

FRED GARBO INFLATABLE THEATER CO.

THE MERITS OF INFLATION: A Letter to Audiences from Fred Garbo

Dear Audience Members:

I founded Fred Garbo Inflatable Theater Co. almost eighteen years ago now. And since then, Daielma Santos and I have had the pleasure of performing for audiences all over the globe. But wherever we go, people always ask the same question: "Where did you ever come up with this idea?" The short answer is: We made it up. It's our own fault.

But it wouldn't be right if I didn't "expand" upon that so, here's the long answer:

I grew up surrounded by family and friends who watched cartoons and Marx Brothers movies. I remember the action and slapstick humor making us laugh until we cried and fell on the floor rolling around. The gags, the animation, the surprises -- I loved it all! And that's what got me thinking about performing surprising illusions on stage. As I got older, I started to develop I guess what you would call a wide repertoire of skills useful to new vaudevillians or "popular entertainers." Mostly, I learned by watching and, ultimately, studying with performers who had developed their sense of physical action and comic timing.

One fateful day in 1988, I took a breather from show biz with a bit of skydiving. While packing my parachute, I was struck by its qualities: bright colors, strong material, and most important to a traveling performer (who spends a ton of time flying in airplanes to theaters) so much of it could pack into a really small space! Bingo! The parachute material inflates into a huge, big prop and then deflates down to nearly nothing. No excess luggage charges! I took this idea to my friend George York, a hot air balloon artist. And between us, we devised what would be the first in a long line of strange new props: a stage set that turns into a couch and a self-inflating body suit, sealed at the neck, wrists and ankles. And thus Fred Zeplin, the inflatable man, was born!

Fred Zeplin is a human beach ball who can bounce back, in this case, literally. The Z-man's enormous body seems to reduce the head, hands and feet to doll size, making him cartoon-like, yet obviously real. I really enjoy playing the character because he gives me license to go kinda

"crazy". And I never hold back when I'm lip-synching to the Blues Brother's song, "Do ya love me?" Fred Zeplin's still a really important part of the show, but that was just the beginning to pop-action, air-filled fun.

From there, the ideas really started ballooning and expanding. We created a series of vignettes involving various combinations of shapes and motions. We started building and assembling tons of shapes, costumes, animals, furniture and others things that blew up! Many of these first inflatable inventions didn't work, but that did not stop us!

I met ballerina Daielma Santos on a flight to Brazil. Daielma is originally from Brazil and I was flying thereto appear with the dance company MOMIX. When she saw the show, she insisted on trying on the inflatable suit and, since then, her athletic grace and radiant charm have been an integral part of the company's success. Actually, the "Co." in Fred Garbo Inflatable Theater Co. refers to Daielma -- she's the "company." And now she's a U.S. citizen, with a mortgage to boot! As an aside, this brings me to another very commonly asked question. Since Daielma and I began working together, people always ask me: "Are you two a couple?" And I sometimes answer back with: "A couple of what?" But the truth is we are partners -- but just onstage. And have been for almost 18 years now. Daielma became happily married to Tom Decker in the fall of 2005 and had a baby girl in December of 2007.

So anyway, Daielma's performance really augmented the novelty of the inflatables with exuberant dance and plenty of juggling fun. Our show began to reach a wider audience, eventually booking world tours.

If you have seen our show before, we hope that you will come back to see us again. You'll see some of your favorite pieces from the last time and be knocked out by our newest inventions. If you have never seen Fred Garbo Inflatable Theater Co. before, we know that you will be amazed and delighted by our original creations and marvel as we bring them to life for you. Truly universal in its appeal, our show transcends age and language. It's a performance for the whole family, from grandchildren to grandparents. Daielma and I believe we are in the health profession: making folks laugh and feel good. It is the greatest job. We hope you enjoy our performance and come laugh at inflation! Looking forward to meeting you soon.

Inflatably Yours,
Fred Garbo