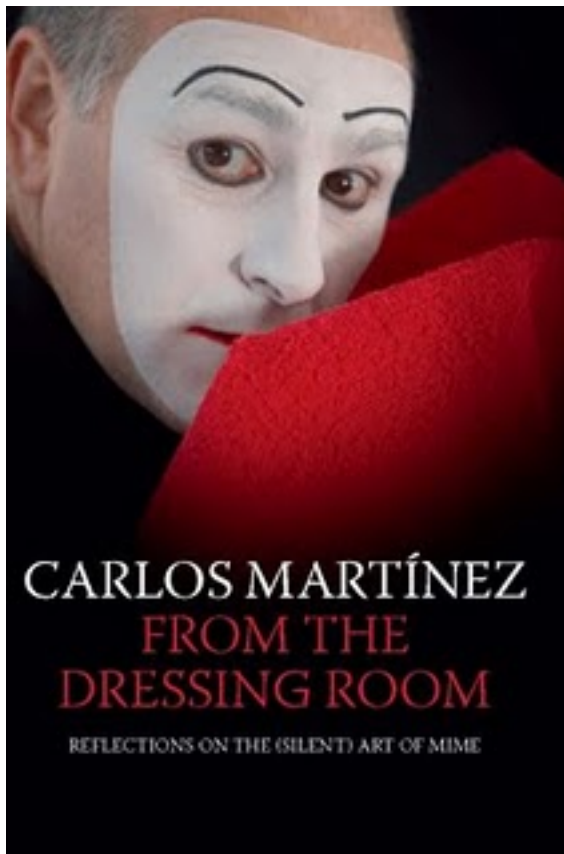


LIFE UPON THE SACRED STAGE

THIS SITE FEATURES NEWS, REVIEWS AND INSIGHTS INTO THE WORLDS OF FAITH AND THE PERFORMING ARTS.

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From the Dressing Room



In 61 stories, some only a paragraph long, and lovely subtle photographs, Carlos Martínez opens a door into the backstage life of a silent actor in his new book, *From the Dressing Room: Reflections on the (Silent) Art of Mime*. Having spoken his lines in gestures for more than three decades, this Spanish actor has become one of the most acclaimed mimes in Europe. With the release of this touching 128-page book, he now speaks in words.

Staring with Little Miracle, he shares the awe he feels that people are actually buying tickets to see him perform. I'm sure many artists feel this way.

His anecdotes of his performing life read like meditations. I love the prayerful quality, the respect he has for his art and his audience. The stories are grace-filled, but also often humorous and informative, offering insight into his specific art form.

In *Masks*, he explains that it takes nearly an hour to paint his mime face alone in his dressing room and “barely 10 seconds and a towel” to take it off, always before his audience.

“Many people have expressed their appreciation for this small gesture at the end of the show,” he writes. “It makes them feel more proximity to me, or perhaps makes me seem more ‘real.’ I suppose a similar thing happens when a priest takes off a cassock, when a doctor removes a lab coat, or when a policeman gets out of uniform. Once the ‘costume’ disappears, it seems like we become nearer and more accessible.”

His contemplation then moves to the kind of masks that all of us put on at times.

“For a mime, the mask isn’t a symbol of hypocrisy but of honesty. In reality, it comes off in a mere 10 seconds. The mask that we must all be concerned about is the one that isn’t painted on with makeup: the one that you can’t see with your eyes, the one that human beings have gotten accustomed to wearing unconsciously. Unlike its makeup counterpart, this one can be put on in 10 seconds, but it takes years of effort to get rid of it. This type of mask penetrates the soul, and all the towels in the world are not enough to get rid of it.”

Many of the narratives are about what takes place in his dressing room -- his preparation, relationships deepened while sharing with fellow artists and the visitors who drop by. For him, the dressing room is “an ally, an intimate space, a waiting room, a decompression chamber, a meeting place and even a small embassy.” Because he learns so much there, he calls one of his dressing room reflections The Professor. And he has had much opportunity to learn, having visited more than 1,000 dressing rooms in more than 30 countries.

In *Undress to Dress*, he explains that actors need to use their time in the dressing room to strip away all the masks they have worn during the day.

“We have to get rid of all of those other characters that society pushes us to be until we find our true selves, devoid of artifice, clean, vulnerable,” he writes. “The dressing room isn’t a place where the actor puts on a mask, but where he takes it off.”

I’ve never seen Carlos perform, but have been blessed with a couple of his DVDs. It is a blessing to reconnect through this book.

To read the first 17 pages of the book:

http://www.carlosmartinez.es/pdfs/fromthedressingroom/FTDR_Online_Sample_Pages.pdf

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