

Oratory

O. ORATORY! WHERE ART THOU? by Collette Mikesell Winfield

From sound Greek thought and practice
Came a strong, unyielding stance;
That oratory stand alone
Its stature to enhance.

None thought it should be classified
As simple public speech.
None classified it as a goal
That everyone could reach.

**BRUNO E. JACOB ONCE SAID,
"SPEECH IS A BUSINESS SUIT.
ORATORY IS WHITE TIE AND TAILS"**

A formal presentation
With graceful, eloquent style
Was the kind of oratory
That would make Greek scholars smile.

And so throughout long centuries
Aristotelian prose
Guided orators in their serious
Pledge to solid argument pose.

Some Roman guys then helped define
Specifics to be used
So that *Logos. Ethos. Pathos* "laws"
Would never be abused.

For centuries we've been blessed to hear
Demosthenes and King
A Roosevelt, a Pericles
Et al, with words that sing.

And in our schools we taught *Declam*
Sweet *Elocution* too
In hopes that later folks would know
The formal stuff to do.

But times have changed.
The world's devoid
Of orators on the street.
And formal speech is out of
vogue.
Slang's in the driver's seat.

So controversy's loud and clear
Among the modern thought
And those who take the
Classic stance
And those who are self-taught.

The controversy harms us all.
It weakens all who teach.
When Classic discipline's
kicked aside,
The Ideal's hard to reach.

For students see that anything
Can win a final round
If judges sitting in the room
Liked, personally, the sound.

Criteria for judging lost,
Then Beethoven's "Ode to Joy"
Sounds no better performed by pros
Than by fourth-grade girls and boys.

And speakers taught that rhetoric
Need no great discipline wear
Go on to shape weak voters' minds
Whose critical ears aren't there.

It takes no grand imagining
To see a future land
Where disciplines no longer guide
The mind, the voice, the hand.

Some Classic form must drive the one
Who's known as Orator
Else that grand name "Oration"
Will be rotten to the core.

Orations made of Classic stuff
Will be far more than speech.
Their content lies in deep research
Bright audience to reach.

They'll not rely on cutesy jokes
Or shallow, mundane claims.
They start from solid premises.
They play no mindless games.

If humor's meant to make a point,
It's subtle and it's deep.
The stand-up comedy routine
Should make all judges weep.

Intelligent orations
Invite souls to rejoice and weep
While minds are forced by evidence
To make a quantum leap.

Intelligent orations
Are not paper-thin in thought
They do not build up joke and story.
Toward some shallow, cute,
hyped plot.

Unless orations deeply probe
And follow Classic Law,
They cannot earn our best respect
Nor judges' praises draw.

The Cicero ARRANGEMENT
Must guide each orator sure.
The *Entrance* to the subject
Sells an overview that's pure.

A deep, compelling *Narrative*
Gets the audience involved.
And the *Proposition's* very clear.
A problem should be solved!

In *Division* the good orator
Builds analysis that shows
That the problem's far more
widespread
Than the average listener knows.

Then comes the *Confirmation*
That the problem's truly real.
The gathering of strong evidence
Must continue with great zeal.

It's never wise to advocate
With a careless ear toward foes.
Rebuttal of opposing claims
Is needed, goodness knows.

Synopsis of stinging evidence,
A strong emotional appeal
Make the *Conclusion* sit right down
The oration's content seal.

The parts seem very simple;
Yet, they're more than simple skill,
For Classic oratory lives
As Artful eloquence still.

It matters not how many try
To make it lesser stuff.
The writer of oration
Must be research- and logic-tough.

The writer of oration
Must also recognize
That *Argument* forms the basis
While *Persuasion* prods the wise.

Without the Pathos integrally
bound
Orations will fall short
And fit a first affirmative,
Extemp speech, or report.

Pathetic or emotional proofs
Will hold the listener tight
In anger, mildness, friendship,
shame
In pity, envy, fright.

The Pathos that the orator speaks
Must move the listener free
To feel the proposition's bite
Through pity, enmity, glee.

Without the power of imagery
All oratory fails.
Against the weight of metaphor
The "8 -V -DO" just pales.

Inversion may a strong point make.
Sharp *Paradox* is the edge
On which clear thoughts can pivot
To create the quiet ledge

From which the listener understands
Some literal harm that's seen
While recognizing *Irony*
In some stunning, life-large scene.

Parallel Structures drive the point.
Narratives make tears swell.
Phrases and *Short Sentences* serve
Quint's "good guy speaking well."

Once the masterpiece is written
Then, it's time to sell its worth.
No mumbling, nasal, shotgun
sounds
Should usher in its birth.

The richest voice must e'er be heard.
Sincerity clearly rings.
The oration now spellbinds us
As a harp when language sings.

Delivery must be masterful
Voice, hand, and body merge.
The orator's a vessel
Through which content can surge.

O, oratory's not to be
Performed by all who speak.
It's for the chosen who can prove
Their depth of skills not weak.

The Greek and Roman spirits
All are waiting for the time
When oratory's fully claimed
Its broad effect; sublime.

Perhaps, the world will hear again
Great minds with voices strong,
Who demonstrate the power of
speech
With mindfulness 'gainst wrong.

An orator who will stick to facts,
Build syllogistic flow;
Ethically persuade, if possible
Some change from status quo.

"O, Oratory, where art thou?"
The Classicists all ask.
"Please stand apart. Lift up your head.
Throw off your choking mask."

Orations have inspired the world
Through struggling, happy years.
No other style has nourished us
Through history's growth and tears.

It's Oratory's dressed-up poise
We once more would applaud,
For at its best, it stretches us
To feel the power of God.

*(Collette Mikesell Winfield was one of
NFL's greatest teachers. She often conducts
workshops for the National Federation.)*

