

# Gin Gin, the Dancing Clown ~ with Roots in the Air

*Gin Gin in Israel*



(Translated by Shobi with the help of Michael Cicchini)

**Ginevra Gin Gin Sanguigno** holds a degree from the Academy of Dramatic Art of Milan, Italy. She has traveled in India, Indonesia, and Japan, where she has studied dance, ritual theater, and supportive arts. She clowns in hospitals in Italy with the Foundation Caravaglia as Doctor Smile. She has traveled as a clown in peace missions with the Red Nose Ambassadors with Patch Adams in Russia, Romania, Siberia, Cuba, Israel, and Palestine. She was also a clown with the Linea Traversale Theater of the Solidarity in Brazil, Scotland, and the Ivory Coast. She has performed with the L'Associazione Nuove Terre di Milano, a collaboration of transcultural clowns in Nepal and Pakistan.



She founded the *Clown One Italia*, affiliated with Patch Adams' Clown One, with the goal of uniting clowns, doctors, and volunteers. She served with the Organization of Missions for Peace with Clowns for three years in Bosnia, Herzegovina, the Ivory Coast, Afghanistan, and Cambodia.

Last year Gin Gin took a group of clowns to refugee camps and hospitals in Southern Italy. Bill Waters reports on Page 7 She will be leading a trip again this year. For info: contact Gin Gin at: [clown.one@flashnet.it](mailto:clown.one@flashnet.it)

The body that laughs, jumps, dances, and sings, is an antenna connected with the Earth, the Water, the Fire and the Air. Myriads of invisible switches are ignited and extinguished in every moment of our life, with emotions and an infinite variety of states of mind that alternate in a choreography without aim. The body creates a symphony. It sings and it flies. It colors the world and it caresses all which it is near, in order to be confounded and transformed.

We do not escape or flee our dreams! The clown proposes a vision of a singing and dancing world. The color and the costume are access keys which allow entry into the world of poetry and dreams. We take ourselves by the hand and we go forth to discover our "clown soul." Through comical experiments, we try to make a different and meaningful relationship with life.

To laugh is physical gymnastics -- psychological and emotional. Laughing mobilizes our deep muscular bands, the brain comes distracted from its activity, emotions and negativity lose their power.

Through whimsical play, together we explore our clown hearts. Moving from freedom to freedom, we open to the laughter and the smiles that emerge from the profound.



Today I entered the kitchen with a red nose, harmonica, puppets, and trombone in my pockets. The chief cook looked at me with a frown: "A clown in the hospital? Never seen! From where does she come? Surely from one of the psych units!" He is a cook, like one seen in a comic strip, with a tall white hat stirring a fat pot of rice, laughing with his belly and eyes. And when I began to play with the cleaning women, the others in the kitchen urged me on saying, "Go to our boss, because he is a natural clown and likes to laugh." I embraced a lady cook who was crying, but we made a game of it. "Do not cut too many onions, si?" Every day is like this, different and unforeseeable.



### Gin Gin in Afghanistan

I have the desire to astonish myself and astonish others. I have decided to become a clown during this time of my life, and I feel so fortunate. I clown often in the public squares, festivals, and neighborhoods, and I surprise myself with the incredible number of unique and rich personalities and exchanges. I transform into my clown self each time, even when I'm tired or not in the mood.

The character of my clown is light, but energetic, moving, singing, dancing, and playing the drum, accordion and trombone - everything that is festive. I embrace, look disheveled, and fall down - astonishing others and myself.

I clown in hospitals and all over the world. I encounter many children, as the role of the clown has always been to bond with children. With this purpose, I also meet many mothers, fathers, and unhappy people who need the clown more than the children.

As a clown, you are forgiven if you dance on the street or if you cry or sing or laugh for no reason like a child. Barinth, a famous circus clown once said, "If you ask my opinion, we should have the government open a school for clowns." Professionals like lawyers, engineers, and doctors could become clowns. Clowning promotes health because you are free to be who you are. A clown can crack everyone up, roll on the floor, and show passion with no reproach. Children love and imitate you. One can have fun, express love, and at the same time earn a living like a professional.

I choose to be a hospital clown because every time I visit, I learn from every encounter. It is my experience that disease is a condition of the spirit. The more serious the person's disease is, the more deeply my spirit is touched. It seems contradictory, but I feel the profound suffering of the people I visit. The children I meet especially communicate a great consciousness of life with great force and urgency.

My clown travels began twenty years ago after I finished theater school. I relate to the journey that Eugenio Barta tells in his books, searching for the origins of theater. I wanted to find again a sense of inspiration. I have experienced the sacredness of theater, especially in the way it inspires community and caring. The actor speaks from the heavens during a performance. The sacred actor becomes like the shaman, sharing stories and dreams that establish equilibrium and harmony. In doing so, the community is healed. These rituals are being lost today in many societies. I believe it is important to preserve the ancient sense of caring with new rituals and ceremonies.

I do not have any special degrees to scrutinize the way society has changed. I am simply a clown. And as a clown, I have the daring to dance, sing and embrace, offering relief to all who suffer. I am a door opening in a dream, a humble example of lightness.

I met Patch Adams six years ago in Milan at a doctor's conference. I have found him to exaggerate a great deal. I would rather communicate with restraint. However, I think exaggeration is needed for the complete expression of one's feelings. To exaggerate is to cry, to laugh, to dance, to love, to abandon oneself fully. The world is full of people who live in isolation because they do not expand with exaggeration. In a recent encounter I had with Patch Adams, he told a story of a time when he visited the notorious boss of a city. He showed up as a clown to a meeting just before a fight broke out. His nearly two meter tall height and ridiculous presence diverted the brewing violence. In the end, Patch was offered a drink by the group. There are many instances of the clown dissolving violence and bringing peace. This has been Patch Adams' passionate dream for more than thirty years.

Patch speaks about his clown character in this way: "It is that of a person I knew many years ago, an adult in body with the innocence of a child. This tall clown is a spirit child, light and luminous. I am a clown who cries when he must leave his friend a cardboard box that turns into a hat." I have seen Patch cry in the corridors of a hospital in the company of small children. They offer their hand to him with trust, as if he was their playmate. I have been deeply affected by his genuine expressions of crying, jumping with joy, and depression as he plays with them.

I have accompanied Patch with the Red Nose Ambassadors in Russia, Romania, Cuba, Siberia, Afghanistan, Israel, and Palestine where there is much suffering and poverty. The suffering in these places is unseen and unspeakable. I embraced this suffering when I visited children who were abandoned and no one wanted to touch. The pain I shared seemed such an absurdity. The myriad of feelings I felt during my visits is difficult to express. I feel privileged to be able to participate so fully on this incredible clowning journey. I do so without judgment. Sometimes I sense the urgency of the situation, and I feel angry. Then, I become filled with gratitude for the countless gifts of love I have been given.

– Ginevra *Gin Gin* Sanguigno