



Leaning on Thin Air

a booklet on beginning mime
by Tim and Tanya Chartier

LEANING ON THIN AIR

a mime workshop and tutorial

Welcome to a mime workshop. Mime is a wonderful, diverse and powerful art. The question is often posed, "How do I learn mime?" Welcome to an answer to that question! This booklet is designed by Tim and Tanya Chartier to help you begin learning the art of mime. Tanya and Tim have studied mime with artists like Marcel Marceau and have performed at national and international levels. So, get ready to have fun with the Chartiers in the art of mime!

"Making the invisible visible" "Speaking beyond words"

These phrases sum up a lot about the art of mime! Yet, how can one learn the art? Practice! Study! and _____. Begin this workshop and you can fill in the blank with many other words and phrases!

To begin the workshop, we must have focus and a sense of fun. Tim and Tanya find that looking into the eye of a peacock helps one gain this skill. *"Look into the eye of a peacock?! How?"* you might ask. Turn the page to learn a fun way to work on focus in order to aid in your mime and your life!

We hope this booklet enables you to express yourself and your faith without words. Enjoy and be blessed!



With creativity from the Creator,

Tim and Tanya Chartier

LOOK INTO MY EYES!

balancing objects
by Tim and Tanya Chartier



You can balance with an elbow, a knee, a foot, or your hand. Balancing objects can be a lot of fun. You can balance while you sit, stand, or even while you walk. It really isn't very hard. It just takes practice and some care while you learn. Learning to balance also increases your focus which is helpful in many things you will do!

Lots of objects make fun balancing challenges. When you are learning, the challenge is simply the act of balancing. So, let us begin with a simple object like a feather.

When we teach balancing, we use peacock feathers. Peacocks often lose their feathers. So, many suppliers of peacock feathers never pluck or harm the peacocks.

Peacock feathers float slowly from side to side and drop very quickly. This feature will allow you to learn balancing quickly and also work on impressive tricks!

Ok. Let's learn how to balance a peacock feather. First, look at the top of your peacock feather. At the top is the eye of the peacock feather. When you balance any object, it helps to look at the top of the object. Generally, if you keep the top still *even* when you move the bottom, the object doesn't fall. To remember to do this, just keep looking into the eye of the peacock feather.



Now, place the bottom of the peacock feather in the palm of your hand. We will call this hand your base. With the other hand, hold the feather straight. We will call this hand your support. Holding the feather straight with your support is important to learn. It sounds easy. Yet, often, people tilt the feather slightly forward. When you let go with your support, the feather will begin to fall immediately if it is tilted. Use a mirror and practice holding the feather straight with your support.

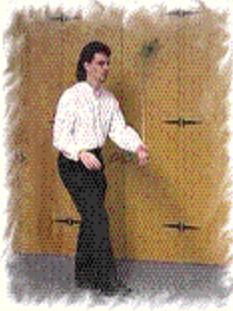
When you have that mastered, it is time to let go. Again, hold the feather straight and let go with your support. Remember to look at the eye of the peacock. Keep the eye as still as you can. It takes some practice. But soon, you will find that you can do it.

When you have that down, try sitting down, standing up, or walking around the room. Try moving with the feather to music.

Now let's learn some tricks! Again, balance the feather in the palm of your hand. We are going to switch bases. Right now the palm of your hand is the feather's base. Next, pop the feather into the air about 2 or 3 inches and flip your hand so that the feather lands on the top of your hand.

The feather needs to go up straight when you pop it into the air. Remember, keep track of the eye of the peacock feather. It needs to stay as still as possible once the feather lands. It takes some practice.

Try balancing on your finger tips. Then try switching fingers as you balance the feather! Next, balance the feather on your elbow, your knee, and your foot. It can be fun to experiment. Be careful where you balance the feather. The tip can hurt when it pokes.



Finally, let us try a more advanced trick. Again, hold the feather in the palm of your hand. Next, hold the feather right above your foot. Then, remove your hand from beneath the feather. It will drop quickly. Lift your foot and catch the feather on your foot and begin balancing it there. If the feather bounces off of your foot, then you need to move your foot down slightly as the feather hits your foot to cushion the impact. It takes practice. It is fun to do and fun to watch. After you balance it on your foot, you can also pop it up from your foot back to your hand.

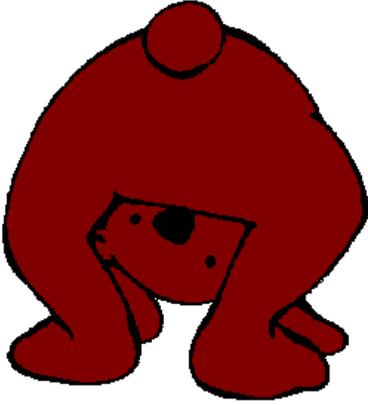


That's about all you need. You can soon be a balancing fiend! If the feather ever begins to fall--remember to have eye to eye contact! That is, remember to look into the eye of the feather. Most of time when the feather fell, we forgot to look at the top of the feather.

Balancing can be fun. Be careful. The feather can poke you or someone watching you. Once you master the feather, you might want to try some other objects. Again, be careful and be sure you have enough room to move. It is fun to use soft objects like the feather--or a newspaper. A newspaper? How do we do that? Well, that's a secret!

Enjoy and be creative!





BEARY SIMPLE STRETCHING

rag doll stretch
by Tanya and Tim Chartier

Rag dolls were once many a child's favorite toy. This simple stretch could become one that you use over and over in whatever daily stretching routine you choose to put together for your mime workout.

The rag-doll stretch is useful as a starting stretch because it is a whole body general warm-up. It starts us out by loosening up so much that we will be like a rag-doll. Rag dolls' bodies bend and flop. This exercise helps us to loosen up so our bodies bend easily. Reach up as high as you can!

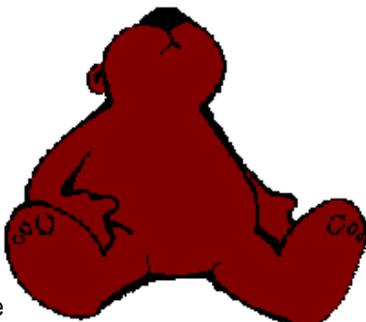


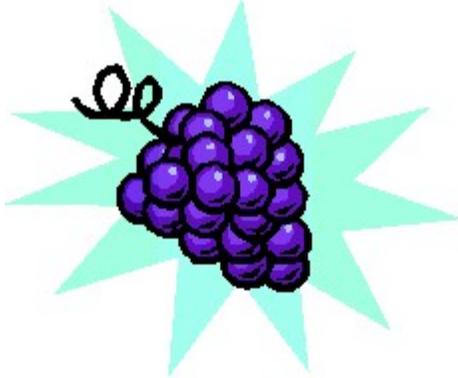
Next, relax your fingertips, and then your fingers, letting gravity take them towards the floor. Now, continue the relaxation down your whole body...wrists, elbows, head, neck, upper back, middle of the back, lower back. Now bend your knees and let yourself hang there -- totally relaxed.



Reach for the stars! Repeat the rag-doll relaxation cycle.

See how *beary* simple that was? To return to the warm-ups page, click the button below.





GETTING A BIT FRUITY

grapes and raisins
by Tanya and Tim Chartier

What does fruit have to do with mime? Well, we can use observation in the world around us constantly and try to mimic those things in our work. In this case, we use the two forms of the grape, natural and dried, and represent it physically to warm up our facial muscles.

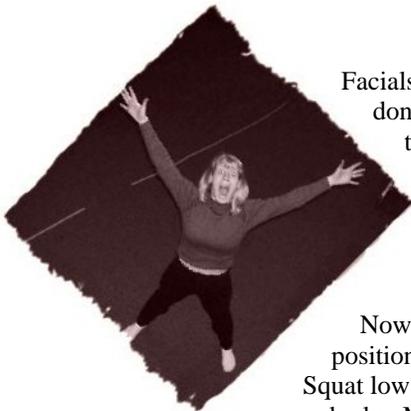


A grape face is one in which we try to stretch our skin as tight as we can across the face. We open eyes wide and mouth as wide as possible...as demonstrated by our young friend. The grape face makes us stretch facial muscles that we often forget that we have!

The raisin face is just the opposite in appearance. Imagine that your face is a grape and that all of the juice is emptying out and you're becoming all dried up. Squish your lips together. Squint your eyes. Push your entire face into a pucker. You are becoming a wrinkled up grape!



Pitstop: We can learn much from the world around us. What other things that you come across daily could you try to imitate? Which of those could you actually build into a warm-up?



Facials are a great starting off place, but in mime we use the whole body. We don't rely solely on the face, so let's expand our fruity warm-up to include the whole body! Do a grape body. Move your legs wide apart. Reach your hands up and out as wide as you can! S-T-R-E-T-C-H! Feel yourself taking up as much space as you can. You should be expanding in every direction possible.

Now make your body contrast the grape's taut position by moving your body into a raisin body. Squat low to the ground and tuck your limbs in toward your body. Make yourself as small as possible! Feel yourself shrinking. Pull in everything. Even your insides! Think small and your body will reflect it!



Warm-ups help to prepare us for an activity. They also are a time to focus before getting into the real work of rehearsal. If you can be a fruit and still be focused, you'll be on your way to creating character...with body as well as face.



WORDS NOT INCLUDED

speaking with your body
by Tim and Tanya Chartier

Mimes speak through body language or nonverbal communication. In fact, we all do. Nonverbal communication is the process of speaking without verbal words. Speaking with silence is nonverbal communication. Grunts, groans, and giggles are also nonverbals.

Understanding nonverbal communication is an important part of studying mime. Let's take a few moments to introduce ourselves to body language. Hopefully, after this session, you can begin to hear body language more clearly. When you do, you can begin to study it yourself!

The power of nonverbal communication



Experts say that nonverbal communication constitutes over 90 percent of communication. That is a lot of what we are picking up! Sometimes, it is hard to believe this is true. To begin to see how this is true, let's look at an example.

Look at the picture to the left. Imagine this creature saying, "*I'm not angry!*" Would you believe it? Why not? The words are very clear that the critter is *not* angry. Yet, the messages from the nonverbals are very clear. They state that the creature *is* angry. And, we believe the nonverbals.

Can you try to create similar examples? How about looking bored but saying the words, "*I'm having a great time.*" How about looking tired but saying the words, "*Really, I went to bed early.*" Often, these images are humorous. The contradiction often strikes us as being funny. In life, these contradictions can be frustrating or confusing. Still, they show the power of our bodies. They also give a glimpse into why mime can speak so clearly and powerfully.

I'm not angry!

Nonverbal communication and mime

Since nonverbal communication is the sole form of communication in silent mime, it is important for a mime to study body language. Body language can create positive and negative messages. It is also possible to create double messages that convey both positive and negative messages.

Think of a time when you have looked at someone and thought, "I like them." Just by looking at the person, you could sense that you would enjoy their presence. Often, these positive messages are communicated through nonverbal communication. As a mime, the tension or relaxation of your body can create positive messages. The posture of your body creates messages.



Look at the picture to the left. This is Tanya Chartier's clown character *Huki the Clown*. What emotions do you believe Huki is feeling at this moment? Can you think of situations that Huki might be experiencing at this moment? Chances are that the images and emotions that filled your mind are positive. Notice the smile on Tanya's face -- the twinkle and sparkle of her eyes. Tanya's head is slightly inclined forward almost in expectation. This is further reinforced by her trunk's slight inclination forward. Do you have any insights on the positioning of her arms? As you see, each part of Tanya's body creates a message. The positions of her body in this photo create largely positive images.

Now, look at the picture to the right. What emotions do you believe Huki is feeling now? Can you think of situations that Huki might be experiencing at this moment? Your thoughts were probably more sullen and melancholy than with the last picture. Again, look at how each part of Tanya's body in the picture contributes to the message being stated in the photograph.



Finally, look at the picture to the left. What emotions do you believe Huki is feeling in this picture? Can you think of situations surrounding Huki at this moment? This picture is more complex. The messages are more complex. These conflicting messages can actually create a dramatic quality to the character. It is also important to remember that different people can create very different messages from this picture. Nonverbals are not always interpreted the same way. Interpretations of nonverbal communication are not always correct. Over 90 percent of communication may be through nonverbal communication, yet, as we know, we do not always communicate clearly or interpret

each other's communication clearly.

Due to body language's possible ambiguity, mimes often search to minimize movement. If you can shake your head twice rather than three times to say "no," then it may be better to do so. The more body language you add to a mime piece the more complex the piece becomes. An audience may find it harder to understand. There is a careful balance of having enough movement to be clear but not so much that images and messages become muddled.

Nonverbal communication is a wonderful tool for mime and for daily life. Take time to study your own body language. Take time to observe other people's nonverbal communication. Remember that nonverbal communication is not always clear. If you study the breadth of body language that we use and also how it can be confusing and clear, you will improve your ability to communicate both in mime and in life.



MIRROR, MIRROR IN THE AIR

mimicking and mime
by Tim and Tanya Chartier

Mimes, actors, clowns, storytellers, puppeteers and painters look at the world around them for creative inspiration. For movement artists like mimes watching how others speak with their bodies is an unlimited learning tool. Taken a step further, mimes can try to mimic the positions, movements, and mannerisms of people, animals, and objects. Sometimes, such mimicking may unlock insights into possible emotions behind the movement. Other times, mimicking can help create ideas for new movement.

The mimicking we describe here does not exaggerate movement. Therefore, we like to talk of this mimicking as “*mirroring*.” In this mime session, we will strive to mirror the world around us with our hands, faces, and bodies.

Mirroring yourself--creating an accurate self-image!

An important part of mime is having an awareness of yourself. How do you stand either naturally or in character? How does your body show sadness or happiness? How can you alter your body to slightly alter an emotion? Answering these questions will make you a better mime! But to answer these questions, you need an *accurate* image of yourself! To increase this awareness, let's mirror ourselves!

Be very still. Take a moment and think about your own posture right now! In what position is your face? your hands? your feet? your toes? your back? Try to see this position in your mind!

Remain still. In a moment, you are going to stand then shake out your arms and legs. After that you will try to return to the posture you are holding right now. When you are ready, relax from your posture, stand, shake out, and try to mirror the posture you have right now!



How did you do? You have just mirrored yourself! This is a fun way to mirror yourself anywhere! You may want to delete the standing and shaking your arms and legs, though! Seriously, anywhere you are, you can study your posture. Then, stand or sit up straight, and in a moment return to the position. In time, you will increase the speed at which you can analyze your body positions from your head to your feet.

Now, let's create a moving mirror! Walk around the room. At some point, stop! Again, picture your body's position from your head to your feet. When you are ready, stand up straight and shake out your arms and your legs. Then, return to the position you had when you stopped walking! Repeat this a few times with different positions when you stop.

Next, imagine you are suddenly transported into a meadow in the valley of a mountain. Your only companions in the valley are beautiful scenery and a warm breeze whisking through the tall grass. Now, walk around the room as if you are walking through this mountain meadow.



HITTING THE WALL

learning the wall illusion
by Tim and Tanya Chartier

Reaching out into empty space and creating the illusion of a wall is an image often associated with the art of mime. The illusion is largely created by a sense of purpose in one's movement. Reach out and touch the wall. Make it real. The logistics of your hands and their evenness are not as important as making a statement in space. Your hands reach out and suddenly they become flat as they touch a wall. Believe it, mime it, and the audience will begin to see it!

Let's learn to make a mime wall!

Hand positions

How you hold your hands is a crucial part of making a convincing wall illusion. To begin, put your hands on your head. Take your hands off your head, keeping the position your hands have as they are on your head.



Look at your hand position. Your hands are slightly rounded. If not, put your hands on your head again and try it again!

When you have the position, try to remember it. We call this skull or head position. This will be the position of your hands when they are not on the wall. Marcel Marceau calls this position shell hand. We used this in our mirroring exercises. For now, we will call it *head position* as it will help us remember how to learn the wall.



Now, flatten your hands. Look at them and try to find a position that is flat. This will be your wall hand, or the position your hand has when it is on the wall. We call this *wall hand* or *wall position*.

For a few moments, switch your hands between wall position and head position. Try to keep fairly consistent hand positions.

Now, hold your hands in front of you in head position. Reach out with one hand and flatten it into wall position. Choose a space in air and define it as the wall by flattening your hand. Touching the wall should be done with authority. Tentativeness often leads to a "blurry" illusion. Define the wall and touch it! Now, reach out with the other hand and touch the wall again. Are your hands even? Probably not entirely. That's fine! Largely the authority with which you touch the wall creates the illusion. Your hands can be uneven and still appear to be touching a wall!





MIME WALKS

the art of walking in place
by Tim and Tanya Chartier
images © Nagatomo Kaol

In mime as in acting, if you need to take a few steps, then take them! In mime, you may want to travel a long distance while staying in one place. You can play an Jew wandering through the desert during the Exodus or walk with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. In either case, mime allows you to walk and still stay in one spot. Again, these walks are generally useful when you need to walk a long distance.

Pressure Walk

The pressure walk is generally but not exclusively performed facing the audience as shown in the picture to the right. However, the illusion is also useful in profile. This walk takes some practice, but with time you can walk on land or slow it down and walk through water. You can struggle and even walk against the wind. Let's learn the steps to this walk.



To learn the pressure walk, practice the following steps:



The word “*pressure*” in pressure walk refers to the pressure applied to the ball of the leading foot. Let's begin leading with our left foot as shown in the picture to the left. Put most of your weight on the ball of your left foot. This frees your right leg to slide back. Begin sliding your right leg backwards.



As the right leg slides back, the left heel presses down to the floor. Ideally, the left heel will touch the ground when the right leg stops sliding backwards.



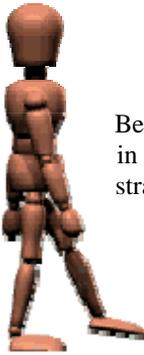
Next, move the right leg to the front, placing the ball of the right foot in preparation for the next step. Now repeat the steps given above with the pressure applied to the ball of the right foot.

Strive to move your arms naturally. Work at moving your legs smoothly. At first, this may be difficult. It will come with practice.

Profile walk

The profile walk is a stylish walk. When performed properly, the ground looks as if it is moving under your feet. The profile walk is also a beautiful walk. The movements are graceful and eloquent. As you may have guessed, this walk should be performed in profile.

To learn the profile walk, practice the following steps:



Begin by standing in double zero. Next, extend the left leg forward as seen in the picture. The right leg should be straight and, once extended, the left leg should be straight.



As you slide the straightened left leg back, raise the right heel as you bend the right knee.



Your right heel should be fully raised when your left leg returns to its starting position.

Next, extend the right leg and repeat the steps given above.

Now you are ready to walk anywhere you'd like while staying in the same spot all the time! Practice, practice, practice, and you will find the illusion appearing right under your own two feet!



Mime

Tim and Tanya
Chartier

combining mime, masks,
storytelling, and dance



Combining the freedom and feeling of creative movement, the precision of mime, and the beauty of dance, Tanya and Tim Chartier paint pictures in the air with their bodies. Accompanied with music, combined with storytelling, or shared simply with sounds of silence, Tim and Tanya

present messages of faith, love, peace, and affirmation. They call their unique approach to mime **Mime-ation**.

In Tim and Tanya's mask performances, **Mime-ation** combines the body control of mime along with the manipulation skills and theories of puppetry. The show includes animal impressions, a large silver slinky, and creative characters created with masks.

Tanya and Tim have trained with masters of mime including Marcel Marceau. Springing from their training and their own creativity, **Mime-ation** is a blend of mime, puppetry and a playful imagination. The Chartiers perform and teach mime at national and international Christian performing arts events. They have taught and performed at churches throughout the United States for groups of all ages.



Mime-ation