CLOWN TRADITION

WHERE
TO
BEGIN

BY RANDY CHRISTENSEN

Clown
Tradition

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Presented in dedication to
Michael "Bingo" O'Shaughnessy
who first opened my eyes to the
realm of traditional clowning.
Much of what I know and share is
based upon what I first learned
from him.

Thanks Michael!

INTRODUCTION

This booklet will simply take you into the basics of traditional character types, make-up application, where to use traditional clowning in a church setting, and just all-round good clowning. I hope it gives you a good place to begin. Let's Kick-off!!

Preface

Clowning, as we know it, is a result of centuries of "trial and error". It seems that practically every culture has had some type of "clown" that helped people release stress through comedy relief, imitation of authority and exaggeration of the common plight of mankind.

These "trial and error" situations were various performance settings where the clown would interact with his audience to discover what would bring the desired response in his audience, and consequently, from his audience. This applies to sundry clown types through the ages, whether it was the clown performing in Pharaohs court in Egypt, in the Hopi Indian culture, the court jester, or the modern American circus clown. Each has contributed to the tapestry which we call the art of clowning.

Generally, the clowning that we understand here in the United States has been greatly influenced by the clowning we have been exposed to. Understandably so. Television clowns, such as Ronald McDonald, Bozo, and others have contributed to our mindset.
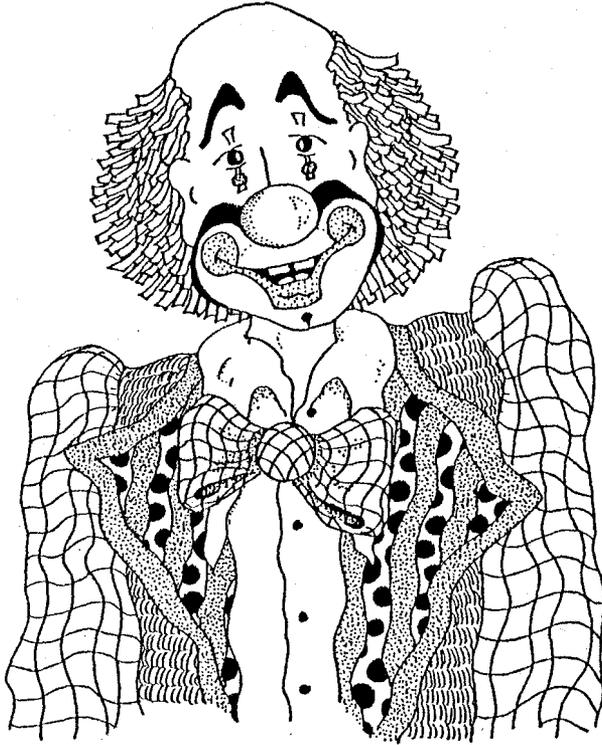
CHARACTER TYPES

There are basically three clown categories with variations that exist within each. They are whiteface, auguste, and tramp. Here are the "rules of thumb" on these categories:

Whiteface - This type of clown is exemplified by Ronald McDonald. He is not a stupid character. He is fun and colorful and intelligent. He demonstrates various skills, uses riddles, and does tricks. He generally knows "the right way" to do things. He is a "take charge" type of personality.

His make-up and costume demonstrate his intelligence. He is color-coordinated, neat and clean.

He has white make-up as the primary color and base on his face. Various colors are used to accent his mouth, nose, and eyebrows, etc.

Auguste (ah-goo-st) - The word "auguste" is a German slang work that means "stupid". That sums up this character. The auguste clown is the one who misunderstands, bumbles, and searches for alternate ways to reach a goal. His "romanticism", curiosity, and stupidity create hilarious situations.

The auguste symbolizes the "common man" in many ways. His make-up base is fleshtone. His exaggerated features portray his stupidity and ineptness. His clothing also demonstrates this to his audience. His unmatched colors and ill-fitted clothing have given this type of character the reputation of being a "tailor's nightmare".

Hobo/Tramp - This character exemplifies the person who has all the "hard luck". He generally is melancholy, depressed, and/or lethargic. The tramp is generally dressed in rags, dark colors, and has a weathered look. The depression era hobo who "rode the rails" helped bring this type of character to the forefront. Red Skelton as "Freddie the Free loader", Emmett Kelly and Emmett Kelly, Jr. are recognized for their tramp characters by the current generation.

CREDIBILITY

Your credibility - your audience's belief that you truly ARE a clown, depends primarily upon two factors: your clown image and the portrayal of your clown's character.

At times, I have heard debated which is most important: the image ("total look") or the character ("personality"). There needs to be quality in each area. This is not an "either/or" situation. Hopefully you will strive to be excellent in each area.

YOUR IMAGE: For the first two minutes, your clown's image is priority. You never have a second chance to make a first impression. That first initial sighting by your audience goes a long way: it will determine whether they will stop and give you their attention or not.

I have heard a number of "teaching clowns" make the statement, "You don't want to look too good as a clown, because it will draw attention to yourself, rather than to the message". May I state, without being rude, that this is a ridiculous statement.

Consider... when a person dresses in clown make-up, whether it is done poorly, or done well, that he WILL draw attention to himself, whether he looks good or not.

Realize, people appreciate quality. They want to see quality. More often, an audience will turn off a clown's message due

to his lack of professional appearance, than they will because he looks "too good".

YOUR CHARACTER: Even more crucial is the portrayal of your character. After you have gained attention, you need to maintain it, and not ruin the illusion of this "living cartoon".

I've heard children say, He's not a real clown!" They didn't make that statement due to lack of make-up. Fact is, I've seen some wonderful clowns with very minimal make-up, and have heard children say, "He's a clown!" Both these evaluations were made by the children within a few minutes of the clown's entrance. One clown, though fully made-up, did not act like a clown, or have a clown character. The other was rich in character, audience interaction, and traditional clown bits.

When performing as a clown, think of yourself as a puppet. The puppet personality reflected is different than the puppeteers. Consider Kermit the frog. He thought different, talked different, and responded different than Jim Henson simply did. You will want to develop a separate character like this for your clown also.

CLOWN MAKE-UP

Clown make-up is not applied to help you hide your features, but to help you show your expressions. Strive to develop an image (outer appearance) that reflects your character (inner personality).

Materials for make-up application and removal:

Oil base make-up, NOT water soluble (white plus two other colors)

Johnson's Baby Powder

Thin sock

Black Maybelline eyeliner (stick or liquid)

Baby Oil

Water

Old Towel

Wash cloth

Towel

Cold Cream (optional)

WHITEFACE APPLICATION

Step 1   Apply white to face, ears, neck, etc. Don't put it on too thick. A little at a time will do. You can always add more. If your face looks "pinkish", then you need to add more white.

Step 2   "Pat" every area where the white is applied. Be vigorous. This removes the streaks, works it into your pores and accomplishes a textured "flesh" look.

Step 3   Remove the white from the areas where other colors will be applied.

a.   Cotton swabs work well if the cotton is twisted tightly

b.   Removing the white will keep your make-up from becoming too thick and will make your colors appear brighter.

c.   If you do not like the shape of the area where the colors are to be applied, re-white, pat, and try again.

Step 4   Apply your colors using small brushes or make-up sticks

Step 5   Using a thin sock filled with baby powder, or a clean powder puff, hit every area where make-up is applied.

a.   make sure that every area is covered with powder by feeling for areas which are still moist. Powder again if necessary. You cannot use too much.

b.   Powdering sets the make-up. It can no longer be wiped off by simply touching it.

c.   Brush off the excess powder with the larger brush.

Step 6   Apply the liner around your features

a.   apply the liner with a pulling action for a straighter line

  b. remaining tense often helps one to pull the line straight

  c. "stretch" the facial region that the outliner is being applied to. This prevents wrinkles, etc., from causing loss of control

  d. if using liquid liner, blot it or use a hair dryer to dry it immediately

NOTE: Some choose to powder after each color rather than only at step five. The advantage of not powdering is that you may correct your make-up until that point. Once you have powdered, the only way to change a feature is to remove the entire "mask" and begin again.

AUGUSTE:

1. Apply white to designated areas and pat.

2. Outline the areas where white is to be left and remove excess white.

3. Powder and brush off the excess.

4. Apply flesh-tone make-up to remainder of face.

5. Remove areas of flesh-tone make-up where other colors are to be applied.

6. Apply colors.

7. Powder and brush off the excess.

8. Apply outliner.

HOBO

1. Apply white and pat.

2. Apply flesh tone and pat. Blend into white edges.

3. Apply red to cheeks and blend out into flesh tone.

4. Apply black or grey beard-area. Blend into edges of cheek area.

5. Remove make-up where other colors are to be applied.

6. Apply colors.

7. Powder and brush off excess.

8. Apply outliner.

TIPS FOR "KEEPING IT ON"

1. When applying your make-up, pat it well, working it into your pores.

2. Keep your powder in a convenient location and re powder before you begin to "sweat it off".

3. Spray a thin layer of hair spray over your entire face when finished. This seals your make-up, brightens the colors, and will keep it looking good longer.

MAKE-UP REMOVAL

Many different methods and substances may be used to remove make up. Some use shampoo, cold cream, or eye make-up remover pads.

Here is the method I use:

1.   Apply a generous amount of baby oil to the corner of an old towel (not a Kleenex or paper towels).

      a.   wipe the make-up off your forehead with horizontal strokes

      b.   use a different part of the towel: apply new oil and remove make-up from cheeks.

      c.   continue make-up removal in the same manner. Remove a section at a time. Don't smear it all over your face.

      d.   last of all, remove make-up carefully from around your eyes.

2.   Using a moist washcloth, wipe the oil away from the eye area.

3.   Using the same washcloth, wash your face with the mild dishwashing liquid.
        * The dishwashing liquid will dissolve the oil without being harsh on your skin.

4.   Rinse out the washcloth and wipe entire face with it.

5.   Rinse face.

6.   Some performers choose to apply a thin layer of cold c
        ream after removal of make-up.

MAKE-UP TIPS

GENERAL:

1.   Always be clean shaven before applying make-up.

2.   If you have dry, skin apply a thin layer of cold cream to
        your face before beginning to make-up. This makes it
        easier to remove make-up later.

3.   Keep the features on your clown face within the outside
        corners of your eyes.

4.   Have a face that is symmetrical... one side looks the
        same as the other.

TIPS FOR FEATURES:

Eyes: Keep white around your eyes. Colors hide the
                movement and expression and may give
                a "dark scary" appearance.

                Highlight your eyes by putting a dark line under
                each eye or by darkening the lashes. This will
                enhance your expressions.

Mouth: Make your upper and lower lips different colors.
                Generally your upper lip will be white and your
                lower one red or black, except on the Hobo.

                Place your mouth design on your natural
                expression lines. Then, when you smile, the

make-up will highlight and expand your expressions. Do not have an "ear to ear" mouth.

THE CLOWN RECIPE

Let's discuss the ingredients needed to put together a flavorful clown...one that leaves a good taste in the audience's mouth. There are necessary ingredients for clowning just as there are essential ingredients for baking cookies. With out those ingredients you won't have clowns or cookies. Following are listed a few of those essentials.

1. Exaggeration: Clowns are exaggerations. They are exaggerations of real people, of each one of us. They have exaggerated personalities, costuming, props, reactions, and problems. Concentrate on making your clowning larger than life. Exaggerate your movements and emotions. When you cry, don't just "boo hoo". Scream and wail! Take a large bandana out and honk your nose in it, then start to bawl again! Use exaggeration to transform yourself from just a person in paint into that magical character of Clown.

2. Character: A clown is a clown. I'll say it again: a clown is a CLOWN. He is not just a person in make-up. Putting on make-up doesn't make a person a clown anymore than putting on surgical gear makes a person a physician. A clown has

developed a different personality that reacts differently than his normal self. This takes practice and experience, but it is an essential ingredient. The more you work to develop that character, the more comfortable you will become performing it. Soon it will be second nature for you. Then you will be able to really put your whole heart into it.

3.   Appearance: Clowns are like fantasy characters to children. Enhance this fairy-tale mindset with your appearance. Don't feel bound to your clown costume and face just because that's the way you've always done it. Always strive to improve. If you do that, you certainly will need to make some changes in your appearance from time to time. Try to look "fantasy". I want to look like a character that just jumped out of a fairy-tale book that they were just reading. One good rule- of-thumb is to use three main colors on your face and costume. Use them in different places so as to tie your costume together. For example: have red hair, nose, mouth, sleeves, belt, and socks. Have blue eyebrows, vest, and shoes. Have gold tie, pants, trim on gloves, and shoelaces. One more thing: I once heard Leon McBride say, "Try to give children what they expect. There are three things all children seem to expect: a clown nose, big feet, and clown hair. The least we can do is give them those three things."

4.   Clown Humor: Clown humor is a unique style of humor. I see it as divided into two categories: visual humor and verbal humor. Often clowns don't have to say a word to get a laugh. They use "visual jokes". Walkarounds are often visual puns. There are "B" collections, blue "J's", and pictures or "our pride and joy" (a bottle of Pride and a bottle of JOY). Often the great exaggerations in largeness or smallness provide chuckles. Often the verbal humor stems from one clown's utter stupidity. Puns once again become knee-slappers. Become a student of clown humor by watching many of the former greats. Go to your public library and check out Laurel and Hardy films. Rent videos of Charlie Chaplain. Read as many clown routines, etc., as you can and soon you will begin to have a real feel for this often-neglected essential element of clowning.

Let's avoid, at all costs, being bland generic clowns. If you mix these four ingredients together you'll find that your audience will want another serving when you're done.

CLOWN ALLEY CLOWN MINISTRY EXCERPTS
Presented by the WCA Clown Ministry Committee

Rev. Randy Christensen and the members of the WCA Clown Ministry Committee prepared a section entitled "Clown Ministry In Conjunction With The Local Church" for inclusion in each of the WCA Clown Alley Handbooks.

Here is a reprint of some of the information:

MINISTRYY POSSIBILITIES

Many churches are looking for novel ways to share their message and inspire their adherents. There are a number of ways that clown alleys and individuals may aid their local churches and religious organizations.

Consider being a part of:

A. Kid's Clubs and Doctrine Classes - Most churches have midweek children's activities that are quite similar to Boy Scout and Girl Scout programs. Often these programs allow for a weekly "just plain fun" time. You may desire to offer to bring some of your fun with you to such a setting.

Often these programs use awards as motivational tools to inspire children to memorize scripture verses, etc. During special recognition banquets and services the awards are given and a special feature is presented.
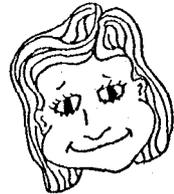
As a clown alley you would not necessarily have to perform a religious themed program at such an awards ceremony. A "congratulations on your achievement" skit at the end of a fun- filled program would delight most church audiences.

B. Family Banquet - Recognizing the importance of healthy family relationships, many churches have began to conduct yearly Mother/Daughter and/or

Father/Son Banquets. These are usually more for the purpose of giving a parent and child a fun common experience than they are for preaching, etc. A clown presentation would be appropriate.

C.   Holidays - Often when we think of holidays we think of special programs that occur during holiday seasons. Many churches are looking for special themed programs during Christmas and Halloween seasons.

Please understand that for Christmas these special programs are to focus on the reason for the season - Jesus.

For Halloween, these church programs generally are to de-emphasize the reason for that season. Many churches are now taking a strong stand against Halloween traditions due to their pagan origins and the rise of occultism.

Churches are also looking to provide a fun evening for children as a safe alternative to having the children out on the streets. These Halloween alternative programs are not necessarily "religious" in nature, depending upon the church.

Other holidays, such as Memorial Day, Labor Day, and the Fourth of July, affect church programs. Often churches find themselves with a lack of workers and are looking for something to present to the congregation instead of their regular programming. Clowns could provide a unique service that the families would enjoy.

Resources By Randy

Training Tapes &Videos
Children's Ministry Training Course
(Volumes One, Two & Three)
Kid-Relevant Kid's Church Series
Lights, Camera, Clowning
Physical Warm-Ups
...and more!

Books
Clowning For Christ
Developing Clown Ministry Programs
Costumes and Characters Solo Clown
Ministry
Tithe Talks (Volumes One & Two)
Easy Gospel Cartoons Clown Skits For Christ
.. more!

Performance Music
Creative Performance
(Volumes One, Two & Three)
Checkerboard Rap Highest of Praise My
Choice ...and more!

Check out Randy's materials @
www. Randyslnfo.com