

Mime Troupe Set To Roll in Fifth Estate Benefit

Fifth Estate Collective

1967

The San Francisco Mime Troupe is readying their actors and props to zap the minds of motor city residents for the second year. The group, as part of its international tour, will bring its current production, "L' AMANT MILITAIRE", to the Detroit Institute of Arts, October 28, at 8:15 p.m., in a special benefit performance for this newspaper.



Sandra Archer as Corallina and Peter Cohon as Pantalone in the S.F. Mime Troupe's *L'Amant Militaire*.
Photo: Erik Weber

Commedia dell'arte (Italian popular comedy), a highly stylized form of theatrical presentation, began in Italy in the sixteenth century. For nearly two hundred years from 1500 to 1700, bands of migrant actors traveled throughout Europe performing their improvised comedies in streets, marketplaces, fairgrounds, and palaces.

They carried with them a rough wooden stage that could be quickly assembled, a painted curtain which served as scenery and the commedia masks which instantly identified each character.

"L'AMANT MILITAIRE," translated from Coldoni's Italian play by Betty Schwimmer and adapted for commedia presentation by Joan Holden, deals with the difficulties to both visited and visitors when a large, powerful country invades and occupies a smaller nation in the throes of civil war.

The Mime Troupe has attempted to follow both the practice and the spirit of the roving Renaissance players, choosing contemporary targets for satiric reference, retaining the contemporary tone of the Italian popular comedy.

There are the stock commedia characters—the grasping merchant, Pantalone; lovely daughter; shrewd servant, Brighelle; bold lover; plus General Garcia of the invading army, a revolting, "mincing amalgam of every military madman and our own beloved president."

Eight actors sing and dance, play recorders, bang cymbals and tambourines, improvise and generally recreate the chaotic commedia atmosphere, slaughter-

ing several sacred cows in the process. Maintaining the Mime Troupe's reputation for relentless pursuit of dis-

turbing issues, a reputation which reached international proportions through its production “A Minstrel Show, Or: Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel,” the Troupe’s current show, in the words of one critic, “manages to plant a firm foot in just about everybody’s mouth but its own.”

Low-cut blouses, slapstick, singing, and dancing make the performance lively and provocative at many levels. Last year’s Mime Troupe performance was sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union and caused a rash- of phone calls and letters to the Art Institute Commission as to the alleged “obscenity” of the group.

Tickets to the performance may be purchased at the Art Institute, Woodward at Putnam, either in advance or at the door; the FIFTH ESTATE office, 1107 W. Warren; Mixed Media Books, 5704 Cass at Palmer; WSU ticket office, McKenzie Hall; Marwil Books, Warren at Woodward. For mail orders send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: BFD Productions, 4746 Fourth, Det. 48201.

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