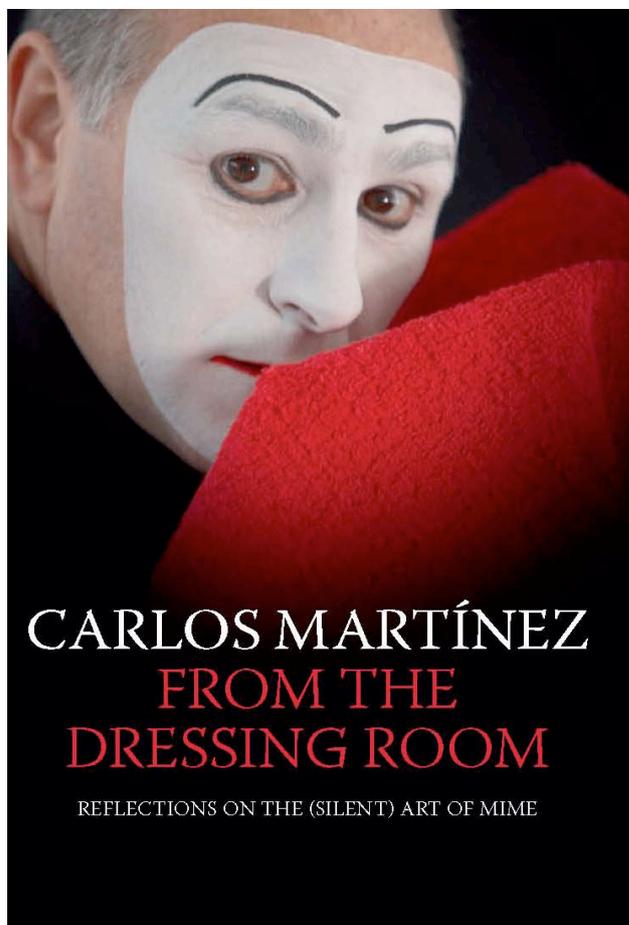


Carlos Martínez

Review by Calvin Seerveld



Perhaps the most important mime in Europe these days is the Spanish actor Carlos Martínez. He has performed for more than 25 years in over 30 countries. Gesture is practically a worldwide language, and mime speaks without the strain of verbal translation.

Recently Carlos put in German words his personal reflections about the art work of performing as a mime. Carlos quietly talks about painting on the mask in his dressing room before a performance, speaking without words to his cosmetic tools on a red towel as silent friends, as the tension of stage fright mutates into waiting time to step out onto the stage. Together they are going to make invisible realities visible.

The mime's **mask** is like the white gown of a bride dressed for the wedding ceremony. The mime's mask distances a person for the occasion from one's ordinary life and appearance, and gives the facial gestures, especially the outlined eyes, white-gloved hand and nimble feet, the focussed presence of forthright symbolic meaning.

It takes a concentrated hour in the privacy of his dressing room to put on the exacting pantomime mask. After the performance it is Carlos' practise to wipe off the mask with his red towel in front of the audience, in 10 seconds, to show he is also a normal person. In daily life persons often wear masks they cannot wipe off in 10 seconds, reflects Carlos.

Pantomime artists are not "**hypocrites**," but turn ordinary body language into suggestion-rich knowledge, and make it available to anybody. Nobody is illiterate in watching pantomime. The artistically crafted silent gesture of the mime helps an attentive audience hear the many unspoken voices in the reservoir of silence: deep misery, whimsical joys, human cunning, sudden surprise.

Carlos has a program called "Human Rights," another program on "My Bible," another program on what is "Hand Made." Of course we will practice being mimes in heaven, Carlos once told me with a smile. "What else could it mean in Revelation 8:1, `...there was silence in heaven for about half an hour'?"

This little book by Carlos Martínez, *Ungeschminkte Weisheiten, Aus der Garderobe des Lebens* (NeukirchenerVerlagsgesellschaft, 2009), ISBN 978-3-7615-5729-7 [English and Spanish translations are available from June 2011], is a publishing artwork: generous white space framing black print



with red subtitles; close-up colour photography by Bernd Eidenmüller, with aphoristic comment. The whole product is gentle, ingenuous, and very wise. It reminds me of Jun'ichiro Tanizaki's book of years ago (1933), *In Praise of Shadows*. For more background visit: www.carlosmartinez.es

A supplementary reading can be found in C. Seerveld, "The meaning of silence for daily life and Sunday worship," *In the Fields of the Lord, a Seerveld Reader*, ed. Craig Bartholomew (Toronto Tuppence Press, 2000), 294-307.

www.seerveld.com/tuppence.html

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