



Theatre Virtual Learning

Acting 3 & 4

Commedia dell'arte

April 28, 2020



Adv. Acting
Lesson: [April 28]

Objective/Learning Target:
**The student will explore the acting style,
Commedia dell'arte.**

Let's Get Started / Warm Up Activities:

What comes to mind when you hear the word improvisation?

Watch the video, and enjoy one example of improvisation!





Lesson Steps:

Today, you will go through information about Commedia dell'arte. As you go through, you will be asked to stop and reflect periodically. At the end of the lesson you will do a character activity.

WHAT IS COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Actors? Professors? Women?

WHAT IS COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE?

Commedia Dell'Arte is a semi-scripted Improvised Play that uses stock characters and humor to tell a story.

- ✗ Commedia Dell'Arte translates to **Comedy of Art** in English.
- ✗ Actors wore masks to portray the different 'stock characters.

Commedia originated in Italy.

- ✗ Commedia troupes began their performances in the 16th century.
- ✗ Commedia continued to be popular well into the late 18th century.
- ✗ Commedia spread all over Europe and still has a lasting impression on our current comedy.



STOP & REFLECT IN THE NAME OF HUMOR...



Now you know that you are learning about an early comedic style! What makes you laugh?





WHO MADE UP COMMEDIA TROUPES?

Actors? Professors? Women?

TRAVELING ACTING TROUPES (USUALLY 10-12 PEOPLE) TRAVELED FROM TOWN TO TOWN, SHARING FINANCES AND PETITIONING TO PERFORM. THEY GENERALLY SOUGHT OUT UNRECOGNIZED TALENT TO JOIN THEIR TROUPES, THOSE OF WHICH INCLUDED...



COMMEDIA ACTORS

- × Acrobats
- × Street Performers
- × Educated Actors/Scholars
- × Women?

This was the first time women were truly allowed to act and perform on stage. In England women wouldn't be allowed to perform until 1660, 50 years after Shakespeare's death. Troupes usually had 7-8 men and 3-4 women.



STOCK CHARACTERS

Stock Characters

The Commedia plays were focused on interactions between different social types. These different social types were called 'Stock Characters'. They were very over exaggerated stereotypes of different personality traits.



Commedia dell'Arte

the
Italian
Renaissance
Mask
Tradition

Il Capitano

Pantalone

Tartaglia

Arlecchino

Il Dottore

Pulcinella

Scapino

Brighella

Marco
Pepe

Pierro

MASKS WORN BY CHARACTERS

Masks

Each stock character wore a special mask to accentuate their emotions and features.

The only two characters to not wear masks were The Lovers.

The masks also helped the audience immediately know which personality that actor was portraying.

Capitano



Zanni



Scaramuccia



Pulcinella



Tartaglia



Naso Turco



Ride



Piangi



Bauta



Pantalone



Arlecchino



STOCK CHARACTER TYPES

All Commedia characters can be broken down into **4** categories!.

The Servants (Zanni)

The servants were used to move the plot along by always messing things up.

Most servants are dumb, but a few are sneaky and coy.

Old Men

The old men like to show off their knowledge and try to seduce young women.

Usually seen eating lots of food and drinking lots of wine.

The Lovers

These two characters spend most of the play trying to marry each other, but the antics of the other actors usually stops them along the way.


Captains

These characters are strong and loud. They like to show off their power over the zanni.

Many times were braggarts who were really afraid of their own shadow.

Agile characters.





AND NOW INTRODUCING...
THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF STOCK
CHARACTERS

THE SERVANTS (ZANNI)

There are 2 categories:

#1 Those who were clever pranksters and agile in mind and body.

(Harlequin, Colombina)

#2 those who were dull and blundering
(Brighella)

HARLEQUIN

A trickster character that uses his quick wit and slapstick to thwart his masters plans and woo Colombina.

A slapstick is two wooden boards tied together, when you hit someone with it, it makes a loud smack! Wore a black ½ mask.

He is also known as Arlecchino or Truffaldino in different scripts.

Modern: Picture on Harlequin Romance Novels.



COLOMBINA

The gossip of the plays. She knew everyone's business and used that information to get what she wanted. A high-spirited flirt.

She and Harlequin often fell in love during the play.

Sometimes called Fontasca or Arlecchina.



BRIGHELLA

Brighella is extremely greedy and is always looking for a way to take advantage of others.

Though he is a servant character, he often represents the middle class, but despises those below him.



THE OLD MEN

Pantalone, il Dottore

PANTALONE

Extremely wealthy and materialistic. He is greedy and is often seen as the most important character. He tries to seduce all the women but always fails.

Harlequin and Colombina are often his servants and Isabella is his daughter.

This is where we get the word pantaloons and he is the predecessor of Polonius in Hamlet.



IL DOTTORE

The doctor is one of the most scholarly characters, he often speaks multiple languages and is always trying to outsmart everyone.

He thinks that he is smarter than everyone and walks with his nose up.

Often a friend or rival of Pantalone.





THE LOVERS

They were called Innamorati (male) or
innamorata (female).

Sometimes there were 2 sets.

They wore no mask.
Isabella, Flavio

ISABELLA

Isabella is one of the lovers, her and Flavio want to be together but the old men characters are always trying to stop them.

Despite this, Isabella is strong willed and witty and stands up for what is right.



FLAVIO

Flavio is over dramatic and won't let anyone stand in his way of Isabella.

He is often shown throwing himself at danger if it means Isabella will be safe.



THE CAPTAINS

Il Capitano

