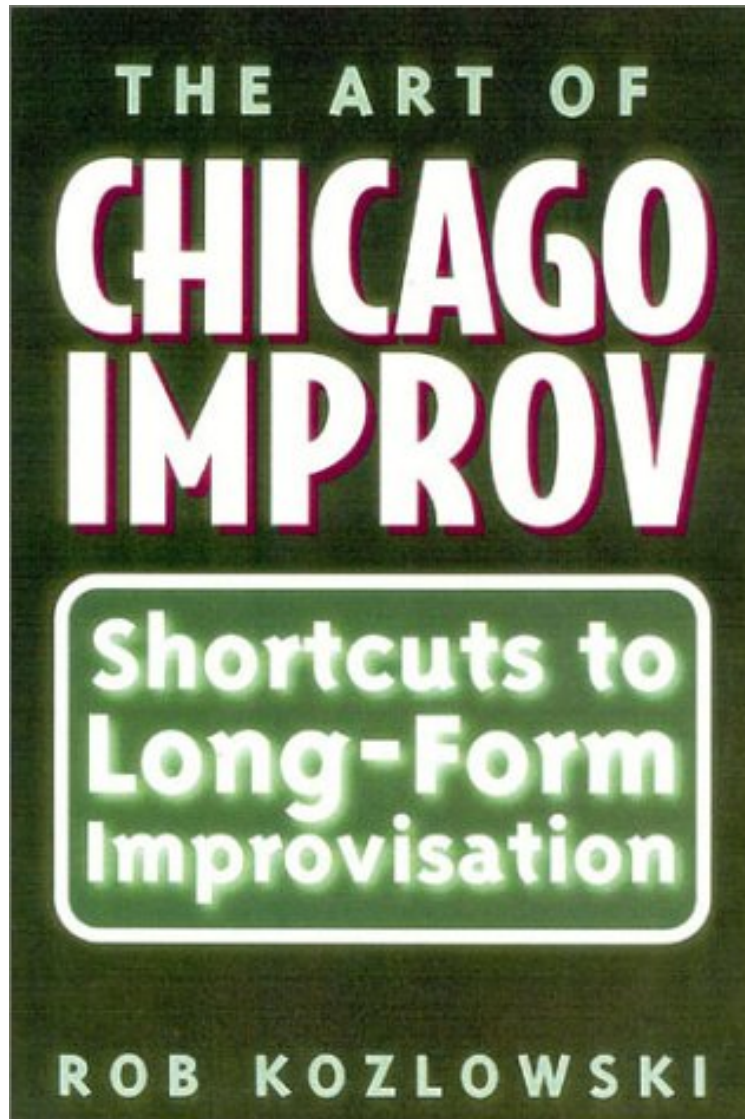


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# The Art of Chicago Improv: Short Cuts to Long-Form Improvisation

*Rob Kozlowski*

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**Rob Kozlowski : The Art of Chicago Improv: Short Cuts to Long-Form Improvisation** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Art of Chicago Improv: Short Cuts to Long-Form Improvisation:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. History and theory of Chicago improvisation By Gregory Childers Rob's book covers the history of Chicago improv rather well. The only other book that does it is "Whose

Improv Is It Anyway?: Beyond Second City" by Amy Seham. Her book is more historical/sociological than this one. His book is rather brief, and it almost assumes that you've read other books on improv before you picked it up. It has brief descriptions of several different long form structures, which makes it and "Truth in Comedy" by Close, Halpern, and Johnson the only two books that discuss long form. While it does offer some good advice on performance, it should be a supplement to your library and not your only source of information.9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. The Barely Abridged History of Chicago Improv By Matthew Flickinger I bought this because I've done some long-form improv and I wanted to learn more about the form. The book stays pretty focused on the history of modern improvisation and its unique incarnation in Chicago. It explores lives of many famous teachers and teams. At certain points, it reads like a seventh grade history book. After you read this book, you can feel pretty sure you will be able to sweep any "Improv Names and Dates" category on Jeopardy. I was more interested in its thoughts on long-form improvisation in general which it did spend some time with. It highlighted some basic tips, some different structures (as opposed to the Harold which most long-formers are at least familiar with, including La Ronde, Close Quarters, Deconstruction and others), differing long-form philosophies, and finally some predictions on the future of the form. I didn't find many "shortcuts" for the performer. If you're looking for a "how to", I'd recommend Truth In Comedy (which this book makes frequent reference to). But if you're looking for the "why and where," this is an interesting book to pick up.10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Detail Soup By A Customer This is a theatre by theatre, person by person account of long form improv productions in Chicago. We're talking date by date, address by address, show by show, location by location, director by director, actor by actor, ticket price by ticket price, lease by lease! There are an ENORMOUS number of personal pronouns in this thing. I mean, every page has seven or eight names of actors or directors associated with a particular theatre or show. I kept reading it, thinking, "Who? Who? WHO? I guess the name doesn't matter, it's the gist of the thing... Who? Who? Who? Where? A basement theatre? An angry landlord? Who? Where?" To me, the murky throughline is what's important: the growth of the improv community, the innovations, the development of the art form. I think this book would have benefitted readers if it had \*synthesized\* the changes in the art form over time, rather than mirroring itself in the "description of the crack in the wall" detail. I mean, hasn't videotape been invented yet? When a chapter features an interview, or some kind of summary or encapsulation, it's wonderful. It overcomes its inferiority complex about Chicago theatre for a brief insightful moment, abandoning its chip-on-the-shoulder need for name-dropping minutiae.

Improvisational theatre revolutionized American comedy and Chicago was its home. That city not only nurtured so much of the best work done; it also spawned many different styles that traveled around the country and the world. Experienced improv artist Rob Kozlowski trained at Chicago's Second City and knows firsthand what improv really is and what it can achieve. He tells all in this account of the first 50 years of the Chicago improv scene. Kozlowski traces the history of improvisational acting in Chicago from the days of Viola Spolin to the appearance of the Compass, Second City, and today's practitioners. In between, he takes a detailed look at Charna Halpern and the ImprovOlympic "revolution," Del Close and the development of a long-form improvisation called the Harold, and all that followed. Kozlowski also provides a guide to improv troupes seeking a style that's just right for them, with detailed descriptions of specific productions and discussions of the implications of pursuing certain improv techniques. His interviews with Annoyance Theater founder Mick Napier, ImprovOlympic veteran Noah Gregoropoulos, and ImprovOlympic's Training Center Director Liz Allen reveal the challenges and joys of long-form improvisation and how aspiring improv artists can get involved. Whether you're an "SNL" wannabe, a student of improv history, or fan of the art form, this resource will enlighten you about the workings of America's comedy capital.

About the Author Rob Kozlowski has studied and performed improvisational theatre in Chicago for nearly a decade. He is a founding member of the Playground Theatre, the nation's only non-profit improv co-op. He also teaches at Columbia College Chicago.