

# MASTERMIME

## Or “Don’t Mime if I Do”

*A one-act mimetic melodrama*

By Katie B. Oberlander

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## **DEDICATION**

*To Cindy and Phillip Bufithis, loving parents who put up  
with my melodramatic behavior for years.*

## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Tomorrow is opening night at The Grand Old Theatre and Mastermime, a notorious criminal who distracts audiences with entrancing mime routines and then disappears with their valuables, has defaced the theatre marquee and is terrorizing the stagehands. Will hard-boiled detective Stanton Ovation and his earnest sidekick Deputy Hammet Upp capture this mute but expressive villain before he steals self-absorbed celebrity actress Ima Starr's diamonds? Or is there more to this case than it seems? Ima's talkative assistant Roberta, who was a forensic scientist before entering the glamorous world of show biz, offers tips to the investigators while Ima's super-fan Shirley Ujest, who watches a lot of TV with the sound off, translates for the mime. The mystery unfolds, punctuated with theatrical cell phone ringtones, love-at-first sight encounters, and a dramatic mime battle! This show is an over-the-top mystery melodrama that celebrates the fascinating art of pantomime. Appropriate for teen to adult performers. About 30 minutes.

## **PREMIER PRODUCTION**

The premiere performance of "Mastermime" was awarded a gold medal in the Massachusetts Middle School Theatre Festival in 2016. It was directed by Katie B. Oberlander and featured Harborlight Montessori students Juliette Chait, Ava Dickman, Matthew Pitkin, Ward Doornbos, Sarah Cox, George Kessler, Omar Chaghouri, Jamison Wrinn, Brodie Hay, Madison Hernandez, Vika Kessler, Caitlin Robinson, David Jones-Martin and Natalie Kalman.

*Adjudicator Peter Tarsi noted in his comments that the play featured, "...a barrage of quirky characters, each one sillier than the next – and I mean that as a compliment" praised the "nicely defined and richly explored" relationships between the characters and quipped, "Could I call this a wonderful production? Don't mime if I do!"*

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*12 actors (3 m, 3 w, 6 flexible)*

**IMA STARR:** (W) A self-absorbed soap-opera actress.  
**MATTHEW / ANITA GRAND:** (Flexible) Owner and artistic director of The Grand Old Theatre.  
**ROBERTA:** (W) Ima's talkative assistant.  
**MACK / MADGE:** (Flexible) Stage manager.  
**STAGEHAND ONE:** (Flexible) Backstage worker.  
**STAGEHAND TWO:** (Flexible) Another.  
**DETECTIVE STANTON OVATION:** (M) Suave lawman.  
**DEPUTY HAMMET UPP:** (M) Faithful pursuer of criminals.  
**MASTERMIME:** (M) Masterful mime artist wearing a traditional mime costume.  
**BECCA / BUBBA LEGG:** (Flexible) President of the Ima Starr fan club and blogger.  
**NANA:** (W) An ornery senior citizen.  
**SHIRLEY / STANLEY UJEST:** (Flexible) A super-fan who idolizes Ima.

**PROPS**

elaborate dresses hanging on a costume rack  
stools  
shawl  
3 water bottles  
necklace with oversize, gaudy diamonds  
large marquee that says "A TALE OF MYSTERY WITH IMA STARR.  
TIME: 7:00 pm."  
large marquee with all the letters covered with black paint except the ones that read "MASTERMIME." Words are arranged so that the word Mastermime was staggered and the letters were taken from the following words: M from mystery, A from Tale, ST from mystery, E from tale, R from mystery, M from Ima, IME from time.  
2 cell phones  
hammers and wood  
paint drop cloths, paint can, paint brush  
wheelchair with blanket  
large bag filled with jewels and money  
chart with pages: "Mime 101" and then with pictures of stick figures in classic mime positions

**SFX**

Dramatic, Sexy, mysterious, athletic, and intense music

## MASTERMIME

*(AT RISE: An unfinished stage set that looks to be under construction. The LIGHTS are dim and a SPOTLIGHT illuminates CS where IMA STARR is delivering a theatrical monologue, with classic melodrama poses, in an extremely over-dramatic style.)*

**IMA:** Pantomime! He could communicate only through gestures and sorrowful looks. It was clear that misfortune had befallen him. And I...I shall never abandon his side. I'll wait upon him and work for him. While I have a morsel, he shall not want. Turn him out of doors and you shall turn me out, too, for I am now his protector and friend. While he cannot speak...I will be his voice.

*(IMA freezes in a dramatic pose. The SPOTLIGHT fades out and the stage lights brighten as STAGEHAND ONE brings on a costume rack and places it SL and STAGEHAND TWO brings on some stools and places them SR. ROBERTA enters from SR and running up to Ima.)*

**ROBERTA:** Brava! Brava! That was amazing Ms. Starr!  
You are such a talented actress!

*(ROBERTA drapes a shawl around IMA's shoulders and hands her a water bottle. MATTHEW enters from SR.)*

**IMA:** Roberta! I'm quite sure we don't need you to point out the obvious!

**MATTHEW:** Ima, that was a great monologue. I just have a few notes for you...

**IMA:** Later, please, Matthew. I need to rest.

*(IMA crosses to the costume rack and begins looking at the elaborate dresses hanging there.)*

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**ROBERTA:** Ms. Starr loves working with you, Mr. Grand. I'm so glad she's making her live theatre debut under your direction. It's just the next step in her extraordinary career. You know, the tabloids recently dubbed her "The most overexposed, overrated, overindulged actress on the planet," which obviously proves that she's over-the-top fabulous!

**IMA:** Roberta! Bring me my diamond necklace.

*(ROBERTA rushes to IMA's side and helps her to put on a necklace with oversize, gaudy diamonds.)*

**ROBERTA:** Yes, ma'am. I polished it just like you asked!

**IMA:** I hope you were careful, Roberta. My agent gave me these diamonds. They have great value.

**ROBERTA:** Sentimental value?

**IMA:** Monetary value. Now, Roberta, this water is not room temperature. Bring me another bottle, please.

**ROBERTA:** Yes, Ms. Starr. Right away, ma'am. You know you can count on me, anywhere, anytime, anyplace to do whatever it is you need me to do, no matter what, no matter where, no matter who...

**IMA:** Roberta!

**ROBERTA:** Sorry, ma'am.

*(ROBERTA exits SL. MACK, the stage manager, and two STAGEHANDS enter SR carrying a large marquee that says "A TALE OF MYSTERY WITH IMA STARR. TIME: 7:00 pm.")*

**MATTHEW:** Mack! What's going on? The show is tomorrow and the set is a mess.

**MACK:** I'm sorry, Mr. Grand. We're working as fast as we can, but for some reason, we don't seem to be making much progress.

*(In the background, the bumbling STAGEHANDS struggle to determine which side of the marquee is up.)*

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**MATTHEW:** Ima, this is our stage manager, Mack.

**MACK:** Hello, Ms. Starr. We're finished with the marquee for outside the theatre. How does this look?

**IMA:** My name should be larger.

**MATTHEW:** It looks great, Mack, thanks.

**MACK:** Don't forget that some members of Ms. Starr's fan club are dropping by the theatre later. The plan is to have them meet Ms. Starr, take some photos with her and then I'll show them around the theatre.

**MATTHEW:** Oh, yes. That'll be great publicity. Now, you and the rest of the crew should get back to work on the set.

*(MACK and the STAGEHANDS exit SL.)*

**MATTHEW:** *(Cont'd.)* Ima, let's go over those notes.

*(THEY cross and sit down on the SR stools.)*

**IMA:** You know, Matthew, I only agreed to star in your play because we are childhood friends. It's common knowledge that The Grand Theatre has been struggling financially for years. Why, your troubles began when your brother Maurice left, am I right?

**MATTHEW:** Please don't speak of him.

**IMA:** I'll never forget him, Matthew. We were all best friends back in the day, remember?

**MATTHEW:** I remember.

**IMA:** Anyway, I'm glad I'm in a position to help you. My fame will attract new patrons to the theatre and then you'll be out of debt in no time!

**MATTHEW:** That's the plan.

**IMA:** Really, darling, what could go wrong?

*(SFX: ROBERTA'S scream is heard from backstage. SHE runs in from SL and grabs MATTHEW and IMA.)*

**ROBERTA:** *(Frantically.)* I was in the green room, looking through the refrigerator for a bottle of water...

**IMA:** Refrigerated water bottles are not room temperature!

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**ROBERTA:** I turned around and then... then, I saw him!

**IMA:** Saw who?

**ROBERTA:** A man! A man was peering through the window of the green room. He was staring at me. And the worst part was his face! His face was...all white. As white as chalk!

**MATTHEW:** All white?

**ROBERTA:** It looked like he was wearing white makeup. You know like a, like a...

**MATTHEW:** No, no it couldn't be... It couldn't be...

*(MACK comes running in with the STAGEHANDS. They are holding the marquee, turned away from audience.)*

**MACK:** Mr. Grand, there's something you need to see. Someone's been tampering with our sign. We just found this.

*(The STAGEHANDS turn the sign around. All the letters in the sign has been covered with black paint except the ones that read "MASTERMIME.")*

**MATTHEW:** Oh no, he's back. He's back.

**MACK:** Who's back?

**MATTHEW:** It's...it's...

*(DETECTIVE STANTON OVATION and SARGENT HAMMET UPP enter dramatically from SR.)*

**OVATION and UPP:** Mastermime.

*(SFX: Dramatic music plays. EVERYONE should freeze in dramatic poses every time the dramatic music plays after the words "Mastermime.")*

**ROBERTA:** What was that?

**OVATION:** I just got a new ringtone on my cell. Ain't technology grand?

**MATTHEW:** Who are you?

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