

Jason Lindner, Marketing Director for InterAct Theatre, recently spoke with Bobbi Block, Artistic Director of Tongue & Groove Spontaneous Theater, for a brief four-question Q&A!

JL: What happens at a Tongue & Groove performance?

BB: Before the show begins, we provide the audience index cards to write their anonymous response to a provocative prompt. The prompt changes with the theme of each performance. Some past show prompts:

- *tell us a true secret you are keeping;*
- *what do you believe;*
- *who are you;*
- *tell us the most memorable thing your mother ever said or did;*
- *write the title of a fictional work of art inspired by a true moment in your life.*

The cards are placed in a basket on stage. The ensemble randomly selects cards, reads them out loud, and the personal contributions inspire the actors and musician to instantly create a montage of unscripted scenes and monologues. In other words, the audience is our artistic collaborator.

JL: How is your 'spontaneous theater' different from improv?

BB: Our approach is to create a piece of theater that has the structural integrity of scripted work combined with the playfulness and tension of unscripted work. While traditional improv is often comic and sometimes surreal or fantastical, our work is serio-comic and we work in the world of realism. We strive to explore authentic human relationships. Like real life, the result can sometimes be hilarious, and sometimes heartbreaking. Also, while improv is often perceived as simply 'quick and clever,' T&G's unscripted performances include a variety of rhythms – sometimes fast and fun, other times slow and soulful. Our ensemble is trained in Actors' Improv™ – a method of working from emotionally grounded truth. While I love all styles of improv, I feel T&G is in a different category of performance --- a performance that will intrigue and resonate with theater-lovers.

JL: Why a collaboration with The Drake?

BB: The Drake is such an exciting venture! InterAct Artistic Director Seth Rozin has been a fan of Tongue & Groove for years, and felt our work fits right in with the Drake's mission of being a new home for new work, since T&G creates a new piece of theater every single time we perform! We're thrilled to introduce our unique form of theater to the loyal audiences of all five resident theater companies at The Drake. We hope they all check us out and discover the fun and magic of unscripted theater!

JL: What's the coolest moment you've experienced with T&G?

BB: There are SO many! It's been a wonderful 9 year journey. I would say a very special moment was when I read our very first review and felt 'wow! It worked! this is the reaction I intended!' That first review says it all:

"If improv to you is just loud-fast-funny, you haven't experienced Tongue & Groove's "serio-comic realism-based improv." Using anonymous audience secrets, eight skilled actors create genuine, complex, unscripted relationships. Opening night's many scenarios were both hilarious and painful -- just like real life -- anchored by a delicate clarity, and more moving than the best scripted plays. I'm thrilled and saddened, knowing that what I witnessed will never be performed again..." City Paper 2008