Photo : Simon Gosselin

LES P'TITES POLISSES

en servisse

(Comedy Patrol)

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY GUIDE

Clowning, music, acrobatics… and in-cop-etence!

Dear teachers who are bringing students to the theatre,

Thank you for helping them discover and appreciate the performing arts, especially our beloved clown arts. We imagine that you and your students might have some questions about the show, either before or after the performance.

This Discussion Guide attempts to provide some answers, with extra information and explanatory texts that will help prepare for the performance, as well as questions to help spark interesting discussions once you're back in the classroom.

We can't wait to meet you!

Dominique Grenier
Marie-Michèle Pharand
Les p'tites polisses - Comedy Patrol
PS^2 Productions Circassiennes

Photo : Emmanuel Burriel

INTRODUCTION TO THE SHOW

ORIGIN STORY

We created the *p'tites polisses* (Comedy Patrol) clown characters in the fall of 2018. We would wander through the streets as these silly sergeants to bring laughter to people both young and old. We laughed with thousands of people, from Toronto all the way to Gaspé. We laughed so much that in 2023, we decided to create a stage show for the whole family : *Les p'tites polisses en servisse*.

Clowning is the art of making fun of yourself, and it does a lot of good! Are we making fun of the police, too? Not at all. In fact, our clowns really admire the police and want to be excellent officers. But it's a work in progress. As much as the zany officers want to maintain peace and order, their emotions and confusion tend to run the show.

Length : 50 minutes
Audience : ages 5 to 10 / family audiences

Interested in a post-performance talk? Let us know. We love meeting our audiences!

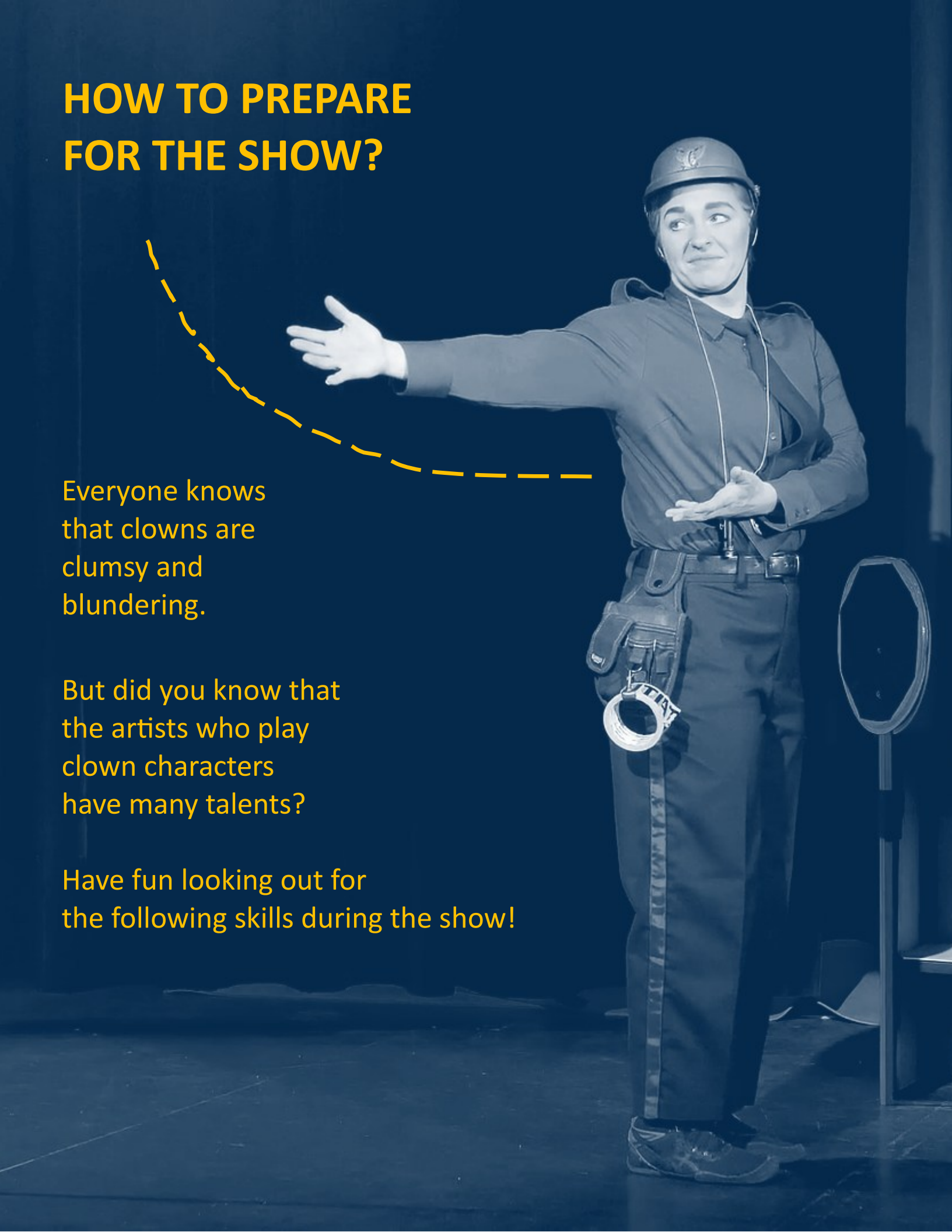
SUMMARY

As the audience enters the theatre, the *p'tites polisses* patrol the room to ensure security. A concert is about to start, featuring Rizotto, a singer/prisoner who is under strict police supervision. The lights go up, and in a dramatic twist, Rizotto refuses to take the stage!

Between musical improvisations and acrobatic mishaps, the *p'tites polisses* try to convince Rizotto to come out from the wings, but things only get out of control.

Photo : Simon Gosselin

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE SHOW?



Everyone knows
that clowns are
clumsy and
blundering.

But did you know that
the artists who play
clown characters
have many talents?

Have fun looking out for
the following skills during the show!

Photos : Emmanuel Burriel

« A clown's excess reflects life's true essence. »

Michel Dallaire

Photo : Simon Gosselin

CLOWNING ARTS

Clowns are simple characters who set ambitious goals that are beyond their capabilities and who tend to go about things all wrong ! Clowns make people laugh with their clumsy antics, zany ideas and infectious enthusiasm.

The clown originated in the traditional circus. Back in the old days, a peasant would set up the next performers' equipment on the stage between circus acts. This person had no stage training and their blunders sometimes made the audience laugh and applaud. Over time, clowns became a funny, colourful character in traditional circus shows, wearing bright makeup and costumes to highlight their comical expressions.

The art of clowning has evolved, and clown characters are now played by multi-talented theatre or circus performers. Clowns are not only impressive for their ability to make people laugh and their unwavering determination, but also for their astonishing feats.

Modern-day clowns, like the *p'tites polisses* don't wear heavy makeup, and their costumes are so realistic that they're not always recognized as clowns right away. Just like Charlie Chaplin or Mr. Bean. Have you heard of them?

The art of clowning is in making people laugh by conveying exaggerated emotions using the face, voice and body. It is the art of being ridiculous without realizing it.

People who don't like clowns have never met a real one. Clowns are funny, lovable and sensitive. They see the world differently and bring endless entertainment!

SLAPSTICK

Have you ever seen characters fall, or bump into a wall, or even slap themselves? The performers are not actually hitting themselves or falling - they're doing something called slapstick.

Slapstick is a comic acting technique that involves pretending to hurt yourself. It requires a lot of skill and precision to avoid real injury. The moves are tested and rehearsed many times before they are perfected. Learning slapstick is both fun and scary!

Sometimes the *p'tites polisses* bump into each other or trip over a case. But don't worry, no one is actually getting hurt!

VOCAL HARMONIES

When you sing a melody, you sing one note at a time. But if voices are added to the melody and sing different notes at the same time, those singers are creating vocal harmonies. Vocal harmony is when multiple voices combine to form a chord, producing a rich and complex sound. Have you ever heard a choir sing? If so, then you've heard vocal harmonies.

Singing vocal harmonies can be hard. Not all sounds combine to make beautiful harmonies. If C and E are sung at the same time, it is very consonant, meaning it sounds very nice. But if E and F are sung at the same time, it creates dissonance, which doesn't sound as nice. In the show, you'll notice that sometimes two people sing together in harmony. And sometimes, a single singer sings vocal harmonies…with herself. She does this by recording her own voice several times before your very eyes to create amazing music! Will your ears be able to pick out vocal harmonies?

Photo : Simon Gosselin

ACROBATICS

Acrobatics are an impressive discipline requiring agility and physical strength. Humans have been performing acrobatics for over 4,000 years. Acrobats know how to climb, jump and balance. The gymnasts you see competing at the Olympics most often perform acrobatics alone, sometimes on the floor, and sometimes on apparatus like bars or balance beams. Circus artists, however, like to perform acrobatics with others. They stack themselves or launch each other into the air with amazing strength and flexibility. These are called acrobatic lifts.

Becoming an acrobat requires training. The dangerous moves must be tested on top of floor mats and with a trainer to minimize the risk of falls and injuries. Acrobatics can be adapted for all skill levels, no matter what your age. You should try it for yourself and feel the adrenaline and joy it brings!

Photo : Simon Gosselin

TAP DANCE

Tap dancers wear shoes with wooden or metal soles that allow them to create rhythms by striking the floor with their feet.

Two hundred years ago, Irish and African dancers in the United States competed against each other, with Irish jigs facing off against African juba. During these dance-offs, dancers would copy each other's steps, and that's how American tap dance was born. Musicals brought tap dancing to the silver screen, with talented performers like Fred Astaire and Gene Kelly catapulting the style into the spotlight.

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND SOME PARTS OF THE SHOW...

We've got you covered!

Here are some more things to think about, plus extra information about Rizotto and the silly sergeants.

You can go back through the show in your mind, talk about it with your friends, ask questions, and remember the parts that made you laugh!

Photo : Emmanuel Burriel

ARE THE *P'TITES POLISSES* "REAL COPS"?

A real police officer carries a lot of responsibility. She needs to make sure that people are obeying the law and that everyone is safe. She can't let her emotions cloud her judgment, and people have to be able to count on her when they feel like they are in danger.

What do you think? Are the *p'tites polisses* "real cops"?

If you were a police officer, how would you act? Try to walk like a cop. Clowns like to exaggerate their movements. Can you make others laugh by exaggerating your impression of a police officer?

Have you ever noticed that we sometimes wish we could be someone else to be accepted and liked? We wish we could be nicer looking, or stronger, or taller, or smarter, or kinder.

But what if, instead of being embarrassed by our mistakes or what we think are flaws, we could simply laugh at ourselves? We would all be clowns, and life would be a lot funnier!

Buddy up with a friend and say "You make me laugh when you..." then fill in the blank.

WHY IS A PRISONER GIVING A CONCERT?

Rizotto stole some Halloween candy, hit police officers and called them chicken. So they put him in jail, away from society, so that he could think about what he had done and change his ways. Rizotto admitted that what he did was wrong and wanted to make amends by becoming a good person. He wanted to sing rock music to bring joy to others.

Before his release, the zany officers were asked to escort him to his concerts to make sure he was on his best behaviour. For a prisoner like Rizotto, it was a struggle to stop stealing candy and calling people names. In fact, it's hard for most people to change. It requires a lot of willpower and self-improvement. But it's what Rizotto needed to do for a successful reintegration into society.

What's that?

REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY

When prisoners get out of prison, they must prove that they can be nice and respect the people around them. The transition from life in prison back to "normal life" can be a challenge, but they have support to help them find housing, a job and new friends. If they can overcome these obstacles, they successfully reintegrate into society. But if they commit another crime, they risk going back to jail.

Has Rizotto successfully reintegrated into society?

Name some behaviours that are not allowed in society and can lead to imprisonment.

(Stealing, hitting, threatening, insulting, lying, killing, etc.)

CAN YOU HELP THE *P'TITES POLISSES* FIND RIZOTTO?

The pint-sized officers were asked to describe Rizotto so he could be found. But they're in a pickle. They can't remember what he looks like! What does Rizotto look like in your imagination ? Could you draw him and send it to the silly sergeants?

It would help them out a lot!

Draw a sketch of Rizotto

Does he have a moustache? Is he short or tall? Does he have a round nose? What colour are his eyes? Does he have all his teeth? Does he have earrings? Is he smiley or serious ? Every detail is important!

Photo : Emmanuel Burriel

WHO ARE THE ARTISTS BEHIND THE *P'TITES POLISSES*?

Dominique Grenier and Marie-Michèle Pharand first worked together in 2014 on *TerZettto*, a L'Aubergine production directed by Christine Rossignol and co-directed by Michel Dallaire, both renowned clown artists. Dominique and Marie-Michèle quickly became thick as thieves. In 2018, they created *Les p'tites polisses* ("Comedy Patrol") to showcase their skills in floor acrobatics, hand-to-hand acts, vocal music, and, of course, clowning. The duo gained significant attention, particularly in the summer of 2020. They then came up with *Les Briques* ("The Bricks"), playing a pair of construction workers with a laissez-faire attitude who are not quite sure what they're doing and ultimately build nothing but ridicule. With their respective backgrounds in acting and circus arts, they bring big laughs and boundless energy to their shared love of clowning.

DOMINIQUE GRENIER, **actor, singer and playwright**

Dominique fell in love with clowning over 15 years ago. With her glass-half-full attitude, she has created innocent, sensitive, clumsy and endearing characters.

Since 2009, she has helped create and present many clown shows, including L'Aubergine's *Burletta*, *TerZettto* and *La Familia*, performing over 500 shows across Canada. In 2019, she starred and sang in Productions Strada's clown musical *Babouche*, which she co-directed with Pierre Langevin et Christine Rossignol.

In 2018, she and Marie-Michèle Pharand formed a musical acrobatic clown duo, creating *Les p'tites polisses* and, in 2021, *Les Briques*. In the summer of 2023, she received acclaim for portraying Marie-Josée in the comedy *Curling* at the Nouveau Théâtre de l'Île d'Orléans, and for participating in Véronika Makdissi-Warren's tableau *Woupelaï* in the outdoor walk-through experience *Où tu vas quand tu dors en marchant…?* She sings in many musical groups. In 2020, she developed a solo concert called *Je suis une chorale* (I am a choir), where she performs popular songs a cappella by singing all the different choral parts herself.

MARIE-MICHÈLE PHARAND, **acrobat, physical actor and stunt performer**

Marie-Michèle discovered circus arts and the performing arts after realizing she no longer enjoyed the rigidity of gymnastics. Much preferring to make people feel something rather than trying to get a score out of 10, she infused her funny, sensitive and generous personality into vibrant, acrobatic clown characters. After training at the École de cirque de Québec in 2014, she helped create and perform the show *TerZettto* at L'Aubergine, and performed Robert Lepage's *Le Rossignol et autres fables* (*The Nightingale and Other Short Fables*) with Productions Haut Vol in the United States and at the Opéra de Lyon, in France. She also toured internationally as an acrobat and clown with Machine de Cirque's *La Galerie*.

An old soul who is forever young at heart, she never shies away from silliness or big, exciting projects. She can also be seen in film and television as a body double and stunt performer in several Quebec productions.

CREATIVE TEAM

Costumes, set design and props
Huguette Lauzé

Lighting
Bruno Matte

Sound
Mathieu Turcotte

Artistic advice
Geneviève Kerouac

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