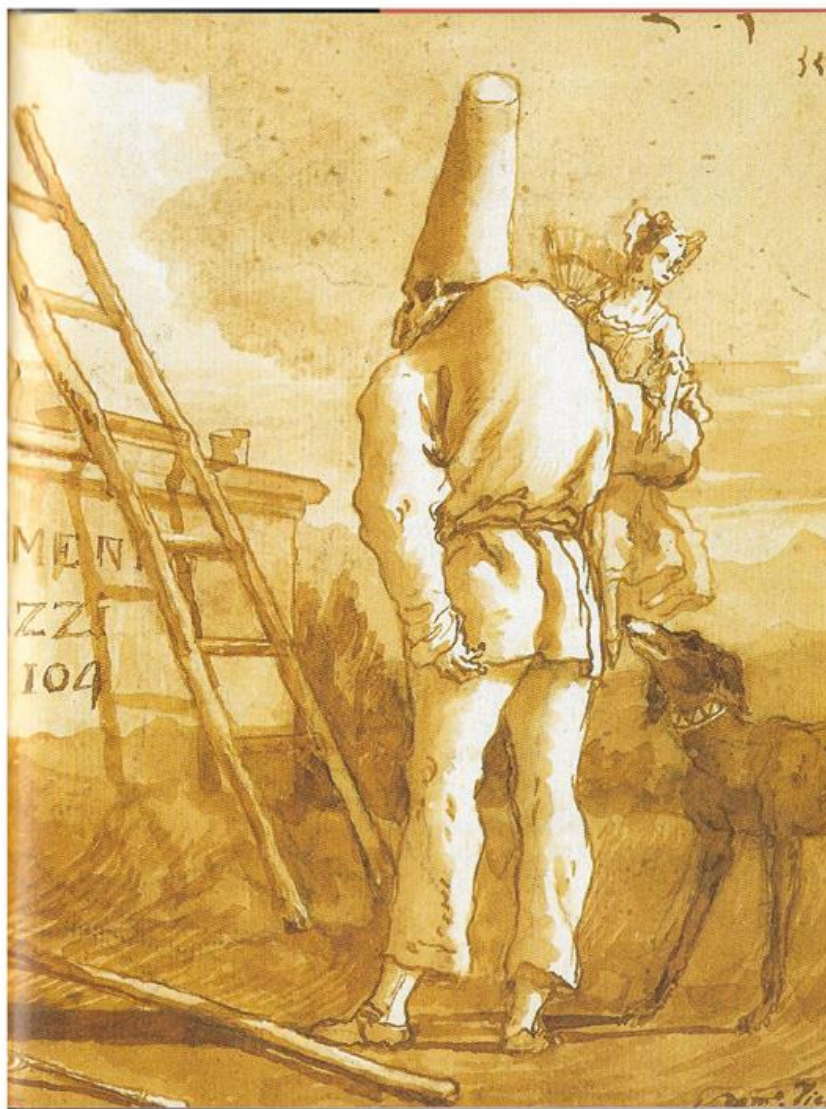




ZANNIZINE

A QUARTERLY ON-LINE MAG DEVOTED TO COMMEDIA





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Contributions to the mag are welcome from all interested in things Commedia – please enquire or send material for consideration to either of the editors:

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or Bill Tuck at bill.tuck@chalemie.co.uk

INTRODUCING THE ZANNIZINE

Zannizine is intended to be a periodical carrying articles about various aspects of Commedia dell'Arte. These articles will be published in the form of a **pdf** document which may either be read on-screen or downloaded. Each issue will be collected under the heading Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. In this way the file will serve as a cumulative record of all the holdings.

This is the **first issue** -- due out in **Spring 2021**.

CommediaZannizine.co.uk is the website host for our magazine. Besides providing access to all issues of the magazine, it will carry short abstracts of articles that will appear in the next issue, along with announcements of events within the Commedia World, such as performances, festivals, films, book reviews, etc.

Why 'Zanni'?

His name puts him as the last, though not the least of the Masks of the Commedia – actually there was a Zorg and a Zuccarino listed by Allardyce Nicoll – of which little more than their names are known, both were in fact Zanni, for as you know the word Zanni, the form being the same in singular and plural, can be used in a generic sense to refer to any or all of the male servant Masks of the Commedia dell'Arte, but also identifies a very specific character, one who appears from the earliest times and here represents the past - Commedia dell'Arte's near on five hundred glorious years; the early days of setting up in the streets and market places of Italy, the later performances at royal and ducal courts, the acclamation of kings and the establishment under their protection in the great cities of Europe, the eventual invasion of Britain and the transformation to Pantomime - Grimaldi, Rich, and Garrick too. The Victorian Harlequinade. Fokine's 'Carnaval' and 1920's figurines dancing across many an Art Deco mantelpiece.

Why 'Zine'?

Ah, Zine is a new word. A mere contraction. But experiment, say it with an upward inflection. Sing it, shout it, proclaim, whisper it. Then try the whole word. Zannizine. Whisper it into someone ear!
"Have you heard about the Zannizine. Shush Pass it on!"

"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

THE NOBLE KNIGHT OF AVIGNON

A Tribute to Ninian Kinnier-Wilson (1953 - 2013)

Actor and Mask Maker

By John Broadbent

A snap shot -

A summers evening, the setting sun casting long shadows in the Esplanade at Avignon. Backdrop – the towering Palais du Papes, foreground a six-foot high trestle stage and an enthusiastic crowd of more than 2000 people looking on expectantly. Centre stage is the dashing figure of an English Captain long haired and bearded, bowing to his love, the first Actress. He looks like Falstaff in silhouette and engages the crowd with his graceful wit and sheer.... stupidity -- he's wooing his lady, but forgetful that another young maiden -the one he kidnapped in the previous scene -- is still draped over his shoulder in a dead faint!

Nin was a strong performer physically – and yet at over eighteen stone in weight his movement was light and precise. It was this courtly manner -- absorbed from his study of the 17th Century – that he projected with such style on the stage. The other actors, mainly French and Italian -- who made up the multi-national cast of the project "le Nuit de la Commedia"-- were captivated by his good manners and also his passion for history.

The Night of Comedy consisted of three shows involving 24 European actors, playing from midnight until sunrise at the Avignon Festival, on a balmy night in July 1983. It was the culmination of intensive training in a variety of skills: character study, improvisation, mime, acrobatics and duelling. Nin had come to study before the Master of Drama Carlo Boso and the Mask-making Supremo, Stefano Perocco. Six weeks later he left -- fitter, wiser and enchanted with theatre.

For Nin, Avignon was a game changer; it fired his determination to return home and set up a touring company back in England. The result was a professional English Commedia Troupe "The Unfortunati" dedicated to improvising their own material and living a nomadic lifestyle in the manner of the troupes of old. It was a noble cause that he persued with great energy down the years. The Unfortunati had been developing over a number of seasons within the English Civil War Society thanks to the vision and drive of not just Ninian, but Angela and John Glennard and other members of ECWS who performed on Village greens and in beer gardens across England before it went fully professional in 1983.

Following three hard years of touring in Britain and Europe, Nin left the troupe to set up as a full-time mask maker. It was a bold and risky decision but he did it -- not to distance himself from the Commedia stage -- but rather to get closer to it,



by giving himself the space and time for intensive research. The results of the subsequent twenty years of work he undertook in this field are a range of masks which today stand comparison with the finest in the genre.

Those years were also spent in continued support of fledgling companies such as The Fortunati, Ophaboom and countless students of Youth Theatre and Colleges. Nin, a self-styled hermit, was never fully isolated in his chosen home of Liverpool and was highly regarded by the wider European Commedia family -- as evidenced by the glowing tributes from colleagues overseas who recognized his input into international festivals like the annual Harlekin Art Projects in France and Germany. In 2003 he helped to found Commediaworks in collaboration with Didi Hopkins. In the next ten years they went on to inspire Drama teachers and students in many workshops, inset training days and summer platform shows at the National theatre and wider afield.

All the while, Nin would lead master classes for the making of masks in leather. The care he took with each of his students -- guiding them through the rigours of clay modelling, wood carving and leather work -- was emotionally exhausting. He said it took a longer time to recover after a workshop than it did to run it. Of course he knew why, he was giving something of his soul to each participant. A high price to pay but there are many mask makers and carvers out there now who will readily acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

A Nin mask is a thing of beauty; a combination of harmonious lines and bold curves that look pleasing to the eye. However, when used in performance it can be a trap for the actor who may be unaware of the range of movement needed to bring it fully to life. There's a good reason for this -- the lines and curves are not mere decoration; they form the visible part the characters DNA and a record of its life story. The lines reflect the rigours of the long dusty trail from field to City and the struggles for survival on the Piazza where paths cross and dramas begin.... From the itinerant hungry-eyed Zanni, to the obsequious yet scheming Inn keeper Brighella, to the stubborn, calculating Merchant Pantalone -- worrying more about his ships at sea than his off-spring's future happiness. Colourful masks for colourful characters, captured and rendered in an animal skin.

Nin's artistic challenge was to get all that necessary information subtly into the mask -- for the actor to discover, to develop and to amplify. Funny, you can't see these qualities when you wear the mask and yet somehow the mask guides your movement and your state of mind -- that's the black art, the magic and mischief of the mask maker -- it's what informs the work of the truly great one: Ameleto and Donato Sartori, Stefano Perocco and yes, Ninian

Nin saw the world of the Commedia as a family, so it's appropriate that we celebrate his life in this first issue of this new online magazine. He was dedicated to the exchange of knowledge and ideas -- especially dialogue and support between artists.



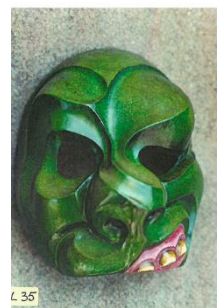
In his teaching of the skills of the Commedia Nin put the emphasis on “the Troupe” a lifestyle choice. First the troupe had to be able to break bread together, talk, laugh and share ideas without ego or personal ambition. The rewards of the work were shared equally -- it didn’t matter who in the end created a good lazzi a funny routine or found the perfect denouement for the finale; it was more important that the conditions be created in which good work prospered. A spirit of co-operation had to be found to enable the troupe to care for itself -- that meant a family unit, living by a simple code. Not always easy!



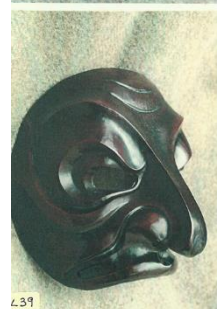
In later years he was still making masks for a variety of uses, but he never advertised -- you had to seek him out to earn the right to place an order. Theatre friends would drop by as various groups performing in Liverpool passed through and they were always welcomed with great hospitality. It’s how he lived, poor, without compromise -- yet he was so generous to all of us.



I’m sure that he would want his masks to live on and continue to be re-interpreted by a new generation of actors and I hope we can also keep alive his memory by sharing our recollections of him online. Nin might not approve of this though -- he famously didn’t get on with computers; his interpretation of the instruction “re-boot” once led to the sudden demise of a PC that he thought had an attitude problem!



Nin’s best computer was the box containing his carving tools, wood blocks and leather (no power switch -- just a workbench, an apron and a bottle of good red wine for the mask maker) and hey presto, Masks -- real Software. To run a program just click your fingers and summon a Zanni on stage and then be transported by it’s flight of fancy..... to the Moon, the depths of the Ocean, or the summit of Everest -- while enduring every emotion -- all in 3D, all in “sensurround”, “feelaround” and “smellavision” (Flopsweat!)



Commedia: improvised, imperfect and unpredictable. In a world where all entertainment is stage managed and our music, our football, all our spontaneous pleasures are seized and made fit for profit, the simple act of mounting a stage, banging a drum to summon the public and putting the world on trial, is still the actor’s true role. In my last talk with Nin we agreed on this and he felt strongly that Commedia troupes are needed more than ever now -- to criticise society in a serious but joyful way.



And so to his final bow and another snap shot...

Covent Garden, a Summer’s day, another trestle stage and a large expectant audience. Nin’s Captain -- having messed up again -- stalks the stage anxiously looking for a means of escape. Just then, the audience parts as a Westminster Corporation dust cart enters the piazza to disturb the show. In a flash the Captain cries out “Come Harlequin, we must away to pastures new!” and leaps across onto the back of the lorry, to the great delight of the crowd.



So he takes his leave of us, dignified, atop a pile of rubbish, carrying his head high, chugging towards the setting sun and still tilting at windmills. What an exit, what a Noble knight.

John Broadbent

Ninian Kinnier-Wilson, born 19th September 1953 -- died 8th February 2013. His Funeral was held at the Rosemary Chapel, Springwood Crematorium, Liverpool on 25th February 2013



THE BALEFUL INFLUENCE OF 'FUNNY WALKS'

BARRY GRANTHAM'S DESPERATE PLEA

As you may have gathered from the title my aim is to shoot down, demolish and banish the currently held idea that the Masks of the Commedia dell'Arte were each shackled with his own 'Funny Walk' (hereinafter referred to as FWs), that they could barely make an entrance or cross the stage without employing them and that they were as much a part of the Commedia dell'Arte as the masks and the improvisation. My stand is that it was never so - that is until its fairly recent proliferation - never in the early open-air days in markets and piazzas, nor in the golden years of the great companies at royal and ducal courts. Never - till perhaps the debased late 19th century Commedia or more likely the efforts of enthusiastic amateurs seeking to recreate an ancient art in the 1920s and 30s.

Commedia is not unmotivated farce. In fact, I require that all aspects of it are as strictly motivated as any Stanislavsky could wish. In Commedia the actions are then exaggerated in the same way that graphic cartoons are an exaggeration of a truth. For example: Pantalone is angry with Arlecchino - the anger has a motive, a reason, however the kick he gives his servant is preceded by a comic preparation, and Arlecchino's reaction is to do a somersault. But an actor must adapt his movement to the dramatic situation of the moment, in line with idiosyncrasies of the character. If he is angry he will walk a certain way. If he is in love, another. If afraid, his step will be hesitant in advances and swift in retreat. How can these subtleties possibly be achieved if he is obliged to pounce about with pointed toes or assume a prescribed rolling gait throughout? Let's start with an extreme case. Last week I read the following which had my shackles (whatever they are) rise to a white heat of indignation:

'Pulcinella – derives from the Italian noun 'pulcino', meaning 'chick'. Thus while playing the role, Pulcinella should imitate the 'chicken walk', knees raised in an exaggerated step and leaning back, with neck and head going forward and back in the characteristic 'pecking' move.'

These instructions are so palpably ridiculous that it is almost sufficiently self-condemnatory for me to have no need for further exposition for my thesis. However, there are more characters waiting in the wings to afflict this perversity on an already disenchanted public.

The performance opens with Zanni, who comes on to lay the foundation of the plot

Oh, dear! The poor actor is uncertain as to whether he should be doing the 'Little' or the 'Big' Zanni walk. As it is, he finds it extremely awkward; he is hopping from one leg to the other and assiduously pointing his toes as recommended by some authorities. As we know, Zanni represents a working man; have you ever seen a working man pointing his toes? Does your postman come up the garden path hopping from one foot to the other and pointing his toes? How about the dustman? Imagine a building site, the workmen carrying ladders, or buckets of cement, erecting scaffolding and going for their lunch pointing their toes throughout. Of course they don't - and they didn't in the 17th century.

Ah, this must be Pantalone!

Yes, he is certainly very old. A nonagenarian at least; '*lean and slippered, His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide for his shrunk shank*'. His FW is a sort of pitter-patter which I fear he will maintain throughout the entire play, whatever the motive or stimulus. He starts to speak - yes, you've guessed it - '*a childish treble. Pipes and whistles in his sound*'. Oh, blast Mr Shakespeare for misleading us so. The Pantalone of the extant scenarios is a father with a teenage daughter or son, not a grandfather and many illustrations show him as still powerful. That's enough of this Pantalone and I'm straying from the FWs!

Here comes Il Capitano Coccodrillo, or is it Giangurgolo?

He is splendidly dressed, masked, and hatted. He proceeds this-wise: putting his weight on his left foot, he swishes through with his right leg raising it to about waist height with the knee bent, and then rises on the ball of the left foot before striding forward on the right to repeat the movement on the other side.. (this move is almost certainly inspired by the picture illustrated) This is not a FW but a perfectly acceptable Commedia exaggeration of *Creeping - a move stealthily or timidly made*. If appropriate to the dramatic situation, for example when the Captain finds himself in a position of danger and decides on a tactical retreat which he hopes no one will notice - it is 'good' Commedia. But it is not a move suitable for his first entrance when his bravado has not yet been punctured.



On comes the Innamorato leading his Innamorata

Ah, at last, the first of the cast to be spared FWs. Bravo! But perhaps they are just the ones who might have had FWs. For they indeed would point their toes, sway the hips, posture in exaggerated balletic positions - in parody of the aristocrats they portrayed. But this is a joke that no longer works for us. And it is better for those playing the pair, to gain laughter by the wit of their dialogue and applause for the sincerity of their acting.

We await Arlecchino; will his FW be 'Step-ball-changes' or 'Pas de Basques'? *

Here he is - step-ball-changes - well that's not as bad as Pas de Basques *- note how prettily he points his toes - This is Harlequin, not Arlecchino, whose comic role was stolen by Grimaldi. Harlequin is a dancer and he points his toes, and might well do step-ball-changes (or 'the three rhythm' as non-dancers call it). It goes like this: step forward on right, draw left foot up behind right and momentarily take the weight with it, re-step forward with right - repeat on left. The problem is that they delay

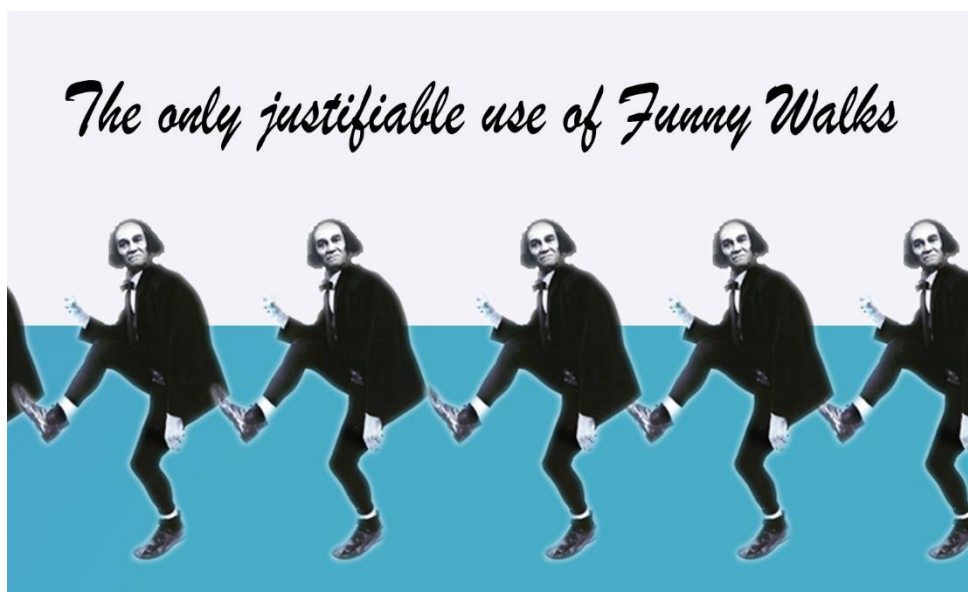
the character's progression, which may not matter in a ballet but does in a play. Arlecchino's natural movement is a 'run' - and 'natural' is actually far funnier than any FW. He runs - like most humans, heels first - he doesn't point his toes - he doesn't run in a 3 rhythm. He runs because he wants to get there. He runs because there might be sausages in the kitchen - He runs because he might catch Franceschina in the larder - the eternal optimist. On an errand he runs to please his young master or just to get the task over sooner. He runs as quick as he can - if you hold him by the collar he runs on the spot. He runs cos he needs a shit. He runs because he is afraid of a beating! If you were afraid of a beating would you do step-ball-changes? Would you, hell?

Now, as some may know, I am something of an authority on Eccentric Dancing and consequently of FWs, but I decry their indiscriminate adoption in Commedia and therefore I appeal to actors, directors, teachers, practitioners: I beg you, let us expunge FWs from the noble art of the Commedia that it may survive and flourish as true theatre.

Barry Grantham

* Pas de Basques - also a step of three movements which is common in Italian folk dancing - you start with a step or leap to the side with the right then carry the left to fourth position in front of the left and draw up the right to join it. When used by Arlecchino it is very irritating.

If any academic or teacher of Commedia (I rather feel that professional performers will agree with me) would care to challenge my assertions and come to an impassioned defence of FWs, citing appropriate authorities, precedent, or tradition, I will (wearing my editor's hat, of course) print your rebuttal alongside my offending article the moment I received it - BG



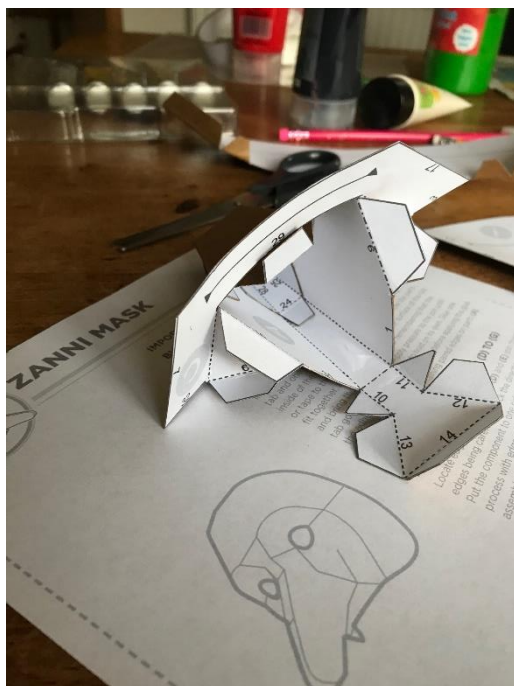
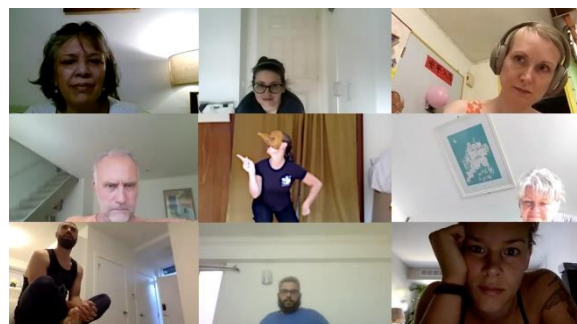
OUT OF HARD TIMES, COME NEW OPPORTUNITIES

CHERYL STAPLETON

I was teaching in Berlin the day that Covid-19 broke out there. The site of the outbreak was Mitte - precisely where I was. The school was abruptly closed and my Commedia masks went back in the suitcase. A case load of commedia characters and I raced to get back home before the world locked down around us. I knew then that using performance masks would have to go on hold for quite a while.

Lockdown conversations

I was determined to not let my creative energies lie fallow, plus I needed to find a way to keep my business going. An idea occurred: I would get in touch with paper-craft mask architect, Steve Wintercroft, who creates digital templates for truly beautiful masks that can be made by anyone, using recycled cardboard. If I could persuade him to make templates for a set of Commedia dell'Arte masks, every student in a class could have their own, with no risk posed from sharing and handling. Whether at home or in class, students could still have a full Commedia dell'Arte experience.



Mask Architecture

The level of craftsmanship that Steve puts into his digital designs is quite extraordinary. He crafts with precision detail, so that every fold, every curve creates an expression and an emotion. I was confident that this idea could work. After several emails back and forth, Steve agreed and we came up with a strategy to produce digital templates for four key characters: Harlequin, Zanni, Pantalone and Capitano. I provided history, images, key features to work with and before long, we had four great designs. Clearly, masks made from cardboard will never be as good as those made from leather or even plastic, but as rehearsal and teaching tools, they are better than alright. If the inside is coated with a sealant, the durability and moisture resistance can be greatly improved, making them even useable for performance. What we have, are effective Commedia dell'Arte masks that can be made, by

a student, as their personal prop and then used in class, in rehearsal - and even performance. They are also a great craft project for anyone with time on their hands.

The digital mask templates are available here: <https://wintercroft.com/collections/our-newest-masks/products/commedia-dell-arte-mask-set>

A Virtual Leap Online

Equipped with the tools for the job, I launched into online learning. I knew teachers were tearing their hair out with how to keep online drama practical and engaging, so I wanted to present some solutions to support them. I also needed to prove to myself that it could work, so I cleared space, dug out costumes, opened my suitcase of masks and started creating videos. One workshop I regularly teach focuses on the influence of Commedia within Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of An Anarchist*, so that's where I began. Performing character comparisons, demonstrating comic techniques and explaining how farce draws on elements of Commedia led to nine videos being uploaded within a week and from there, ideas kept flowing.



Unleashing my masks again and leaping around as Harlequin, gave me immense pleasure – even if my only audience in the room was a camera! After filming and editing various character and Commedia related videos and talking to various teachers, I realised there was more I could offer. Navigating the virtual platforms, I launched live, online training sessions for teachers as CPD. The sessions and content proved hugely popular and led to bookings for virtual theatre classes and further live courses. Now, thanks to wintercroft.com's mask templates, I could also run online mask making and using workshops, proving that out of hard times, great new opportunities can be forged.



A year on and business has never been better! I am teaching sell-out online classes to schools and teachers in every corner of the world - from Casablanca to Ontario, Taiwan to Kenya – and all without ever leaving my dining room! I know how fortunate I am to have remained busy during this past year. I also know that this time has been devastating for many people, for our theatres and for many businesses. As far as teaching goes, I am acutely aware that although much can be taught and shared online,

we will never get the same acting and audience experience; training for actors and artists, in this way, will never replace the need for physical contact and shared experiences.

Although we all began this journey nervously, I believe this pandemic has been the push we needed in many ways. If we had not been forced to venture online for lessons, courses, conferences, performances, we may never have discovered a world of opportunity and connections that are possible without flights, trains, commutes, expenses and office blocks. And when theatres open again, and when rehearsals can begin, we will all fully appreciate just how lucky we are to be here still and able to perform. I'm looking positively to a future where theatre can continue to be shared and enjoyed, in person and remotely, the world over.

Cheryl Stapleton

Founder, Director and Lead Practitioner, Learning Through Theatre

<https://learningthroughtheatre.co.uk>

DANCE IN COMMEDIA

A Celebration of the important role of Dance in Commedia dell'Arte

(This piece recaptures some of the many dance elements in the (Online) Mini-Commedia Festival of 2021 – the other parts are reviewed elsewhere)

For the past few years, it has become the custom to celebrate World Commedia dell'Arte Day on or around the 25 February, the date in 1545 when the first performance contract was signed by a professional theatre company in Padua in Italy.

Commedia dell'Arte and its various offshoots – including English pantomime – has, ever since that date, been a principal source of inspiration for dance, from the cavorting Scaramouche of Lambranzi in 1716 to the Pulcinella of the Stravinsky/Diaghilev ballet two hundred years later. And not only have the characters been a source of inspiration, but commedia, in the form of pantomime, has provided a principal context for dance itself, both serious and comic.



Pierre Dubreil as Scaramouche, c.1700



Klaus Abromeit dances Scaramouche

February 2021, unfortunately, provided no opportunity for a live celebration. Instead, a trawl through the collected video clips from the previous 4 years, during which an annual celebration was held at Sands Film Studios in Rotherhithe, yielded a mass of interesting material that could be readily compiled into a retrospective. It was in this way that a commemorative *Virtual Festival of Commedia* was held over two weekends following the 25th February. As with the Early Dance Circle's 'Virtual Festival' the videos were released on YouTube Premiere and combined with an informal Zoom party for many of those who had been involved in the original performances.

As appropriate, the compilation included a good number of dance items, opening with a splendid evocation of Scaramouche by Klaus Abromeit of the company [L'Autre Pas](#), Berlin, who came to the first commedia festival in

2017 and who had, in fact, been to one of the earliest of the Early Dance Circle's Festivals in 1986 and subsequently invited two London performance groups (including Bill Tuck, Barbara Segal, Steve Player and Barry Grantham) to present shows at the Berlin Tanzwerkstatt in 1987!. Based on the illustrations of this figure in Lambranzi, Klaus's dance showed just how the character might have been realized on the 18th century stage by Pierre Dubreil (as shown above).

The following year Daniele Ruzzier of [Commedia Nova](#), also from Berlin, did a brilliant rendition of Arlecchino, accompanied by Gaby Bultmann on pipe & tabor.



Daniele Ruzzier as Arlecchino,
with Gaby Bultmann

The impact of commedia on music was recognised in an imaginative re-working of the famous (but seldom performed) Stockhausen piece, *Harlekin*, for solo clarinet – performed here by Neyire Ashworth on clarinet and accompanied by Klaus as a wonderfully distressed Harlekin.

Giancino Scelsi is another composer less often heard in the concert hall. Sara Stowe has made a speciality of performing pieces by Scelsi and other modern Italian composers and for our festival in 2019 produced a startling performance from his *Capricorn Suite*, accompanied by Barbara Segal as a dancing puppet.



Sara Stowe and Barbara Segal

More conventional perhaps were the dancing roles of Columbine and Pantalone in a little piece featuring these two characters, reprised by Barbara Segal and Bill Tuck from a performance given some years ago at an EDC Festival. And as a fitting finale to 2018 section, we had the justly celebrated performance of Lambranzi's *Kissing Dance* by Sharon Butler and Colin Holloway of [Pastime Historical Dance Company](#). Space did not permit, unfortunately, for the inclusion of several other dance items from past festivals, including Pastime's re-working of Lambranzi's *Plate Dance* in their piece *Trouble in the Kitchen* or the numerous dances performed outside as part of the *Pulcinella's Grand Parade*.

Next February, we hope to be able to return to normal live performance, so if you would like to participate, get working now on your Lambranzi piece (or any other with a strong 'commedia' theme) and submit it for consideration to the organisers (Barry Grantham and Bill Tuck) of the Mini-Commedia Festival. We have yet to settle on a fixed date, but it will most likely be on the first weekend following the 25th February – **World Commedia dell'Arte Day!**

COMMEDIA MURALS IN THE CARIBBEAN - THE STORY



PULCINELLA'S FAMILY - NAPLES c.1800



PULCINELLA'S FAMILY- ARUBA c.2010

BARRY GRANTHAM

In 2008 Joan and I revisited the small Dutch Caribbean island of Aruba. I say revisited because some fifteen years previously we had frequently called there. That was in our cruising days, when we entertained the passenger on luxury liners - there's a story to tell - but not now, for this article does relate to Commedia - in an unexpected way. Our impressions of the island way-back-then, were not really flattering. We thought it one of the duller of the ports we made. I recall a long dusty road - to an almost shanty town with one multipurpose store, where most passengers bought duty-free, but where we replenished our stock of China Tea (a particularly heady blend), and where I acquired two flashy silk suits (good for the shows) for £5 each. Otherwise all was dust and sand and rock. But no longer - a fairy land had sprung from the ground, a weird and wonderful fantasy town shaped from ancient traditions of the Dutch Homeland. Like -- but not of -- a pantomime set, or a Disneyland castle.



The Royal Plaza Mall, Aruba

It was night when we arrived and I went ashore and wandered among the garish sights -neon and laser - and sounds -rock from this door, samba from that window. There was hardly anyone about, like at a ghost funfair - perhaps it was early in the season. A manager in immaculate tuxedo stands at the door of his empty restaurant, waits until I get close and turns away when he sees I'm not money. I wander on, my eyes drawn upward, carried along the high open galleries, precariously perched balconies and the sweeping Cinderella open-air stairways. An Aruba take on a Dutch Glockenspiel tells me it's ten o'clock in Goblin Land. I make my way back to the ship, take to my bed

and dream of gables and goblins. Was it all hideously ugly or was it all so intense, so extreme, that it had somehow transmuted to a terrible beauty?

The morning gave a new complexion to the scene and Joan was with me. The sunlight revealed the gables as pink and white wedding cake confections, the window blinds like blue shaded eyelids, the stairways inviting one to climb to the terraced cafes, rather than flee down in terror losing one shoe, and there were a few perfectly harmless tourists wandering about eating ice-creams. It was all rather pretty and less menacing.



As we walked along, the fantastic hotels and pleasure palaces gradually gave out; there were a couple of new building plots - one with a half constructed edifice that looked as if it was intended to outdo all those we had passed and next we came to older buildings that might have been there when we first visited Aruba - modest, dingy, but on a human scale - a garage, a food store., a bicycle repair shop. It was then that we came to the Don Carlos Italian restaurant Funny, 'Don Carlos' surely Spanish? Then I remembered the Verdi opera; what could be more Italian than that? What indeed! There, painted on the exterior walls, and on an heroic scale, were no less than the masked



characters of the Commedia dell'Arte. The place was closed - in fact boarded up - as I said it was early in the season. So no chance to quiz the host about his interest in the Commedia dell'Arte. As we walked from the ship we had taken lots of photographs; of the buildings, a pelican on a flag-post, the palms, the sea, the skyline, and several lizards playing among the rocks; there was just enough memory to get some photos of the troupe of the Villa Don Carlos.

Barry Grantham

WAS PULCINELLA A PASTAFARIAN?

BILL TUCK

[The following is the text and illustrations of a talk given to the International Mummers Conference (Online) on Monday 4 January 2021 [<http://mummersfestival.org/>]

In 1797 Napoleon invaded Venice, leading to the disappearance of the Venetian Republic, *La Serenissima*, which had existed as an independent state for over 1000 years. Through fear of fomenting sedition, the characters of the *Commedia del'Arte* were expelled from the streets of Venice along with the great Carnival that had existed for centuries, not to return until the 1970s. The principal victim of this suppression was the ubiquitous character of *Pulcinella*, a notorious rebel and libertarian who featured in many of the *Commedia* plays and whose character had been adopted by the Venetian public as a symbol of resistance to all authority. During Carnival weeks he could be seen everywhere.

The character of *Pulcinella* is beautifully captured in a series of 104 drawings by Domenico Tiepolo — created in the last decades of the 18th century — along with a series of fresco paintings, now on view in the Ca' Rezzonico museum in Venice. The set of drawings — *Divertimenti per li Regazzi* — can be read as a sort of wordless bible, a chronical of the enjoyments to be found in a life lived without any particular moral constraints — a paean to simple pleasures. At the same time there are elements of despair — at various points he is executed by firing squad, imprisoned and finally expelled from home and family. He can suffer all these fates yet still survive because he is a multiple character — *Pulcinella* is an everyman.



Domenico Tiepolo — *Divertimenti per li Regazzi*

My argument will draw parallels between this anarchic character and certain features of the universal *Folk Play*. In particular, there is *The Hero's* opposition to authority and invulnerability to any form of attack — *The Doctor* will always revive him since he, like *Pulcinella*, is a universal everyman. There are also parallels in the plausible origin of the folk play as a replacement — or revival — of the practice of *Carnival*, in which the natural order of society is subverted for a short



period; or the *Feast of Fools*, during which the principal tenets of religion may be mocked with impunity. Our own hero, *Pulcinella*, would most likely have adopted, as his parody religion, a firm belief in the *Flying Spaghetti Monster* — not least because of his inordinate fondness for pasta!

The underlying premiss is that there are strong parallels between a number of traditional festivities and what, it could be argued, is their modern counterpart, Pastafarianism:

- Medieval Feast of Fools with its Lord of Misrule,
- 17th/18th century 'Venetian' carnival with its anti-hero Pulcinella,
- 18th/19th century emergence of the Hero-Doctor Folk Play,
- Post 2000 emergence of parody religions, such as Pastafarianism.

It is not the purpose of this piece, however, to seek to find origins of any one form in terms of its possible precursors, but rather to argue that the strong parallels between these traditions indicates a common need that is most readily expressed by participation in the collective ritual, whether it be the inversion of authority in the Feast of Fools, the celebration of the anarchic character of Pulcinella/Mr Punch in Carnival, or the transgression of class and social boundaries in the Mummers Play. In the same way, the modern-day quasi-religion — Pastafarianism — with its exhortation to 'drink beer and eat pasta', encourages the same sort of ritualistic behaviour previously seen in the unrestricted feasting and drinking observed in pre-Lenten carnival.

Having already disavowed any interest in tracing origins, there are nevertheless clear evolutionary links between many of these traditional festivities. The seasonal connection between the feasting that preceded Lent and its Bacchanalian pre-cursor, the Saturnalia, is somewhat obvious: animals could not be kept over winter so had to be slaughtered, resulting in a surplus of meat that could not realistically be preserved much beyond the post-Christmas period. This was as true in Northern Europe as in Italy, the home of Pulcinella. The invention and spread of pasta — a dehydrated form of dried wheat/egg mix — is likely also to have been a product of the need to preserve food during the lean post-Christmas months. It may be no coincidence that the fondness that Pulcinella has for pasta — particularly in the form of gnocchi — can be linked to his role in these pre-or post-Lenten feasts.

Technologies of food preservation and distribution have long since obliterated any direct link



Papa del Gnocco leads out the Gnocchi Carnival



The Battle between Carnival and Lent — Bruegel

between food availability and seasonal festivals — both meat and pasta are available all-year round in our supermarkets, except at moments of pandemic panic-buying when suddenly 'starvation' threatens. Nevertheless, many of the festivals that began as food celebrations continue as before. Notably, the Gnocchi Festival of Verona, which may be traced back to an event in 1531 when a terrible famine is said to have been relieved by a group of wealthy families distributing all the ingredients necessary to make gnocchi (though not including New World potatoes, which were added to the recipe later). The festival to celebrate this

event takes place on the last Friday before lent and has as its 'patron saint' — Papa del Gnocco — a Santa-like figure who leads out Verona's carnival.

The symbolic role of pasta in the character of Pulcinella — shown in the adjacent images — is further reinforced by several of the drawings in the collection by Domenico Tiepolo *Divertimenti per li Regazzi*. Notably, at the foot of the 'altar' in the frontispiece (ostensibly the tomb of past Pulcinelli) before which our hero is showing ritual obeisance, is a large plate of gnocchi. Further on, Pulcinella is seen 'riding an ass to the gnocchi feast'. This parody of Palm Sunday — where Jesus enters the city on an ass, on his way to the Last Supper — is hard to miss. Palm Sunday is, of course, the Sunday immediately preceding Easter and thus marks the end of Lenten fasting. It is more appropriate therefore to celebrate by consuming the last of the pasta, an easily preserved food that has been carefully hoarded during the preceding months.



D. Tiepolo — *Pulcinella riding to the Gnocchi Feast*

While often disapproving of such 'parody' festivals, the church authorities could not realistically prohibit them. Instead, they sought to co-opt them and incorporate them into the seasonal round of church-sanctioned rituals, such as church-ales, harvest festivals, etc., etc. This served as a satisfactory way of curbing any Bacchanalian excess. The Thanksgiving Feast of North America might be cited as another example of such a subversion, in which religious and civic authorities co-opt the feast to incorporate it as part of the founding myth of the state.

The Feast of Fools is the most well-documented example we have of a medieval parody religion. Specifically, it inverted the formal roles and powers of the priestly hierarchy by creating 'boy-bishops' and a 'Lord of Misrule' who, for a limited period, were permitted to administer the sacraments, etc. The temporal limitation meant, of course, that the true authorities could maintain control. In this respect, the Fools and Lord of Misrule served much the same purpose as the Royal Fool, by drawing attention to Royal failings, but under licence — which might easily be revoked — as a sort of social safety valve to diffuse any emerging discontent.



The Feast of Fools — after Bruegel

With the Reformation, this questioning of fundamental power structures by inverting the hierarchy became untenable. The Feast of Fools was effectively banned by Henry VIII, later restored by Mary, before being banned again by Elizabeth. All such festivities were subsumed under the control of the Master of Revels. With the rise of Puritanism, however, it became increasingly unacceptable both to enact the role of a priestly hierarchy and to question the underlying tenets of the religion. This is likely to have remained the case throughout the religiously troubled 16th century. Parody religions



Myles Standish & the Puritan militia confront the revellers of MerryMount

in Protestant lands seem to have met with uniform hostility, one notorious example being that of Thomas Morton at Merry-Mount in Massachusetts in the 1620/30s, which was founded as a liberal colony in opposition to the Puritan fundamentalism of the Pilgrim Fathers' settlement in Plymouth.

It could be argued that the revival or re-invention of the Mummers Play in the 18th century was an attempt to re-create the old Feast of Fools, but in a format at least partly acceptable to the religious temperament of the time: which might broadly be called 'enlightened Protestantism'.

Returning to Pulcinella and the Venetian Carnival as represented in the drawings and paintings of Domenico Tiepolo: These can, almost in their entirety, be interpreted as a parody of Christian religion, with a 'virgin birth' (Pulcinella emerges from an egg), parade on a donkey, last supper, trial and execution, along with the frequent appearance of sacramental gnocchi on the altar (and elsewhere). The final triumph of Pulcinella appears in the famous painting of that name. The Pulcinella drawings of *Divertimenti per li Regazzi* were made by Domenico Tiepolo in the closing decades of the 18th century when the Venetian Republic was in terminal decline, shortly to be taken over by Napoleon. As such, they may be seen as a last attempt to assert the rights of the populace to demonstrate their independence from authoritarian rule.



D. Tiepolo — *The Birth of Pulcinella*

This, I would argue, is likewise the true purpose of both the *Mummers' Play* and of *Carnival*. What is needed, therefore, in order to revitalise the sad and somewhat emasculated 19th century version of the *Mummers Play* is to recast it with Pulcinella — or Mr Punch — as Hero.

Since the earliest Mummers Festival in 2004, the dance and theatre company [Chalemie](#) has performed their own version of the Mummers Play, *The Death and Resurrection of Pulcinella*, at least once a year — usually in lieu of Lenten penance — and at each of the four Mini-Commedia Festivals. The script is continually evolving, but follows the basic lines of the traditional folk play, though now with Pulcinella/Mr Punch as Hero and Napoleon as his nemesis. All that, however, is a story for another day.



D. Tiepolo — *Pulcinella's 'Last Supper'*

Bill Tuck



Domenico Tiepolo -- *The Triumph of Pulcinella*

ARLECCHINO IN LOCKDOWN



A Review of the (Online) Mini-Commedia Festival of 2021

World Commedia dell'Arte Day, 25 February, has been celebrated for the past few years with a **MINI-COMMEDIA FESTIVAL** held at Sands Film Studios and in the surrounding streets of Rotherhithe. The curious constraints of the past year 2020/21, however, have forced the celebration of this event into cyberspace. *ARLECCHINO IN LOCKDOWN* is the result. Held online over two weekends in early March 2021, it sought to mark the occasion with a compilation video assembled from many of the best performances held at Sands over the preceding four years. The compilation video, in two parts, may still be viewable at:

Part 1: <https://youtu.be/7l7bmaiQVbl>

Part 2: <https://youtu.be/RjhhAw-CXgw>

Barry Grantham takes the lead in much of the proceedings, both as writer and performer, most notably in several fine performances with Steve Player (*The Pies, Two Old Men, and Arlecchino & Pantalone*) and with Rein van Schagen as a somewhat dyspeptic jailer and Barry as his ward, Angelo Costantini, in *The Last Days of Mezzetino*, a dramatized reading from Barry Grantham's new novel *The Life of Mezzetino*.



Barry Grantham & Rein van Schagen



Gaby Bultmann, John Mead & Matthew Spring

Other notable performances captured in our retrospective were Liam O'Neill's *Il Dottore* in *Logic* and John Mead's even more batty version of the same character in a scene from *Hotel*, the extended performance piece by John's Bath-based company.

The enforced Lockdown has provided a not unwelcome incentive to re-evaluate the past four years of commedia festivals. It has also encouraged us to learn something of the art of video editing in order to compile this retrospective and of highlighting the value of making a video record of performances -- along with the need for ensuring that lighting, staging and such-like are adequate

for the purpose. This is now something that Sands Studio is well set up to provide and plans are in place to use Sands for future commedia events on this basis: video enables access to a much wider audience than any small theatre can provide.

Street theatre has always been an integral part of commedia dell'arte and the picturesque streets around Sands in Rotherhithe provide an ideal location for such performances. These have been a feature of all our past mini-festivals, coupled with Pulcinella's Parade and an informal performance of *The Death & Resurrection of Pulcinella*, our 'mummers play', usually in the forecourt of St Mary's Church or the Norwegian Church nearby (as shown here -- where Pulcinella/Mr Punch fights it out with his nemesis, Napoleon).



Fight scene from *The Death & Resurrection of Pulcinella*



Olly Crick & Rein van Schagen



The cast from the 2018 Mini-Festival

ENDS AND ODDS

THE LONDON COMMEDIA CENTRE

In our next edition - Summer 2021, we hope to announce the establishment of the London Commedia Centre at Sands Films Studio, Rotherhithe. This is not to initiate something new or untried but to give a name to, and extend the scope of, a partnership that has developed between Olivier Stockman of Sands and myself over many years, and to extend it to include and welcome all practitioners and enthusiasts.

On the day we first walked into the magical ambiance of the Studio – to see an exhibition by the British Music Hall Society – we were approached by Olivier “Excuse me but are you, Joan and Barry Grantham? Oh, we’ve been trying to reach you, to see if you would like to do a workshop for us.”

“Well, yes that might be rather nice.” It was the start of many.



THE ZANNIZINE ON-LINE DEBATE

SPRING ISSUE -- 2021

INDECENCY AND THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE'

Charges of indecency were frequently levelled at the Commedia dell'Arte over its long history. Remembering that, for a woman to just put her foot upon a public stage would have been seen by many as scandalous enough - but of actual impropriety the evidence (and not the female costumes) is surprisingly scanty.

What do we have? Frequent references to cuckoldry and impotence, several engravings of enemas administered, a picture from the *Recueil Fossard* of Harlequin with his hand up Francischina's skirt - A Callot engraving which seems to show a different Franceschina prettily topless - there must be more so>

If anyone would care to start off an on-line debate on permissiveness in the historic Commedia, - please send in your paper entitled '*Indecency, Innuendo, and Enemas*' (or some such title) in time for the next issue. Papers and involvement please ---

Barry Grantham

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE CONTRIBUTORS

Cheryl Stapleton

Cheryl Stapleton 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 **The Troupe**. 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 International School of Amsterdam.



John Broadbent

John Broadbent. Commedia Actor, Trained with Carlo Boso in Venice, Paris and Avignon. Co-founded **The Unfortunati** with Ninian Kinnier-Wilson and collaborated with him - as a performer and assistant in Commedia and mask-making workshops. John later co-founded **The Fortunati**, an English Commedia troupe that toured the UK and Europe with many productions. John has performed with TAG Teatro di Venezia at the Venice Carnival, London International Mime Festival and on tours of

Italy, France and Holland. He teamed up with Chris Howitt on the award-winning *Severed Heads* (a very English take on the French Revolution) and collaborated with Ophaboom Theatre on many of their comedies. More recently, John toured the solo show *Mak the Sheepstealer* and played Chief Barker in *Saved*, a modern Mummer's play.

John joined **Learning Through Theatre** to perform in their most recent production, *The Breath of Love*. He also leads workshops as a commedia dell'arte specialist.



Barry Grantham

Barry Grantham is a performer, director, and teacher of Commedia and related physical theatre. His background is professional theatre; his maternal grandfather was a Music Hall artiste and his father a classical actor, who first aroused an interest in the Commedia dell'Arte in his son who, as a teenager, worked as a mime artist and dancer.

He has performed and given master classes in Norway, Sweden, Holland, Germany, and in Italy itself at the **Theatro Municipali, Reggio Emilia**. He currently writes, directs and appears as a guest artist with various companies as well as running the Intention Commedia Company.

His books **Playing Commedia** and **Commedia Plays** (featuring some of his plays that will be familiar to some of you: *The False Turk*, *Home from the Wars*, and *Pantalone Goes a Wooing*) are published by Nick Hern Books.



Bill Tuck

After early studies on the flute with Stephen Preston at the Guildhall School of Music in London he developed an interest in the problems of staging eighteenth-century music theatre, particularly dance and pantomime. He is a founder member of **Chalemie** and performs in Commedia with Barry Grantham's **Intention Commedia Company**. His principal interest is as a writer and deviser of eighteenth-century style pantomimes. With Chalemie he has created and performed in shows in Berlin, Ghent, Moscow and Krakow, as well as touring throughout the UK. With Barry Grantham he organized the series of mini-commedia festivals at Sands Film Studios, beginning in 2017.

As a musician he has played and taught pipe & tabor for many years and developed a particular interest in the 15th century dance repertoire. As accompanist he has worked with a number of dance groups and dance teachers on courses and performances of early dance. He is also an enthusiastic performer upon the sackbut (or early trombone) and other brass, both early and modern.





Haiku of red:

Wherefore candle clown
Illuminating darkness
In these wintry times

Mitch Mitchelson



Thank you for reading our Zannizine. Yes, it is 'our' Zannizine, but we hope it will also become your 'ZanniScene'. We need your articles, your suggestions, your experiences, your ideas, and your point of view. In the meantime, we're working on the Summer Edition

The End!