



Lessons from Second City

By Charlisa Anderson

Wouldn't it be great to be clever and witty? I sometimes don't get the joke until someone explains it to me or wish I had a clever comeback when someone disses me in jest. We all have a friend or acquaintance that is just plain funny; that is quick, witty and can always think of a different way to look at a situation and put you in hysterics! That person is a risk taker.

My avocation and one of my greatest loves is performing whether it is in theatre, films, commercials or singing in my barbershop chorus. All of these mediums require a certain amount of risk; getting out of your comfort zone, being willing to make a fool of yourself and trusting others in the cast. I have come to realize that if I want to become a better performer and deliver a feast to my audience, then I have to risk. When you are out of your comfort zone and scared to death...that is when the real learning takes place. It's kind of like the quote I have heard (and I will paraphrase); "If you think the way you always have, you will get what you always got". (Source unknown).

I recently went to Second City in Chicago for 3 day improv intensive training. Second City's alumni include, John Belushi, Dan Akroyd, Alan Arkin, Chris Farley, Gilda Radnor, Bonnie Hunt, Stephen Colbert, and Tina Fey, to mention a few. They have sketch comedy and improv shows on a regular basis and offer many training classes at several locations throughout the country. You can find out more at www.secondcity.com.

My agent, Carol Mosaic of CAM Talent, www.camtalent.com, said to me this week, "Why did you go all the way to Second City to take this class...that is pretty brave!?" I told her that I wanted to risk, explore my imagination, learn from the professionals, and after all, I am in the business of promoting myself and this will look GREAT on my resume! Carol then told me that a favorite quote of hers lately is, "If you are not living on the edge, then you are taking up too much space". Isn't that a great concept?

I stuffed all kinds of goodies in my "life's journey bag" and brought it home. These lessons will, and already have started to, change how I live AND perform.

Trust others. I had to trust that the others in my scene were going to go with what I delivered and I did the same for them. Have faith in your fellow man. Most people are good and want to help each other.

Support others – "Yes, and..." is always the response to another's delivery. Teamwork; we can all do more together than alone!

Don't worry what others think of you. Think outside the box. Anything goes! Get creative! The crazier it is, the more entertaining. You have to be willing to make a fool of yourself when you do improv or act. When you are in that mindset, you can "get out of your own way" and really let your imagination flow. Live as if you were dying.

It's okay to make mistakes although our instructor told us that nothing you say or do in improv is "wrong". The only rule is that you don't deny another's idea or statement. If you go with the flow in improv, a great story will unravel, and if you do the same in life, you will achieve great things!

There is never nothing going on. This is true in life AND in the arts. Good theatre and improv is "life with all the boring parts taken out". If you can LIVE this concept, you will jump out of bed every morning!!

I encourage you to seek out improv troupe performances in Columbus and/or take a class. It really stretches you and opens you up to possibilities and greatness. Here are some links to local improv:

<http://paleimitations.googlepages.com/>, <http://www.horsecoproductions.com/ffn2/ffn/>, <http://www.cinublue.com/>