

**College of DuPage Theater Department
Presents**

Created through Improvisation
by Cast and Director
original music created by Leo Grabowski-Grant
July 8 - July 18, 2021



Special thanks to Student Art Designer: Kyler Sadkowski
Art Director/ Faculty Advisor: Gautam Wadhwa
Graphic Design Program, COD
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**When the sky is falling who saves the day? Chicken Little and a flock of friends!
Heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Join us as we learn that courage takes listening
to one another and belief in yourself. Bring your imagination and participation in a
'no shushing' hour of fun! This play is perfect for all ages!**

Time: Sometime in the past

Place: A Farmer's Chicken Run

Characters:

The Farmer

Turkey Lurkey

Cocky Locky

Goosey Loosey

Chicken Little

Foxy Loxy

Henny Penny

The production will have no intermission

Director's Note

This production, is an authentic collaboration between many minds and developed through the improvisation and creativity of the actors themselves. After more than a year of working remotely, we were inspired by the ability to work in person with one another. The story of *Chicken Little* is a cautionary tale about what can happen when we are swayed into choosing which voice to follow. While there is nothing wrong in curiosity, an error in judgement may result in panic; and a manipulative leader might take advantage of those who are directed through fear. The only way to escape this end, is to act with reason and to listen reasonably to one another. ~AB

Admission is free for all streamed performances. Support is made possible by a generous gift from the [College of DuPage Foundation's](#) Dr. Donald and Helen (Gum) Westlake Fund for Student Productions.

For more information, call the MAC Box Office at (630) 942-4000, or visit:
<https://www.atthemac.org/events/chicken-little/>

For more information on College Theater: <https://cod.edu/academics/programs/theater/index.aspx>

Improvisational Theatre

The focus of our dramatization is to give life to the story for both the youngest members of our audience as well as the most seasoned theatergoer. Family theatre is exciting to us as teachers and theatre artists because we seek a dynamic creative theatrical process. Our task is to guide both the student actor and the audience through a process in which we develop, express and communicate ideas, through the telling of the story. Our improvised scenario has been developed in order to motivate and extend learning. We hope to expand language, laugh at our own popular culture, communicate, encourage participation, problem solve and create. For our audience, we aspire to foster empathy, social awareness, and to clarify universal social values. Ultimately, we hope that this experience will integrate the investment of imagination, energy, feeling and ability in all of us! ~AB

After reviewing several versions of the *Chicken Little* story, we used seven steps in order to develop our production suggested by storyjumper.com:

1. Characters
2. Challenges
3. Motivation
4. Setting
5. Obstacles
6. Climax
7. Closing

The Story

Our production is based on a compilation of American *Chicken Little* stories and what the English call *Henny Penny* stories. *Chicken Little* “is a folk tale with a moral in the form of a cumulative tale about a chicken who believes the world is coming to an end. The phrase *The sky is falling!* features prominently in the story, and has passed into the English language as a common idiom indicating a hysterical or mistaken belief that disaster is imminent. Versions of the story go back more than 25 centuries; it continues to be referenced in a variety of media.”¹

In the article *The Best Lessons from Childhood Fables (That Still Matter as an Adult)*, states “These fables are more than children's stories. They are the original advice columns, self-help books, and life hacks. Some of these fables may teach different lessons to different people, but the morals they carry can help you go about your life in better, more productive manner. That kid that loved story books and cartoons is still inside of you somewhere, let them teach you a thing or two.”²

“[*Chicken Little*] The story was part of the oral folk tradition and only began to appear in print after the Brothers Grimm had set a European example with their collection of German tales in the early years of the 19th century. One of the earliest to collect tales from Scandinavian sources was Just Mathias Thiele, who in 1823 published an early version of the Henny Penny story in the Danish language. The names of the characters there are Kylling Kluk, Høne Pøne, Hane Pane, And Svand, Gaase Paase, and Ræv Skræv. In Thiele's untitled account, a nut falls on Kylling Kluk's back and knocks him over. He then goes to each of the other characters, proclaiming that “I think all the world is falling” and setting them all running. The fox Ræv Skræv joins in the flight and, when they reach the wood, counts them over from behind and eats them one by one. Eventually

¹ Lau, Jackie. “Chicken Little (Henny Penny).” *Stories Preschool*. 8 June, 2021. storiespreschool.com/fairytales_chicken_little.html

² Allen, Patrick. *The Best Lessons from Childhood Fables (That Still Matter as an Adult)*. LifeHacker.com. 10 June, 2021. lifehacker.com/the-best-lessons-from-childhood-fables-that-still-matt-1608240513.

the tale was translated into English by Benjamin Thorpe after several other versions had appeared.

Once the story began to appear in the English language, the titles by which they went varied considerably and have continued to do so. John Greene Chandler (1815-1879), an illustrator and wood engraver from Petersham, Massachusetts, published an illustrated children's book titled *The Remarkable Story of Chicken Little* in 1840. In this American version of the story, the characters' names are Chicken Little, Hen-Pen, Duck-Luck, Goose-Loose, and Fox-Lox; Chicken Little is frightened by a leaf falling on her tail.

A Scots version of the tale is found in Robert Chambers's *Popular Rhymes, Fireside Stories, and Amusements of Scotland* of 1842. It appeared among the "Fireside Nursery Stories" and was titled "The hen and her fellow travellers". The characters included Henny Penny, Cocky Locky, Ducky Daddles, Goosie Poosie, and an unnamed "tod" (fox). Henny Penny became convinced that "the lifts were faun" (the heavens were falling) when a pea fell on her head.

In 1849, a 'very different' English version was published under the title 'The Story of Chicken-Licken' by Joseph Orchard Halliwell. In this Chicken-licken was startled when 'an acorn fell on her bald pate' and encounters the characters Hen-len, Cock-lock, Duck-luck, Drake-lake, Goose-loose, Gander-lander, Turkey-lurkey and Fox-lox.

It was followed in 1850 by 'The wonderful story of Henny Penny' in Joseph Cundall's compilation, *The Treasury of pleasure books for young children*. Each story there is presented as if it were a separate book, and in this case had two illustrations by Harrison Weir. In reality the story is a repetition of the Chambers narration in standard English, except that the dialect phrase 'so she gaed, and she gaed, and she gaed' is retained and the cause of panic is mistranslated as "the clouds are falling".

Benjamin Thorpe's translation of Thiele's Danish story was published in 1853 and given the title 'The Little Chicken Kluk and his companions.' Thorpe describes the tale there as 'pendant to the Scottish story...printed in Chambers' (see above) and gives the characters approximately the same names as in Chambers.

Comparing the different versions, we find that in the Scots and English stories the animals want 'to tell the king' that the skies are falling; while in the American story, as in the Danish, they are not given any specific motivation. In all versions they are eaten by the fox, although in different circumstances."³

While the cast was working through the plot line and dialogue for our production, we were cognizant of the messages we send our audiences. We saw how choices not only

³Lau, Jackie. "Chicken Little (Henny Penny)." *Stories Preschool*. 8 June, 2021. storiespreschool.com/fairytales_chicken_little.html

affect one character, but how they affect relationships between all characters. We also saw the importance of looking at motive, and we wanted to explore Foxy's deeper motives and what he might learn from the Hen House.

Background on College Theater Improvisational Shows

Originally written by Connie Canaday Howard for *Sleeping Beauty*

At COD, a variety of classes in Theater are offered. One of our most highly demanded classes is Improvisational Acting. Each summer, for many years, we create a family show.

Generally, we start with a scenario created by the director and with which designers and director have been collaborating for weeks prior to auditions. Once cast, using the scenario as a basis, the work begins. Always, the scenario changes and flexes, based on the work in rehearsal; sometimes this change is subtle and other times it is dramatic.

At the core of the experience is practical application of improvisational skills to create characterizations and believable action (in the context of this 'fantastical land'). Most often the basis of our use is children's stories, but with new plot-lines, environments, and/or characters. Some titles in recent years are *Duck, Duck Goose*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (including a hen and harp, and Giant on stilts), *The Emperor's New Clothes* (including Prime Minister, Emperor, and Honest Girl) *Joe White and the Seven Dwarves* (including our central character of Joe, as opposed to Snow, White and female seven dwarves), and *True Confessions of the Wolf* (including the Wolf, Three Little Pigs, Boy Who Cried... and Little Red Riding Hood, all in a Courtroom presided over by Judge Mother Goose).

Also, in some way, we always include audience interaction. Characters mingle in the audience, ask for volunteers to help with certain segments of the show and quarry the audience for reactions. We also use dialogue, slang, and music from traditional children's stories, as well as from pop culture. For instance, a recurring line in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, when the cow would not give milk was, "No milk" as opposed to the ad campaign of "Got Milk." When the cow finally milked, the line was "Got Go-gurt," as that was a new and hot snack item in pop culture.

Background on Improv.

Originally created by Connie Canaday Howard for *Sleeping Beauty*

Though every director and instructor teaches with their own individual style, our ultimate goal is to teach believable action (within the realm of setting). We pull on aspects of both

technical and method acting, and also rely on a woman commonly referred to as the mother of improvisation, Viola Spolin.

Born in 1906, in Chicago, "Viola Spolin trained initially (1924-26) to be a settlement worker, studying at Neva Boyd's Group Work School in Chicago. Boyd's innovative teaching in the areas of group leadership, recreation, and social group work strongly influenced Spolin, as did the use of traditional game structures to affect social behavior in inner-city and immigrant children.

While serving as drama supervisor for the Chicago branch of the Works Progress Administration's Recreational Project (1939-1941), Spolin perceived a need for an easily grasped system of theater training that could cross the cultural and ethnic barriers within the WPA Project. Building upon the experience of Boyd's work, she responded by developing new games that focused upon individual creativity, adapting and focusing the concept of play to unlock the individual's capacity for creative self-expression. These techniques were later to be formalized under the rubric "Theater Games".

"The games emerged out of necessity," she has said. "I didn't sit at home and dream them up. When I had a problem [directing], I made up a game. When another problem came up, I just made up a new game". (Interview, Los Angeles Times, May 26, 1974).

In 1946 Spolin founded the Young Actors Company in Hollywood. Children six years of age and older were trained, through the medium of the still developing Theater Games system, to perform in productions. This company continued until 1955, when Spolin returned to Chicago to direct for the Playwright's Theater Club and subsequently to conduct games workshops with the Compass, the country's first professional, improvisational acting company.

From 1960 to 1965, still in Chicago, she worked with Paul Sills (her son) as workshop director for his Second City Company and continued to teach and develop Theater Games theory. As an outgrowth of this work, she published *Improvisation for the Theater* (1963), consisting of approximately two hundred and twenty games/exercises. It has become a classic reference text for teachers of acting, as well as for educators in other fields.

In 1965 she co-founded the Game Theater in Chicago, again working with Sills. Open only one evening a week, the theater sought to have its audiences participate directly in Theater Games, thus effectively eliminating the conventional separation between improvisational actors and audiences who watched them. The experiment achieved limited success, and the theater closed after only a few months.

In 1970 - 1971 Spolin served as special consultant for productions of Sills's Story Theater in Los Angeles, New York, and on television. On the West Coast, she conducted workshops for the companies of the Rhoda and Friends and Lovers television series and appeared as an actress in the Paul Mazursky film *Alex in Wonderland* (MGM 1970).

“In November 1975 the publication of the Theater Game File made her unique approaches to teaching and learning more readily available to classroom teachers; in 1976 she established the Spolin Theater Game Center in Hollywood, serving as its artistic director. In 1979 she was awarded an honorary doctorate by Eastern Michigan University, and until recently she has continued to teach at the Theater Game Center. In 1985 her new book, *Theater Games for Rehearsal: A Director's Handbook*, was published.

Spolin's Theater Games are simple, operational structures that transform complicated theater conventions and techniques into game forms. Each game is built upon a specific focus or technical problem and is an exercise that militates against the artifice of self-conscious acting.

The playing (acting) emerges naturally and spontaneously; age, background, and content are irrelevant. The exercises are, as one critic has written, "structures designed to almost fool spontaneity into being" (Review, *Film Quarterly*, Fall/Winter 1963).

By themselves, the games have liberating effect (accounting for their wide application in self-actualization contexts); within the theater context, each clearly fosters a facet of performance technique. There are games to free the actor's tension, games to "cleanse" the actor of subjective preconceptions of the meaning of words, games of relationship and character, games of concentration - in short, games for each of the area with which the growing actor is concerned.

Key to the rubric of Spolin games are the terms physicalization ("showing and not telling"), spontaneity ("a moment of explosion"), intuition ("unhampered knowledge beyond the sensory equipment - physical and mental"), audience ("part of the game, not the lonely looker - onners"), and transformation ("actors and audience alike receive the appearance of a new reality").

To achieve their purpose, Theater Games need only the rules of the game, the players (both actors and audience are considered to be players), and a space in which to play. Beyond the very tangible pleasures of "playing" which the games encompass, they also heighten sensitivity, increase self-awareness, and effect group and interpersonal communication. As a result, Spolin's games have developed currency beyond actor training, that is, in encountering techniques, self-awareness programs, and nonverbal communication studies.

Viola Spolin's systems are in use throughout the country not only in university, community, and professional theater training programs, but also in countless curricula concerned with educational interests not related specifically to theater.

The list of Spolin's guest lectures, demonstrations, and workshops is extensive. She has introduced her work to students and professionals in theater, elementary and secondary education, schools for gifted and talented programs, curriculum studies in English, religion, mental health, psychology, and in centers for the rehabilitation of delinquent children. She notes that "Theater Games are a process applicable to any field, discipline, or subject matter which creates a place where full participation, communication, transformation can take place" (Los Angeles Times, May 26 1974).

Exemplary of the broad recognition her work has received are a 1966 New England Theater Conference Award citing "contributions to theater, education, mental health, speech therapy, and religion," and the 1976 award by the Secondary School Theater Association of its highest honor, the Founders Award.

In her devotion to the development and application of Theater Games, Spolin has made a unique contribution to American theater. (Written by D.E. Moffit, www.improvcomedy.org/hall/spolin1.html)

Things to think about prior to performance:

- What, if any, is the importance of family entertainment?
- How do you expect improvisational theater to differ from traditional scripted work?
- We normally tour this play but because of COVID we are streaming the production instead. Although the show was recorded live, we are not performing in front of an audience. When you see the show, we hope that you will be with other people. Notice your experience when you are with those other people.

Things to watch for in performance:

- Why, and how, is the audience directly involved in the production?
- What are the “universal themes” that are reinforced?
- Was the production accessible for young audiences as well as more mature audiences?
- How did the repeated elements contribute to your understanding and your experience?
- What are the lessons communicated by each of the scenes?
- What are the journeys of each the characters?
- What do the songs communicate about what the characters are thinking/feeling?
- Look at the costumes and the set pieces. What do they communicate to you?

- Notice how each of the actors use their bodies differently depending on what animal they portray.
- Look for how the actions of Foxy are used and their consequences. What does that tell you about words and actions?

Things to think about after the performance:

- What were the major themes of this production?
- Was this production accessible to the entire family? If so, how?
- What did you take away from the production experience?
- What were your favorite elements in the production and why?
- How did music affect your experience?
- Did you respond to the characters through: verbally, physical or mental reactions?

Other Analysis “Tools”:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds of the story before the “hoedown”? In that time, what happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is ‘about?’
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did we decide that this was the most appropriate title for this piece?

Resources

Allen, Patrick. The Best Lessons from Childhood Fables (That Still Matter as an Adult).” LifeHacker.com. Web. 10 June, 2021. lifehacker.com/the-best-lessons-from-childhood-fables-that-still-matt-1608240513.

Adams, Kenn. *How to Improvise a Full-Length Play - The Art of Spontaneous Theater*. Allworth Press 2007. improvencyclopedia.com. Web. June 27, 2017.

Canaday Howard, Connie. “Background on College Theatre Improvisational Shows,” *Sleeping Beauty Study Guide*, 2004.

Canaday Howard, Connie. “Background on Improv,” *Sleeping Beauty Study Guide*, 2004.

Lau, Jackie. “Chicken Little (Henny Penny).” *Stories Preschool*. Web. 8 June, 2021. storiespreschool.com/fairytales_chicken_little.html

Moffit, D.E.. *The Improv Page*. Web. 1, June 2004.

The running time for our production is 45 minutes. There is no intermission. *Chicken Little* is appropriate for all ages. Audience participation is appreciated and the production will be streaming from multiple locations throughout DuPage County.

We encourage you to view *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* in order to take advantage of our repertory experience (July 29 - August 8, 2021)! College Theater's Box Office 630/942-4000 or visit: <https://www.atthemac.org/events/cod-theater-youre-a-good-man-charlie-brown/>