Program of the Paterson Silk Strike Pageant, 7 June 1913.


The Pageant represents a battle between the working class and the capitalist class conducted by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), making use of the General Strike as the chief weapon. It is a conflict between two social forces—the force of labor and the force of capital.

While the workers are clubbed and shot by detectives and policemen, the mills remain dead. While the workers are sent to jail by hundreds, the mills remain dead. While organizers are persecuted, the strike continues, and still the mills remain dead. While the pulpits thunders denunciation and the press screams lies, the mills are dead. No violence can make the mills alive—no legal process can resurrect them from the dead. Bayonets and clubs, injunctions and court orders are equally futile.

Only the return of the workers to the mills can give the dead things life. The mills remain dead throughout the enactment of the following episodes.

Episode One:
1. The Mills Alive—The Workers Dead
2. The Workers Begin to Think

Six o’clock on a February morning. The mill windows all aglow. The mill whistle sounds the signal to begin work. Men and women, old and young, come to work in the bitter cold of the dawn. The sound of looms. The beginning of the great silk strike. The striking workers sing the Marseillaise, the entire audience being invited to join in the song of revolt.

Episode Two
The Mills Dead—The Workers Alive

Mass picketing. Every worker alert. The police interfere with peaceful picketing and treat the strikers with great brutality. The workers are provoked to anger. Fights between police and strikers ensue. Many strikers are clubbed and arrested. Shots are fired by detectives hired by the manufacturers, and Valentino
Modestino, who was not a striker or a silk mill worker, is hit by a bullet and killed as he stands on the porch of his house with one of his children in his arms.

Episode Three
The Funeral of Modestino

The coffin containing the body of Modestino is followed by the strikers in a funeral procession to the strains of the Dead March. The strikers passing drop red carnations and ribbons upon the coffin until it is buried beneath the crimson symbol of the workers’ blood.

Episode Four
Mass Meeting at Haledon

Great mass meeting of 20,000 strikers. IWW organizers speak. Songs by the strike composers are sung by the strikers. They also sing the International, the Marseillaise, and the Red Flag, in which the audience is invited to join.

Episode Five
1. May Day
2. Sending Away the Children

The May Day Parade. The workers of Paterson, with bands playing, flags flying, and women and children dressed in red, celebrate the international revolutionary labor day.

The strikers give their children to the “strike mothers” from other cities. The strike mothers received them to be cared for during the war in the silk industry. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn speaks to the strikers and the children, dwelling upon the solidarity of labor shown in this vividly human episode, and is followed by William D. Haywood.

Episode Six
Strike Meeting at Turn Hall

The strikers, men and women, legislate for themselves. They pass a law for the eight-hour day. No court can declare the law thus made unconstitutional. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca and William D. Haywood make typical strike speeches.