

Storytelling and Comedy Workshop

02 APRIL 2022 / 6:00-9:00 GABRIOLA ARTS AND HERITAGE CENTER

With Troy Stark

Troy Stark's slow-burn storytelling and his ability to switch from deadpan joke delivery to swift storytelling make him one of Canada's most captivating stand-up comedians. He has performed at countless festivals (ZooFest/OFF-JFL, Montreal Fringe Fest, The Dark Comedy Festival, Pretty Good Comedy Fest).

Troy has emceed for Damonde Tschritter, Spencer Rice, Brian Posehn, Robert Kelly, Darryl Lenox, and more.

He's currently employed as a Narrative Designer at Ubisoft, where he works on scripts, storyboards, character design, continuity, etc. for various projects (Romance, Action, Sci-Fi). He's published articles on The AV Club and worked as a copywriter for Zerys Media.

While living in Montreal, he created several staple shows in the comedy community including The Nerdy Show (over 30 sold-out shows, Montreal ComicCon, Ottawa ComicCon, FanExpo Canada), MTL Grand, and Big Laughs.

After moving to Gabriola Island, BC, he created a new live comedy showcase - Gabriola Laughs (SOLD OUT) - in collaboration with the Gabriola Arts Council and #GabriolaLive.

Comedy Night at the Gabriola Golf Club is happening on April 29th.

Troy has been featured on SiriusXM's Canada Laughs, The CW and MTV Canada.

His debut album The King Of Clubs can be streamed everywhere.

You can book a private writing session with Troy at www.troystark.net, Use promo code GAC to receive a 10% discount.

April 02 - Gabriola Arts and Heritage Center

Introductions

6:00 - 6:15

1. Troy Stark introduces himself.
2. Each attendee introduces themselves:
 - Tell us your name.
 - Tell us what experience you have in performance.
 - What do you hope to learn in this workshop?

The Basics of Performing

6:15 - 6:40

In this section, my hope is to share with you a few tips handed down from actual pros, and a few things that I wish someone told me before I ever got on a stage.

Most people are too scared to do any kind of public speaking or performance, in fact, it's ranked as one of the top fears. If you're trying to overcome that, congratulations! We're jumping into the deep end today.

There are a few basic tips that anyone who plans on stepping on a stage should know:

BEFORE THE SHOW:

1. **WRITE, WRITE, WRITE!**
 - You have to know what you're going to talk about before you get on stage. Write it down.
 - Download a NOTES APP on your phone that you will use only for creative purposes. No grocery lists, no email addresses, just stories and jokes and thoughts you don't want to forget.
 - Put a notebook beside your bed, in your car, on your desk at work, everywhere you can (or carry one with you).
 - And remember: Editing is writing; thinking is writing; brainstorming is writing; recording yourself talking is writing; transcribing the recording of yourself talking is editing... which is writing.
 - Write it down. Try saying it exactly as you wrote it. Now try saying the same thing in a more natural way.
2. **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!**
 - Some people stand in front of their mirrors, with a hairbrush in hand and practice their lines. Others spend hours editing their perfectly formatted .DOX files full of jokes and stories. Figure out how you like to practice and do that a lot.

3. START THE RECORDING

- Download a Voice Notes app on your phone. When the host is introducing you, start the recording. I don't always remember to do this, but I'm grateful for every tape I have.

TAKING THE STAGE

4. TAKE A MOMENT

- In the first few moments, you step on stage, and get yourself set up.
- Adjust your mic.
- Set down your notes.
- Did you start that voice note?
- Take a breath.
- When you're ready - begin.

5. STEP INTO THE LIGHT

Is the spotlight too bright?

Good! That means you're standing in the right spot. You might find yourself wanting to step to the side, so you can see your audience better - the only problem, if you step out of the spotlight *they cannot see you!*

6. NO DISTRACTIONS

If you're not going to use the microphone stand, put it behind you.

If you bring notes, set them down somewhere visible, instead of holding them.

People didn't come to the show to see you read off your notes - if you need a cheat sheet, that's fine but you should try not to look at it unless absolutely necessary. Or find a discrete way to have it on display for yourself.

7. APPARENT SPONTANEITY

The same way no one came to see you read off your notes, people also don't want to see you recite something that you've grown completely bored with.

You know your material inside and out, backwards and forwards.

You should also know how to make it seem like you're just coming up with these thoughts out of thin air.

8. PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION

- If you mess up, forget something, say it in the wrong order... KEEP GOING!

No one else knows how it's supposed to go. Plus, you might have just found a better (more natural) way of telling your tale.

- Confidence is cool.

- Things happen in a live event - people have weird laughs, cups drop, police sirens go by, that one guy didn't turn his phone off and now he's taking a call during the climax of the story. Sometimes it's just not going to go the way you planned, and that's okay.

Acknowledge it if you think you need to, then move on with your act.

9. HOW I DEAL WITH HECKLERS

Q: What is a heckler?

A: Anyone who is disrupting/involving themselves with the show.

There are many types of hecklers:

Happy Hecklers - instead of laughing, these people will vocalize their approval “*Oh, you’re doing great. Keep going, honey. That one was really good. We watch selling sunset too, so I totally got that one!*”

Angry Hecklers - upset perhaps by something you said, but more likely the fact that they turned off the hockey game to start the show, they want to ruin everyone else’s fun. “*You suck!*”

Participation Hecklers - forgetting that they’re not watching CSI on their couch at home, this heckler will try to figure out your punchline before you get to it and then lean over to his buddy and loudly say “*Purple, he’s going to say purple. Just wait*”

In any case, even if your intentions are pure, if you’re distracting the audience from the performance, you’re heckling. This is how I deal:

- **First instance:** Be friendly, and polite. Acknowledge the person. Remind them that comedy is typically a one-sided conversation, but that you appreciate them for being excited.
- **Second instance:** You again? I thought we agreed that I talk, you listen. There are other people trying to enjoy the show, so try to keep it down. I wouldn’t want to have to get the bartender to cut you off.
- **Third instance:** Straight up, if you don’t stop talking right now I’m going to have you removed from the venue.

10. KNOW YOUR TIME

(see “*Practice, practice, practice!*”)

- You should know how long it takes to tell your story (or jokes, poems, etc).

- If you’re on a show and the producer asks you to do 10 minutes, then you should know exactly what you’re going to talk about during that time... within reason.

11. WATCH FOR THE LIGHT

AKA Communicate With The Producer.

- Some shows will be in a proper venue and will have a big, impossible-to-miss red light. When you have one minute left the light will come on. If you see that light flash, you’re over time. You better wrap it up immediately and re-introduce the host.

Other shows will be outdoors, in a dive bar, or who knows where... a lot of times “the light” will be someone waving their cell phone at you.

AFTER THE SHOW

12. TAKE THE COMPLIMENT

- If someone compliments your performance, do not say “Oh no, I’m just a beginner. It could have been a lot better.”

They saw it, they enjoyed it, why would you tell them they’re wrong?

13. REVIEW THE TAPES

Remember those voice notes I’ve been talking about? They’re full of gold, but only if you listen to them. Listen to the good ones. Listen to the bad ones. Listen to the ones where nothing interesting happened. Trust me, this is going to be awkward. No one likes hearing their own voice, especially if that voice is bombing. But there is wisdom in those tapes.

There are a lot of contributing factors to how you and your material are going to be received by the audience:

You need to be able to identify the parts that went well, the parts that didn’t, and what you can do to improve next time.

Nine Types of Funny

6:40-6:45

1. Physical
2. Self-deprecating
3. Surreal
4. Improvisational
5. Wordplay
6. Topical
7. Observational
8. Bodily Functions
9. Dark

Writing Session

6:45 – 7:00

CHAPTERS OF YOUR LIFE [EXERCISE]

We're going to take 15 minutes to jump into some writing.

If you were writing "The Book of My Life", what would the chapter titles be?

Remember:

Don't get hung up on writing them down in order. *Editing is writing too.*

Some chapters might be one hour of your life "When I failed my Driving Test"

While other chapters might encompass a few years "My time in Toronto"

And some chapters might not be constrained to periods of time "My Mother"

Break

7:00 – 7:15

Get some fresh air.

Go over your notes.

Keep working on your chapters exercise if you'd like.

Workshop

7:15 – 9:00

One at a time, we're going to take turns on the microphone.

Here's how it works:

5-6 minutes of microphone time.

This is your time, use it how you want. If you brought a story that you're ready to work on, now's the time! Otherwise, we can go through your notes from "The Chapters of Your Life" exercise, or you can just wing it.

8-10 minutes of feedback.

Everyone is now able to offer (constructive) feedback on the material we've just heard.

Move on to the next attendee's story.

Useful Resources:

- This is a link to the digital version of this document:
www.troystark.net/downloads
- YOUR STORIES:
Here's a link to a Google Drive Folder, where you'll find the audio from today's workshop. I'll include your [MIC TIME] as well as all of [FEEDBACK] that was offered.
Link : <https://qrco.de/bctsNU>



Recommended Reading:

1. Born Standing Up - Steve Martin
I've purchased and given this book away more times than I can count.
2. Live From New York - An Uncensored History of Saturday Night Live
What I found really interesting about this book is that it's an "Oral History" so every story has multiple POVs from people who were there.
3. Compositions: Notes on the Written Word - Naomi Beth Wakan
Local Gabriolan Writer Naomi Beth Wakan has written much on the subject of writing and has published a few books of exercises as well. Check out the Pages Resort Bookstore to find her stuff.
4. Ultimately immerse yourself in the stuff you're passionate about and find a way to apply that to your craft.

Book a Private Session

www.troystark.net/shop - use promo code GAC for 10% off.

In a one-on-one session, I can help you with

- Writing: from the early stages of writing your story to the final stages of rehearsing and performing your piece.
- Showrunning: ready to start your own show, I can offer advice on finding venues, promoting, booking, etc.