

Never before, when it is life itself that is in question, has there been so much talk of civilization and culture. And there is a curious parallel between this generalized collapse of life at the root of our present demoralization and our concern for a culture which has never been coincident with life, which in fact has been devised to tyrannize over life.

What is most important, it seems to me, is not so much to defend a culture whose existence has never kept a man from going hungry, as to extract, from what is called culture, ideas whose compelling force is identical with that of hunger.

We need to live first of all; to believe in what makes us live and that something makes us live — to believe that whatever is produced from the mysterious depths of ourselves need not forever haunt us as an exclusively digestive concern.

Antonin Artaud
in *The Theatre and its Double*

The Canadian Mime Theatre, a group in its second season, is representative of the rekindled interest in mime in North America. The company will perform at the Arts Centre today, Friday, January 29 and tomorrow. Both performances start at 8:30 p.m. and ticket prices range from \$3.00 to \$1.00. Students may obtain tickets for half price.

Canadian art critic Nathan Cohen said "... when you are watching this (Company), you are seeing, in direct line of continuity, gestures used by the Greek mimes five centuries prior to the Christian era, in the commedia dell'arte of four centuries ago, and by Chaplin and his various film colleagues 40 years ago.

"However much the world has changed, certain emotions and attitudes remain the same, and they are the impulse power of mimetic art..."

Mime:

by Leslie MacDonald

Theatre as life, life as theatre. The intertwining of art form and reality dates back throughout human history. And mime presents itself as one of the oldest of these arts.

Essentially, mime is imitation or mimicry. Elements of mime are present in the gestures of a storyteller, in ballet and modern dance, as well as the circus clown. It plays a large part in dance and theatre in many eastern countries.

Mime, to a greater extent than many other theatre forms, deals with the realism of life. So we see Marcel Marceau or Jean Louis Barrault two world famous mimists, perform skits which could easily have come from the street life in Paris or our own living rooms.



CHARLIE CHAPLIN

Mime, originally, was either a recitation with different parts acted by one person or a dramatic performance executed by two or more persons. It was, probably, not connected with religious festivals, but with rich men's banquets and other secular occasions.

Its subject matter was "low life", the behavior of people who did not belong to high society and who were not endowed with aristocratic "virtues".

Thus mime differed greatly from the tragic art form, which dealt with noble heroes or heroines.

The mime presented human life "as it is", it was, to a certain extent, the theatre of the people. Although it achieved this representation through simplification, choice of characteristic detail, overstatement, overemphasis or caricature, still it dealt essentially with the realism of "the people".

The form which most immediately comes to mind when one speaks of mime is the silent theatre, but in reality this is only one branch of the art. In ancient Greece some mime plays were a blend of mime speech song and dance. As they spread through Europe, the element of mime became more important, and instead of amplifying speech, it became an art form on its own.

Even now, mime can be presented on its own, or in combination with speech. It often uses elaborate facial makeup, especially whiteface, and suggestive costuming to reinforce the drama, yet most of the

Art and life

burden of communication lies with the expression of emotions through gestures, of the hand, face and the whole body.

Mime is one of the major art forms in the east. Dance drama theatres flourish in India and the far east, based, for the most part, on ancient tradition, formalized and immutable.



MARCEL MARCEAU

Yet, although ancient, this art draws on the spirit and the culture of the country, and the result is forcefully alive and stimulating.

Jean Louis Barrault suggested that Western theatre and mime was at an impasse, and must find a new mode of expression with more of the scope and power of the Oriental school.

The inability of western theatre to express emotion to the same degree as eastern theatre, is rooted in the old Western tradition of rationalism over emotionalism.

Dating to the time of Plato and Aristotle, the western culture has based itself on logic and rationalism. The ascendancy of those twin virtues has made the expression of emotion almost a tabu act in our culture.

The training that children receive in our schools, as well as the demands of the "outside world" force us to submerge our emotions. Emotionalism, in North America especially, is a sign of weakness, that we have been taught not to show in public.

Perhaps the resurgence of mime is linked to the ever spreading attempt in North America of oppressed groups, to redefine themselves, and thus free themselves from the crippling stereotypes that our culture has imposed.