

# Unit 31: Developing Styles in Clowning

<b>Unit code:</b>	<b>M/502/5401</b>
<b>QCF Level 3:</b>	<b>BTEC National</b>
<b>Credit value:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Guided learning hours:</b>	<b>60</b>

## ● Aim and purpose

The aim of this unit is to give learners the opportunity to explore the history of clowning and the tools to develop their own style. They will learn how to create clown routines, clown styles, rehearse and perform for an audience.

## ● Unit introduction

The art of clowning has existed for thousands of years and has been present in a wide range of cultures and theatre forms since approximately 2500BC. The history of clowning provides a rich resource of approaches including the jesters of ancient Greece, Commedia dell'Arte, Shakespeare's clowns, circus clowning, and modern street and theatre clowns.

There are many misconceptions about clowning. It is not just about the look and the props used. The routines are often very simple in their structure and encompass universal themes such as love, failure and success. Clowning is based primarily on the performer's personality interacting with the audience in a believable way. The clown must evolve from within the performer, from their life experience, temperament and emotions; it's a celebration of their freedom to play. The unit emphasizes the importance of creating the performer's own style but recognizes the value of exploring clown archetypes, such as the auguste, the white faced Joey, the tramp or Charlie. Clowns love the audience and aim to please and routines build from their reactions. It is not a passive art form. Skilled clowns can work in any situation; the theatre, the street, parades, festivals, film, hospitals, schools and pantomime.

This unit brings together many of the specialist skills needed including improvisation, visual gags, audience interaction, movement, persona, directing, history and performance.

## ● Learning outcomes

**On completion of this unit a learner should:**

- 1 Understand the history and development of clowning
- 2 Be able to create a clown persona
- 3 Be able to rehearse and develop material
- 4 Be able to perform to audience or present a directed clown piece.

# Unit content

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## 1 Understanding the history and development of Clowning

Learners need to cover any two of the following categories:

*Earliest recorded clowns:* eg Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Asian, Native American Trickster clowns, Russian Skomorokhi, French Troubadours, Italian Moutebanks, German Minnesingers, The English Merry Andrews

*Commedia dell'Arte:* eg Zanni, Arlecchino, Columbine, Pantaloon, Capitano

*Shakespeare's clown actors:* eg Robert Kemp, Robert Armin, William Walle

*Shakespeare's clowns:* eg Feste, Lear's Fool, First Gravedigger, Touchstone, Bottom, Lancelot Gobbo, Dogberry, Costard

*Circus clowns:* eg Dan Rice, John Ducrow, Oleg Popov, Lou Jacobs, Coco, Amelia Butler, Felix Adler, Karandash, Les Fratellini

*Theatre clowns:* eg Nola Rae, Dimitri, Bill Irwin, Avner The Eccentric, Slava Polunin, Charlie Rivel, Grock, The Right Size, Spymonkey, Bob Berky

*Tramp clowns:* eg Nat Wills, Otto Griebling, Joe Jackson, Emmett Kelly

*Whiteface:* eg Joseph Grimaldi, Whimsical Walker, Francois Fratellini, Footit

*Auguste:* eg Tom Belling, Coco, Albert Fratellini, The Rastellis

*Street clowns:* eg The Butterflyman, Leandre, Pickle Family Circus, Justin Case

*Film clowns:* eg Abbott and Costello, Marx Brothers, Laurel and Hardy, The Three Stooges, Charlie Chaplin, Lucille Ball, Buster Keaton, Don Knotts, Red Skelton, Jacques Tati, WC Fields, Robin Williams

## 2 Be able to create a clown persona

*Visual image:* eg costume, make-up, props

*Skills:* eg slapstick falls, mime, physical gags, directing, object manipulation

*Characteristics:* temperament; physicality; style; audience interaction; personality

## 3 Be able to rehearse and develop material

*Process:* selection of material; devising; improvisation; theme; rehearsal structure; giving and responding to direction

*Health and safety:* set-up and maintain a safe working environment; use safe working practices during rehearsal

## 4 Be able to perform to audience or present a directed clown piece

*Audience interaction:* honest and spontaneous interactions; responsiveness; building an audience rapport

*Presentation:* focused energy; commitment; dynamics; skilful communication

## Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
<b>P1</b> discuss at least two areas in the history and development of clowning [IE]	<b>M1</b> explain at least two areas in the history and development of clowning, with references to key influences	<b>D1</b> analyse at least two areas in the history and development of clowning, with references to key influences and how the development of clowning has influenced current practise
<b>P2</b> create a clown persona, including consideration of the way the clown looks and acts [CT]	<b>M2</b> create a clown persona, including thoughtful consideration of the way the clown looks and acts	<b>D2</b> create a clown persona, including detailed justified consideration of the way the clown looks and acts
<b>P3</b> apply clowning skills in the development of a clown sketch, with support and direction [TW, CT]	<b>M3</b> apply clowning skills in the development of a clown sketch, with minimal support and direction	<b>D3</b> apply clowning skills in the development of a clown sketch, with independence and a sense of clarity and flair
<b>P4</b> perform or present a clown sketch in front of an audience. [EP, TW, CT]	<b>M4</b> perform or present a clown sketch in front of an audience and maintain a clown style throughout.	<b>D4</b> perform or present a clown sketch in front of an audience and maintain a clown style throughout, demonstrating skilled ability with working an audience, inventiveness of material and believable clown persona.

**PLTS:** This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

<b>Key</b>	IE – independent enquirers	RL – reflective learners	SM – self-managers
	CT – creative thinkers	TW – team workers	EP – effective participators

# Essential guidance for tutors

## Delivery

The learning activities in this unit are a combination of academic and practical activities that should enable learners to develop a better understanding of clowning. Tutors need to assess the learners on the quality of their research, the development of their clown persona, performance ability, and understanding of the art form.

The approach needs to be a combination of research, discussion, practical workshops, individual consideration, rehearsal and performance. Learners should be encouraged to integrate the theoretical and practical learning into their own work. Practical workshops should focus on physical clowning such as slapstick, mime, movement and prop manipulation. Elements of costume, props and clown archetypes need to be covered. Learners should be taught how to present themselves on stage, as well as developing their style and the ability to express freely believable emotion. Exercises focusing on rhythm, timing and individual expression should be explored by tutors using games, improvisation group and solo work. The tutor also needs to play an active role with gentle provocation when learners are improvising. The tutor becomes a ringmaster directing the action, which helps bring out learners' personality and craft their clown. Although it is not a requirement, where appropriate, tutors may also want to explore juggling, magic and balloon-modeling skills to incorporate into clown sketches. However, this should be secondary to the development of a believable clown persona.

It will be useful to arrange for learners to see a professional performance that includes clowning. Seeing the skills in context will motivate learners and make them aware of the professional opportunities that are available.

## Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

### Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

Introduction to the unit; introductory workshops, including overview of the unit and assignments.

#### Assignment 1: The Development of Clowning – P1, M1, D1

- Introduction to clowning: workshops.
- Visit to V and A museum.
- Researching history and background to chosen clown performers and styles.
- Presentation of research findings to selected audience.

Submission of research folders.

## Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment

### Assignment 2: Creating a Clown Persona – P2, M2, D2

- Take part in creative workshops.
- Clown workshop with professional clown.

Rehearsals and explorations to create a clown persona.

- Workshops: focus on personality.
- Workshops: characteristics.

Physical skills:

- juggling
- magic
- balloon-modelling.

Perform work in progress/review/adapt.

Develop costume.

Find props.

Presentation of clown in workshop performances.

Peer evaluations/feedback.

### Assignment 3: Developing a Clown Sketch for Performance – P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4

Watch theatre performance.

Workshops on:

- rhythm
- timing
- individual expression
- clown relationships and interaction
- the audience.

Improvisations and explorations of themes.

Present ideas for directed performances.

Directing solo/pairs/groups.

Preparing performance venue.

Performances.

Reviewing and assessing the work.

## Assessment

To meet learning outcome 1, learners will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of clowning history. Depending on the learners' strengths, this could be achieved through a wide range of approaches. Learners could practically demonstrate their understanding through a performance or demonstration, write about their understanding through an essay or logbook or talk about their understanding through a presentation.

For P1, learners should be able to provide relevant information on the background and development of at least two areas of clowning history. They should provide descriptions of the performance styles of the chosen clowns, together with sufficient details on cultural influences. For M1, learners will need to provide explanations and detailed information on the chosen areas. For D1, learners will be able to make links between clowning history and current practice.

To meet learning outcome 2, learners must go through the process of creating a clown persona. The evidence for this should be a written or verbal log as a video diary. This should detail their research and personal journey in developing a clown persona. For P2, the clown persona will be simple, the skills and characteristics will be basic, and the clown will have a suitable appearance. Tutor support and guidance will be needed to ensure development takes place. For M2, there will be evidence of the character blossoming and evolving through skills applied and honed, reactions to audience responses, and experimentation with costume and props. For D2, learners will have created the clown persona through a process of reviewing and development. There will be a thorough engagement in the process.

To meet learning outcome 3 and 4, learners must create and perform a short routine that incorporates the clowning skills they have learned. They have the option to create a solo or group performance and the length of this should reflect the number of learners in the group. Learners can present a clown routine they have directed. A basic guideline would be a minimum of four to six minutes per performer or sketch. The final performance must be shown to an audience.

For P3, learners will develop the performance work with support from the tutor. Learners will be responsive and cooperative during the rehearsal process. For M3, learners will engage with the creative process and develop material that demonstrates imagination and skill. Tutors may provide support and guidance during the rehearsal process. For D3, learners must be able to demonstrate a deep understanding of the art of clowning. The process of rehearsal and development will be conducted with professionalism and focus; learners will be imaginative and precise in the direction and development of the work.

For P4, learners will present work that demonstrates rudimentary clown skills and there will be audience interaction that is generally appropriate. For M4, learners will retain focus throughout the performance, working successfully with the audience and maintaining the clown persona. For D4, the routine must display skilful ability with responding to audience reaction and a playful presence that is very creative and encompasses many of the skills learned. There will be a believable clown persona performed that reflects the learners' personality.

## Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1	Assignment 1: The Development of Clowning	Learners will research the development and history of clowning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual records.</li> <li>• Of presentation.</li> <li>• Portfolio of evidence including research notes.</li> </ul>
P2, M2, D2	Assignment 2: Creating a Clown Persona	Learners will develop a clown style through performance training, costume and learning physical skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual records.</li> <li>• Peer/tutor notes.</li> </ul>
P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	Assignment 3: Developing a Clown Sketch for Performance	Learners will create and rehearse and direct each others clown sketches, then prepare the performance space and perform a four to six minute clown sketch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio-visual records.</li> <li>• Peer/tutor notes.</li> </ul>

## Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	Acting Skills and Techniques	Developing Physical Theatre
		Applying Physical Theatre
		The Performance of Mime
		Developing Movement Skills
		Circus Manipulation
		Circus Equilibratics

## Essential resources

In order to deliver this unit, centres will need an appropriate rehearsal space and equipment. The equipment required will depend on whether the tutor wants to incorporate costume, make-up, juggling, balloon modeling, props, or magic. For the purposes of collecting evidence, centres will need a video or DVD recorder and playback equipment. Learners must wear appropriate clothing for practical participation.

## Indicative reading for learners

### Textbooks

Barner P and Witt J – *The Center Ring: The Art of Therapeutic Clowning* (Hampton Road Publishing Company, 1992) ISBN 9781878901316

Clair J – *The Great Parade: Portrait Of The Artist As Clown* (Yale University Press, 2004) ISBN 9780300103755

Fife B – *Creative Clowning, Third Edition* (Piccadilly Books, 2003) ISBN 9780941599160

Jenkins R – *Acrobats of the Soul* (Theatre Communications Group, 1989) ISBN 9780930452728

Kerr W – *The Silent Clowns* (Da Capo Press, 1990) ISBN 9780306803871

Lane L – *How To Become A Comedian, Third Edition* (Frederick Muller, 1945) ASIN B0007KCSCQ

Mason B – *Street Theatre And Other Outdoor Performances* (Routledge, 1992) ISBN 9780415070508

McVicar W – *Clown Act Omnibus: Everything You Need to Know About Clowning Plus Over 200 Stunts* (Meriwether Publishing US, 1998) ISBN 9780916260415

Merton P – *Silent Comedy* (Random House Books, 2007) ISBN 9781905211708

Neville G – *Incidents In The Life Of Joseph Grimaldi* (Jonathan Cape, 1980) ISBN 9780224018692

Otto B K – *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around The World* (University of Chicago Press 2007) ISBN 9780226640921

Payne R – *The Great Charlie* (Pan Books, 1957) ASIN B000PC9DYC

Remy T – *Clown Scenes* (Ivan R Dee, 1997) ISBN 9781566631440

Roberts D – *Strutter's Complete Guide to Clown Make-up* (Piccadilly Books, 1991) ISBN 9780941599108

Staveacre T – *Slapstick: The Illustrated Story Of Knockabout Comedy* (Harper Collins, 1988) ISBN 9780207154935

Stolzenburg M – *Be A Clown* (Sterling, 2002) ISBN 9780806948164

Towsen J – *Clowns* (EP Dutton, 1976) ISBN 9780801539626

Wettach A – *Grock: King of Clowns* (Methuen, 1957) ASIN: B0006D9U3Y



## Video/DVD

- AMC TV – *The Red Skelton Show 1951-1971* (RPH, 2002)
- Atkinson R – *Rowan Atkinson's Guide to Visual Comedy* (2 Entertain Video, 1992)
- Chaplin C – *The Charlie Chaplin Collection* (Elstree Hill, 2007)
- Cirque du Soleil – *We Reinvent The Circus* (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2005)
- Farley J – *The Buster Keaton Collection* (Elstree Hill Entertainment, 2008)
- Fields WC – *WC Fields – Six Classic Shorts* (Fastforward, 2007)
- Laurel S and Hardy O – *The Laurel and Hardy Collection* (Elstree Hill, 2007)
- Martin S – *Saturday Night Live: The Best of Steve Martin* (Lions Gate, 2007)
- Sellers P – *Peter Sellers Collection* (MGM Entertainment, 2006)
- Tati J – *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (BFI Video, 2004)
- The Marx Brothers – *Marx Brothers Collection* (Warner Home Video, 2004)
- The Three Stooges – *The Three Stooges: All The World's a Stoooge* (Columbia TriStar, 2000)

## Websites

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| <a href="http://uk.youtube.com/fraserhooper">uk.youtube.com/fraserhooper</a>   | Clowns and visual comedy clips          |
| <a href="http://www.bonts.com">www.bonts.com</a>   | Bont's International Clown School       |
| <a href="http://www.circusarts.org.uk">www.circusarts.org.uk</a>   | Circus Development Agency               |
| <a href="http://www.clown-ministry.com">www.clown-ministry.com</a>   | Clown Ministry                          |
| <a href="http://www.clowns-international.co.uk">www.clowns-international.co.uk</a>   | Clowns International                    |
| <a href="http://www.coai.org">www.coai.org</a>   | Clowns of America International         |
| <a href="http://www.contemporaryclowningprojects.com/noflash/whynot.htm">www.contemporaryclowningprojects.com/noflash/whynot.htm</a> | The Why Not Institute                   |
| <a href="http://www.ecolephilippegaulier.com">www.ecolephilippegaulier.com</a>   | Philippe Gaulier School                 |
| <a href="http://www.theclownmuseum.org">www.theclownmuseum.org</a>   | International Clown Hall of Fame Museum |
| <a href="http://www.worldclown.com">www.worldclown.com</a>   | World Clown Association                 |

## Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>Independent enquirers</b>	researching, reading and watching clown films or performances
<b>Creative thinkers</b>	being spontaneous, improvising and developing clown sketches or personas
<b>Reflective learners</b>	using influences from research and performance to develop clown personas and sketches
<b>Team workers</b>	developing material with other learners and taking part in the sketches
<b>Self-managers</b>	structuring their rehearsal, producing presentations, organising costumes and props
<b>Effective participators</b>	taking and giving direction, improvising with other learners and producing clown sketches and personas.

## ● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
<b>ICT – Use ICT systems</b>	
Select, interact with and use ICT systems independently for a complex task to meet a variety of needs	producing presentations and researching clown websites
Manage information storage to enable efficient retrieval	backing up work on hard drives or discs
<b>ICT – Find and select information</b>	
Select and use a variety of sources of information independently for a complex task	researching websites
<b>ICT – Develop, present and communicate information</b>	
Present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience	presenting or producing written presentations or video diaries that show relevance to the subject
<b>English</b>	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	contributing ideas to sketches and personas, taking direction and producing a clown sketch
Reading – compare, select, read and understand texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	researching clown books and films and using influences from them in their performances and presentations
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	producing written pieces or video evidence of research that demonstrate the learner's journey to developing their clown personas and sketches.