

INDUSTRIAL IMPROV

Industrial Improv is an improv collective based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Created in July 2005 by a mix of veteran and first-time longform improvisors, Industrial quickly gained local prominence and a set of regular local performance spaces. In late 2005 the ensemble took their show to the Washington Improv Theater in Washington, DC. During 2006 Industrial Improv has already performed in New York City (at the Magnet Theater) and Rhode Island (headlining the Rhode Island College Comedy Festival). In July they will perform at the Providence Improv Festival.

Members of the ensemble have trained at The Second City, the Magnet Theater, the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater, and the Philly Improv Theater. They have studied with members of The Kids in the Hall and The Upright Citizens Brigade, Keith Johnstone, Joe Bill, and Armando Diaz. Outside of the ensemble they perform stand-up and short-form, all while working tirelessly in the battle against capitalism.

Ensemble Members:

Mike Connor
Brandon Libby
Greg Maughan
Mike McFarland
Akshay Sateesh
Jessi Snow
Kevin Thone
Erin Weems

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Show Description:

Each show begins with Industrial asking the audience to picture in their minds something that they are passionate about and then tell us what that thing is. Based on the first suggestion Industrial hears we will tell stories from our own lives that our audience member's passion inspires in us and use these stories to create a completely original 30-minute show that has never been performed before and will never be performed again.

Program Blurb:

Comrade, are you prepared for the glorious revolution Industrial Improv will lead for you? Don't let the bourgeois pigs sour you against us or pollute your pure, working heart with other distracting amusements - come to the only show that will passionately stand against the forces of capitalism.

Using only a single thought from you, our brothers in the eternal struggle, we will create thirty minutes of performance that will rival the creativity of any five-year plan. You will see theater more explosive than the atomic weapons given to Mother Russia by Aunt and Uncle Rosenberg. Our comedy will cause you to laugh so hard that you will forget the soul-crushing experience of The Gulag. BYOV.

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Cast Bios:

Mike Connor - has been involved in the Philadelphia improv scene for a year now. However he has been performing comedy since the third grade when he headlined school talent shows with his stand-up routine. Mike attended Oberlin College and was a founding member and head writer of Oberlin's only sketch comedy troupe, Piscapo's Arm. He has performed stand-up at various clubs throughout Philadelphia and Cleveland. He even taught a class at Oberlin involving the history and practice of sketch comedy.

"Learning to write sketches was like learning to play in an orchestra. Everything is planned out for you," Mike once said with the insight and wisdom for which he is known, "Improv is like jazz. You got to make the funny on the fly." Many in Industrial Improv see Mike as a spiritual guru and pay a tithe to him each week in addition to the animal sacrifice (mostly rodents). He currently performs with Philly's best short form group, The N Crowd, but when he gets a hankering for some long form improvisation, he joins Industrial Improv.

Though Mike is fantastic at improv (and most activities in general) he doesn't make much money at it. So he spends his days at Independence Charter School teaching fourth graders what life is all about. The students also pay him a tithe.

Brandon Libby - was picked out of the primordial ooze that is New Jersey. He wiped himself off, and found himself performing all over the tri-state area.

Brandon began improvising in 2005 when he joined Philadelphia's short-form improv group The N Crowd, with which he continues to perform. He has studied improv with Ray Reese (director of The N Crowd) and Ari Voukydis of the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater.

Now as he prepares to take over the world with Industrial Improv - he is reminded of his meager beginnings, and the little people who made his journey worthwhile: namely, Gary Coleman & Webster. In the words of fellow Jerseyite Bruce

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Springstein "Me and Crazy Janie were making love in the dirt." Thanks, Boss. Thanks.

Greg Maughan - is the founder of the Philly Improv Theater. In addition to performing with Industrial Improv he is also one-half of the two-man duo Holmes/Maughan. Prior to moving to Philadelphia in 2001 he lived outside Detroit, where he ran the sketch/improv group Second Suburb and appeared in the alternate production "Improv Survivor" at the Second City Detroit. He has also appeared at the UCB Theater and Magnet Theater in New York, and the Washington Improv Theater.

Greg has studied improv with over 20 teachers, including: Keith Johnstone, Ian Roberts and Matt Besser of the Upright Citizens Brigade, Armando Diaz, Joe Bill, members of the Chicago and Detroit Second City mainstage casts, Ari Voukydis, Owen Burke, Billy Merritt and numerous other teachers at the UCB Theatre.

When he isn't busy running PHIT or performing, Greg leads a double-life as a political mercenary.

Michael McFarland - considers improv to be a way to make people laugh by making up characters and scenarios that are humorous. In Philadelphia, Michael was an original member of The Ninjas. After leaving The Ninjas he wanted to create an improv group with semi-autonomous collective leadership. In July 2005, he gathered the members of Industrial Improv to achieve this goal, and to create "Philadelphia's Most Powerful Improv Group" - succeeding beyond his wildest dreams. Michael was a founder and organizer of the Philadelphia Improv Festival (PHIF), which was held in November of 2005. He now serves as New York liaison for the festival committee. Michael can also be seen performing occasionally with Hypnotoad, an all-star Philadelphia group that only performs when they are desperately needed.

He moved to New York City in March 2006, but still considers Philadelphia to be geographically south of New York. Michael recently graduated from the Magnet Theater

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improv program, where he studied under Armando Diaz. Michael performed in Magnet Theater's MAGNETOSPHERE with Flavor Destination, featuring the best and brightest Magnet students, during a three month run of shows in 2005-2006. These shows are over but Michael still considers them to be part of his recent past.

Currently Michael is working on a two man musical escapade titled "Singer & Songwriter: a historical, musical & educational trip into popular music" set to debut in summer 2006. Stay tuned to his website for updates and new projects.

Jessi Snow - Jessica Snow started improvising in high school as part of a Comedy Sportz group coached by Kelly Jennings. At Cabrini College she joined another short-form troupe that changed its name yearly, until she and The Rare Bird Show's Matt Holmes took the reigns, establishing it as "On The Spot". She also performed with a Commedia dell'Arte troupe in college. Now she gets her short-form fix as the Artistic Director of The N Crowd, and her opiate fix from Industrial Improv.

When not improvising, Jessica works and sleeps. She loves sleeping. She loves beer. She loves Tequila. She loves pizza. She loves Frisbee. She wishes there was more time for drinking and Frisbee. She also wishes Phish didn't break up. She wishes she was a little bit taller. And a baller.

She wishes she had money to take classes and get good at improv, but she's poor. She has squeezed out the needed favors, goods and/or services for workshops with Kevin McDonald and Chris Gethard, and a class with Scott Greer. Jessica follows Alexis Simpson around, hoping her skills and knowledge are contagious. She follows Akshay Sateesh around for different reasons.

Akshay Sateesh - began improvising in high school where he founded Theater Sports, which focused on improvisation for non-theater peeps like jocks, librarians, and school

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counselors. He coordinated school-wide improvisation competitions in which he would demolish his rivals by improvising the scoring rules to confuse them (well, mostly just the jocks). This was good for his ego - until it was squashed by folks cooler than him like UCLA's Eric Trules, Instant Cafe Theater's Shantini Venugopal, and UCB's Chris Gethard.

After a long hiatus from improv, Akshay thanks The N Crowd for sucking him back in, and he thanks Industrial Improv for not buying him a jumpsuit in XL.

Akshay is fond of monkeys. Very fond. Especially baboons, 'coz they have colorful butts. He likes butts too. He would also like to say thanks Brahma for being so awesome and thanks to Shiva for destroying anybody who doesn't believe in Brahma. Akshay is from Malaysia.

Kevin Thone - hails from Belgium, and never got into improv before he got to the United States or Philadelphia for that matter. Is that a Belgian thing you ask? I don't think we will ever know, it being one of many things he won't reveal about this mysterious little country no one ever talks about for good reason.

So our foreign laddy newbie man got into Improv in the summer of 2005. He probably can't remember exactly how if you ask him, nevertheless Industrial Improv was forming around that time and so was his first conversation with Michael McFarland, at that time founding member of Industrial Improv.

His distinct way of terrorizing the stage has shown time and again though, that Kevin Thone must be Belgium's most raved about export product since Jean-Marie Pfaff, Leona Detiege, Samson & Gert, Eddy Wally, Bobbejaan Schoepen, and meneer de Burgemeester from Samson & Gert.

Erin Weems - is the eldest member of Industrial. She has performed since she learned to speak, when she appeared in her kitchen, scrubbing the floor and singing "It's a Hard

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Knock Life" from Annie, for her relatives On her 22nd birthday she took the big step and moved to Manhattan, where she had the opportunity to study and work with some amazing talent.

In addition to a three year Meisner/Method-Acting program with Deena Levy, Erin took voice, movement and speech classes. She studied stand up comedy at the Comic Strip on the Upper East Side and studied improv with the Upright Citizens Brigade Theater. Improv is and will always be Erin's favorite because there is nothing to remember (except the suggestion!), it's in the moment and spontaneous, and a great outlet for her ADHD.

When she isn't improvising, Erin works for Philadelphia Management: and wants you to know that if you need an apartment she is your girl. Outside of work she is the proud mother of the most adorable baby ever. Her favorite food is Sushi, and her favorite drink is Hoegaarden.

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Photos:



Industrial Improv (color press photo)

In their traditional orange jumpsuits, Industrial Improv are: Brandon Libby, Mike Connor, Kevin Thone (top); Jessi Snow, Michael McFarland, Greg Maughan (middle); and Erin Weems (bottom).

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Industrial Improv (black & white press photo)

In their traditional orange jumpsuits, Industrial Improv are: Brandon Libby, Mike Connor, Kevin Thone, Greg Maughan (top); Jessi Snow, Erin Weems, and Michael McFarland (bottom).

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Reviews:

* "Industrial Improv combines different people who have done different styles of improv, and it's the way they're combining that is special." -PhillyImprov.com, August 2005.

* "Philadelphia's newest and most powerful Longform Improv Comedy Team." -Michael McFarland. October 2005.

* "Comedy Show in New York: Friday, Jan. 27th, 2006." -The Onion AV Club. January 2006.

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Growth in the Industry

Philadelphia's improv scene gains a new group, made up of a diverse population of local improvisers.

Article by Matt Holmes

Industrial Improv is Philadelphia's newest improv comedy group. They'll be performing long-form improv, starting off by doing 'the Harold,' the standard format for long-form improv that's created by taking one audience suggestion and creating something like a half-hour improvised play. The group is the brainchild of Mike McFarland, but he's hesitant to call himself the leader. The idea behind the group is that there should be no leader, no director, no one person in charge. It's communal; hence the soviet theme of their website at www.mikejob.com. No one should think they're funnier or better than anyone else. Everyone has a different background, different levels of performance experience, and a different take on improv, with training and experience in short-form, long-form, acting, stand-up, and sketch. They've been together for about six weeks and have been trying to create a communal group mind, incorporating the unique backgrounds of each member and combining their different skills.

McFarland studied improv under Armando Diaz and has been performing long-form shows at the Magnet Theater in New York City. He studied drama at the Actor's Center in Philly and did some stand-up. He is also a member of local improv groups, Hypnotoad and the Village Idiutz, and is formerly of the Ninjas.

Greg Maughan ran a successful improv troupe in Detroit and took classes at Second City. He's been taking various classes and workshops in Philly, which is where he met McFarland, but he hasn't performed in quite a while. He says of his personal improv goals, 'At this point I just want to start performing. It's cheaper than classes.'

Erin Weems also hasn't performed in a while. She was an actress and stand-up in New York, taking classes at the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre when 9-11 happened. She moved to Philly and was briefly in the Ninjas with Mike, but took a break from improv to have a baby. One night, she met up with McFarland and they started talking about performing together again.

That same night, they also approached members of the N Crowd to join in on this project. Jess Snow, Brandon Libby, and Mike Connor have all been doing short-form improv, Whose Line Is It, Anyway-style with the N Crowd, and are now learning long-form. They each have history in acting and improv and, contrary to the other members of their new improv commune, have been performing weekly.

Industrial Improv combines people who have been improvising for years with people who have been improvising for months; people who haven't performed in years with people who have been performing every week; different people who have done different styles of improv, and it's the way that they're combining that is special. Industrial Improv is a collective of Philadelphia improvisers with a group dynamic of a true democracy. It's said that improv is about the ensemble, so this 'teamwork' idea should produce some interesting results. Their debut will be September 11th at Fergie's, performing with the N Crowd and Hypnotoad.

[Previous Spotlight \(The N Crowd\)](#)

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Salve Regina University Theatre Arts Dept. presents...

The College Improv Festival

Participating Groups:

Marist College	W.P.I.
Salve Regina University	Industrial Improv
Providence College	Inside Jokes
U.R.I.	Unexpected Company
Northeastern	Am I a ghost?



March 24-25
7:30 p.m.
Theatre Studio
Mercy Hall

\$5 Admission
Box Office: (401) 341-2250
Tickets available in advance
or at the door.