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“Zannizine is for the now – Gathering inspiration from the past, fostering experiment and collaboration in the present and securing a future for the Commedia dell’Arte” Barry and Bill

INTRODUCING ISSUE 7 OF ZANNIZINE

Welcome to Zannizine's seventh appearance – our Autumn 2022 Issue.

Summer is over and Winter approaches; the nights are drawing in and the clocks have gone back – time to dust off our commedia scripts and start rehearsing! But don't forget to remind yourself about those important skills that may have been neglected during the past few years of pandemic lockdown when live performance was much restricted: performing on the stage is not the same as playing over Zoom! To aid in this recovery, Barry Grantham has provided a timely reminder of the importance of stage-craft in Commedia. This is the first article in our new 'technical' category and is intended to provide practical help for the Commedia player: how the actors should present themselves on stage, how to address the audience and the significance and impact of certain locations within the stage space.

With this issue we are now well into our second year, adding to our accumulated Commedia knowledge. A reminder not to think of 'Zannizine' as a newspaper. It is more like a rather gorgeous self-expanding coffee-table book to be dipped into as the moment arises. The articles in the first issue are as relevant as those of the latest. New subjects and titles are awaiting us. Some are nearly ready for printing, others half finished, and many just an idea.

Among the new entries is the announcement and publication of the winning entry in the 'write a Commedia scenario' competition. Nathan Hook's entry – *The Magnifico of the Rings* – was the clear winner, albeit in a very small field (a reminder that next time we will expect more from our literary readership!). His fine contribution to our repertoire is duly printed in this issue and we look forward to seeing a live production at some point in the future.

But we open our proceedings with an all-encompassing review article by Brendan Stapleton charting the emergence of Commedia as a significant entry upon the wider theatrical scene. It also includes an account of the substantial role played by my co-editor Barry Grantham in assisting this re-emergence, movingly conveyed through the Audrey Rumsby film *Barry & Joan*.

And where Commedia goes, the 'bouffon' is sure to follow! The 'clown', the 'fool', the 'grotesque', all are an essential part of this form of theatre. Its open depiction of those mal-formed in body or mind only serves to remind us of the frailties of humankind - while consistently to omit them is no less than a deceit. This, I believe, is the message of Cheryl Stapleton's welcome piece in praise of the 'bouffon'.

Bill Tuck

Our cover illustration

The cover for this issue shows two of the 'grotesque dwarves' created by Jacques Callot of 1616 – and later (19th century?) adapted to illustrate a set of playing cards. In this case a pair 'bouffons' satirise the foibles of the 'armed knight' by picturing them as fighting dwarves, with swords drawn in imaginary combat. This represents the kind of court entertainment that was popular in the early 15th century in which the 'fool' was frequently enlisted to provide a counterpoint to the conventional order, as in the *Feast of Fools* discussed in Cheryl Stapleton's article.

Commedia dell'Arte is Alive and Kicking

Brendan Stapleton charts the influence of Commedia dell'Arte in live and onscreen performance over the past century, and praises a recent documentary about the legendary Joan and Barry Grantham.

[Our thanks to Dorothy Max for permission to include this article by Brendon Stapleton, which was first published by *Total Theatre Magazine* in October 2022. See www.totaltheatre.org.uk]

Commedia dell'Arte (or 'Commedia' for short – the 'dell'Arte' is believed to have been added only in the 18th century by Goldoni) in its pure form began in Italy midway through the 16th century, and flourished for two hundred years. From there, it provided the impetus for the growth of many other forms and practices, including mime, pantomime, clown, slapstick, and physical comedy. We can see the influence of Commedia dell'Arte in much of today's live and onscreen performance. But let's first go back to the roots.

The familiar figures of Pierrot, Harlequin and Columbine recall the burgeoning Commedia dell'Arte scene beginning in Italy midway through the 16th century. Growing up in the market place at the service of quack medicine men and such-like, it developed into a powerful entertainment for the common people – a culmination of various styles of performance skills, including acting, dance, mime and acrobatics. The indigenous culture that existed in 16th century Italy was seen as a freeing of theatrical expression, returning to the use of characterisation that was far older, dating back to the obscure ancestry of Ancient Greece and Rome. Commedia, in its original form, flourished for two centuries before mutating and being absorbed into other forms such as mime and pantomime – although in its pure form, it has continued to exist right up to the present time (although sometimes undercover as we'll see later).

Coming up to the beginning of the 20th century and the advent of film as an artform: Commedia was a clear influence on silent physical comedy. Laurel and Hardy were both Zannis, and Charlie Chaplin was a classic Arlechino (all types of servant clowns). Later, Britain's favourite of this genre was undoubtedly Norman Wisdom, whose slick and well-timed comic skills even conquered the United States where the 'low birth' loser was considered endearing.

We can see, therefore, that Commedia becomes integrated into each new artform or genre that evolves without necessarily being recognised for what it is.



Laurel and Hardy's classic Eccentric Dance routine in the film *Way Out West*

The contemporary influence of Commedia dell'Arte can best be exemplified by none other than Cirque du Soleil. The French mime artist in their show *Alegria* is similar to the Marcel Marceau clown character Bip. In contemporary circus, theatre and Outdoor Arts festivals, we can see very many performances that owe a great deal to Commedia.

In recent theatre work, we can note Richard Bean's play *One Man, Two Guvnors*, an English adaptation of *Servant of Two Masters (Il servitore di due padroni)*, a 1743 Commedia dell'Arte style comedy play by the Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni. The play replaces the Italian period setting of the original with Brighton in 1963. The play, with Commedia inspired clown work directed by Cal McCrystal, opened at the National Theatre in 2011, then moved to the West End and Broadway and subsequently toured worldwide, bringing an awareness of Commedia to a wider audience (although Bean's play was influenced by, rather than being a contemporary example of, true Commedia).



National Theatre: *One Man, Two Guvnors*

Yet often the provenance of such characters and performances isn't acknowledged. When I choreographed Mike Bennett's *Glambusters*, inspired by the early 1970s Glam Rock movement, I referenced many classic Commedia characters, but even the people who created the production would not have noticed or recognised these allusions.

We can also note that Commedia has also spawned many seemingly new performance practices that are in fact as old as the hills.

A good example of forgotten traditions was the emergence of the 'living statue' at street festivals worldwide in the 1990s – supposedly a new development. It had, in fact, been used by street theatre clowns and mimes for decades, and harked back to the travelling troubadours of days of yore, who excelled in portraying or parodying characters from their own cultures. In another personal example, I played a 1920s mannequin in the film *Whoops Apocalypse*, starring Rik Mayall, in 1985; and I subsequently performed as a dancer and footballer statue in a 1994 Opera North commission for the Munich Biennale in Germany, and the Manchester City 100th Anniversary Celebration.



In 2005, whilst working on a video-installation and performance with Greek visual artist Sophia Kosmaoglou, we sourced our human 'still life' image from the Victorian 19th century *tableau vivant* – the staging of scenes from popular paintings and sculpture where the participants hold postures and expressions for up to twenty minutes. This form can even be traced back to Goethe's 1809 novel *Elective Affinities* in which he describes such a performance as 'this living reproduction [that] far exceeded the original, sending the audience into raptures'.

Brendan Stapleton as Rembrandt, World Living Statue Championship 2022

So, these are just a few examples of Commedia breaking into the world of contemporary performance. Let's now look to our TV screens.

A good example from TV is the BBC's television sitcom *Fawlty Towers* where we see the master-servant relationship explored, and encounter various eccentric characters that reference the stock characters and archetypes of Commedia. John Cleese is El Capitano/The Captain and the Spanish waiter Manuel, The Servant – his depiction of social ineptitude is physical comedy par excellence. The Major is a Captain Doddery; the character Polly (played by John Cleese's wife, Connie Booth, who was co-writer of the sitcom) a mischievous Columbine.

We can also note the influence of Commedia in 1970s sitcom: *Are you being served?* The character John Inman portrayed, with his 'I'm free' catchphrase, portrays a good example of the physical comedy set-pieces taken from Commedia that we call *lazzi*, with comedy footwork customising his character. Also in the 1970s, Bruce Forsyth had a specific foot sequence in his introduction and in the *Kenny Everett Video Show* proved he was the king of the unpredictable *lazzo*.



Arlechino and Columbine, played by Barry and Joan Grantham

Traditional Commedia with its masks and costumes might exist in a cultural backwater, but many of the stock characters of the form are constants in the cultural landscape, despite changing tastes in comedy and family entertainment: film, dance and physical theatre shows feature Pierrot characters that can be any gender; and the brilliant comedy of Pantomime dames, which were undoubtedly ahead of their time when they emerged centuries back, owe much to Commedia.

Commedia is still seen as a 'minority art' for contemporary 'eccentric practitioners' who exist as a subcultural underground movement. Yet occasionally a name surfaces from that underground...

Barry Grantham, described by British Commedia dell'Arte expert Richard Handley as 'a national treasure', has a lifetime's experience in Commedia dell'Arte, Vaudeville and Eccentric Dance that took him and musician wife Joan from their early days treading the boards in ballet and musical shows, through years working the British Variety Circuit, on to many decades of teaching, directing, researching and developing both Commedia and Eccentric Dance.



From the Audrey Rumsby film *Barry and Joan*

A recently released film entitled *Barry and Joan*, directed by performer and filmmaker Audrey Rumsby, who has trained with the Granthams, gives due credit to both halves of this creative partnership. Born into a theatrical family, Barry was imbibed with the traditions of Commedia, developing his work with traditional acting, mask, ballet and physical comedy; performing from an early age and teaching at the family's dance school. He met his multi-

talented wife, Joan whilst they were working together on a West End show. As the publicity for the film says:

'He was an incurable performer who loved to cross-dress. She was a dancing piano genius. She spotted his legs when they met in a musical. Seventy-five years later, they are still married, performing, and teaching.'

The film is demonstrative of this wonderful work-life partnership and highlights the couple's contribution to Commedia, Eccentric Dance and British Music Hall.

Barry Grantham has concurrently made a name for himself as a writer and teacher with an advanced understanding of Commedia dell'Arte. Barry notes that the Clown or Fool is the natural and historical bridge between all the singing dance-mime and circus visual gags and associated imagery on the stage, television and film. Barry Grantham has been studying the revival, re-creation and development of Commedia, and moving the knowledge of the form forward with his research, teaching, performing and lecturing. With an awareness of how the form has fallen out of fashion in contemporary performance circles, Barry says that one can choreograph Commedia dell'Arte but it is not wise to refer to it as such because in the modern context it is so often misunderstood.

Let's hope that Audrey Rumsby's film goes some way to redress this, bringing awareness of the value and power of the true Commedia dell'Arte style. It is refreshing to see in the film how many young drama students are bowled over by Barry and Joan's work, pledging themselves to pursue the work in their future theatre practice.

Perhaps a minority artform, and often misunderstood, Commedia dell'Arte is nevertheless alive and kicking – its influence apparent everywhere in contemporary live and onscreen performance.

Brendan Stapleton



Vaudevillians Joan and Barry Grantham

THE RESURGENCE OF THE BOUFFON

“The Bouffon is a crippled outcast, a lame person, a legless or one-armed cripple, a dwarf, a midget, a whore.... He has not been chosen by the gods. He has been chased into the swamps and ghettos by the children of God in fact, who have seized the opportunity to announce that in view of the bouffon’s physical and moral ugliness, the Father could not be a great artist of international fame.”

Philippe Gaulier, *Pièces Pour Bouffons*



Photo credit: Philippe Gaulier

The Bouffon has been present in theatre since the earliest Greek and Roman comedies. But as society evolved, and political correctness began to govern, the Bouffon struggled to survive on stage in modern times. But now, more than ever, we need to bring back the bouffons.

For over a hundred years (300-200 BC) Romans guffawed at Atellan farces (*fabulae Atellanae*), populated with bouffon such as Dossennus, the hunchback, Maccus the loud-mouthed glutton and others. Trace this forward and we find Pulcinello popular in the medieval carnival, where troupes of Pulcinelli with humped backs, pot bellies and beak noses paraded, mocking the crowds and entertaining with misdemeanour.



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo, *Gruppo di Pulcinella*

Taking his place in the commedia dell’arte of 16th century, Pulcinella became known for his destructive behaviour and resentment of authority. But his bitterness was not without reason. In 1847, [The Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review](#) published this lovely tale of ‘Pulcinello’, the tragic grotesque, most likely witnessed during a *Harlequinade*:

“I knew a Pulcinello, said the Moon. The folks all shouted whenever he made his appearance on the stage. All his movements were comical, and raised peels of laughter in the house, although there was nothing in particular to call it forth, -- it was only his oddity. Even when a mere lad, romping about with the other boys, he was a Pulcinello. Nature formed him for the character, by putting a hump on his back and another on his chest. But the mind that was concealed beneath this deformity was, on the contrary, richly endowed. No one possessed a deeper feeling, a more vigorous elasticity of spirit that he. The stage was his world of ideals: had he been tall and handsome, every manager would have hailed him as his first tragedian. All that was heroic and great filled his soul,

and still his lot was to be a Pulcinello. His very sorrow, his melancholy, heightened the dry comicality of his sharply-marked features, and aroused the laughter of a ticklish public, who applauded its favourite.

“The lovely Columbine was good and kind to him, and yet she preferred to give her hand to Harlequin. It would indeed have been too comical a thing in reality if ‘Beauty and the Beast’ had married. Whenever Pulcinello was dejected, she was the only one who could bring a smile upon his face, but *she* could even make him laugh outright. At first, she was melancholy like him, then somewhat calmer, and at last overflowing with fun. ‘I know well enough what ails you,’ she said; ‘it is love, and love alone!’ And then he could not help laughing. ‘Love and I!’ he exclaimed; ‘that would be droll indeed: how the folks would clap and shout.’

“‘It is love alone,’ she repeated with a comical pathos; ‘you love - you love me!’

“Ay, people may speak thus when they imagine that in others’ hearts there is no love. Pulcinello skipped high into the air and his melancholy was gone. And yet she had spoken the truth: he did love her; he loved her truly, fervently, as he loved all that was noble and beautiful in art. On her wedding day he seemed the merriest of the merry; but in the night he wept; had the folks seen his wry face they would have clapped their hands.

“Not long ago, Columbine died. On the day when she was buried, Harlequin had leave not to appear upon the boards: was he not a mourning widower? But the manager had to give something very merry, that the public might the less miss the pretty Columbine and the agile Harlequin. So the nimble Pulcinello had to be doubly merry: he danced and skipped about – despair in his heart – and all clapped their hands and cried ‘Bravo, bravissimo!’ Pulcinello was called for. Oh, he was beyond all price!

“Last night, after the performance, little Humpback strolled out of the town, toward the lonely churchyard. The wreath of flowers upon Columbine’s grave had already faded. There he sat down; it was a perfect picture; his chin resting upon his hand, his eyes turned toward me – a Pulcinello upon the grave, peculiar and comical. Had the folks seen their favourite, how they would have clapped and cried, ‘Bravo, Pulcinello! Bravo, bravissimo!’”

It is the tragedy at the core of this grotesque clown that gives the bouffon his beautiful humanity and makes him compelling to watch. Bouffon are no fools. They play the fool because they know this will keep them alive, but underneath their sadness turns to anger and rebellion is brewing.

Pulcinello is one of a legion of oppressed outcasts. The medieval *Feast of Fools* stems from a time when society’s misfits were expelled from the city to live and perish in squalor. *The Feast of Fools* was one day a year when these pariahs were invited back inside the city walls and paraded on wagons, to be laughed at, crowning one as the King of the Fools. The ‘beautiful ones’ believed the ugliness and deformity of these mutant miscreants could chase away the plague and cholera. The crowds rejoiced at the fools’ ugliness, but the last laugh was with the bouffon who used this moment of power to subtly usurp authority, parody Christian rituals and spit upon the clergy.



Charles Laughton as Quasimodo, King of the Fools, in the 1939 *Hunchback of Notre Dame*

The Bouffon is irrepressible. In the sixteenth century, when poverty was rife, bouffon were visible everywhere, but today we don't always notice them, for the bouffon are invisible to those who have a warm bed to sleep in. Our politically correct society has caused us to turn a blind eye when a bouffon crosses our path and this has marginalised bouffon as a performance style.

But perhaps now is a time for a resurgence of the bouffon, as an antidote to the diseases that grip our society: consumerism, capitalism, Trumpism. The 2019 film *Joker* gave us a glimpse of the uprising. The Joker is the classic bouffon – the inverse clown – who laughs at his increasingly confused audience. When the time is right, he flips the table and we see him as one of thousands, with the same mask, who rise up with him. The voice of the bouffon is rising in each of us. As the frustration of a nation bubbles within, perhaps we need to find a way to vent it before anarchy is unleashed. Theatre is where this can happen.

Cheryl Stapleton



Les Bouffons of Arbeau's Orchesography

To any musician or dancer, the title “Les Bouffons” invariably conjures up the tune, images and dance description presented in great detail in the final pages of Arbeau's *Orchesography*. This volume, first published in 1589, is the most important source of dance choreographies from the first half of the 16th century, a time that also witnessed the emergence of Commedia dell'Arte. Its author, Jehan Tabourot (of which Thoinot Arbeau is an anagram) was a French priest born in Dijon in 1519.

Feincte



Eftocade



Taille haulte



Reuers hault



Orchesography is thus a late work, which is generally assumed to describe the dances current during Arbeau's youth in the French province of Langres, bordering the Calvinist areas of Switzerland. There are numerous concordances to the dance tunes – *Bouffons* alone has at least ten – indicating that the dances in *Orchesography* were very widespread throughout France at that time.

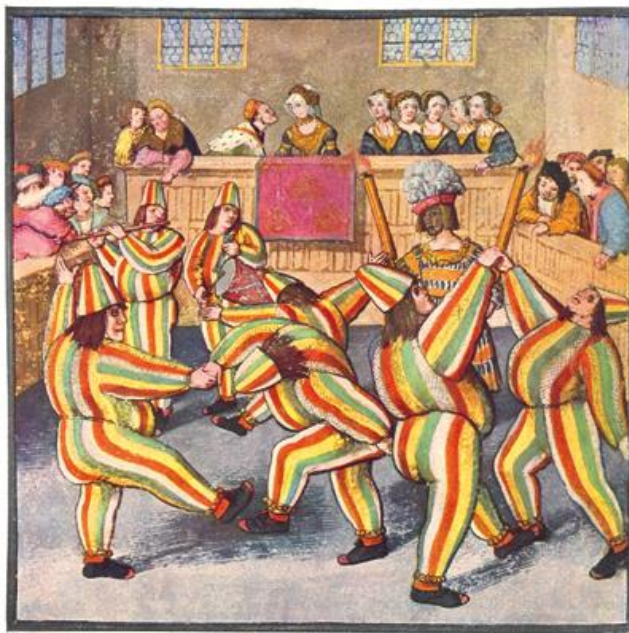
But what does this dance have to do with the Bouffon character of the Commedia as described in Cheryl Stapleton's above? The dance images that accompany Arbeau's description bear little resemblance to the grotesques that we have come to associate with the term 'bouffons'. Even less easy to associate with the grotesque image of the bouffons are the rather polite and timid re-enactments of the dance frequently depicted in YouTube videos (see, for example:

<https://youtu.be/5tme9DnEqsQ>)

Illustration of the 'Buffens' dance
from Arbeau's *Orchesography*

The problem is to reconcile the incongruity of the name ('bouffons' – 'buffens' in English -- translates as 'fool') with the imagery conveyed by Arbeau's choreography. One possible explanation may lie in the origins of the dance itself. A suggestion can be found in the introduction to a 19th century edition of *Orchesography*, where it is claimed that the dance was in use throughout the sixteenth century and in the ballets under Louis XIII: "Brantôme, in volume I of the *Grands Capitaines*, life of Charles de Bourbon, tells us that, during the sack of Rome (1527), the invading Landsknechts (Protestant German mercenaries in the pay of Charles V), would make fun of the poor Roman ecclesiastics, by dressing them as 'bouffons' and forcing them to dance" [Laure Fonta, 1888]. This would explain

the mock-heroic quality of the dance: Is it, perhaps, an attempt at getting their own back on the part of the French [Catholic] court by reversing roles and depicting the northern [Protestant] Landesknights as less than heroic, dressing them in 'antique' costumes with "helmets of gilded cardboard" and labelling them 'bouffons'?



'Narrentanz' or 'Dance des Bouffons' - from *Freydal Medieval Tournament Book* (c.1515)



'Matachins' dance or mock-heroic fight between stylised opponents – from *Freydal* (c.1515)

This explanation does at least make some sense, but more importantly draws attention to the underlying religious tensions that existed at the time of *Orchesography's* publication: 1589 is only a decade or so removed from the horrors of the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, in which a wave of Catholic mob violence led to the death of thousands of Huguenots (French Calvinist Protestants) in Paris during the French Wars of Religion.

Mock battles were, of course, a feature of court entertainments from very early times. It is likely that this also forms part of the background to Arbeau's dance, with the music acquiring its name from a true dance of les Bouffons, but later being used to accompany a more martial display.

MUSIC IN COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE PART II

Music that has been expressly composed to accompany a Commedia performance is difficult to find. Most likely this is because the original Commedia performers would take whatever was to hand from the popular repertoire of songs and dances and use that to accompany some piece of action within the scenario. It is likely that each troupe would have a collection of pieces that it might use in this way as needed.

An interesting exception to this is the Commedia piece composed by Mozart, K 446, most of which is lost but the fragment remaining gives a tantalising glimpse of his interest and involvement in Commedia performance. This is addressed in greater depth later in this article.

Another, though somewhat misleading source, is the Madrigal Comedy of composers such as Alessandro Striggio and Orazio Vecchi. This musical style developed in Italy in the late 16th century and was a high-brow art form that used some of the basic Commedia scenarios but recounted the narrative in a *capella* form, without acting. Vecchi's direction in the score of *L'Amfiparnaso* (1597), is for the singers not to act, but for the audience to fill in the action internally, using their imagination. He speaks to the audience in the prologue to the work: "the spectacle I speak of is to be seen in your mind; it enters not through your eyes, but through your ears: instead of looking, listen, and be silent." Despite this restriction, there has grown up a tradition of extending the vocal performance to include a considerable amount of stage business and theatrics. The resulting performance, though entertaining, is generally very far from traditional Commedia dell'Arte. A good example can be found here: <https://youtu.be/7UL6XOMCGeY>



An actor/singer performing the prologue to Orazio Vecchi's *L'Amfiparnasso* (1597)

Despite this restriction, there has grown up a tradition of extending the vocal performance to include a considerable amount of stage business and theatrics. The resulting performance, though entertaining, is generally very far from traditional Commedia dell'Arte. A good example can be found here: <https://youtu.be/7UL6XOMCGeY>

A further development from the comedy madrigal is towards full-blown opera – in the form of 'opera buffa'. The earliest of these, and one of the most successful, is Pergolesi's *La Serva Padronna*. This popular and still much performed piece is essentially a three-character, two act commedia scenario, but sung throughout and not played in mask. The characters -- Uberto (an old man), Serpina (his maid) and Vespone (his servant) -- are readily identifiable as Pantalone, Columbine and Harlequin. The two acts originally formed the interlude entertainments between Pergolesi's three-act 'opera seria' *Il prigionier superbo*, which achieved nothing like the same success.

There remain some sources of music, however, that were almost certainly employed within a traditional Commedia context or even composed for specific Commedia productions. In the first category are the tunes that are associated with the *morisco* performances, such as the dance tunes *Les Bouffons* and *La Morisque*, which exist in numerous sources, including Arbeau's *Orchesography* (referred to earlier). These tunes are, in turn, frequently derived from generic forms (simple

harmonic progressions) such as the *passamezzo antico*, *passamezzo moderno* or the *cicconia* (chaccone). Each of these progressions would be open to numerous improvised variations, which is most likely the practical approach taken to dance accompaniment by Commedia musicians.

Another musical source are the tunes in Gregorio Lambranzi's *Nuova e curiosa schuola de' Balli theatriali - Neue und curieuse theatralische Tantz-Schul* (publ. Nuremberg in 1716). Each of the 100 plates in this volume, gives an outline description of a dance, together with an illustration of the dancer(s) and is accompanied at the top by the notated tune. Many of these illustrations show Commedia characters, often executing a sequence of characteristic dances. Lambranzi was a Venetian, but spent much of his working life in other parts of Europe. Although there is no suggestion that Lambranzi composed all these tunes, this one volume is perhaps the greatest source of Commedia music, along with indications of the style of stage dancing that would have been current in early 18th century Commedia.

The text reads: *Here Pantalone & his Pandora are dancing. But since he is old, she repeatedly refuses to dance with him. Finally, she takes him by the beard, turns him round in a circle several times, and after the tune has been played twice, drags him off by his beard.*



Page from Gregorio Lambranzi's *Neue und curieuse theatralische Tantz-Schul* (1716)



Frontispiece to Johann Hasse's *Comic Tunes* (1750)

A third source are the 'comic tunes' composed expressly for the Commedia elements of the English 18th century pantomimes by composers such as Michael Arne or Johann Hasse. Arne published the comic tunes for his pantomime *The Choice of Harlequin* in 1781 (the reprint from 2009 is currently available from Amazon). Hasse's comic tunes (from 1750) can be viewed online at:

<https://archive.org/details/hassescomictunes04hass/mode/2up>

Mozart and Commedia

Mozart was undoubtedly influenced by Commedia dell'Arte. There are many scenes and characters within the operas, for example, that show an understanding and deep knowledge of Commedia, its characters and style of scenic construction. But did Mozart ever write true Commedia dell'Arte, with stock commedia characters of Harlequin, Columbine, Pantalone, et al; along with a traditional

scenario and accompanying music? The answer lies in a relatively obscure item catalogued as KV446. No score or script remains, and only one orchestral part, the autograph of a first violin part, is extant. Because Mozart inserted stage directions in this part, we know something of how it was intended to be staged. These directions show that it was a Commedia piece, with the entries and actions of the various characters clearly marked: “Scene 1 – Pantalon und Columbine zanken sich”, “Scene 2 – Der Dottore kommt”, etc. From these limited directions it is possible to trace out a plausible scenario and several attempts have been made at doing so.

In addition to working out the scenario, a number of composers have sought to reconstruct the full score of the music. The most prominent orchestral version, by composer **Franz Beyer**, was recorded by St Martin’s in the Fields orchestra in 1991. This is a rather lush re-composition for full orchestra, appropriate for something on the scale of an opera, but rather overblown for what must have been a fairly small-scale and semi-amateur production -- in which Mozart and his friends played the commedia roles, Mozart himself as Harlequin. More recent attempts have sought to get closer in scale to what might plausibly have been the original performance, but updated towards a more modern interpretation. One example is the reconstruction of the music by **Johannes Holik** to a script created by mime artist **Milan Sladek**, for which a fully staged implementation is planned. Another, more limited attempt can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/CDC9TyGw7HM>

Music by Mozart that was not originally intended to accompany Commedia has often, of course, been used for this purpose. In particular, the ballet *Petit Riens*, originally created to a scenario by Jean-Georges Noverre, with music by Mozart and other composers, has often been adapted or mined to provide music to accompany commedia-type performances. An interesting example is to be found at: https://youtu.be/rzotCr2ld_Q

Throughout the nineteenth century there was considerable music composed for commedia in the form of the English pantomime or Harlequinade, for example. Little of note survives from this period, however, and it was not until the revival of interest in the earlier forms of Commedia dell’Arte in the 20th century that composers made any serious attempt to create musical accompaniments for this genre. This may partly be because the style of Commedia performance -- improvisational and highly physical -- does not lend itself to a rigid ‘through-composed’ form, unlike opera or ballet. Most commedia companies of the revival period adopted the ‘pasticcio’ approach to music: take whatever you can find from any worthwhile (and preferably non-copyrightable) source and adapt the words of any songs or steps of any dances to fit the narrative. This was the approach of the Chalemie company (2000-2010), for example, who produced a series of works based on 18th century material, including the ‘comic tunes’ of Hasse and Arne, along with the dances and arias from French and English operas; creating from this a novel form of musical theatre based around the Commedia performance style.

In parallel with the efforts of small theatre companies to revive Commedia, several well-known composers have used Commedia themes as inspiration for their own work: Examples include Schoenberg (*Pierrot Lunaire*), Stockhausen (*Kleine Harlekin*), Horowitz (*Commedia*), Birtwhistle (*Punch & Judy*), and John Zorn (*Commedia*) along with many others. This theme -- Commedia as a source of musical inspiration -- will be the subject of the next part of this exploration.

Bill Tuck

COMMEDIA AROUND THE WORLD



Surprise Commedia in North Carolina

by Lara Coutinho-Dean

Commedia dell' Arte is a niche art, enchanting a small percentage of performers worldwide enough for us to make regular practice of it. Imagine my surprise then, seeing it at a commercial renaissance festival in rural North Carolina, USA.

American “Renaissance Festivals” are seasonal, fun, fantasy playlands inspired by a few images of European history - just enough to generate a lucrative entertainment business. They do tend to generate enough attention that small circus acts, musicians, character actors, and crafty artists can make a modest living traveling from festival to festival around the United States getting seasonal jobs at these fairs. They hire jugglers, storytellers, fairies, mermaids, pirates, fencers, wenches, lords and ladies in waiting, and a myriad of other creative characters that support the theme of a fantasy village mildly inspired by Elizabethan England. They are not, however, commonly known for their historic accuracy nor support of higher education.

The Carolina Renaissance Festival & Artisan Marketplace in Huntersville, North Carolina (<https://www.carolina.renfestinfo.com/>) is a little different. When I visited this fair on Sunday, October 23, expecting to enjoy a day of comedy acts and music outside in the beautiful fall weather, I was surprised to see “UNCC Commedia Players” listed in the program. As a Commedia enthusiast, I attended the first show feeling very excited to see this niche art at a commercial fair. I was thrilled to see four young adults in traditional looking commedia character masks come out to start their show!

They started what felt like a well-rehearsed introduction and audience gathering song that lacked the intense improvised energy of the professional circus acts. At first, I was disappointed, but as they brought forth their skits, I witnessed their beautiful portrayal of classic commedia.

They wore commedia masks of Pantalone, Arlecchino, and what looked to me to be two general purpose zanni. They performed two very simple storylines of a zanni bank theft and a zanni stealing Pantalone’s family cookbook. What enchanted me most was their *movement*.

Their movement was wide, dramatic, and expressive in the extreme. Their whole bodies spoke of their characters and intent. They used few words and yet expressed intense fear, joy, sadness, celebration, indigestion, and relief with their flowing bodies. They took up the whole stage, used every level, and shared the focus equally between the cast members. They used classic sneaky walks, mimed imaginary props and doors, and brought me into their world using motion and a few lines of dialog.

I could barely contain myself having found fellow Commedia practitioners at a commercial Ren-fest! Naturally, I stayed after the show and asked them to share with me who they were and how they came to perform at this fair.

They are students of theater at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte <https://www.charlotte.edu/> in a class specifically on Commedia dell'Arte. Their teacher is Mr. Carlos Alexis Cruz who came to the afternoon show to check on his students and give them notes. Professor Cruz was kind enough to chat with me and share his story. He teaches Physical Theater and Commedia dell'Arte at UNCC and has an established agreement for his students to perform at the Carolina Renaissance Festival. The students study Commedia, prepare skits for the fair, and perform at the fair in teams of four for the whole run of the fair.

Professor Cruz holds an MFA in Physical Theatre from the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, where he studied a range of movement techniques including Commedia dell'Arte, Laban, Lecoq-based theater dynamics, Alexander Technique, as well as an extensive voice training in the Linklater voice method. He also took a 3-month workshop in Commedia from Antonio Fava in Italy. He works as a performer, Artistic Director, and Producer as well as an instructor at UNCC. He is the co-founder and Artistic Director of the Pelú Theatre project as well as the founder and producing artistic director of The Nouveau Sud Circus Project, a contemporary social circus initiative in Charlotte. He's originally from Puerto Rico and speaks fluent Italian, French, Spanish, and English. He's also very friendly and proud of his students.

The partnership that Professor Cruz and the Carolina Renaissance Festival have established that enables Commedia students to perform in a very real environment is a rare and amazing blessing. The students get an excellent learning opportunity with a real audience, and the audience gets a rare beauty of historically informed entertainment.

I hope to see more of Professor Cruz's students and more commercial festivals partner with theater programs. This was a win-win-win scenario!



STAGE CRAFT . . . and Commedia!

This article is, I think, a first for the Zannizine in being an instructional manual for performers (and their directors). It deals with what we used to call 'Stage Craft'. The term can also refer to the craft of turning the designer's sketches into a thing of canvas, plaster and paint, but that is for a different article and another writer.

Barry Grantham

What is Stage Craft?

It consists of awareness and experience in choosing the optimum on-stage position for a particular scene and how 'stage location' can influence performance, and also your relationship with that other space from which you are usually excluded - the 'auditorium'.

Its rules mainly apply to actors, comedians and Commedia players, for whom a lack of this knowledge can spoil an otherwise good performance. Opera singers and ballet dancers may work to a different dynamic.

The variables are endless, so I will ask you to imagine yourself on stage looking into the auditorium. It is a strange and magical moment often captured in movies (I am thinking of Streisand in *Funny Girl*).

Pitching to the audience

But our purpose here is practical. This evening you are performing *The Three Zanni* and need to consider how you should pitch it to the audience at this particular venue. Is it a Grand Opera House or the Village Hall? In either case, it is essential to note if you are above or level with the first row of seats, chances are that you are likely to be 4 to 8 feet higher. If the Village Hall, there is no problem; you merely incline your head a fraction and play to the front row of chairs. But make sure you do. It is very easy, especially in a mask to play above everyone's head and wonder why you are getting a lukewarm reception.

Now supposing you are playing an Opera House. It may surprise you, but it's the same. You need to play to the front row of the Stalls. Not because they have paid the most for their seats but because the first few rows are nearest to you and form a kind of filter that accepts or rejects your performance. You might be tempted to play to the Grand Circle, but if you do, you will lose contact with the Stalls, whereas performing to the Stalls will be acceptable to the Grand Circle and higher levels, even the Gallery. You may choose to address certain scenes to the Gallery; a Zanni, *'I'm one of you'*, or a distraught Innamorata can appeal to them as nearest to heaven.

Establishing the locations

Now we will consider how your location on stage affects performance. In other words, certain scenes are best played in the appropriate 'on stage' location.

As you know, the stage is divided into nine areas which are:

Upstage right (USR)

Upstage centre (UPC)

Upstage left (USL)

Centre stage right (CSR)

Centre Stage (CS)

Centre stage left (CSL)

Down stage right (DSR)

Down stage centre (DSC)

Down stage left (DSL)

This is, as we know, from the actor's point of view. Complications arise when the director wants an actor to move to the right and has to remember to tell him to move to his left.

Another point we need to clear up is why '*ups and downs*'. This we inherited from a time when stages were raked, getting higher as they were further from the audience. It improves the audience's view and even 'sound'. More significantly, it was there to increase the illusion of perspective scenery.

Stages in new theatres are now built flat, a false sloping floor occasionally added at great expense on the whim of the set designer.

Centre Stage - Power spot

So, place yourself, in your mind's eye, centre stage (CS). Now we have the first anomaly. Though you are on the physical centre, it is not the 'emotional' centre. Move halfway between CS and DSC, and you will then find yourself in the *Power spot* - the state of being *Centre Stage*. Here, Liar will divide his kingdom, Mark Anthony address the Romans, and Judy Garland sing *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*. On the other hand, it is not the place for the reflective '*To be or not to be*', nor for the villainous '*Winter of our Discontent*'. However, it is where the peasant girl St Joan will face her inquisitors.

But be warned, it is not without its dangers. If you, as the actor or the character you're playing, prove unworthy, the audience will not accept your right to be there. Often better to play a little to the right or left. This 'showing up' can be used intentionally. Mentioning St Joan again, I recall a production where the Dauphin found himself there, revealing his weakness.

Domain of the Masters

Each of the nine areas has its effect on the performer and his/her reception by the audience, which have been established by tradition and proof in performance. Commedia is no exception:

Central stage (CSL, CS, CSR) is the domain of the Innamorati and the noble masks, Pantalone and The Doctor, and even The Captain, until he is disgraced and banished to the kitchen, which is usually *Down Stage Right*. Pantalone and The Doctor will confront each other on either side of

the *Power spot*. Or, The Doctor *Centre* is trying to hold Pantalone's attention, which is drawn to a Servetta going about her domestic duties *Down Stage Left*.

It is the same with the Lovers, sharing centre stage unless we want to show a difference in status.

A young Isabella will enter modestly from *Centre Stage Right (the good side)* and meet her father Pantalone, likely to the left of the power spot. The grand *Prima Dona Innamorata* will enter with a flourish from USC and occupy *Centre Stage*.

You will notice that we often lose either *Up Stage Left* and, or *Up Stage Right*, the playing area being reduced to a chopped triangle by the set or curtains. This can be opened up with a 'prop' doorway, staircase or window (as in *Spectre de la Rose*).

Domain of the Servants

Down Stage is the home of the Zanni and Zanne. Here they can chat with the audience as mates. The hierarchy of the servants is more or less maintained, but here too, plots are planned. If good (to help the Lovers) *Down Stage Right*. If bad (to rob from Pantalone) *Down Stage Left*. The Servetta moving more freely in the central area than her male counterpart who will become subservient or uncomfortable.

An Innamorata would only enter the *Down Stage* area if in disguise, especially male disguise. If a Zanni should appear *Up Stage* it is certain he is 'up to no good'.

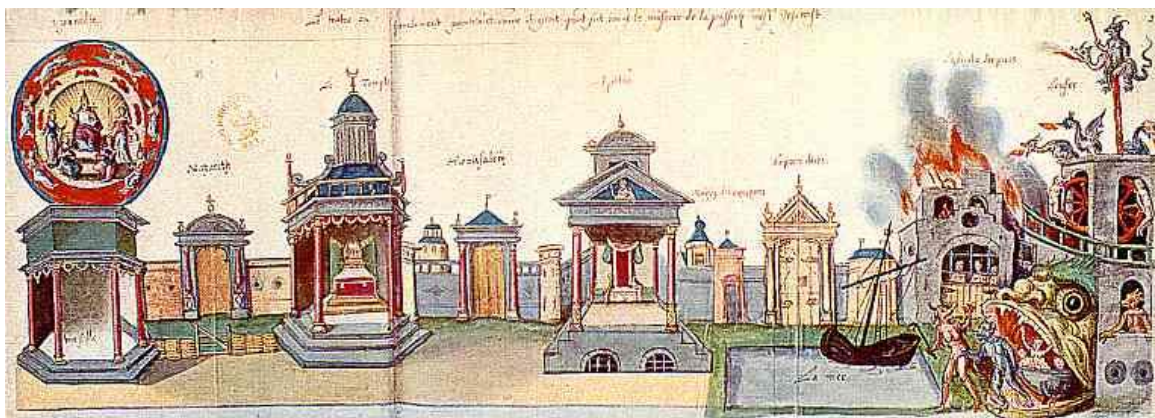
Good and Bad - the influence of the Mystery Plays

The influence of mystery plays doesn't have so much relevance today but certainly would have done throughout most of the Commedia history.

Down Stage Right was reserved for the forces of good - Heaven's Gate; and later, for the Good Fairy of Pantomime; whereas, *Down Stage Left* was the Mouth of Hell and the Pantomime Demon.

I hope to deal with the 'spatial' relationship between cast members in a later issue.

Barry Grantham



Stage setting from Valenciennes Mystery Play (1547) showing the Mouth of Hell (*Down Stage Left*) and Heaven's Gate (*DSR*) -- from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Commedia dell'Arte, by Domenico Pietropaulo, London, New York, Dublin: Methuen, 2022.

Review by Olly Crick

Methuen has recently launched a new series of books titled *Forms of Drama*, of which this is one of the first to be published. It is a paperback, for sale under £15, which puts it very firmly in the 'affordable' category, and as such should be a shoo-in for anyone interested in building up a commedia library. Published in this series so far are volumes, similarly purposed, on satire, Asian badhai, romantic comedy, Greek classical tragedy; Chinese opera; tragicomedy; cabaret and pageants. The aim of this book is to present an overall history of commedia dell'arte and introduce both a general reader and an undergraduate to what it is, and what people who think about these things, think about it, introducing both general readers and undergraduates to the form in a way that will enhance their appreciation of it.



Overall, it does what it says on the tin, and is certainly worth the asking price. There are, however, a few omissions and a few changes of register which may not help someone new to the genre. Although, it is always useful to have acknowledged Italian experts writing in the English language about Commedia: for my part, I always have a nagging feeling that there is information out there I cannot access due to my own linguistic inadequacy.

I missed the inclusion of research included within Kathleen McGill's 1991 journal article "Women and Performance: The Development of Improvisation by the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte". It offers far more illumination on both how women became such an integral part of the form, and what their unique contribution was, than does Pietropaulo's brief mentions of Taviani (1982:333-5) and Tessari (2017:321). Both are acknowledged Commedia scholars and appear to only note the career history and virtuosity associated with the new phenomena of the leading lady, or prima donna. McGill's argument is that a specific grouping of women, skilled in rhetoric and other social skills (conversation, social dance and music) joined the all-male troupes and, through performing these skills, effectively upgraded the previously all-male farces into a far more sophisticated theatrical product. McGill, and Rosalind Kerr (2015) after her, whilst noting the commercial advantage to be had by the display of women on stage, argue that it was the improvisational skills of the women that allowed commedia to grow from a knockabout carnival type entertainment to a theatrical vehicle with the potential for entertaining not just the piazza crowd, but royalty too. The addition of women, therefore, is ultimately what gave Commedia its longevity and breadth of appeal. Undoubtedly these leading ladies were, as Pietropaulo recounts, highly skilled performers, but not acknowledging McGill's research or its implications is a fairly serious omission. Women, at the time, which is referred to here, were also beginning to be accepted as members in learned academies, if not as societal equals, but at least as being intellectual equals to men.

Similarly omitted is any mention, let alone a discussion, of the experiments in creating a new form of commedia by Jacques Copeau and Suzanne Bing in the early C20th in rural France, with Les

Copias and later La Compagnie des Quinze. As this artistic grouping is arguably the first documented experimental theatre company, attempting to unpick the conundrum of historical commedia, it is a shame that it is not included, especially as there are dynastic links from member Jean Dasté to Jacques Lecoq.

Moving from sins of omission to virtues of new commission Pietropaulo presents us new information on Pulcinella and Commedia in the South of Italy. There is a very informative section on Pulcinella dramas, or *Pulcinellate*, that occurred both in Rome from the C17th and of course in Naples, from the C18th onwards. The author is very clear about the comic possibilities of different languages and dialects being used at the same time on stage and pinpoints the Neapolitan Pulcinella as a place where French, Spanish, formal Italian and Neapolitan dialect all fight for space. He similarly devotes time to the English 'Harlequinade', a form of comic drama popular during the Napoleonic wars, which again offers us some unique insights into the evolution of commedia in different countries.

He is very strong on the development of commedia into an eccentric dance style, as apart from the highly vocal and physically acted form of commedia that preceded it. Occasionally Pietropaulo switches into a purely academic register and ambushes the reader with several highly technical paragraphs on the semiotics of commedia. This can be disconcerting and, for me, acted as a break on the enjoyable read through of the history of my favourite art form. His analyses are correct, generally when he does so, but I found the change of register slowed my reading and understanding.

The sections on Goldoni and Gozzi, and their feud as to the future of commedia in the C18th are very good indeed, and though brief (as is the nature of these introductory volumes) cover both cultural contexts, the public nature of the dispute, and what dramas we still have today that came out of this clash. Pietropaulo takes no sides, but assiduously, though in a much-abbreviated way, takes us through the key points that both parties held dear. Of incidental interest is that it becomes clear that although Goldoni and Gozzi were implacable opponents, at various times they wrote for the same troupes of actors.

The introduction to the relationship between Commedia and Opera is similarly succinct, and here both 'old' sources such as Nino Pirotta (1955) and 'new' Emily Wilbourne (2016) are deployed well. The relationship between the two forms is very complex, and many plots, dramatic structures and working methods appear to be shared or 'borrowed' from each other. Pietropaulo steers us through this convergence well. There are enough clues and references provided, as are also in the Goldoni/Gozzi section, for an interested student to expand the breadth of their inquiry or interest.

In terms of Commedia revivals in the twentieth century, Pietropaulo names Lecoq, Strehler at the Piccolo Theatre of Milan, the Sartori Mask making studio, Dario Fo, Carlo Mazzone-Clementi and Giovanni Poli as the main focus points. Again, he offers us succinct career arcs, but neither chooses to or perhaps hasn't the space to, describe how these practitioners' dramaturgic approach to commedia differs. Unlike Giacomo Oreglia's book, also a slim single volume, there are no featured commedia scenarios or lazzi to inspire, or act as examples. Overall, this book is certainly worth adding to one's library, with, as I have noted, a few caveats.

Olly Crick

COMPETITION RESULTS

Small fanfare: **Nathan Hook** of the UK comes first (in a field of one) (ssssh eds.). A copy of *Commedia in the Asia Pacific* and *Commedia Dramaturgy* are on the way to him. A topical little skit, rather than a full-blown Scala three-acter, but nevertheless charming in its own right. Nice one Nathan.

The Magnifico of the Rings

An original Commedia scenario by Nathan Hook

Characters, in order of appearance

Doctore

Pantalone

Scapino

Scaramouche

Arlecchino

Pulcinella

Columbina

This scenario can be performed by a minimum size cast of five actors. In which case:

- Pantalone is doubled with Pulcinella
- Columbina is doubled with Scaramouche

Props

A fine looking ring, possibly oversized to be recognisable.

Slapsticks.

Brush / broom for cleaning.

Scenes

Act 1, Scene 1: In the plaza

Doctore enters and starts giving a rambling lecture to the audience on the topic of rings. This might reference such things as love / wedding rings, signet rings, rings worn by cattle, the legendary ring of Gyges, the Ouroboros, the letter O, and (the switching off of) ringtones.

Act 1, Scene 2: In the plaza

As the Doctore rambles on with his lecture, Pantalone enters in a fluster, and tell him to shut up. He explains that the ring of office of the Magnifico has been lost! All matters of state are frozen, for whoever has it can place the seal on new laws or treaties. The Magnifico has commanded everyone to find it. The two start arguing, with Doctore trying to lecture on importance of the topic abstractly, while Pantalone tries to get across the urgency of the situation and interrogate the audience on who has it. Pantalone also reveals how much he wants it himself. The two exit together, still arguing.

Act 1, Scene 3: In the plaza

As the last scene draws to a close, Scapino and Scaramouche enter, at work cleaning the streets. One of them finds a ring and they start arguing over it. This gradually builds, till eventually they start fighting over the precious ring.

As matters draw to a close Arlecchino enters, and convinces Scapino that if they take the ring back to the Magnifico they will be rewarded. Scapino and Arlecchino set out on this quest with the ring and exit together. Scaramouche is left behind wanting the precious ring.

Act 2, scene 1: In the plaza

Pulcinella enters, on a mission from the Magnifico looking for the lost ring. Pulcinella asks the audience what they know, then questions and beats Scaramouche (still present from the last scene) for information. Lassi of slapstick violence. Scaramouche begs the audience to save them from a beating.

Either the audience eventually tells Pulcinella what they saw earlier to save the poor zanni, or Scaramouche tells him. Both exit separately, continuing the search.

Act 2, scene 2: In the Doctore's house

Arlecchino and Scapino (carrying the ring) have gone to the Doctore's house for advice on how to get the ring back to the Magnifico. The Doctore's servant Colombina welcomes them in. The Doctore starts another rambling lecture about the history of the ring to Scapino, and they gradually drift to the back, continuing in mime.

This leaves the stage free for a lassi of Arlecchino to try to woo Columbina, showing off his acrobatics and/or musical interlude. Just as Columbina is starting to be won over and about to let Arlecchino have a first kiss, the Doctore interrupts them. The Doctore has finally figured out that he, Arlecchino and Scapino should take the ring back to the Magnifico together and the three leave together. Columbina stays at the house, exiting the stage separately.

Act 2, scene 3: In the streets

Doctore, Arlecchino and Scapino are on their way to Magnifico with the ring. Option for musical interlude of a travelling song.

Pulcinella enters behind them, staff ready, and starts sneaking up on them to take the ring. Either the audience call him out ("he's behind you") or he is eventually spotted, and a comedy chase around the stage ensues.

Eventually, the Doctore faces off against Pulcinella, tells him he shall not pass, then starts a lecture about whether the correct term is 'can not' or 'shall not' pass. During this distraction, Arlecchino and Scapino sneak off stage. Eventually Pulcinella starts beating Doctore, and chases him off stage, with the two of them exiting together.

Act 3, scene 1: In the plaza

Pantalone enters and starts talking to the audience, expressing his lust/greed by saying how much he desires the ring for himself. Columbina enters going past. Lassi of Columbina trying to go past and Pantalone lusting over her instead.

Arlecchino and Scapino enter, still on the quest with the ring. Arlecchino sees Pantalone after Columbina and tries to help her by distracting Pantalone with the ring. Arlecchino and Columbina move to the back of stage together while Pantalone forgets about Columbina and focuses on demanding the ring from Scapino. Dramatic pause as Scapino holds up the ring....

Act 3, scene 2: In the Plaza

Pantalone is about to claim the ring for himself when he is suddenly interrupted by Doctore entering, now wrapped in white bandages (from the beating he had from Pulcinella). Possible lecture from the Doctore on the medical power of bandages and the colour white. This surprises Pantalone who then starts arguing with Doctore while Scapino sneaks off alone with the ring.

Gradually Pantalone and Doctore take their argument to the back of the stage, while Arlecchino continues his wooing of Columbina at the front of the stage. They are just about to kiss when the Doctore interrupts them (like last time). Doctore commands Columbina to take him home and they exit together.

Both Pantalone and Arlecchino are left pining for Columbina in their own way, then depart separately.

Act 3, scene 3: The palace gates

Scapino enters alone. He is finally at the gates of the Magnifico's palace with the ring.

Scaramouche enters. Lassi of Scapino and Scaramouche arguing and then fighting over the ring (echo of act 1, scene 3). Arlecchino enters and tries to take the ring, but this time the ring is dropped and lost for good down a drain.

There is a thunderous shout of rage from off-stage: the dreaded Magnifico himself has seen what has happened. Everyone runs away.

Act 3, scene 4: In the Doctore's house

Arlecchino returns to the Doctore's house where Doctore and Columbina are present, and reports the ring is lost. The Doctore starts giving a rambling lecture about how with the Magnifico's ring lost, the city is saved as no one can misuse it. Possible topics include that a ring is like a hole, and losing a hole is to gain what fills it in, hence losing is winning.

Pantalone enters and tells the Doctore to shut up, and they start arguing at the back.

Pulcinella (unless doubled) enters, chasing / beating Scapino (and Scaramouche, unless doubled) believing they still have the ring. After a little time at the front of stage they drift to the back.

Arlecchino and Columbina drift to the front of the stage. Arlecchino resumes the wooing and they finally get to kiss. Possible closing musical interlude here.

The end.

ENDS AND ODDS

Biographies of New Contributors:

Brendan Stapleton

Brendan Stapleton is an actor and dancer, working in mime/ physical theatre and film. He has trained in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, and is an advocate of the form.

For more about Brendan Stapleton's work see www.brendanstapleton.com



Lara Coutinho-Dean

Lara teaches Commedia dell'Arte for the Town of Cary, NC, USA Performing Arts Department. She is also the Capocomico of the companies: *i Firenzi* and *Commedia All Stars*. Lara has been studying and performing Commedia dell'Arte since 2000 and has founded three Commedia troupes: *i Scandali*, *The Commedia All Stars*, and *i Firenzi* (www.ifirenzi.com). She wrote "Bringing 16th Century Commedia dell'Arte to Life" available at www.sca.org. She lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA with her husband Dottore and their two cats.



Returning Contributors:

Cheryl Stapleton

Cheryl started out as a dancer and actress, training in movement and physical expression at École Philippe Gaulier, and specialising in Commedia dell'Arte with John Rudlin, Dr Olly Crick, Mike Chase and Antonio Fava. Cheryl founded *Learning Through Theatre* in 2013 as an education theatre company, specialising in Commedia dell'Arte, delivering workshops and performing, under the name of *Punch's Progress*. She has taught at over 200 schools including RADA, Fourth Monkey Acting Training, Circomedia, UCL, The Actors' Workshop, University of Gloucestershire, Berlin Metropolitan School and the International School of Amsterdam.



Olly Crick

Olly Crick has been a Commedia enthusiast since classes with Barry Grantham in the 1980s, has performed with the Unfortunati, The Medicine Show, Venice Carnival in 1990 and ran The Fabulous Old Spot Theatre Company. He publishes on Commedia, likes to talk about it a lot and even has a PhD in it. Superpower: Commedia dramaturgy.



Natha Hook

Nathan Hook Nathan studied psychology and then humanities with The Open University. Enrolled as a part-time distance PhD student at a game research lab in Tampere University, Finland, he bridges these subjects in his research, publishing findings on the psychological processes of identification with fictional characters. From a background in game design and character play, he developed an interest in improv theatre a few years ago, and from there into both conventional modern theatre and commedia. He performs in theatre productions around Bristol.

References & Acknowledgements

In Brendan Stapleton's article, the main image (top) is a still from the film **Barry and Joan**, featuring director Audrey Rumsby as Pierrot with Barry Grantham.

For more about Audrey Rumsby's film **Barry and Joan**, see <https://barryandjoan.com/>

The film is released on DVD in November 2022, and can be ordered [here](#).

Barry Grantham's two volumes on Commedia Dell'arte, **Playing Commedia** and **Commedia Plays** are available from Nick Hern Books:

<https://www.nickhernbooks.co.uk/barry-grantham>

Barry Grantham (with Bill Tuck) is now running the Zannizine – an online magazine devoted to Commedia, and his novel of the 17th century Commedia player Mezzetino is almost ready for publication. Joan is working on Joanie's Song Book.



Barry & Bill's
6th Commedia Festival

ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual Celebration of
World Commedia Day (25 February) will once again take place over the weekend of February 24th to 26th next year (2023). A full programme is in preparation – though further applications to join us are welcome.

Once details are finalised, further information and links to booking facilities will be posted on the Festival Website:

<https://minicommediafest.co.uk>