



Al Moessinger a.k.a. Allo's Adding Variety to Your Act



Do you ever feel that your standard dialogue between character and vent is falling a little flat? You want to get the audience involved but you don't want to be another vent who uses an audience member as a puppet? You want a little pizzazz, but don't have any ideas how do that? [Al Moessinger](#) knows some great ways to add variety to your act to spice up what you do and build that audience participation in a fun, different way.

First, a comment about audio systems and your act. This was a BIG topic at the 2007 ConVENTion and almost every lecturer touched on it in some way, really encouraging people to get good sound systems. If you can't be heard, you've lost half the act. A hands-free microphone system is key; a headset like the [Countryman E6i Directional Earset](#) is a great piece of equipment. That let's you be mobile on stage and not limited to what you want to add to your act. The audience will pay attention to you if they can hear you. You can move around the stage but they stay focused on you because of your voice. Be sure you put enthusiasm into your voice. Liz Von Seggen's [Fun with Character Voices DVD](#) is great and Gary Owen is very knowledgeable and approachable. You can always talk to him at the Convention about voice techniques.

Okay, there are lots of different ways to open your show besides opening with a joke. Not everybody is Jeff Dunham who can do an hour and half of killer stand-up material. Jeff is highly talented, but he didn't just jump on stage and start doing one-man sold out shows. He's had to work *very* hard to develop his craft. Some vents might say that he has a gift and use that as an excuse for why their shows are not succeeding. Jeff does have a gift for great comedy and funny characters, but everyone has gifts. You need to find





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your gift; they can come from lots of different places. When you figure it out, really work to develop that gift into an amazing talent that works for your act and makes it your own. The purpose is to be entertaining and there are lots of ways to achieve that.

One technique that Al likes to use is opening with clapping. Using his [Roland SP 404](#) to quickly and easily add music, Al starts pulling a streamer out of his mouth to the beat of the music, all the while the audience is clapping. The music is lively classical music like *Flight of the Bumblebee*, and Al is dancing around. It gets the audience energized and ready for fun. At the end of the bit, Al is sure to do a safety reminder that boys and girls shouldn't stuff anything into their mouths that's not food. It was magic in his mouth, and they can go to the library to learn more about magic. You can also open the show with another bit of magic, pulling a volunteer from the audience and asking them to tear up a piece of paper and stuff the bits into your hand. Then you pull out a paper hat for the boy or girl to wear on his/her head.

When doing an educational show, Al follows the show to a **T** and only ad libs a little because the educational show has been carefully crafted and things tie together in the end. If it's a family audience with both kids and adults, it's important to mix it up and make sure that elements of the act appeal to both.

Also, watch your audience and read their reactions; be prepared to jump to something else if a bit doesn't seem to be working. Having some extra tricks in your arsenal is important.

Al pulls out his duck Webster who has brought an invention, a hypnotize wheel... or something to make him gain or lose weight in





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thirty seconds. The audience stares at the wheel while it turns for 30 seconds. Then the wheel is taken away and Webster either looks bigger or smaller. Using a prop mixes up the standard vent act and gives it a little more interest.

Webster: Knock knock

Al: Who there?

Webster: Dishes.

Al: Dishes who?

Webster: Dishes a nice group.

Another way to open the show or warm-up the audience for an educational show is to use the color/rainbow ropes, an easy to find magic trick. This is a very versatile, portable trick you can always carry in your pocket. Dialogue to match can be adapted in a variety of ways. In this case, the three ropes are red, white and blue. You tie them together and then ask a student in the audience to test out if they are tied together by pulling the rope tight.

While the student is holding on, you can pull on the rope a bit and drag the kid across the floor a little which gets a laugh. Then always thank the boy or girl for following directions, tying some manner cues into the show. Once the three parts of rope -- red, white, and blue -- are tied together, the dialogue goes something like this:

"The red rope is for believing in yourself. If you don't believe in yourself, you won't go anywhere. You need to believe in yourself. We'll be talking about that in the show today. The white rope is choosing good character. This is very important and we're going to talk about that today too. The blue rope is choosing good friends. The people you hang around with make all the difference."





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"We've put all these things together -- believing in yourself, choosing good character, and choosing good friends -- so what good are these lessons? No good unless you use your brain. Pretend your hand is your brain (at this point wrap the rope around the hand). Anything can happen so you need to pay attention and have a bit of knowledge. Everyone pull a handful out of your pocket. (Students should put their hands into their pockets and pretend to pull out a fist.) Raise your hand in the air and on the count of three shout, 'Be the best you can be!' and throw it up here.

One, two, three...BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE!

"Choosing friends or choosing good character is not an individual lesson. They all go together to make you the bet you can be." At this point the rope is unwrapped from the hand and is all one rope. Ooohh, aaaahhh. You've just introduced three character components that will be talked about later on in the show. This trick can adapted for different stories but it packs flat and is easy to do.

Another technique especially if you perform for children is to take a familiar song and make it visual. For example, the song *Bingo* can be done using a clothesline (insert history lesson since most kids have probably never seen a clothesline, ha ha) and big, laminated letters on one side and clapping hands on the other. The roped stretched across the stage makes the stage look full.



The vent can be mobile and active. As you lead the song, point to the letters. When it's time, flip them to the clapping hands and lead them in the clapping. With the music pre-programmed on the Roland SP 404, it's very easy.

Game shows and reality shows are very popular right now. Develop a 'game show' for your act. Say, "Now we're going to play 'Whose Smarter Than a 5th Grader?'" As you pull volunteers from the audience, introduce the ladies first and



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been playing and what kind of guitar they will be using. It's easy to use the puppet with this bit.

Taking a game and adding a lesson is a great for educational shows. The Smoke Detector Game is great for fire safety. You take five smoke detectors and attach them to a board with a hinge and number them. One detector needs a new battery so the game is to push the test button to figure out which one it is. The dialogue goes something like this:

"Your smoke detector is only good if the battery is good. We're going to test these detectors today to find out which one needs a new battery. Our firemen friends say you should test the battery every month. You should change the battery when you change your clocks in the spring and fall, and when you come back from vacation. When the battery is low the smoke detector will beep, but if you've been on vacation you might not have heard the beeping." Then you bring volunteers up to press the buttons and test them out. It's easy and people enjoy participating.

Adding variety to your act means getting creative and breaking out of the simple puppet/vent dialogue routine. It makes it easy to use music in the act without simply singing a song. It also allows for a wide-range of audience participation that's different from turning someone into a dummy. These ideas are fun and simple for the audience to do and make everyone who gets up feel like a winner. Find that pizzazz by creatively adding variety to your act.

To find out more about Al Moessinger, visit him at his website www.alloshow.com.