

# TABLEAU

Tableau is a drama technique in which the participants make a "still life" picture using their bodies. It's like what you see if you are looking at a scene in front of you through the eye of a camera.

A tableau scene must demonstrate a clear point of focus. This could be an object, a focal direction, or another person in the tableau group. The actors position themselves in ways which communicate what they are focusing on and how they are reacting to the point of focus.

*For example; if one person in the tableau is angry at another group member, they would be focusing on each other. The rest of the tableau group could assume various positions and reactions to further support the main, or focus point.*



Fairy Tales and other stories work well with the Tableau performance style.

## STILL TABLEAUS

A still tableau is a "frozen picture" created to represent a word, theme, situation, or story, where the focus is on one significant moment. With "still tableaux," no one moves and no one talks.

There are many different ways to use still tableaux in creative drama. Participants can freeze into statues independently, or work together as a group to create one still life picture.

Holding a freeze for 10 seconds or longer takes practice. One group member is designated to be the "cue person," breaking out of the freeze first, thereby cueing the others to break freeze. In a series of still tableaux, actors move during the transitions.

## MOVEMENT TABLEAUS

When the still life picture comes to life, it becomes a "movement tableau."

With this format, actors can create and act out a series of tableaux demonstrating, for example, "before", "during", and "after" an event (like a thunder storm); or, a 5 or 6 scene plot-buildup-to-climax storyline.

With the movement tableau format, each scene could take place at a different time or a different place, and the actors can become different characters. These changes must, of course, be clearly communicated through the way the actors position themselves, move and speak. Scenes can vary in length.

Action, sound or word cues can be used to freeze each tableau scene. Transitions would be frozen, held for perhaps 5 seconds. This places greater importance on specifically planning the meaning of the starting position of the next scene, because it is, in fact, the freeze position of the prior scene.

# SOME THEATRE ARTS PERFORMANCE STYLES



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# STORYTELLING

Storytelling evolved in many cultures and in many languages. One of the earliest records is found in the Westcar Papyrus of the Egyptians in which the sons of Cheops (the pyramid builder) entertained their father with stories using stones.

Storytelling usually took place during play time with gifted but ordinary folk entertaining their social group informally. Gradually these activities were included in religious rituals, historical recitations and educational functions. It is believed that storytelling

- (1.) grew out of the playful, self-entertainment needs of humans;
- (2.) satisfied the need to explain the surrounding physical world.
- (3.) came about because of a religious need in humans to honor the supernatural forces believed to be present in the world.
- (4.) evolved from the human need to communicate experiences to other humans.
- (5.) fulfilled an aesthetic need for beauty, routine and form through expressive language and music.
- (6.) stemmed from the desire to record the actions or qualities of one's ancestors, in the hope that this would give them a kind of immortality.



“PANTOMIME” comes from the Greek language, meaning “an imitator of things.” Originally it meant a performer, not a theatrical style. The origins of pantomime go back to ancient Rome.

In the United States, a “mime”, is a performer who needs no words to express himself. The mime is silent; life is simple, but often problematic. The mime responds emotionally, reacting to everything that happens. The gestures and facial expressions are large and full of emotion, and the pace is one of action, followed by reaction.

## PANTOMIME

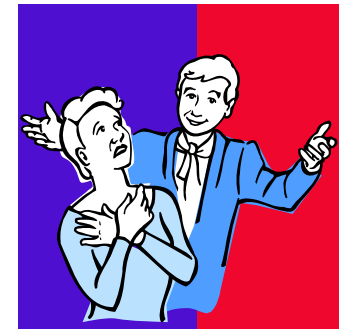
Pantomime is a very intense physical activity. The mime must rigorously learn to move individual muscles and muscle groups to create the reality of action or object. The mime uses no or minimal props and scenery when performing. Reality is created through precise body gestures.

The mime does not mouthe conversational dialogue when communicating thoughts or reactions. Rather, a mime will mouthe only a word or two—words which best express the emotion the mime is feeling; for example, “wow!”



# IMPROVISATION

*Improvisation is a spontaneous response to a dramatic situation involving verbal & non-verbal activity.*



Another way to define improvisation is, “to think on your feet,” and, “to make it up as you go.” This performance style offers actors the opportunity to hone their quick thinking and quick response skills. However, staying focused, building the storyline, and maintaining character are primary considerations in this performance style.