

Commedia dell'Arte Scenarios

Edited by Sergio Costola
in collaboration with Olly Crick



COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE SCENARIOS

Commedia dell'Arte Scenarios gathers together a collection of scenarios from some of the most important commedia dell'arte manuscripts, many of which have never been published in English before.

Each script is accompanied by an editorial commentary that sets out its historical context and the backstory of its composition and dramaturgical strategies, as well as scene summaries and character and properties lists. These supplementary materials not only create a comprehensive picture of each script's performance methods but also offer a blueprint for readers looking to perform the scenarios as part of their own study or professional practice.

This collection offers scholars, performers, and students a wealth of original performance texts that bring to life one of the most foundational performance genres in world theatre.

Sergio Costola is Associate Professor of Theatre at Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE SCENARIOS

*Edited by Sergio Costola in collaboration
with Olly Crick*

First published 2022
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2022 selection and editorial matter, Sergio Costola; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of Sergio Costola to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-60838-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-60836-1 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-10067-6 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100676

Typeset in Bembo
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xii
<i>Notes on the translation</i>	xviii

PART I

An introduction to commedia dell'arte 1

Introduction: the dramaturgy of the commedia dell'arte	3
<i>Sergio Costola</i>	

The secret of the commedia dell'arte 3

The birth of commedia dell'arte 6

The companies and their composition 7

The stock characters of the commedia dell'arte 13

The scenarios of the commedia dell'arte 16

The generici or zibaldoni 21

The lazzo 23

The folds of the commedia dell'arte 25

Ludovico Ariosto's Orlando furioso and the commedia dell'arte 31

*The Madness of Orlando. Opera eroica rappresentativa
(Locatelli collection) 39*

Orlando's madness. Opera reale (Corsiniana collection) 59

PART II

The collections of scenarios 77

- 1 Abagaro Frescobaldi, Codex II-1586 (Madrid, Real Biblioteca) 79
Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick
Primary text 80
Recent editions and translations 81
 The Three Cuckolds (I tre becchi)—canovaccio 82
 Two Crazy People (Doi pazzi)—canovaccio 86
 Perseus (Perseo)—canovaccio 89

- 2 Flaminio Scala, *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative* (Venice, 1611) 96
Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick
Primary text 98
Recent editions and translations 98
 The Jealous Old Man (Il Vecchio Geloso)—comedy 99
 The Husband (Il Marito)—comedy 109
 The Tooth-Puller (Il Cavadente)—comedy 119
 The Mirror (Lo Specchio)—comedy 129
 The Madness of Isabella (La pazzia d’Isabella)—comedy 139

- 3 *Raccolta di scenari più scelti d’istrioni divisi in due volumi.*
 Codices 651 and 652, manuscripts 45.G5 and 45.G6
 (Rome, Biblioteca dell’Accademia Nazionale dei
 Lincei e Corsiniana) 153
Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick
Primary text 155
Recent editions and translations 155
 Elisa Alii Bassà (Elisa Alii Bassà)—*Turkish opera* 156
 The Nobility of Bertolino (La nobiltà di Bertolino)—
Tragicomedy 161
 The Enchanted Fount (Il fonte incantato)—*Pastoral* 164

- 4 Basilio Locatelli, *Della scena de Soggetti comici et tragici di*
B. L. R. Manuscripts 1211 and 1212 (Rome, Biblioteca
 Casanatense) 171
Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick
Primary text 173
Recent editions and translations 173

Zanni Puts on Airs (Le grandezze di Zanni)— <i>Tragicomedy</i>	174
The Two Look-Alikes by Plautus (Li duo simili di Plauto)— <i>Comedy</i>	185
A Comedy Within a Comedy (La commedia in commedia)— <i>Comedy</i>	194
5	
Ciro Monarca, <i>Dell'opere regie</i> . Manuscript 4186 (Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense)	204
<i>Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick</i>	
<i>Primary text</i>	205
<i>Recent editions and translations</i>	206
The Thunderstruck Atheist (L'ateista fulminato)	207
6	
<i>Anonymous Manuscript Correr</i> . Manuscript 1040 (Venice, Museo Correr)	218
<i>Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick</i>	
<i>Primary text</i>	220
<i>Recent editions and translations</i>	220
The Honest Courtesan (La cortigiana onesta)— <i>Comedy</i>	221
The Three Captains (Tre Capitani)— <i>Comedy</i>	228
7	
Gibaldone [. . .] Manuscripts XI.AA.40 and 41. (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale)	236
<i>Sergio Costola in collaboration with Olly Crick</i>	
<i>Primary text</i>	237
<i>Recent editions and translations</i>	237
Pulcinella in Love (Pulcinella innamorato)	238
Arcadia Enchanted (Arcadia incantata)	242
The Lady as Pulcinella (Donna Zanni)	251
<i>Bibliography</i>	260
<i>Index</i>	269

FIGURES

I.1	Scheme of a typical scenario	8
I.2	Parts and roles: Elizabethan theatre	14
I.3	Parts and roles: commedia dell'arte	15
I.4	Image from the frontispiece to the scenario <i>La nobiltà di Bertolino. Tragicommedia</i> in the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G6, c. 18r) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	36
I.5	Image of the title page of the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G5) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	60
I.6	Image of the title page to the scenario <i>La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando. Opera reale</i> in the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 1r) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	61
I.7	Image from the frontispiece to the scenario <i>La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando. Opera reale</i> in the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 2r) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	62
I.8	Image of Act One of the scenario <i>La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando. Opera reale</i> in the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 3r) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	63
I.9	Image of Act Two of the scenario <i>La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando. Opera reale</i> in the <i>Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni</i> (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 3v) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana	66

- I.10 Image of Act Three of the scenario *La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando*.
Opera reale in the *Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni* (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 4r) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana 69
- I.11 Image of the list of characters and properties of the scenario
La Gran Pazzia d'Orlando. *Opera reale* in the *Raccolta di scenari piú scelti d'Istrioni* (Manoscritti, 45 G5, c. 4v) housed in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana 71

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of a long and multifaceted journey that took me to different countries on both sides of the Atlantic and that began in 2006, while I was collaborating as Resident Dramaturg with the Leon Katz Rhodopi International Theater Laboratory (RITL) in Smolyan, a small city in the Bulgarian Rhodopi mountains, where students and artists from all over the world used to gather each summer (2005–2012). There I had the pleasure to meet Alexander Lubenov Iliev, at the time Associate Professor at the National Academy in Sofia. An expert in movement traditions from around the world, Alexander Iliev has been an incredible mentor and supporter of my work. Using commedia dell'arte masks and techniques, we collaborated on the production of a series of pieces, all performed at the Rhodopi Dramatichen Teatar: *The Virgin and the Unicorn* (2007), *Aristophanes' The Birds* (2008), *Orlando Furioso* (2010), and *Hypatia* (2011). In addition, Alexander Iliev, Tania Karbova, and I also collaborated on the creation of a commedia dell'arte workshop that was offered in 2008 at the Rhodopi Dramatichen Teatar, and in 2010 at the National Academy in Sofia and at the Vassil Indzhev Soring Laboratory in Ruse, a city on the border between Bulgaria and Romania.

A few years later, I also began my archival research in Italy, where I had the pleasure to consult a variety of scenario collections from different manuscripts at libraries such as the Casanatense and Corsiniana in Rome and the National Library in Naples. I am especially grateful to Andrea Dibitonto and Giovanni Fraioli at the Academia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome for their precious help. During the same years, I also had the opportunity to share my work at a series of conferences (The International Conference on Commedia dell'Arte at the University of Windsor, Windsor Canada, 2013; The Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, New Orleans, 2014; The Global Improvisation Initiative Symposium at the UC Irvine and Chapman University 2017), where I either attended insightful paper presentations or received useful feedback from various

colleagues: Claudia Wier, Joan Schirle, Nikole Pascetta, Katrien van Beurden, Giulia Filacanapa, Carlo Boso, Javier Berzal de Dios, and Erica Stevens Abbitt.

I am the primary writer of this volume, but Olly Crick has also contributed in a substantial way. While working individually on our own projects, Olly and I have constantly collaborated on each other's volumes since we first met at the Global Improvisation Initiative Symposium. Olly and I are truly grateful to Nikole Pascetta for organizing the panel "Improv(is)ing Interculturality through Five Centuries of Commedia dell'Arte" and for bringing all of us together.

My work at RITL with my students, my archival research, and my attendance at national and international conferences have all been made possible through numerous grants and awards by the generous support of my institution, Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas. My appreciation goes to my colleagues, past and present, of the Theatre Department: Desiderio Roybal, Kerry Bechtel, John Ore, CB Goodman, Kathleen Juhl, Rick Roemer, and Paul Gaffney. A special thanks goes to my colleague and friend Michael Saenger, whose help with editing and content was instrumental for the completion of this book.

All translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own, with the exception of the passages by German-speaking scholars, for which I would like to thank Joyce Crick.

PREFACE

This book offers a selection of newly translated commedia dell'arte scenarios from some of the most important Italian manuscript collections – most of which are currently unavailable in the English language – and presents a diachronic analysis of commedia dell'arte dramaturgical practices. Each single collection and scenarios are preceded by introductions offering a brief historical contextualization and a bibliography. The general introduction to the anthology serves instead the purpose of introducing the reader to the most recent trends in commedia dell'arte scholarship, with a particular emphasis on the books published in the Italian and English languages. It also addresses, among other things, the history of the term 'commedia dell'arte'; a brief survey of the first companies and their composition; the format and dramaturgy of the scenarios; and, to conclude, an analysis of the relationship between commedia dell'arte and the Baroque culture, with specific references to two scenarios based on Ludovico Ariosto's famous poem *Orlando Furioso*.

There has been no edition of commedia scenarios from various collections to date in the English language: the editions of Flaminio Scala's scenarios edited by Henry Salerno (1967) and Richard Andrews (2008) refer mainly to the one collection, as does the bilingual edition of the Casamarciano scenarios, edited by Francesco Cotticelli, Anne Goodrich Heck, and Thomas F. Heck (2001). Natalie Crohn-Schmitt's recent partial edition of the Scala collection (2014) again focuses on the one source. The only similar book is the one edited by Anna Maria Testaverde (2007), which is available only in the Italian language.

Roberto Cuppone (2001), in his "Appendix. Overview of the main known collections of scenarios" (136–138), lists about twenty known collections: the first one, dated 1568, is not properly speaking a collection, since it contains only a single scenario and is part of a work by Massimo Troiano meant to describe the entertainments organized for the wedding between William V, Duke of

Bavaria, and Renata of Lorraine, which took place in Munich on 22 February 1568. The last collection listed by Cuppone, Luigi Riccoboni's *Discorso della commedia all'improvviso* (1743), showcases, among other things, six scenarios. We have decided to select seven collections for this anthology, chosen primarily on the basis of their importance in the evolution of the genre and also for the conspicuous number of scenarios therein contained – from the forty-eight contained in the Ciro Monarca collection to the 183 contained in the Casamarciano collection. The first three chapters offer a selection of scenarios from the oldest known collections that most probably belonged to professional actors. Chapter 1 presents the translation of three scenarios from the *Zibaldone* compiled between 1574 and 1580 by the actor Abagaro Frescobaldi, better known as Stefanelo Botarga, who toured throughout Spain as the Magnifico of the Zan Ganassa troupe (Ferrone 2014: 300–302). This is the oldest known collection of materials compiled by a professional actor, and its scenarios present clearly identifiable borrowings from the regular Italian comic, pastoral, and tragic dramaturgy (Testaverde 2007: xxxi). Chapter 2 contains the translation of five of the scenarios contained in the collection written by Flaminio Scala and printed in Venice in 1611. Scala, himself a professional actor who used to perform the young *innamorato* under the name Flavio, was also responsible for the only known collection to have been published in its entirety during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter 3 contains three scenarios from the anonymous collection conserved in the Biblioteca Corsiniana in Rome and with bindings that have been dated between 1621 and 1642. This collection, however, seems to predate its binding, and according to Elsebeth Aasted, through external as well as internal evidence, it could be considered “the earliest extant collection of commedia dell’arte scenarios dating from the second half of the 1500’s,” thus placing the Corsini manuscripts “in a central position in commedia dell’arte research” (1991: 108). Chapter 4 introduces the reader to three scenarios from the collection compiled by Basilio Locatelli between 1618 and 1622 and conserved in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome. Because of the strong similarities of some of their plots, Anna Maria Testaverde (2007) believes Locatelli’s scenarios to be amateurish variations of the ones contained in the Corsiniana collection, and according to Cesare Molinari, the similarities between these two collections can also be understood as proof of the close relationship that existed between professional and amateur actors (1985: 43–44). This group of four collections, according to Anna Maria Testaverde (2007: xxx), represents the dramaturgical repertory of the golden age of the commedia dell’arte.

The collections of scenarios showcased in the last three chapters of this book and compiled in the second half of the seventeenth century constitute examples of a well-established theatrical tradition (Testaverde 2007: xxxvii). Chapter 5 presents a scenario from the collection compiled by Ciro Monarca and conserved in the Casanatense Library in Rome. This collection is very important because it contains only tragedies – *opere regie* or royal works – it has clearly been influenced by the plays of the *Siglo de Oro* by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón

de la Barca, and it is the only collection of the second half of the seventeenth century to have been compiled by the actors of a professional commedia dell'arte troupe. Chapter 6 highlights two scenarios from the anonymous collection that can be found in the library of the Museum Correr in Venice: according to Carmelo Alberti, the editor of the entire collection, these scenarios offer an idea of the “involution” of the practices of the commedia dell'arte, with the almost worn-out repetition of those dramaturgical modules based on the fixed types (1996: 21). Chapter 7, the last chapter, presents three scenarios from the lively and multifaceted theatre world of Naples, with the omnipresence of the Neapolitan masks of Pulcinella and Coviello.

To select twenty-two scenarios out of more than six hundred is a daunting task and presupposes some arbitrary choices. However, the specific scenarios were chosen to make the reader aware of the broad spectrum of dramatic genres actually performed by the commedia dell'arte troupes – not only comedies but also pastorals, tragedies, tragicomedies, royal works, and Turkish plays, to name but a few – together with scenarios that were either presenting original stories or were instead adaptations of a variety of preexisting sources – poems, short stories from the Italian *novella* tradition, like Boccaccio's *Decameron*, classical sources such as the plays by Plautus and Terence, plays from the *Siglo de Oro*, etc.

Commedia dell'arte has achieved an almost mythical status among theatre makers, not because of its commercial successes within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (though there have been several) but because of its adoption by a succession of iconic practitioners who used the form, in their own way, to recreate, reform, reinvent or reenergize a theatre they saw as lacking in something vital. Whenever theatre became too cerebral, too shallow, too star-studded, too static, or too literary, there emerged voices claiming that a return to the spirit and practice of the ancient commedia dell'arte would resolve these issues and restore a missing vitality to the stage.

What the spirit of commedia dell'arte actually is and what its ancient practices were are still a matter of debate and some disagreement. To broadly generalize, the ‘spirit of commedia’ is often identified within modern comedy as a feeling of unexpected joy and release in an audience, gained through laughter, as performed by actors who are not merely good at their trade but comic virtuosos to boot. Many worthy and highly relevant academic investigations of the genre have, when eventually hitting the twin brick walls of historical distance and the performance's ephemerality, invoked or at least mentioned ‘the spirit of commedia’ as a significant element within their deliberations. How a person developed the skills to become a commedia virtuoso in the Renaissance is a matter of informed guesswork and conjecture based on an incomplete jigsaw of tantalizing fragments because, for various reasons, commedia dell'arte disappeared or evolved beyond its early roots at the time of the French revolution. What exists now as commedia dell'arte is an asynchronous and synthesized practice drawn from a variety of methodologies but mainly focused around the two cognate disciplines of theatre training and theatre performance.

Although the most successful drive toward recreation occurred from 1946 onwards in Italy, attempts to recreate, revive or reinvent commedia dell'arte were, of course, made before 1946 (Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Copeau, Reinhardt, and Brecht, to name but a few).¹ This date is significant because the four theatre artists generally accepted as founders and inventors of the contemporary genre, Jacques Lecoq, Giorgio Strehler, Giovanni Poli and Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, are still present within living memory of the second generation, and in some cases the third generation of its practitioners (Crick 2019). The memory of their working practices still exists as a guiding force within practitioners today. Associated with these four exists a raft of significant other luminaries, including but not limited to Amleto Sartori, Dario Fo, Eduardo de Filippo, Leo de Berardinis, and Gianfranco di Boso.² Significantly, the end of the Second World War also signaled an artistic freedom and optimism within which commedia dell'arte, among other art forms, could develop and flourish. The downfall of fascism, especially in Italy, signaled a return to celebrating regional diversity through the arts.

These four founders, of course, did not create their practice in an artistic vacuum. Giovanni Poli,³ for example, mentions Stanislavski's method acting as a key element in his practice, and Lecoq traces his influence in a direct line to Jacques Copeau (1879–1949), who, “considered by many as the fore-father of a new way of making theatre” (Sartori 2015: 140), experimented with using comic masks in contemporary contexts with “Les Copiaus” in 1924 as part of this new approach (Frost and Yarrow 1990: 20–30). Copeau also trained Charles Dullin (1885–1949), who then inspired a young Pierre-Louis Duchatre to find out more about commedia dell'arte, resulting in the 1925 book (translated into English in 1929) *The Italian Comedy*, a work of seminal scholarship on commedia dell'arte. In Russia, Konstantin Mikaleševski (1886–1944) published a first draft in 1925 in Meyerhold's *Journal of Dr. Dapertutto*, what was later to become the book *La Commedia dell'Arte* (1927) (published under the nom de plume of Constant Mic). Meyerhold himself experimented with commedia dell'arte, both in terms of creating work from a scenario rather than a full script and in the physical preparation of an actor (Frost and Yarrow 1990: 18–19). Etienne Decroux, the inventor of expressive Mime, was also a pupil of Copeau and also had as his pupil Marisa Flach, who was one of the artists responsible for movement training for Giorgio Strehler. Copeau's influences included Maurice Sand's illustrated book *Masques et Bouffons* (1862) and a friendship with Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966), whose theatrical periodical *The Mask* (1908–1929) proselytized for, amongst other things, a return to the spirit of the historical commedia dell'arte. It is within this reflexive web of practice, influence, and inspiration that the founders and reinventors of commedia dell'arte operated.

Although the end of the Second World War can be seen as catalyzing artistic expression and the war itself potentially as only temporary blockage in artistic development, if there was one single event that signified the start of the current wave of reinvention, it was the meeting of Jacques Lecoq and Amleto Sartori at the University of Padua. Lecoq saw the masks produced by Amleto Sartori

for a production of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, directed by Gianfranco De Bosio in 1948 (Sartori 2015: 143). He subsequently invited Sartori, the then professor of sculpture, to his classes, where his students were busy making their own version of Copeau's Noble Mask, and "with great respect and some compassion" (144) Sartori noted the masks were neutral only in name and announced he would take over the mask making. Later, Lecoq brought Sartori to the attention of Giorgio Strehler, and since then, Sartori masks have been associated with the Piccolo Theatre of Milan's canonical production of Carlo Goldoni's *Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters*. Lecoq took Sartori masks with him when founded his (still running) school in Paris, and Mazzone-Clementi took a set of Sartori masks with him when he went to the United States. The intense focus on developing commedia through corporal acting or mime dramatique postwar is arguably different from the reinvention of Copeau, because of the specialist artistic expertise introduced by Donato Sartori (2015: 143). The design and finish of the Sartori masks arguably presented both actor and audience member with the ideal comedic vehicle for the genre.

In 1946, the Piccolo Theatre of Milan reopened after the war and in 1947 introduced the world to Giorgio Strehler's adaptation of Carlo Goldoni's *Il servitore di due padroni* (1753), retitled *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni* (Malia 2013: x). This show, now in about its tenth reincarnation, is still in repertoire and is arguably the most canonical of commedia shows within both the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Both Goldoni's script and Strehler's various productions of it are significant to contemporary Commedia.

Goldoni captured Commedia as it was dying, diluted and disfigured, to record . . . the rhythmic system, the rhetoric and construction. . . *The Servant of Two Masters* holds keys to unlock techniques of rehearsal, construction and performance that make Commedia such a success. If we peel away Goldoni's words, what is revealed represents the scaffold on which the architects and storytellers of Commedia built their improvised scenarios.
(Hopkins 2015: 480)

And whilst Strehler was conscious that what he was not doing was recreating commedia dell'arte, what he did do was to create a blueprint that showed what it might have been like, and by doing so inspired many who saw the production to make the attempt.⁴ This volume is arguably a result of that inspiration and, presenting to us a collection of scenarios previously unavailable in the English language, shows us from what few written words the ancient commedia actors constructed their performances. This, surely, required the virtuoso skills for which they were renowned and which are now the stock in trade of current teachers such as Carlo Boso, Antonio Fava, and the two schools founded by Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, appropriately enough called Dell'Arte and Commedia.⁵

Notes

- 1 Regarding the relationship between commedia dell'arte and Stanislavski and Meyerhold, see Douglas Clayton (2015) and Ruffini (2018); for Jacques Copeau, see Consolini (2018); more in particular, for the staging of Carlo Gozzi's commedia dell'arte plays by Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, and Brecht see Vazzoler (2018); for Max Reinhardt's staging of Carlo Goldoni, see Fischer-Lichte (2018).
- 2 For the relationship between Eduardo de Filippo and commedia dell'arte, see Megale (2018); for Leo de Berardinis, see Filacanapa (2015b).
- 3 Regarding Giovanni Poli and the commedia dell'arte, see Filacanapa (2015a).
- 4 For an overview of the relationship between commedia dell'arte and experimental theatre, see Schino (2018)
- 5 On Carlo Boso and the commedia dell'arte, see Cottis (2015); for Antonio Fava see Rudlin (2015); for Mazzone-Clementi see Schirle (2015).

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

As Antoine Berman has noted in his “negative analytic” of translation, every translator is “inescapably exposed” to a play of “deforming forces,” a system that is the “internalized expression of a two-millennium-old tradition, as well as the ethnocentric structure of every culture, every language.” Thus, Berman continues, only languages that are “cultivated” translate (2000: 286). When a nonstandard literary – or non-cultivated – language is used, a triangulation between the source text, “standard translation,” and new “deviant or heterodox” translation becomes unavoidable. In this case, however, the nonstandard literary language is not the one chosen by the translator but is the one of the source. As a result, the “deforming forces” – ethnocentric, annexationist, etc. – characterize the reader’s expectations more rather than the translator’s intent. The language of the commedia dell’arte scenarios are “practical, unadorned, and repetitive, sometimes descending to a kind of telegraphese” (Andrews 2008: li) arguably being more “a record of *orality* than of *literacy*” (Heck 2001: 1). In the present English edition of some of the commedia dell’arte scenarios, we have tried to reproduce as much as possible the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the original, with its terseness, use of repetition, and some technical jargon. When needed, the text has been expanded for clarification through the use of square brackets or endnotes for more complex points. Most proper names have been regularized (e.g., Pulcinella for Policinella, Orazio for Oratio or Oracio, etc.). Dottore and Capitano, despite referring to professions, have been treated as proper names, like Pantalone, and the article ‘the’ has thus been omitted. For clarity, when characters in a scenario refer to Dottore and Capitano, but they mean their profession, we have used ‘the doctor’ or ‘the captain’ instead. We have also kept the original elision of the ‘e’ in Dottore, when followed by the proper name Graziano, as it is the case in the original scenarios by Scala (Dottor Graziano). In addition, some scenarios constantly switch, for example, between Dottore and Graziano or Zanni and

Ganassa, or Pantalone and Magnifico. The list of characters might list Dottore, but the scenario itself might only use Graziano instead. We have decided not to substitute the stage name for the given name for the sake of clarity and opted instead for being faithful to the original.

A few editorial interventions were nonetheless necessary. For clarity, we have introduced a more modern use of punctuation, and certain words – especially if of a technical nature – have not been translated: the word ‘lazzo,’ being so pervasive, does not appear as italicized, while all the other foreign words (for example, *burla*) appear in italics. The only technical word that has been translated is the phrase used to usually end a scene: *in questo* or *in quello*. Here, following Richard Andrews (2008: 1–li), we have accepted the suggestion of Corinna Salvadori Lonergan and translated the phrase as *next* and in italics, because of its technical status.¹ In addition, we have included uninterrupted scene numbers (i.e., they do not restart with the beginning of each act) even when numbering was not present in the original. These numbers, we think, might make it easier for actors or students when referring to specific passages. We have also adopted Ferruccio Marotti’s strategy for newly entering characters: those who cannot syntactically introduce the opening scene are listed in square brackets (1976).

To conclude, a few words regarding the hypothetical stage layout for the performance of commedia dell’arte scenarios, with the typical houses on both sides of a street (see Figure I.4), and “with practicable doors for the entrances and exits of the different characters, and windows from which the characters can witness to the events happening in ‘the street’” (Alberti 1996: 19). In some scenarios the use of ‘enter’ and ‘exit,’ as a result, might create some confusion in the English language, as a character ‘exiting’ is actually entering the scene (by exiting from one of the houses). We decided not to change the original since the meaning can be easily gleaned from the context.

Note

- 1 Thomas Heck (2001) has opted, for his translation of the scenarios in the Casamarciano’s collection, for the unitalicized ‘at that.’



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

PART I

An introduction to *commedia dell'arte*



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

INTRODUCTION

The dramaturgy of the commedia dell'arte

Sergio Costola

The *secret* of the commedia dell'arte

To study and analyze the dramaturgy of the commedia dell'arte, regarded by both scholars and practitioners “as one of the most significant phenomena in the history of European theatre” (Vianello 2018: 1), is a rather difficult task because the term, as Ludovico Zorzi (1990) points out, improperly refers to a “confused multitude of pure epiphenomena” (149)¹ that, for convenience, have been grouped under this denomination. In addition, the commedia dell'arte, according to Ferdinando Taviani, is not a well-defined theatrical form, as certain forms of Asian theatre are:

Whether the composition of its style is reduced only to the masks and fixed characters . . . , or analyzed as a multifarious interlacement of different strands . . . , it is always an analysis that takes for granted the historical existence of a codified style of theatre, with its fixed attributes, and with the persistence of a tradition. It is not thus a surprise if, after having read the books, enthusiasts and scholars of foreign theatres come to Italy and ask where they can see commedia dell'arte performances, as they would ask, going to Japan, India, or China, where they could see some good Noh theatre, a good example of Beijing Opera or Kathakali. . . . The illusion that the theatrical genre ‘Commedia dell’Arte’ existed in Italy . . . does not have historical and material roots, if not in the ways in which the commercial expertise of the Italian actors took advantage of the system of organization of the Parisian theatres, which was based on the specialization and the monopoly of genres.

(Taviani and Schino 1982: 308)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003100676-2

4 An introduction to commedia dell'arte

At the basis of the commedia dell'arte there isn't a form, but its fame. Of the commedia dell'arte, in fact, only its skeleton has been preserved – the scenarios published by Flaminio Scala and the ones of the different manuscript traditions. These scenarios, according to Ferdinando Taviani, cannot be considered as a specific form but only as a different level of dramaturgy and a different level of preservation.²

It would be useful to begin by first taking into consideration the denomination itself and also, although briefly, those firm points concerning the history of this theatrical 'form' by mentioning some of the most recent acquisitions that have been the result of the careful archival work conducted in prevalence by Italian scholars, to whom we owe, starting with the 1970s, the rectification of some of the myths that had developed around the commedia dell'arte. Benedetto Croce (1933) had already pointed out how the denomination of the commedia dell'arte was to be intended in the sense of "profession and craft," since this was the meaning of the word 'arte' in old Italian:

These were not theatrical representations performed by occasional actors, students, academicians, jolly fellows, members of confraternities, or similar people; instead, this was industrialized theatre, characterized by the formation of companies regulated by contracts and statutes, by masters and apprentices, by the knowledge of a craft that was handed down from father to son, and from mother to daughter, and by the exercise of that industry traveling from one city to another.

(503)

The expression commedia dell'arte, in fact, cannot be found before the eighteenth century, and the phenomenon that began around the middle of the sixteenth century was called different names by different cultural environments: *commedia all'improvviso*, *commedia degli Zanni*, *commedia delle maschere*, *commedia mercenaria*, *comédie italienne*. 'To be in art' simply meant to exercise the acting profession, to be part of a guild – *corporazione* – according to the medieval acceptance of the term.

"The growth and development" of this theatre, Benedetto Croce insists, "took place in the middle of a literary and spiritual decadence" (505), so that "the commedia dell'arte was nothing more than this: clownish theatre" (506), rather than "poetry or art in a strict aesthetic sense" (510). This view, although not completely incorrect, was nonetheless partial in its delimitation of the term 'arte' to only its professional aspect and thus ended up obscuring the aesthetic side of the phenomenon, allowing for the subsequent proliferation of myths around the commedia dell'arte. Even today, if we look at tertiary sources – especially in the English language – the commedia dell'arte is still primarily characterized as a street theatre of popular origins that could rely on the absence of a play-script and that was based on the mimetic and gestural skills of an actor who, unable to read and write, was improvising farces for the entertainment of an unsophisticated audience.³

As Laura Falavolti (1988) argues, “there is a dominant tendency nowadays to consider its actors’ professionalism as the main characteristic of the *commedia dell’arte* and also, turning this line of reasoning on its head, to consider the *dell’arte* actors as the first real theatre professionals” (12). As we shall see, the *comici*’s professionalism should not go at the expense of a wider acceptance of the term ‘art.’ In the first of the two prologues to the comedy *Il finto marito* – a fully written comedy that was based on an original scenario by the same author – Flaminio Scala defines his idea of dramatic composition and, at the same time, offers us an idea of the *commedia dell’arte*. It is worth mentioning a passage from this prologue:

Comedian. I think that the true art of making comedies resides in those who perform them well because, if experience is the teacher of all things, it can teach to those who already possess the spirit for forming and best representing the theatrical subjects, and for writing them down; unless the person in question was born in Voltolino, or any other place where people write *I* when they should write *me*. But what does this art, by grace, consist in?

Foreigner. It consists in preserving the precepts and in imitating as much as possible.

Comedian. Who then can better know the precepts of the acting art than the comedians themselves, who exercise it daily by practicing it and by learning from using it? And who can better possess the true art of imitation than them, who not only imitate the effects and properties of actions, but also, by introducing different idioms, must imitate in the best possible way, not only with their own idiom, but also with all the others? Because if a Florentine would try to speak Venetian, and the Venetian the idiom of Bergamo, we would reward them by throwing vegetables.⁴

It is a declaration of a new poetic and at the same time an ideology for defending a novel way of doing theatre: not only the pure and simple defense of a technique that could allow the manufacture of a product suitable for the tastes of a variegated audience but also the claim to a ‘know-how’ that was at the very basis of a new idea of art and thus a new culture. Numerous scholars have in fact pointed out that Scala’s insistence on the value of experience rather than tradition finds a parallel in the experimental method that Galileo Galilei will develop between 1624 and 1630 and then describe a couple of years later in 1632 in his *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* – a parallel that makes the *commedia dell’arte* part of those major upheavals that characterized the sixteenth century.⁵

As Francesco Cotticelli reminds us,

We cannot rule out the possibility that the *commedia dell’arte* became, at times, just that: the pleasure of *mise-en-scène* for its own sake, lazzi (comic

6 An introduction to commedia dell'arte

routines) and acrobatics performed without regard to context, novelty without the slightest pretense of lasting, hardened traditions incapable of renewal. It was successful, however, despite being an anomalous and hazardous enterprise, and flourished in the juncture between the *absence* of the text and its *open-ended* presence (as proposed by F. Taviani), where the author merged with the actor.

(2001a: vol. 1, 12)

Let us see, then, what were the origins of this “anomalous and hazardous enterprise.”

The birth of the commedia dell'arte

On 25 February 1545, some “comrades” – Ser Maphio, Vincentio da Venezia, Francesco da la lira, Hieronimo da S. Luca, Zuoandomenego detto Rizo, Zuane da Treviso, Tofano de Bastian, and Francesco Moschini – went to a notary from Padua to constitute “a brotherhood” that should last for a whole year “without any hatred, rancor and dissolution.”⁶ Scholars have endowed this document with a symbolic value, since it is considered to be the oldest document to witness the birth of the first theatre troupe of professional actors. Among the things that these comrades “together concluded and deliberated,” there was the election of a “leader in the reciting of his comedies from place to place,” said Ser Maphio, who would “take control” of “how to recite the comedies” and who would create a “little box” with three keys, where to keep “the potential profits.” Who were these eight men? What kinds of comedies did they perform? How were they staged? What was the difference with the kind of theatre that had preceded them? Cesare Molinari (1999), despite the lack of precise documents in this regard, answers these questions convincingly: the *capocomico*, Maffeo dei Re, was probably a man of a certain culture and economic ease who, at one point, driven by his passion for the theatre, joined other craftsmen to be able to perform “his comedies.” What the document means by “his comedies” we cannot know. However, we know that by the middle of the sixteenth century, Italian dramatic literature could already count on a rich repertoire: apart from the texts by Plautus and Terence, the company could also draw on the texts of the so-called *commedia erudita* (learned comedy) – that is, those texts that had been written and represented at court since the early years of the sixteenth century (Ariosto, Machiavelli, Ruzante, Bibiena, and Aretino, to name but a few). Molinari also assumes the presence of original texts written by the same Maffeo dei Re. Furthermore, the scholar continues, these texts were no longer memorized and recited *ad verbum* but staged in a new way:

The actors read or listen to the director while reading the play, they memorize the main points and then they go ad lib, chasing the fragments of

their memory. Then they will find more comfortable to simply summarize the comedy in a *canovaccio*, in a *scenario*, as more precisely it was said to indicate that the plot of the play was not merely summarized, but described scene by scene, event by event. This would also explain why so many *canovacci* collected by the amateur Basilio Locatelli, as well as the others most likely owned by professional companies such as the seventeenth century *Raccolta di scenari più scelti di histrioni* (known now as *scenari Correr*), are nothing more than well-known ancient and modern comedies reduced to a scenario.

(viii)

As most scholars nowadays agree, the commedia dell'arte will fully come into existence only a couple of decades later, in 1564 – another symbolic date – with the arrival of the actresses. In fact, until this point, the female roles were acted by men or boys, as it had also been the case in the Roman theatre and court theatre in the early sixteenth century. With the arrival of women, while “the structure of the ‘regular’ comedy” remained the same, it was nonetheless “violated” because “so much room was reserved to the monologues of these characters whose main characteristic was their ‘eloquence.’”⁷ In 1564 a contract similar to that of 1545 was stipulated in Rome; the novelty of no small importance was the presence of a certain Lucrezia Sienese, probably an actress, but of whom we know only the name.

The companies and their composition

The arrival of women on stage also helped define the basic structure that will then characterize for a long time the commedia dell'arte companies. The characters of this theatrical ‘form’ can be divided into two main categories: fixed and moving parts. Among the fixed parts there are the characters without a mask – although it is quite inappropriate to speak of characters without a mask, even for those without one on their faces – which can vary in number: there are the *Innamorato* (young male lover) and the *Innamorata* (young female lover), and the scenarios can present one, two, three, or sometimes more pairs of this type; among the fixed parts there are also the two *Vecchi* (old men: Pantalone and Dottore, for example); and the two servants or *Zanni*. Among the moving parts, instead, there are the Capitano, the Maid, the Innkeeper, and many other figures depending on the genre of the play and needs of the scenario (the magician, the sorceress, various animals, etc.) The different characters can also be divided into serious and comic parts,⁸ as can be seen from the scheme (see Figure I.1) proposed by Ludovico Zorzi (1990), who also reminds us that this set of characters, with a few substitutions and variations, reappears with great frequency not only in the theatre of Flaminio Scala but also in the whole tradition of the commedia dell'arte that has come down to us:

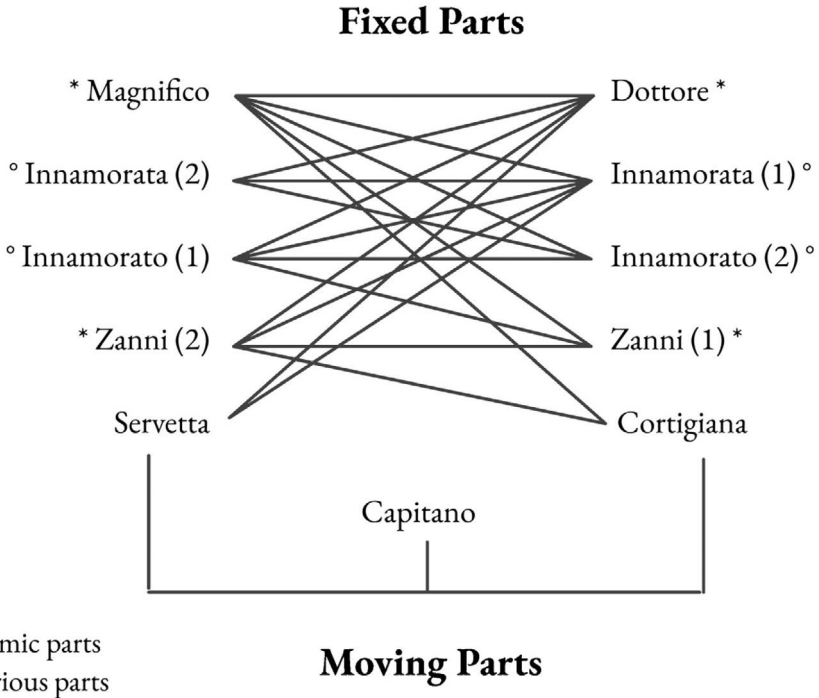


FIGURE 1.1 Scheme of a typical scenario. Author’s reconstruction and translation of the image created by Ludovico Zorzi (1980: 434).

The last symbolic date, that of 1564, also coincided with the emergence and proliferation of professional acting troupes: by the early seventeenth century, those companies that will characterize the golden age of the commedia dell’arte had already been formed.

The Gelosi (1568)

First recorded as performing in Milan in 1568, the company was performing in Paris in 1571, showing how “the nomadic vocation of Italian actors” was “already clear since these remote times” (Molinari 1999: xxii). The Gelosi comprised some of the most important commedia dell’arte actors of the time; Francesco Andreini, in a passage of his *Le Bravure del Capitano Spavento*,⁹ describes his interaction with the Gelosi Company and names its actors and characters:

“Not only did I meet him [Dottor Graziano], named Ludovico da Bologna, but I also met Giulio Pasquati from Padua, who played Pantalone; Simone da Bologna, who played Zanni; Gabriele da Bologna, who played Francatrippa; Orazio from Padua, who played the *innamorato*; Adriani Valerini from Verona, who also played the same; Girolamo Salimbeni from

Florence, who played the Florentine old man, called Zanobio, and also Piombino; Mrs. Isabella Andreini from Padua, who played the *prima donna innamorata*; Mrs. Prudenza from Verona, who played the *seconda donna*; Mrs. Silvia Roncagli from Bergamo, who played Franceschina, and a certain Francesco Andreini, husband to Mrs. Isabella, who played the part of a superb and boasting Capitano and who, if I remember correctly, called himself Capitano Spavento da Valle Inferna.”¹⁰

At the head of this company there were, since 1578, Francesco Andreini and his wife Isabella, both of them among the first examples of actor–authors. The death of Isabella, which occurred in 1604 during her stay in France, is used to symbolically mark the end of the company.

The Confidenti (1572)

One of the most long-lasting companies – we have documents testifying their existence as late as 1640 – in 1612 they accepted the patronage of Giovanni de’ Medici, thus abandoning what had been the cooperative organizational and hierarchical structure of the first commedia dell’arte troupes (Molinari 1999: xxii).¹¹ According to Siro Ferrone, the generic denomination of Confidenti, with which scholars have often grouped those Italian actors performing in France and Spain in the 1570s and 1580s, “most probably does not refer to a specific company but needs to be considered as an illustrious denomination freely used by the actors to achieve prestige” (2014: 290–291). Scholars have even argued for the existence of two different companies with the same name: the one initially led by Vittoria Piissimi and operating under the patronage of the Duke of Mantua (1574–1599), and the one managed by Flaminio Scala and under the patronage of Don Giovanni de’ Medici (1611–39) (Crick and Rudlin 2002: 31). Recorded as part of this company were Drusiano Martinelli and his wife, Angelica Alberghini (*prima donna innamorata*), and Tristano Martinelli, Drusiano’s younger brother, the first Harlequin in the history of the commedia dell’arte.

The Uniti (1578)

Led by the famous Dottore Bernardino Lombardi, this company is first recorded playing in Ferrara in 1578 “in the private rooms of the Duchess of Urbino, who was, presumably *en visite*” (Crick and Rudlin 2002: 40). The company played the usual circuit of the Northern Italian cities until the early 1600s and, in a rare case for the commedia dell’arte troupes of these years, there is no record of them having performed abroad. Both Vittoria Piissimi and Isabella Andreini occasionally worked for this company, thus testifying to a reversal of trend in the theatre of the time: “it was no longer the ensembles that enhanced the actresses, but the actresses who enhanced the company” (Ferrone 2014: 146).