PANTOMIME: ITS PLACE IN EDUCATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ARTS: BY GILES EDGERTON

"There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gestures." —Shakespeare.

THE language of gesture,"—there could not be a better definition of pantomime. Pantomime is gesture made fluent, beautiful and expressive. It is the study of gesture as an art, which varies as it is affected by various temperaments. It is constructive gesture, the expression of states of mind worthy of recording. Joy or sorrow, peace or tumult, anger or gentleness, these may be made clearer, more understandable through pantomime. And at the same time this finely fluent art, which ministers to all the arts and enriches everyday intercourse, must result in a truer appreciation of the body which is its instrument. To cultivate a power is to grow in appreciation of it. We could not picture a Japanese soldier putting to vulgar use the sword which he had brought through the fire, had engraved with his own hands and made beautiful with jewels. Such a sword becomes a part of a man's spiritual as well as material equipment.

In presenting a testimonial to the half-forgotten art of pantomime we are taking it for granted that its rejuvenation in America would be because of its constructive value, because it would develop that power of expression which beauty reveals to the world. Americans, more than almost any other people, are in a position to benefit by anything which makes for fuller self-expression. And particularly, like Byron's "serious Angles," do we lack "the eloquence of pantomime." We have forgotten or learned to ignore gesture as one of the most dramatic and beautiful ways of transmitting thought and emotion. Of the possibilities which lie dormant in fluent facial expression we have taken no heed; on the contrary we have actually convinced ourselves that it is well-bred to wear an asbestos facial mask, guaranteed to withstand the fire of every flame from heart or soul. And not only must the formal countenance be protected by training from responding to any illumination within, but the whole attitude of the ultra-"civilized" person must be inert and unresponsive.

There can be no question but what this checking of expression must carry back, and impress itself upon the quality of mind and soul; for not only does thought assert itself through the body, but the body, whether trained to expression or to lack of expression, must inevitably reflect back upon the soul. Thus in our effort to acquire an ultra-restrained manner we are running the risk of losing our capacity for vivid interest in life. Lack of interest in vital conditions is likely to lead to the submerging of those conditions, and subterranean vitality.
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is no safer for a nation than for nature itself. Somehow the truths of life have got to be liberated, even though their expression is through upheaval.

It is impossible to escape the conviction that in modern life the man of genius, as we call the man who sees truth clearly, is the exception. Our environment does not often produce great simple natures. Hence our great painters, musicians and sculptors must remain a more or less limited community. Some kind of expression, however, is essential to all of us, and it is possible for all to enrich and beautify expression by a knowledge of pantomime. We will have gone a long way toward this result when we recognize the educational value of pantomime, and insist upon its being taught in our schools, our colleges and our homes. In this connection we are glad to record that Barnard College has established a course of study of pantomime for teachers. This should be a matter of congratulation not only to Barnard College and all educational institutions, not only to the teachers and to the children taught, but to all art in the country, for in a measure every fundamental art depends upon pantomime for its fullest expression. Such is the opinion of Rita Sacchetto, who has recently presented pantomime in this country in a beautiful and brilliant manner, and in connection with her pantomime has proved herself an interesting and original dancer. To quote her own words:

"THERE is no art which does not depend more or less for its complete achievement on that complementary art of pantomime, because the artist cannot as a rule present the fulness of his vision without the aid of some human being who holds for him the time being an expression of the ideal he wishes to portray. This is especially true of the sculptor and of the portrait painter. It may also be true of the musician in a more elusive and yet as essential a way. What painter has not been handicapped by the inadequacy of his model; what sculptor has not felt that it was almost impossible for him to secure the great expression of the beauty he felt in his soul because his model lacked the power to express that fine essence of beauty in face and form? As for dancing at its best, it is dependent so largely upon pantomime that they seem at times to be one and the same thing; for dancing without the supreme gesture of hand and body, without facial expression absolutely in accord with gesture, is not the real art of dancing at all. It is only one phase of motion. And here in America I find that people look to the foot as a realization of dancing. They say to me, especially when I am dancing my Spanish dances, 'Why do you wear the skirt so long? We cannot follow the motion of your feet enough.' And I have said to them

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"EN CRINOLINE": FROM A PAINTING BY BEN ALI HAGGIN OF RITA SACCHETTO IN EIGHTEEN-THIRTY PANTOMIME.
MME. HANAKO, JAPANESE ACTRESS AND PANTOMIMIST: FROM A PAINTING BY BEN ALI HAGGIN.
PIRAR-MORIN IN A PANTOMIME PRESENTATION OF "MADAME BUTTERFLY."
RITA SACCHETTO AS Pierrot, in MARIO COSTA'S OPERA, "HISTOIRE D'UN PIERROT."
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very often, I do not wish you to watch my feet. They are the least of what I wish to express in dancing. I wish you to notice what I have to say with my face, with my hands, with my body. They are all more important, and they must all be in perfect harmony with the emotion I want to make clear to you. My feet help me a little, sometimes a great deal, but never so much as the face and the hands, which are much closer to the spirit, so much more fluent. They more readily become a part of the rhythm of music. You shall not remember only my feet."

In Sacchetto's opinion the defect of ballet dancing is that it centers in the expression by the feet alone of a usually somewhat trivial rhythm. There is much charm and prettiness, she feels, in the well-developed ballet, especially when related to so exquisite a personality as Adeline Genée, and yet it seems to her impossible that the utmost of beauty, joy and spirituality, the very soul of woman, can ever be expressed without utilizing the beautiful possibilities of the body as a whole.

"As for my own work in pantomime," Rita Sacchetto has said, "I must express what I feel about life, and I must express it by all of my body. For instance, in the 'Peer Gynt Suite,' which enables me to show the art of pantomime in its noblest form, there is dancing, and also an expression of all the beauty through face and form that to me is conceivable. It is an exposition of the human soul, all its beauty, all its truth, and I shall present it so far as in my power, through beautiful movements of the body and through groupings of various dancers in the most harmonious way. For the most perfect expression of beautiful emotion I must have added the rhythm of the music. The music and dancing must be one, and the rhythm of the body must be one with them. To me 'Peer Gynt' is a hymn of praise to all women who battle for great aims, for the highest and best in life, to those women who live for more than the externally beautiful, who feel that the life of the soul must be one of freedom and purity. Grieg's music expresses all this, and I shall seek to express it through pantomime.

"At the beginning, out of the darkness of ages will appear three mystic figures,—the Past, the Present and the Future. First of all I shall present out of the utmost gloom the soul of woman, that woman who would follow the voice of her spirit, but who may not because of suffering, who struggles in vain trying to reach the great light of understanding. It is very wonderful how Ibsen seemed to understand all that the woman groping for wider spiritual development has suffered, and to me he has presented it all in this story of 'Peer Gynt.' Through pantomime I shall show how this woman pleads with the inexorable
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Past and with the Present, and how she suffers from the forgetfulness of her sisters, they who in turn suffer through no fault of their own. Added to her own suffering is that of the women who were thrown too young into the battle of life, who have blossomed but have never ripened, who have lost strength and grown tired, and of those whose love has died on the long road before fulfilment. All these weary souls must be helped. Later will come the conflict of the soul with the deteriorating spirits of materialism and convention, who triumph momentarily and for the time crush what is good in womanhood. Then will appear the pure white spirit to bless the sacrificed body. The conquered spirit of woman recovers itself, expands, gains strength and is bathed in the rays of the great light which henceforth shall illuminate the paths of all women’s souls. At last there is the procession toward peace, the ideal and the sublime.”

To Sacchetto, pantomime is the greatest art because most widely complementary to all arts, and because also the most intimate to daily life. New York has had an opportunity this winter of realizing to some extent how significant Sacchetto has made this art as an expression of beauty. She has presented pantomime in isolated dances, —Chopin’s Tarantelle, in which she becomes the peasant girl suffering and dying; in the old Spanish court dances in which there is always the battle of love and jealousy and joy; in an eighteen-thirty dance which is wholly pantomime, and on this account the most perfect expression seen in America, and also in complete pantomime at the New Theatre, where she presented Mario Costa’s “Histoire d’un Pierrot,” where the fairy story of Pierrot’s love and happiness and sorrow is depicted with interesting mise en scène and delightful fairy music. But all of this work is to Sacchetto an incomplete expression of what she feels the art of pantomime is capable, which she hopes to be able to prove to her complete satisfaction in the “Peer Gynt Suite,” which she is to present at the New Theatre during February.

Glancing back through the slender history of pantomime in New York, one recalls with the greatest interest and pleasure the remarkable work of that enchanting personality, Mme. Pilar-Morin. Back at the time of Pilar-Morin’s first production of pantomime, America was so remote from her purpose that there was scarcely any response to her exquisite work. And yet undoubtably the beauty and sincerity of the art she expressed at that time helped to create the public interest which has made it possible during this last season for the management of a New York opera house to have the courage to present to fashionable audiences pantomime performances.

Pilar-Morin is especially interested in the education of children in the art of pantomime. On this subject she says:
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"In the education of children it gives foundation for better understanding, therefore, greater character. The value of a nation lies in the character of its children. You can also teach children wonderful historical events, inventions and their results, pictured and brought to life by the emotions of play portrayed by them. I have made a careful study of this, and I hope to be given a chance to offer it to America as I understand it.

"The 'silent drama' is also a great help to memory because the pictured meaning of words, such as birds, trees, flowers, the sun, etc., unroll their form or meaning like a panorama before the eyes, and therefore become prompters of memory. This ought to be of value to singers; they could go on a platform without the sheets of music and the eternal turning of pages during a beautiful phrase of music would be avoided, thus giving to the singers less rigid appearance, because while the panorama of memory would pass before their eyes they would simply illuminate it with echoes of song, thus freeing the voice from the thought of fear or lack of memory, giving charm expression of the face, of the eye, and occasionally of the hand, inspiring the sympathy of the hearers; in short, becoming magnetic.

"In fact, this art is endless in its aims. It can be applied to almost every art, and everything in life. It is the silent voice within us that creates our thought. So when we stop and think of the wonderful light of understanding that this art of silent drama can give to life and to art, let us be thankful and believe in it as the greatest foundation for right thought."

At practically this same date and in the same barren soil Sada Yacco, the Japanese actress, achieved great artistic success. She was, however, caviar to the general public,—although her dancing was the perfect flowering of an art which has had centuries of development in the most beauty-loving nation in the world. Sada Yacco was possibly less of a pantomimist than an actress and a dancer, but the three arts are so related that as we have said it is often difficult to say where one begins and the other ends.

What more intricate and exquisite weaving together of these three phases of an art could be found than the more recent achievement of a Japanese actress, Mme. Hanako, whose work at the little Berkeley Theatre, under the management of Mr. Arnold Daly, was a most artistic presentation—and naturally—ignored. If Mr. Daly had never accomplished what he has as an actor in America (one of the most versatile and most sincere which at the present time we can boast), he would have deserved the commendation of true art lovers for furnishing an opportunity of seeing such acting, dancing and pantomime as was presented by this Japanese company of actors.
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a few brief weeks in the season of nineteen hundred and seven. There was no moment in Mme. Hanako’s acting in which the most remarkable pantomime expression was not interwoven. Indeed, the supreme tragedy of her sad little plays was achieved through the fluent quality of her lovely small face, and through her rare power of significant gesture.

Our school system at present is mainly absorbed in converting the child brain into an overcrowded storehouse of unrelated material; the usefulness of pantomime in our educational institutions would be to teach children how to use this material to the best advantage by liberating their power to express what they have learned.

THE SANE LIFE

THAT life is sane which is thrifty, provident, practical, as well as simple, generous and idealistic:

Which asks no advice and makes no apologies, follows no stale conventional standard, but, standing firmly, challenges the best in other lives and appropriates the best for its own.

That life is sane which has in it enough fresh air to breathe freely, enough sunshine to kill disease, enough rain to make it fruitful, enough wind to arouse the spirit:

Which seeks sound labor for every day, and wholesome play for every holiday, realizing that both work and play in their just ratio are essential, and that both may be beautiful.

That life is sane which claims for its own a few good books, pictures or statues, or the right to enjoy them,—a little good music, and, above all, good friends:

Which recognizes its end in service and its fulfilment in love.

That life is sane which meets the natural course of events naturally, glorifying, as it passes, birth, growth, maturity, parenthood, death, step by step, with perfect ultimate faith.

And this sane life may be lived even now.

MARGUERITE OGDEN BIGELOW.