

THE NEW CALLIÖPE

For Members of Clowns of America International

September / October 2021

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MISHA USOV

2022 COAI Convention
Headliner



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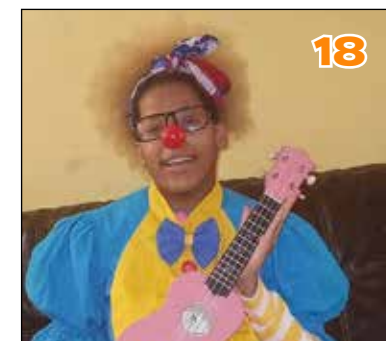
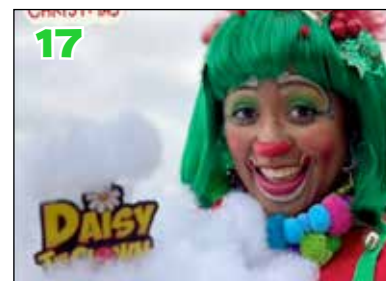
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Misha Usov, a clown originally from Kharkov, Ukraine, has been entertaining the world since 1983. He once said, “There are more than seven billion people on the earth, and only about two hundred are professional clowns. Our world needs clowns now, more than ever!”

Misha became a professional clown at just sixteen years of age. At twenty-three, he graduated from one of the world’s most prestigious clown schools, the Moscow Clown School in Izmaylovo, Russia. Soon after graduation, he founded the MIKOS Clown Theater which won the Silver Prize at the First International Clown Festival in Moscow in 1991. For fourteen years, Misha was the inspiration, creator, and principal performer of the MIKOS shows as they toured Russia and Europe.

In 1995, Misha won the silver medal and special prize of Anna Fratelli at the World Festival of the Circus of Tomorrow (*Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain*) in Paris, France. A few years later, he won the gold medal at the International Clown Festival in Ostend, Belgium.

Soon after, Misha was invited to participate on the *Le Plus Gran Cabaret de Monde*, *Patricio Sebastian Show*, *Belle et Fou*, and *Star in der Manege*, all of which increased his popularity across Europe. For many years, Misha worked for the Wintergarten Variety in Berlin, the Tigerpalast in Frankfurt, and Prinzregentheater in Munich, and Friedrichbau in Stuttgart. Some of those shows were so popular they sold out eighteen months in advance.

Misha later appeared on television across Europe and Asia, including shows in the United Kingdom, China, France, Russia, Italy, The Netherlands, Germany, and Croatia. He has also appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* in the United States. He has appeared in the Circus Kaskade (The Netherlands),

Misha Usov: Ping Pong ball juggling.



Circus Romcalli (Germany), Circus Massimo (Italy), and Circus Salto Natali (Switzerland), as well as numerous festivals and theaters throughout Europe. Misha has had the honor of performing at the Royal Albert Hall in London on three occasions and the distinction of working alongside many creative people in the performing arts such as Robert Lepage (Canada), David Scheiner (USA), Tereza Durova (Russia), Anatoliy Zalevsky (Ukraine).

One of the acts for which Misha is known is his Ping Pong juggling. The act involves Misha juggling balls as they bounce off a series of aluminum pots which are attached to parts of his body, with each pot producing a different sound. A unique musical instrument is born, and various melodies are created. Misha also juggles with the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag. The act becomes an expression of philosophy and poetry as the bags defy gravity as he juggles them very slowly and they appear to freeze in midair.

Misha joined Cirque du Soleil in 2009 as a creative artist to work with writer and director Robert Lepage of Canada. Misha created a character for Cirque, the Fisherman, for its new show, *Totem*. He performed this character from the show's premiere in 2010 until the show's last performance in March 2020. In a review of the show, the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, "Misha Usov's fishing boat idyll is a comic gem."

When Covid put a stop to live performances, Misha took the opportunity to form his own clown institute. He teaches a variety of classes, held both in person and online, at his Invisible Clown Institute (IC Institute), including the Art of Clowning, the Art of Improvisation, and Your Clown Character. Misha says, "We are using the quarantine as a unique way to begin your education as a clown with individually tailored online classes. As in the Great Depression, the world needs kind and funny clowns more than ever!"



Dmitry Shakhin

One of Misha Usov's signature acts. PHOTO BY DMITRY SHAKHIN

His classes at the 2022 COAI Convention in Atlanta, Georgia (www.coaiconvention.com), will focus on three main elements that fuel discovery and creation of a clown and their antics: timing, character, and state. Participants learn about the use of gags, pauses, and silence as well as clown makeup, costumes, and props.

Improvisation means acting spontaneously, confidently, and unpredictably. This workshop teaches having self-control in any situation and allows the clown to become "lighter, higher, simpler, and more fun." Misha adds, "At every performance, clowns come face to face with improvisation. The success of a clown depends on the ability to improvise. The



Using Ping Pong balls, pots, and ingenuity, Misha Usov creates unforgettable comedy. PHOTOS BY DMITRY SHAKHIN

real clown is always improvising, no matter what happens.”

Discussing his workshops, Misha says, “I am a professional clown who has been working on stage almost every day for thirty-five years. I have learned that the ‘clown’ is not a simple clown nose, over-size shoes, or funny underwear, and I would like to share my practical experience with you! We discuss individuality, originality, and your own strengths as a person and performer. My goal is to help you create a unique clown routine or act, as well as to help promote your act on the world’s market.”

He has held workshops for students of theater, professional actors, professional clowns, and people who are interested in learning more about the art of clowning. Cirque du Soleil artists also take his workshops. In addition to professional artists of clowning, Mikhail’s workshops have been used for team building for groups and even personal introspection. “To be a clown,” he says, “means to change yourself every day.”

One of his students, Dal Walton, stated, “The experience of learning under Misha Usov has been wonderful. I’ve taken lots of other clown classes, some

from world renowned performers and teachers (whom I love and adore, too), but Misha’s class has been a truly unique learning experience... It’s like taking a clown class strapped to a rocket ship that’s laser targeted on my success as a performer. It’s amazing.” Another student, Thomas Fenn, adds, “There are many sides to my experience in working with him. Firstly, I have come to study with Misha with much humility to his expertise, discipline, and extensive experience in bringing the intimacy of the

art coupled with the highly disciplined technique to create a beautiful and penetrating impression. I also appreciate his deep insight and love for the ‘real’ theater which is designed to uplift the soul. My own personal interest relates to character development, but the results of my [time] with Misha have far exceeded the parameters of my study to encompass the whole interplay between artistic expression and the human being who is a vehicle for that expression.” Finally, Tom Durrance adds, “If you are new to



Misha in action. PHOTO BY DMITRY SHAKHIN



Top: Juggling plastic bags, Misha creates the illusion that time stands still. Bottom: Misha and his wife Olga pose with his new book, The Invisible Clown.

the art of clown, you will go from cautious to confident, from interesting to funny, and from average to unique. His classes don't teach you how to act like a clown; they teach you the essence of clown. Attending his class is like sitting on stage at the symphony – it's inspiring and beautiful all at the same time. As a result, I've been inspired to create more and work harder. My art has gone from good to great under his passionate mentorship."

Misha has also been enjoying more time with his family at their home in California, creating new acts, and finishing his book, *The Invisible Clown: How Not to Be Afraid of Being Yourself*, which is available now. Amazon declares the

book to be "essential reading for any actor, clown, public speaker, or professional ready to shed the patterns that cause creative blocks, stage fright, inconsistent performances, waning artistic energy, and the fear of being yourself." Misha was inspired to write this book because of his childhood experiences. He says, "Every one of us sooner or later wonders, "Who am I? How can I be myself? What is my calling? How can I be happy? In childhood, we don't encounter these questions. We are happy because we are ourselves. As we become adults, new psychological processes are activated internally, and we start to acquire templates. These templates arise from our upbringing, education, and our perception of the world. They become bad habits and develop into fears, a lack of self-confidence, or arrogance. The traits arising from these templates actually block us from accessing who we truly are... This book is my clown's recipe for happiness."

*Don't miss Misha Usov at the 2022 COAI Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, April 26–30. Register now at www.coaic convention.com. Misha's book, *The Invisible Clown: How Not to Be Afraid of Being Yourself*, is available from Amazon.*



From the President

Adam Schill

Check out our cover story about Misha Usov, and you'll know why we are excited about having him headline at our COAI Convention next year. We're "knocking it outta the park" in Atlanta, Georgia, April 26–30, 2022. Take a look at our incredible lineup of instructors and performers at www.coaiconvention.com, and register before the end of the year because prices will be going up. This is one convention you do not want to miss!

Also, remember to visit our online merchandise store for great gift ideas. You can find COAI and *The New Calliope* branded T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, phone cases, mugs, and more at www.teespring.com/stores/coai.

We appreciate all of our members, and that means *you*. Our organization wouldn't exist without our loyal members who are working to be ambassadors of joy in the world. Thanks for all that you do! **TNC**



We are super excited to announce that we have set up an **online merchandise store** for all of the coolest COAI gear to make your friends jealous! At the moment we have three different designs, with many different merchandise options for those designs. A portion of all sales comes back to support COAI and help us to keep dues low and provide quality benefits for our members! We have everything from T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, phone cases, mugs—you name it! Everything is available in men's, women's, children's, and babies' sizes. And they all come in a huge rainbow of different colors! You can check it out at www.teespring.com/stores/coai.



From the Director of Education

By Alene Klaus

Just like everyone in our business, I am thrilled to be working again. Every gig is a joy—until one is not.

I booked a first birthday party for twin boys. The client and I agreed on the time, fees, payment, the magic show, and balloon twisting for ten to fifteen children. The contract was signed, and the client's deposit was received.

I arrived thirty minutes before showtime to set up and schmooze the guests and the three children in attendance. I quickly discovered that the parents and twins were arriving in an hour, after everyone had eaten. What?!

After a few deep breaths and a meditation chant, I decided to work the room, table by table. I just played with the guests. We laughed, we smiled, and we groaned. I offered to taste test their food for them. They offered warm smiles and laughter.

I made balloons for the three children and taught the oldest to twist a balloon dog. He so proudly displayed that balloon to anyone who would look! His father could not believe he was so outgoing with me as he was a "timid" child. We don't always know the positive effect we have.

Finally, the celebrants arrived, and I was told I could start the kid show. I declined to entertain only the kids and explained that I would be performing for the room, all seventy of them. I had them all move forward, and I shut off the music and prepared to have some fun! We had a fun half hour of good family entertainment filled with laughs and a bit of wonder. The adults and kids were my assistants, and you could see the joy on their faces. It was super, and I earned a standing "O." Yay!

Then, a "thang" happened on the way to getting paid. The parent who hired me said she forgot she had to pay me, blah, blah, blah. "Oh, it's in the contract, and when

I confirmed with you yesterday, I mentioned it," said Rufflez, smiling through clenched teeth. She apologized, and I said, "Well, I will stay here with you while you Venmo the payment to me." That was that. I did get paid, but I received no tip for all my extra time and effort.

How will I avoid this in the future? I was relaying this tale to a friend and mentor, Leslie Ann Akin, and she reminded me that she asks for payment up front. I received a few pointers to tell clients who question this policy:

The money is a hundred percent refundable in the event of my cancellation or I will find a replacement.

Receiving the payment up front relieves the pressure of doing business in front of your guests. Your guests don't need to know your business.

You won't lose time enjoying your event to pay the entertainment.

We won't have to go looking for each other during the event. This will allow for smoother transitions.

I have now adopted this policy, and it has been received by clients in a professional and respectful manner. **TNC**



For more information, visit www.mycoai.com
or call the COAI Business Office at 1-352-357-1676.

WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU DO BEST?

By Patricia "Pricilla Mooseburger" Manuel



I was recently at a business meeting, and during our education segment, the presenter asked us to write down three things we were good at. Wow, I thought, that is a really good question for clowns, old and new!

For folks who have been clowning awhile, ask yourselves what three things you are really good at. Some of the obvious might be balloons, face painting, or magic, but let's dig deeper. What three things do you think your audience thinks you are good at? Some of those might be being silly, making them feel welcome or comfortable, or helping them forget their worldly troubles for a bit. Those are the hallmarks of a really good clown. We can all accomplish these goals with different tools such as balloons, face painting, and magic. Personally, I don't do any of those things. What? That's right. The joy I find in clowning is based on the interpersonal communication of clowns.

What can you do to increase interpersonal communication skills as a clown with your audience? The first is to pay attention to your audience. I don't care if you are communicating with an auditorium full of people or just one person – we need to be great at reading our audience. People can tell when you are paying attention to them, listening, and being genuine. Take the extra few seconds to breathe and enjoy the

moment with your audience. Don't rush into your show, jokes, and well-rehearsed bits of business. Take a deep breath and smile. It is about making people feel something.

What do you want your audience to feel? When I clown, my goal is to say something so ridiculous it makes the adults laugh. The kids usually laugh, too, but my guess is they really don't know what I am talking about! Here is an exchange I had with my new

bunny puppet, Cinnie Bun, at the church fall festival. We had a couple of games, the cake walk and the Bottle Blast. The premise is simple – put a quarter down on a number, spin the wheel, and someone wins a cake or a bottle of something. The cakes are mostly homemade and come in all shapes and sizes. The bottles are soda, fancy condiments, and a spin or two of alcohol for the adults. (Ah, life in a small town!) Later, I brought out my bunny friend and started walking around having a discussion with her. Since she is a rabbit, it made sense that she whispered in my ear. "Miss Moose, no, we are not going back to the cake walk. I already spent ten dollars trying to win you a carrot cake. Last year, you ate the whole thing and got a belly ache. No, they do not have celery juice at the Bottle Blast. No, they do not have carrot juice. They have V8. I'm sorry, Cinnie. I know you don't like it when it stains your fur red. You have to be more careful." Parents think this is funny because they have had similar conversations. That is what I am good at – saying ridiculous things, not exactly to the audience, but sometimes. It's a kind of storytelling. The kids can imagine the bunny puppet eating a whole cake and getting a belly ache.



It starts a conversation, and the audience wants to know more.

What are you good at? How can you develop that skill into an asset for your clowning? If you have been focusing on your skills like balloons, face painting, or magic, take a fresh look at how you can incorporate a more connected experience with the audience. Ask about a favorite color. Try mixing things up. If I see a little girl in a pretty dress, I ask to borrow it. "No, it won't fit," she will say. "You are right. It's too big. Maybe next year," I say. For those of you who are new to clowning, this is called patter. Patter is the conversation you have while you are performing a routine. Sometimes patter is very specific, such as what you say when you are doing a magic trick. Other patter is just silly conversation. Work on it. Come up with some new and fun things. Get inspired with a prop. I know a married clown couple called Cupcake and Flapjack who have great patter back and forth as they tell jokes. They give out brown Es and chit-chat about who baked them. This displays their different personalities. They make it a conversation. You can feel the joy they have as they perform and how much they care for each other. I always walk away feeling better when I watch them perform.

To recap, think about three things you do really well. Focus on them and expand upon them. Breathe and don't rush your performance. Enjoy it! If you are having fun, your audience will too. **TNC**

Tricia Manuel is "Pricilla Mooseburger," the founder of Pricilla Mooseburger Originals, Mooseburger Clown Arts education, and Red Nose Readers. She has devoted her life to clowning and lives with her bunny Mr. Nibbles in Maple Lake, Minnesota. Contact her by email at pricilla@mooseburger.com or by phone at 320-963-6277. You can also visit her online at www.mooseburger.com.



25 Years go

Featured on the cover of the September/October 1996 issue of *The New Calliope* were Harvey "Jingles" Jacobvitz and Susan "Fruit" Oberg. The two "chairclowns" were shown playing hoops on the green at Old Sturbridge Village as a preview of the 1997 COAI Annual Convention which was held April 15–20, 1997, at the Sturbridge Host Hotel in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. The issue introduced the upcoming convention with registration details and expected events.

In addition, the issue included a thorough discussion of the makeup competition held at annual conventions and the disappointment some felt from the previous year's competition. As a result, the COAI Board of Directors made a few changes in the plans for the upcoming convention.

For those who are active in clowning, several articles gave advice and instruction. Birthday parties were a main focus with an article by Margaret Clauder discussing performing for the under-five set and one by Karen Reinholt related to making year-round bookings with birthday parties. Cheryl Smith provided an introduction to clowning as ministry, and Nicki Zwerin described her experience and advice as a caring clown, using clowning at hospitals, which may be, in her words, "the toughest gig" of all.

Finally, the issue provided a detailed description by Danny Kollaja of the journey taken by ten COAI members to Russia to spread smiles as they performed at various hospitals, orphanages, and schools in Moscow and St. Petersburg. They also visited the Old Moscow Circus, the Academy of Circus Art, and the Municipal Clown Mime Theater.

The first issue of *The New Calliope* was dated September/October 1984. All issues are available in "The Vault" and can be accessed by COAI members at www.coai.com.

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The Secrets of a Clown

By Misha Usov



Timing is the regulation of speed, rhythm, and frequency to achieve the desired effect.

It seems to me that clowns know better than other artists what timing is. After all, they depend directly on it. Without the correct rhythm, the public will not laugh. A clowning act lasts for approximately eight minutes. If something has gone wrong, the public will sense this immediately and will not follow the performer's lead. Because a clowning act does not last very long, clowns can check the results of their work very quickly.

Anyone who goes on stage will gain from studying how clowns use timing. Prior to working at Cirque du Soleil, I was a freelance entrepreneur. I chose where I performed and when. I had to write fifty emails a day to potential hiring managers. I did not always receive a reply, but when I did, the employer would ask about my terms, conditions, and other important aspects. I had to respond to these messages in good time. If I answered immediately, my message, as a rule, would not be thoroughly considered, and it would be emotional and contain too much information. Overall, I rushed through it. If I delayed the response, the employer would find other clowns instead of me, and I would lose the chance of some work. I later learned that my business, selling my clowning act, functioned according to the same laws as those that apply on stage. If an entrepreneur does not complete his business tasks in good time, his business will not grow.

Effective use of time ensures that the entire mechanism functions properly, independently of what it is we do – whether we are putting on shows, engaged in clowning acts, leading a theatre or large corporation, conducting an orchestra, or simply cutting the grass or chopping wood. Doing everything at the right time is the key to success. In our bodies, when the heart is working perfectly, it supports the entire organism.

It is common knowledge that making people laugh is much more complicated than playing a dramatic role. The road to making people laugh passes through perfect timing. If a joke is told at the right time, the public will find it funny. Timing is the principal secret for a clown.

In order to know this secret, however, you need a better understanding of a clown's profession. What is a clown? It is not possible to answer that question succinctly. A clown on a theatrical stage or a variety stage is one thing and in the ring at a circus quite another. On the street, a clown is different again. What unites them all, however, is the need to observe accurate timing.

Often, journalists who interview clowns are interested in one and the same question, "How does a clown differ from an actor, and in general, is an actor a clown?" In my opinion, they are, and they aren't. Usually, an actor works with many people. A dramatist writes a play for them, a composer writes the score, and a director gives the whole creative process direction. A good actor should realise the author's vision. A clown,

however, is the dramatist, the director, and, occasionally, even the composer.

An actor might play the role of a jester one day, but the next, he may play King Lear. A clown does not play anything; he just is. Inside, as with every person, he is King Lear and the jester, the comedy and the tragedy. A good clown is a poet, a poet of action, an artist of living pictures.

The Three Factors Behind Success

It seems to me that a good clown is a poet. A poet of action, an artist of living pictures.

At the heart of everything are three factors: timing, character, and state.

Timing, as we examined above, is a sense of time or rhythm that can be defined by the question, "When?"

Character is the essence, the structure, and the goal of whatever we are doing. If we are on stage, this is the essence of our persona, habits, reactions, and attitudes to the world and to ourselves. Character can be defined by using the questions "Who?" and "What?"

State is the conscience or conscious perception of the world on its own terms in the present moment. It is the state of the Invisible Clown; the most suitable definition for this is "Here" and "Now."

It seems to me that accurate timing decides almost everything in every undertaking. Sometimes, the window of opportunity opens up, and we are not prepared for it. If we do not take these opportunities that have opened up before us, new opportunities will not be quick in coming.

Let's examine how this works using my profession as an example. Let's suppose that I have created a very good character and have good and funny jokes, but I have problems with timing. I do not tell the joke at the right time. I either hold back or I am a second too

early. Therefore, the joke doesn't work. I know this is my weakness. It's likely that I would not last a minute on stage. The public, like an X-ray machine, would read my character, and after that, I would just be boring to them.

If everything was fine with my timing, but I unfortunately had not succeeded in creating a convincing character, I would be in a much more fortunate position. I could act in a play, or if I wasn't a clown, I could give an entire lecture. The public

would forgive me because they would not get bored with me. It is possible that it would not be an outstanding work and would be forgotten the next day, but I would be able to see the play, lecture, or act through to the end. I would avoid failure.

I know of performers who have precise timing, but their characters are so bad that the audience learns almost nothing of their persona. Nevertheless, these artists enjoy success because of their timing. Many large show-business corporations are following this path. It takes a great deal of time and work to create a really good character. As we know, in any business, time is money. Therefore, the directors rely on timing and often turn a blind eye to developing a character. These shows do quite well, but they are not remembered. They do not stand out from the others. They do not become works of art.

When timing and character work together to achieve a result, we feel much more comfortable. They create harmony in what we do, and we find real joy in our work. We could appear in films, on the television, and work on the most prestigious stages in the world, commanding the fees we deserve.

Another level of performance exists, and if we master it, we will not need to

work on our timing and image anymore. We will become a mystical actor, clown, or troubadour. That is all we have to do, just maintain that level and not worry. We don't need to worry about timing or character. Those worries would create a barrier and interfere with us attaining this level. What then is this wonderful level?

This is the state of the Invisible Clown, the conscience or consciousness. This is our presence, our true selves. Although this is a very big goal, the ultimate goal of our learning, as my dear teacher, the King of the Heart, once said, "Everything is just getting started from that level, and it never ends."

Therefore, timing is a rhythm, the sense of time, the sense of a pause. It is the breath of your enterprise, your clown, your act, your show. Timing is the basis of everything.

At times, I have succeeded in discovering a very successful and funny character for my shows, but without accurate timing, my jokes did not work.

I have noticed that people who occasionally perform, especially clowns, mistake a sense of timing for speed. They simply start doing everything more quickly, or they go to the other extreme and perform more slowly. Doing everything faster or slower is not timing. Accurate timing is when everything happens at the right time.

It is true that the public are at times sleepy, sad, or seized by a single emotion. This happens when the viewer is under the influence of the new or full moon, cosmic phenomena (such as Mercury retrograde, meteorite showers and so on), or by our earthly problems, perhaps when a very famous person passes away. For example, in Germany in March, people submit their tax declarations and learn how much they have to pay in taxes, and the public are downcast. To cheer them up, everything has to be done a little more quickly, but the sense of timing still needs to be solid. You go

Timing is a rhythm, a sense of time... the sense of a pause.

from idea to idea that you plan to deliver or from joke to joke, keeping the end goal in your mind.

If you do not know how to make an entrance on stage, go to the first idea you want to share. At one moment in my life, when I had little clowning experience and needed to make an entrance on stage, I did not understand where I should look. Should I look into the auditorium, at my partners, or at the ceiling or floor? My director at the time, the wonderful Tereza Gannibalovna Durova, saw my confusion and told me, "Go to your first gag." Keep the goal of telling your first joke in mind. In that situation, it is not important where you look. You have a goal, and this leads you on.

With this, we are approaching an understanding of the ultimate goal. As the author of this term, one of the founders of the Moscow Arts Theatre, Konstantin Sergeyevich Stanislavskiy, put it, the ultimate goal represents the main idea, the goal, and the objective from which the play, the actor's image, or the show is created.

We need to go from joke to joke and topic to topic, remembering the bigger picture or the end goal of the performance, of the entire enterprise. In my master classes, I set a target and give my students a dart. The students, in performing any sketch, keep the end goal in mind, hitting the apple with the dart at the end of the performance. In doing this, they gain a better understanding of how the ultimate goal is maintained, as well as how to maintain their own ultimate goals throughout their performances.

You have to add energy to each of your movements. This is because any movement for anyone who performs in front of the public represents a whole event, and this movement cannot just be an empty gesture.

Disrupted timing for a performer leads to energetic failures. We still call them energy wells. A weak clown tells a joke, and the public laughs heartily. Hearing the public's laughter is very pleasing to a clown, and he wants to keep this moment going as long as possible. Therefore, the clown waits while the audience is laughing. He tells his second joke only after this laughter has stopped. A good clown will not wait for the laughter in the auditorium to dissipate. He maintains the rhythm and tells the second joke at the right time, the most suitable time for that joke.

The same goes for other stage performers. A weak speaker takes his lead from his audience. He waits for the audience to applaud. By doing this, both the clown and the speaker lose rhythm. A good performer works without keeping his eye on the public. He will take the next step toward his goal when he needs to.

Performing on stage is about mathematics.

Performing on stage is about mathematics. The number of jokes and ideas and their succession are counted. For clowns, the classic succession is the Rule of Three, or as we know it in clowning language, the "Law of Two and a Half." We repeat one action three times. During the third repetition, the inversion comes, and this is where the joke is. There are some exceptions to this. Any performance you give will come alive if you allow yourself to deliberately voice the stupidity out loud, to tell the joke, for example. We do this when we need to take the pressure off the public so we need to make a judgment call on this.

You cannot communicate two ideas simultaneously. Even clowns don't tell

two jokes at once. You communicate one idea and then another. If you need to combine two ideas, you need a good reason for doing so.

Sometimes, timing solves everything, and sometimes, it is the character that has been created that solves everything. Our internal self, our Invisible Clown, helps us recognise this.

Many performers are afraid of pauses, and they are constantly working whilst breathing in. They do this time and time again, but a pause is a part of movement. A pause is our breathing out. Often, this is the motion of our soul.

Recently, I attended mind-training sessions at Cirque du Soleil. I particularly liked one of the exercises in which we were trained to breathe from the stomach, the way little children breathe. You have probably noticed how babies push out their stomachs. This is because they are breathing from the stomach.

To get rid of stress, it was suggested that we breathe out six times, but only breathe in deeply, from the stomach, for four seconds. It seems to me that this wonderful plan demonstrates how important it is to breath out.

My second teacher, the King of the Absurd, a clowning teacher, once said that clowns are paid for pauses. I asked him, "How can this be?" He answered, "It's very simple: on stage, a pause puts your wages in the bank."

Whatever you do, creating an act, working on a report, or preparing for an audition for some filming sessions, you have to consider two breaks which will certainly appear in the preparation process. They will also appear in the performance process. Usually, these are our weaknesses. You can read about breaks in Pyotr Demyanovich Ouspensky's book, *In Search of the Miraculous*, in which he discusses the wonderful system of the Fourth way.



Thanks to this system, any event or phenomenon happens in accordance with the laws of octaves. Let's take the musical staff. The musical staff is illustrated in the drawing from one note to the next. We can see black and white keys. You have probably noticed that between the notes MI and FA and between SI and DO are no black keys. These are our two breaks. As I mentioned above, these represent our two weaknesses.

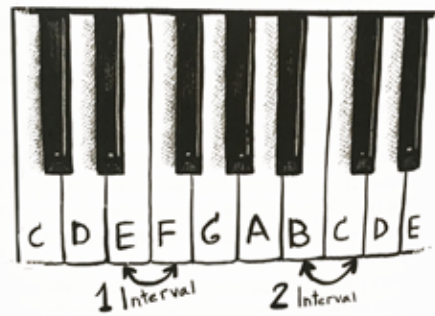
There are two weak places in anyone's conscience and in our own performances. Knowledge of this in itself helps to destroy our fears.

Knowing about these problems, which inevitably appear almost every day during my performances, I have learned to transform my weaknesses into my greatest strengths. For example, the public shout something to you, and you intentionally lengthen the pause. The situation is then transformed and miraculously turns in your favour.

You are conducting a videoconference, and at that moment, the cat that you have locked in the next room meows, demanding you let him out. Everyone hears this. If you continue the video chat, pretending that nothing is happening, the attention of the participants will shift to the cat. In the world of theater actors, it is well known that it is impossible to outperform animals. If an animal happens to appear on stage, all the attention of the public will be focused on the animal.

If you are on a video chat and the cat you have locked in the other room meows, the participants will not be able to make out a word you are saying. They will just hear the meowing of the cat. You need to free the cat and accept it as your partner. Start to interact with it. The cat will cuddle up to you, and you can stroke it. In doing so, you will gradually bring the attention back onto yourself.

Whatever we do represents the path of water. Water will always take on any form we want it to. This is what it means



to accept the world on its own terms. We, like water, accept what the present moment is offering us. We adopt whatever shape the moment puts before us. We are a higher power for water when we, for example, pour it into a glass. We can drink water from a glass if we do not accidentally knock it over.

The present moment also represents a higher power. We simply observe its terms. If we do not do this, it will be like the story of the cat – a meowing animal locked in a pantry. Everyone can hear it, but we pretend that nothing is happening, that no cat is there, and that only our spectators can hear it.

In his story, "The Actor," Mikhail Zoshchenko writes, "The public are idiots." Often, this is how it is, but you would be an idiot if you did not notice the cat. My wonderful partner and friend, the White Clown, once appeared on stage with his act, "The Mini Piano." It begins with the clown coming on stage and standing before the little piano, greeting the public and waiting for their applause. At one of the shows, however, after the White Clown had approached the instrument and turned to face the public, suddenly a huge buzzing fly, which was clearly visible and audible to the public, flew in. The White Clown also saw the fly. Without losing his head, he made an entire event out of this

moment, a whole clowning act. The fly flew here and there, and the clown just followed it with his eyes. At some point, the fly landed on the artist's right cheek, crawled around for a few moments, and flew across to his left cheek. It moved to his right cheek and then flew away. My friend did nothing but follow the insect with his eyes. The public laughed themselves into hysterics. The White Clown just allowed the fly to be and was subordinate to this moment, having accepted its terms.

We will discuss this in more detail with regard to the third part, state.

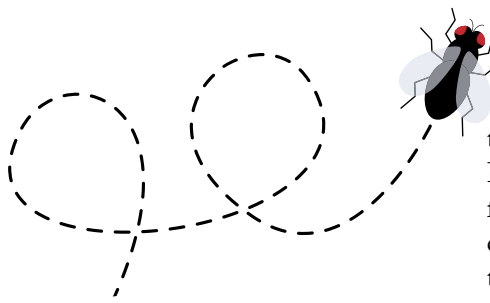
To work on timing is to work on the subordination of your mind. The mind often rushes or is delayed because of an abundance of the sheer variety of thoughts. Apart from that, to give an order to complete or not to complete the next action, our minds feed us an external idea of some kind which does not bear any relation to the situation at hand. Therefore, be careful and do not let your mind interfere in the process. This is very important if you want to be a good performer or

simply a good person. I wanted to put a full stop after the verb "to be," and the text suddenly looked like this, "Be careful and do not let your mind interfere in the process. This is very important if you want to be."

What is key in this method is that we do not have any other way. Our conscience disappears and immerses itself in our thoughts, and we find ourselves somewhere else, not in the here and now.

"A human being is everything or nothing. It is not given to us to be in between." When I am me, when I have a sense of myself, I am complete. When I do not have a sense of myself, I am simply not there, correspondingly, I am incomplete.





Walk up to the table. Pause for a moment, counting the clicks of the metronome – one, two, three, four. With both hands, pick up the file from the table and hold it level with your stomach. Pause for a moment – one, two, three, four. During this and all other pauses, don't forget to keep the goal in mind, the target. Open the file and again pause for a moment – one, two, three, four. Read the entire text and then pause – one, two, three, four. Close the file and pause again – one, two, three, four. Put the file on the table and pause – one, two, three, four. Take the dart from the table, aim, launch it at the target, and pause – one, two, three, four. Move away from the table.

Do everything separately.

Let's start doing some exercises on the art of timing. Many people do lots of things simultaneously, and as such, their characters are seen as restless and not very serious. More often than not, this happens because our emotions go off the scale. When you perform in public or are simply participating in important negotiations, you will be taken much more seriously, and your words will carry much more weight if you learn to do everything separately.

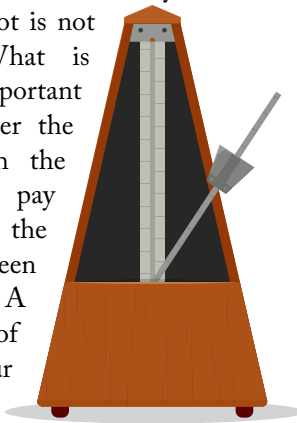
Exercise

You will need a smartphone or video camera, a metronome, a writing desk, a file in which your text will be printed in PDF format, a dart, and a dartboard. Set the video camera or smartphone up opposite the table at a distance of two or three meters from each other. Put the file containing the text and the dart on the desk. Hang the dartboard to the left or right of you.

Switch on the metronome so that it works at a measured tempo, not too fast and not too slow.

All your subsequent actions need to be taken separately and at the right time, keeping in mind the end goal, the target. You should learn to do this exercise so naturally that your movements appear seamless. For this, you have to remember the goal, that you hit the dartboard with the dart. You have to concentrate on the target from the very start, from the first step.

Do this exercise four times, twice with the metronome and twice without it. As soon as any thoughts come into your mind, mentally stick a Post-it Note on the back of the chair, exactly as we did in the first exercise. Whether you hit the bull's eye or not is not important. What is much more important is to remember the goal. As with the first exercise, pay attention to the pauses between your actions. A pause is a part of movement. Our mind forces us to act in line with templates, to always work while we are breathing in, while a pause is our breathing out. Charisma lives in spite of the mind, and it lives as we are breathing out, in the pause.



Misha Usov is an internationally acclaimed performer and the author of The Invisible Clown from which this article is drawn. The book is available on Amazon. Misha will be the featured performer and teacher at the 2022 COAI Convention in Atlanta, Georgia.



Our Good Cheer List

Please take a moment to spread a few words of good cheer with a card or note to one of these members.

Ruth "Sweet Sue" Hoppe
1355 Shannon Dr., Apt 103
Iowa City, IA 52246

Miriam "Senorita Soto" Kleinberger
2 Maple Lane North
Loudonville, NY 12211

Kathy "Noodles" Gurak
18 Park Avenue
Garfield, NJ 07026

Richard "Design-O" Smith
97 Grafton Street, Back Door
Shrewsbury, MA 01545-5646

Fran Etkorn
1015 Champion Circle
Longmont, CO 80503

St. Joseph's Manor
Fran "Cuddles" Smith
6448 Main St
Trumbull, CT 06611

Good Cheer Chairperson:

Crissy "Miz Daisy" Melnitzke
crissy@mizdaisyentertainment.com
863-221-4183

Let's Have a Jolly Good Time!

By Kynisha "Daisy the Clown" Ducre



'Tis the season to be thankful, jolly, and filled with glee!

Nothing says holidays like a good children's book, storytelling, balloons, and sometimes milk and cookies. Pre-Covid, I encouraged some blanket and books parties and entertainment for sleepovers to share the real meaning of the holidays. I did more marketing in November, yet I told many awesome stories and led Indian crafts, too. In December, many holidays are celebrated, including Hanukkah, Christmas, Boxing Day, Kwanzaa, New Year's Eve, and, in Japanese culture, Omisoka. Check your local bookstores and libraries for availability and make sure to bring coloring pages of yourself.

Some of my favorite holiday visits include group homes, women's shelters, low-income preschools, senior living facilities, toy drives, toy giveaways, and working the photo line with Santas to keep spirits high. Even the simplest things like making

balloon headbands for the grocery store checkers and baggers, leaving balloon bouquets for school counselors, and making balloon wristlets for the fast-food drive-thru workers (that I should not be in) brighten people's spirits! Make sure you make time to wrap some of your props for shows in holiday paper to add more cheer. All this makes the world a better place. If you know any military families, spread joy with them, too.

My true passion is doing children's church and going on mission trips. By the time you read this, I hope to be in Ghana, Africa, to add to the list of countries where Daisy has shared smiles! Whatever holidays you celebrate, share your smile with someone. You may think you are doing it for them, but it will warm your heart like cookies straight out of the oven! **TNC**

You can find Daisy the Clown on Facebook (Kynisha Daisy Ducre), YouTube and Instagram (DaisyTheClown), and TikTok (Daisy_TheClown), or reach her by email at clowninaroundtown@gmail.com.

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GEN Z JOEYS

For ages 18 to 24



By Regina Wollrabe, *Junior Joeys Director*

Dorianna King—an amazing young woman in her early twenties from the Washington, D.C. area—started her clown journey earlier this year. In March she realized that laughter and joy were distant memories that had been replaced by fear and anxiety. She knew it was time for a change and started looking for a new direction.

She stumbled into the world of clowning seeking fun and happiness. It was a curious discovery for her because she had previously been afraid of clowns. Dorianna had studied at an acting conservatory for one year, became a freelance dancer, and worked at Six Flags America for two years. She also worked as a costume character and an elf during the holidays. With those skills under her belt, she took a leap of faith into the unknown and gave her new character the name “Doree.” She then created Doree’s World on Facebook where she began documenting her journey, allowing the world to watch each step of the learning process in becoming a clown in today’s world.

She began seeking out people who could help her. Doree joined Free State Clown Alley in nearby Maryland. Online, she came in contact with Toto Johnson who suggested she attend Mooseburger’s camp, pointing her in the direction of meeting other clowns. She signed up, but due to the pandemic it was canceled. However, she joined the Mooseburger E-Alley and got help from the Mooseburger staff. This led her to finding other mentors as well, including Bonnie Corcia, who have continued to assist her with skills she is trying to learn.

She continued going to as many online events as she could find, watching YouTube videos, and calling people when she had questions.

She became a part of our Junior Joey program because we’ve expanded our program to people in her age group (early twenties), called the Gen Z Joeys. She has connected with our Membership Director, Kesha Beckly, and our Director of Education, Alene Kraus. Dorianna and I have also had many great conversations as she explores this new world of clowning. Her enthusiasm and excitement inspire me.

She has not been clowning quite a year but has already met some of the top clowns and is enjoying the process of learning juggling, plate spinning, poi, basic magic tricks, balloon animals, ukulele, comedy techniques, and business. Dorianna continues gleaning all she can about the history of our art as she develops her character that goes much deeper than the red nose on her face. She is learning so much more about herself through this process of character building.

It was impressive to watch her dive into the world of online entertainment that many of us hesitated to try in the beginning of the pandemic. She was anxious to try her new skills and get immediate feedback from those who could help her grow. She

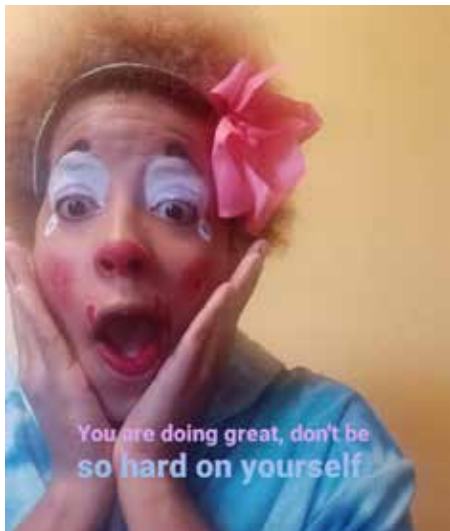
used Clown Week as her goal to get a video made and put it online for public viewing.

She began seeking advice about how to start a business and applied for a sole proprietor business license in her hometown. She recently received her EIN number and is now ready to start a business in the beginning of 2022. She doesn’t know exactly all that she will do as a clown in her business, but the opportunities are endless.

Doree wants to look professional by getting branded and working at birthday parties and other venues. She wants to help other young people discover the art of clowning and has been coming up with ideas to help reach out to those in her age group. She has found the older clowns ready to help and very giving of their unused items. It has been almost overwhelming for her as she has been the recipient of many gifts from other clowns to help get her started. Our clown community is always ready and willing to help young, inspiring clowns like Doree.

Recently Dorianna went to MACA 2021 Convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where she met many seasoned clowns and got her first interaction with other clowns up





Doree encourages people with her inspirational memes.

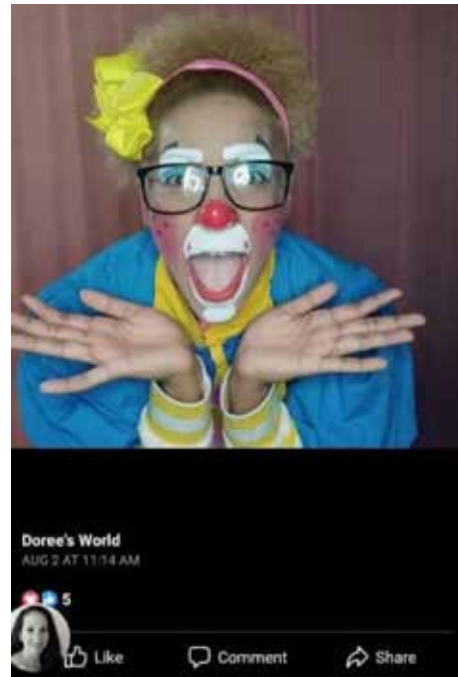
close and in person. This helped solidify in her mind what clowning is all about. She was so happy to have the experience of what it feels like to be on the receiving side of a clown's silly antics. Both Kesha and Alene donated costumes, and she even received a pair of Spears shoes. She soaked in as much as she could,



attending every single class and even the jams. She received the Willy from Philly award, which is a scholarship for new clowns that reimbursed her cost of the convention. All of these opportunities



COAI board members show their support with donations of costumes, shoes, and other clowning supplies.



Dorianna shares her clowning journey on social media. Check out her Facebook page, Doree's World.

continue to show her that she is on the right path.

I am so proud of Dorianna and the effort she has put in seeking people who can teach her what she desires to learn about clowning. She is putting herself into a place that is helping her grow quickly. One of her goals in clowning is to help lift up anyone who is at the bottom of the barrel. With a heart like that she will help many people on her path. Dorianna says she knows what it's like to be down and out. "If I can help bring a little bit of sunshine into someone's life, I will," she says. "The two things I keep saying to myself that keep me going are 'Learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable' and 'Don't be afraid to take risks in life—you never know what will happen.'"

Doree's story is a good reminder that all of us in Clowns of America International are here to help our members and prospective members grow. When you need help, reach out to our Director of Education, our Membership Director, or myself (Director of Junior Joys) to get the help you need. Our information is found on page 2 of every issue of *The New Calliope*. **TNC**

POCKETS'S

#13 Something Special



**Heather
"Pockets"
Wuerschling**

Now we are most definitely getting into the second barrel of fun. Pockets just has to find things for Twaddles to do. What with the slowdown of clowning due to Covid she is worried that he may become lazy and bored and so she continues to collect ideas for Twaddles to work on for her.

Gag Bags are a great way to break the ice and get some fun and laughter going with a minimum of effort. If you present Gag Bags to your family, friends, and any people that you meet you can lighten up their lives. These bags are full of hilarity, puns, and corny jokes so if you introduce them with flair and enthusiasm, you may well create a long term memory for your audience. These seriously funny gift ideas are something that people will either love to hate, hate to love, or

a mix of both. Either way, no one can deny that laughter is the best medicine.

We have set up a page of four labels, you can print and use if you do not want to design your own. Just e-mail me and ask for the PDF "Something Special" labels and I will send the page to you. All of the previous sets



ANTI-AGEING PILLS: Do you know someone who is worried about the years galloping past. Here is the answer. "Don't worry about getting old, lock ageing fears away. Just take an Anti-Ageing Pill and enjoy another day." Dosage: Under normal circumstances take one pill per day. In case of EMERGENCIES (like yours) consume all at once. In the bag are some smarties. Jelly beans, M&Ms or some other small, pill shape candy would be fine.



PLACEBO, MAX STRENGTH: Many of us are living stressful lives, feel that we might need something to take the edge off, but don't wish to take unnecessary medicines or harmful drugs. Well Max Strength Placebo pills are the answer. Guaranteed to be as effective as you believe them to be. "When you think that you are ill and Doctor won't agree. Don't swallow one Placebo Pill but chew on two or three. The dose is not important. There is no wrong or right. They may not cure everything but if you believe. They might." The bag contains a quantity of Tic Tacs. Any other capsule (or tablet) shape candy could be substituted.

GAG BAGS

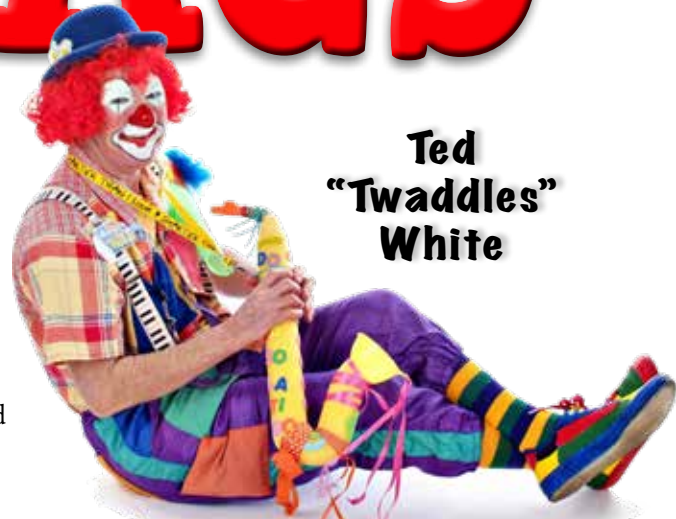
By Ted "Twaddles" White

of labels are still available if you want any of them as well. I can also send you the details of when they each appeared in The New Calliope and you can check them all out in The Vault via the COAI website - mycoai.com.

The clear plastic resealable bags currently in use are about four inches across the top, so these labels are four inches long. (If you want to use narrower bags, you may prefer to have the page of labels sent to you as a JPG and you can adjust the size to suit.)

But what does she put in the bags?

Most importantly have fun. Have fun making them, and then have a lot more fun handing them out and interacting with the person in front of you.



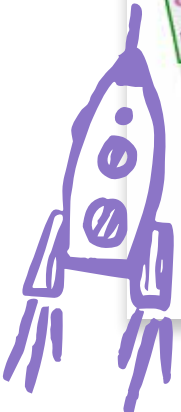
Ted "Twaddles" White



RETIRE MINTS: If you know someone who looks like they should soon end their working life, they may not be excited about retiring. Pockets has come to the rescue with this Retire Mints pack. "The only problem with retirement is you never get a day off." "It's awful to wake up in a good mood and have to waste it by going to work." What do you call a person who is happy on Mondays?.. RETIRED." "What is bedtime for retirees?.. Three hours after they fall asleep on the couch." Obviously the bag contains a quantity of mint flavoured candy. Here we have used Nestle Extra Strong Mints but many other types of mint flavoured candy could be substituted.



SOCIAL DISTANCING WORLD CHAMPION: I'm sure we all know some individual who has always tended to be uncomfortable with others crowding their personal space. Covid came along and the cry was "Social Distancing is necessary." Well for those who were social distancing long before it became cool, here is the recognition. "I've always kept myself aloof and some folk think I'm woeful. I wasn't Social Distancing it's just I'm Antisocial." Pockets places a gold medal in the bag. Cheap plastic medals, or even small trophies, can generally be picked up at cheap shops.



Salem Health Celebrates National Clown Week with SPOTLIGHT ON DR. FUN E. BONE

By Mike Bednarek

In the run-up to National Clown Week, and approaching my seventh anniversary as the resident clown doctor, pretending physician, and Chief of Stupidity at Salem Health hospital (Salem, Oregon), Dr. Fun E. Bone, I wrote a heads-up e-mail to the hospital's community relations staff that led to some media coverage.

Here are some excerpts from that e-mail:

Breaking News: August 1-7 is National Clown Week!

The Hospital has shadowed Dr. Fun E. Bone on his clown doctor rounds a couple of times in past years. Just thought I'd let you know about the upcoming National Clown Week in case you saw an opportunity to spotlight how the medical clown integrates humor into the healing process and environment in Pediatrics, the Emergency Department, and waiting rooms and public areas throughout the hospital.

Here's some background:

National Clown Week was first proclaimed by President Richard Nixon and Congress in 1970 to be observed August 1-7 every year to "call public attention to the charitable activities of clowns and the wholesome entertainment they provide for all our citizens."

Clowns are performing artists who use unique comical personas and skills to entertain, create laughter, and help audiences take a break from everyday life and enjoy moments of spontaneous play.

In the hospital setting, Dr. Fun E. Bone – who you know well – supports the healing process, uplifts spirits, and helps patients deal with the stress of hospitalization by providing humor and laughter-filled distractions from the feelings of fear, helplessness, anxiety, and sadness.



Dr. Fun E. Bone will observe National Clown Week on clown doctor rounds Wednesday at Salem Hospital to celebrate the art and contributions of the clown today, dispel some of the negative imagery of clowns in today's social media, and show gentle humor at work.

If desired and appropriate, feel free to invite hospital community relations staff and representatives from the local media to accompany Dr. Fun E. Bone on his rounds (where confidentiality would allow, of course) to show medical clowning in action. Or, we can just chat after my rounds on Wednesday.



For me, every week is Clown Week, celebrating the performing art of clowning. Let me know if you want to do any follow-up to this.

In cheer and laughter,

Mike "Dr. Fun E. Bone" Bednarek,
medical clown



And the Hospital ran with it! They posted this on its internal e-news bulletin, The Daily Dose, and on the Salem Health Facebook page:

It's National Clown Week — a good reminder that clowning around isn't just for laughs. It's also for healing, thanks to our very own Dr. Fun E. Bone, medical clown and longtime volunteer at Salem Health.

So, what can a clown do during the Pandemic? We asked Mike Bednarek (aka Dr. Fun E. Bone) what he's been up to.

"I was on hiatus from my hospital clown work from mid-March to late September 2020," he said. "As you can imagine, there were no live audiences for clowns, so I suddenly had time on my hands. So I Zoomed and started an online self-study program for clowns called A Fool's Tools."

He also honed skills on "medical clowning" and started playing the concertina (imagine a small squeezebox-like accordion) to be ready when we asked him back.

Can a clown smile through a mask? Of course they can! Dr. Fun E. Bone draws grins on his surgical masks, his red nose hanging over the top. "I'm double masked – and Dr. Fowlbreath, my rubber chicken, is masked up, too."

Read more about Dr. Fun E. Bone's travels on his blog: www.bustertheclown.net/hospital-clown.html

When I showed up for my weekly clown doctor rounds that week, the entire Volunteer Services office had red circle stickers on their surgical masks, all ready to greet me with a group "Happy National Clown Week!" What a great, affirming surprise that was! I quickly performed red nose transplants (with my clown red nose stickers) to make them official National Clown Week ambassadors. They wore their new red noses with pride that day.

Later that same day, I got word that the local newspaper wanted to do a story. Here are a couple of the e-mails exchanged internally.

Subject: MEDIA REQUEST - FW: you have a clown??

I thought I'd start with you since you wrote the Daily Dose article. Salem Reporter wants to do a story on our clown!

Here's the reporter's request (with the subject line: "you have a clown?"):

"Saw this FB post and would love to profile your clown. What are the odds I could shadow him at the hospital for a bit and sneak in an interview? Can show proof of vaccination and wear like 7 masks as needed."

Can you let me know who my contacts would be to coordinate this interview and visit to the hospital? Thanks!

Wow, hysterical. "Hospital clowns" are a thing; a very interesting concept and valuable asset. Great opportunity for us to do something light for a change. Mike would make a great interview; you may want to accompany them, although Mike knows what areas a reporter should avoid (like the ER).

The only thing we need to emphasize (and the reporter should know this) is

that they need permission to photograph people, since it's not a public setting. Our consent forms are for our own purposes, so the reporter would need to bring their own.

The next week, Dr. Fun E. Bone was shadowed by a newspaper reporter for his room visits in PEDS and short concertina serenades to Dr. Fowlbreath in elevator lobbies and the Emergency Department. The resulting article, "Rubber chicken and concertina in tow, Salem's hospital clown lifts spirits," chronicled that morning's clown doctor rounds. It started, "Mike Bednarek has been a clown for decades, but felt called to bring his act to hospitals after his teenage daughter's serious illness almost 20 years ago. Through corny jokes, card tricks and a little music, he brings a moment of laughter to kids ranging from four days old to 18."

Find it here: www.salemreporter.com/posts/4857/rubber-chicken-and-concertina-in-tow-salems-hospital-clown-lifts-spirits

If you're like me, normally a little sheepish about self-promotion, National Clown Week gives a framework and reason to tell our story as performing clowns, demonstrating and celebrating the art and contributions of the clown today and showing the positive impact clowns have with their audiences and in their communities.

I clown, therefore I am . . . a clown!

Mike Bednarek is medical clown Dr. Fun E. Bone, Chief of Stupidity at Salem Health hospital in Salem, Oregon. He's been a hospital clown for the past seven years of his 41 years in clowning, and is the architect of a twenty-one-day self-guided study program for performing clowns called A Fool's Tools. In his spare time, he squeezes his concertina, downward dogs, spins his wheels cycling, and gets taken for long walks by his dogs and wife. TNC

Welcome, NEW MEMBERS!

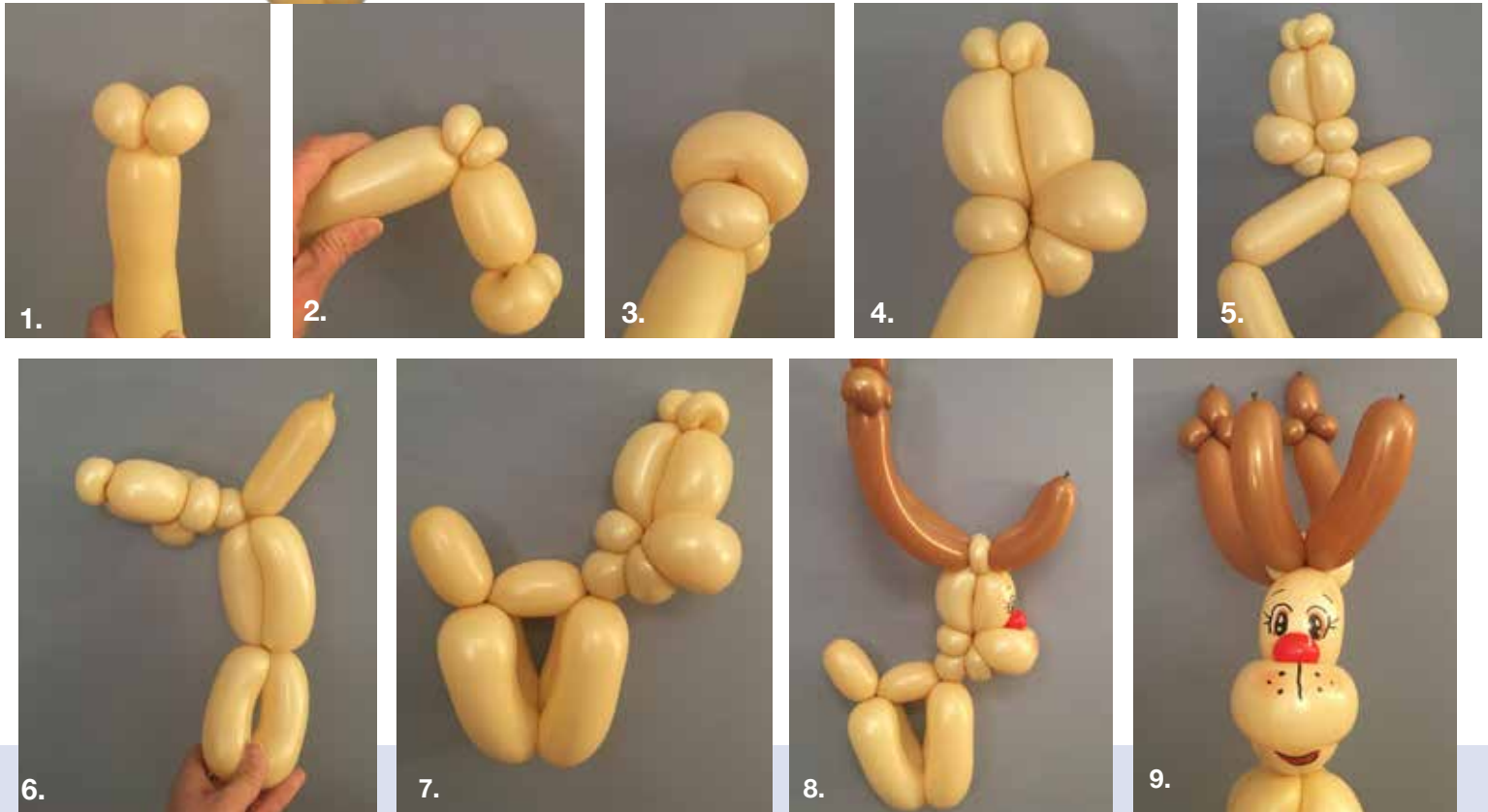
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Lorraine "Nurse Morning Glory" Kveskin Stamford CT
Bonnie "Tiggles" Perdelwitz Hayes VA
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Lilith "Jess Askin" Neisler Denver CO
Laura "Lala la Clown" Diemert Cottonwood AZ
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Zhang "Golden Bean" Jinning Changzhi City Shanxi China
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A big thank you to
Alene Kraus
Connie Morrow
Richard Smith (in
Memory of Dot Petty)
for gifting memberships!



Rudolph

By Patricia "Pockets" Bunnell

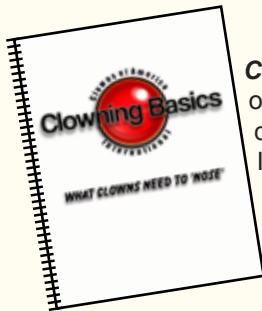


1. Inflate a Toffee 260, leaving a 5" to 6" tip. Form two pinch twists.
2. Make a 2" bubble followed by two small pinch twists. Finish with another 2" bubble and twist in at the pinch twists.
3. Twist a very soft bubble that's about 2.5". Form it around one of the pinch twists.
4. Side View.
5. Make a small, round bubble for a neck. Twist four equal bubbles about 4" each and twist to form a diamond. These are his legs.
6. Twist the four bubbles together in the middle.
7. With the remaining bubble create a small bubble for the body and twist in at the back of the four bubbles. The rest will become his tail.
8. Make antlers. You can make simple antlers or more complex depending on your time.
9. Add artwork. Inflate a Toffee 160 leaving a 4" tip. Twist in at the side of the mouth. Make a bubble the same size as the head. Form a loop for an ear. Make a small bubble and twist in at the top of the head into the pinch twist. Reverse the process for the other side. Make antlers.

Patricia "Pockets" Bunnell is an award-winning balloon artist from the Portland, Oregon, area. You may reach her by e-mail at oddballoon@gmail.com.



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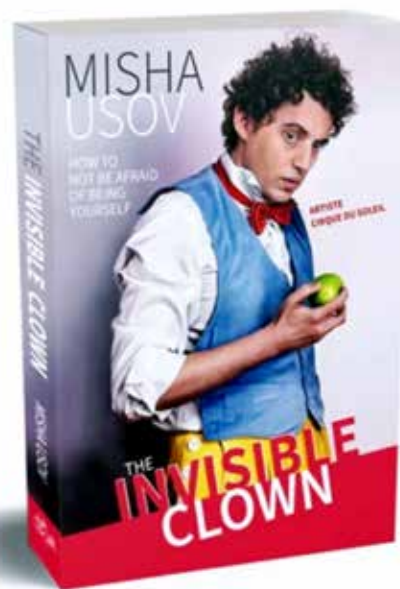
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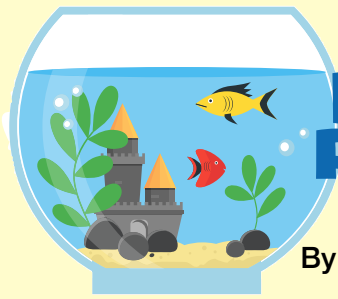


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A JOURNAL FOR AND BY CLOWNS CELEBRATING THE ART OF CLOWNING.



BUILDING YOUR PUPPET'S PROP

By Richard "Design-O" Smith

Those of you who read my last article may remember Misty and Snowball, my cats who modeled how to make a puppet. The other day, the three of us put our heads together to come up with a prop to incorporate into a paradeability skit or stage bit.

I love puppets and so do kids. I have hundreds of them, but they aren't always the easiest to bring along in a way that preserves their illusion. Enter the bucket prop. This prop is essentially a plastic bucket which is made into your puppet's personal, portable house. For Misty and Snowball, I created a fishbowl and a trash bin, but you can make anything that goes with any character you might have. The beauty of the bucket structure is its versatility and durability. If you've read any of my other articles, you know how much of a stickler I am for durability in professional clown props.

Here's what you'll need to make the fishbowl prop:

- Five-gallon plastic bucket, available from a hardware store such as Lowe's. If you ask at your local supermarket, they might have some extra food storage buckets they'd be willing to give you. Make sure you get two lids for the fishbowl.

- One 2½ to 2-inch brass hinge with matching screws.

- Four tubes of Goop glue or a similar strong adhesive.

- One can of adhesive spray, such as 3M Super 77 multipurpose adhesive spray.

- One or two sheets of picture frame matting, the largest you can find.

- One or two packages of twelve-inch square dowels which have a width of three-quarter inch. They come in packages of four, and we are using these for supports. If you feel you need more, err on the side of having too many.

- Twelve to fifteen sheets of photo paper.

- Half a yard of heavy clear vinyl.

- Half a yard of vinyl in black or any color you like.

If you don't have the following tools for the project, I highly recommend investing in them, as they'll come in handy for many projects in your clown career.

Staple gun.

Several sizes of grip clamps to hold things in place while they dry.

Jigsaw with a fine blade that will cut plastic or a fine handsaw with a rattail blade. Make sure the blade has fine teeth.

Drill.

Hot glue gun.

Assemble your materials, and let's get to work!

I'm going to walk you through the steps for making a portable fishbowl, but as I said, you can build any style of puppet house onto this structure.

Make the lid. Since we are making the fish tank, you'll need two bucket lids: one to anchor onto the bucket and the other to act as the actual lid which flips up and down.

Start by cutting out the center portion of one of the lids, leaving a one-and-a-half or two-inch border around the outside edge. Don't cut off any parts that latch onto the bucket. This is where your hand is going to come in and out with

the puppet, so sand those edges or cover them with foam.

Measure and cut two rings of matting board to the same dimensions as your now-cut lid. Stick the two rings together with adhesive spray and attach them to the top of the cut bucket lid with Goop glue. Clamp the lid and matting boards together with hand clamps and let them cure overnight.

When gluing anything to plastic, rough the plastic up first with sandpaper. This gives something for the glue to grip onto. If you don't, the matting will not adhere, and you'll have wasted your time.

Meanwhile, measure and cut two circles of matting board to fit inside the remaining lid. Stick them together with adhesive spray and glue and clamp them to the lid as you did the previous one.

Let both lids completely cure before moving on. Once they're done, I usually run a line of staples around the edge of each lid to be safe. Remember, you want this prop to last.

Right now, the top (uncut) lid and the bottom lid should nest fairly smoothly together. However, you'll notice the lip of the top lid overhangs the bottom. This is going to prevent the lid from opening and closing smoothly, so we will need to cut some of that lip away. Position the hinge where you'd like it on the top lid and mark where it will go. Mark an inch or two on either side of the hinge and cut the lip off the top between those two marks. Screw your hinge into either side of the lid.

Be careful here to screw the hinge into the *bottom* of the top lid and the *top* of the bottom lid. To be safe, I also cut a strip of cardboard or matting board to glue over the hinge on the top lid as reinforcement. Your finished product should look like **Figures 1 and 2**.

Prepare the bucket. Measure from the entry point of one side of the bucket handle to the other and divide that in half to find your center. Make a mark. Buckets like these usually have several



Figures 1 and 2. Note the matting board circles on the bottom side of the top lid. The close-up gives a better view of the hinge itself and where the rim is cut to make room for it. The hinge needs to be on the inside of the bucket for easier opening.

“ribs” near the top (**Fig. 3**). Measure at your center point about two inches down from the last rib and make another mark. Now, draw a square centered off that mark that’s about six and a half inches. This is a pretty good space for your hand to get in and operate the puppet. If you feel you need more or less space, adjust the square (**Fig. 3**).

Drill a hole in the center of the square so your jigsaw can get in and cut along your marked lines. Sand the edges smooth.



Figure 3. This is the back of the prop, so your hand should be fairly well hidden going in and out of the bucket.

Now it’s time to add your supporting dowels. Figure out where each one will be placed before attaching them. Start with one on either side of your hand opening and work your way around the bucket from there. These are going to help create the three-dimensional effect of the tank, giving something for the clear vinyl to wrap around. You’re also going to be putting fish which are about five inches long in between these supports, so make sure you space them accordingly.

To be extra secure, I glue the dowels in place with Goop and also screw them to the bucket from the inside. Clamp them down and let them cure. It may be a little difficult to see from **Figure**, but the dowels should come just under the bucket’s ribs.

Make the fish and background. You can purchase files that fill an eight-by-ten sheet which look like a variety of different home fish tanks, so find one you like and print out several. I recommend going with something simple because you will be adding things and most audiences won’t see much detail in the background. Print off about five sheets for the bucket. Each section should take at least one sheet, and you will need a few extra for effects.



Figure 4. Misty wanted to get in on the action, so she modeled the prop.



Using spray adhesive, glue the sheets to the bucket, shaping them over the dowels and staying flush with the ribs and the lower edge of the bucket. If you look at the above picture, you can see that the shape of the dowels still comes through, but that’s okay. No one will notice from the audience or on a parade route (**Fig. 5**).

Now it’s time for your fish. Print out any tropical fish you like on photo paper. My cat likes clown fish, and they worked well with my hobo character.

Make sure each fish is four to five inches long and two-and-a-half inches tall so the audience will be able to distinguish them from a distance. Adhere these to cardstock and then to matting board or foam core. The foam shouldn't cover the whole fish, just enough to make it stand out from the bucket for a good three-dimensional effect.

Arrange the fish in between the supporting dowels on the bucket. Each section should have two or three fish, depending on how large you made it. Glue them to the background with Goop and let them cure. Don't move on to the next step until they have completely dried, or your fish will fall off your tank. If you want your fish to have a little more pizzazz, you can add some glitter in different colors. Just make sure you brush off any excess once the fish have dried (**Fig. 6**).

Supporting borders. Prepare two strips of the photo matting board, one which is two inches by the full length of the board and one which is an inch and a half by the full length of the board. Shape these around the top (the two-inch strip) and bottom (the one-and-a-half-inch strip) of the bucket. The top should align with the ribs but not cover them. The bottom should align with the bottom edge of the bucket. You might need more matting board if your first piece doesn't fit all the way around.

Take your extra background sheets, cut out the coral shapes or the shapes of whatever is in your tank pictures, and adhere them to cardstock. Take the top portion of those sheets (mine were just blue) into strips about three inches wide with an uneven border at the lower end and adhere them to cardstock.

Arrange your coral pieces around the lower edge of your bucket however you'd like. As you can see, they overlap some of my fish, which adds to the reality of the prop. I recommend marking where you want your coral configurations to go. You're going to take them back off, glue them to the one-and-a-half-inch strip of matting board, and put them back on the bucket.



Figure 6. This shot shows the glitter effect on the fish. Also, you can go ahead and decorate the top at the same time as the bucket. Figure 6. I wrapped the vinyl around the back edges and attached the fairy lights. The belt is attached on the inside to help hold up the tank while I'm operating the puppet.

Make sure you line the straight edge of the coral pieces with the straight edge of the board and the whole thing with the bottom of the bucket. Anchor your coral pieces to the dowels since they will extend beyond the matting strip and add pieces of matting or foam core underneath in any place where you think it might cave in.

Glue your top blue pieces to the two-inch strip of matting board and glue that to the top of the bucket just under the ribs, taking the same considerations for its support as you did for the bottom strip.

Add the vinyl. Once all your coral has dried, take your heavy clear vinyl and cut it to the length of the bucket from the ribs down. Glue around the top under the ribs, pulling the vinyl snug. As much as possible, you want the vinyl nice and flat with no dipping in between the support dowels. It'll never be perfect, but the closer it is, the more it will give the illusion of a fish tank. If you like, you can also staple each section in place until it dries so there are no bubbles.

Once it's dry, it's time to add your black vinyl. Cut two one-inch or two-inch strips for the top (under the ribs)

and bottom and glue them in place with either Goop or adhesive spray. I like to use Goop because it's more secure. Smooth out the strip with a scrap piece of matting board. I don't have a picture of this, but I also like to edge the hand opening in the back with black vinyl for a more finished look.

For the final touch, I added LED fairy lights that run on a battery pack. Most fish tanks have lights, so this gives just that extra touch. I ran them around the "inside" edges of the black vinyl on the top and bottom and along the edge of the arm hole. The battery pack can be stowed inside the bucket. I recommend keeping these on the outside of the tank, since they will be easy to replace if a bulb goes out without undoing all your fabulous glue job with the fish. Glue them in place with dots of Goop (**Fig. 7**).

Finishing the lid. Apply all these techniques to your lid. I recommend turning the whole top into the tank from above, including the fish. Cover it with clear vinyl and wrap the edge of the lid in black vinyl. Once everything is dry, you're done! Now, it's time to have fun.

While these instructions are specifically for a fish tank, you can make a



Figure 8. The wood helps to stabilize the hand, since that is a pretty big bolt. However, no one is going to see it.



Figure 9. The arm was attached to the bucket before I added the rest of the foam.

variety of props with a bucket base: a fire hydrant, pig stall, or cannon. I also made a trash barrel which turned out to be much easier. I just glued matting strips on the outside to make it look like a corrugated trash can. I also only needed one lid on the top.

This prop can be used on a table for a stage show or walkaround. I do suggest attaching some sort of belt like I have in **Figure 7** if you plan to use it for a walkaround. It's awkward to try to hold the bucket with one hand and operate the puppet with the other. You can purchase a simple utility belt from any hardware store such as Lowe's or Home Depot. Cut it in half and attach it to the support boards inside the arm opening at a height that will be comfortable to fit around your waist. I recommend doing

this after you cut the arm hole and before you decorate the top.

Extra: Make a fake arm. If you are planning on using this prop for parade-ability, you can also make a fake arm to complete your illusion.

You can purchase a fake hand with an extended arm piece from eBay. I would make sure the hand is hollow, as this will help immensely. Drill a hole in the center of the palm and insert a long bolt with a flying nut. Wrap one end of a coat hanger around the end of the nut inside the hand and extend the hanger to your elbow and slightly up to your bicep. Fill the hand with spray foam insulation to anchor everything in place (**Fig. 8**).

Make a fabric tube to cover the wrist and extend to your shoulder over the

wire. As you can see from the picture, it should be about the size of your arm. I used flesh-colored Spandex, but you can use cotton or whatever fabric you have on hand. Just remember to keep it in line with your clown persona. If you are an auguste clown, flesh-colored fabric works well. If you are a white face, the whole arm should be white, even the hand (**Fig. 9**).

Making sure I had the shape the way I wanted it, I filled the whole tube with foam insulation. If you don't want to use that, you can fill it with rolled-up batting. Make sure you still have some fabric left relaxed so you can attach the whole apparatus inside your jacket at the shoulder.

To attach it, I use a three-by-five-inch strip of Velcro with the teeth strip attached to the arm fabric and the loop strip attached to the jacket. Hook it in and attach the hand to the bucket, and you're all set. Don't forget to use Scotchgard to spray the hand for protection.

I hope you like this article and find it easy to duplicate. Please let me know through email or Facebook about your experiences making the prop and what you've changed to fit your clown persona. Send me pictures! I'd love to see how I've helped you to become more creative in using your puppets. **TNC**

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Crafty Giveaways

By Connie "Punkin" Morrow

I love crafting and making giveaways for kids' parties. I thought I'd share a few with you.

The first one is an easy magic wand. All it takes is a black paper straw and white electrical tape. Wrap each end of the straw with a strip of tape, and voila! You have a magic wand. The kids at one of my big summer events loved these!

Next is my frog mask. The basic frog masks are available from any online novelty shop and come in packs of twelve. I added tongues to the masks. At the time of writing this article, I didn't have any red blowouts, so use your imagination. I cut a small horizontal hole in the frog's mouth. Next, I cut away all the streamers that were on the blowouts, which can be purchased at any dollar store. I cut the straw part of the blowout down to make sure it would fit in my mouth and not push the mask out. All you have to do is blow!



Finally, I made straw bracelets. This project was so much fun, easy, and cheap! All you need are regular plastic straws and pencil sharpeners, all of which I bought at a dollar store. The sharpeners come in packs of twelve. Sharpen the straw as you would a pencil, and it will come out all twisted. You can make a bracelet by linking the ends together. Some kids put them around their pencils instead of wearing them as bracelets. Watch out for this one—it can be habit forming!

Connie serves as COAI RVP for the Northeast Region. Contact her by email at punkin@punkintheclown.com.



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CLOWN COMICS

WEATHER WARNING

By Ann "Tuttles" Sanders

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Chuck "Otto" Shields
Sharon "Miss Sheri" Wilson
Joe "Checkers" Saunders
Kim "Kimi" Hall



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to Make Your Holiday Shows a Success!



Art by Gina "Cha Cha" Wollrab

RUDY REINDEER!

Show a colorful cardboard plaque of Rudy Reindeer. Rudy couldn't fly like all of the other reindeer, so Santa gave him a magic cape – and a special job. Rudy flies from house to house scouting out which houses have chimneys and which ones have doors, so Santa will know ahead of time where he needs to use his magic key.

To demonstrate Rudy going down a chimney, you slide him into an envelope printed with a chimney design. One volunteer holds Rudy in the chimney envelope while another helper holds an empty envelope with a printed door design.

The audience shouts the magic words, and the plaque is pulled out of the chimney envelope, Rudy is gone! A cut out area where he used to be is all that remains.

When the door envelope is opened – oops! Rudy is NOT there! His little green silk cape tumbles out, but no reindeer. The cape disappears, but Rudy is nowhere to be seen. Finally, after a frenzied search and lots of enthusiastic "advice" from the audience, Rudy Reindeer is found to be clinging to the second helper's back! "He made it to the next house – he just went around to the back."

Be the first on your block to own this fabulous flying reindeer. Everybody needs a little R&R – that's why you need Rudy Reindeer! **ONLY \$20!**



Art by Selina Frederick

BIG RED NOSE!

Rudy starts out as a blue-nose reindeer. The children object so you magically turn his nose to red. You like it better the other way but when you try to change it back, the color vanishes from the reindeer's nose. The children howl as the red nose ends up on you! Complete with glossy cards and a high quality, red foam nose. **ONLY \$20!**



Art by Selina Frederick

PRESENTS OF MIND!

Display a set of jumbo cards, each with a different holiday picture (candy cane, Santa, snowman, candle, gifts, ornament, angel, etc.). Two spectators think of any picture. You roughly sketch the pictures you think they have mentally selected. Place your sketches on a stand, and when you reveal your drawings, you have correctly guessed the pictures

they chose! Absolutely NO artistic skill is required! Complete set includes cards, card stand, and marker. **ONLY \$35!**



A fun idea by Silly Billy

MAGIC CHRISTMAS PICTURE

Show a black and white drawing of a rooftop with reindeer and sleigh ready to land – except the sleigh is empty! No color, no Santa, no presents, oh no! A volunteer picks several crayons and writes his name on the sign in front of the house, colors the reindeer's nose, and adds some smoke coming from the chimney. The child holds

the picture while everyone says the magic words ("Out to Lunch!"). When the picture is turned around, Santa and a sleigh full of presents – complete with a Christmas tree – appears, all magically colored with crayons! The child keeps the magic drawing as a souvenir of the show! 20 refills included. **ONLY \$20!**



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