



Chicago is known for its glorious improv scene, but it's not everyday that performers from across the country flock here for the weeklong [Chicago Improv Fest](#). This year, the festival presents 60 shows from 20 North American cities, with 32 shows making their CIF debut. Whether you're a seasoned improv-er, a fan of funny people or haven't seen a single improv show in your life, our guide will help you get a taste of the best.

#### MONDAY, JUNE 2

8 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)

Think you can only spot celebrities in Los Angeles or New York? On opening night, "30 Rock," the NBC show written by Tina Fey, comes to Chicago—well, part of it at least. This year's headliners are the show's [Paul Scheer](#) (Donny Lawson, the head page; he's also been on Comedy Central's "Crossballs," among other shows) and [Jack McBrayer](#) (Kenneth, the dim-witted Southern page; you might also remember him from spots in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" and "Arrested Development").

And before the dudes step up, the 13-member female, long-form improv group Virgin Daiquiri performs.

#### TUESDAY, JUNE 3

8 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)

Catch more "30 Rock" at the Lakeshore tonight with the antics of [Scott Adsit](#), who you may remember from shows like "The Office," and "Mr. Show."; tonight he improvises in "Messing with a Friend," a long-form improv show that you can also catch every Thursday at 10:30 p.m. at the [Annoyance Theatre](#) with Chicago improviser extraordinaire [Susan Messing](#) and [Mick Napier](#). Messing's rule for this show is "If you don't have fun, you're the asshole." We like that attitude.

#### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

7:30–9:30 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)

This evening is all about Chicago. Kick off the night with [Dirty Water](#), followed by [Wing Night](#) and [Cornwallis](#). But the real fun starts with the long-running [pFamily the Musical](#) (9 p.m.). This ridiculous, improvised one-act musical explores always-entertaining family dynamics. Audience members name the character, help create it and shape who that character will become (kinda like what your parents did to you, you dig?). But, as with all improv, the performers take this adventure to the next level. And if you want more Chicago in your life, stick around for the 9:30 p.m. group, [Revolver](#).

8:30 p.m. at [Second City ETC](#)

"But I can catch the locals anytime," you say. "I want to see some imported comedy!" Ok, then head over to our most famous improv theater's smaller stage for opening act [Brian Gallivan](#) (formerly on the [Second City](#) mainstage) and headliners FrankenMatt, featuring MADtv alum [Frank Caeti](#) and Second City alum Matt Craig.

#### THURSDAY, JUNE 5

8 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)

This show features two guys with Chicago ties who are, unfortunately (for us, at least), no longer living here. YouTube writer/director and all-around improviser/sketch/stand-up comedian [Thomas Middleditch](#), a Canada native who spent time in Toronto and Chicago before heading to New York City, improvises with [TJ Miller](#) (the former [iO](#) regular recently starred as Hud in the hit movie "Cloverfield" and as Marmaduke Brooker in ABC's "Carpoolers").

**FRIDAY, JUNE 6TH**

*8 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)*

Every Chicagoan—no matter how artsy-fartsy—knows "Da Bears." And along with the team is "Da Coach," the mustached Mike Ditka. Tonight at Lakeshore, a four-person Los Angeles-based ensemble—appropriately named [DITKA](#), the crew features MADtv alum Frank Caeti, who used to perform at [ComedySportz Chicago](#) with the troupe "The Hot Karl," [Maribeth Monroe](#) (as seen on ABC's "According To Jim" and NBC's "Thank God You're Here") and Second City alums Brian Gallivan and [Marc Warzecha](#)—makes the most of some amazing Ditka quotes. The cast will throw one out—such as the inspiring "If you are determined enough and willing to pay the price, you can get it done"—and see what the audience can do with it.

*7:30 p.m. at [Playground Theater](#)*

Headlining act the [Irish Mutts](#)—Shaun Landry and Kevin McShane—bring some much-needed diversity to the Chicago Improv Festival—and improv in general. Between Landry, an African-American woman, and McShane, an Irish chap, the two bring years of oppression to the table. Their improv focuses heavily on relationship-based scenes that poke fun at how we actually deal with each other. And if you love them, don't miss Landry in the upcoming Sean Penn film, "Milk."

**SATURDAY, JUNE 7**

*7:30 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)*

The six-person cast of [313](#) originally met at Second City Detroit; later, everyone moved to L.A. to pursue more comedy. This interracial crew is adept at playing a wide range of characters, broadening the scope of scenarios and situations typically seen in the improv scene (i.e. they're not your average middle-class white folks). So who are these people? They're MADtv's [Keegan-Michael Key](#), ABC's "According To Jim's" [Larry Joe Campbell](#), [Nyima Funk](#) (MTV's "Wild 'n Out," NBC's "Thank God You're Here"), Josh Funk (MTV's "Wild 'n Out" and "Shortcircuitz"), [Marc Evan Jackson](#) (Comedy Central's "The Showbiz Show with David Spade") and Andy Cobb (writer/director of the viral video sensation "[John.He.Is.](#)").

*9 p.m. at [Playground Theater](#)*

Four-man improv ensemble [4-Track](#) headlines this evening's show. Named best new improv troupe of 2007 by Time Out New York, these four dudes met while studying improv at New York City's Magnet Theater. They're self-described nice guys who just wanna make you laugh, okay?

**SUNDAY, JUNE 8**

*8 p.m. at [Lakeshore Theater](#)*

Put a little political flavor into your weeklong entertainment fun with opening act [Whirled News Tonight](#). The improv troupe typically lays out a pile of newspapers and weekly magazines, then asks audience members to walk into the theater and cut out articles that catch their eye. The cast comes out, reads a few sentences from the articles, then performs scenes based on them. And did we mention they wear news-reporterly suits the entire time? This is smart, politically driven improv that focuses on current events—none of that, you know, artsy crap.