



VCE Unlocked
Online Workshops
Impro Melbourne
Teacher Resources
2020-21



Ideal for VCE students

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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource has been created to provide teachers with some preliminary ideas as to how to extend their experience of the **VCE UNLOCKED Online Workshops** beyond the programme. The activities are designed to be open-ended and multi-ability. They may need differentiation for your specific cohort.

The VCE workshops included in the RAV Arts and Education program are designed to offer students engaging arts experiences with strong links to Victorian Curriculum specific to the VCE Drama Units 3 and 4 and building capabilities in Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Interaction and Ethical behaviour.

Please feel free to contact the Arts and Education team on (03) 9644 1808 or at education@rav.net.au if you have any questions about this resource, its content or its implementation within your classroom.

ABOUT REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA

Regional Arts Victoria inspires art across the state. Through creative facilitation, touring, education, specialised resources, artistic projects and advocacy, we develop and sustain creative communities and artistic practice all over Victoria.

Regional Arts Victoria is an independent, not-for-profit, membership-based organisation working in long-term partnerships with every level of government, fostering contemporary and innovative regional cultural practice across five decades. We advise and impact on decision-making across multiple portfolios and levels of government.

Regional Arts Victoria is the peak body for regional artists and arts organisations, and the leading organisation for regional creative practice in Victoria.

PARTNERSHIPS

Regional Arts Victoria facilitates the partnerships, the organisations and the practices that create new work.

- Regional Cultural Partnerships
- Creative Arts Facilitators
- Membership program
- Devolved grants programs
- Resources, workshops and events
- Sector advocacy and leadership development

PROGRAMMING

Regional Arts Victoria nurtures the experts who foster local artistic experiences and stimulate young minds.

- Arts & Education Program
- Connecting Places
- Touring programs
- Education resources
- Industry development resources and events
- Sector advocacy and leadership development

PROJECTS

Regional Arts Victoria presents major artistic projects that build local artistic leadership and legacy.

- State-wide projects including *Small Town Transformations and Artlands Victoria*
- Internal Creative Professional Development programs
- Sector advocacy and leadership development

ARTS & EDUCATION

Regional Arts Victoria's Programming department has nearly 50 years of experience touring work to schools, community halls and theatres across Victoria and Australia. The department programs are the Arts & Education, Touring Services and Connecting Places programs.

The Arts and Education program also provides significant subsidy assistance (up to 75% of program costs) to eligible remote and disadvantaged schools. Your school may be eligible so please contact us to find out more.

For general enquiries please contact: education@rav.net.au



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INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

Impro Melbourne offers 3 VCE online workshops through Regional Arts Victoria, which are live streamed interactive experiences for students.

These workshops are focused on VCE Drama Units 1-4. However they can be adapted for Years 9 and 10 to work on performance and character development in consultation with teachers. While each workshop has a particular focus there are exercises which will be common across the workshops and exercises that are specific to that focus. In the lead up to the workshop Impro Melbourne will work with the teacher to prepare and offer pre-activity suggestions specific to the needs of your cohort of students.

Available workshops:

VCE Drama Unlocked: Creating as an Ensemble (Unit 3 Drama Ensemble)

When faced with the prospect of creating performance, many students become 'blocked', trying to work out every detail before even getting onto the floor. Unlocking creativity, being playful, understanding how a simple exploration of one idea can lead to further discovery, how a sound or movement can have dramatic significance and how constructive criticism and peer observation can be helpful is the focus of this workshop for senior students.

Improvisation is a key tool in performance creation and used as a rehearsal process globally by theatre practitioners and directors. This 90 minute workshop uses a stimulus and, through practical exercises, takes the students through a process of how to use brainstorming, improvisation, editing and refining towards creating performance.

The workshop builds an understanding of the dramatic conventions and theatrical elements that form part of the Ensemble and Solo tasks of VCE Unit 3 and 4 Drama and will give your students a process to follow to develop their best possible work.

VCE Drama Unlocked: Creating Characters (Unit 4 Drama Solo)

Creating a range of different characters and the ability to 'transform' between one character and the next within a solo performance is often a challenge rather than a joy.

This workshop focuses on the key area of character creation and character transformation that is required in the VCE Unit 4 Drama Solo Task. The Impro Melbourne teacher will use a range of exercises to build skills to create characters physically and vocally. Accessing the work of Rudolf Laban, Anne Bogart and many other practitioners the students will be encouraged to unlock creativity and explore a wide range of character choices and how to sustain them physically and vocally.

The second half of the workshop then focusses on how to transform between characters by using space, snap changes and 'morphing' and how use of focus and gaze builds the believability that a number of characters are existing in a single space. The workshop can be used as an overall general starting point or as a workshop to look at specific choices the students are making on their Solo Structure choice.

This workshop can also be adapted to help students working on their Monologue task for Theatre Studies with physical and vocal characterisation.

VCE Drama Unlocked: Transitions & Space (Unit 4 Drama Solo)

The VCE Solo Task asks the student to not only create scenes that develop the ideas of their chosen structure but to be able to transition between them. These transitions and the use of space as a performer can play a vital role in lifting a solo performance from a simple series of scenes to a complete performance involving all the elements of non-naturalism such as space, focus, sound, rhythm, and heightened language.

The VCE Theatre Studies Monologue asks the performer to create ‘a world of the play’ through the monologue and students to justify choices they have made and use the space rather than simply ‘stand and deliver’. Use of space and physicality become key elements in interpretation of a monologue. So this workshop can be adapted to that area if the school is only doing Theatre Studies.

This workshop focusses on the key areas of: what are transitions, how are they created and how can they be used. In the first half of the workshop, using a range of exercises students will create transition skills that involve movement, sound, language repetition, song, sound and rhythm. These transitions will be developed either from a common stimulus given by the workshop facilitator, or created from the students chosen Solo Structure.

The second half of the workshop then focusses on how to apply these transitions in performance space and how they can be used to lead from one scene to another, at the same time reaffirming the chosen structure, themes and ideas the students are trying to portray in the performance.

ONLINE WORKSHOP TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Impro Melbourne can deliver VCE Unlocked Online workshops using the online program your school is most comfortable with e.g. Zoom, Google hangouts, Windows teams, etc. Before the class, the teacher will be in contact to confirm your technical platform and requirements to ensure we work with you so that the students get the most out of the workshop. The delivery method of the workshop will be adapted to suit your setup.

At least 15 minutes is required prior to the session beginning for the technology to be set up and tested, ensuring that everything is working so as not to cut into the session time. It is recommended that the session be scheduled after a class break to help this be achieved. If this is not practical with your schedule, we can also arrange another time to trial the setup and solve any technical issues.



ABOUT IMPRO MELBOURNE

Impro Melbourne is the longest-running improvisational theatre company in Melbourne, whose purpose is to boldly expand the use of improvisation in theatre and education.

Since 1996 Impro Melbourne has produced all forms of improvised theatre from short game/scene style formats through to full length 50 minute to two hour fully improvised shows, exploring genres like Shakespeare, musicals, film noir, murder mystery and non-naturalism. They currently produce the global impro format Theatresports™, as well as Keith Johnstone's two other competition formats Maestro™ and Gorilla Theatre™. These formats are licensed through the International Theatresports™ Institute and Impro Melbourne is the Victorian license holder. Impro Melbourne has also produced shows for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for the past two decades.

In 2004 they developed a schools' program which has now become a highly acclaimed series of demonstration shows and workshops for primary and secondary students managed by Regional Arts Victoria. In response to Covid-19 restrictions, these workshops have been adapted in to online, livestream offerings. Impro Melbourne's reputation continues to grow as they travel across Australia and overseas. The company has performed and taught in Asia, Europe and North America. In 2005 they ran the first International Improvisation Festival in Australia, bringing in players from North America, Europe, Scandinavia and Japan. They continue to share their innovative techniques with the impro world and will never stop searching the globe for inspiration.

THE PERFORMERS

Key performers in the company have been working as actors and improvisers in Melbourne, Sydney and overseas for over 15 years, on the stage and in TV and film.

The Schools Players:

There are currently 12 performers who deliver the schools program. All of our schools performance ensemble are regular cast members of our productions of Theatresports™, Maestro™, Gorilla Theatre™, and perform and create new improvisation formats. All performers attend regular training and seek to constantly improve the standard and quality of our work. The Impro Melbourne schools cast is committed to promoting a passion for improvisation, performing and theatre among students.



VCE DRAMA STUDIES: UNIT 1 - 4

The 2019-2023 VCE Drama Studies design asks students to:

1. Draw on a range of performance styles to devise performances that go beyond the reality of life as it is lived. Students can juxtapose a number of performance styles to make dramatic statements and create theatre that is innovative, transformational and creative. The work is likely to be eclectic in nature. Students should use creative processes to devise and define the performance style of each work with a specific purpose and intention for the audience.
2. Use Performance styles studied in VCE Drama to draw on drama traditions and practice including:
 - Ritual and story-telling
 - Contemporary drama practice and performance styles
 - The work of drama practitioners and associated performance styles.
3. Use Play-making techniques to extract and to explore the dramatic potential of stimulus material and to develop ideas, roles, dramatic action, story and themes to construct devised performances. There are many play-making techniques. For the purposes of this study, play-making techniques are:
 - Researching
 - Brainstorming
 - Improvising
 - Scripting
 - Editing
 - Rehearsing
 - Refining

To aid building confidence in using these techniques, Impro Melbourne's VCE Unlocked workshops are designed to get students doing that work 'on their feet', rather than sitting and 'thinking about' or 'talking about' what they might do, trying to edit and write in their heads. Rather than trying to create the whole piece before 'rehearsing it', we encourage students to take one or two smaller components and 'play'- using improvisation exercises and structures, to experiment, and then discuss what ideas came up and note down what was strong or could be useful in the final piece. This process brings in editing and refining of ideas. Our teachers also encourage students not to put pressure on themselves to create everything at once, in the right order, but instead to take a looser creative approach that can lead to discovery, then editing, scripting and refining.

PREPARATION BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:

In order to get the most from your VCE Unlocked workshop, your students should be familiar with the Tasks in Units 1, 2, 3, & 4 so they can link exercises to the tasks they will be working on.

Students should also be familiar with the key terminology involved in the VCE Drama tasks so that discussion can be ongoing through the workshop using these terms:

Conventions: what is meant by Transformation (Character, Time, Place), what can be 'symbol' – actions, gestures, language, vocal or facial expression, object, costume, set pieces or heightened movement.

Dramatic Elements: what is meant by Climax, Conflict, Contrast, Mood, Rhythm, Sound, Space and Tension.

Expressive Skills: Voice, Movement, Gesture, Facial Expression

TECHNIQUES USED AND EXPLORED IN THE WORKSHOPS

NOTE: Each workshop delivered will be particular to your student cohort, their needs and the type of workshop. Exercises will also vary depending on the time available, student skill level, and areas we are asked to try and cover in the workshop. Each Impro Melbourne teacher will also bring their own knowledge, gained by years of work both locally and internationally. The following are examples of processes and exercises that will be common in each of the workshop types.

We strongly suggest that teachers attending also take their own personal notes in the workshop, to take advantage of any material included beyond what is detailed in these notes.

VCE UNLOCKED: ENSEMBLE

Processes used in the workshop:

- **Brainstorming:** using butcher's paper with a central WORD and allowing students to riff off that word without censoring the thought process. This technique can be applied to unpack elements of a stimulus.
- **Improvisation:** using improvisation exercises and structures to explore ideas generated from brainstorming
- **Editing and rehearsal:** making choices on the work created through improvisation, then repeating to refine and focus.
- **Outside Eye:** having students watch each other's work and give feedback: to develop their critical eye. This will help students in the analysis area of this study, learning how to express opinion and give feedback.

Example Activity:

I am a Tree:

This exercise explores stage picture and uses techniques such as symbol, 'titling' and naming what part of the picture each player represents – a Brechtian/story telling technique.

Exercise:

- Person A begins by moving into the performing space and announcing - "I am a Tree". Then they take up the physicality of their 'tree' shape.
- Person B enters and adds themselves as a second element, announcing what they are and placing themselves in appropriate position – e.g. "I am a leaf on a branch", "I am a child sitting under the tree", "I am a bird on a branch"
- Person C enters and adds a third element to the picture: "I am the sun", "I am the wind", "I am the swing on the tree"
- Person A then says "I will leave the" And nominates one of the other two people to stay. Person A and the other player then leave and the nominated player stays and announces again what their offer was and a new picture/tableau begins – e.g. "I am the sun" and it continues from there.

Online adaptation: you can use the whole class to form the picture if you are unable to split into smaller groups or the class can watch three people play. Although the students can't get into each other's space they can hold the shapes on camera and visualise the interconnectivity.

Coaching Tips and development:

- Performers should always re-announce who/what they are when the new picture starts. This allows the players watching to 're-set' and see new possible offers.
- This 'titling' process also brings in the performance elements of beyond reality as required in the task.

- Once students are confident with the exercise, they can use it to explore elements of their stimulus, they can also bring in more metaphoric and metaphysical elements: e.g. “I am the fear of failure”, “I am the sadness in the heart”, “I am the thought of revenge”.

VCE UNLOCKED: CREATING CHARACTERS

Example activity

Leading with parts of the body

Students move around the space, using different parts of the body to focus on then allowing that body ‘part’ to lead movement. See how that changes physicality, breath and think about the type of character that would move this way.

E.g. start with students walking neutrally as themselves. Offer a part of the body to focus on and that now leads movement. For example – the nose. Students must let their nose lead them everywhere.

Online adaptation: We have found the best way to play this online is by talking the students through the exercise and getting them up and moving in their house without their camera on. Allowing them to explore and create without feeling like they need to perform.

Coaching Tips:

- Allow this to change your physicality / Don’t forget to breathe / What is a name for this character? / Where does their voice come from, can you hear it? /
- Other parts of the body to experiment with: leading with the chest, leading with the pelvis, leading with the forehead, having one leg that is stiff, having sore hips. Having sore hips is helpful if the student wants to play a much older character. This naturally slows down movement and vocal quality.

VCE Unlocked: Transitions and Space

Example activity

Accelerating Sound Circle:

A warm-up exercise to get students using bigger physicality and sound.

- Form a circle
- One person turn to next person in circle and makes a small movement (e.g. shrug shoulders) and a small sound.
- Next person takes what they received and passes it on making it a little bigger.
- Then continuing around the circle, growing bigger and bigger and shifting and changing.
- Then instruct students to start lowering back down and see how subtle it can become.
- Students should use sound not words.

Online adaptation: When playing online pick the order beforehand, for instance, Sally passes to Mark, Mark passes to Luther etc. so the students know who they are receiving the sound and physicality from.

FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Impro; Improvisation and Theatre by Keith Johnstone, Published by Methuen (paperback) or Faber and Faber (hardcover)

Impro for Storytellers by Keith Johnstone. Published by Methuen (paperback)

Improvisation for the Theatre by Viola Spolin Northwestern University Press

Theatre Games for the Classroom by Viola Spolin Northwestern University Press

Impro Wisdom by Patricia Ryan Published by Bell Tower

Acting on Impulse by Carol Hazenfield (2002)

Viewpoints by Anne Bogart and Tina Landau Theatre Communications Group; (August 1, 2004)

The Mastery of Movement by Rudolf Laban. Revised by Lisa Ullmann. Available on Amazon and Book Depository. (4th edition, 2011)

ONLINE:

Frantic Assembly (UK physical theatre company). Videos of exercises they use when creating ensemble work

Building blocks for devising:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BC9uJrY9Bh8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUqZPfGIX6U&t=69s>

Rash Dash (UK company). Devising masterclass, Under and Over:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47QhuLMLDL8>

Contact the Arts & Education team at education@rav.net.au with further questions or, even better, examples of your work!

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