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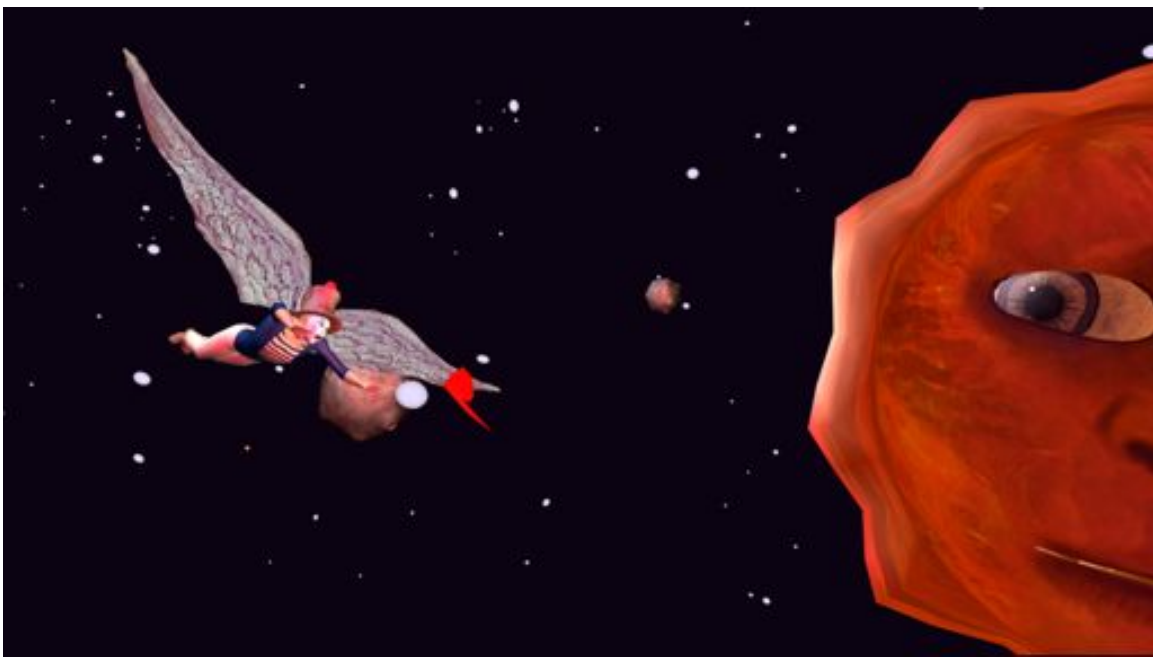


Photo from *There Is No Silence* production, media image design by Vita Berezina-Blackburn.

Making the Invisible Visible: Mime's Contemporary Legacy
A Mime and Movement Theatre Symposium
By Jeanine Thompson

When I put the call out for papers and workshops for this one-day symposium in December 2013, I had no idea I would receive such an abundance of interest and applications from around the country. I had originally wondered if it might garner enough applicants to fill half-a-day. What I quickly realized was that I had more than enough applicants to fill a week's worth of symposium events.

It became very apparent that this opportunity to gather and present meant a great deal to many people who had worked in mime or whose work had been influenced by mime, including people who had worked professionally in North America and Europe, and many who had worked closely with Marcel Marceau and Etienne Decroux. There was a palpable desire from the applicants to share their work, to tell stories about learning mime from Decroux and Marceau, and to champion the multifaceted legacies of these two founding fathers of mime.

Here is the Call for Papers and Presentations that was publicized:

Making the Invisible Visible: Mime's Contemporary Legacy
The Ohio State University, Department of Theatre
Columbus, Ohio, April 11, 2014

As the founding fathers of contemporary mime, Étienne Decroux (1898-1991) and Marcel Marceau (1923-2007) have, through their apprentices, established a performative legacy with global resonances. As a new generation of practitioners emerges, we seek to interrogate, connect, critique, and celebrate the work of mime's late twentieth century North American cohort. We aim to articulate mime's history, to cultivate its legacy, and to imagine how contemporary artists might take mime into future practice, especially as they incorporate the potentials of motion capture and technological mediation.

To that end, The Ohio State University's Department of Theater and the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD) are delighted to present *Making the Invisible Visible*, a symposium celebrating mime and movement theater that will take place on April 11th, 2014 in Columbus, Ohio. We invite paper and workshop proposals that consider mime, movement theater, and mediated performance including:

- The history and legacy of mime
- Pedagogical approaches to teaching mime techniques and styles
- Critique and analysis of mime as an art form
- The works of contemporary practitioners
- Mime and its influence on cinematography and animation.
- Motion capture and other technological advancement for documentation and preservation of the art of mime

This symposium ran in conjunction with the world premiere of *There Is No Silence*, a movement theater performance piece inspired by the life and work of the French mime artist, Marcel Marceau. I conceived and directed this new work that was devised by graduate students and faculty from The Ohio State University's (OSU) Department of Theatre in collaboration with the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD). This multimedia work integrated technology throughout the entire process. This included in the development phase, students learning mime techniques from Marcel Marceau's motion capture data held at OSU; and in the performance, the student performers interacting with live motion capture, projected animation, video and

silhouettes.

There was also a concurrent exhibition on Marcel Marceau showcasing material from his career including lithographs of his paintings, artifacts from his North American tours, and materials from his residencies at OSU including the motion capture session of his signature movements with members from Industrial, Light & Magic.



Symposium Keynote speaker, Annette Thornton. Photo by Damian Bowerman.

For the Keynote Speaker of the symposium, I invited Annette Thornton, President of the Association of Theatre Movement Educators and former student of Marcel Marceau, to provide historical context as well as contemporary significance. For one of our guest speakers, I invited Dean Evans, professional actor and mime artist in Chicago and OSU Theatre alum, to speak on his life as an independent artist. My primary collaborator at ACCAD, Vita Berezina-Blackburn, invited two guests: Kevin Abbott, Digital Media Specialist at Western Michigan University, to share his experiences producing performance work that integrates digital media; and Lorin Eric Salm, professional mime and actor working in theatre and film Los Angeles, to speak about mime and motion capture in the film industry.

I originally come from a background in modern dance and theatre, and I studied mime and taught at the Goldston School for Mime in Gambier, Ohio starting in 1985. There I learned from Gregg Goldston, Nick Johnson, the Polish mime artist Stefan Niedzialkowski, and most notably Marcel Marceau. This was during a period of great strife between people who studied with Marceau and those who studied with Decroux; between those performing “pure” silent mime and those including text and dance in their mime work.

When determining which proposals to accept to present at this symposium, I decided that I

wanted a variety of people and perspectives, those who had worked with Marceau and Decroux, and those who perhaps had not before met each other. I thought that this would provide a varied and enriching opportunity for all of us to learn from and to hopefully inspire new relationships and collaborations.

The following is a complete list of the presenters along with session titles and snippets of what they shared at the Mime and Movement Theatre Symposium: *Making the Invisible Visible: Mime's Contemporary Legacy*.

Keynote Speaker:

Annette Thornton

President of the Association of Theatre Movement Educators, studied with Marceau, and faculty at Central Michigan University.

Keynote title: *How Mime Saved My Life*; she provided historical context of mime, remembrances of studying with Marcel Marceau, and contemporary significance of mime and movement theatre.

Session Presenters:

Kevin Abbott

Digital Media Specialist at Western Michigan University.

Session title: *Pushing the Envelope: Integrating Media Technology into Theatre and Dance Productions*; he showed excellent and inspiring samples of performances of new works that he has collaborated on that integrated multimedia including motion capture.

Nena Couch

Professor at OSU and Curator of the Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute (TRI).

Session title: *The Marcel Marceau American Archive at The Ohio State University's Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee Theatre Research Institute*; she spoke about the many years she and I spent working with Marceau to acquire his archive; she also spoke about the contents of the archive including the 2001 Marcel Marceau Motion Capture Data from ACCAD.

Dean Evans

Professional actor and mime artist in Chicago and OSU Theatre alum.

Session title: *Working as an Actor and Mime Artist*; he shared stories of how he creates work, opportunity and deals with stress – all delivered very comically to the delight of the entire audience.

John Giffin

Professional choreographer and performer, former Pina Bausch dancer, and Emeritus in Dance at OSU.

Session title: *Tender Expressions: Gestural Material from Pina Bausch's Kontakthof*; he showed examples of Bausch's work, and then took the

participants through a gesture phrase development exercise. It was wonderful to have this group of individuals up and moving and working together doing this exploration.

Jeff Glassman and Lisa Fay

Jeff was a founding member of the United Mime Workers that toured from 1971 – 86; both are professional movement theatre artists.

Session title: *Folding Time*; they performed an example of a physical movement and acting phrase, then explained their development of a remarkably effective and visually beautiful notation system.

Maria Ignatieva

Associate Professor in Theatre at OSU Lima, Russian Theatre expert.

Session title: *Marceau-liese (La Marceillaise)*; she talked about Marceau's significance and connection to Russian theatre and showed rare footage of film of Marceau in Russia.

Rob Mermin

Professional mime artist, worldwide touring, studied with Marceau and Decroux, and founder of Circus Smirkus.

Session title: *Memories of the Masters: Decroux, Marceau and the Pantomime-acting Dog*; he shared stories of studying with Marceau and Decroux, touring around the world, and showed video of his indelible dog performance partner. A heartfelt and enjoyable session.

Tom O'Connor

Professional movement theatre artist and faculty member at UCLA.

Session title: *Physical Theatre in the Acting Curriculum*; he provided a thorough rationale and examples of the Physical Theatre Curriculum he is developing at UCLA; a remarkably informative and hopeful session for the future of physical theatre in university programs. "Actor Training these days *has* to include creating not just interpreting."

Ligia Pinheiro

PhD in Dance at OSU.

Session title: *Dancing Words – Moving Text: The mimed action in the "ballet d'action"*; she discussed an early European ballet description and mime connection to the work, "In this instance, dance has to "talk", and mime is excellent at transporting the souls and feelings of the spectators."

Lorin Eric Salm

Professional mime and actor working in the film industry.

Session title: *Taking Mime Outside of the Box*; he shared valuable mime and acting technique skills that greatly assist doing motion capture work for films. Lorin also gave a motion capture master class at ACCAD.

Daniel Stein

Professional mime artist, worldwide touring, studied and worked closely with Decroux, former School Director of The Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, currently faculty at Brown University.

Session titled: *Poetic Dynamics*; he shared stories about studying and working with Decroux as a student and as his translator, discussed Buckminster Fuller's symbiotic energy theories that create an amplification of sound, and showed a section of his solo *Timepiece*. "There is lots left to be done." "Take what you have been taught and take it further." "I was always interested in what *didn't* exist." "My students don't learn to cook the way I do. They learn the ingredients that I use."

There Is No Silence collaborative team of OSU faculty members: Jeanine Thompson (myself) – Conceiver and Director, Vita Berezina-Blackburn – Animation and Motion Capture Designer, Alex Oliszewski – Media Designer, Janet Parrott – Media Co-Designer, Jennifer Schlueter – Script Supervisor, and Brad Steinmetz – Scenic Designer.

Session title: *The collaborative process of creating and staging the multimedia new works production There Is No Silence with integrated technology including live motion capture, and projection of animation, video and silhouettes*; individuals spoke about their contributions to this collaborative process, along with challenges faced and solutions found.

Workshop presenters:

Mark Jaster

Professional mime artist and teacher, studied with Marceau and Decroux.

Workshop title: *Decroux and Marceau: A Comparative Study of Two Short "Etudes"*; he taught two studies, one by Marceau, and the other by Decroux, to participants, he remains an exquisite example and teacher of the techniques and style of both of these masters. "Decroux said, "Memory is the first poet.""

Sifiso Mazibuko

OSU Theatre graduate student, actor and deviser of new works production *There Is No Silence*.

Workshop title: *The Body as Text*; he taught a lively and insightful workshop dealing with vocal and physical techniques that prepare and enable the performer's body to fully "speak" as an expressive artist.

Eleni Papaleonardos

Professional physical theatre artist and OSU Theatre alum.

Workshop title: *Becoming Unstuck: Using movement work to facilitate the creative process of theatre-makers*; she taught participants imaginative methods to physically deal with "writers block".

This day was our opportunity to talk about the research of some, hear fond memories of

others, and see the innovation currently being done by students and faculty in new work productions like *There Is No Silence*. We looked to the past, renewed the present, and envisioned the future.

An overarching theme that ran throughout the entire day was that it seemed as though what was true for Marcel Marceau is true for many of us – when given the chance – most mimes talk a lot. The presentations were very full, the breaks in between sessions got shorter and shorter, and whenever an opportunity arose conversations automatically burst out.

One of the highlights for me was what Daniel Stein, who I had never met before this, said about me at the opening of his session: “Jeanine, I applaud you for having the courage to put up a piece of mime theatre and inviting a group of bastard mimes to come in to critique it. I applaud you for putting your work on the line and walking the talk. Bravo!”

This acknowledgement and appreciation by someone who I have only read about in history books and heard mythic stories about from other mime artists, meant so much to me about the risk that I took in creating a physical theatre work about Marceau with my acting graduate students, curating an exhibit about Marceau, and organizing a mime symposium and welcoming professionals from around the country to examine it all. The whole experience was truly daunting to say the very least, as well as deeply rewarding.

I will always cherish all of those who came to Columbus, Ohio to present their work and to see the work we’re doing at OSU. I was inspired by the enwrapped enthusiasm that each of the presenters had as they watched the other presentations; I was renewed by the support and cooperation of those who attended the events and those involved in assisting me with the symposium, most notably fellow OSU faculty member, Shilarna Stokes. I was also humbled and in awe as the presenters spoke of times in their lives with people and events that we refer to when making a historically relevant point referring to a time, place, technique or performance – these were the people who were actually there making history. Which I guess in many respects is exactly what we were doing in meeting together for this symposium – we were honoring and creating history, as well as inspiring and strengthening mime and movement theatre for future generations to come the future.