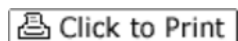


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Back Stage and SAG Foundation Tackle Comedy

'Laughing Matters: From Improv and Stand-Up to Screen Time'

By Jessica Gardner

June 12, 2010

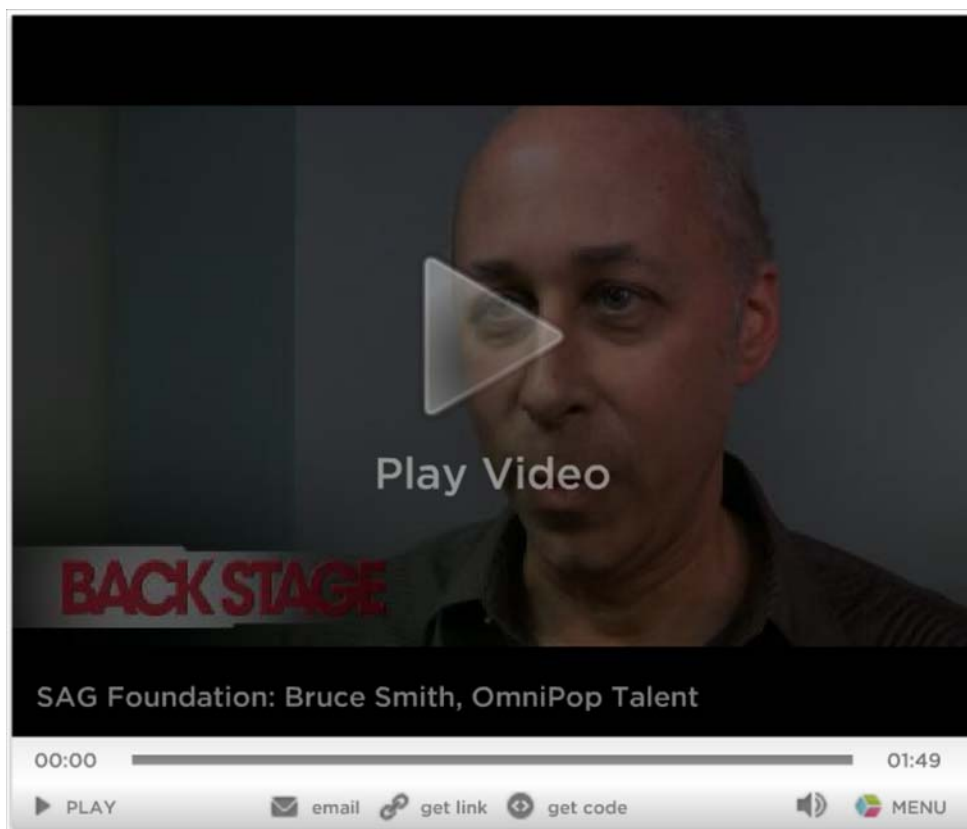


Back Stage at the SAG Foundation held a serious panel on the business of comedy on June 9. The panelists were actor Oscar Nuñez ("The Office"), his manager Bruce Smith (co-owner and founder of Omnipop Talent Group), David Goldman (CEO of Comedy Time Network), stand-up comic/casting director/producer Lesley Wolff, and casting associate/stand-up comic Chris Gehrt. There were a few laughs and jokes throughout the night, but for the most part the panelists candidly shared their expertise about the comedy world. Topics included why improv training is important for

actors, if you can teach someone to be funny, how important writing is to comedians, the truth about open mic nights, and how the Internet has changed the comedy world.

"It separates you from being the good actor to 'I gotta have that guy,'" said Gehrt regarding those who have been trained in improv. "It makes you stand out so much more when you can think quick on your feet. If you're not trained and you're trying to be funny, it shows. It shows on the camera, it shows in the [casting] room."

Wolff believes that trying standup comedy is equally important. "Standup, like improv, is extremely helpful in your arsenal of tools as an actor because it teaches you to have the self esteem to speak your story, to have your voice, and to have the confidence to know that you're funny," she said.



Smith, who is always on the lookout for new talent, told the audience, "The most important thing is to be out doing work whether it's live work or Internet."

"Keep on writing, keep on performing, get up on stage as much as you can," advised Goldman. "[Comedy] is a craft. It doesn't just happen. You can't just show up and be great on stage."

Added Nuñez, "Go in there, do your best. If they don't get you, it's their loss. Find your voice and stay true to it."

Back Stage at the SAG Foundation is a free monthly series co-presented by Back Stage and the SAG Foundation in Los Angeles. To get invited to future events, sign up as fan of Back Stage on Facebook or find future invitations in BackStage.com's [Bulletins area](#).


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