Elizabeth Copeland

Author / Theatre Artist / Arts Facilitator

How To Create Characters that *JUMP* Off the Page!

San Miguel Writers’ Conference 2016 Workshop Handout

Sunday, Feb. 14 from 11-12:30\*

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**Note to workshop participants.**

*I have included some pre-workshop homework for you. Bring paper and pens, and wear loose comfortable clothing. Lastly, please arrive on time! I only have you for 90 minutes and want you to get the most out of the workshop. Looking forward to playing with you on Valentine’s Day in San Miguel!*

**The 7 Rules of improvisation**

From Dave Morris – The way of improvisation

Play

Let yourself fail

Listening

Say yes

Say ‘and’

Play the game

Relax and have fun

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Improvisation is a process in which plot, characters and dialogue are made up in the moment.

***How can improvisation help us as writers?***

Writing is a solitary art. It’s easy to get stuck in pre-conceived ideas of what *should* be happening. Improv busts us out of our heads and into our bodies. It teaches us to ‘say yes’ to our creativity.

 “All great ideas originate in the muscles.” Thomas Edison

***What is my homework?***

I recently took a poetry workshop where the teacher reminded us that, although writing requires a lot of effort, great writing must have an element of *play.* Please playfully approach the following bits of homework. If you attend to this the week prior to the conference, your subconscious mind will have lots of time to percolate on what you have begun.

Now, trust yourself and write!

1. Pick a character to work with. It can be a character from something you are writing, a favourite historical character, or something from your imagination. Go where the energy is!
2. Do a free write around the character. Be willing to step into the unknown and allow whatever wants to come. Images. Sensory information. Setting. Whatever. Take 3 sheets of paper, writing longhand with a pencil or pen. Do not lift your pen off the paper. Say yes to all your ideas. Fill all 3 pages.
3. In your imagination, step inside the character. Do a second free write from the point of view of ‘I’ in the present tense. Bring in all the senses. Show how you feel by the actions the character takes.

E.g. *I am running into the field. The sky is lilac-grey and the air tastes like ice. My cheeks are burning hot. But not from the cold.*

“First thought. Best thought.” Allen Ginsburg

“Through spontaneity we are reformed into ourselves, freed from handed-down frames of reference, memory choked with old facts and information and undigested theories and techniques of other people's findings.”

 Viola Spolin

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**Workshop Outline**

11:00 Welcome

Creative mind vs. Editorial mind

The way of improv

Free write

11:30 Let’s play!

* Theatre games / Group
* Improv - What if?

Free write

12:20 Q & A

12:30 Go forth and prosper

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

 Maya Angelou

“I have fallen in love with imagination. And if you fall in love with imagination, you understand that it is a free spirit. It can go anywhere and it can do anything.”

 Alice Walker

**Resources**

The joy of failure – improv and writing

<http://www.sfwa.org/2013/07/the-joy-of-failure-improv-and-writing/>

Viola Spolin

<http://www.spolin.com>

The way of improvisation

<https://gcintro2theatre.wordpress.com/2014/09/04/7-rules-of-improvisation/>

**About your instructor**

An award-winning author, theatre artist and artist facilitator, Elizabeth has worked with *Second City* doing improv comedy, the *Honolulu Symphony* playing the *Witch* in *Hansel and Gretel,* and at *Factory Theatre* where she appeared as *Amanda* in *Private Lives.* As a storyteller, she has taken the stage at the *Toronto International Storytelling Festival,* the *Canadian National Exhibition,* and most recently with the *Township Tellers* in North Hatley, Quebec.

Elizabeth facilitates innovative workshops designed to support people to live more creative lives. Her workshop, *Reclaim your Voice* has helped thousands claim their personal power through poetry, song and story. Nervous presenters have found the courage to step into the spotlight through Elizabeth’s theatre-based coaching programs. Most recently she has toured New Brunswick with the *Writers in the Schools* Program, helping young people find their writers voice. She and her husband, composer B. Glenn Copeland create original theatre using a community-based, collaborative approach. Their most recent project – *The Raven of Éirean Mhór* featured a cast of players ranging in ages from 10 to 81.

Her short stories, personal essays and poems have been published in *The Furious Gazelle, Circa – A Journal of Historical Fiction, Forge Journal & Quick Brown Fox*, to name a few. She won the 2014 Writer’s Federation of New Brunswick Young Adult Fiction Award (1st prize) for an excerpt from her novel, *Traeh Gnul – Miranda’s Journey from the Great Forest.* Her novella *JAZZ* won the 2013 Ken Klonsky Novella Prize and has since been long-listed for the *ReLit Award*. *JAZZ* is available on Amazon, or at the Conference bookstore.

<http://www.amazon.com/Jazz-Elizabeth-Copeland/dp/1927443652>

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Dear workshop participants,

Thanks for your willingness to explore with me. It is always an honour to work with other writers, and after the workshop, if the spirit moves you, do stay in touch. Together, we are strong!

All good things!

Elizabeth

elizabeth@songcycles.com

https://www.elizabethcopeland.ca