

Carlos Martínez mime actor

Biography

Virtuoso of silent sound

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 feedback 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 theatre in the future.

At the same time Manuel Carlos Lillo and Jorge Vera help him to perfect his acting abilities. He is fascinated more and more 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.

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 Bon Aire, Canada, the Philippines, South Africa, and the USA. The actor has 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* and *Books without Words* or thematic concept programs like *My Bible* and *Human Rights*. The fact that these programs appeal not only to a church circuit or within non-profit-organisations but also among the theatre-going public speaks of the imaginative craftsmanship of Carlos Martínez.

While exploring the intimate world of silence with his solo shows, he never abandons his first love for theatre. From 1997 – 2000 he tours the play *...and some are more equal than others* in England, 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.

In 2001 an exceptional collaboration with the German pianist Johannes Nitsch begins, which reaches its culmination in the poetic program *PianOmime*. This is not mime with background music, but a precise and well-rehearsed dialogue between two artists who work as master accomplices. The show that is packed with laughter and surprise 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 an operation in September 2002. Consequently Carlos Martínez tours solo again.

Shortly after the death of his friend, Carlos Martínez receives –in October 2002–, the award of the German ecumenical foundation *Bibel und Kultur* for his silent stories based on biblical texts. As a result, the program *My Bible* is born and he tours it extensively in 2003, the Year of the Bible in Germany and Switzerland. His very relaxed and unprejudiced approach to the generally accepted truth behind the very human and moving stories creates enthusiasm among widely diverse audiences.

After the positive feedback from *My Bible*, Carlos Martínez revisits the ideas explored during the European project and works on the transformation of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* into the language of mime. Something that perhaps sounds impossible! Too complicated for an entertainment-hooked generation of theatregoers, he thinks at times to himself. 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 program *Human Rights* tours from 2005 onwards throughout Europe. 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. Among those taking part in the ceremony are, for example, the German president Horst Köhler and one of the most well known German singers, Herbert Grönemeyer.

Seminars and workshops are an important pillar in the work of the actor. From the pure mime workshops for beginners to the advanced courses for prospective actors, and more recently, seminars on convincing without words and communication have emerged for educators and business people.

Carlos Martínez is equally at home with business 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. He performs at international conferences and meets the challenge of customizing his pieces in *Mime à la Carte*, to meet the specific requests of the organizer or the spontaneous expression of the spectators.

Fruit of his master classes in mime is the Christmas program *Silent Night*. Performed in ensemble, this bizarre show revolves around the sense and nonsense of Christmas. Carlos Martínez performs the show over five Christmas seasons with the best of his former students.

In the summer of 2004, generous theatre enthusiasts in Portugal choose his show *Hand Made* out of 30 European stage productions to receive the audience award in the Almada Theatre Festival. *Hand Made* is a selection of some of the most emblematic pieces of the actor's long stage career.

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 in 2005 with the TV journalist and "word acrobat" Andreas Malessa. This unlikely team presents a play, rich in contrast, with humour and satire, in which both artists poignantly display their strong points. The overwhelming response to the show results in a second *Still und Stark* tour with even more intensity.

The arrival of 2007 gives a good reason to celebrate: 25 years of creative accomplishments on stage. Consequently the anniversary show is called *Time To Celebrate*. Obviously the actor doesn't want to celebrate alone but on stage, which not only for him, but also for his public, means a celebration of life! As an old timekeeper, he takes the audience to the top of a bell tower and into his world of memories and dreams and ultimately to engage in a wonderful dialogue about human nature. One year turns out to be insufficient for such a celebration that continues throughout 2008 and beyond.

With the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights in 2008, Carlos Martínez performs *Human Rights* on a wider platform that includes a nine-theatre tour in Portugal, shows for Amnesty International in Spain, and a participation in the Trasguardi festival for the City of Lugano.

Master classes also bring new challenges as non-verbal language finds its place in more and more disciplines. Working with the imagination of prospective architects at the University of Applied Sciences HTW Chur, Carlos Martínez learns how much architecture there is in his art form. And with Development and Cooperation Officers the actor concentrates on body fluency skills to give words and actions deeper meaning in places and situations of conflict.

As a very personal contribution to the UN Literacy Decade, in the spring of 2009 Carlos Martínez returns to his program "Books without Words." Based on a scene in the library, the actor offers the viewer a mesh of narrative yarns that intertwine with his own well-known stories. The driving force of the show is the joy of discovery and invention. And his audiences again respond with their vote by choosing "Books without Words" as the winner of the 2009 edition of TeatroAgosto in Fundão, Portugal

Silence, in the hands of the mime, gently reveals the past, lives the wonder of the present and looks to the future with hope. However, it is as he embraces each new audience that Carlos Martínez gives silence a voice.

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