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

# INTRODUCING ISSUE 4 OF ZANNIZINE

## Welcome to Zannizine's fourth appearance - our Winter Issue.

Once the feasting of Christmas is past, Winter is a time to feed on scraps, to burrow into the recesses of the pantry to discover what neglected items may have been overlooked and to rejoice in the discovery of forgotten morsels! And such is the case with this our Fourth and Winter edition of little Zannizine.

But several delights we have indeed found, including a long forgotten posting from the far east in the form of an account by André Pink of his sojourn in Singapore where he inducted the natives into the mysteries of Commedia. Also, as part of our 'Commedia Round the World' section we have a contribution from Brazil in memory of noted teacher and director Roberto Innocente.

To begin, however, with a reminder that if Winter's here then Spring (and Summer) cannot be far behind, we have a piece by Dr Tony Lidington recollecting the glory days when Pierrot Troupes were a regular feature at the British seaside. The travel section features an exploration of the Goya collection in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid by Rein van Schagen.

To further the erudition of our respected readers, Barry Grantham has compiled a catalogue of all the characters depicted in the famous illustration of the Theatre Royal in Paris during the great Parisian vogue for Commedia. And finally, our Books and Reviews section introduces us to one of the great classic texts on Commedia *The Commedia dell'Arte* by Giacomo Oreglia, first published in Italian in 1961. The review by Dr Olly Crick will surely act as encouragement to read this important text.

**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 later or previous issues, along with announcements of events within the Commedia World, such as performances, festivals, films, book reviews, etc.

## Our cover illustration

One of our interests in creating this Zannizine is to show the extraordinary variety of illustrations that have incorporated the commedia characters. Many, of course, are familiar, but many are quite obscure. They all tell an interesting story, yet often one that is difficult to penetrate at first glance. This is particularly true of the present cover illustration, which shows the frontispiece of an obscure little 19<sup>th</sup> century magazine. It was issued as a *Strenna Carnivalesco* ('carnival gift') for the 1869 Carnival. An article on this will appear in a later issue.

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

**Barry Grantham at [brrgrantham@gmail.com](mailto:brrgrantham@gmail.com)**

**or Bill Tuck at [bill.tuck@chalemie.co.uk](mailto:bill.tuck@chalemie.co.uk)**

# British Seaside Pierrot Troupes

– Uncle Tacko! AKA Dr Tony Lidington

As readers of this magazine will already know, the character of Pierrot originates as 'Pedrolino' from the commedia dell'arte of the 16th & 17th centuries. The mid-nineteenth century saw the name and character of 'Pierrot' (Little Peter) evolve in Paris from his commedia roots, into an increasingly whimsical, silent mime – expressing through action and music the emotions and psychological complexity that was fashionable in the prevailing avant garde form of Romanticism and Symbolism. A production called 'L'Enfant Prodigue', featuring a family of pierrots, transferred from Le Théâtre des Funambules in Paris to London's 'Prince of Wales' Theatre' in 1891.



*Jane May in 'L'Enfant Prodigue', 1891 (author's collection)*

A banjo entrepreneur called Clifford Essex saw this production of L'Enfant Prodigue starring Jane May and a few weeks later, created the first British pierrot troupe. 'Clifford Essex's Pierrot Banjo Team' (as they were originally known), gave their first performances at the prestigious society event of Henley Regatta in July of 1891. This success was followed by performances for Edward, Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) at Cowes Regatta and a subsequent tour of seaside resorts on the Isle of Wight. Up until that year, the predominant entertainment at the seaside was provided by black-faced minstrels. These minstrel troupes popularised the use of the banjo for musical accompaniment, but Clifford Essex took what was

generally regarded as a novelty ethnic instrument (pretty much exclusively associated with African, American and Caribbean cultures) and began to experiment with innovations in manufacture and playing techniques to bring it before a wider audience.

Essex's shows met with such success, that in the decade following his original troupe, the fashion for a group of pierrots, clad uniformly in floppy white costumes, black pom-poms and conical hats, presenting a variety-based show format *al fresco*, using music, comedy and dance, became so widespread, that almost every resort in Britain could boast of one or more troupes. The pierrots inverted the blackface look of the minstrels and presented what was regarded as a more refined, smart aesthetic, with virtuoso skills on instruments such as the banjo and strill (portable harmonium).

The pierrots appealed to the mass market of holidaymakers and their pierrot costume and make-up provided an exotic presence that chimed with the romance and excitement of seaside holidaymaking. By the outbreak of the First World War, pierrot troupes had become a mass entertainment form in Britain, which according to my archival records (the largest and most comprehensive in existence), shows that hundreds of troupes were performing in dozens of resorts and towns, employing thousands of artists. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pantomime, music hall, travelling fairs, circuses and pierrot troupes provided a vast amount of employment for performance artists and between them, they provided the primary cultural experiences for the majority of working-class audiences in Britain. Within just two decades, pierrot troupes proliferated at seaside resorts across all the coasts of the United Kingdom.



*Clifford Essex's 'Royal Pierrots', circa 1894 (author's collection)*

The location for the pierrot performances in the late 19th Century were often little more than boards or trestle stages on the sands. The strill and banjo were common instruments, because they were loud, relatively reliable at remaining in tune and enabled a performer to sing as well as play. The performers had to compete against the sound of the waves, the wind, salesman barking their wares and the general hurly-burly of seaside life, so they had to make enough sound to cut-across the cacophony of noise and hold the attention of their passing audience. If it were a popular troupe, then there might be a roped-off area near the stage, possibly with deckchair or bentwood seating available for a small charge, but the majority of the pierrots' income in the early days was purely from busking, or what was known as 'bottling'. As the seaside pierrot shows grew in popularity, so at some of the larger resorts, these simple stages evolved into larger facilities. By the outbreak of the 1st World War, pierrot troupes had become a mass popular entertainment form whose songs, routines and image evoked a nostalgic glimpse of normality and a sense of patriotic pride, which provided a tremendous boost to servicemen's morale and a temporary escape from the privations and horrors of war. As a result, during the Great War, tens of thousands of performances were given by many hundreds of artistes and servicemen throughout the global theatre of war, providing a vital service for the forces and the nation.



***Image 1: Tom Carrick & Claude West's 'Original Pierrots', Scarborough, circa 1895. This is the earliest image of a troupe performing on the sands in existence, (author's collection, courtesy of Peter Charlton).***

During the 20s and 30s, the louche influence of the jazz age brought an air of informality and modernity to Britain that holidaymakers readily embraced, so perhaps it is not surprising that it seaside entertainers increasingly relinquished their stylised pierrot look, for the more modern, accessible look of smart leisure wear such as boaters and blazers. Seaside entertainment troupes remained a core part of the working-class British cultural experience (despite the popularity of new popular technological advances such as the gramophone, the wireless and the cinema), but it was world events that shattered their ubiquity and apparent invincibility, for the outbreak of the 2nd World War signalled the end of an era and a break with the Edwardian past.

All seaside performances ceased when fear of invasion meant that instead of being a leisure attraction, beaches and seafronts were perceived as a source of danger and threat. However, from their demise evolved organisations who managed troupes of performers as part of the war effort. Basil Dean's 'Entertainments National Services Association' (ENSA) was the largest of these and provided concert parties with the versatility to perform on many scales - from a platoon of soldiers in a NAAFI, to an aircraft hangar of thousands. Nevertheless, the basic staging, facilities and al fresco nature of these troupes directly paralleled the rough-and-ready fit-up stages of the Edwardian seascides.

Within two months, they were delivering 1500 performances for more than half a million audience members and was the largest entertainment organisation ever to have existed in the world - the pierrot and concert party format had truly become a mass medium!



*Harry Gold's 'Margate Entertainers', 1929 (author's collection)*

After the Second World War, motoring holidays, caravans and hiking promised a healthy outdoor substitute for the more traditional seaside experience and affordable air travel facilitated package holidays in the sun. The post-war era also saw the emergence of a financially independent teenage market, young people with the freedom and intention to forge their own, new styles of entertainment in music, dance and comedy. These exciting new attractions and technologies resulted in the seaside troupes falling into a sharp decline, with the last troupe regularly-performing in the open air being 'The Ramblas' on Clacton Pier in 1964. After this date, there were no more professional pierrot troupes or concert parties left in existence.

The format of a seaside concert party show appeared only sporadically in the 1950-70s, usually as remediated sketch-based radio and television formats like *It 'Ain't Half Hot, Mum*, however these were framed as historicised and anachronistic, bearing little or no relevance to the more contemporary practices of post-war popular entertainment in Britain. But the legacy of the troupes can be traced in the new post-war musical and comedy genres which began to emerge: skiffle music and the comedy sketch formats of radio and television all owed their origins to *al fresco*, seaside entertainment forms.

By the 1980s, there was little record of the vast impact these troupes had made on generations of British working-class audiences. In 1983, I decided to create my own troupe – 'The Pierrotters' (named after Brighton's rotting West Pier) and with a spirit of curiosity, youthful chutzpah and a musical ability (or lack of!) inspired by punk, I began my quest to research the story of pierrots in Britain – an industry that had provided the roots of post-war British comedy and the roots of contemporary pop music.



*'The Pierrotters' in Filey - can you guess which one is me? (Author's collection)*



# Commedia dell'Arte in Brazil:

## A requiem for Roberto Innocente

by Douglas Kodi

Last year (2021) during the pandemic, we lost a great theater director, an Italian living in Brazil: Roberto Innocente (1957-2021). In this article I will briefly outline two aspects of his dramaturgy: the portrayal of Brazil and his first steps towards a Brazilian Commedia dell'Arte. Innocente founded the theatre company *Arte da Comédia* in Curitiba-Paraná in 2006, with two fundamental aims: On one hand to produce Commedia dell'arte with its ability to produce dynamic and comic stagings that communicate with any audience through masks, and on the other to represent Brazil with all its "diversity": a territory in continuous evolution that mixes races, cultures, and all their stories into one gigantic melting pot.



(Roberto Innocente making a mask, 2006.  
Source: Roberto Innocente's personal archive)

His thought was that, by *making Commedia dell'Arte* in Brazil, and thinking about dramaturgically combining its Italian roots and the Brazilian present, he would be able create a powerful alchemy. The raw material available within this vast country would open up a potential synthesis between the cultural, geographical and historical characteristics of each of its regions and the traditional Commedia masks. The problem was trying to reduce eight million square miles into a sixty-minute Commedia show, as the country is chaotic, colonial, postcolonial, decolonial, dominated by late capitalism and a retrograde government, still trapped in the rubble of its tragic political and historical construction.

This question has a parallel with the 1922 São Paulo Modern Art Week— a historical event that celebrates its centenary this year – that artistically changed the course of art in Brazil. It was characterized by the *anthropophagic movement* (*movimento antropofágico*) of Brazilian modernism which assimilated, but refused to slavishly copy, the avant-garde European influences. Eurocentric art was devoured and then regurgitated by Brazilian artists, marking the beginning of twentieth century modernism in Brazil. What, therefore, would be the relationship between anthropophagic-Brazilian art and *Commedia dell'Arte*?

The first answer is simple: anthropophagy here consists of deconstructing the European theatrical form of *Commedia dell'Arte* and refashioning it in a distinctively Brazilian way, permeated with characters and fables that could only exist in the *tupiniquins*<sup>1</sup> lands. It was with assumptions analogous to Brazilian anthropophagy that Robert Innocente, an Italian artist living in Brazil, created his first *Commedia dell'Arte* shows in the 21st century. He was a *dell'Arte* artist who descended on Brazilian lands and, together with his actors, re-presented the Italian theatrical tradition to create something he named *Commedia dell'Arte-Brasil*.

To flesh out this brief requiem I will refer to two of his shows: *As Calcinhas da Flor* (literal translation: *Flower's Knickers*) (2006) and *Aconteceu no Brasil enquanto o ônibus não vem* (*It happened in Brazil while waiting for the bus*) (2007) and tell you a little about his character-masks. These were not adaptations of Italian masks, but true creations of a Brazilian *gestus*, in the manner of Brecht's use of the term.

*As Calcinhas da Flor* contained the first embryonic Brazilian masks, who were born out of popular stories; social, political and cultural analyses; establishing confrontations and parallels with other universal characters and *the Commedia dell'Arte* itself. Here were born the following masks: BIRO BIRO, the *Malandro* (*Trickster*) of Copacabana (Rio de Janeiro), a typical bohemian who enjoys life to the full, always interested in women and samba; VICENTE CAPADOR, a landowner of the north, a rude and violent person; SACI (PERERÊ), that Saci of children's stories, an employee who is a remnant of Brazilian slavery, an employee who always finds excuses not to work; ROSENDÓ, another employee, who represents the northeastern retiree trying out life in the big city and always ending up being exploited by his boss; MARIA TANAJURA, rich old woman with huge behind covered in jewels, a woman of the elite of São Paulo with monarchist ideals; NEGA TIANA, an old woman from Bahia with aspirations to being a sorceress, heavily influenced by the Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda; TRAMBIQUINA, young girl from Bahia, with an attractive doll like face; CELINA, a prosperous and falsely naïve young woman; BICHO PAPÃO, another character borrowed from the popular tradition of children's stories, who always has a final surprise; and finally FLOR, (or Flower) the beauty whom everyone covets, truly naïve and pure in her way of being.



*As Calcinhas da Flor*, 2006.

Source: Roberto Innocente's personal archive)

<sup>1</sup> Tupiniquinlands: The Tupiniquim tribe was à first tribo to find the Portuguese in the "discovery of Brazil", thus the term "tupiniquins lands" it is employed as a decolonialising term, referring to a Brazil that has strayed from the European universe. "Tupy or not Tupy that is the question" is one of the best-known aphorisms of the "Manifesto Antropófago", published in May 1928 by Oswald de Andrade in the first issue of the Journal Antropofagia.

The show tells the story of the theft of Flor's panties, stolen by Maria Tanajura and Nega Tiana in order to distance her from the men who court her — Vicente Capador and Biro Biro — and thus arrange marriages for their own daughters, Celina and Trambiquina. This conundrum will eventually be solved by Bicho Papão and the show has a classic happy *Commedia dell'Arte* finale.

In 2007, the group created what would become their most successful show, which remains in repertoire to this day: *Aconteceu no Brasil enquanto o ônibus não vem* (*It happened in Brazil while waiting for the bus*). Through further dramaturgic analysis, the masks created in the previous show experienced a deeper symbolic immersion in Brazilian culture and new and fundamental masks were imagined, among them: JOSEFINA, the mother of Brazil, coming from the idea that Brazil is a woman who cares for and protects everyone, and therefore should be represented by a great mother who lives somewhere lost in this country; Josefina's two daughters: AMARINDA, a girlfriend who only thinks about material goods, representing southern Brazil, linked to agribusiness and capital; and the other daughter, MIRANDA, the *innamorata*, who only thinks about love, representing the Brazil that is sold abroad (samba and beautiful women) and also alludes to the singer Carmen Miranda.

*It happened in Brazil while waiting for the bus* synthesizes Brazil through a simple fable: The evil characters (Amarinda and Vicente Capador) unite to kidnap the last indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest along with Miranda, and sell them all abroad. The characters of good (Saci, Rosendo, Biro-Biro) unite to prevent the plans of the abduction from working, and in the end, everything is solved by a fantastic intervention from Josefina.



*Aconteceu no Brasil enquanto o ônibus não vem*  
(*It happened in Brazil while waiting for the bus*) 2018.

Source: Douglas Kodi Personal Archive

The play is a metaphor for the ills that happen in Brazil while waiting for the bus (salvation) that never comes, and during this eternal wait, the story of a Brazil-sold repeats itself.

*Commedia dell'arte-Brasil*, as created by Innocente, playfully sticks to the backdrop of Brazilian modernism: dismantling the European Art form (*Commedia dell'arte*) and reassembling it as a poetic-theatrical response to the present day. This brief text aims to honour Roberto Innocente, who landed in Brazil to make masks for the whole of Brazil, and yet could still be counted as a man who would perform on a trestle stage, in the middle of a square. Reinventing *Commedia dell'arte* is a difficult task, because denying traditions or ancient forms of theatre is as easy as it is difficult to find anything to put in its place.

**Douglas Kodi**

Once upon a time a Brazilian theatre practitioner named André lived in London teaching Commedia dell'Arte in Drama Schools and directing Theatre through his company **Dende Collective**. In the Summer of 2012 he was invited by NAFA, a Drama School in Singapore to direct a show using Commedia with their students who would graduate in 2013. This show would bring together 30 students from their English and Mandarin Drama courses working together for the first time; 18 of them spoke English and 12 spoke (only?) Mandarin. André called the show . . . . .

## 'VIVA LA COMMEDIA!'

### *Staging Commedia in Singapore*

By André Pink

I arrived in Singapore in January 2013 and had 6 weeks to devise something with the actors. I started the work teaching the basic skills of Commedia, going through the characters and challenging them with scenarios that would increase the number of characters each time as I often do. But there was something new and exciting in the exchange with these actors: all the impro work was rich in Asian references. The vast range of languages used was amazing: English, Singlish, Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Urdu, Tagalo, Tamil, Hindi, etc. The actors on the Mandarin course had trained with the Peking Opera and were constantly using its repertory of movement and vocal work. Capitano would often be portrayed as a great martial artist. Some of the actors were very good at Sillat, the Malay martial art. All the actors of Indian descent found connections with the world of Bollywood and the world of lovers. This was really a process of appropriation and transformation. Commedia itself was extremely physical and stylized and similar traditional and contemporary practices in Asia are still performed in this manner today. These young actors quickly understood that and were making these connections on the stage.

The themes touched by Commedia were also extremely resonant. Asia is living an economic boom. Signs of growth and wealth are everywhere. This can be witnessed in a very obvious manner in Singapore. People consume madly and construction work executed by foreign workers of Indian descent clogs the city. Obviously the voracious capitalism that is bubbling in this part of the world brings with it new social types and conflict between those that have and those that have-not. Having servants, for instance is quite common among the rich and they are often from a different ethnic background from their masters. In Singapore they are often from the Philippines, Indonesia or Malaysia. Conflict is hiding in the corner. All these elements make Commedia an extremely fertile platform to echo the world in Asia. Commedia echoed Italian society and the classes of its time. VIVA LA COMMEDIA had the potential to echo contemporary Singapore.



In the end I decided to stage 3 scenarios by Flaminio Scala (1547–1624), an Italian comedian and stage actor, who in 1611 published a collection of 50 scenarios of Commedia dell'Arte. I chose *The Toothpuller*, *Two Identical Capitanos* and *The Husband* that would be performed in the same show back-to-back. In order to make them contrast from each other, they would be staged in a different location and era. *The Toothpuller* was set in Renaissance Italy and aesthetically made references to that time. *The Two Identical Capitanos* was set on an imaginary Asian island, Chindia, where the family of a Chinese Pantalone had serious racism issues with the Indian Dottore. The two Capitanos wore uniforms of Mao's Chinese Red Army. There were lots of Asian references: Bollywood, Asian Martial Arts, Indonesian rap, etc. And we finished the show with *The Husband* set in contemporary Singapore. The houses of Pantalone and Dottore echoed condos where the rich live and the servetta was of Indonesian decent and Oratio had been sent to Thailand to be far away from Isabella, where he got distracted by its sex shows. The Capitano was a playboy full of tattoos with a predilection for sports with rackets and digital gadgets. Arlecchino was a Chinese lower class sex addict who made the audience go crazy when he simulated sex with Isabella's Hello Kitty doll.



In Singapore the arts still suffer censorship: sexual references, for instance, have to be used with care. Commedia's subversive nature was therefore extremely potent, its mixture of physical comedy and its ability to reflect reality as magnifying lenses were more obvious than ever. The reactions the show received were fantastic, the audience watched 3 hours of Commedia without a blink. They not only laughed, but the show seemed to make them reflect about what Singapore is, or is trying to become. The show was a celebration of the past while also being extremely current and reflective of Singapore in 2013. *The show re-emphasized my belief that although Commedia can be brought back to life as an archaeological exercise, it can also be reinvented to speak directly to the world we live in today; and perhaps that is the way to go if it is going to be again as relevant as it once was.*



André Pink - June 2013

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## Barry Grantham's

# KEY TO THE PLAYERS IN THE THEATRE ROYAL

Here we have a picture familiar to most Commedia lovers. We have learnt that it is not a moment in a performance but a composition drawn from familiar images of Italian and French Comedians 'Playing in Farces'. From left to rights, they are: Molière, Jodelet, Poisson, Turlupin, Le Capitan Matamore, Arlequin, Guillot Gorju, Gros Guillaume, Le Doctor Grazian Balourd, Gaultier Garguille, Polichinelle, Pantalon, Phillipin, Scaramouche, Briguelle and Trivelin. You will notice that the actors are given in their French

names (just to show how Frenchified it had got by then) and that, whereas some are identified by the actor's names, others only give the Mask they are playing.



at Windsor Castle. He died in England in 1707. It seems unlikely to me that an artist of his calibre (see, for example, the Cherub, right) would bother to copy already published prints of individual players to dot about in an admittedly well-painted set; the chandeliers are excellent. Unless, of course, Louis XIV had demanded it. Or is there another Verrio?

**In the mini biographies that follow I have reverted to the Italian form where appropriate.**

The picture of the Theatre Royal is an oil on canvas and dated c.1670. It is attributed to Antonio Verrio. Stylistically speaking I think that doubtful. Just to widen our knowledge (or mine at least), who was Antonio Verrio? Born in Lecce, in the Kingdom of Naples, in 1636, he soon found his way to Toulouse, France then to Paris, and lastly to London at the invitation of Charles II, where he painted a ceiling or two



## 1. MOLIÈRE 1622- 1682

Here, with his right arm across him, he seems to be introducing the players of his day. The pose is taken from one of many prints showing the great comic dramatist. His life from the early touring days with his company, the *Illustre Théâtre*, to the time when he shared a theatre with the 'Italian Players', his life was inextricably bound up with Commedia, and was the background to his creative genius.



## 2. JODELET 1590-1660



French actor and dramatist. He was associated with the *Théâtre du Marais*, for which he wrote comedies. The *Marais* was founded in 1634 as a rival to the King's players at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. It burnt down in 1643 and was rebuilt with the first proscenium arch and elaborate stage machinery. It eventually became the *Comédie Française*. The print on the left shows the costume and pose used in the Theatre Royal painting,

## 3. POISSON 1682- 1743

French actor and playwright, known professionally as Cripin. His best known plays being *Le Procureur Abitre* and *Le impromptu de Compagne*. He was Born in Paris, made his début in 1704, and retired in 1722. His play, *L'Actrice Nouvelle*, was mocked by Adrienne Lecouvrier and not produced. The image matching that in the Theatre Royal painting is available but I have chosen a different engraving as it tells a little more about the actor he was.



## 4. TURLUPINO Henri Legrand 1587-1637

A French actor, he began as a cantabanco (street performer) working with his two friends Gros-Guillaume and Gaultier-Garguille. From 1615 to 1625 they were still together heading the attractions at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*. Turlupino specialized in Rabelaisian wordplay - his *turlupinaides*, and was considered the greatest comedian of his time. He wore a large cloak, big hat and hid behind a voluminous beard and moustaches.



## 5. MATAMOROS Silvio Fiorilli c 1562-1632

Silvio is the most likely candidate for Matamoros. He was Tiberio's father which puts him earlier than most of the others in the picture. I have not found the original print copied in the painting but here is a splendid one; you may recognise this as the original from which Maurice Sand took his popular Captain. Silvio worked with Tristino Martinelli and as Captain Matamores and Arlecchino they made a successful duo. He came from Naples and is said to have also been the original Pulcinella.





## 6. ARLECCHINO Everisto Gherardi 1663-1700

I didn't find the engraving to match the painting, but it is undoubtedly Gherardi, one of the greatest of Arlecchinos. Born in Prato, Tuscany, he assumed the mask in 1682 at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* appeared there until the dismissal of the King's Italian Players, 1697. Gherardi did his best to get the order rescinded but only got permission for the players to perform their comedies outside a thirty mile radius of Paris. His costume set the style for most later Arlecchinos and British Harlequins. (see the 'Costume Map' in our Autumn Issue). Before his early death in 1670 he published 12 volumes of the plays that had been given at the Bourgogne Theatre during his time there.

## 7. GUILLOT GORJU Bertrand Hardouin de Saint-Jacques , 1600-1648

French physician and actor – It appears that there is something between the medical and the comical professions because there are several modern examples. Guillot Gorju met with great success at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* but for a time returned to his medical life till "sadness overtook him" and he went back to performing. I have a very fine engraving in which he seems an imposing figure, though his contemporaries remarked on his ugliness. It is interesting that at this period the French took the lead in a new intellectual basis for their comedy, in which Guillot Gorju was renowned.



## 8. GROS GUILLAUME Robert Guerin 1554-1634

French comic actor. Unlike Guillot Gorju and Turlupino he was an innocent, a plebeian, and originally had been a baker's boy. The origin of the white-faced mime most likely belongs to him and not Pierrot. He wore a white 'shirt' belted above and below his enormous belly, and brightly striped trousers described by his friend Guillot Gorju as being 'Like the Swiss Guard'. He worked as a trio with Gorju and Turlupin and later with Turlupin and Gultier Garguille.

## 9. DOTTORE BALOURDO Giovanni B Lolli c.1628-1702

Appropriately for The Doctor he was a native of Bologna who first went to France in 1645 and worked there until 1694. He married the actress Patrizia Adami and both became French nationals in 1683. He was a leading player in the company that appeared at the *Hôtel de Bourgogne* till their dismissal in 1697. By this time the structure of the shows in Paris had departed from the traditional formula. For example there was no Pantalone or Captain in the company, meaning that the Doctor's role was modified. Never-the-less Giovanni Lolli was able to establish himself as a favourite with the French public. The image is correctly identified as G.B. Lolli by Giacomo Oreglia in the book reviewed by Dr Crick in this issue.





## 10. GAULTIER GARGUILE Hugues Gueru 1573-1633

French actor who specialised in old men's part; Duchatre referring to him as a Gallicized Pantalone. He was thin, with long, slender legs and a big face. He never played without his mask. He had a large, pointed beard and wore a black flat cap, black pumps, a doublet with red sleeves, and hose of black. He first appeared at Théâtre du Marais in 1598, where he became a songwriter, singing saucy verses at the end his shows. He published a collection of these (available on Amazon for under £10!). He then entered the Hôtel de Bourgogne in 1619, which he left four years later for the Hôtel d'Argent. He also performed in partnership with Gros Guillaume and Turlupin.



## 11. PULCINELLA & 12. PANTALONE

I found this engraving of Pulcinella and Pantalone in Allerdyce Nicoll's *Masks, Mimes and Miracles*, but he gives no indication of who the actors are. The picture goes against all my preconceived notions. To start with Pulcinella is such a little chap and I always cast a big bloke - and, well you might easily change them over, for this Pantalone looks a very heavy fellow. Another thing they're not usually paired. In fact, if one could find a play or even a company where they met, one might be a long way to discovering who they were. Two actors who just might have been the couple based on their dates a.one are: Pantalone: Antonio Tonti; Pulcinella: Giulio Cecari Gabrielli.



## 13. SCARAMOUCHE Tiberio Fiorilli 1608 -1694s

By many accounts (including Garrick's) the greatest actor of his age. Born in Naples, he pre-dates the rest, and is first mentioned at the court of Louis XIII and his Queen and is said to have brought the young prince (later Louis XIV) back to health by making him laugh. He was in Paris 1640 -1653, where he acted with Moliere, and made frequent visits to London. The mask of Scaramuccia had been popular since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but Fiorilli rejected the mask in favour of a white face accented with a small black moustache and beard and changed the costume to the all black in which he made his name.



## 14. BRIGHELLA & 15. TRIVELIN

I also found the engraving of Brighella and Trivelin in Allerdyce Nicoll's *Masks, Mimes and Miracles*, but he gives no indication of who the actors are. There is no problem with Trivelino, who is our old friend Domenico Locatelli, still touching his cap, but I haven't found the identity of the Brighella. There is a Domenico Bononcini



who took on both roles, but I'm not sure if he ever got to France. The nearest match seems to be Giovanni Gherardi, father of the great Arlecchino, Everisto Gherardi. He was known as *Flautino*, a great musician who could also produce the sound of musical instruments with his voice. He got himself into trouble and was first thrown into prison and then out of France.

## 16. PHILLIPIN ???



Finally we come to a delightful mystery. We presume that Phillipin is a role name, not a performer's one, but the actor banished to the balcony is wearing an Arlecchino costume (as you see in an unusual pattern of red and white triangles and a very odd hat). Like the case of Tristino Martinelli, who played Arlecchino but called himself Trivelin, could this also be an actor who worked as Arlecchino but called himself Phillipin? Trivelin is to be found in all the standard works, but Phillipin, it seemed, nowhere . . . until I found that lovely Kathleen M Lea mentions him

in her *Italian Popular Comedy* being among other Zanni as "Phillipin, Cornetto, and Francatrippa; all who wear wide trousers!"... Then Cesare Molinari, in his monumental *La Commedia dell'Arte*, comes up with the additional information that **Phillipin was possibly a French actor!** In both cases the dates are c1590. I am looking for another Arlecchino with a flat hat!

## TRIO

This often-shown engraving of a performance at the Hôtel de Bourgogne shows Gros Guillaume affectionately comforted by a beautiful Innamorata. One of his partners, Gaultier Garguile looks on while the other, Turlupin, is stealing from Gaultier's purse. An Innamorato (left) and a Spanish Captain (right) look on. The chair plonked in the middle of the archway is there as a message to the audience that the scene is an interior one.



## FRANCISCO DE GOYA AND HIS MASKS

A few years back I visited Madrid. In museum Real Academia de bellas artes de San Fernando I stood eye to eye with some paintings by Francisco de Goya (1746-1828).

I was dazzled by these fierce images, populated by groups and individuals caught in the moment, in the middle of their emotions, like a snapshot. Some of them included persons with masks. I was intrigued. Was there a connection between Goya and Commedia?

### *Comicos ambulantes / strolling players*

He lived in a period where it was not uncommon to come across a performance by a wandering troupe, as seen his painting above. Here the connection is clear.



There are other paintings with masked persons, with possible links to commedia but also possibly mixed with traditions like carnival.



### *Carnival folly*

Here an audience watches a comedy spectacle. Two actors exchange insults and obscenities while covering their genitals while young man feels up a priest. The Inamorato? on the right observes the scene, ready to take action if necessary.



Commedia and similar masks are also abundant in *The Burial of the Sardine*.

In this painting Goya shows us the last of 3 days of the Carnival in Madrid.

It is a parody of a funeral procession, where at the end of the day a ceremonial sardine is being buried.



### *The burial of the sardine*

The sardine or fish symbolizes the dietary restrictions of Lent. The burial of a fish was originally a protest against the Catholic tradition that fish be eaten instead of meat throughout the forty-day period. The procession mocks the church and comments on their religious leaders and gives the common people an outlet of freedom for a few days. The image of the grinning King Momo, the king of mockery and satire is prominent. Here the masks are worn to avert the spirits of criminals and those who died violently.

**Francisco de Goya** painted the members of the Spanish court, two kings in succession and the aristocracy, but he also immortalized the less fortunate, the inmates of mental institutions, the beggars, the victims of war, the common people. The latter with empathy but also in harsh reality. People caught amidst strong emotions: in extasy, agony, anxiety, greed and lust.

*Dona Isabel*



Influenced by the Enlightenment, and an illness which left Goya deaf and depressed and having witnessed the atrocities of the French-Spanish war that ravaged the country, he changed his style. It became dark in content and style.

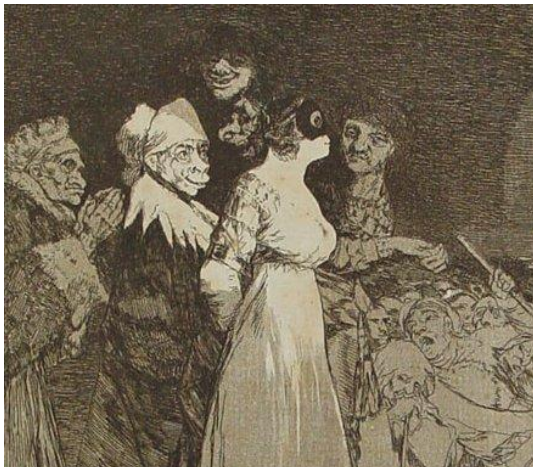


From painting in a romantic style, he became a forerunner of Expressionism and Surrealism and was of great influence on **Pablo Picasso** and **James Ensor**.

*Dreams of Mother-of-Pearl, James Ensor*

In Goya's series *Los Capricios* (the caprices) he depicted in his own words:

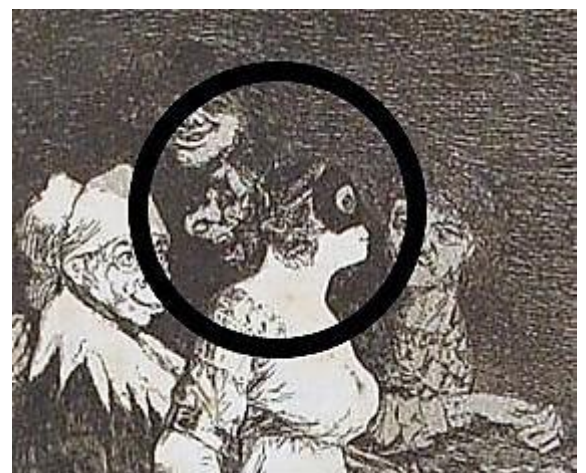
*"the innumerable foibles and follies to be found in any civilized society, and from the common prejudices and deceitful practices which custom, ignorance or self-interest have made usual".*



In these etchings he mocks the greed of the clergy, the delusion in courting, the ignorance of teachers and doctors, challenging the belief in witchcraft and superstition. Here the masks unveil the true characters and the behaviour their bearers so much try to cover up: lust, greed, treachery, despair. Of course, this is all an interpretation in hindsight. Lots of scholars and historians have tried to give meaning to Goya's work, but many of his paintings are still cryptic.

*They say yes and give their hand to the first one who comes*

In this painting a beautiful young girl is being married off to an ugly older man. Goya suggests that she is only marrying him for his money. They are engaged in a "pantomime" in which both are complicit. The mask on the back of the bride's head represents her "two faced" intentions towards her husband to be.



In *Nobody knows himself* the subject is again the masquerade between a man and a woman. What are their real intentions, what lies beneath the masks? It is hard to tell whether their attentions and intentions are true.



*Nobody knows himself*



When I saw his pictures for the first time I thought many faces were masked. But looking more closely the faces seemed a mask by themselves. Many of them contorted, rigid in emotions, therefore almost a mask in itself. And sometimes they seem a mix of mask or a face pulled, hard to tell the difference.

*Monk talking to an old woman*

Here the victims of Goya are the clergy, only seemingly interested in keeping what they have taken from the people, corrupt, greedy, and in total control of their believers.

The priest has a large claw-like hand, which undoubtedly refers to the avarice of the clergy.



Sometimes the disguise becomes complete and the protagonist takes the form of an animal, the donkey standing for ignorance, lack of knowledge and stupidity of doctors and teachers.

*Of what ill will he die?  
Can the pupil know more?*



The target this time is the aristocracy. Two noblemen restrained in their coats of arms. Their eyes shut, their ears and brains locked to prevent knowledge from entering. The donkey-like figure, a cloth around his head so he can't see (*'Ignorance'*) feeds them.

Goya took inspiration from a comedy by Jose de Canisares. In the play two idle bluebloods believe they are superior to others and do not feel the need to study or improve otherwise.

*The Chincillas*

In *A Pilgrimage to San Isidro*, painted on the walls of his own house, Goya again gives his satirical comment on religion; an apparently ecstatic and singing group of pilgrims, remorseful, in trance, in awe or in fear?



We also see his critical views on the superstition and misguidance of the uneducated, a vulnerability painted by Goya.

Interesting to think how he would depict the antivaxxers in these times. The two witches have just taken a snuff, to digest better their meal, a supper of babies. Witches were accused of devouring babies in their coffins. Suck can refer to old women sucking substance from babies for strength.

Understood in a figurative sense: They take money for those requiring their services to perform abortions to rid themselves of the unwanted fruit of secret sexual relations.

Hmm, reminds me of QAnon, the movement who believes that an elite is guilty of satanic child abuse.

*There's plenty to suck*





A priest is preparing to inject the contents of a syringe into a kneeling soldier, begging for mercy. The other priests gloating for what's to come.

Goya might have based this etching on a poem that tells about the rivalry between a priest and a soldier over a woman. In the left corner the contested veiled woman is watching.

*Swallow it, dog*

Clearly at the end of their lives, these two figures. The mouth of the left figure is drawn into a grimace, possibly from lack of teeth. The skull shaped face of the other figure hardly seems alive at all.

*Two old men eating soup*



James Ensor inspired Barry Grantham and his troupe to bring his paintings to life. Goya certainly seems another motivating candidate to inspire theatre makers to use his paintings (and these above are just a small selection) as a starting point to experiment with and bring their characters to life, with or without masks.

**Rein van Schagen**

# BOOKS AND BOOK REVIEWS



Very often the issue with starting your own Commedia book collection, apart from the expense of them (especially academic books), is knowing what to buy and what you, the reader, want out of it. Academics want one thing and performers want another. Academics may moan about the poor pedagogy of performers, while actors complain that the people who write the books have never been on stage. There are, I promise you, people who have experience of both, but very often it is best to look for what you want out of the book. As a former street

performer with a fascination with the Commedia, I developed a reading method that looked for material that was of use to a performer. Here, then, is a place to give brief reviews of Commedia books, keep oneself up to date with new publications and pick the bones out of some old ones. You can't learn Commedia from a book, but some of them sure can help. We will (ahem) in the interests of honesty, leave you, the public, to judge books written by those concerned with this Zannizine.

**Olly Crick**

## *The Commedia dell'Arte* by Giacomo Oreglia

Reviewed by Olly Crick

The *Commedia dell'Arte* by Giacomo Oreglia, should be there at the beginning of everyone's Commedia book collection, as it cuts to the chase and contains very little academic waffle. It is a very good introduction to the genre, but sadly it is hard to get hold of, except from slightly overpriced second-hand book dealers. It was originally published in Italian in 1961, translated into Swedish in 1964, and finally made it into English, via Methuen Dramabooks, in 1968. When I posted on Facebook my eventual acquisition of a copy, likes and endorsements of the book came from excellent mask maker John Finbarr Ryan and Commedia teacher and blogger Micke Klingvalle, among others. It was also the book, according to people who were there at the time, that inspired the late Ninian Kinnier-Wilson, then at Liverpool Art College to enter the world of Commedia and mask-making. So, the book has got good references, and appears to be a springboard for action but what is in it?

Initially in its favour are a lot of pictures (58 plates), and some example scripts and scenarios, a few of which also appear in longer slightly duller books. It is not huge, and this is to its advantage: one gets a clear introduction to all the characters, chapter by chapter, with example scenes and some useful information. It also starts off with quick introductions to 'how' Commedia was done, through chapters on 'technique' and on 'scenarios'. It is clear that Oreglia knows a lot more about the subject than he puts in his book so, thankfully, what we do not get is a barrage of dates and facts, but a few well selected examples, and set out in a clear readable way, that guides one unprotesting into how to read a scenario. Those included (in full) give a good range of genres available to the *Comici: A Play Within a Play* from the

Locatelli collection (a 'straight' comedy); *The Mad Princess* from the Flaminio Scala collection (a tragi-comedy), and *The Stone Guest* (aka Don Juan) (a tragedy with funny bits included) and *Enchanted Arcadia* (a pastoral), from the Neapolitan Casamarciano collection.

As the book gives us the outlines of the genre within its 140 pages there is not enough room for any facts or assertions that have since been proved to be questionable, debatable, contested or just plain wrong to be included. One gets a more reliable brief history of Commedia from this book than one will on the internet. His list of sources is pretty much up to date, and the only omission of note would be the Bruni Prologues (from whence cometh the famous 'servetta' prologue), but its absence is not noted if one wasn't looking for one's favourite lazzi or stock speeches.

This book, though aimed at a general audience, is also very performer friendly and Oreglia makes it clear that Commedia cannot be discussed in the same terms as literary drama because, as an improvised form, its main frame of reference is the skill of the performers, and the resulting enjoyment by the audience. He also makes the statement that Commedia sits precisely between theatre and circus. In short, it is most certainly worth a read, both as inspiration, but also as brief overview of the genre, its history and, most importantly, how to do it.

### Some new books, folks!

Ok, readers, I'm bringing to your attention five new books on Commedia dell'Arte that have come out over the last eighteen months or so, and all published by Routledge. If you want to buy them new, try the Taylor and Francis website, and if second hand try AbeBooks as second-hand copies might be coming around soon. I confess I had major fingers in three of them, but more of that later: first a brief description of the books and their subject matter.

#### **1 *Performing Commedia dell'Arte, 1570-1630* (London: Routledge, 2020). Natalie Crohn-Schmitt.**

This is a truly excellent account of commedia dell'arte in its historical heyday, detailed, informative and very readable. Crohn-Schmitt is a long-term Commedia scholar, and has considerable expertise in Commedia's performing methodology, focusing in with a keen eye on scenarios, improvisation and the practice of rhetoric. The book offers a coda on Commedia dell'Arte today as well and is both a good introduction to the formative period of our beloved genre, as well as benefiting you (the reader) by including up-to-date scholarship and recent discoveries.

#### **2 *Commedia dell'Arte, its Structure and Tradition: Antonio Fava in Conversation with John Rudlin.* by John Rudlin and Antonio Fava.**

For those not familiar with Antonio Fava's previous book and his workshops, here is another glad blast of the maestro's opinions, advice, and instruction in how to do Commedia. John Rudlin (also a notable Commedia scholar) asks provocative Commedia questions, and then lets the tape run, as Antonio excitedly launches into his instructive and entertaining monologues. To quote the Amazon blurb:

"Fava explores the role of each stock Commedia character and their subsequent incarnations in popular culture, as well as their roots in prominent figures of their time. The lively and wide-ranging conversations also take in methods of staging Commedia dell'Arte for contemporary audiences, the evolution of its gestures, and the collective nature of its theatre-making. This is an essential book for any student or practitioner of Commedia dell'Arte – provocative, expansive wisdom from the modern world's foremost exponent of the craft."

Well ... I would say there are more than one 'foremost exponent' knocking around, so be advised this is the Fava view of the Commedia world. Other flavours are available (see book 4). It is a good companion piece to Fava's first book.

### **3 *Commedia dell'Arte Scenarios* by Sergio Costola and Olly Crick**

Getting hold of the original scenarios (in the English Language) to see how they were written, what the stories were about and what conventions were used can be problematical for an English language reader. Previous editions in the English language (Henry Salerno; Richards Andrews; Crohn Schmitt and Heck, Heck and Cotticelli) are all quite expensive or out of print. Step forward Sergio Costola (and a wee bit of editing by yours truly) with a selection of scenarios from all the major surviving collections (Scala, Correr, Corsini, Locatelli and Casamarciano), thus granting us access to a variety of collections, previously unavailable in English. The variety is surprising, and despite such apparent limitations such as stock characters and apparently fixed staging, the locations and subject matter ranges from heroic opera, historical epic, bourgeois comedy and low (Neapolitan) farce. Once one has mastered the art of reading a scenario (imagine making sense of a Shakespearean comedy with no script, and just from stage directions) this is a useful introduction to this historical composition and performance method.

### **4 *The Dramaturgy of Commedia dell'Arte* by Olly Crick and Sergio Costola.**

Why did I write this? I've read a lot of books and done a lot of workshops with good (even great) commedia teachers and what bugged me continually was comments by some to the effect that 'that isn't commedia'. So, what is Commedia, and what on earth are people who do it now think they are doing? Taking as a starting point a range of artists' practice since the genre's reinvention post WW2, I tried to build up a picture of what each artist thought they were doing (and what they actually did!). I identify strands of practice, and schools of Commedia training (Piccolo Teatro di Milan, Giovanni Poli, Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, Jacques Lecoq, Dario Fo, Antonio Fava, Carlo Boso, etc.), and note how they differ in performance and practice, and come up with a more inclusive model of Commedia. Also included is a digression on unmasked Commedia (Pete Talbot and Annie Ryan), the neuroscience of masks and a no-brainer conclusion that women innovate more in the genre than men! (what happens if you love the style, but have issues with the patriarchy, sexism, and 'its only the men who get to wear the masks' etc.).

### **5 *Commedia dell'Arte for the 21st Century: Practice and Performance in the Asia-Pacific*: edited by Corinna Di Niro and Olly Crick.**

Whilst us in Europe are slumbering, down under folks are still doing Commedia. This is a book with a multitude of chapters by a multitude of authors, all of whom have, in some small way, performed, taught, thought about or reimagined Commedia in the Asia-Pacific region. It covers a lot of ground, and is full of surprises: that Thailand has a native equivalent of a slapstick; Harlequin meeting Hanuman, Commedia in India, in Singapore, in Australia, in New Zealand and all of it pushing the boundaries, creating hybrids, and reinventing itself as it goes along. A cockney hippy ends up as mask maker in Bali; the Piccolo Theatre of Milan perform in Beijing to an audience of picnicking high end military officers; and 3 male performers improvise a two-hour show for some native Queenslanders, who have never before seen Commedia.

**(Dr) Olly Crick**

# ENDS AND ODDS

## Biographies of Contributors

### Dr Tony Lidington

Tony has been a showman, researcher and teacher for over 35 years. He specialises in historical popular entertainment forms and their application to contemporary contexts. Tony was awarded a doctorate for his research into itinerant British performance forms by the University of Exeter, where he now teaches. He regularly writes about the subject for academic journals and general interest magazines, as well as broadcasting on both radio and television. Tony was founder of 'The Pierrotters' - Britain's last professional seaside pierrot troupe, with whom he performed for 27 years as 'Uncle Tacko!'



### André Pink

André started working with Commedia dell'Arte in his native Brazil, working with the influential Troupe de Atmosfera Nômade, which was pivotal in bringing commedia and clowning to the spotlight in the São Paulo theatre scene in the 90's. He relocated to the UK in '96 to train with Philippe Gaulier, amongst others. He has been teaching and directing Commedia in Drama schools here and abroad since 2000 and has worked alongside Didi Hopkins and Barry Grantham (both Commedia royalty if we can use this term). The Japan Foundation granted him a fellowship to conduct research comparing Commedia and Kyogen in 2003, which allowed him to train with Mansaku no Kai. He is also a mask maker and Artistic Director of Dende Collective - [www.dendecollective.org](http://www.dendecollective.org) - having directed all its projects to date. He ran *Progression*, the Tramshed's artist development programme from July 2019 to July 2021.



### Douglas Kodi

Douglas Kodi (Douglas Kodi Seto Takeguma), holds a degree in Theatre from the State University of Maringá (UEM) (Brazil) a Masters and PhD in Performing Arts from the State University of Santa Catarina (UDESC). He is a researcher in the practice and dramaturgy of Commedia dell'Arte, as well as being a mask performer, actor and director of the group *Arte da Comédia* (Curitiba-PR).



## Rein van Schagen

Rein attended Maastricht Acting School, Holland, Desmond Jones Mimeschool and a variety of theatre workshops at City Lit and the Oval House, London, where he studied and performed with Barry for two years. With Tim Jones he formed comedyduo Foreign Bodies and toured throughout Holland, Belgium and Denmark with great success. Rein also taught Commedia dell'Arte and physical comedy, and directed youth theatre.

Writing a sitcom episode brought him to a television career which spanned over 25 years: Writing and directing drama and comedy, art and history programs. In 2015 he retired from television and returned to the theatre to act, write and direct.

A long line of comedians influenced Rein, from Laurel & Hardy up to Monty Python. Comedy with a strong base in a physical approach. It is therefore that commedia dell'arte has also been so much at the core of his work. His own style developed from pure slapstick to which has been his favourite style for a long time now: tragicomedy, to touch the heart by laughter and emotion.



## Olly Crick

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



## A Reminder of the Dates of the next Mini-Commedia Festival:

The Next Edition of the Mini-Commedia Festival will be held over the weekend of 25 to 27 February, 2022 at Sands Films Studio in Rotherhithe. Although, because of Covid restrictions, seating in the theatre is very limited, most of the performances and workshops will be live-streamed from the theatre and viewable online. For further information and links to booking facilities go to the festival website:

<https://minicommediafest.co.uk>

Live and streamed from  
Sands Film Studios, London  
25th - 27th February 2022

WE SUPPORT  
*Sat*  
*Commedia dell'Arte*  
*Day*



# Barry & Bill's 5th Mini Commedia Festival

**Book online:**

<https://minicommediafest.co.uk>

**Friday 25th February  
7.00pm (GMT)**

A virtual celebration!  
Commedia banter and films  
from across the globe.

*Commedia  
dell'Arte  
Day*



**Saturday 26th February  
7.45pm (GMT)**

World exclusive! Anna Cottis  
presents a scratch performance  
of her new show.

**The Good,  
The Bad and  
... The Funny**



**Sunday 27th February  
1.00pm (GMT)**

A workshop with Didi Hopkins



**Discover Your Zanni!**

**6.00pm (GMT)**

Barry Grantham &  
Didi Hopkins present

Saturday and Sunday  
evenings also feature  
an extravagant medley of short Commedia acts.



*The Road  
to Commedia*

