

# *The Arts*



## **PART II.4**

Pantomime.....	2
Analysis, Evaluation.....	9

**NOTE: This document is a work in progress. Parts II and III, in particular, are in need of further development, and we invite the submission of additional learning experiences and local performance tasks for these sections. Inquiries regarding submission of materials should be directed to: The Arts Resource Guide, Room 681 EBA, New York State Education Department, Albany, NY 12234 (tel. 518-474-5922).**



# Creating A Story

ARTS

1

- ▲ write scenes
- ▲ enact experiences
- ▲ use techniques
- ▲ make acting choices

ARTS

1

- ▲ use theatre technology

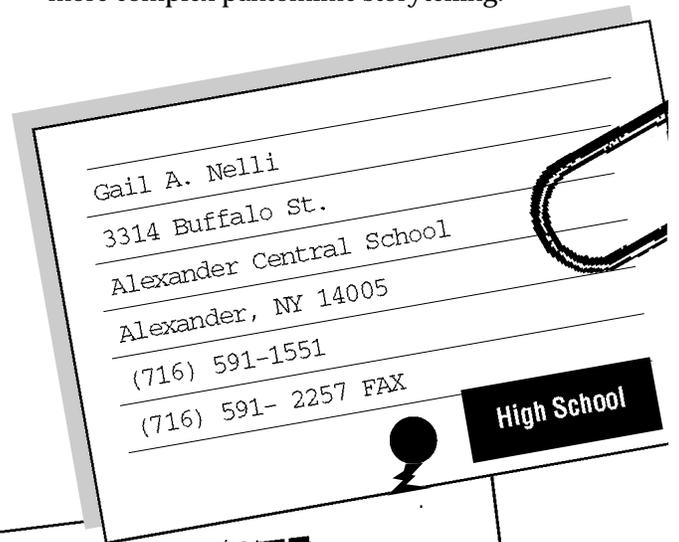
ARTS

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- ▲ articulate an understanding
- ▲ interpretation

This learning experience in pantomime is designed for an introductory high school level theatre class as part of an acting unit.

A series of lessons takes a student through the creation of simple pantomime actions to more complex pantomime storytelling.



## BASICS OF PANTOMIME STORYLINES

**1. Pantomimes must tell a story, but keep it SIMPLE!**

In pantomime the storyline must be simple if the audience is to understand. Don't make it too complicated!

**2. Pantomimes must have a beginning, middle and an ending.**

In making up a storyline, actors begin with a situation taking place in a specific setting (beginning), a conflict develops with problems and complications (middle), and a solution to the conflict ends the scene (ending).

**3. Pantomimes can be fantastic!**

In pantomime complications and solutions can be less realistic, more creative and more fantastic than improvisations with dialogue. Have a little fun and stretch reality a bit for humor's sake. For example, in a shoe store scene the shoes can at first be too tight, then too loose, then too high, then too heavy, then just right but too expensive, with the customer finally deciding to leave the store barefoot.

# PANTOMIME

## BASIC QUALITIES OF GOOD PANTOMIME

1. **Consistency - space objects must remain the same size.**  
A steering wheel of a car should not shrink and expand; drinking glasses should not disappear in mid-air, but must be set down; a broom handle is not a wet noodle, but long and rigid.

2. **Exaggerated resistance - the resistance of a person against an object must be exaggerated and made "bigger than in real life."**  
If you push against a door, pull a rope, lift a suitcase, push a button or pick a flower, knock on a door, lift a weight, tighten a bolt, sew on a button or perform almost any other action, you must make the action more definite, sharper, and bigger, than in real life.

3. **Exaggerated expression and gesture - the facial expressions and gesture used in pantomime must be exaggerated in a big way.**  
If you point to someone, cry, laugh, become sad or angry, react in sorrow or joy, your facial expressions and gestures must be BIG!

4. **Focus - you must "see" the space objects and setting as you perform your pantomime to help make it real.**  
If you were going to go bowling you must "see" the alley, where the shoes are rented, where the balls are stored, where you get your score sheet. You must "see" the action of bowling: wiping your hands on the towel, picking up the ball, feeling its weight, inserting your fingers into the holes correctly, and holding the ball as you walk to the starting line, etc. Always focus on the space objects and setting and never allow your eyes to wander aimlessly.

It is important to start this on a Monday to allow for weekend preparation of the first pantomime performance.

The games have a serious intent which is to help develop important theatre performance skills in movement, perception & expression, creativity, teamwork, and storytelling skills.

Whether students have serious interest in pursuing theatre or not, while playing they learn about concentration, problem-solving and group interaction.

Teacher

## Day 1: Space Objects

In a large circle, the teacher leads the class in creating imaginary "space objects" to pass to around: basketball, small bouncing ball, balloon. The teacher questions students about the properties of each object (size, shape, and weight) and how to make these invisible objects visible by using eye contact to focus attention, by creating consistency of size, and by allowing the object its time in space. Students pair up and continue passing objects back and forth from closer together to farther apart as teacher side coaches students to "see the object," "give the object its time in space," and "keep the size consistent."

In the last half of class, students play dodge ball in large circle with the player in the center. The object is to keep focus on the space ball as it is thrown at the center person who must attempt to dodge the space ball without getting hit. If the center player is hit, the person who threw it replaces him. Teacher coaches students to "play with their whole bodies," "keep focus on the ball in space," and enforce the rule, "no hitting above the waist."

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## Day 2: Tug of War

Teacher re-stresses the concepts of focus, size consistency and time in space by splitting into groups of 3 to 5 to play imaginary jump rope with two people at opposite ends synchronizing the turning of the rope while others take turns jumping. Play continues until everyone has had a chance to turn the rope and jump in. The teacher coaches throughout. The concept of *exaggerated resistance* is introduced next by group circle work where students pass heavy objects of different sizes: anvil, bowling ball, luggage, and barbell. Teacher demonstrates that resistance should be exaggerated for effect by making actions definite, sharp and *bigger* than in normal life and adding appropriate facial expression to show exertion.

Students now split into two teams for game of tug of war with an imaginary space rope. Coach students to “see the rope in space,” “use their whole bodies to pull,” “keep the rope between you,” and “show body and facial tension.”

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***This series of lessons takes a student through the creation of a simple pantomime action to more complex pantomime storytelling. It is important to start this on a Monday to allow for a weekend preparation of the first pantomime performance.***

Teacher

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## Day 3: Apple Picking

Teacher re-stresses concepts of focus, size consistency, time in space, exaggerated resistance and exaggerated facial expression by working in pairs to recreate a simple activity. Students imagine they are apple picking. Each student is wearing an imaginary shoulder bag for collecting the apples. Two students are to pick apples from the same tree, making sure to get apples from branches which are high, low, outside, and inside. When their bag is full they are to remove it, empty the contents

into two large baskets and, together, carry each basket to a large waist-high bin and dump the apples inside. As students pantomime these simple actions, the teacher coaches with appropriate comments which keep students focused and attempts to guide them into appropriate use of the elements being stressed: focus, consistency of size, time in space, exaggerated resistance, and exaggerated facial expression. By now students have usually become attuned to the basic qualities of good pantomime and are ready to embark on creating their own simple pantomime of an action.

At this point students are given a handout reminding them of these qualities and a second handout describing their pantomime assignment on creating a story pantomime. The assignment also includes a sample outline and an outline form. Teacher stresses good storytelling elements through performance of a pantomime. The pantomime demonstrates the assignment by creating an individual character in pursuit of an objective (goal) who is confronted with obstacles in trying to reach the objective (conflict), but eventually overcomes the obstacle and resolves the conflict (climax and resolution). The teacher goes over the handout and sample outline, then assigns an outline to be brought to class in two days (**Friday**). Remaining time is spent individually listing ideas on paper for the assignment.

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## DAY 4: Good Introduction, Poise, Energy

The emphasis on this day is the importance of a good introduction delivered with poise and energy. The teacher explains that each pantomime performed in class must have an introduction. Since talking is not allowed in pantomime, students will create signs with titles which will help their audience to understand their pantomimed action better. Using an adjustable music stand and a blank sheet of paper large enough for a sign, students practice walking across the stage to a podium, placing the sign on the stage and moving to center stage for the start of the pantomime. Students not performing are asked to observe

each person's introduction looking for characteristics of an effective beginning: poise, energy, eye contact, and emphasis. This is an appropriate time to discuss the need to give honest, constructive criticism which first points out strengths, then gives helpful suggestions for improvement. After each student performs and is critiqued, the class discusses what will need to be done in an introduction to make it effective. Generally speaking, the teacher guides the discussion to make sure the following is stressed: enter the stage area with good posture, poise and energy giving direct eye contact to the audience while walking to the music stand, pausing after placing the sign on the stand to allow time for the audience to read the sign, then walking with good posture, poise and energy to center stage, pausing before the start of the pantomime. Students are given blank sheets of construction paper and told to complete a title for their pantomime lightly in pencil using large letters that can easily be read by the audience. Sample signs should be shown to students as models. Appropriate simple graphics may also be added, but should not clutter the sign. The sign is due the next day when students will submit them for approval and color in with markers.

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## DAY 5: Rubric

### ***The Teacher will:***

- give students the rubric assessment sheet which will be used to evaluate student performances (The rubric is designed to assess the same qualities stressed by the teacher during theatre games played earlier in the week and attributes of an effective introduction discussed yesterday.)
- collect pencil drawings of signs and check for visibility and appropriateness
- circulate among students double-checking outlines and giving assistance.

### ***The Students will:***

- exchange outlines of their pantomime activity, check for conformity to the assignment by using the criteria on the rubric assessment sheet as a guide, revise and turn in outlines
- revise and color in signs

- develop their pantomime and be ready to rehearse in class **Monday**.

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## DAYS 6 & 7: Rehearse

### ***The Students will:***

- rehearse their pantomime activity using the music stand and sign. (Rehearsal is videotaped.)
- verbally critique each performance while the performer takes notes of suggestions.
- take their tapes home for self-evaluation.

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## Day 8: Makeup

### ***The Teacher will:***

- show students various pictures of makeup designs of pantomime artists
- demonstrate the application of white-face makeup on a selected student.

### ***The Students will:***

- design a simple sketch for their white-face makeup to bring in to class on the day of their performance (Students are given individual makeup kits to use on performance day).

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## Days 9 & 10: Performance/ Assessment

### ***The Students will:***

- apply makeup designs before presentations begin
- perform their pantomimes before the class (they are videotaped)
- evaluate their peers using the rubric assessment sheet
- take videotape home to complete self-assessment and reflection sheets.

### ***The Teacher will:***

- evaluate each student using the rubric assessment sheet.

In each category being assessed, please circle the number which represents your assessment of the performance and write explanations in the comments section following each category.

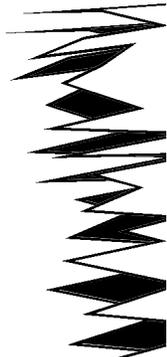
**INTRODUCTION**

- 3** performer entered the playing space with energy and poise; placed sign on the podium with an indicated pause and walked to starting point freezing into position before beginning pantomime
- 2** performer rushed the introduction appearing in a hurry to finish although all elements of the introduction were present
- 1** performer showed lack of rehearsal of the introduction seeming uncertain and unsure of what came next or showed discomfort and self-consciousness
- 0** no introduction was given

comments: *great energy level; you looked like you really wanted to be up there; nice smile*

**CONSISTENCY**

- 3** performer created space objects which remained consistent in size throughout the pantomime
- 2.5** performer only had a few noticeable mistakes in maintaining consistency in the size of the space objects
- 1** performer had difficulty maintaining consistency in the size of the space objects throughout the pantomime
- 0** performer's space objects were not clearly defined and difficult to comprehend



Improved from rehearsal by remembering to mime shoe lace and taking off shoes. You also increased facial expressions and gestures at window and remembered to close the door. Good job!

comments: Only minor problem with door knob

### FOCUS

- 3 performer maintained focus throughout the pantomime "seeing" the space objects and setting
- 2 performer rarely lost focus during the pantomime
- 1 performer had difficulty maintaining focus during the pantomime
- 0 performer had no focus, eyes wandered aimlessly

comments: Did not lose concentration at all throughout. Great job helping us "see" all the objects easily.

### EXAGGERATED RESISTANCE

- 3 performer made all actions definite, sharp and "bigger" than in real life; resistance was exaggerated for effect
- 2 performer's action were life-like but not exaggerated enough for effect
- 1 performer was inconsistent in performing actions with exaggeration; actions were not followed through; needed more rehearsal time
- 0 performer's actions were weakly executed and vague making it difficult to tell what was happening

comments: Used arms and legs well when trying to pound on door

## EXAGGERATED FACIAL EXPRESSION & GESTURE

3 performer exaggerated facial expressions and gestures

*2 1/2* making them "bigger" and easier to understand emotion

2 performer was not consistent in making facial expression and gestures "bigger"

1 performer rarely showed emotions through gestures a facial expression

0 performer showed no emotional context through facial expression and gesture

comments: *Intensified emotional reaction from puzzlement, annoyance and frustration then happy when you found the key. Consistent but could be a bit bigger.*

## STORYTELLING

*3* performer clearly created a character other than self; character is in pursuit of an objective but is confronted with an obstacle(s) which stand in the way of reaching objective; obstacles are overcome and resolved with ending a logical outcome of events or a surprise ending

2 performer's character is not distinctly different from character is in pursuit of an objective but is confronted with an obstacle(s) which stand in way of reaching the objective; obstacles are overcome and resolved with ending a logical outcome of events or a surprise ending

1 character's objective is unclear and/or obstacles do not complicate situation enough; ending does not seem to resolve the conflict in a satisfying ending.

0 character does not have an objective; no obstacles are confronted; no storyline exists

*Easy to follow your storyline. Could use over more "character". Ending seemed anticlimactic when you sat in the chair - Better to end after you close the door. It made me think*

*going to be more to the picture.*

*there was*

# ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, COMPARISON OF Professional and Student Performance



- ▲ thorough listening
- ▲ read/write
- ▲ use anatomical terms
- ▲ identify/describe

This lesson will:

1. demonstrate the students' command of specialized language used in musical analysis
2. develop the listening abilities of our students
3. make the student more thoughtful, over time
4. ensure that students will use clear and specific statements focusing on what was heard and observed
5. most importantly, improve the students' musical ability by making them evaluate themselves

***This lesson teaches students how to evaluate and critically think —two areas often dismissed in the area of performance.***

Teacher



**A** performing ensemble is in the process of rehearsing a composition. This activity is designed to give the students a model of a quality performance, improve student listening, student analysis, and individual and group performance skills.

Students will have previously rehearsed a work to the extent that they have a minimal understanding of its style, structure, and overall sound. They will listen to a recording of a professional ensemble and a recording of themselves performing the same composition.

They will be asked to listen to each recording twice. The first time, they will listen and write in response to three questions. After the second hearing, they will write an analysis and evaluation of the professional performance, compare it with their own performance and make suggestions for improvement.



## ASSESSMENT

Students are asked to respond to three questions in writing:



1. How would you evaluate the performance of the professional ensemble?  
How did the music make you feel?
  - a. *Specificity*—state the strengths and weaknesses of both performances, make suggestions for improvement relative to the specific weaknesses. Make suggestions of appropriate areas of the ensemble performance that should be dealt with by the ensemble at the next rehearsal.
  - b. *Terminology*—show an understanding of the language of talking about music and performance. Examples would include style, genre, form, melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, tone, dynamics, articulation, etc.
  - c. *Completeness*—the extent to what the students critique. Analyze, evaluate and compare the whole work by stating multiple strengths and weaknesses, giving many examples of terminology, and multiple suggestions for improvement, including what he/she and the ensemble need to do to improve.
2. What is the difference between the professional performance and our current performance?
3. What must we, as an ensemble, and you, as an individual, do to improve the performance of this work?

**To be successful, students must have been taught how to critique a work. They must have been taught appropriate musical terminology to be used in the critique.**

Teacher

## Student Critique Comparison of *Comedian's Gallop*

1. Philadelphia's performance is excellent! Wow! I could not hear any weaknesses in their performance. Through their performance, I can see why the composer called the piece *Comedian's Gallop*. It is very fast! Just like a musical gallop. The dynamic contrasts were amazing—sometimes very soft and getting very loud within a few beats of each other. It seems to have an ABA structure because it is loud at the beginning with everyone playing, then gets soft in the middle with that fantastic mallet solo (I'll have it down by next week, Mr. Dirth. I promise). Then it gets loud again with everyone playing.



2. There is a *biiiiiig* difference between our performance and theirs. First, they are an orchestra and we are a band. They have strings and we don't. Next, they play it at a real gallop. We play it at a slow trot. Technically, people like me can't handle it at the moment. Our performance lacks style. It is too boring—there is no personality. Rhythmically we are playing it right—just not at the right tempo. We are having some real interaction problems. For example, the chimers at me. 10, I think are supposed to be playing the same thing. It sounds like 15 people—not 1. The trumpets at 80 are too blatty, which hurts the intonation and makes it terrible to listen to. Also, I think the trumpets are in 3-part harmony here. It doesn't sound like the same 3-parts that Philadelphia is playing. On the right side, I think we have a great sound. I guess to use your I actually like the full sound of our band better than the orchestra sound. I guess to use your terms the orchestra timbre seems too high or thin. I'm not sure, but I know I like ours better. I know I can't say too many nice things about us, but we have only played it a few times and we are not professional. When we compare pros to us, it makes us seem pretty low.

3. The biggest thing we have to do is practice! I know I can play that solo but I have to do some—as you would say—woodshedding. I want to sign out the practice room period 3 next week. As a group, we have to listen more. I think people are so busy finding the right notes and rhythms that they can't do anything else—especially think about listening. I think we also have to lighten up and think of this as a fun piece. We are trying to be serious. Everyone has to work up the tempo. Again it takes practice. Taking it slow until we can do it right, then speeding it up until we can get it to 140. I live to use a metronome for this. It is great to hear the professional recording because it gives us a better idea of what we should sound like and it gives us a goal to work for.

*A very fine job! You were specific and complete. Your use of vocabulary shows me not only understand the musical elements, but can use them to evaluate your work others'. I know you will do fine on the solo. I can't wait to hear it. I was also happy see you listened to other instruments and made comments. As I said earlier, you a quickly turning from a drummer to a percussionist. Keep up the good work.*