

# THE QUEST FOR CREATIVE INSPIRATION

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thoughts  
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The quest for Creative Inspiration took a fascinating turn when I had the opportunity to talk with Jeff Wirth, Co-Director of the Interactive Performance Laboratory and Research Associate in the Digital Media Program at the University of Central Florida.

Wirth is a legendary teacher of improvisational acting and interactive performance. Improvisational comedy has recently been made popular by the hit TV show "Whose Line is it Anyway?" Both improv and interactive performance require spontaneous creativity. While many creatives have the luxury of slipping away to some dark corner in their creative space to do some of their best creative thinking, interactive and improvisational actors must come up with their brilliant ideas right on the spot, in front of an audience. That's a tough testing ground for new ideas.

So where do these quick thinkers turn when they want to hone their talents, their speed and their creative approach? You guessed it: Jeff Wirth. Wirth studied theatre at the University of California at Irvine. Then he ran away with the circus to perform as a clown for the Ringling Brother's Barnum and Bailey Circus. (No kidding). In his travels he has conducted workshops for Blue Man Group, Disney/MGM Studios, and ComedySportz troupes across the United States. When I learned of Jeff's colorful history, I thought he might have some very interesting insights into creativity and creative inspiration. He did. I asked him a few questions and his answers were honest and thoughtful and useful:

**BK** Why did you choose to focus your talents on Interactive Performance?

**JW** The way I use interactivity is to empower people to rise to whatever level they desire...whatever level resides within them.

**BK** What are some techniques you use to empower people?

**JW** Give them control over their destinies - control over whatever experience they are engaged in. Take things that people see in themselves as ordinary, and frame them as extraordinary.

**BK** When you seek creative inspiration, where do you look first?

**JW** I lie down, close my eyes, clear my mind and let the universe talk to me (he pauses and laughs) Oh, that's going to be really useful to people. This approach is based on my understanding there's stuff beyond what's in my head. If I clear out what's in my head, it [the universe] will feed me what I need.

**BK** What's the biggest hindrance or barrier to spontaneous creativity?

**JW** Fear of any kind. My role is to facilitate people's capacity to release their fears. I try to keep them aware of power they have.

**BK** What's the coolest job you've ever had?

**JW** The job I have right now. If this weren't the coolest job I've ever had, I'd be doing something else.

**BK** Are there any rules or axioms that you like to follow in order to stimulate a higher volume of great creative ideas?

**JW** Yes! Yes. (Pauses and stares into the air)

- *Embrace the absurd*
- *Find the metaphor*
- *Explore wrong answers as though they are right*
- *Trust the obvious*
- *You can always change your mind*
- *The impossible is only impossible if you think it is*

**BK** What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?

**JW** French fried ants

**BK** And how were they?

**JW** Very small (laughs) and crunchy.

**BK** Who were some of the biggest creative influences in your life?

**JW** My Mom was a huge influence. She said to me "It doesn't matter to me what you do, as long as what you do is what you love to do."

I am also moved by the work of the author Richard Bach. He wrote "You are never given a dream without being given the power to make it come true..." There's another part of that quote that many people seem to forget: "...you may have to work for it though."

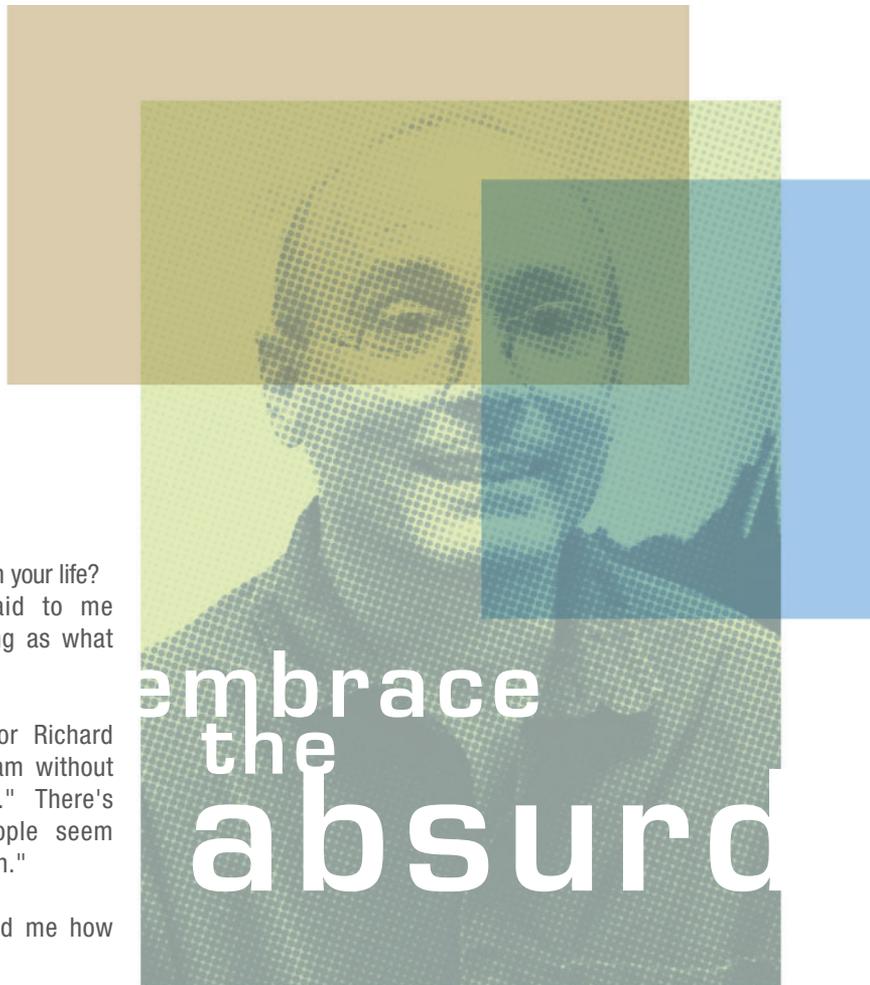
And I owe a lot to Mary Poppins who showed me how to integrate the fantastic and the pragmatic.

**BK** Name one job you never want to do...ever.

**JW** Executioner.

**BK** What's the biggest lesson you took away from being a Ringling Brothers' Clown?

**JW** It's all about connecting with people's hearts.



**BK** Empowerment is a very strong theme in your work.

**JW** The kind of empowerment I want people to have is a sense of their own power. And if I can help them to discover that all on their own, all the better.

**BK** Why is that so important to you?

**JW** Because ultimately, the only life we have the capacity to alter is our own.



I found Jeff Wirth to be a very thoughtful and profound man. He takes his ideas and his teaching very seriously, and yet the clown is never far from the surface, ready to play. Thanks to Jeff's wisdom and generosity, I am able to slide yet another piece of the creative inspiration puzzle into place. Until next issue, stay inspired!

-BOB

