



Young  
Audiences  
Arts for  
Learning

Maryland

## Teacher Program Guide

Assembly Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assembly Time: \_\_\_\_\_

For Students in: \_\_\_\_\_

### Classic Comedy

*Mark Lohr*



Mark's character, Mr. Jones, takes audiences on an exciting journey with underlying educational themes. Highly interactive, Mr. Jones and the audience share center stage! This action-packed performance includes slapstick, juggling, plate spinning, and more. Based on "If at first you don't succeed..." theory, Mr. Jones' creative problem solving skills leave audiences howling with laughter.

Contact Young Audiences for more information on this and other programs at 410-837-7577 or [yamd.org](http://yamd.org)

Young Audiences/Arts for Learning | 2600 N. Howard St., Suite 1300 | Baltimore, MD 21218



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**Please pass along the attached teacher program guide to all participating classrooms.**

#### **Setup Requirements**

- Clear 15'x15' performance area
- At least 3' space between performer and audience
- Private dressing area for performer before and after performance(s)

#### **Artist Arrival Time**

**30 to 40 minutes prior to performance**

#### **Suggested Introduction**

“Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, get ready for some big fun! Please welcome Mr. Jones, presenting... ‘Classic Comedy!’”

#### **Inclement Weather**

DON'T WORRY! Artists will follow school closings/delays and will work with you to reschedule the performance if necessary.

#### **Young Audiences Contact Number**

410-837-7577

#### **After Hours / Emergency Number**

Call 410-837-7577 and follow the prompts to be connected with a staff member on call.

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Artist Bio

Inside this Guide:

- Artist Bio
- Program Description
- Maryland State Curriculum Connectors
- Core Curriculum Connectors
- Vocabulary
- Background Info
- List of Resources
- Pre- and Post-Performance Activities
- Discussion Questions



An entertainer who has studied the masters of his craft—Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton—Mark has more than two decades of performing experience wowing audiences around the globe, including the Kennedy Center, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, and the Kimtom International Clown Festival in Shanghai, China. Mark's unique comedic style brings together many disciplines of performance art in hysterical ways that are guaranteed to amaze audiences of all ages!

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"A lively and entertaining performance...the kids were hooked from the moment he walked into the auditorium! It was very interactive. The kids loved every minute of it! They could relate to the performance. They talked about it the rest of the afternoon and at home."

*Alice, Teacher, Church Hill Elementary*



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### Maryland State Curriculum Connectors

#### Standard 1.0 Perceiving and Responding: Aesthetic Education

Students will demonstrate the ability to perceive, interpret, perform, and respond to the development of a variety of dramatic forms over time and the aesthetic qualities they reflect.

### Common Core Standard Connectors

#### SL.3.1 Comprehension and Collaboration

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.



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## Vocabulary



**Clown:** a comic performer, usually in a circus, who does not speak and wears an outlandish costume and heavy makeup.

**Balance:** a state in which a body or object remains reasonably steady in a particular position while resting on a base that is narrow or small relative to its other dimensions.

**Juggle:** to keep several objects in motion in the air at the same time by throwing them and catching them in quick succession.

**Pantomime:** a person who acts without speaking, using gesture and expression.

**Practice:** to do something, especially exercises, repeatedly in order to improve performance in a sport, art, or hobby.

**Slapstick:** comedy with the emphasis on fast physical action, farcical situations, and obvious jokes that do not depend on language.

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## Background Information

- This website gives information on the art of pantomime. It gives a lesson on how to perform certain types of pantomime and includes games and activities:  
*<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/do/pantomime.html>*
- This website chronicles the history of pantomime. It also includes different types of the comedy, performed for different reasons:  
*<http://www.its-behind-you.com/Factsheets/The%20History%20of%20Pantomime.pdf>*
- This History Channel video explains a bit about slapstick comedy from the perspective of a silent film director. This would be best used for older students:  
*<http://www.history.com/speeches/harold-lloyd-on-slapstick-comedy#silent-film-director-recalls-wc-fields>*
- Library of Congress Website for Vaudeville:  
*<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/american-variety/langarts.html>*
- American Masters, a PBS website, gives great information about the history of Vaudeville. It not only includes good, reputable information but also pictures and links for educators. There are even lesson plans to use with students in the upper grades!  
*<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/vaudeville/about-vaudeville/721/>*
- *Keep Your Eye on the Kid: The Early Years of Buster Keaton* by Catherine Brighton: Four-year-old Buster Keaton became one of the best-known comedians of his age and inches when his father threw him across a vaudeville stage, shouting, “Keep your eye on the kid!” The crowd roared as he easily landed on his feet and instantly became a star. As Buster grew, he set his sights on the budding world of Hollywood and went on to become one of America’s most beloved silent-film stars. Airy detailed illustrations evoke small-town USA in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Told in Buster’s voice, this captivating biography introduces young readers to a boy who became an American icon and changed the face of comedy and the film world forever.

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## List of Resources

### WEBSITES

- Library of Congress Website for Vaudeville (lots of lesson/activity ideas):  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/american-variety/langarts.html>

### MOVIES

- “Charlie: The Life and Art of Charles Chaplin” (2003)

### ARTICLES

- “Creative Clowning” by Bruce Fife

### BOOKS

- *American Laughter* by Mark Winokur
- *Juggling for the Complete Klutz* by John Cassidy and B. C. Rimbeaux
- *Clowns* by John H. Townsen
- *Circus in a Suitcase* by Reg Bolton

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### Pre-Performance Activities

- Read one of the recommended picture books. Discuss the art of comedy or clowning. Question students: What do you know about comedy? What experiences do you have with comedy? What is involved with performing a comedy act?
- Watch the movie: “Charlie: The Life and Art of Charles Chaplin.” Facilitate a discussion about Charlie’s career. Why does it work for him? What were the positives? Negatives of being in comedy?
- Review the Library of Congress website for Vaudeville. Discuss how vaudeville is similar or different to other comedies you have seen. Develop a Venn diagram as a class making these comparisons.  
*<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/american-variety/langarts.html>*
- Use the Vocabulary Resource Sheet to define and discuss key concepts from the program.

### Post-Performance Activities

#### Ideas/Questions for Discussion

- List the skills Mr. Jones displayed in his performance.
- What kind of character traits did you observe?
- How did you feel if you were not picked as a volunteer?
- What can we do if we want to volunteer but are not chosen?
- What kind of education do you think Mr. Jones (Mark Lohr) needed in order to be able to:
  - Balance
  - Juggle
  - Spin plates
  - Communicate without speaking
  - Perform on stage
- Write a letter to Mr. Jones. Describe what you liked best about the show. Also mention what you didn’t like and what questions you may have. You may want to include an illustration of your favorite part of the performance.

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### Classroom Discussion Questions

- What kind of education do you think Mark Lohr (Mr. Jones) needed to be able to perform these stunts on stage?
- What did you learn about the human body while watching the performance? Is this something you could be able to do? Why or why not?
- How did this assembly involve math skills and concepts? Why?
- What purpose does comedy serve?
- What makes something funny? What makes attempts at humor fail?
- Are there any forms of comedy that are universal- comedy that could span generations, cultures, or languages? Could you describe Mark's comedy as universal?



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# Sample Lesson Plan

YOUNG AUDIENCES OF MARYLAND

Lesson Title: Classic Comedy

Artist's Name: Mark Lohr

Teacher's Name:

School:

Grade:

## Fine Arts Standard

### Standard 3.0: Creative Expression and Production

Students will demonstrate the ability to apply theatrical knowledge, principles, and practices to collaborative theatre presentations.

#### Indicator:

2. Demonstrate knowledge of theatre performance and production skills in formal and informal presentations

#### Objective:

c. Create a perform scenes that combine unrelated sources and characters through collaboration with a partner

## Integrated Content Area:

**4.MD.C.5** Geometric measurement: understand concepts of angle and measure angles

**SL.3.1** Comprehension and Collaboration

**Lesson Objective:** Students will connect the Classic Comedy performance to the study of Mathematics by pulling examples from the show as proof.

## Introduction/ Motivation (10 minutes)

### Teacher:

**Question students:** When you think of MR. Jones comedy routine, what do you think of? **Allow students to respond. Guide students by continuing to question.** Did anyone think of Math when they saw MR. Jones perform? I did! Why do you think I thought of Math?

**Allow students to think for 20-30 seconds before sharing out their thoughts.**

**Question students:** How can we connect his performance to the study of Math? Today we are going to find different ways we can connect physical comedy to the study of Math.

**Modeling (10 min):**

**Introduce the three different stations students will be working through.** Three different types of comedy MR. Jones showed us throughout his show were: juggling, plate spinning, and pantomime. Today, you are going to try your hand at each one of these skills to see where they connect to mathematics.

**Model each one of the centers, explaining that at each center there is a reading component that explains how to perform each skill.** At each center, I have included a “how-to” piece of literature for your group to read and use. This will help if you need instruction on how to get started.

“Let’s try one together!”

**Guided Practice (10 min):**

**Gather students on the carpet. Project the instructions for pantomime on the board by using your document camera or Smartboard. Read through a few examples, trying a few moves while thinking aloud.**

I’m noticing that when I am trying to lean against this imaginary wall, I am very aware of the weight of my body. Weight is a form of measurement, which is connected to mathematics.

**Introduce the graphic organizer to the students.** Using my graphic organizer, I am going to document that pantomime is linked to mathematics through weight and measurement. It seems that if I don’t balance my weight well, I might fall over. Oh! Balance is also another connection to mathematics! I will jot that down also!

**Question students:** Did you notice any other connections while I was pantomiming? **Allow students to share responses while you record their thoughts onto the graphic organizer.**

**Say:** Now it’s your turn! You get to explore the different types of physical or slapstick comedy and record your mathematical connections.

**Independent Practice (5 min per station/ 15- 20 minutes total):**

Student groups (2-3 per group) will have 5 minutes per station. Time students by using a timer with an alarm to signal moving to the next station. Monitor progress by walking around, asking guiding questions or supporting students’ needs throughout the activity. Make sure students are recording their thoughts on their graphic organizer.

**Assessment/Closer (5 min):**

**Students share their finding as a large group. Ask students:** What connections did you find while you were performing these skills? What did you notice? Any interesting connections you were able to make?

As students are responding, record their responses on your model graphic organizer. Leave this on the overhead while students are presenting their findings so you can refer back.

**Vocabulary:**

**Physical comedy:** comic entertainment involving stunts or physical acts

**Clown:** a comic performer, usually in a circus, who does not speak and wears an outlandish costume and heavy makeup.

**Balance:** a state in which a body or object remains reasonably steady in a particular position while resting on a base that is narrow or small relative to its other dimensions.

**Juggle:** to keep several objects in motion in the air at the same time by throwing them and catching them in quick succession.

**Pantomime:** a person who acts without speaking, using gesture and expression.

**Practice:** to do something, especially exercises, repeatedly in order to improve performance in a sport, art, or hobby.

**Slapstick:** comedy with the emphasis on fast physical action, farcical situations, and obvious jokes that do not depend on language.

**Materials:**

9 juggling balls (if possible)

3 copies of "How to Juggle" handout

<http://www.yoyoguy.com/info/ball/>

3 sticks and 3 paper plates (if possible)

3 copies of "How to Spin Plates" handout

<http://www.platespinning.com/learn/>

3 copies of Zoom Pantomime handout <http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/do/pantomime.html>

document camera and projector or Smartboard

Copies of graphic organizer (attached) for each student and a model copy

**Handouts:**

<http://www.yoyoguy.com/info/ball/>

<http://www.platespinning.com/learn/>

<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/do/pantomime.html>

**Resources:**

<http://www.yoyoguy.com/info/ball/>

<http://www.platespinning.com/learn/>

<http://pbskids.org/zoom/activities/do/pantomime.html>

# Math Connections Graphic Organizer

**Juggling Connections**

**Plate Spinning Connections**

**Pantomime Connections**

**Other Show Connections**