

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - May 9, 2013

Dr. Angela Lauria with Janet Carafa, mime artist and author of *Yoga of MIME: Touching the Invisible*

"There's a reason that I do this art and I'm passionate about it, and it's the ultimate expression from the heart." ~Janet Carafa

Angela:

Well hello, everybody and welcome to Book Journeys Radio. I'm your host, Dr. Angela Lauria. I am the founder of The Author Incubator and creator of The Difference Process for Writing a Book That Matters. As you know, every week on the show, we interview an author about their experience writing a book that matters and today's guest... and this is, I have to say, is a first for me... today's guest is a mime and her name is Janet Carafa. She is the author of *Yoga of MIME: Touching the Invisible*, and you can... you can check out her website at artofmime.com and uh, Janet thank you so much for being here.

Janet:

Thanks... You're welcome. My pleasure.

Angela:

So tell us a little bit about this book, *Yoga of MIME*. How did you come to write it?

Janet:

Well, I have been - most of my adult life - a mime artist and uhm, uh, so, uh, I hadn't... haven't up 'til now written about it because it's really, you know, using performing without words, but uhm, (laughs), but I have tackled this, you know, and in putting it down, in words, and also creating and touching the invisible... *Yoga of MIME* is, uhm, a book that tells the story of how... what I experienced as a mime, being silent and experiencing from the silence and expressing and communicating... and my work... I've done a lot of work with children, with adults, with special adults, with the elderly, with uhm, universities, on expressing body language, expressing from the heart, and, uhm, I think it's... it was time to put it in words so everybody can get their hands on it, open the book... And also, I'm creating the *Yoga of MIME* workout which will be out on DVD. It's not done yet... and it's uhm..

Angela:

[Interjects] ...really quickly because, you know, I think a lot of people are like... they don't have a lot of experience with mime itself. So why don't you tell us really quickly: What is mime? How do you define mime?

Janet:

Uhm, well... it is expression... It's theater... so you're expressing... you're performing... and uhm, you're using your body language (it's what we all do) and you're expressing... it's gotta

be the truth, you cannot express physically, a lie (laughs), and so what it is... and it's all a symbolic... it's symbolic but it's real, so...

Angela:

What is the difference between mime and dance?

Janet:

Well, uh, dance is similar. Mime tends to be more grounded so you're working with gravity and against gravity. But dance, which more... well, actually you're working with gravity more, I would say, if you're gonna use terminology with... with mime... and being more grounded and alignment... like... uh... Hip hop is more close to mime with doing... using isolations, but uhm, yeah... and it goes with the music. Mime goes in between the music notes.

Angela:

(Laughs)

Janet:

So I don't know if that's clear...

Angela:

Okay. So the next part is... So your book is called Yoga of MIME. So what's the connection between yoga and mime, and, more importantly, this [is] for [the] people listening because... We're talking about this because, I think... I hope what you're gonna tell me is that this is... maybe other people do it, but Yoga of Mine is... *Yoga of MIME* [Angela corrects herself] is an idea that you had... something that you've developed, something you've created. Yes?

Janet:

Yes...

Angela:

Right.

[Angela and Janet talk at the same time unintelligibly]

Angela:

...Yoga of MIME is and everybody who's listening, hang with me 'cause we're gonna talk about how it applies to you. I know you think we're having a conversation about what is mime and what is yoga but I'm going somewhere with this. So tell us what is *Yoga of MIME*.

[Angela and Janet speaks at the same time unintelligibly]

Janet:

Okay. I'm also a Bikram Yoga instructor and I've done yoga for... years...

Angela:

For people who don't know, Bikram Yoga is a Hot yoga, right?

Janet:

Yes... and I've done other types of yoga, so... it's, it's... Yoga is... for anyone who hasn't done it, it's just a workout, uhm, using your body, mind, and spirit... your breath and it tends to be more physical unless you're doing a more "medicated" one and you... really contracting and releasing and bringing oxygen... oxygenating your inner organs which then works the whole body, including every system of the body... and physical. Now... So I would use... and still do... the specific yoga techniques to prepare for mime. And mime has also techniques just like dance does, so I've worked with... So in doing that, you work with your body but with mime, you also relate out to another performer or to the audience and you're expressing your emotions. Uhm, yeah. So uh, whereas in yoga, you do all that. You activate everything but it's... it's more physical or spiritual. Uh, you can take it along different lines just like... but with mine, you actually work with the space around you, So yeah, it's uh... how to relate this with everybody's life, if you look around you, and you see (wherever you are) you see walls or you see the outline of the car, whatever you're in, you see the physical... tangible... uh, walls... and then you look at the space... really... uhm, the space is creating the walls... too... although, we basically work with centering awareness of these... to create the illusions and uhm... Go ahead, what were you going to ask?

Angela:

Yeah. So.. Okay, so this is... this is in a little bit, you know... a little bit...

Janet:

Yeah.

Angela:

But the... going to say to people and I'm going on a leap (we haven't talked about this), so jump in... anytime Janet... but my guess is that [addresses listeners] Janet was interested in mime and had a lot of pretty amazing experience. She hasn't mentioned it but she was actually trained by Marcel Marceau and she's had a lot of experience and a lot of teachers and training in mime and then she was interested and fascinated by Bikram yoga, yoga in general, and I'm gonna guess she's had a lot of trainers and training and experience there as well... discoveries on her own.. Now... for you... You might not be interested in yoga and mime, maybe you're interested in, you know, cooking and personal growth - whatever it is for you and your life - but what I love about this example is people come to me as authors 'cause they want coaching, they wanna write their book, and one of the ideas that gets in the way of writing a book is this idea of: Who am I to write this book? Like who am I? How am I worthy of writing this book? And one of the things that I try and help people to look at is their unique experiences. And I don't know but I'm just gonna venture a guess... there are not many people who have had your set of experiences

[Angela and Janet speak at the same time unintelligibly]

Janet:
Well...

Angela:
...both mime and... do yoga... and do yoga, right? But we all have that in our own ways and it could be something like... you're a single mom... Oh, actually this is one of my clients. She's a single mom and she's also a hunter. I don't know... I don't think (she was a teenage mom). I don't think there are a lot of fifteen-year-old girls who spend their child... on who to cheat or... because she's hunter. I don't think there's a lot of people that had that experience.

Janet:
Yeah.

Angela:
Right? So we all have, especially authors who want to make a difference in the world, feel compelled to say something. We all have these unique experiences and a lot of times we will dismiss them, like, "I'm just a yoga instructor, there's... kinds of yoga instructors." We dismiss a lot... Oh like, you know, "I dance. A lot of people dance." It doesn't... you don't feel special or we don't feel that special or unique about that, and where a lot of that specialness or uniqueness is and where you can really differentiate yourself as an author is in those inner sections so I feel like *Yoga of MIME* is really almost a Venn diagram where these areas of your life where people haven't had that specific combination, you've been able to cross over and develop something unique that kinda belongs to you - that new idea you're bringing to the world, so...

Janet:
Absolutely. Yeah...

Angela:
So, I think that's something that I think everybody should learn from...

Janet:
Yeah. I think that...

Angela:
And I just wanted to, you know, take time to...

[Angela and Janet speak at the same time unintelligibly]

Janet:

Because it's joyful. It's joyful. It's... it's... It's uhm... like you're saying... Basically everybody... well... I have a story that I can just quickly tell...

Angela:

Yeah, that'd be great.

Janet:

Uh, one of my experiences... First, it even... The first... one of the first ones as a mime artist, and I was performing mime at the Museum of Transportation. So they had hired me, they wanted a mime. It was a special day, I don't know, and uhm... In that museum, you can climb on the tall car... you can have hands-on experience of all the different exhibits, and I was absolutely silent and I imed traveling through the museum. I didn't mind that; I actually did that through the museum and a group of children were with me. And for an hour we played silently together and we explored the museum and we had fun and we were all silent but we were communicating the whole time and we were just having a blast. When it was time to go home, one of the children who was about three years old, silently motioned to me to come close so she could whisper in my ear. And she whispered, "How do you speak so softly?"

Angela:

Mmmm...

Janet:

Yeah. None of us had actually spoken a word.

Angela:

Wow.

Janet:

So, I just... From that, I think that each of us are born a hundred percent intuitive. First and foremost, beyond of our senses, we are born with the ability and ultimate creativity and we each see the invisible which is what we practice in mime, and hear the silence and uhm, it's our essence. And words are learned, which is important to communicate verbally. But by communicating over a hundred percent with our body language, with our energy, you know.

Angela:

And I don't know how like great, like, this is not a topic I think about, not something that I'm interested in or I've explored in my life, but as we were talking, you're so passionate about it and so connected to the idea, that I'm like getting excited and interested and curious and this I think is the power that we have as authors, when you have a way that you wanna change the world or influence the world or ideas that you want to communicate and you have that clarity and passion and story - like that beautiful story you told, you pull people in with those stories to your ideas and I think you can make real changes in people's lives and in their perspectives and in the way they see events, even if it's subtle and even if it's small. For me... that's why I

encourage people who have ideas and passion and who have that little inkling, I wanna write a book, to actually write a book. Uhm, so... and 'm interested in your story, so tell us how... 'cause obviously a lot of these ideas, you had, before you wrote your book. So how did you come to put these ideas into a book? How did you make that transition into being an author?

Janet:

Well, eh, uhm... I just... I can tell you this... Let me tell you the first three... or three paragraphs from *Touching the Invisible*... How 'bout that?

Angela:

Okay.

Janet:

Ah, okay. So...

[Ambient music notes briefly plays from Janet's line; Janet's narration comes in]

Janet's Narration:

Listen. Listen deeper... to your heartbeat... and deeper still where there's silence. Listen to raw motion... blood flowing in your veins... shells colliding... or is it just your imagination? Experience the pulse of the Universe inside you and outside. There are no words... and for most of my adult life, I've been practicing the art of mime, which is the synthesis of motion emotion and silence. I listen to hear the sound of the Earth's spin. The clouds float... the distant birds soar! Beyond time, beyond emotion, wherein my imagination takes me where thoughts begin, and I express these ideas in performance. And I'm gonna tell you an experience that I had performing. My thoughts that you have... through my performance on stage at the MOMA Theater, which is Museum of Modern Art in New York City. And the piece I'm performing is called "The Lovers" and with the American Mime Theater.

I'm arched backwards, on my knees with my head on the floor and a mask on my face, and it is silent. The large audience is rustling loudly in the silence as the curtain opens. I hear the woman in the front row whisper to her friend, "What is she doing? She looks like a stage creature!" And my heart is palpitating, my breath is short. I'm upside down and backwards. From the stillness, I begin to move very, very slowly. I see the audience moving in their chairs adjusting to the silence. I hear a crash. I hear breathing. I hear paper rustling. I focus now on my breath and my emotion, the flow of lifting up slowly. My back arches, my heart and chest open, leading my list. My heartbeat slows down as I breathe, and I reach my arm out and around. I am the lover reaching for her loved one and I am in the moment. The audience is hushed. I fall into the silence, deeper and deeper, and there it is! In the depths of silence, I hear the heartbeats of the audience and they are merged together and synchronized with mine, and they hear the silence too, and together we experience the pulse of the Universe as our heartbeats merge.

[Janet finishes narrating]

Janet:
Now, I need it...

Angela:
[Laughs]

Janet:
That's my experience.

Angela:
Okay.

Janet:
A real experience! Now I don't know if my putting it in words uh, is understandable, or it makes you more interested in it, but there... I can hear music in silence, if you... and I think everybody can, so uhm...

Angela:
So... Okay... let's... Yes, so let's talk about how that... So you had that experience and did you decide to write a book after having that experience? When did the moment come in your head when you're like, "I need to write this book."

[Janet speaks at the same time as Angela]

Janet:
Yes. Yes, there's quite a few experiences. So... So you wanted the actual... I sat down and I tried to write... and kind of like doing this, this... radio show... it's a little bit new to me, and it's... It gets a little extra scary. I mean, how do you write about something with no words? How do you speak about it?

Angela:
Uhm...mm.

Janet:
Yeah? So uhm, so I would write things. They would come out a little bit too poetic, uhm, not a story, and then I try again and I have someone read it and then they go, "I don't understand this. Well, this is interesting but it's kinda, you know, whatever. So, then I realized that it's just... it's a process of... I have... I think it's important, now that I've done all these years of mime, it's a good idea for me to bring it into words and make it really so that I can communicate with other people and share it more.

Angela:

And why is that? Why do you want that? Where did that goal come from? Did somebody say something to you or... What made you to write it out?

Janet:

Well, yeah. I... uh... huh.. uh... I've been doing workshops, uhm, which is speaking and having people do it, and I can also, on the radio here, have the listeners try something so we can actually (they can actually) experience seeing the invisible and breaking down their own wall which they create. So, we can do that in a minute. But uhm, yeah so I just done that and then people would ask me... you know I could show my website... I could show some video which you have to get a really good, you know, really good video to really represent it well... representing... doing this...

Angela:

So when you had the idea to do the book, how long did it take from the idea...

Janet:

[Laughs] Oh, you know what, it really... I started with my other book which is *Silent Fortune*, uhm, and that is a fiction book that's kind of like a Harry Potter story and that started, actually, as a screenplay, so I thought, you know what, there are no parts for female mimes in the movies, I might as well write one, so that actually was my motivation.

[Chuckling]

Angela:

Okay...

[Angela and Janet speak at the same time and are unintelligible and/or voice unidentifiable]

Janet:

So I wrote *Silent Fortune*...

Angela:

[Interjects] Like the artist came out and you were ready for your own show.

Janet:

Yes. But, par[don]... What did you say?

Angela:

Oh, I was saying [that with] that movie the artist came out and you were ready for your own show after that.

Janet:

Yes, exactly. And actually, I wrote that screenplay, *Silent Fortune*... at that time, and this was a while ago... Marcel Marceau was still alive then, and I showed it to him and there's a part in there for him that's seriously long and he said he would be in it. And then I just didn't know how to get it to produce so, uhm... yes, how to get one produced, so...

Angela:

Okay, then how did it lead to your non-fiction book and how long did it take for you to write your non-fiction book?

Janet:

The non-fiction, well, I'd already written the screenplay and about a year ago, I decided you know what, the screenplay is sitting here, let me write it into a book, and it took me about almost a year before it... published now.

Angela:

Okay.

Janet:

So it took me a year to completely write it and get it published. Self-published.

Angela:

Okay, and then... When did you... and you self-published that book... talk about, like specifically for you, what are some of the things that come out of having that book? How has having the book helped you?

Janet:

Well, I have something tangible that I can hand [to] people that... and it's helped me to say, yes, here I have it; this is my experience. I am actually an expert in yoga and mime and the only person that has put them together and here are some of the experiences, here are some of the, you know... the story. This is the story of a mime searching for her voice and so there's a lot of truth in it, even though it's a subtle fantasy, and a... magical story... and it's a musical. So uhm, it's being able to have a larger audience and have acknowledgement. People buy it, read it, and then ask questions and understand more. And like you said, feel the passion of it and uhm, want to know more about it.

Angela:

Uhm hmm. And are there, uhm, conversations you've had or opportunities that you have that you think, without the book, they wouldn't have happened?

Janet:

Opportunities that what? Say it again.

Angela:

That would not have happened without a book. Opportunities for speaking or performing or people that you've met or other things that have come out of having a book that either wouldn't have happened or would have been harder, uhm, to make happen without a book.

Janet:

Yes, yes. It's really nice to have something tangible in my hand to hand and to give people and to have them understand and read something that is actually... Well, in this book, it's totally also a... uhm, non-violent but it's an action-adventure story, so these are the... there's a reason that I do this art and I'm passionate about it, and it's the ultimate expression from the heart, and uhm, and it's something I love to do and love to give and love to share and this, uh, you know, helps people to go, "Oh, I've read the book! Now I get it a little bit more." You know? "I wanna know more. I want to understand..." You know? "I'm really interested in doing the yoga mime workout now, you know.

Angela:

Right. So that is a good thing. And if you were to, you know... If you were to be giving advice to somebody who, uhm, had... had a similar idea and wanted to write a book, not necessarily yoga and mime, but their own project, but, uhm, what would you... known what you know now... What type of advice would you give? What would you do maybe differently if you were starting over again?

Janet:

Oh, well I would definitely put the words down but then... and share that. So get an editor, first... even before an editor....share them with your relatives, your friends, and share it and see how they respond. See what questions they ask, and see if it... how much you're relatable. It's that... and... and listen...

Angela:

And is this what about something you did?

[Angela and Janet speak simultaneously which makes parts of what they're saying unintelligible]

Janet:

...to say. If they say... because what happens is when I started writing, you know, it's almost like, oh, this is my little child here, you know, writing becomes very intimate and you have it there and you think... and it's been rewritten and you've worked on it and it's coming from something like... me I've done twenty years and so... "Oh my God. This is so good!" Even

though, you know, necessarily, I think the writing might be good, but the idea when someone critiques you or says, "Well, I don't understand this," or, "I think you should say this," or, "Maybe you mean this," uhm, to put aside all of that and go...and listen... write it down and make the change because that's the way I learned so much, uhm, from that and I... and then, it makes it so much more relatable. So... I think that's... what's important... thing...

Angela:
So, okay.

Janet:
Yeah. It's to share it and to listen to people... and then of course... you wanna write what's in your heart and you don't want to move off of that, but uhm, I think getting feedback was the most important thing for me.

Angela:
Uh huh. And did you... How did you get feedback? Did you pay for an editor? Did you have a writer's group you went to?

Janet:
Uhm. Both. I have a writer's group and that's what started me going, "Oh, I need an editor." And then, uhm, I got, uhm, just someone out of school; had just graduated college who'd been writing and, uhm, who had a connection with what I was doing and seems to enjoy reading what I wrote and uhm... So I would send him a chapter. He would re-write... he would rewrite it in his own words - how he understood it and it was that...

Angela:
Ooh that's interesting.

Janet:
Yeah. It was really very good because talking about invisible things and silence, you know, [laughs sheepishly] is not something I know how to write about.

Angela:
Well, I think this is a problem a lot of people have and so I would... I think it's a great piece of advice... If you are working on a [project that] has some more esoteric ideas, or the way Janet told a moment [ago], invisible ideas... things that... or maybe... not meant to be spoken about - dance or art or things that more right-brained and not necessarily, you know, designed to be laid out in a system, having a... a buddy, a... whether you hire them or meet them in some other way, but who read what you wrote and then sent it back to you in some fashion... write it back to you - this is how I understood it - that's great, uh, that's a really valuable partnership and I think that's a great tip for people who have listened today, so I would say a couple of really great ideas from Jen... fr-from Janet, today - one for sure, finding a reader like that, and then we talked about really owning your unique experiences and being able to create your

own special thought, your own idea. So Janet Carafa, the author of *Yoga of MIME: Touching the Invisible...* you can go to her website, uhm, at artofmime.com. Janet, thank you so much for being on the show today.

Janet:

You're so welcome. [Laughs]

Angela:

Everybody out [there]. Just keep in mind that you move your books. We are changing the world one book at a time.