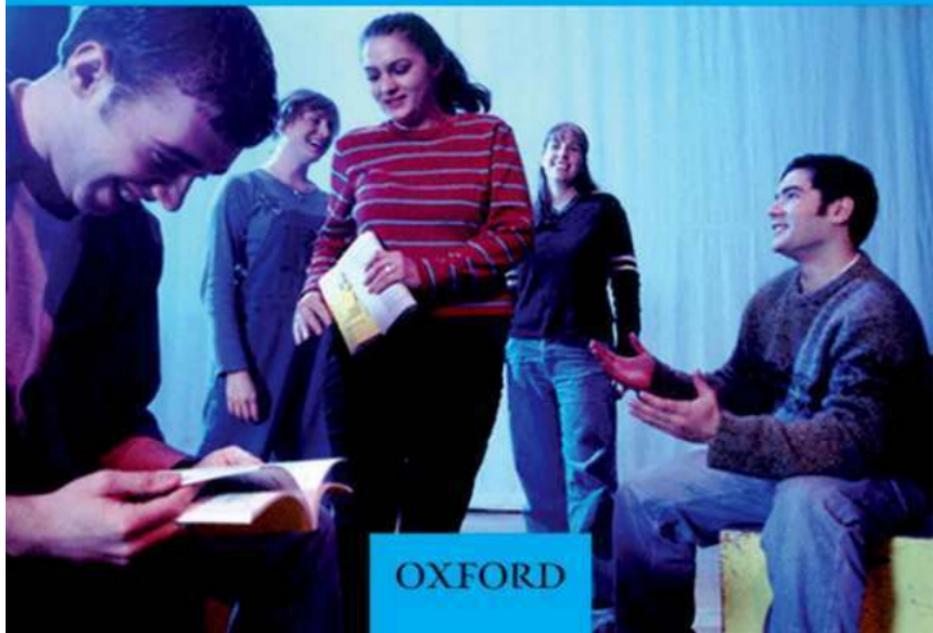


RESOURCE  
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*series editor*  
Alan Maley

# Drama and Improvisation

Ken Wilson



OXFORD

**Ken Wilson**  
**Drama & Improvisation**  
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**Аннотация**

Designed to enliven English classes through drama activities and activate students' imagination and creativity.

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# Ken Wilson

## Drama and Improvisation

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# Acknowledgements

During the 1990s, my wife Dede and I did a teacher development summer school in the middle of the Hungarian plain at a place called Bugac. The course was called *Drama Plus* and was attended by teachers from more than 30 countries. Many of the ideas in this book were developed with the participants at *Drama Plus*, who then tried them out on their own students when they went home. The information gained from this international exposure to the activities is reflected in the notes relating to the material.

I have also seen inspiring work done by extra-curricular English clubs that teachers with more energy than me have started in schools all over the world. Many of these teachers make drama and performance the focus of such extra English activities. In particular, I want to pay tribute to the students and teachers who attend the annual Teenplay Drama Festival in Arad, Romania, where I was lucky enough to be president of the jury on two occasions. The work done by the teachers and students in those groups is staggeringly good, and Romania is one of the many countries where an interest in English and an interest in drama, theatre, and performance seem to go hand in hand.

My co-directors at the English Teaching Theatre, Hazel Imbert and the late Doug Case, have both had a profound influence on my drama training ideas and written work. Both

Hazel and Doug were wonderful working partners, and were instrumental in the development of many of these ideas.

I am also indebted to the many ETT actors whose ideas I have been able to adapt for this book. I have been fortunate to work with some extremely talented and energetic young actors. Apart from anything else, they showed me that good actors are incredibly hard-working and dedicated people.

I want to give a special mention to two of these colleagues: Joy Harrison, an actor-director with amazing energy and an endless fund of good ideas, who has accompanied Dede and me on various ELT drama training ventures; and Richard Vranich, who was a member of both the English Teaching Theatre and the Comedy Store Players and who introduced me to the work of the Players.

### **The Comedy Store Players**

The Comedy Store Players are a group of improvising comedy performers who are based at the Comedy Store in London. The group began in 1985, and the original line-up included Mike Myers, who was later to become internationally famous as the parody spy in the *Austin Powers* series of movies. Canadian Myers and an American woman comedian and actor called Kit Hollerbach brought North American improvisation ideas and taught them to an eager group of English actor/comedians.

### **Viola Spolin (1906–1994)**

Many of the Comedy Store improvisations were inspired by the work of educator and actor-director Viola Spolin, the

inventor of Theater Games.

Viola Spolin was born in Chicago and initially trained as a settlement worker, someone who helps immigrants to adapt to their new surroundings in the USA. She was aware that language communication was vital to these new Americans, and she was influenced by innovative teaching methods aimed at making groups work well together. She also found ways to use these methods to help individuals in the group feel confident enough to express their feelings.

Spolin was also interested in the way in which game structures affected the social behaviour of inner-city and immigrant children. She was particularly fascinated by the fact that children who were reluctant and resistant to normal teaching methods reacted with enthusiasm and energy if something was introduced as a game. When the children weren't being asked to 'learn' something, they actually learned a lot!

In 1939, while serving as a drama supervisor in Chicago, Spolin began to devise a system of theatre training that could cross cultural and ethnic barriers. She began to develop new games that focused on individual creativity, using the concept of play to unlock the individual's creativity and self-expression. These techniques were later to be formalized under the title *Theater Games*. She said, 'The games emerged out of necessity. I didn't sit at home and dream them up. When I had a problem with the children, I made up a game. When another problem came up, I just made up a new game.'

Her son Paul Sills developed the comic potential of these games, and opened Second City, the first improvisation comedy club in the world, in Chicago. When they opened a new club in Montreal, Canada, one of the first people to attend the show was Mike Myers, then aged 14.

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of two people: Doug Case, my life-long working partner and friend, without whose influence and advice this book would never have been written; and my lovely sister-in-law Lesley Wilson. Both sorely missed.

# The author and series editor

**Ken Wilson** is an ELT materials author whose work also involves training, theatre, music, audio production, and writing for radio and TV. He has written ten series of coursebooks and vast amounts of supplementary material, including books of sketches and more than 150 ELT songs. His course material includes *Smart Choice*, a four-level course for young adult learners, also published by OUP.

Ken has trained teachers all over Europe, Latin America, and Asia. After working as a CELTA trainer, he began to develop drama techniques and incorporate them into more conventional teaching methods. With his wife Dede, he ran a summer school called 'Drama Plus' for ten years in Hungary. Teachers from 30 countries attended these courses. More recently, he has trained teachers in China and other Asian countries.

After his first teaching job in Seville, Ken moved to International House, London, where he became a teacher trainer. In his free time, he started playing in a band, which led directly to two new strands of his working life. Firstly, he wrote songs for his English students, which resulted in the recording of the first-ever album of ELT songs, *Mister Monday*. Secondly, he joined the English Teaching Theatre (ETT) as a teacher/musician. He eventually became artistic director of the company.

The English Teaching Theatre was the brainchild of John

Haycraft, the founder of the International House chain of language schools. Over a period of 25 years, the ETT made more than 250 tours to 55 countries. The actors who worked at the ETT, and the teachers and students that Ken met in these countries have been a major source of inspiration for the ideas in this book.

**Alan Maley** worked for the British Council from 1966 to 1988, serving as English Language Officer in Yugoslavia, Ghana, Italy, France, and China, and as Regional Representative in South India (Madras). From 1988 to 1993, he was Director-General of the Bell Educational Trust, Cambridge. From 1993 to 1998 he was Senior Fellow in the Department of English Language and Literature of the National University of Singapore, and from 1998 to 2003 he was Director of the graduate programme at Assumption University, Bangkok. He is currently a freelance consultant. Among his publications are *Literature* (in this series), *Beyond Words*, *Sounds Interesting*, *Sounds Intriguing*, *Words*, *Variations on a Theme*, and *Drama Techniques in Language Learning* (all with Alan Duff), *The Mind's Eye* (with Françoise Grellet and Alan Duff), *Learning to Listen and Poem into Poem* (with Sandra Moulding), *Short and Sweet*, and *The English Teacher's Voice*.

# Foreword

Despite all the innovations which have entered the language teaching profession in the wake of the 'communicative revolution', it remains true that the vast majority of what happens in classrooms is highly structured and controlled. It tends to be focused on supposedly predictable outcomes to be achieved by concentrated, effortful activities, which can be measured in tests and examinations.

There is, however, abundant evidence that languages are not learned or acquired only in this way. There is an important role for activities which focus on playfulness, on enjoyment, on physical movement, on affective engagement, and which can foster what has been called a 'flow' state of effortless effort.

There is, of course, no single way of achieving 'flow' but using drama and improvisation is one of the well-attested ways of moving towards it. They build confidence and an ability to handle the very unpredictability which lies at the heart of interactions in the new language. They foster the capacity to deal imaginatively with the unexpected, and the willingness to 'have a go' – to take risks in the new language. In the absence of this capability, little enduring learning is likely to take place.

The activities in this book are designed specifically to help learners loosen up, to engage creatively with the new language in a context of support and cooperative effort. This is not a course

book, yet the chapters do tend to lead from shorter, simpler, less demanding activities towards longer and more complex activities, culminating in a series of ideas for working with a series of original dramatic sketches in English.

The author has distilled his experience of working with teachers and students, and with the actors of the English Teaching Theatre and their audiences, over many years in many different geographical and educational contexts. The activities themselves bear the stamp of authentic experience and proven success. This book is a breath of fresh air and will prove a welcome new bank of activities for the resourceful teacher!

Alan Maley

# Introduction

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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Improvisational theatre, often called improvisation or improv, is the form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted: created spontaneously by the performers. In its purest form, the dialogue, action, story, and characters are created collaboratively by the players as the improvisation unfolds in present time, without use of an already prepared, written script. Drama and Improvisation is a series of activities designed to enliven your English classes and activate your students's™ imagination and creativity. I devised and collected them over many years working as a language trainer and actor/director with the English Teaching Theatre (ETT). Many of them emerged from improvisation activities with students in class or with teachers at workshops and on courses all over the world. Some of them were inspired by working