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# Pantomime 2010: When you say nothing at all

The eleventh Pantomime in Bangkok festival begins this week. We get Thailand's only pro mime group, Babymime, to start talking

By Nuttapon Srisirungsimakul 28 June, 2010

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COURTESY OF BABYMIME

The boys of Babymime first met back in 1999 and have been silently entertaining the nation ever since.

If the word "mime" brings to mind images of blundering clowns with white make-up struggling to walk through a non-existent mirror, then you haven't been to [Pantomime in Bangkok](http://www.thaiticketmajor.com/performance/pantomime-in-bangkok-eng.php) (<http://www.thaiticketmajor.com/performance/pantomime-in-bangkok-eng.php>).

Back for its eleventh year, running from Thursday to Sunday, the festival imports leading mime artists from Japan, Poland and Korea to dazzle and draw laughs with a combo of slapstick fun, witty humor and poignant sensibility.

We caught up with Thailand's only professional mime troupe, Babymime, which is the single local act appearing in the festival. The trio is made up of Thong-Glur "Glur" Tongta, Nuttapol "Ta" Kummata and Ratchai "Nging" Rujiwipatna. The guys first met back in 1999 in a workshop run by local pioneer Paitoon Laisakul, a.k.a. Khon Na Khao (White-faced Guy).

"We gave it a try just for fun. We learned how to use our body to speak and picked up the basic mime actions, like pulling ropes and climbing imaginary ladders. But then mime grew on us," says Nging. Spending years mastering the tricks of the trade, busking and performing at any given opportunity, the trio finally made their professional debut as Babymime in the sixth Pantomime in Bangkok in 2003, and remain a crowd-pleasing mainstay.

## The magic of mime

In some ways, Babymime's performances are a reminder of how little is required to pull off an entertaining show. No props or special effects needed.

"Mime is like magic. It's the art of creating something out of nothing. All you need is a good dose of creativity and imagination," says Nging.

But it's the simplest things that are the trickiest to do well as it's totally up to the mime artists to shine on their own. An acute sense of humor, charisma, a gripping plot and well-timed pacing are all key ingredients to a successful show, and that involves constant practice and learning, as well as unwavering passion, say Babymime.

"When we decided to take mime seriously, people, even our families, questioned our decision," Nging says. "It took us a long while to find our style and signature, but we persevered and nowadays we can make a living from performing and doing nothing else."

So what makes Babymime click? According to Nging, it's an entertaining plot everyone can relate to.

"Our shows are very easy to understand and fun. We draw inspirations from daily life, things that you might overlook or take for granted," explains Nging. "But it's not all fluff, though. We do tackle complicated, satirical stories in our routines. But whatever the plot, we always make sure that the end result is audience friendly."

### Silently satirical: Taking aim at Thai society

For the latest edition of Pantomime in Bangkok, Babymime are poised to entertain with a show titled "Thai Jaaaa..." (Very Thai).

"We'd like to see if we can use mime to touch on relatively serious, more complicated topics and the result is 'Thai Jaaa...', a satirical four-act mime that touches on Thai traditions and social values," adds Nging.

The acts include "Sawasdee Muang Thai" (Hello Thailand), in which the trio reinterprets the "wai" (Thai greeting) gesture into dance moves, then question if the beggars are really poor and homeless or if they are first-rate actors cashing in on our sympathy in "Hai Bang Arai Bang" (Learn to Give). "Mai Chuea Ya Lob Luu" (If You Don't Believe, Don't Disparage) is about Thai superstitions and, last but not least, "Ratrisawas" (Good Night) is inspired by rapper Fuckling Hero's song of the same title about Thailand's three troubled Southern provinces.

"I think Pantomime in Bangkok is going to be a blast. The ticket is more than good value considering you get to see lots of talented performers," says Nging. "We are gearing up to make you smile and laugh, so be there."

### Pantomime in Bangkok 11

*Muang Thai Life Assurance Auditorium*

*Ratchadapisek Road, Huai Khwang, Bangkok*

*Tickets: 800 and 1,000 baht, available at [Thaiticketmajor.com](http://www.thaiticketmajor.com)*

*(<http://www.thaiticketmajor.com/performance/pantomime-in-bangkok-eng.php%20>)*

*Show schedule:*

*Thursday, July 1: 7:30pm*

*Friday, July 2: 2:00pm and 7:30pm*

*Saturday, July 3: 2:00pm and 7:30pm*

*Sunday, July 4: 2:00pm and 7:30pm*

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