

## Consensual Improv brings 'Consensual Christmas' to TACAW

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During the stressful holiday season, the team at Carbondale-based Consensual Improv hopes you take a minute to slow down, take a breath, and, most importantly, laugh.

They are here to help with that, with their first holiday show Saturday at TACAW: Consensual Improv — A Consensual Christmas.

Consensual Improv was founded in 2016 and is currently comprised of 13 comedians and actors living in the Roaring Fork Valley from different backgrounds. According to their website, "The group has been a regular at the Aspen Laugh Festival and shared the bill with Trevor Noah, Second City, and the late, great Norm MacDonald."

For the uninitiated, the art of improv (as opposed to stand-up) is a form of live theater whose components plot, character, dialogue, and scenes are all created in the moment, often based on suggestions from the audience. It is governed by five rules: agree; say "yes, and ..."; make statements; there are no mistakes, only opportunities; and make sure you play with



Consensual Improv gearing up for upcoming show, "Consensual Christmas."  
Courtesy Consensual Improv.

people who have your back.

For Ryan Honey, executive director of TACAW and a Consensual Improv member, these rules extend beyond his time on stage and into his daily life.

"'Yes and ...' is the fundamental rule of improv, and so, for me, I try to 'yes and' every situation that I'm in — in my family, in my work life, and my personal life — and it really is a great way to approach the world," he said. "I think our world is got so many barriers and blocks and things that are preventing connections. So, living in a 'yes and' state is healthy for me."

Troupe member Zoe Rom

has other reasons why she loves improv so much. Calling herself "a sensitive person," she credits improv for helping her let go of striving for perfection, which allows her to loosen up and have fun in a way she generally struggles with.

"In improv, sensitivity becomes a superpower, I think. A lot of times, that's where the humor and the comedy come from — allowing yourself to embrace the wackiness that comes up from being a sensitive, mistake-prone person and just allowing things to unfold," she said.

Traditionally, improv shows are 100% made up in the

moment; but, for the troupe's first Christmas-themed show, they did things a little differently.

According to Consensual Improv member and for TACAW Theater Operations Coordinator Jack Trembath: "With this one, we've been putting in a little extra time where we've written a few sketches, and we've been rehearsing those. So, there's a little more rehearsal involved in that sense, but we'll also still be doing the traditional improv."

Rom confirmed there will be some jingle bell, holiday elements infused into the show, but that it's a "approachable, festive, and fun" way to celebrate the holiday without it being too heavy-handed.

Honey, Rom, and Trembath have long histories in performance, comedy, and improv of some sort and enjoy the opportunity to continue performing. But, what they most cherish is their community of friends and fellow performers.

The troupe rehearses every Wednesday night, and Honey said it's an important time for him because "we get together every week and belly laugh for two hours straight," adding "it is such a treasured time for me because I feel like laughter is becoming less and less common in our world, and we need it, and improv does that for me."