

Mime Activity

PA Standard - 9.1: Production, Performance and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Arts

Mime in Ballet

In ballet there is no dialogue. A story ballet relies primarily on pantomime for exposition; it helps convey the story. There is a standard mime vocabulary used by every ballet company. For example, a dancer from Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and a dancer from New York City Ballet would mime the word "love" in a similar fashion. However, based on the character and the role he/she is playing in the story, each dancer may embody the gesture differently.

Activity 1. In *The Sleeping Beauty* we see mime in several places, including when Carabosse curses Aurora. Here is the "dialogue" for this scene:

The Curse—Carabosse and the Lilac Fairy

In mime, Carabosse tells the court: *You listen to me speak. That baby will grow up to be beautiful and graceful. But the baby will find a spindle and will prick her finger and die.*

The Lilac Fairy steps in to negate the spell. In mime, she says: *Aurora will grow up to be beautiful. But when she pricks her finger, she will sleep. And one day, from far away, a handsome prince will bring the kiss that will wake her.*

Using the gestures below, have students "translate" this scene into mime. Then, [view this video](#) to see the mime "decoded" by Nashville Ballet

You—gesture to person

Listen—tap ears

Speak—hands at mouth, brushing upward

Baby—cradled arms

Grow—indicate from ground with hand -low, medium, high

Beautiful/Handsome—circle your face/draw hand down face

Graceful—sweep hand down each arm

But—one finger raised

Spindle/needle—hold with finger and thumb

Prick—tiny stabbing motion with finger/thumb

Die/dead—cross arms-hands clenched in fists

Sleep—bend arms at elbow, place on top of each other and rest head lightly on them

One day—one arm raises toward the front, one low toward the back

Prince/Princess/King/Queen—gesture to top of head, hand upright, touching each side of the top of the head to indicate a crown

Kiss—two fingers touch the mouth then pull away

Awaken—arms scoop down in front of body and up

Now try miming these scenes!

- In Act 1 the King tells Aurora that she looks beautiful and must choose a prince to marry. With this news Aurora runs to her mother who tells her she only has to dance with the princes.

Marry—point to your ring finger

Beautiful/Handsome—circle your face/draw hand down face

Dance—circling hands overhead

- In Act 2 the Lilac Fairy asks Prince Desiré why he is crying. After the Lilac Fairy shows the vision of Aurora to the Prince, the two travel to Aurora's castle. Carabosse orders her minions to kill Prince Desiré. When the Prince defeats Carabosse, he kisses Princess Aurora, and asks the King for her hand in marriage.

Dance—circling hands overhead

Why—gesturing hands out in front of body

Cry—gesture with all fingers in front of eyes

Prince/Princess/King/Queen—gesture to top of head, hand upright, touching each side of the top of the head to indicate a crown

Kill—gesturing pointer finger across neck

No—turn head or gesture with arms

Love—two hands on heart

Marry—point to your ring finger

Activity 2: Charades: For individuals or small groups: review lists and practice select movements. Students select terms to share with the class WITHOUT using words. Have students in the audience guess which gesture they are making based on their sheet. After they have correctly guessed, be sure to ask all students to perform the gesture together as a class.

Sidecoaching Suggestions:

- Encourage students to analyze their movements and explore all possibilities. Show all the different ways we “point” to ourselves (for “I”) or that we could “hold up two fingers high” (for “promise”). What seems to represent the idea the clearest?
- What could the rest of your body be doing during these mimes--legs, arms, face? Show us what the idea is with these other body parts (especially the face!).

Reflection Questions for Part One--Exploring Mime Charades

- How did you have to change your communication when you weren't allowed to talk?
- Quick check: What were 3 of the most interesting mime gestures students performed and why?

Activity 3: Create your own mime story!

In small groups, students will create a story using just mime movements using one of the variations below. Allow students 5-10 minutes to create a story using the 6 movements. After the students have completed their short movement stories, share with the class.

1. Choose 6 movements from the mime list to create a story.
2. Students can be given random terms and must create a story from the terms.