Clown games 2 – Audience games

When a game is good, the audience forgets the time and rules and enjoys the show.
If the game is bad or boring, it gets cut off early

About this collection

These exercises and games have emerged from our work with Rebel Clowning, Physical Theatre and creative political education. The collection draws on experiences from different projects, trainings and international collaborations, particularly the collaboration between Clownlabor Schweiz and Theater der Unterdrückten Wien (TdU Wien), supported by Movetia, and the work and exchange with clown practitioners Hilary Ramsden and Robin Hambrook. The methods have been tried, adapted and further developed in different groups and contexts.

We share them as an open resource for clown groups, youth workers, educators, artists, activists and anyone interested in Rebel Clowning as a practice. The exercises in this collection focus particularly on encounters and interaction with audiences.

We see this collection as a commons – shared knowledge that can be passed on, adapted and further developed.

The collection is intentionally open-ended. If you have developed exercises or games that you would like to share, please send them to us. We are happy to include new contributions, perspectives and experiences from different contexts.

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Big Flop
Groups of three: the first person plays the fool. The task is to fake a handshake, where the second person tricks the first by pulling their hand away. The fool shows great enthusiasm for the trick and wants to try it on the third person — but it fails, so the first person remains the fool. What follows is improvisation.

Breath and greet
In pairs, facing each other. Then, one person or both approach and greet each other with a handshake. The breathing style is varied to give character and color to the greeting/person.

Broadway disaster
Choreographies are developed in pairs: six different movements in sequence, which are then performed synchronously as a duo. The choreography is then performed as clowns at a Broadway casting to music in front of an audience. However, there is a third clown who does not know the choreography but has been assigned to the duo by the production. Architecture of the play: by repeating the choreography, the duo provides the platform for the third clown's play en contre-point. -> Variation: Clown Haka (Maori war dance in a clownish version) instead of Broadway choreography.

Choreo Improv
The group forms pairs. A theme is announced, and each pair has **2 minutes** to create a dance choreography.
They then perform it to music.
The best choreography is chosen afterward.

Clown conference
Three clowns, the first is the moderator, acts as a counterpoint and translates what the other two say, who play a family of two experts on a selected topic. The experts only speak in Gromolo, and the moderator translates it into a language that the audience can understand.

Vatiation: the one clown is the expert, presenting something, the second is the translater for the audionce and the third is a mime, performing whats said with their body.

Clown Rugby
Setup: A ball is placed inside a circle of string/rope in the center of the field. Two teams play, one-on-one.
Goal: Bring the ball back to your team's zone.
If someone steps inside the rope circle, the opponent is allowed to touch them, earning a point.

Additionally, one of the two players is allowed to talk or sing to distract or influence the game in their favor.

Dance Competition
7 chairs are placed in the back or the stage and 8 clowns come on stage. The clowns are asked by the moderator of the show (game master) one after the other who they are and whom they are dancing for. Then music plays and the clowns dance, competing for the attention of the public. When the music stops everyone has to find a chair. The clown that doesnt find a chair has to swing on stage with a liane and show something that only they can do.

Emotion Volley
The group plays volleyball in a circle and chooses an emotion or feeling. Each time someone hits the ball, they look at the audience and express that emotion.

Existing Alone:
A clown in front of the audience for 10 minutes, without eye contact, ignoring the audience.
Afterward: The audience gives feedback according to "I see, I know, I feel, I imagine."
What happens when a clown exists without an audience? Where does the clown find their game support points?
Goal -> Experience the emptiness, but there is no emptiness! You just have to wait for the game -> Exercise for trust and conviction.

Focus impro
5 clowns enter the stage one after another, always giving focus to the next clown. When everyone is there the improvisation starts by negociating the focus very precisely. Whenever the public feels like the focus is lost, meaning they don't know where to look, they raise their hands or do snipping sounds with their fingers.

Gromolo Shakespeare
Two clowns enter to music. When the music stops, they perform *Romeo and Juliet* in Gromolo for an imaginary circus audience of four thousand people.

High Five Volley
In groups of 4 or 5, the ball is passed around. After passing the ball, the player immediately gives a high five to another person, both facing the audience. The group with the most uninterrupted high fives wins.

I do, I dont
Solo with the audience. A goal is pursued, such as sitting in a chair. However, on the way there, a distraction appears—a more important goal that draws

attention, like closing a window. As you head toward that goal, another goal is discovered, and so on. The gaze is the key to signaling the next goal and connecting with the audience ("Did you understand what my next goal is?") -> Show and amplify inner conflicts.

Ikea Game
Solo with the audience, two chairs on stage. The task is to choose one chair. Its a recision game, follow and develop the first intention of decision-making ("Do I decide with my gaze, feet, mouth, or butt...?").

Inventing Games

In pairs: within one minute, invent and perform as many understandable games as possible for the audience.
Rules: No miming. Explaining the game to each other on stage is boring and not allowed.

Invisible Dog
One person tells a story to the audience while being attacked by an invisible dog. This forces them to change their voice, facial expression, and body language — all without stopping the story.
Goal: Find a rhythm and play with mimicry and voice.

Magnification / Minimization:
A self-made gesture and sound are repeated, then enlarged, minimized, sped up, or slowed down (spatially, audibly, intentionally...) to find clown-like expressions.

Metric Exercise
Three people, A, B, C, begin offstage. A enters the stage and establishes contact with the audience. Then B enters, establishes contact with A, and then with the audience. A gives B the focus during the performance, then together with B, directs focus to the audience. When C enters, A and B give C the focus. C establishes contact with A and B and then with the audience. A and B stay with C, maintaining the focus. The ball is now with C, who chooses a point on the stage using their gaze. C looks at the partners and the audience to check if they've seen the chosen point. C then walks to the chosen point. Along the way, C remembers they forgot to give a partner a hug or a slap. C pauses, looks at the audience, selects a partner with their gaze, and approaches them. There, C checks with the audience and partners to confirm who was chosen. C gives the hug or slap, then passes the focus to the chosen person, who looks at the audience and then returns the focus to C. C checks with the audience and

partners if they saw what happened, then continues to the chosen point and passes the focus to another partner, where the game starts again.
-> This basic rhythm of the game can then be expanded with content.
-> For contrast: Oscar distribution game -> Three people on stage trying to attract focus. The audience points to who has caught their attention.

Noise Poem

One person stands on stage. A sequence of sounds is played through the speakers. First, the performer must reproduce the sound sequence as precisely as possible. Then they must recite a poem in a foreign language, integrating the sounds into their voice.

Potato Poem

The clown presents a poem — in any language — while holding a hot potato in their mouth.

Scare Chase

Group game: how many well-constructed scare scenes can each group perform within one minute?

Shut Up

Two people perform a dialogue on stage. Whenever one looks at the other, the other must immediately go silent. If they look at each other at the same time, both must stop talking.
Exercise version: They can be asked to sing a song together under these rules.
Intro idea: Both come from opposite sides of the stage, lock eyes, walk toward each other, and simultaneously say something without prior agreement.

Tele Impro

A table with a phone is placed center stage. One person comes on and tries to make the audience laugh. If a game doesn't work for too long (no one laughs), someone from the audience signals, and the player must switch to a new act.

The Fly

Two people mime a fly (the same fly for both). Using finger pointing, sound, and gaze, one shows the partner where the fly is and how it moves. The more people involved, the more challenging the game becomes.

Coordination Exercises

Lift and lower arms, but one arm follows a 3-beat rhythm (1 down, 2 horizontal, 3 up).

One hand draws a triangle in the air with the index finger, while the other hand simultaneously draws a square.

Theatre Charades
Three players leave the room. The group decides on a title for a play that the three actors will unknowingly perform.
The actors enter the stage one after another. Every time one of them does something aligned with the chosen title, the audience applauds.
In the end, all three play together, trying to guess the title through performance.

Thread game
A pair, with 2 strings of 2m each, held at both ends and stretched between them. Then they move together in the space, ensuring that the strings remain taut.
Stage 2: Drop the strings but play as if they are still there and taut.
Stage 3: No longer mime the strings but continue moving together, maintaining the connection.
The exercise can also be done with three or more people.
-> If there's an audience, an invisible thread must be maintained as the connection to the audience.

Three Musketeers
Three people stand in a row on stage. The person in the middle is the boss and holds a folded newspaper to hit the others when a mistake is made.
The goal is to perform the following sequence:

1. One and only one person says: "We are the three musketeers."
2. Then, a different person says: "And we are very dangerous."
3. A third person makes a sword-thrusting gesture with a sound.
4. Then, another mimics being wounded, also with a sound.
5. Finally, all three raise their hands and mimic a bear with a sound.

Any mistake is punished, and the game restarts. Each person plays the boss once.

Three-Headed Monster:
Three people on stage, in synchrony. A game master interviews the monster offstage, and the monster (the three people) answers in unison and with clear movement.

Warrior Exercise

Create a short phrase that functions as a battle cry. One person performs it, while the others are the audience. The person walks in a circle repeating the phrase, building energy (start by whispering and gradually increasing volume and speed). When fully charged, the person faces the audience and yells the phrase with maximum volume and physical engagement. -> The key is to relax the body in the engagement to let the full voice out and articulate the mouth well!