

PANTOMIME

-Action performed without words or sounds from the voice-

BASIC QUALITIES OF GOOD PANTOMIME

Even without much training or time, you can emphasize three qualities necessary to effective pantomime:

1. **consistency:** Objects that are mimed must remain the same size. A steering wheel cannot shrink and expand; drinking glasses cannot float off in mid-air, but must be set down; a broom handle is not a wet noodle.
2. **exaggerated resistance:** If a mime pushes against a door, pulls a rope, lifts a suitcase, pushes a button, picks a flower, knocks on a door, lifts a weight, tightens a bolt, sews on a button or performs almost any action, the resistance of person against object *must* be exaggerated and made "bigger" than in real life. In real life, picking flowers may take no effort at all, but in pantomime, the actor must make the action more definite, sharper, bigger.
3. **exaggerated expression and gesture:** If a mime points to someone, cries, laughs, becomes sad or angry, reacts in shock or horror or joy, the facial expressions and gestures used must be exaggerated, or made bigger, than in real life.

BASICS OF PANTOMIME STORY LINES

In addition to mime techniques, original pantomimes must eventually — though not in the beginning exercises — tell a story and hold audience interest. The introduction to the chapter on improvisation covers methods of story development more thoroughly, but here are some suggestions:

1. **Keep it simple.** In pantomime, the storyline must be simple if the audience is to understand. The process of watching a well-executed pantomime is itself satisfying; a complicated plot simply muddies the action.
2. **Tell a story.** In making up a storyline, actors think in terms of an initial situation (beginning), complications and problems arising from that situation (middle), and a solution to those problems (ending).
3. **Be fantastic!** In pantomime, complications and solutions can be less realistic, more creative and more fantastic than those in realistic improvisations with dialogue. It's easy and entertaining to present, through mime, a shoe store scene in which the shoes are first too tight, then too loose, then too high, then too heavy, then just right but too expensive, with the customer finally deciding to go barefoot. (This situation is, of course, an exception to the rule of object consistency in pantomime.)

An interesting scene can develop from almost any initial situation, depending on the creativity of the actors. Such creativity, of course, is not universally distributed. Through repeated exercises and the use of the idea sheets, however, all group members develop and strengthen their creative skills.