by one of the players, followed by some quick scenes, maximum 5 lines per scene. Then show the cast (every character in the movie), and follow with the whole movie. This can be done with out without director. After the movie you can do the special features, deleted scenes, bloopers, commentary, you name it.

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