

Program Name: Slapstick Circus

Artist: Richard Renner

## Special Requirements:

Open floor space

## Special Points of Interest:

Did you know that the best jugglers practice anywhere from six to eight hours every day?

## Performance Description

Richard Renner, as the VodVill Clown, entertains students with circus skills, pantomime techniques, physical comedy, prat falls, and juggling.

Objects attack and machines refuse to work as the VodVill Clown explores the possibilities of circus skills and humor.

Unicycling with motors, balancing with cleaning equipment, and playing band music with hardware supplies are some of the surprises you will see in Slapstick Circus!

Richard combines his unique talents and experience to give audiences a good old-fashioned belly laugh. Although most audiences are

unfamiliar with old-time vaudeville humor, Richard is able to inspire their imagination and enthusiasm with his comic antics and tricks. In addition, Renner encourages audience participation in the skits he performs.



## Educational Objectives & Standards

### Students will:

- see the value of perseverance.
- discover how failure can lead to success.
- learn how to reinforce the value of laughing at ourselves.
- be shown the power of non-verbal communication

### Standards Addressed:

- Understands that many skills can be practiced until they become automatic, and that if the right skills are practiced, performance may improve
- Uses nonverbal communication such as eye contact, body position, and voice tone effectively

## Artist Bio: Richard Renner

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Richard Renner, a native of Wichita, Kansas and current Kansas City resident, has entertained audiences across the country for the past ten years. His background combines training in theatrical acting with tutelage under international mime and clown teachers.

After completing his degree in theater at the University of Kansas,

Richard attended the School for Movement Theatre in Philadelphia. He has trained with Marcel Marceau and has performed with Kansas City's Mimewock Company. As a veteran performer, Richard has appeared in fairs, festivals, and schools in over twenty-eight states, Canada, and Mexico.

## Vocabulary

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**Acrobatics** – difficult gymnastic act

**Coordination** – the ability to move the body's various parts well together

**Improvisation** – the act of making up material on the spot

**Juggler** – one who keeps objects moving through the air by throwing and catching them, one after another

**Mime** – a performer who expresses him- or herself without words

**Stilts** – poles used to raise a performer above the ground in walking

**Tightrope** – a stretched high wire on which circus performers balance

**Trapeze** – a horizontal bar suspended high off the ground between two ropes, used by gymnasts to perform acrobatic feats

**Unicycle** – a one-wheeled bicycle with pedals and no handlebars

## List of Resources:

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### Books:

Bishop, George Victor, *World of Clowns*. Crescent, 1988;

ISBN: 0517209101

Coxe, Antony Hippisley, *A Seat at the Circus*. Archon Books, 1980;

ISBN: 0208017666

Harmer, Mabel, *Circus*. Children's Press, 1981; ISBN: 0516416103

Harris, Richard, *This is My Trunk*. Atheneum, October 1, 1985;

ISBN: 0689311281

Hubbard, Freeman, *Great Days of the Circus*. HarperCollins, 1962;

ISBN: 0060226307

### Videos:

"Juggle! The Passing Zone Method" Owen Morse & John Wee;

ASIN: B0006472D8

Contact KCYA for more information about this and other programs

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## Post-Performance Activities

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1. Discuss the value of perseverance. Whether you want to learn the computer, play guitar, compete in basket-ball, or dance *en pointe*, you must practice to acquire new skills. What would happen if [name famous actors, athletes, musicians, writers] had given up when they were discouraged? Failure has much to teach us.
2. Write an essay on the value of persevering through difficulty. In the body of the essay, describe at least two specific situations in which perseverance paid off for you, as well as what might have happened if you had given up.
3. Using toothpicks, string, and glue, create your own mini-circus model. You can design a trapeze, tightrope, animal cages, as elaborately or simply as you choose.
4. Soundtracks in movies and television cue us in on how to feel about what we are seeing. Write about two examples of music used on a program or movie and how the music affected how you viewed what was happening.
5. Create a quick story in pantomime. Divide in groups of three and plot out a short 2-minute skit. Convey the story of your skit entirely without words, using mime and facial expression.