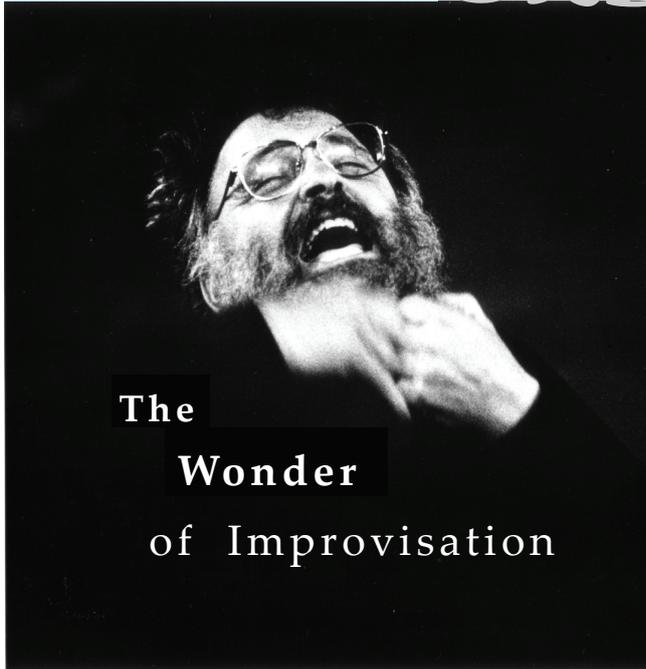


Theatre of the **ORDINARY**



The Wonder of Improvisation

launches
Al Wunder's Book



THE WONDER OF IMPROVISATION offers readers invaluable insights to improvisation as seen through the eyes of Australia's grandfather of improvisation.

Al Wunder has been the mentor to two generations of improvising performers; Ruth Zaporah and Terry Sendgraff during the 1970s in the United States and Australia's Born in a Taxi, Trotman & Morrish and Five Square Meters during the 80s and 90s.

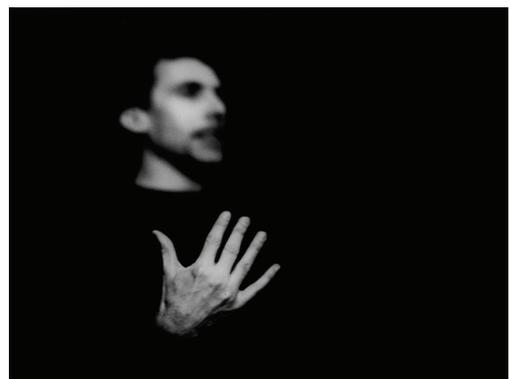


The book starts with autobiographical snapshots revealing the events leading up to Al's discovery and falling in love with **improvisation**. It details the influences his mentor Alwin Nikolais and partners Terry Sendgraff and Ruth Zaporah had in the development of his unique methodology that one of his students described as 'teaching without teaching'.



Humanity, humour and hubris punctuate the various chapters. The relationship between teacher and student, especially within the performing arts, is discussed in great detail with an emphasis on experiential learning.

Most students do not trust their impulsive child and fall into the trap of needing to do something 'good' in order to please others. Too often students try to emulate someone else's style because it seems to be popular. By taking this copycat route the best they can hope for is an inferior version of that other person's style: an attempted mirror image that is only surface deep. Many of us tend to play it safe, sticking to some learned or perceived blueprint of what is a good performance. By trying to do something 'good', (usually the teacher's good) we deny ourselves the freedom to search for our own aesthetic values and are left with a poor imitation of another person's creative genius.



Theatre of **ORDINARY**



For the past 35 years I have been developing a form of Improvised Movement Theatre that is unique in it's teaching of performance as a means of communication between people. My philosophy is that performance is for everyone not just the highly skilled professionals. We all have our own stories, songs and dances to share with each other and it is this sharing that enriches us. A safe non-competitive environment is essential to allow our thoughts and feelings to manifest themselves in a theatrical setting. I try to instil in people the confidence to open up and explore through movements, word or sounds, our own way of being in the performing space. This space becomes not something to fear, but a source of power that allows us to look at laugh at and enjoy ourselves and our relations with other people.

Thought provoking ideas such as *The Four Modes* and *The En Game* (our entertaining ways) are sprinkled throughout the book.

Our way of being in the performing space has many faces. There is our own face (pedestrian), the faces of Romeo and Juliet (character), the face of the harlequin (caricature), and the face of the dancer (abstract). These are the four modes. As improvisers, we must decide who we are at the beginning of our improvisations. Who we become depends on what is most theatrically appropriate for each moment of performance. No matter how we choose to disguise it what we present to the audience is in reality a self-presentation.

Entertain, engage, enlighten, enrich, endear, engross, entrance, ennoble, energise, enchant, enrapture, enthrall, enthuse, entice are all words that reflect how a performer might like to effect an audience. Performers certainly **entrap** an audience by luring them into their **den** with various advertisements that **ensure** what is witnessed will be **enjoyable**. I like to think of the word **entertain** as the mother word from which all the other **en** words spring, defining the various ways we have of pleasing an audience. I know some performing artists do not like to classify themselves as entertainers and I do respect that. There is, however, the old adage of low-brow and high-brow entertainment, a terminology which signifies one can be entertained in several different ways. Whether a performance deals with music, dance or drama, whether what we see is broad slapstick or a serious representation of war and its repercussions, we as audience members go to the theatre to be entertained in some way. What entertains us is a matter of individual aesthetics.



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