What is mime?

Marcel Marceau – waiter and customer in restaurant.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTHGaxdMms0

Electric Cabaret
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDzL0k72tfk
(2mins only – stop after mime of throwing drink can)
Unit Overview

▶ At the end of this unit you will learn how to use mime skills in Drama.

▶ You will use of these key skills to develop a successful performance.

▶ You will also study the how mime was used within silent movies.
Mime

- a style of performance in which people act out situations or portray characters using only gesture and action
- a performer who relies on gesture, facial expression, and action rather than using the voice.
Lesson 1: The Challenge

- To develop an understanding of the rules of mime
- To develop confidence in performing using mime skills
- To develop effective group working skills
The Rules of Mime.....

- Silent (No talking!)
- Exaggerate **facial expressions**
- Exaggerate **gestures and movements**
- Keep the **size** of objects the same
- Show the **weight** of objects
- Make the **shape** of objects clear
- Ensure objects stay where you put them and don’t “Disappear”. E.g don’t walk through the table you’ve mimed!
Task 1

In pairs, label yourselves A and B. You must spontaneously improvise the following scenarios:

- A directs B to a destination in the high street
- swap
- B instructs A in how to wash a cow
- swap

Now repeat the scenario but with no words i.e. mime the scenario.

Purpose: to start using non-verbal communication.

What makes this task difficult?
Main Task

In groups of three – Removal Men!
Create a mimed scene where two removal men and one home owner move the following objects:

✓ A large mirror
✓ A Wardrobe
✓ A chair
✓ A Lamp
✓ Two other items of your choice

Purpose: to accurately use rules of mime for size, weight and shape of objects, along with facial expressions and body language (Gestures and movement).

What makes this task difficult?
Assessment for learning – Lesson 1

- Reflection of strengths and weaknesses in performance. WWW and EBI – Students provide feedback.

**MUST**
Be able to understand the importance of facial expressions in performance.

**SHOULD**
Be able to show clear contrast in character emotions and states through use of facial expressions.

**COULD**
Allow character facial expressions to develop strong character types
Lesson 2: The Challenge

- To develop believable character and interaction
- To understand the importance of clear character types
- To understand the principles of audience awareness, and show this in performance
Warm-Up

Ooey, Gooey, Chewy Gum
All stand in a circle with teacher – mime chewing gum – focus on building up facial expressions and making the movements exaggerated. Build up chewing to a point where you then create the worlds biggest bubble and make it explode! React to gum everywhere! KEY: Whole class takes time to really build this and work facial muscles!
Paired Mime

What skills are needed when miming objects?

In pairs, one is “A” and one is “B”. Improvise the scenario:

- “A” mimes taking an object out of a box
  - A uses the object
  - A gives B the object
  - B takes the object
  - B uses the object
  - B puts the object back in the box

Who is using imagination?
Who is being convincing?
Who is maintaining the same weight and size through gesture, facial expression, control and concentration?
What skills are involved when showing environment?

All find a space and mime the different environments as a whole class:

- hot sand
- cold frozen weather in the arctic
- a rainy wet street
- a windy forest by a haunted house
Representing Characters

Find a space and mime the following roles:

(remember – mime is silent!)

► a police officer
► parent
► child
► teacher
► Teenager

Who is successfully communicating who they are supposed to be?
Whole class Recap

Can you adopt an appropriate tableaux (Still image – as though someone has pressed pause on the remote!) for these emotion statues:

1. happy
2. sad
3. angry
4. confused
5. worried

Now, mime these different environments:

1. strong winds, carrying an umbrella
2. a desert with no drinking water
3. walking carefully on thin ice
4. walking on a tightrope
5. alone in a dark alleyway
Neutral State

The state prior to action or character creation, when an actor is in a state of perfect balance, presenting nothing but a neutral generic being.

A character experiences conflict, has a history, a past, a context, passions.

On the contrary, a neutral mask puts the actor in a state of perfect balance and economy of movement.

Its moves have a truthfulness, its gestures and actions are economical.

Jacques Lecoq
Whole class progress

Mime these different environments again, this time starting from a neutral state and gradually building up the scene, remembering to always stay in control:

- strong winds, carrying an umbrella
- a desert with no drinking water
- walking carefully on thin ice
- walking on a tightrope
- alone in a dark alleyway

LEARNING FOCUS: Control in performance, taking time to build the scene for the audience
Characters

Why are clear characters important in mime?

Why do you think that they need to have clear relationships?

What could the challenges in achieving this?

Do you anticipate any problems?
Task

In pairs, A is going to give B a present

Mime the scene, making sure that the audience are able to establish what has been given

(make sure that the gift is something appropriate for somebody of your age)

Swap, this time with B giving A a different present. Will the audience know what it is?

Repeat the task 2 more times, with the gifts getting larger each time
In groups of 3 you now need to develop a short mime that is not going to be any longer than 1 minute.

You mime should clearly show:

- 2 different character types from the choice below:
  - A nervous person
  - A scared person
  - A confident person
  - A sporty person
  - A nerd
- at least one object each
- One clear environment.
- Follow the 6 rules of mime from Lesson 1

Purpose:
Focus on showing the differences in the characters make the interaction believable in order to tell the story demonstrate knowledge and understanding of skills so far.
Assessment for learning – Lesson 2

- Peer evaluate - WWW and EBI, students provide feedback.

**MUST**

Show awareness of the audience in performance (facing the right direction, not mask anyone else on stage (Stop them from being seen by the audience).

Show an understanding of how to create clear characters for performance. (movement, gesture, facial expressions).

**SHOULD**

Meet the needs of an audience - are the objects, characters and environment clear?

Create a scene with clear character types that interact with each other with dramatic purpose.

**COULD**

To engage and entertain an audience throughout the whole performance.

To create original and creative character types that interact with other fluently to allow an audience explicit understanding of the plot.
Lesson 3: The Challenge

By the end of the lesson you will have:

- Created a structured silent movie performance piece
- Understand the importance of stock characters to a silent movie
Information

The term silent movies refers to the full length films made in the early 1900’s.

Films had been made before this time but they were called ‘one-reelers’. This meant that they were very short, lasting only 10-12 minutes, and were on only one reel of film.

Silent Movies were on 4 or 5 reels of film and were therefore up to an hour long making the characters and storylines much more detailed.

Despite their name, silent movies were rarely silent. Although, sound technology was very simple and it was not possible to record the sound of the actors or soundtracks on to the filmed action, there were many ways in which sound would be part of the performance...
Silent Movie Soundtracks

An organ or piano would be in the movie theatre playing the music to accompany the films action.

The actors would narrate from behind the scenes.

By 1910 as the movies became a little more advanced full orchestras would play music especially written as a soundtrack to the film.
Laurel and Hardy

- One of the most successful comedy duos of all time
- They were the original Chuckle Brothers!, bringing chaos into any situation
- The two characters were very different, Laurel was childlike and naive, but Hardy was loud, and easily lost his temper
Charlie Chaplin

- 1889 – 1977

- English motion-picture actor, director, producer, and composer, one of the most creative artists in film history, who first achieved worldwide fame through his performances in silent films.

- He was most famous for his character of ‘The Tramp’. In this character he used clown like skills of large facial expressions, body language and gesture. He was a tragic character that created hilarious comedy.
Buster Keaton became famous for his straight faced characters that had excellent acrobatic skills.

He started his career in 1917 but before that he had many years of experience performing with his family.

In the early 1920’s he paired up with a successful producer who recognised Keaton’s talent, they made 20 films in 3 years!

In many of his films he played the same character ‘The Great Stone Face’, who was a quiet, determined man who seemed unaware of danger or frustration making him very funny to watch.
The most successful silent movie actors were:

- Clear character types
- Part of a simple story
- Excellent at using highly exaggerated body language and facial expressions
- Supported by music
- Totally aware of their audience by making every single action as clear as possible
Learning check:

Why were silent movies silent?
What silent movie stars can we name?
What skills did a silent movie star need?
Task 1 – in groups of 5 in group work zones

► You start as a group by entering the cinema and sitting down.
► The film starts – you need to show by your reaction to the film, what genre of film it is.
► Remember, not everyone will react exactly the same, but your reaction must be appropriate for the genre of film.
► As you watch, the film changes. What type of film will be on next?
► The film needs to change a total of 3 times, meaning that you will watch 4 different types of film in total.
► Can your audience work out which type of film you have been watching?
► Remember – this is a silent performance!
► 5 minutes to rehearse then one group shows (teacher picks) and WWW and EBI provided by the class.
Poor Wretch

Find a space on your own...
Teacher will read the story of “the poor wretch”, on your own you are to mime the story (Characters, actions) as the teacher reads!
THE POOR WRETCH

It is cold, and you are freezing. It is snowing outside and the cold wind blows through your house. You are poor, so poor and you have no money for heating.

You go to the kitchen to find some food. You open the cupboard but there is nothing there. You go to another cupboard but, alas, it is empty too, not a crumb! Then you have an idea! You fetch a saucepan, than go outside fighting the cold, icy wind to fill the saucepan with snow. You return to the kitchen, put the saucepan down and light your last match carefully so that you can light a candle. You warm your hands for a moment on the candle flame, and for a moment feel a little better. You then remove your old boot from your foot and put it in the saucepan, then place it over the flame so the snow melts. You smell the aroma, “Umm!”

You are startled by a sudden knock on the door. “Who could it be?”, you think. The knock is heard again, this time even louder. You approach your door hesitantly, as you open the door it is pushed open by your evil landlord. He wants the rent. He strides into the house, he is angry, you plead with him, that you will get it to him, but this makes him angrier. He threatens you, you plead with him again, and he grabs you.

You scream, but no one hears …. or so you think!
Stock Characters

Whole class Tableaux (Still images! As though “Pause“ has been pressed!)

Show us your best:
1. Hero
2. Heroine
3. Villain
Group Work

Create a performance of The Poor Wretch, that includes a hero, a heroine and a villain, and create your own ending!

Remember, you are not allowed to talk in your performance, so the success of your story relies on your body language and facial expressions.

5 minutes to rehearse!
Group Work

Create a performance of The Poor Wretch, that includes a hero, a heroine and a villain, and create the ending

Pause rehearsal...!

Watch this version of “A Poor Wretch” notice - what does this version use to aid understanding of the plot?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ifz6qfJesQ

Answer (after watching the clip):
Lesson 2: The Plenary

- Have you:
  - Explored the use of facial expression in mime?
  - Devised a piece of mime in larger groups, which explores communicating meaning through facial expressions?
  - Performed your own work to demonstrate progress made?
  - Evaluated your own work and the work of others?

Interpretation

- Why do you think placards were important?
- What information should be included on a placard?
- What makes a good placard?
- What makes a bad placard?

Watch the clip:

[Placard Clip]
Task

Continue to rehearse your performance of The Poor Wretch, and make 5 placards to use in your performance (A4 paper - one actor to hold each placard up at key points)

TIPS

• Make your placards simple and clear
• Not too much writing
• Bold/big writing
• Don’t tell the whole story!

Your teacher will play this piece of music for you to use throughout your performance:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw_bLGwmm_o&index=6&list=PLBXBmZcJbX0zZVWmF SSLCcB-r5#t=00s
Assessment for learning – Lesson 3

- One group performs
- Peer evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in performance. WWW and EBI – Students provide feedback.

**MUST**
Develop the main characters and basic events from the story of The Poor Wretch.

**SHOULD**
Create clear character types suitable to the silent movie genre that add meaningfully to the plot development.

**COULD**
Develop character action that compliments the music of the drama.
Lesson 4: The Challenge

- To understand the main features of silent movie chase scene
- To develop slapstick comedy skills

Who is this silent movie character?
Criteria for a successful chase scene:

1. Circular pathways – taking the same route over and over again
2. Confusion / an obstacle – Who’s chasing who? Where did they go? How do we get out?
3. Disguise / hiding in plain sight – Pretending to be someone (or something!) else.
4. Pausing the chase – taking a double take before realising what’s going on or where they’ve gone!
5. A Distraction – the hero or villain notices / points out something!
6. Use the rules of mime!
Chase scenes

Look for examples of chase scene criteria in both clips!

Charlie Chaplin chase scene:
▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ4opMyIUI-w

Silent Movie Chase Scene:
▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydTU85WzV_I
Criteria for a successful chase scene:

1. Circular pathways – taking the same route over and over again
2. Confusion / an obstacle – Who’s chasing who? Where did they go? How do we get out?
3. Disguise / hiding in plain sight – Pretending to be someone (or something!) else.
4. Pausing the chase – taking a double take before realising what’s going on or where they’ve gone!
5. A Distraction – the hero or villain notices / points out something!
6. Use the rules of mime!
Paired Work

Create a chase scene in pairs, where one Villain has stolen an important object from the Hero! Remember to use:

1. Circular pathways
2. Confusion / an obstacle
3. Disguise / hiding in plain sight
4. Pausing the chase – taking a double take
5. A Distraction
6. The rules of mime!
Assessment for learning – Lesson 4

- Several pairs perform. After each performance: WWW and EBI Student led discussion and feedback.

**MUST**
Be able to piece together a typical silent movie chase scene.

**SHOULD**
Be able to add character movement and expression to a typical silent movie chase scene.

**COULD**
Develop character expression so that a comic and detailed silent movie style chase routine is developed and presented.
Lesson 5: The Great Train Escape

- To create a structured silent movie performance based on the typical Great Train Escape Scene
- To create the 3 main silent movies archetypes, and develop them with creativity in performance

Who is this silent movie actor, who we met earlier in the unit?
Watch the silent movie film 'The Great Train Escape'

The Great Train Escape Clip
Analysis

What were the main features and dramatic purpose of the characters in The Great Train Escape?

Structure

Establish the scene and characters
Introducing the role of the villain
The Capture
The hero is alerted
The chase
The conclusion
Assessment Challenge

Use all of this lesson to rehearse in groups of three, ready for your assessment next lesson.

- Use the Great Train Escape structure
- Develop your own version of the Great Train Escape scene using all the character/interaction/placards (5) / slapstick you have explored in this unit
- Focus for grading: rehearsals, acting skills, rules of mime, chase scene criteria.

Structure

Establish the scene and characters
Introducing the role of the villain
The Capture
The hero is alerted
The chase
The conclusion
Assessment for learning – Lesson 5

- Students made aware of, and shown, assessment criteria for rehearsal and acting skills.
- Students pair and share WWW and EBI self reflection against the criteria in preparation for performance assessment lesson.

**MUST**
Contribute to a performance of the Great Train Escape with an attempted character.

**SHOULD**
Create a structured silent movie story with identifiable characters and clear and appropriate performance features. They will attempt to meet the needs of an audience.

**COULD**
Create an original and/or creative performance that is detailed and informs and entertains the audience to a very good level. It will show clear role and physicalisation skills, and will show clear awareness of audience.
Lesson 6: Assessment

You have 5 minutes at the start of the lesson to recap your performance in your groups!

How the Drama assessment works:

- You will all sit in three neat rows as an audience, as one group at a time performs.
- Audiences remain silent and still, as a show of respect, whilst actors are performing.
- Your teacher is marking each of you for your acting skills, structure of a silent movie, how you have used the rules of mime and criteria for a silent movie chase scene.
- All performances start and end in tableau, with the audience giving a round of applause at the end, then the next group goes on stage.
- Remember to stay focused and controlled!
Complete your logs and evaluate your performance and one other performance that you’ve seen using PEED to structure your responses.