

# THE CHAMELEONS

Berger & Diskin

## *Mime/Movement Workshops*

### MEET THE ARTIST:

When **Keith Berger** and **Sharon Diskin** were children, they did not dream about being mimes when they grew up! Both were drawn to the theatre, studied acting, and appeared in dramatic productions. When Keith was 15, he saw a mime concert by world-famous artist Marcel Marceau. Marceau's ability to create characters without words had a tremendous impact on Keith and opened up a new world of expression and artistry. He sought formal training at The American Mime Theatre in New York City and became one of the very first street mimes. Keith has performed his one-man show at Lincoln Center, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and at a Royal Command Performance before the late Princess Grace of Monaco.

Sharon began her mime work with the Oberlin Mime Players under the direction of Keith Berger. She, too, had seen Marceau when she was a teenager and was struck by the fact that he worked on a bare stage without costumes. However, it was not until her participation in Keith's mime workshop that she realized the true power and depth of feeling in the art form.

Berger & Diskin began working as a team in 1985 and have since toured to the delight of audiences throughout North America and Europe. The style of the company itself is characterized by strong emotions and natural characters involved in real-life dramas. Berger & Diskin are masters of the traditional mime illusions and acclaimed for their original mime repertoire. Artistic collaborators as well as husband and wife, their performances demonstrate that silence is indeed golden.



MUSIC·CENTER

### ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Beginning with a brief warm-up that emphasizes stretches and isolation of different body parts and may incorporate the use of imaginary objects, the artist works with students and teaches them the techniques used to create "something" or "somebody" out of empty air. Students learn how to use their bodies as a creative tool as they explore imaginary objects (ropes, walls, balls), play games (tug-of-war, catch), and physicalize characters. They learn how to use their creations in mime stories, incorporating emotions as well as actions. Working individually, with partners, and in groups, the students learn to let their characters and stories grow in a manner that encourages full creative and individual expression.



## **BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:**

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Please encourage the students to dress appropriately – in clothes that allow them to move comfortably.
- Discuss the art of mime with your students. Tell them that mime is communication through the use of facial expression and body gestures. Ask them to try to show a thought or emotion without making a sound. (Examples would be nodding the head for “yes,” shaking the head for “no” or shrugging the shoulders for “I don’t know.”) Let the class guess what they are trying to say.
- Ask the students to bring in pictures that show different kinds of people expressing strong emotions. Discuss how the facial features change shape for each emotion. Have them attempt to express one of the emotions portrayed. Make sure they include the body as well, since body posture often gives clues about how a person is feeling (Examples would be tapping the foot when impatient, crossing the arms or shaking the fist when mad or slumped shoulders when unhappy.) See if the students can guess how someone is feeling if their back is turned.
- Have the students show an action that they do every day (eat lunch, brush their teeth, comb their hair, etc.) without speaking and without using any real objects. Encourage the class to guess what they are doing.

- Ask one student to choose a public place (beach, restaurant, movie theatre) and to pretend to do the activities they would normally do at that place (go swimming or try to get a suntan, order and eat a meal, watch and respond to a movie while eating popcorn!) As soon as the other students guess what the location is they may join the first person “on stage.”
- Make sure students know they will be working with professional artists who make their living from creating, performing and teaching mime. Reassure them that they are not expected to be expert actors, but should be ready to listen carefully and be willing to try these new experiences that will help them discover the joy and creativity of mime theatre.

## **AFTER THE WORKSHOP:**

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What were the most important ideas? What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What did they learn? What did they learn about themselves?
- Practice the activities and skills they learned with the artist so students can attain more ability and enjoyment with music.