

Carlos Martínez Mime actor

Biography

Virtuoso of silent sound

The Actor

Carlos Martínez was born in 1955 as the eldest of four siblings in Asturias (Spain). At the age of 12 he moves –together with his family– to Barcelona, the vibrant capital of Catalonia, where his father found work. Still nowadays Barcelona is the hometown of the actor.

Carlos Martínez discovers his love for acting as an adolescent in his neighbourhood theatre group. After leaving school, he first pursues a job career as a mechanic, but at the same time dedicates all his free time to the theatre, taking acting lessons and registering for a correspondence course in theology.

In 1980 he joins the mime school *Taller de Mimo y Teatro Contemporáneo* and one year later he switches to the theatre school *El Timbal*. After his first solo performances, the positive response confirms to him that mime has an inexhaustible potential in itself as a mirror of the human soul that touches very deeply the heart of the viewer. Therefore, in 1982 he decides to live from the theatre in the future.

At the same time Manuel Carlos Lillo and Jorge Vera help him to perfect his acting skills and he further deepens his storytelling quest under the Shakespeare specialist Christine Adaire. He is continually fascinated by the woodcarving expressiveness of mime and its plain reduction to the essential. Completely without words, without props or ornamentation, he wants to capture the attention of his public in order for them to experience –feel, smell, see, touch and hear– the entire story in their minds. Not with spectacle but with an irresistible power of persuasion he walks a tightrope of emotion, facing the silence in the hall, until the first redemptive laughs are heard from the seats of the viewers. It is this challenge that intrigues Carlos Martínez anew with each of his performances in the silence that he pushes to the limits.

Full-length Shows

Because he is not dependent on any translation, he finds an open stage door in many countries. He travels throughout Europe and does a number of performances in places as diverse as Argentina and Chile, Canada and the USA, the Middle and Far East, and South Africa. The actor gains a very loyal public in Germany and Switzerland, two countries where "Kleinkunst" is an important part of cultural life. Over the years, feature-length programs emerge: humorous solo shows like *Hand Made* (1999), *Time to Celebrate* (2007), and *Books without Words* (2009) or thematic concept programs like *My Bible* (2003), *Human Rights* (2004), and *Mirage* (2012) that deals with the topic of water shortage by way of a highly visual narrative. The fact that these programs appeal not only to non-profit-organisations or within the church circuit but also among the theatre-going public speaks of the imaginative craftsmanship of Carlos Martínez.

On the occasion of his 40th stage anniversary (2022), he and his director Robert Long have put together a jubilee show, *Vitamimo*. The first part explores three travel stories without words. In the second part –without makeup– his life as an actor is expressed in performance mingled with anecdotes and experiences. The audience helps shape the evening by choosing the pieces. In this way, he presents a very personal evening to his followers throughout the years.

Seminars and Workshops

Teaching is an important pillar in the work of the actor. From the pure mime workshops for beginners to the advanced courses for prospective actors including stage direction of full-length show for non-verbal performers. Seminars on convincing without words and communication have emerged for educators and coaches as well as executives. His expertise is put to the test in areas as diverse such as fine-tuning hand movements for the Spanish team of synchronized swimmers, improving the spatial imagination architectural students or body language fluency for speakers, teachers, pastors including impresarios of a large orchestra or family businesses.

Carlos Martínez is equally at home with corporate events or internal workshops for top tier companies as on a theatre stage. The art of mime offers insights into more effective communication, without any language or any cultural barrier. Consequently new audiences are coming under the spell of the artiste. At

international conferences he meets the challenge of customizing his participation to meet the specific requests of the organizer proving that the art of mime is an excellent bridge between languages and culture.

During the 2021 pandemic lockdown, he took a Master's level course at the University of Alicante (Spain) on body language, to study the scientific view of a topic that is familiar to him. He completed the course with a thesis on body language in theater. This enhanced knowledge gives an extra dimension to his seminars and workshops, from which the participants benefit.

Programs and Projects

Humorous Shows

Hand Made

The first full-length evening show that Carlos Martínez performs and a show that remains an audience favourite to this day is "Hand Made". At the outset of his career, he wanted to affirm that the universal language of his craft could result in a rich dialogue with the audience. Hand Made is his genuine mark of identity that includes many of his most humorous pieces that have now become classics: The Pocket Watch, The Bus Stop and The Olympic Games. Carlos Martínez creates an atmosphere of subtlety and wonder that opens up a world of suggestion and provocation, giving glimpses and bringing deeper understanding into what it means to be human.

Books without Words

On a visit to the library, the actor pokes around between book covers and slowly he gets lost among endless bookshelves. Suddenly the imaginative scripts and letters change into movements and action. The body and hands of the mime speak volumes. Known and unknown heroes conquer the stage. A mesh of narrative yarns intertwine with his own well-known stories. From the high spheres of literature, he takes us down to the more mundane occurrences of daily life. And then he allures us into the lowlands of human nature where the bittersweet lurks as others stumble over a stone that we put in their way.

Time to Celebrate

As his 25th anniversary show, Carlos Martínez first offers a showcase of his most emblematic pieces, stories from his collection of polished jewels. In the second half he develops a theme that has always intrigued the Spaniard, that of time. Carlos Martínez approaches the topic with irony and humour in order to open the door to hope. We climb to the top of a bell tower with an old timekeeper and as he rings the bell we enter into his world of silent monologues. Memories and dreams, transport us to a train station, a baby's crib, perhaps even a wedding... and ultimately to engage in a conversation about our own humanity.

Vitamimo

The new *Vitamimo* program marks a milestone in the life of the actor, celebrating 40 years on stage as a professional mime. As a young actor he accepted the challenge of performing in whiteface alone on an empty stage without props, wardrobe changes, words or voice and then went on to forge an original world of theatre that transforms ordinary events of our lives into extraordinary performances. Over the past four decades he has ventured into new territories of silence, with the skill of an artisan and the wisdom of an artist. After a 40 year *tour* to more than 40 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, North and South America, Carlos Martínez continues to expand the frontiers of our imagination and stir our capacity to laugh and cry at the human condition. For the first time, the audience uses their mobile phones to vote for the pieces to be performed in the second part of the program, making every evening unique.

Concept Shows

My Bible

Carlos Martínez approaches the great stories and texts of the scriptures making them intimately personal. He observes human weaknesses in great detail and embraces each character as such. Just as the Bible does. First Psalm 23, then Creation, and later Noah, The Wise Men, The Lord's Supper... These initial brushstrokes are eventually fashioned into a full-length show titled *My Bible* where the art of mime makes visible the invisible; words become gesture, movement and action... words become flesh! The eternal stories of the Bible never cease to surprise in the most unexpected places and ways.

Human Rights

The affirming feedback from *My Bible*, encourages Carlos Martínez to revisit the ideas explored during an EU Socrates project and he works on the transformation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* into the language of mime. Too complicated for an entertainment-hooked generation of theatregoers, he thinks at times. However, with an unusual stage production and sheer hard work and skill, Carlos Martínez once again manages with *Human Rights* to create a unique mixture of personal consternation and buzzing excitement. Thus the show *Human Rights* tours from 2005 onwards. Under the sponsorship of Amnesty International a month-

long tour of Switzerland takes place and in March 2006, the actor performs at the Amnesty International awards ceremony held in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights (2008), the show was performed for numerous celebrations, civic events and festivals for entities such as Amnesty International (ES), Camera dei Deputati and Facoltà Valdese di Teología (Rome, IT), TraSguardi Human Rights Festival (Lugano, CH) and during a nine-theatre tour in Portugal. Today the topic resonates more than ever making *Human Rights* one of the most frequently booked shows of Carlos Martínez.

Mirage

In 2012 Carlos Martínez celebrates his 30th stage anniversary and prepares a new programme to mark this major milestone. The troubling evidence of global warming, the urgency and universal nature of the topic, and the UN Water for Life Decade, prompt the actor to develop the theme of water in his show "Mirage". As the houselights of the theatre dim, we see a man losing his way in the desert. His canteen is almost empty. His cell phone battery is running low ... as his growing thirst leads to delirium, he begins to see illusive images of the cool, thirst-quenching elixir of life: one mirage after another. The Swiss Foundation for the Environment (Umweltstiftung) helped to support a 2014 tour of the show in order to bring greater awareness to the problem of water shortage.

The Seven Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross

In 2014 Carlos Martínez receives a challenging commission from the Swiss Red Cross to prepare a mime program about the seven principles adhered to by the Global Red Cross Network: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Voluntary Service, Independence, Universality and Unity. The interactive program for Red Cross employees and volunteers is designed to embody the principles, help visualize the subtle differences between them and promote ongoing dialogue on the topic.

Mimologos

Crafted specifically for each event, *Mimologos* is an engaging program of words intermingled with silence where Carlos Martínez performs without makeup. This gives the actor the freedom to combine a number of his individual mime pieces with personal observations, stories, and texts. The pieces and words are chosen with great care in order to create a program that meets the purpose of the organiser and the expectations of the audience.

Mime à la Carte

At international conferences Carlos Martínez meets the challenge of customizing his pieces to present a show consisting of a number of individual mime pieces that can be performed at different times during an event or as one single program. Designed for an international audience, the program reflects the communicative identity of the Spanish mime actor: precision, sensitivity, humanity and humour.

Shows with Other Artists

...and some are more equal than others

While exploring the intimate world of silence with his solo shows, the actor never abandons his first love for theatre. From 1997 – 2000 he tours the show *...and some are more equal than others* in England, France, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland with the Zahorí theatre company. As a hymn of celebration to the preservation and respect of plurality within an open Europe, this initiative is sponsored by the EU Socrates Programme under the project The Golden Rule / Learning By Doing.

Silent Night

Fruit of his master classes in mime is the Christmas program *Silent Night*. Performed in ensemble, with his most outstanding students, this bizarre show revolves around the sense and complete nonsense of Christmas. The show is toured over five Christmas seasons.

PianoMime

2001 marks the beginning of an exceptional collaboration with the German pianist Johannes Nitsch, which reaches its culmination in the poetic program PianOmime: a precise and well-rehearsed dialogue between two artists who work as master accomplices. The show that is packed with laughter and eye-opening twists is nourished by the technical brilliance of two virtuosos and heart-rending humour. The collaboration stops abruptly with a calendar full of bookings because of the sudden and unexpected death of Johannes Nitsch following a surgical intervention in September 2002.

Still and Stark

With the program *Still und Stark* the spoken word earns, for the first time, a coequal place on stage, side by side with silence. The mime actor tours in Germany and Switzerland in 2005 and 2008 with the TV journalist and “word acrobat” Andreas Malessa. This unlikely team presents a show, robust in contrast, with humour and satire, in which both artists poignantly display their craft.

Pictures at an Exhibition

In 2008 the Swiss songwriter and storyteller, Linard Bardill, stages the work "Pictures at an Exhibition" by Modest Mussorgsky under the musical direction of Valdimir Ashkenazy and in cooperation with the Junior Ballet of the Zurich Opera House and the Robinson Children's Circus together with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra. Carlos Martínez takes part as an invited guest in the role of a thief who steals the images from the exhibition and interacts with the children on stage. The project is repeated in collaboration with the Musikkollegium Winterthur in 2011 and performed to a completely sold-out Stadthaus. On this occasion the conductor is Douglas Boyd and the dancers are from the AHA! Dance Studio.

Der Josa mit der Zauberfiedel

Beginning in 2014, Carlos Martínez and Linard Bardill once again join forces in another musical theatre project, this time involving the story of *Josa with the Magic Fiddle* (Text: Janosch, Music: Wilfried Hiller). The audience is submerged into a magical realm of music where things seem to change proportions, growing and shrinking. An imaginative journey predestined to be performed with and without words.

Klassisch!

The first joint appearance of the concert pianist, Shani Diluka (FR) and the mime actor takes place in 2013 at the Künstlerhaus, Boswil (CH), in response to an invitation by the festival "Boswiler Summer". Immediately both artists become intrigued by the idea of combining classical music with the classical art of mime. In the delicate interplay on stage between piano and mime, the performers discover the potential of new forms of expression, which were only possible in a collaborative venture. And so "Klassisch!" is born. The artists seduce the audience and draw them into a poetic fantasy world where words are quickly forgotten and objects and emotions only exist in the mind. Klassisch! is not a piano recital or a mime performance, but the experience and expertise of two performing arts professionals, creating a profound dialogue between themselves, their two distinct art forms and the audience.

And our ears will become eyes

(Original title in German: Und die Ohren werden Augen machen)

Jürgen Werth and Carlos Martínez have travelled alone for decades. In this program, however, they share the same stage. In 2019 these two poets, with and without words, joined forces in an extraordinary evening of theatre and concert that toured in Germany and Switzerland for three weeks. In their respective art languages they tell stories about God and the world, about life and faith. Sometimes hilarious, sometimes thoughtful, but always surprising. Both artists are on stage as known and appreciated soloists, but also as a duo. Song and silence thus enter into an exciting and entertaining dialogue. Their next tour is scheduled for November 2021.

Accolades and Publications

Accolades and Prizes

2002: Ökumenische Stiftung Bibel und Kultur, Germany

The Ecumenical Bible and Culture Foundation, distinguishes Carlos Martínez as their 2002 prize winner for his contribution to underlining the importance of the Bible in the cultural and intellectual life of society. The prize-giving ceremony takes place in the Renitenztheater, Stuttgart.

2004: Audience Choice at the Almada Theatre Festival, Portugal

In the summer of 2004, generous theatre enthusiasts in Portugal select the show *Hand Made* out of 30 European stage productions to receive the audience choice award at the Almada Theatre Festival.

2009: Audience Choice at TeatroAgosto, Fundão, Portugal

As a very personal contribution to the UN Literacy Decade, Carlos Martínez continues to tour with his program *Books without Words*. And his audiences again respond with their vote by choosing the show as the winner of the 2009 edition of TeatroAgosto in Fundão, Portugal.

2014: Plaque of the Municipality of Amman, Jordan

At the close of a charity gala in favour of HLID, a foundation for the hearing impaired, Carlos Martínez is presented the Plaque of the Municipality of Amman by HRH Princess Muna al-Hussein in the presence of the Mayor, Akel Biltaji.

2015: Gold Medal, European Forum Cum Laude, Oviedo, Spain

It is never easy to be recognised in your own country. Consequently the gold medal presented to Carlos Martínez, for his contribution to culture, by the European Forum Cum Laude head-quartered in the region of his birth (Asturias), represented an especially significant moment in the career of the actor.

2017: Special WMO Award, Belgrade, Serbia

Carlos Martínez receives this award from the "World Mime Organisation" for his outstanding contribution to the art of mime.

Publications

DVDs

Four stage programs with many extras are available on DVD and can be acquired individually or in a Four-DVD Box Set.

- My Bible (Published in 2004), The Fragility of Being Human/Five Pieces
- Human Rights (Published in 2005), The Right to be Human
- Hand Made (Published in 2007), The Joy of Being Human
- Books without Words (Published in 2012), The Adventure of Being Human
- Still My Bible (Published in 2016), The Fragility of Being Human/The Whole Show

Books

For the first time Carlos Martínez takes his audience into his dressing room before a performance and allows us to experience the moments when the artist is the most vulnerable, contemplative and mischievous. As he opens up this intimate space, he breaks his silence, and finally gives words to his unspoken stories. The book is published in German, Spanish and English.

- Ungeschminkte Weisheiten, Aus der Garderobe des Lebens (2009)
- Desde el camerino, Reflexiones sobre el (silencioso) arte del mimo (2011)
- From The Dressing Room, Reflections on the (Silent) Art of Mime (2011)

In February 2020, Brunnen Verlag Deutschland published "The Poet of Silence", the second book by Carlos Martínez. In this new work, the artist shares 26 very personal stories related to his life, his art and his faith. At the moment it is only available in German and can be purchased in any bookstore in Germany, Austria or Switzerland.