



NEWSLETTER

2001

You're invited to visit: <http://www.michaelcarloneil.com>

OBJECTIVES:

As the end of the year 2001 is quickly approaching, I thought it would be a great idea to create "Michael Carl O'Neil's "Klassic Komedie Newsletter 2001"! First of all, please accept my sincere wishes to you and yours for a truly Merry Christmas and all the very best for the upcoming year 2002! May the "Year 2002" bring you much happiness with many smiles and laughter, as we all hope and pray for world peace.

The main purpose of this newsletter is to share some of my memorable performance highlights in 2001 and reflect fondly on a true Canadian icon, Mr. Ernie Coombs, warmly remembered as "Mr. Dressup", who sadly passed away this year. Indeed, he touched the lives of many Canadians, young and old.

The "highlight" examples display some of the venues in which I have had the rewarding opportunity to perform and meet fantastic audiences! Please see this information on page 3 and 4. This newsletter will also provide some background information and insight as to my choice of mime characters and their development over the years.

For those readers that are new to me, I offer a unique repertoire of mime characters that provides both "walkaround" and "set-circle stage show" types of performances. As a Professional Mime Artist, I have had the opportunity to perform internationally and nationally at various festivals, theme parks, parades, exhibitions, expos, fairs, television, grand-opening

events, corporate-event functions, five-star hotel lobby performances, markets, fund-raising events, weddings, anniversaries, birthday parties, nursing homes and even hospitals!

My aim, as a Professional Mime Artist, is to bring the audience into the act, either indoor or outdoor, where they indeed become the "extras" and the environment around them becomes the "set". This scenario is one that I fondly refer to as "Interact-ional Theatre". In connection with this "mission", my goal includes an end-result to create laughter with fun, and also to be able to "touch the lives" of people in an uplifting, positive and sometimes even moving manner. The year 2001 will be remembered as an extraordinary year! To many it is still amazing that we have reached this new century. This year came with many different experiences, some good

and then again, some that were just devastating to the world. It seems that the most "constant" reality in life is that the world around us frequently changes. However, the need for comedy and laughter never change. One of the benefits of being a performer is sharing the ability to make people laugh, which is very healthy! For your interest, please note the many rewarding benefits of laughter on page 4.



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MY MIME CHARACTERS:

As a Professional Mime Artist, I very much enjoy the art-form of mime, as it is also referred to as “non-verbal communication”. Mime can also be defined as a “universal language” that is understood by all cultures and ages. As a mime artist, one soon learns and discovers that “actions speak louder than words”.

Mime artists can use many different techniques to obtain the attention of their audience. One of my most effective tools that I use are my eyes. While performing recently last September in Barcelona, Spain, one of the street artists painted a photo of my eyes. The artist remarked: “The eyes are the windows of the soul, and that is how you can reach your audience!” This photo is included in the “Newsletter” logo and in the “Klassic Christmas” drawing.

A popular conclusion and unique challenge of my performances is that every show is different. This is achieved by “interacting” with audiences, but also most importantly, by being spontaneous and flexible. This involves observing and then utilizing the potential of every environment. This also means that I often do not know exactly what will happen in a particular show. Since many of my major movements involve rhythm and dance, there is appropriate music added with the theme of whatever character I am portraying.

As many of my characters are examples of people from the past, my goal is to bring their feelings and reactions as to how they might perceive the world today. When I was a young boy, I would watch Patrick Watson's “Witness to Yesterday” on television faithfully. This show would have actors dress up as the people in history and he would interview them. I would watch this show with great fascination. I believe Patrick Watson's method truly inspired me.

My mime characters include the following:

- Charlie Chaplin's Canadian Tramp
- Sir John A. MacDonald's Living Statue
- Queen Victoria's Living Statue
- Louie - The Living Suitcases
- Mel - The Mountie
- The Puzzlettes!

Creating and developing my characters:

There is a common theme of “living” and that is truly

what I wish to achieve in my shows by making my characters come to life, in a way that relates to our every-day society.

Charlie Chaplin's Canadian Tramp:

After travelling overseas, I have titled my character of Charlie Chaplin: “The Canadian Tramp”. There are many Chaplin impersonators throughout the world. Charlie Chaplin's character, in my view, is a classic Shakespearean character of Hamlet. This universal role has brought many actors to bring their own unique interpretation to him. Chaplin's Tramp himself has inspired everything from Mickey Mouse to Mr. Bean. One of my favourite routines that I perform throughout the world is: “The Crossing of the Street”.

The Living Statues of Sir John A. Macdonald and Queen Victoria:

After performing in New Zealand in 1996, I observed two popular statues of Sir John A. Macdonald and Queen Victoria in the down-town core of my home-town in Hamilton, Ontario. An idea suddenly hit me: “What if they came to life”? I thought of their historical importance, and also the sad reality that many people are not too familiar with Canadian history. In fact, while performing overseas, I have often felt that I have introduced tourists to Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's Father of Confederation. It is common to have “statue” actors stand still as for hours, but my technique involves the statue coming to life! For most people, Queen Victoria and Sir John A. are statues or images on paintings, my goal again is to bring their existence back into life by the concept of a “Living” Statue. As well, by portraying these characters in a positive manner, they are also an educational reminder of our history.

Louie - The Living Suitcases:

This lively one-person grouped with stacked and colourful suitcases is popular with children! Spontaneous, Louie is ready with friendly handshakes. He is also a great marketing tool, as his signs and stickers can be customized for any event!

Mel - The Mountie:

Before leaving to perform in New Zealand for the Millennium celebrations, as a proud Canadian, I created Mel - The Mountie! He is an excellent walkaround character that is a great Ambassador and greeter to all tourists!

The Puzzlettes were just recently created. Please see details on page 4.

YEAR HIGHLIGHTS - 2001

Meeting Mr. Ernie Coombs - "Mr. Dressup":

What a way to end the year 2000, it was a lucky break for me to be inspired by a famous Canadian children's entertaining icon at Harbourfront, in Toronto, Ontario. On New Year's Eve, December 31st 2000, upstairs in the celebrity room, tucked in the corner, talking to people both old and young, was a familiar face that I was instantly recognized. Yes, it was Mr. Dressup! I myself in costume, coloured with green makeup and latex as my Sir John A. Macdonald's Living Statue, was pleased to approach him. With a few kind words and picture-poising sessions, he sincerely encouraged me "to keep bringing laughter and smiles to all, especially the children". Later in the evening as I was finishing my performances, I saw him walk down the street. Sadly I didn't realize this would be my last glimpse of the real Mr. Dressup - a true Canadian treasure.



Upon my return from performing at the Instituto de cultura, Merce 2001 Festival in Barcelona, Spain, I was saddened to hear that Ernie Coombs had died on the same day that I had left Canada, on September 18, 2001, at the age of 73 as result of a stroke.

Truly he will be missed by all who ever knew him, and I feel extremely blessed that I had the opportunity to meet and speak with him. I will always remember and treasure his words of sincere encouragement.

"Mr. Dressup went on the air in February 1967 and has been on the CBC continuously since that time. In

1994, Ernie Coombs was presented with The Academy of Canadian and Television's prestigious Earle Grey Award, honouring excellence in Canadian television. He was honoured for his many years of bringing quality programming to Canadian children when he became a Member of the Order of Canada in 1996. He was a spokesperson for Canadian Save the Children for many years and was presented with a special Save the Children Award in 1997."

Taken from:

www.cbc.ca/onair/personalities/mrdressup/coombs.html

Sir John A. Macdonald's Living Statue Performs for Real Inspirational Heros:

Speaking of Canadian icons, many refer to Sir John A. Macdonald as a true Canadian hero. I would definitely agree! However, on May 6th, Sir John A. Macdonald's Living Statue was honoured to perform for true and inspirational heros, at the Annual 10th Anniversary Variety Club Games in Scarborough, Ontario. The Variety Club Village is a world leader in integrated active living and features specialized programming for children and adults with special needs. I was inspired by their extreme enthusiasm and positive attitudes. Using my "Interact-ional Theatre" philosophy, Sir John A. Macdonald's Living Statue played hockey with these heros!

Queen Victoria's Living Statue: The "Birthday" Weekend Festivities:

Queen Victoria's Birthday Weekend was very busy and yet also very rewarding. For this special weekend, my "Queen Victoria's Living Statue character was truly appropriate! I was very pleased that my Queen Victoria's Living Statue appeared in the "The Toronto Star", "The Globe and Mail", and on the first page of "The Ottawa Sun". Performing for the first time amongst the beautiful tulips at The Canadian Tulip Festival gave me the opportunity to meet and poise with guests from Springfield Gardens in Britain. These guests were also associated with the Spalding Flower Parade, namely: Mr. David Norton and "2001 South Holland Flower Queen": Ms. Claire Collins. During the presentation, while celebrating British culture here in Canada, my Living Statue of Queen Victoria stood to the side, observed and gave her quiet approval. The Ottawa Sun reporter asked if I would poise for a photo. To my delight, this photo appeared on the first page of the Ottawa Sun. I have many fond memories performing in Ottawa, Ontario with my characters, especially with Sir John A. Macdonald's Living Statue on Parliament Hill.

On Victoria Day, I rushed back from Ottawa to perform again in “The Queen Victoria's Birthday Parade” in Toronto, Ontario. Pity that it rained, but as always, the show went on. The Toronto Star stated: “Victoria reigns on her soggy parade”, and indeed it poured! Luckily the makeup I wear is not water-based, and as many remarked: “The weather in Britain is very much like this - terribly rainy! Cheerio!”

The Creation and Debut of The Puzzlettes:

While performing at St. Jacobs Farmers Market, in St. Jacobs, Ontario, I heard this voice calling: “John A.! John A.!” With those words, I turned around as two men approached me with a letter and an inquiry about my idea of the “Puzzlettes” that I had included on my website. I wish to express a special thank you to Mr. Jim Wamsley, Operating Manager, at Graybar Electric of Kitchener, Ontario. “The Puzzlettes” were created for the June 14th “Grand Opening” of Graybar Electric. They are now also available to be customized for other corporate events.

My idea of “The Puzzlettes” was to create and put together “themes” for events, which I saw as a future, useful marketing tool for potential employers. The Puzzlettes consist of three large life-size puzzle pieces that interact with the audiences. Graybar Electric chose: “Electrical, Com-Data and Automation”. I was fortunate to have excellent professional performers (Paul Maskell as “Electrical”, Jeff Collins as “Com-Data”, and John Brogan as “Automation”) to fulfill this task. My Charlie Chaplin’s Tramp was utilized as a walkaround throughout the building. Still in costume for the “grand finale” on a stage with music and lights, I had the pleasure of putting the three puzzle pieces together. This end result emphasized that “Electrical”, “Com-Data” and “Automation” are three important aspects of Graybar Electric. As a marketing tool, it emphasized that although these areas may be separate, in the end Graybar Electric traits compliment each other, and coming together as a team, they offer excellent quality and variety to their customers.

As mentioned, these Puzzlettes can be specifically customized to accommodate other corporations and organizations by changing their names. They would also be excellent characters for parades, as they are approachable, friendly and ready for hand-shakes and creating smiles for children.

Performances at The Festival of Balloons: “Festival de montgolieres de Gatineau” in Gatineau, Quebec:

In early September, I had a wonderful opportunity to perform in French Canada! I have always respected and admired the artistic and creative energy of this part of Canada. Having an opportunity to perform at the balloon festival as Charlie Chaplin and Queen Victoria’s Living Statue was fun! One of my favourite memories was while performing Queen Victoria, I was chauffeured to another area of the festival, I took the opportunity to do a “popular wave” of the Queen, and indeed, amazingly many waved back and cheered!

Returning again to perform at the Barcelona Arts De Carrer 2001 Festival:

After the September 11th tragedy in the United States, there was much anxiety for many people to fly again. On September 18th, after a long-time period to go through airport security, I was seated in the plane to fly again to Spain. There was a great selection of seats, it was a true reality that air travel had certainly changed. However, one thing remained, as the ole saying goes: “The show must go on...” and indeed even now more than ever, people needed to continue to laugh.

It was a large celebration in Barcelona with large audiences for busking! Last year, I had great fun there, using the famous “Crossing of the Street” routine, with Charlie Chaplin’s Canadian Tramp. Particularly this year, I was proud to perform my “Canadian Father of Confederation's Living Statue” on the famous street: “La Rambla”. Looking around at all of the other “statue” actors on La Rambla Street for which is it famous, I had to wonder what the real Sir John A. MacDonald would have thought. I bet that he would have never imagined that a mime artist would portray him as a Living Statue on a famous Spanish street!

THE BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER:

“Patients, doctors and health professionals are finding that laughter may be the best medicine. Laughing is found to lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones, increase muscle flexion, and boost immune function”. (<http://www.holistic-online.com>) As a mime artist, I hope that we all have many bouts of fun, laughter and good health in 2002! Best wishes!