

Mime, flashback and flash forward

Mimed sequences can help to tell a story of a play; while **flashback** and **flash forward** allow a playwright to change the time period in the same text.

A performer's use of mime

Mime is a useful technique that requires a performer to communicate without voice. Though many of the performance texts are 'naturalistic' in style and form, mimed sequences can help develop certain scenes.

For example, in Scene 2 in *Dr Korczak's Example*, Adzio is alone in Dr Korczak's office and is irritated by a fly buzzing around. Adzio becomes more animated as the scene progresses, which could be staged as a mimed sequence. If the performer playing Adzio uses mime, he will have to convince the audience that he is trying to swat an actual fly.

Performers such as Steven Berkoff and Jacques Lecoq wanted to make mime a component of body language and communication, rather than just relying on mime to display a gesture. In this sense, mime can be used in every role to enhance the communication of the character, rather than as a separate technique.

The use of mime was made famous by the French 'white-face' mime artist Marcel Marceau, who created 'Bip the Clown' in the 1940s.

Mimed sequence – This is a moment in a play that relies solely on the use of **non-verbal communication** such as body language, physicality and facial expressions.

Performance skills

Flashback and flash forward – The use of flashback and flash forward moves the action in a performance backwards or forwards in time.

Using mimed sequences

Mimed sequences are often given in the text as stage directions. Therefore, rather than being used as a stand-alone technique (such as physical theatre), mime can be incorporated into staging a moment from a text.

For example, there are several mimed sequences in Jessica Swale's *Blue Stockings*. During the men's card game at Trinity College in Act 2, Scene 8, there is also a stage direction that includes moments of mime: 'They take it in turns to put a card down from the three they've picked. It's fast... They get excited...' As there are no lines of dialogue at this point, the performers might mime laughter or gestures, as though the characters are holding a conversation.

Using flashback and flash forward

Changes in time within a play can be an effective device to help engage an audience. The use of flashback and flash forward can help communicate character background and development.

For example, towards the end of 1984, the character of Winston is threatened with having a cage of rats set on his face. As the scene progresses, he becomes more and more desperate and the scene builds towards a crescendo of tension. Within a quick snapped blackout, the playwright uses a flash forward to take Winston into a café in sunshine after this very dark scene. The performer portraying Winston could show his confusion at the change in scene, as well as his relief that his nightmare is over.