

The Yin Yang of Clowning

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There I was, trying to doze off in the middle of the night while waiting at the airport for my flight to the WCA convention in Jacksonville. Every 10 minutes I was jolted back to reality by a ringing cell phone, a baby crying or someone running to catch a flight. Since I couldn't sleep, I tried to find some meaning from this for entertainers about which I could write.

Eureka! Contrast keeps your audience tuned in! This may seem like such an obvious and almost trite truism but how many of us seriously consider this when planning our shows? I know I sometimes get on a roll and do a lot of frenetic segments in a row. This can tire an audience just as much as monotone slow moving segments. So why not mix them up! If your character is a high energy type, it would really be funny to see you suddenly do some stick in slow motion. If your character usually stands tall, you could occasionally do something on your knees. If your character is loud, you could suddenly start to whisper and then get loud again. Sudden unexpected changes of pace will lengthen the attention span of your audience.

This certainly applies to public speaking as well. Steve Smith had us in the palm of his hands during his lecture. Of course he spoke from the heart and gave good advice but we may not have listened as intently if it weren't for his presentation. His voice was gentle, and thunderous, high and low. He expressed a wide range of emotions, moved around and stood still--a delight to watch.

Think about performances that you've seen that kept your interest. How much contrast was there in pace, tone, actions, etc.? My favorite performance at the convention was that of the Open Sesame mime clown team from Japan--Rone and Gigi. The contrast of their characters, their facial expressions, their movements along with a variety of sound effects (thanks to Cathy's help) made their skilled performance even more appealing. As I watched them, I thought of the Chinese dualistic philosophy of Yin-Yang...the feminine-masculine, the hot-cold...the opposites that make life exciting. Maybe Rone is the Yin and Gigi the Yang!

Watching their movements, I wrote a Japanese Haiku poem (5-7-5 syllables).



**To stretch and compress
Perform slowly then quickly
The Yin-Yang of clowning**

This idea of increased interest with contrast is true with almost everything in life--foods, decor, clothing, the arts, relationships, etc. Even in photography. Check out Rone and Gigi's photos. They rarely pose together with the same expression. Each one shows a different emotion which makes for a more interesting picture. Next time you pose with a clown buddy or

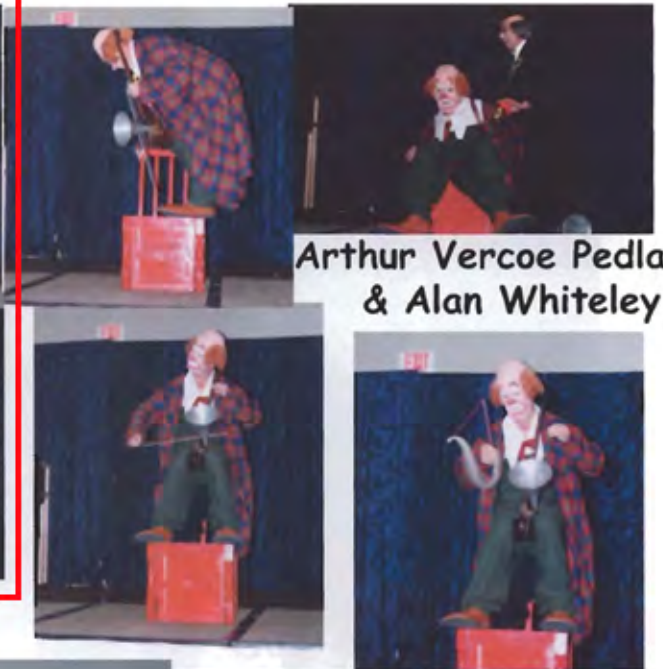
a bunch of clowns, each try to show a different mood or expression--think Yin-Yang. What a great shot that will be!



"Bingo" with Rone and Gigi



Open Sesame



Arthur Vercoe Pedlar & Alan Whiteley

Bruce "Charlie" Johnson & Helpers



Steve Smith



Junior Joeys Make-Up & Wardrobe



Gold: Cassidy Goulet Silver: Samantha Goulet Bronze: Stephanie Goulet