Face the IMPROVABLE with SUBOG

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Two secret comedy agents faced their toughest mission yet: performing to a crowd of University of Connecticut students at the Student Union Theatre on Wednesday, Feb. 11. They passed their mission with flying colors, as the actors and audience alike experienced fits of laughter throughout the improv comedy show put on by the Student Union Board of Governors (SUBOG).

Donned in dress shirts and khakis, Agents Byron and America of Mission Improvable delivered a delightful improv comedy show — what they called a "mission" — that enthralled the small crowd inside the theater with a multitude of games, skits and scenarios.

One of the first, and arguably funniest, games they played was a four corners game. Both agents and two audience members acted out four distinct scenes, and when Byron yelled "pan left" or "pan right," they would switch scenes. The scenes were entertaining in their own rights, especially when they started devolving into meta-comedy.

One scene about a couple who painted their bedroom mauve started to meld with a scene about medieval-age peasants looking for rocks, and those same peasants started talking to two heisters who were trying to rob the Louvre.

Audience participation was a through line in the show. The audience had a part in each game the mission IMPROVable troupe played, whether it was filling in as additional actors on stage, coming up with one-liners for the secret agents to drop in conversation or creating scenarios that either Byron or America had to deduce the contents of.

Speaking of audience participation, Byron and America welcomed a few members of Scared Scriptless, a no-audition improv comedy club at UConn, to play a few games with them.



A promotional graphic for SUBOG's Mission Improvable show. The show featured several improv games that emphasized audience participation.
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"The core of our club is we want there to be a safe space where people can come in for two hours a week ... [to] just make and build those improv skills and get to play [improv games] with other people," Valentine Zauls, Vice President of Scared Scriptless and an applied mathematics major, said.

The first game was an elimination type, where all the actors performed a bit about people at a beach encountering a tsunami. The twist was that each time they performed it, some actors left the stage, leaving one person with the herculean task of performing six to eight parts all by themself.

Next, actors had to come up with amusing responses to prompts from the audience, whether it was one's best Michael Jackson impression, the world's worst pick-up line from a mountain gorilla or the worst things to say at a funeral.

To conclude the mission, Byron and the audience brainstormed three scenarios for America to predict, with his only hints coming from Byron's excellent pantomime skills and gibberish tongue. They "talked like Sims" throughout this game, Zauls said.

In the final scenario, Agent America flew with imaginary arms made of Democrats through clouds of ex-girlfriends with The Beatles and a Jehovah's Witness, and the modest yet mighty crowd erupted into rounds of applause for the two secret comedy agents.

Looking back on the show, Zauls said she liked the theming of it, with the idea of shows as missions and the big countdown the agents did before each game.

"It kind of had an entertainers' slant to it, and I think it helped keep the audience engaged," she said. "I feel like they were fantastic improvisers, fantastic comedians. They did a great job engaging with a small crowd."



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