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# **SERIOUS PLAY: THEATRE GAMES AND WARMUPS FOR REHEARSAL AND ENSEMBLE BUILDING**

## **Instructor**

TODD ESPELAND

## **Materials**

Video modules, Handouts, Transcripts, MP3 Files, PDF of  
Powerpoint Slides, Completion Certificate

## **Course length**

8 modules  
1 hours, 36 minutes of video  
3 credit hours

## Course Description

In this class, Serious Play, the instructor will lead you through a series of games in risk, movement, focus, and voice. You will get access to a series of all inclusive games that you can string together to make one giant game that is great to use in rehearsal. You will learn how and when to use these games.

You'll get ideas on how to craft your own warm-up lesson plan; and, most importantly, you'll learn about a pre-class warm-up that you can do on your own so that you can get yourself into that third stage of the creative brain, so that you can begin trying out interesting, creative, and risky choices for yourself in your classes and in rehearsals.

## About the Instructor

Todd is Artistic Director of the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, the founder and former Artistic Director of Commedia Zuppa and a graduate of the world renowned Dell'Arte International in Blue Lake California. While at Dell'Arte, Todd did extensive post-graduate work in Mask, Clown, Commedia Dell'Arte and Physical Theatre.

He has an MFA in Directing from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, where he directed such plays as *On the Verge*, *Equus* and toured work to the Adelaide Fringe Festival in Adelaide Australia. While in Las Vegas, he was a Clown consultant on Cirque du Soleil's show *Zumanity*, working alongside lead Cirque clown Shannan Calcutt. With Commedia Zuppa Todd has toured work nationally and internationally. He has also directed, served as a Master Teacher and artist in residence Off-Broadway for the Rosebud Theatre Company, and at many regional theatres, colleges and universities. He is a specialist in mask and movement actor training.

Todd has also served as a Guest Artist/visiting Assistant Professor at Kalamazoo College where he taught classes in acting, mask performance and directed recent productions of *Peer Gynt* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In 2002 his mask show *BOXHEAD* was nominated for a Brickenden Award for best touring production by the London Free Press. His production of *Richard the Third* won the Civic Theatre Production Excellence award (2015).

## Course Curriculum

### Lesson 1: Warmups 6:14

Introduction to the course and an overview of the types of games you'll learn, how you can use them, and the effect they have on those who play them.

### Lesson 2: Risk Games 13:49

In this lesson, you'll learn risk games. Risk games encourage students to take risks, move out of their comfort zone, and learn something new. Risk games – they're a great way to train your students to do and not think.

### Lesson 3: Movement Games 13:26

Learn three valuable movement games that help your actors to get comfortable moving their bodies and communicating using their bodies.

### Lesson 4: Focus Games 13:06

During lesson four, you'll learn important focus games that not only help to build ensemble, but also help your students to focus on themselves and others.

### Lesson 5: Voice Games 13:39

Through vocal games, your students will be encouraged to "play in their voice" and makes sounds in a free and impulsive way.

### Lesson 6: All-Inclusive Games 17:33

In lesson six you'll learned games that will be linked together and will mimic the rehearsal and performance process.

### Lesson 7: When to use Games 16:16

Lesson seven reviews the categories of games you learned and guides you through how to use them for specific rehearsals. You'll even learn tips on how to use games you already know throughout the rehearsal process.

### Lesson 8: Wrap-Up 2:50

In this final module, you'll review what you've learned and how you can use and add on to what you've learned throughout the rehearsal and performance process.

# Standards Connections

## National Core Arts Standards

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 6

TH:Pr5.1.6.a - Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.

### Organize and develop artistic ideas and work - Grade 7

TH:Cr2.1.7.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 7

TH:Pr5.1.7.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade 8

TH:Pr5.1.8.a - Use a variety of acting techniques to increase skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade HS Proficient

TH:Pr5.1.HSI.a - Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade HS Accomplished

TH:Pr5.1.HSII.a - Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

### Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation - Grade HS Advanced

TH:Pr5.1.HSIII.a - Use and justify a collection of acting exercises from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance.

## California VAPA Standards (2019)

### 6.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

6.TH:Pr5.a - Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Cr2 Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

7.TH:Cr2.b - Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

### 7.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

7.TH:Pr5.a - Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### 8.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

8.TH:Pr5.a - Use a variety of acting techniques to increase skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Prof.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Prof.TH:Pr5.a - Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Acc.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

Acc.TH:Pr5.a - Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

### Adv.TH:Pr5 Develop and refine artistic techniques and

### work for presentation.

Adv.TH:Pr5.a - Use and justify a collection of acting exercises from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance.

## Colorado Academic Standards - Drama and Theatre Arts

### Sixth Grade

DT.6.2.2.a - Students Can: Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### Seventh Grade

DT.7.1.2.b - Students Can: Demonstrate mutual respect for self and others and their roles in preparing or devising drama/theatre work.

DT.7.2.2.a - Students Can: Recognize how acting exercises and techniques can be applied to a drama/theatre work.

### Eighth Grade

DT.8.2.2.a - Students Can: Develop a variety of acting techniques to increase skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### High School - Fundamental Pathway

DT.H1.2.2.a - Students Can: Practice various acting techniques to expand skills in a rehearsal or drama/theatre performance.

### High School - Advanced Pathway

DT.H2.2.2.a - Students Can: Refine a range of acting skills to build a believable and sustainable drama/theatre performance.

### High School - Professional Pathway

DT.H3.2.2.a - Students Can: Perform and justify a collection of acting exercises from reliable resources to prepare a believable and sustainable performance.

## Common Core

### Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 - Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### Reading: Informational Text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6 - Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

### Language

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5 - Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## Florida Sunshine State Standards

### Critical Thinking & Reflection

TH.912.C.1.5 - Make and defend conscious choices in the creation of a character that will fulfill anticipated audience response.

TH.912.C.2.5 - Analyze the effect of rehearsal sessions and/or strategies on refining skills and techniques by keeping a performance or rehearsal journal/log.

TH.912.C.2.7 - Accept feedback from others, analyze it for validity, and apply suggestions appropriately to future performances or designs.

TH.912.C.2.8 - Improve a performance or project using various self-assessment tools, coaching, feedback, and/or constructive criticism.

### Innovation, Technology & the Future

TH.912.F.3.3 - Exhibit independence, discipline, and commitment to the theatre process when working on assigned projects and productions.

### Skills, Techniques & Processes

TH.912.S.1.6 - Respond appropriately to directorial choices for improvised and scripted scenes.

TH.912.S.2.4 - Sustain a character or follow technical cues in a production piece to show focus.

TH.912.S.2.8 - Strengthen acting skills by engaging in theatre games and improvisations.

TH.912.S.3.2 - Exercise artistic discipline and collaboration to achieve ensemble in rehearsal and performance.

TH.912.S.3.3 - Develop acting skills and techniques in the rehearsal process.

## Georgia Performance Standards - Theatre Arts

### Grade 6 - Creating

TA6.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify artistic choices, utilize theatre vocabulary, and demonstrate non-verbal communication skills in the rehearsal process., b. Interpret a character's motivation by understanding the relationship between their background and their behavior., c. Identify the variety of relationships between characters., d. Identify, define, and classify character traits., e. Recognize and demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and skills associated with collaborative performance., f. Use resources to identify and create technical elements of theatre.

### Grade 6 - Performing

TA6.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Execute character creation in a performance., c. Demonstrate a variety of types of theatre performances.

### Grade 7 - Creating

TA7.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Identify and rehearse effective communication skills., b. Compare and contrast character types and relationships by analyzing character motivations, objectives, and goals., c. Compare the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character., d. Investigate the role and responsibility of the cast and crew., e. Identify and model ensemble skills in the rehearsal process., f. Utilize staging and blocking choices to enhance the performance., g. Compare, contrast, and design elements of technical theatre., h. Utilize

theatre vocabulary throughout the rehearsal process.

TA7.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Create ideas for stories., b. Analyze the theme and structure of a play., c. Use the dramatic writing process to generate a script., d. Utilize dramatic conventions in the scriptwriting process (e.g. stage directions, dialogue, scenes).

### Grade 7 - Performing

TA7.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Execute effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills in performance (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Participate in a variety of acting exercises and techniques that can be applied in a rehearsal or theatre performance., c. Engage in various performance styles.

### Grade 8 - Creating

TA8.CR.2 - Develop scripts through theatrical techniques., a. Classify different points of view in a story., b. Identify, analyze, and articulate the structure of a script., c. Utilize improvisation techniques to generate script ideas., d. Use the dramatic writing process to generate a script.

### Grade 8 - Performing

TA8.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Demonstrate the physical, emotional, vocal, and social dimensions of a character in different types of theatre performances (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, motivation, physical movement), b. Demonstrate appropriate ensemble skills throughout a performance., c. Use appropriate listening and response skills during performances.

### Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Creating

TAHSFT.CR.1 - Organize, design, and refine theatrical work., a. Recognize and/or employ realistic and conventional speech patterns within dialogue or dramatic verse., b. Incorporate dramatic elements through improvisation., c. Recognize and interpret artistic choices in performance.

### Grades 9-12 - FUNDAMENTALS OF THEATRE LEVELS I-IV - Performing

TAHSFT.PR.1 - Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments., a. Observe and demonstrate aspects of verbal and non-verbal techniques in common human activity for performance (e.g. voice, breathing, posture, facial expression, physical movement), b. Construct and interpret artistic choices in performance including the objectives, decisions, and actions of characters., c. Explore various acting methods and techniques (e.g. Stanislavski, Uta Hagen, sense memory, emotional recall) for the purpose of character development., d. Perform acting choices for an audience based on critiques.

## North Carolina Essential Standards 2024

### Beginning High School Create

B.CR.1.1 - Devise a variety of scenarios and scenes through improvised and scripted activities.

### Beginning High School Present

B.PR.1.2 - Communicate characters, situations, and scenarios using body and voice while adhering to staging conventions.

B.PR.2.1 - Develop scripted or devised theatre for

presentation.

## North Carolina Essential Standards 2010

### Beginning High School Standards - Communication

B.C.1.1 - Use non-verbal expression to illustrate how human emotion affects the body and is conveyed through the body.

B.C.1.2 - Apply vocal elements of volume, pitch, rate, tone, articulation, and vocal expression.

B.C.2.1 - Use improvisation and acting skills, such as observation, concentration, and characterization in a variety of theatre exercises.

### Beginning High School Standards - Culture

B.CU.2.2 - Use acting conventions, such as stage presence, subtext, style, and ensemble work, to perform formal or informal works.

## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Theatre Arts

### MS 117.213 LIII - Creative Expression: performance

B.2.C - create characters, dialogue, and actions that reflect dramatic structure in improvised and scripted scenes, individually and collaboratively.

### HS 117.315 LI - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.C - employ effective voice and diction to express thoughts and feelings.

### HS 117.316 LII - Creative Expression: performance

C.2.D - apply physical, intellectual, emotional, and social interactions to portray believable characters and convey a story when applying acting concepts, skills, and techniques.

### HS 117.317 LIII - Foundations: Inquiry and Understanding

C.1.A - apply theatre preparation and warm-up techniques effectively.

## Alberta, Canada

### Speech Drama 10

- 1 - demonstrate vocal relaxation and warmup techniques
- 12 - create specific vocal sound effects

### Improvisation Drama 10

- 1 - use warmup techniques for preparation of body, voice and mind
- 17 - demonstrate the ability to accept, advance, offer or block thought and action, quickly and effectively
- 3 - maintain concentration during exercises
- 6 - demonstrate thinking in a divergent mode

### Movement Drama 10

- 10 - demonstrate focus, concentration and energy in all movement and gesture
- 11 - demonstrate the ability to move isolated body parts
- 12 - demonstrate knowledge of elements of space
- 14 - create physically shapes in space
- 15 - use basic locomotor movements (eg. walking, running, crawling) to explore space
- 16 - create and repeat patterns of movement
- 19 - demonstrate qualities of energy
- 20 - create appropriate personal physical warmup routines

21 - demonstrate the ability to extend a movement

3 - recognize the necessity for physical warmups

4 - perform a physical warmup

### Junior Orientation

demonstrate a willingness to take calculated and reasonable risks

demonstrate trust by becoming comfortable, physically and emotionally, with others

focus concentration on one task at a time

listen effectively

move in a variety of ways

recognize the purposes of and participate in warmup activities

respond to directions without breaking concentration-side coaching

share ideas confidently with others

speak, move, and generate ideas spontaneously

work cooperatively and productively with all members of the class in pairs, small groups and large groups

### Movement Level I - Beginning

10 - use varying speed of movement

11 - use directions and pathways

13 - control focus and energy in movement and gesture

14 - create shapes with the body

2 - demonstrate awareness of personal and shared space

4 - recognize the need for and demonstrate warmup activities

5 - move individual body parts

9 - travel through space in a variety of ways e.g., running, creeping and jumping

### Movement Level II - Intermediate

22 - use exaggerated movement and gesture

23 - plan, repeat and combine movement patterns

### Movement Level III - Advanced

28 - coordinate movement and movement patterns with other students

### Speech Level I - Beginning

1 - speak spontaneously

7 - create vocal sound effects to explore voice potential

### Speech Level III - Advanced

18 - apply speech skills in a variety of speaking situations

### Improvisation/Acting Level I - Beginning

1 - use warm-up techniques for preparation of body, voice and mind

2 - respond to directions without breaking concentration-side coaching

4 - create experiences through imaging, visualizing and fantasizing

### Improvisation/Acting Level II - Intermediate

16 - demonstrate economy in movement and speech

25 - demonstrate understanding of focus and the processes of sharing, giving and taking

### Junior Goal I Objectives

develop the ability to interact effectively and constructively in a group process

develop the willingness to make a decision, act upon it and accept the results



explore and develop physical and vocal capabilities  
strengthen powers of concentration

### **Senior Goal I Objectives**

demonstrate a sense of responsibility and commitment,  
individually and to the group  
demonstrate the ability to consider decisions, act upon  
them and accept the results  
extend physical and vocal capabilities  
extend the ability to concentrate  
sharpen observations of people, situations and the  
environment

### **Senior Goal II Objectives**

develop the ability to select appropriate physical and vocal  
expression for feelings, ideas and images  
extend the ability to give form and expression to feelings,  
ideas and images

### **Orientation Drama 10**

concentrate on the task at hand  
demonstrate behaviour appropriate to given circumstances  
demonstrate effective use and management of time  
listen to self and others  
make effective decisions or choices  
positively support the work of others  
share ideas confidently  
work with abstract concepts

## **British Columbia (2018)**

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual  
using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation,  
and purposeful play

Intentionally select and apply materials, movements,  
technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by  
combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and  
principles in art making

### **GRADE 6 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts  
Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and  
experiences

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual  
using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation,  
and purposeful play

Intentionally select and apply materials, movements,  
technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by  
combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and  
principles in art making

### **GRADE 7 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences through the arts  
Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and  
experiences

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Exploring and creating**

Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual  
using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation,  
and purposeful play

Intentionally select and apply materials, movements,  
technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by  
combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and  
principles in art making

### **GRADE 8 - ARTS - Communicating and documenting**

Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and  
experiences

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Exploring and creating**

Create dramatic works both collaboratively and as an  
individual, using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, and  
purposeful play

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Reasoning and reflecting**

Receive, offer, and apply constructive feedback

### **GRADE 9 - DRAMA - Connecting and expanding**

Collaborate through reciprocal relationships during creative  
processes

Demonstrate respect for themselves, others, and the  
audience

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Improvise and take creative risks to express meaning

### **GRADE 10 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and the audience

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Improvise and take creative risks using imagination,  
exploration, and inquiry

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Reason and reflect**

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

### **GRADE 11 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate awareness of self, others, and audience

### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Explore and Create**

Improvise and take creative risks using imagination,  
exploration, and inquiry

### **GRADE 12 - DRAMA - Connect and expand**

Demonstrate respect for self, others, and audience

## **Ontario, Canada**

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Foundations - Responsible Practices**

C.3.2 - identify and apply the skills and attitudes needed to  
perform various tasks and responsibilities in producing drama  
works (e.g., use active listening and cooperative problem-  
solving skills; practise punctuality; use tact in suggesting  
changes and improvements; demonstrate willingness to  
accept criticism and build consensus)

C.3.3 - demonstrate an understanding of theatre and  
audience etiquette, in both classroom and formal  
performance contexts (e.g., as a performer: show willingness  
to take direction and behave appropriately towards other  
actors; as a viewer: demonstrate respect for performers and  
other audience members by paying attention, not interrupting  
or talking, and applauding when appropriate)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Connections Beyond the Classroom**

B.3.1 - identify and describe skills, attitudes, and strategies  
they used in collaborative drama activities (e.g.,  
brainstorming, active listening, and cooperative problem-  
solving skills; strategies for sharing responsibility through  
collaborative team roles)

B.3.2 - identify skills they have developed through drama  
activities and explain how they can be useful in work and  
other social contexts (e.g., explain in a journal how their  
brainstorming and negotiation skills support teamwork in a  
variety of contexts)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Reflecting, Responding and Analyzing - Drama and Society**

B.2.2 - explain how dramatic exploration helps develop awareness of different roles and identities people have in society (e.g., explain what they learned through role playing characters from different socio-economic groups)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - Presentation Techniques & Technologies**

A.3.2 - use a variety of voice and movement techniques to support the creation of character or atmosphere during rehearsal (e.g., use voice and movement to suggest an airport, circus, or factory environment)

### **Grades 9 & 10 - Creating and Presenting - The Creative Process**

A.1.3 - use role play and characterization to explore personal and social issues (e.g., with a partner, create or assume a role that explores an issue such as bullying; create a scenario that reveals details about a character's motivation)