





## CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE (Summer 2022)

1. Introducing Issue 6 of Zannizine
2. Arlecchino vs Harlequin (Barry Grantham)
3. Arlequine or Arlecchina? Emergence of the female Harlequin (Barbara Segal)
4. *Visual Vernacular* possibilities within the Commedia Style  
(Kinny Gardener)
5. Commedia Around the World
  - Commedia in Tehran - 1976 (introduced by Barry Grantham)
6. Music in Commedia dell'Arte – Part 1 (Bill Tuck)
7. *Chalemie* Summer School Review (Harvey Dobbs)
8. Ends and Odds

*“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 6 OF ZANNIZINE

## Welcome to Zannizine's sixth appearance - our Summer 2022 Issue.

With the Summer issue 2022, we are well into our second year, adding to our accumulated Commedia knowledge. Please do not think of 'Zannizine' as a newspaper. It is more like a rather gorgeous self-expanding coffee-table book to be dipped into as the moment arises. The articles in the first issue are as relevant as those of the latest. New subjects and titles are awaiting us. Some are nearly ready for printing, others half finished, and many just an idea.

In the next issue (Autumn 2022), we are looking to add a new category to provide practical help for the Commedia player, his director, designer and wardrobe person. Some will be by the hometeam of Bill, Olly, Cheryl and Barry; others by guest writers on their particular subject. If you have skill and knowledge and are prepared to share it, we would love to hear from you; it could be on costume or prop making, scenario writing, ideas for Lazzi, or sources of witty lines and rhymes. I trained as a dancer and an actor - I am working on a piece about 'Stage Craft', which many budding Commedia performers seem unaware of. And voice - Oh dear, how many of us need a voice coach!

In the meantime, I think you will like this issue. We start with a little piece **Arlecchino versus Harlequin**, which I put together after re-reading Alexandre Benois' *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet*. What a bad-tempered old darling he was. He got so angry with Diaghilev and Bakst that he put his fist through a window and cut himself so badly that it was touch and go if he would be able to paint or draw again. Then Kinny Gardner writes on the affinity between **Commedia and British Sign Language**. Kinny is a great artist, and it is a pleasure to have him writing for the Zannizine.

I happened to ask Barbara if she knew anything about 'Hesther Booth' - and of course, she knew everything about her [though even she failed to spot that Hester Booth appears among the 2048 ninth-great-grandparents of our future King, Prince George of Cambridge! BT]. The result is a detailed and beautifully illustrated account of **Arlequine or Arlecchina**, as she is sometimes called. The piece on **Commedia in Tehran** comes from a programme I found in my seemingly endless piles of theatre ephemera. On then to Bill's seminal work on the **Music of Commedia, Part I**, a major contribution from my co-editor. The issue ends with an account of **Commedia at Chalemie** in July of this year by Harvey Dobbs.

I started this page by saying Zannizine is not a newspaper, but we are attaching news of an exciting programme at the Edinburgh Festival from a longtime friend and colleague, Gerry Flanagan.

Barry Grantham

## Our cover illustration

This charming picture showing Arlecchino with Arlecchina is by Giovanni Ferretti (1692 – 1768), who created more than a dozen paintings featuring Arlecchino – a subject we may tackle 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** [brrgrantham@gmail.com](mailto:brrgrantham@gmail.com) or **Bill Tuck** [bill.tuck@chalemie.co.uk](mailto:bill.tuck@chalemie.co.uk)

**CommediaZannizine.co.uk** is the website host for our magazine





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Image: Paul Mac

SHIFTING SANDS THEATRE WORKSHOP

## LOVE AND MADNESS

*"Love that is not madness is not love"*

It's 1592. Welcome to Italy!

Using a 500-year-old scenario, Shifting Sands Theatre Workshop present an exciting blend of Clowning and Commedia. See Masters, Lovers and Servants argue, trick and deceive each other in a world rich in love, jealousy, revenge and .....stupidity!

## LOVE AND MADNESS

Shifting Sands Theatre Workshop

Pantalone, takes his daughter, Isabella, against her will, to a distant city to be married.

Her true love, Oratio, and his faithful servant, Grappa, set out to rescue her. They in turn are pursued by hot-headed Flaminia, who has been spurned by Oratio. She will do anything to make sure the marriage goes ahead, convinced Oratio will fall in love with her if Isabella is out of his grasp.

To avoid the marriage, Isabella feigns madness. Oratio and then Flaminia really do go mad. Soon everybody is dragged into their folly. A prophet arises foretelling the end of the world. Signs are seen in the sky. All succumb to urges beyond their control. Is the whole world going crazy?

LOVE AND MADNESS is an exciting blend of Clowning and Commedia, the culmination of 12 days of workshops led by Gerry Flanagan of Shifting Sands Theatre who for over 25 years has been directing Clown and Commedia.

Using a 500-year-old scenario - but no masks! - Masters, Lovers and Servants argue, trick and deceive each other in a world full of envy, love and revenge. Much of today's comedy has its origins in the Commedia.

*"I don't know why they call it heartbreak. It feels like every part of my body is broken too."*

*The doctors have told him he is crazy... but, the truth is, it's the voices who are crazy, not him."*

*"To fear love is to fear life, and those who fear life are already three parts dead."*

*"In a mad world, only the mad are sane."*

[www.shiftingsandstheatre.co.uk](http://www.shiftingsandstheatre.co.uk)



## ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual Celebration of

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

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

<https://minicommediafest.co.uk>



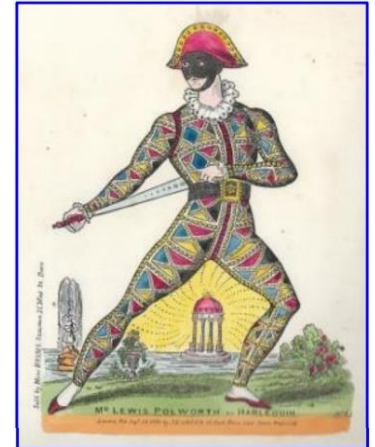


*The Case of*

**ARLECCHINO**

**VERSUS**

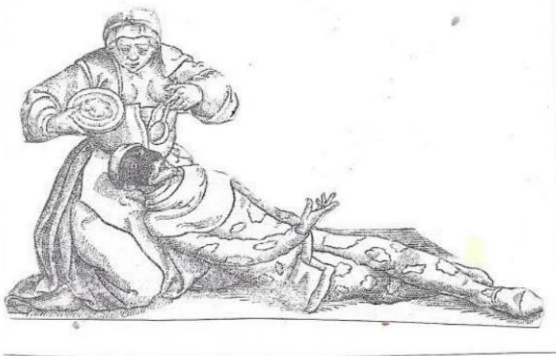
**HARLEQUIN**



### Barry Grantham for Arlecchino

Like most Commedia professionals, I consider the dancing, prancing Harlequin, a mere shadow of his former self. A decadent character only fit to decorate biscuit tins or to live out his days as a figurine on an Art Deco mantelpiece.

One has only to look at the company he keeps. Who would take Pantaloon, a two-dimensional paper character to be pushed onto the toy-stage to which he belongs, when we can have Pantalone, (but not Shakespeare's lean and slippered fool with the piping treble) A Pantalone whose voice can be thunderous, whose servants fear his chastisement. Even his lust for the servetta shows he is a man for all that. He walks leaning backwards to show he is 'as good as he ever was', not forward bent over a stick like Pantaloon, too old to have fathered the teenage Columbine (the old jibe of 'cuckold' being confirmed). We lament the loss of the Franceschinas or the early Colombinas - witty and wise women from the real world - for the inane teenager Columbine (the only woman to get younger as the years pass).



And what of 'Clown'? We cannot blame Grimaldi for driving Arlecchino from the stage. We only regret there was no Biancolelli or Gherardi of similar calibre to take him on.

The international Commedia community has not been without success in bringing Arlecchino back to centre stage. May the good work continue. That concludes my case for Arlecchino de Bergamo.

### But who will speak for poor Harlequin?

I will.

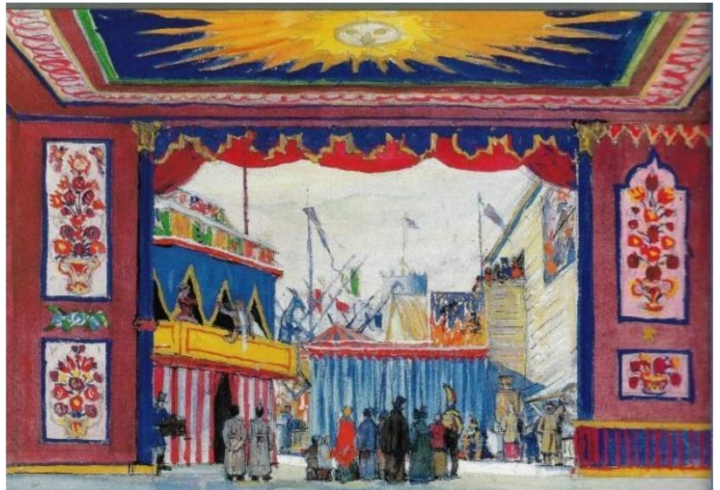
You will, sir? Thank you. Please identify yourself.

I am Alexandre Benois. Artist and writer. Editor of *Mir Iskusstva*, the influential *The World of Art* magazine. Founder with Diaghilev of the Ballet Russe and designer of *Petrouchka*.



### Alexandre Benois for Harlequin

To begin my defence of Harlequin, I need to take you back to Butter Week in St Petersburg 1847. The Russian Carnival had much in common with those of Paris, Vienna and Rome, but the atmosphere was different, the gaiety more intense, the revelry more spontaneous and wholehearted. First, I want to introduce you to the Balagani, huge wooden buildings decorated with gaily coloured pictures, which served as enclosures for various entertainments. Military-patriotic plays used to be given in some of these 'Theatres'. In others, it would be fairytales of Princes and Princesses; finally, in the two chief Balagani, kept by Berg and Yegarev, Harlequinades were presented to the public.



Set for Petrouchka – depicting Belagani -- by Alexandre Benois, Paris 1910

When I look back to my life, I consider it a remarkable stroke of luck that I had the opportunity of seeing those traditional pantomimes before they disappeared for, thanks to them, Pantaloon, Pierrot, Harlequin and Colombine are not, for me, characters constructed by learned research into the Commedia dell'Arte, but real figures that I have seen with my own eyes. I fell completely in love with one of those figures from the first moment I saw it, the moment that its multi-coloured costume and face half covered by a black mask began to flit in front of my eyes. Throughout my childhood and youth, this figure never ceased to charm and lure me. It was not the ancient Arlecchino, the artful dodger - robber almost - black-faced and curiously ugly. When later on, I saw the ancient Arlecchino in the pictures of Watteau, Gillot, and Lancret, I did not want to believe that this was Harlequin, the real historical Harlequin.



Harlequin costume by Benois from *The Nutcracker* ballet

My Harlequin was youthful, ideally built, with a charming face, that one imagines behind the mysterious mask. One was the Harlequin, who had been adopted and transformed by the French of the eighteenth century; the other the darling of the fairies, who dressed in clothes sparkling with spangles and performed the most wonderful miracles. Such was the unfading youthfulness of Harlequin, and such he remained for me until I was found worthy to see him.

I must add that this was the way Harlequin was depicted in a beautifully illustrated book called *Les Aventures d'Arlequin*, which I inherited from my brothers and that of the *fantocci* which my grandmother brought me from Venice, just as charmingly attractive. The charming Harlequin that I first saw in 1874 (when I was four years old) on Yegarev's Balagan, was my first experience of theatre and to this day I consider it to have been a most wonderful beginning to my artistic life.

From: *Reminiscences of the Russian Ballet* by Alexandre Benois. Putnam, London 1941

# ARLEQUINE or ARLECCHINA?

## - The Emergence of The Female Harlequin

While it seems quite likely that female members of the Italian commedia troupes may have, on occasion, adopted the mask of Arlecchino and replicated the (male) character on the stage, the fashion for playing a female version appears to have emerged in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably in Paris, as suggested by this picture of 'La Signore Spinette en Arlequine de l'Opera'. Engravings of this kind were produced in large numbers to sell to members of the public who frequented performances at the Paris Opera and the existence of such prints is testimony to the widespread popularity of the character.

The name 'Arlequine' first appears in the finale of the play *Le retour de la Foire de Bezons*, performed for the first time at the Théâtre Italien on the 1st October 1695. A number of Commedia characters come out to dance on stage, and amongst these «**Arlequin danse avec une Arlequine**». This fact is important enough for the dancing couple to be chosen as the main subject for the frontispiece of the play's text, shown below. However, the name does not occur again in the whole collection of plays printed by Evaristo Gherardi.



*La Sigore Spinette en Arlequine de l'Opera*  
- engraving by Bonnard (late 17thC)



The identity of the Spinette Arlequine engraving has been traced to an actress whose real name was Maria Teresa and who was married to Vittorio Dorsi, a Commedia actor living in Italy who took on the roles of Dottore. She was the sister-in-law of Angelo Costantini, who played Mezzetin in the company. The actress only joined the Théâtre Italien in April 1697, barely one month before the theatre was closed down, and was only able to perform with them five or six times. She then moved to the Opera, from which the engraving above dates. [1]

The character "Signore Spinette", appears much later on a decorated fan from the 18<sup>th</sup> C. Although it is unlikely that Spinette was still alive at that time, it seems possible that her fame was such as to ensure the name of Spinette as Arlequine persisted even to the end of the century.

An identical figure of Arlequine is to be found in another engraving by Bonnard. It shows Arlequine dancing on stage with another four



actors, in a performance called *L'Opéra du Carnaval de Venise*. This opera, in French and Italian, was written by Jean-François Regnard together with the musician André Campra, and was first performed at the Académie Royale de Musique on the 20th January, 1699. Regnard was well-known to the Italian troupe, as he was the author of a number of plays published in Gherardi's collection.



A Scene from *Carnaval de Venise* by Campra, 1699

The next Harlequine for which we do have a lot of information is Hester Santlow (later Hester Booth), who is represented in a painting by John Ellys, from around 1722-25. The fact that the English dancer was already playing this role in Drury Lane in 1706, after training with a French dancing master, René Cherrier, shows clearly that the figure of Arlequine as a Commedia dell'Arte character had quickly spread beyond France by the early eighteenth century.

Santlow's costume, although similar to that of Spinette, differs considerably in the detailing. The patterned design on Spinette's costume is more complex; the multi-coloured triangles, which are similar to the pattern on Santlow's dress, are divided into panels that are bordered by narrower panels bearing a distinctive sinuous line going right down the skirt, decorated with large circles on each side of the loops. The pattern is repeated at the hemline.



*Hester Santlow as Harlequine*, by John Ellys, 1722-25, V&A London

The pairing of Harlequine and Harlequin as stage characters within the Commedia dates from their original appearance as dancers in *The Retour de Bezons*. Further evidence of the popularity of this pair is testified by the well-known painting by Lancret shown here.



*Actors of the Italian Comédie*. Painting by Nicolas Lancret (1690-1743), Louvre Museum, Paris





*Arlequin & Arlequine*: Gregorio Lambranzi: *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul* (Nuremberg 1716)

Just how widespread the figure of Arlequine had become by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century is indicated by the presence of a similar engraving in the theatre collections of Cesky Krumlov Castle in the Czech Republic. As depicted here however, and in other paintings at Cesky, it is clear that by this time the dress style was no longer the sole preserve of travelling commedia players (such as those shown in the print below from Gregorio Lambranzi's *Neue und curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul*, published in Nuremberg in 1716) but had been adopted and refined by the aristocracy as part of their costume for masquerade balls.



*Portrait of Margravine Sibylla Augusta as Harlequine and her son as Harlequin*, 1705-06  
Landesmedienzentrum, Baden-Württemberg

*Arlequine*: an engraving from the Schwarzenberg collection at Český Krumlov (mid-18<sup>th</sup> century)







Further examples of eighteenth century Arlequine costumes, possibly designed for aristocrats to wear to masquerade balls.



The pairing of Arlequin and Columbine predates that of Arlequin and Arlequine (which only dates from 1695), but in

the 18<sup>th</sup> century the costume of Columbine began to adopt elements of the Arlequine pattern, as shown here in the painting on the left by Giovanni Domenico Ferretti (1692 – 1768)







During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the figure of Arlequine began to be used more widely as a decorative emblem. On the reverse of the fan shown here, dating from the 1760s, the image of "Signore Spinetti" is paired with that of a masked Arlequin. On the front, at the centre of the fan, a butterfly stands on a bouquet against a backdrop of ancient ruins while on the right, in trompe-l'oeil, a fly is depicted as having landed on the lace, an indication of the extraordinary quality of its workmanship.



The popularity of the Arlequine figure continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even beyond. The costume design shown below dates from 1996. The designer was the well-known costume and theatre designer, **Terence Emery** (1933 – 2003). Emery had a long and varied career starting with Western Theatre Ballet in the 1960s. He designed *Coppelia* in Oslo and Japan; *Le Renard* in Liverpool, and at the Proms with the Royal Ballet in the late 1970s. His

work for opera included *Don Pasquale*, with Colin Graham at Sadler's Wells/ENO; *Let's Make an Opera*, with Benjamin Britten at Aldeburgh (1960s); and *Orfeo*, conducted by Sir Roger Norrington in Florence and London. He worked with the Consort of Musicke, with Emma Kirkby and Anthony Rooley, on a Proms performance of *The Judgement of Paris*, which led to the film *Monteverdi Madrigals*, partly shot in Mantua and directed by Don Taylor in the 1990s [Guardian Obituaries].

The numerous productions Emery designed for Lina Lalandi and the English Bach Festival were an important contribution to the reintroduction of early opera, starting in the 1960s. The date on this drawing, 1996, is the year in which the English Bach Festival produced a version of Moliere's *Comédie Ballet Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Music for this work was composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully and includes a version of the dance *Chacon for a Harlequin*. It seems just possible that this chacon was danced by a female Harlequine and that it was for her that the costume was designed.

## Barbara Segal

[1] Many of the details within this article are drawn from the research of Vicki Ann Cremona: "From Louis XIV's Paris to the Schwarzenbergs' Cesky Krumlov: «Le Théâtre Italien», Italian Actors and Images of The Commedia dell'Arte", Published in «Teatro e Storia» nuova serie 3-2011 [a. XXV vol. 32] and available from the web at

[https://www.teatroestoria.it/pdf/32/Vicki\\_Ann\\_Cremona\\_526.pdf](https://www.teatroestoria.it/pdf/32/Vicki_Ann_Cremona_526.pdf)



Arlequine costume by Terence Emery  
- from the collection of Ann Susan Brown

# VISUAL VERNACULAR

## - POSSIBILITIES WITHIN THE COMMEDIA STYLE

My first outing into creating theatre for young audiences with British Sign Language, which led to its integration into my general creative practice, was with a Commedia dell'Arte creation entitled 'Cacophony'. This grew out a relationship with a hearing theatre sign interpreter Jenny Sharpstone and a deaf actor/director Robbie Jones, both of whom had seen my earlier 'spoken only' shows and were intrigued to imagine the work with the addition of the visual extravagance of British Sign Language (BSL). Always up for a challenge, my then co-artistic director and partner Alastair S Macmillan and I said, "let's try it". The result was incendiary and influenced the next 25 years of my creative output. Having a strong background in Commedia creation, with five shows under our belt, it seemed a perfect opportunity to re-assess some of our earlier Italianite creations, and a scenario and design was created over a few months. The possibilities of the visual 'lazzi' that we had developed in other works really blossomed in this new 'visual vernacular' environment.

This project received financial encouragement from Arts Council England which allowed for a lot of research and development time. We worked for four weeks in the studio with a small performing company comprised of a deaf actress/ puppeteer Tinca Leahy, a hearing onstage actor/ interpreter Katie Fenwick and us two experienced commedia performers who were also BSL trained, Alastair S Macmillan and Kinny Gardner. We predicated the story and use of language around 'first the visual, next the aural'. We also had added BSL input from Deaf Language Teacher Stewart Bailey and had meetings and advice from the British Deaf Association and the National Deaf Children's Society. Much frustration was experienced around the use of half mask as a fair amount of the BSL language is based around Non-Manual Features (NMF). The placement and shape of hands is important, but the bulk of the communication is facilitated by face and body. We did discover that white gloves added to the focus of the hands and have used that in each Commedia costume design since. Our director, the venerable Barry Grantham, had such massive commedia experience that the time spent developing this work was a voyage of pure delight, discovery, and inspiration. He understood the need for non-verbal storytelling, and was adept at facilitating use of puppets, clown, vaudeville, dance, and mime to move the story along in a D/deaf friendly way.



Kinny Gardner and Alastair S Macmillan in *Cacophony* - photo Robert Workman



As a result of this initial highly successful 6-week tour, my company 'Krazy Kat Theatre Company' went on to specialise in creating theatre incorporating Sign Language Arts which is accessible for deaf and disabled children and young people and is performed and taught by an integrated company of deaf and deaf-aware practitioners. We have kept a strong Commedia influence, of course, and regularly teach related workshops across the globe.

I have been creating theatrical work for Deaf children in the UK, but touring it in a Hearing world, for many years and regularly come across basic misconceptions about D/deafness and its diaspora of cultural difference. So, here are four bullet points of cultural recognition that I am often asked to explain in lectures and interviews.



Joanna Tagney, Kinny Gardner and Keith Boehm in *Commedia Clowns* –  
photo David Liddle

### The Visual Language:

80% of British Sign Language is based around Non-Manual Features. The placement and shaping of hands is vital, of course, but the bulk of the communication is facilitated by face, body placement and 'role shift'. Often, in the past, signing actors have been accused of making 'too many funny faces'; alas this shows a simple and understandable misunderstanding, and much of my work is about building a greater awareness of D/deaf cultural and linguistic identity in the Hearing world. The use of half mask in our Commedia world adds a further layer of interference and takes a lot of experiment and cut 'n' paste to find a coherent and accessible syntax. But it can most certainly be done.

Contrary to popular belief, most sign languages bear little resemblance to the spoken language. In other words, in the majority of cases, the various sign languages used have not actually developed from spoken languages. For example, American Sign Language resembles Chinese in form more than it does English in that a single gesture often represents a phrase or whole idea, rather than a single word. Further, most

sign languages were invented by the deaf and thus bear little real resemblance to spoken language in form, having a greatly different syntax. A further point to be aware of is that it is a **three-dimensional language**, and in consequence in theatrical presentations written ‘surtitles’ are at best obscure, when not meaningless. We don’t read much!

### Eye Breaks:

It is acknowledged that Deaf children need a rest from receiving information by hand and face. So in my work I am using and developing ‘Eye breaks’: moments of storytelling where the information is presented as dance, shadow-play, mime, storyboard pictures etc., and which serves to both move the story along and let the child rest. It’s a form of ‘dynamic teaching’, using theatrical effects rather than white boards or Power Point.

Tiredness affects Deaf children to a much greater level than hearing. It is greatly exhausting for children trying to fit in to the “neurotypical” or hearing world. Think about the energy involved in lip reading, sign receiving, and being attentive all day long. Processing and constructing meaning out of half-heard words and sentences, making guesses, and figuring out context. It’s like doing jigsaws, Sudoku and Scrabble all at the same time.

### Repetition:

As soon as a deaf person ‘looks away’ from the actor, they have missed the line, there is only the visual reception to rely on, no aural. So, in my work as in Deaf sign conversation, I use reiteration and repetition. This successfully reflects the hearing oral storytelling tradition of repeating phrases and rhythms. It is also vital that only one person ‘speaks’ at a time, to allow the child to focus on the signer and receive the information. The addition of Commedia set character mask and costume greatly helps focus the audience onto ‘who is speaking/signing’.

### Cultural Values:

There are many critical differences between Deaf and hearing cultures. Under no circumstances should the characteristic visuality of sign language be ignored. Prosodic (the rhythm, stress, and intonation of speech) elements in the telling of the story need the linguistic sensitivity of a first-language translator, otherwise they will be lost. What cultural reference frames are applied when judging the work and value of Deaf led theatre?

### In closing:

By using Commedia dell Arte as a starting point in the development of new works I find it gives a concentrated and highly visual clarity to the issues around communication across a cultural diaspora. It has allowed me to develop and discover new ways to tell our tales in an accessible and constantly fresh way, with the vast over-reaching panoply of nuance and subtlety that a combination of both Commedia dell Arte and British Sign Language can achieve.

**(Copyright) Dr Kinny Gardner B.E.M., B.C.A.a., D. Arts (hon). April 2022**

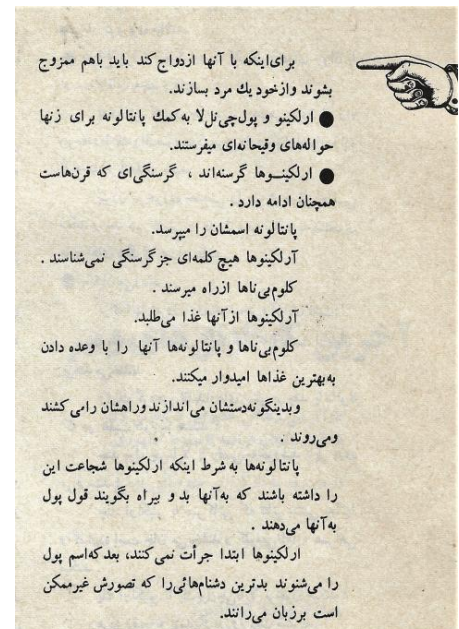


# COMMEDIA IN TEHRAN?



Now and again our Zannizine likes to bring you the unusual, the unlikely, the bizarre. This is one such; we expect Commedia in Paris, London, New York and Frisco - but Tehran?

This is a report from the archives of three performances by *La Compagnia de la Commedia dell'Arte a l'Avogaria* of Venice given in Tehran on 14 - 16 April, 1976



Written and directed by: Giovanni Poli

Cast:

Paolo Bertinato; Francesca Bettini;  
 Laura Boato; Giorgio Davanzo;  
 Piere-giorgio Fasolo; Daniela Foa;  
 Giovanni Keller; Sandra Martini; Ranzo Milan;  
 Carla Picozzi; Giuseppi Morassi;  
 Giorgio Pansini; Attilia Pittarella; Fabio Sartor;  
 Virgilio Quagliatto; Efisio Coletti; Stefano Poli



## ***I CARNEVALI DI VENEZIA* (Tehran, 14 April 1976)**

“Napoleon’s conquest of northern Italy has reached the outskirts of Venice. The Council of Ten and the Doge declare the Republic’s neutrality.

The men prepare a Carnival Feast, plunging into an evening of carousing without the ladies. A group of serving girls singing happily, are invited by a youth to come out and enjoy the last day of the Carnival, and so hasten to finish up their chores.

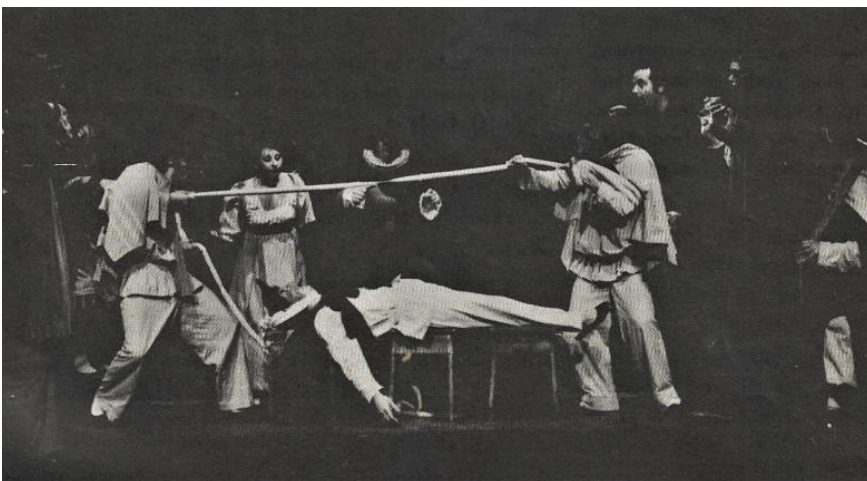
The old folk want to kick up their heels as well. An old lady goes out masked in search of an affair; her jealous husband goes after her, but gets told that he is sick and should stay at home, while she dashes off to the public square.

Two oldsters amble to San Marco Square, the centre of festivities; full of sport they have an eye to an adventure themselves and chase after a girl in a mask. Back to the old lady, who has now picked up a young noble admirer, who thinks, because of her mask, that she is a sweet young thing, until the old husband arrives and snatches the mask off her face, causing the youth run off repulsed. The serving girls arrive on the scene, relishing their freedom and joking about the way they have slipped out of the arrogant and mean clutches of their masters.



Arlecchino and Pantalone are joined in a comic tirade against the ladies while Colombina, in turn, deploras the men. Pantalone promises a handsome reward to the Arlecchinos if they’ll shout curses in public; at first the Arlecchinos don’t dare, but the sight of money moves them to indulge in the most frightful abuses imaginable. Pantalone reacts angrily and beats them furiously with his stick.

Then along come the traditional masquers: a band of Pantalonis chasing after a Colombina; Punchinellas doing a worship dance of a Neapolitan sun. Arlecchinos, living up to all the names with which the comic tradition has dubbed them, court their Colombinas.



The Carnival has come to an abrupt end: the army of Napoleon has invaded the region of Veneto and reached the lagoon district; Napoleon deals the coup de grace to the Venetian State, declaring the end of the Republic.”



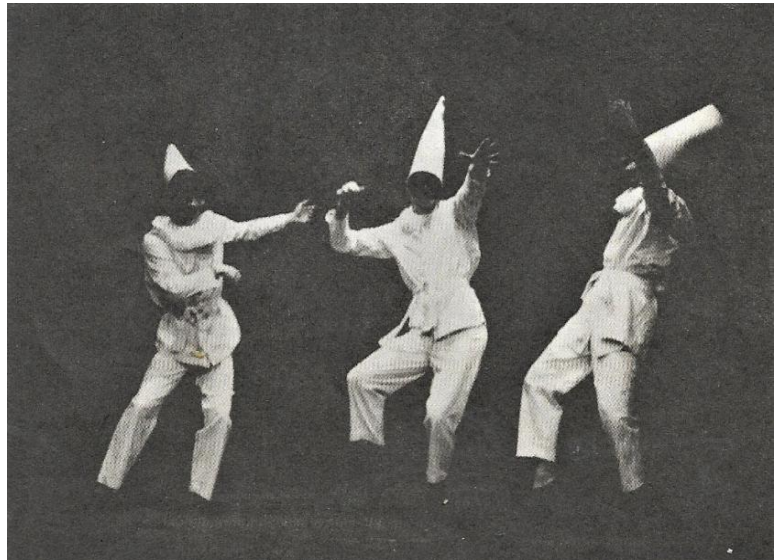
## **COMMEDIA DEGLI ZANNI (Tehran, 15 -16 April 1976)**

“The Italian masques, in their grand display of colour, were born into the era of the finest human expressions, and bespoke, along with the poetry and painting of the Cinquecento, the celebration of human nature finally freed from the fusty propositions of the medieval intellect. It is only this, the last remaining heritage, to take pleasure in the aesthetic contemplation of this world so briefly past.

### **The Folio is slowly opened.**

One by one the masks emerge from faded manuscripts and the oblivion of long centuries to speak with the rhythm of their colours, of their movements and of their voices. These are the Zanni, servants, average fellows, willing to please and always hungry. And here is Pantalone, an old miserly reprobate, brimming with senile lust.

Enter the Capitano, a swashbuckling Spanish soldier, given to boasts about military exploits. Tronfio full of sententious wisdom and The Dottore, a physician -cum- physicist -cum- philosopher as well as astrologer, and finally the tender love-birds Isabella and Lucio. The minstrel Zanni start to play slowly and quietly, and the play begins . . . “



### **Note from the Editor**

*The text is a little odd - it may have been translated and re-translated. Even so, I felt that it gives a good impression of how it appeared on stage.*

*I have not found a 'Tronfio' in any list of Masks - but if it is of any help, it is Italian for 'Trunk'.*

*The pictures are as the originals (poor) but good enough to show the vitality of the troupe. La Compagnia de la Commedia dell'Arte can be found on YouTube and, to my mind, they are among the very best of performers. Their every move, their every nuance of expression, is worthy of our study. (B.G.)*

# MUSIC IN COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Whether to accompany a dance or a song – or just to set the mood – music is an essential component of any commedia performance. From the familiar images of Jacques Callot (1620s) to the dances of Lambranzi (1716) and on to the harlequinades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century pantomime, representations of Commedia are frequently shown with musical images. And it is not just the simple occurrence of Commedia performers engaged in making music, but frequently the presence of an accompanying band expresses the close integration of these two arts, from the plays of Moliere to the ballets of Stravinsky.

A further elaboration is the way in which Commedia characters, or 'masks', have themselves inspired composers to create music evocative of the character – witness the numerous pieces with the title 'dance for a Harlequin' or similar. Contemporary examples might include the Stockhausen clarinet solo *Harlekin*, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite* or the *Pierrot Lunaire* of Arnold Schoenberg.

In the first of my three articles we consider the relationship between the mask and the instrument: What instrument is most frequently depicted being played by Arlecchino, for example. And what might we reasonably associate with Pulcinella, Pantalone or Il Dottore?

In later articles we shall deal with the kind of music that has been produced to accompany Commedia-related performances; while in the final piece, the influence of Commedia on the wider world of musical composition will be addressed.

But first a picture: Here is the 'Innammorato' Ottavio, dressed in the costume of the 1680s as depicted by Marice Sand in 1860. He is shown playing a **flute**.



Landsknechts with flute & drum

Now while the flute might be regarded as a suitable instrument for a rather foppish young man in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in an earlier period this association would not be at all obvious. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier, the flute, along with an accompanying drum, was more frequently associated with the armed men of the Swiss mercenary bands, or the Landsknechts of Germany. Known as the 'Swiss pair', flute and drum are frequently to be found in a military rather than Commedia context, or accompanying young knights dancing with their ladies, such as in Maximilian's *Freydal* Tournaments book. On these grounds the flute might be considered a more suitable instrument for Capitano Spavento!

It needs to be acknowledged that instruments convey symbolic meaning and that this can change over time. The choice of instrument for a Commedia musician may need to reflect this aspect. Il Dottore, for example, might well complement his serious self-image



with a 'serious' instrument, such as the bass viol, for example. Pantalone, on the other hand, would probably reject any association with the vulgar role of musician and, in fact, is seldom, if ever, pictured with an instrument:



*Pantalone dupé*

This early illustration of a Commedia scene, *The duping of Pantalone*, shows him in the company of two musicians (presumably responsible for his duping) but no suggestion that he might ever be part of a musical trio.

Less contentious are the mandolins, or other 'plucked strings' of various kinds depicted by Callot in his series *Balli di Sfessania* (c.1630-1635). In this illustration, Razullo is playing upon a long-necked version of the lute called the *collascione*, sometimes known as *liuto della giraffa* meaning giraffe-lute on account of its long neck.



From Jacques Callot's *Balli di Sfessania* (1622)

Interestingly, the same image was copied a century or so later by Andien de Clermont, a French artist who arrived in Britain in 1716 and was commissioned in 1742 to provide a series of 16 mural panels to decorate the 'Scaramouche Parlour' in Belvedere House, Kent. Although the house was demolished in the 1950s to be replaced by a housing estate, many of the paintings survive in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum. This sort of interior decoration was very popular amongst noble or wealthy families and frequently featured scenes from the Commedia dell'Arte.



Mural decorations from Belvedere House by Andien de Clermont (French painter, active 1716-1783)



Here, in addition to the familiar **mandolin** and **tambourine**, we also have the ‘**salt-box**’ being played by the character on the right. The direct copying from Callot’s original engraving shows the continuing influence of his work.



Brighella with **guitar** is a familiar depiction and the instrument fits perfectly his character as the somewhat unscrupulous ‘**seducer**’

Comic or improvised instruments, on the other hand, are frequently to be found in the hands of Pulcinella. The coloured etching of Polichinelle (the French equivalent of Pulcinella) shown here was produced in Paris during the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It depicts the character about to ‘**play**’ on the ‘**tongs and griddle**’ – a sort of improvised instrument of a kind much favoured in Commedia.



The same idea is reflected in the burlesque band created by Hogarth to accompany his satirical image of Italian opera – with instruments such as **bagpipe**, **jews harp**, **dulcimer**, **salt-box** and **bum fiddle**. While not strictly ‘**commedia**’ it shows the range and kind of instruments that might be employed to accompany Commedia performance.





A more straight-forward image of musicians playing for a Commedia show is represented by the pair playing **trumpet** and **drum** to ‘drum up a crowd’ for their company’s performance in an adjacent booth at Southwark Fair. The drummer in this picture might well revert to her role as Inammorata in the ensuing performance.



Southwark Fair (detail) William Hogarth



Drums and other percussion are frequently shown in the hands of Commedia characters. In particular, the pipe & tabor combination features quite strongly in illustrations from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as with the familiar images of the English ‘clowns’, Richard Tarleton and Will Kemp.



An 18th century print of the Elizabethan clown, Richard Tarleton.

Stipple engraving by S. Harding, 1792, Wellcome Collection

In the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the range of instruments depicted in the hands of Commedia performers increases greatly, to the point where almost anything can be found. For example, the ‘commedia’ paintings of Gino Severini from 1920s to 1940s frequently show **clarinets**, or even **tubas**, particularly as played by the zani characters: Pulcinella, Arlecchino and Brighella. Yet, even in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century as unlikely a Commedia instrument as the **trombone** (which is usually treated with grave seriousness) can be seen in a Commedia role – frequently accompanied by some mildly lewd verses.

Gino Severini: *Pulcinella with Tuba*, 1942



“I have to bend down, holding my instrument of pipes, so as to direct it so it will give a sound. Look how my club hangs from my body, as a result of my movements.”



Although historical references are fairly limited in indicating what instruments traditionally went with each player, contemporary performances of Commedia may basically take a free hand in what instruments they might assign to any mask. A recent performance of Sylvano Busotti's *Lachrymae*, for example, included elements of Commedia, including a short sequence in which Pulcinella emerged playing a blue plastic trombone, well in keeping with the character of this mask.



Pulcinella with trombone -  
Mini-Commedia Festival, 2018

In other images from the prolific collection of Commedia paintings by Gino Severini, the same character is shown with an **accordion**, while his Zani companions, Arlecchino and Brighella, adopt the more traditional **mandolin**.

In the trio shown here, Pulcinella adopts the **pipe and tabor**, while his unmasked companions play other traditional 'commedia' instruments: **bagpipe** and **hurdy gurdy**.

Finally, it is worth noting that simplicity of performance is the ultimate aim. The performer must not let the instrument or the music intrude in any way that hinders the telling of the story. The music must be memorised (no music stands or other encumbrances allowed) and integrated with the character in such a way that the movements remain consistent with those of the 'mask'. Dancing to the **tambourine** alone, as in this Callot etching, is a nice representation of this ideal.



'The Band': Commedia Festival at Sands Studios 2020



Bill Tuck



# SUMMER SCHOOL REVIEW

## Commedia at the Chalemie Summer School in Uppingham

You might ask, where's Uppingham? It's a village nestling quaintly in the countryside of Rutland, about 20 miles north of Peterborough (UK), and the home of the boarding school which opened its doors in July to the 2022 Chalemie Summer School.



The commedia class has been tutored by Barry Grantham since the beginning of Chalemie in 1986. I had taken part several times before, and after two years of enforced home-office idleness, it was wonderful to be back. This time my nephew, Robert, who is new to commedia, came along as well.

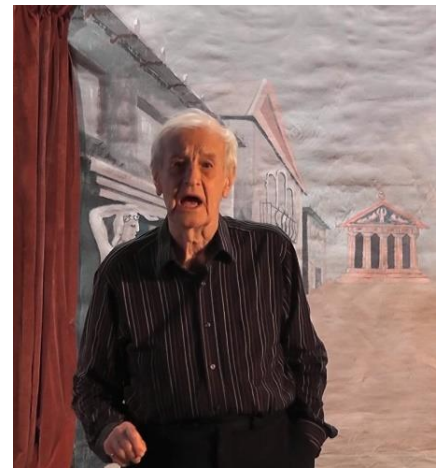
On the first day Barry set the class going with word-games, which were good for overcoming my reticence and which hone the skill of concentrating on your partner to arrive at the give-and-take of a dialogue. My nephew was immediately captivated. In the following classes we worked on posture and movement, with a range of exercises, from subtle gestures to more intense movement patterns, to teach us to communicate thoughts and intentions with clarity. Barry impressed on the class that movements are never "wrong", provided that they convey what was intended.

Towards the end of the week, we started to develop some scenes with a view to presenting them at the performance on the last night of the summer school. As in previous years, Barry wished to create pieces that demonstrated contrasting commedia styles, so we



Cocodrillo & Spavento fight it out

worked on two mimed sequences which illustrated the "whimsical" genre, and a dialogue scene with Arlecchino and Pantalone in a more "serious" (I'm sure that is not the right word!) vein.



Barry Grantham



Arlecchino & Pantalone confer

Finally (the first-time ever for the Chalemie Commedia Company!), we developed a scene with audience participation, in which volunteers formed the entourage of the two rival Captains, Spavento and Cocodrillo. Despite his superior sword-play and

the enthusiastic vocal support of his followers, the dashing Spavento did in the end loose out to the formidable Coccodrillo (played with such gusto by Patrissia).



Barry Grantham as *Captain Spavento* recounting his exploits in the battle of the *Val d'Inferno* (Chalemie 2022)

One of the joys of the Chalemie Summer School is the range of activities and entertainments on offer. Each day began after breakfast with a plenum warm-up session lead by Barry in which we were introduced to the basics of various eccentric dances including the “Sand Dance”. My nephew (a tenor) enjoyed the madrigal singing with tutors Mathew Spring and Sara Stowe at the end of each afternoon. A barn dance on the first evening organised by Barbara Segal was the perfect way to get to know the other people at the summer school.

During the mid-week tutors’ concert Barry gave a performance of a monologue in which an ageing Captain Spavento recounted the heroic exploits of his youth.

On the way home from Uppingham I asked my nephew whether he will come back to Barry’s class in 2023? “You bet!” came the reply.



Harvey as Pantalone

**Harvey Dobbs**

The Chalemie Summer School is scheduled to run in 2023 at Uppingham School from 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> July. For further Information check the Chalemie website: [www.chalemie.co.uk](http://www.chalemie.co.uk)



Some of the members of Chalemie at the Final Performance at Uppingham on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022



# ENDS AND ODDS

## Biographies of Contributors

### Barbara Segal

**Barbara Segal** is a performer, teacher and historian of dance from the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. She is director of **Chalemie**, a group specialising in early dance and music theatre. She has performed and taught throughout Europe, the Baltic States, Russia, the USA and Australia. She has toured for the Early Music Network and the British Council, and she has taught historical dance at the Royal Academy of Dance for their BA (Hons) degree in Ballet Education. She organises and teaches at the **Chalemie Summer School** each year, and she taught and performed for fourteen years at the **Cracovia Court Dance Festival** in Poland. Currently she is organiser of the Early Dance Circle Biennial Conferences and has edited the Proceedings for the past twelve years. Barbara gives lectures on early dance and allied topics for both academic institutions and other interested groups, and she has trained singers in baroque gesture. In 2018 the Early Dance Circle presented Barbara with the Peggy Dixon Award for Outstanding Services to Early Dance. She holds a PhD from London University.

For more information visit: [www.baroque-dance.co.uk](http://www.baroque-dance.co.uk)

barbara.segal@chalemie.co.uk



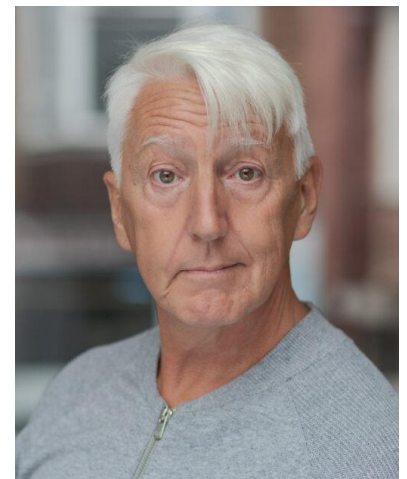
### Kinny Gardner B.E.M., B.C.A.a., D.Arts (hon).

Kinny was born in Edinburgh sometime in the last century. He studied Classical Ballet, graduating in 1976, and at The Martha Graham School in New York in 1978, studying with Martha Graham herself.

As a soloist choirboy he sang the 'War Requiem' with Sir Peter Pears, under the baton of Sir Benjamin Britten, for the 1968 Edinburgh International Festival. He has featured in London's West End in early casts of 'Godspell' and 'The Rocky Horror Show', and enjoyed a year in Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap'.

Rep. and tours include 'Chicago', 'The Pirates of Penzance', 'Marat/Sade', 'Adrian Mole', 'The Threepenny Opera', 'Assassins', 'Café Debris' and 'Cabaret', with work at Queens Hornchurch, Manchester Royal Exchange, Perth Theatre, Wolsey Ipswich and New Victoria Stoke on Trent. For 27 years Kinny has been a principal guest solo artist with **The Lindsay Kemp Company**, with whom he has toured the world's greatest opera houses and appearing in all Lindsay Kemps greatest works

He co-founded **The Crazy Kat Theatre Company** (Sign Language Arts) in 1982 and remains Artistic Director. He is responsible for directing or creating over 42 productions for the company, including workshops, which now features integrated sign-language as a matter of course.



He is currently a Development Adviser to BBC Cbeebies, working on new mainstream Sign Language television projects for children. In 2014 he was awarded the BBC Community Hero Award and in July of 2015 he received the prestigious British Citizens Award for services to the Arts. More recently, Kinny was included in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2016 and was awarded The British Empire Medal for services to the Arts and Disability. In 2018 he was awarded an honorary degree from The University of Wolverhampton, giving him the title 'Doctor of Arts'.

For more information visit: [www.kinnygardner.com](http://www.kinnygardner.com)

## Giovanni Poli

Giovanni Poli was born in Crosara di Marostica, Vicenza on 2 July 1917. He died in Venice, 18 February 1979.

Poli is remembered as one of the most important figures responsible for the rebirth and rediscovery of Commedia dell'Arte, along with other major characters of the Italian theatre such as Giorgio Strehler and Dario Fo. He was one of the founders of the **Teatro Ca' Foscari** university theatre in 1949. He later moved to Milan where he carried out his theatrical activity until finally returning to Venice, where he created the **Teatro a l'Avogaria** and the acting school that still carries his name (since 2009 directed by his son Stefano)

Poli's name is inextricably linked to his most famous work, **COMMEDIA DEGLI ZANNI** (*The Comedy of the Zanni*) [<https://youtu.be/dxenBCfAGJc>] the result of his research on sixteenth-century texts. Thanks to the universal language of this type of presentation, this work has been performed world-wide by **La Compagnia a l'Avogaria**, including in Iran (in 1976).

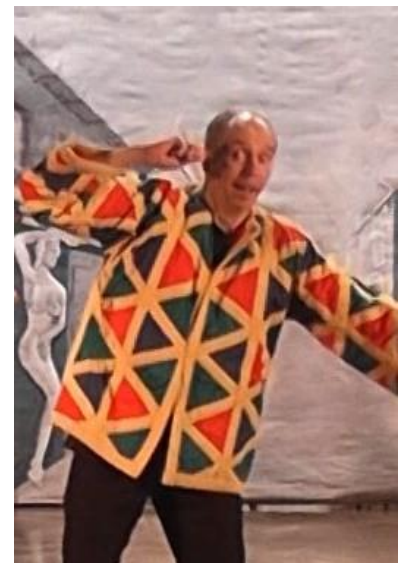
For more information visit: <https://www.teatro-avogaria.it>

## Harvey Dobbs

Harvey Dobbs is cooped up all-day in an office (or more recently his back-bedroom) in Munich, Germany, but likes to let his hair down of an evening by training with various groups for historical dance, including **La Danza**



**München** with Jadwiga Nowaczek. He has been enjoying Barry Grantham's classes at the Chalemie Summer School for several years.





## STOP PRESS: WORKSHOP ANNOUNCEMENT



### Play & Perform

GERRY FLANAGAN

**A 12-day Clown workshop spread over four weeks to devise and perform a show at Edinburgh's Storytelling Centre.**

Week 1: Tues Aug 30<sup>th</sup>, Wed Aug 31<sup>st</sup>

Week 2: Mon Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, Tues 6<sup>th</sup>, Wed 7<sup>th</sup>, Sun Sept 11<sup>th</sup>

Week 3: Mon Sept 12<sup>th</sup>, Friday Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, Sat Sept 17<sup>th</sup>, Sun Sept 18<sup>th</sup>

Week 4: Mon Sept 19<sup>th</sup>, Tues Sept 20<sup>th</sup> with evening shows on both days in the Netherbow theatre at the Storytelling Centre.

This is an exciting Clown and Commedia workshop to devise:

## LOVE AND MADNESS

*"Love that is not madness is not love"*

It is 1592. Welcome to Italy!

A father, Pantalone, takes his daughter, Isabella, against her will, to a distant city to be married.

Her true love, Oratio, supported by his faithful servant, Grappa, disguise themselves and set out to rescue her. They in turn are pursued by the hot-headed Flaminia, who has been spurned by Oratio.

She will go to any lengths to make sure that the marriage goes ahead, convinced that Oratio will fall in love with her if Isabella is out of his grasp.

Knowing Pantalone is superstitious she disguises herself as an old soothsayer to convince him Fate demands the planned marriage must go ahead.

If not - disaster awaits!

Desperate, Isabella feigns madness to avoid the marriage. Unwittingly this starts a chain reaction - Oratio and then Flaminia really do go mad, a mysterious figure arises foretelling the end of the world, portents are seen in the sky.

Is the whole world going crazy?

**LOVE AND MADNESS** is an exciting blend of Clowning and Commedia. Enter the madcap world of Commedia dell'Arte to meet the wonderfully comic characters that arose in 16th century Italy. Using a 500- year-old scenario – but no masks! - we will see Masters and Servants argue and fight in a world full of envy, love and revenge just like they did all those centuries ago. Much of contemporary clowning has its origins in the Commedia.

In the workshop we will emphasise; the use of rhythm to link action, intention, and emotion; play and vulnerability; the role of status, especially that of master/servant. These ingredients plus references to current national and international politics will be the catalyst for vibrant clowning and physical comedy that will create **LOVE AND MADNESS**.

This project is ideal for all those with previous experience of play and clowning and who wish to develop their devising and performance skills, put them into action – and above all else, have **FUN!**

Gerry Flanagan, Artistic Director of Shifting Sands Theatre, has more than twenty-five years' experience performing, directing and teaching clowning and physical theatre.

### **STOP PRESS!**

**If successful and participants wish to continue other dates for LOVE & MADNESS will be found. At that point application will be made to Creative Scotland to tour the show in 2023. If that application is successful all involved will be paid for rehearsal and the tour. Depending on experience payment will be at least minimum ITC rates**

**Previous PLAY & PERFORM projects have taken place at Theatre Delicatessen in London, TUT Clown School in Hanover, Theatre Haus Mitte in Berlin, College Street Studio, Nottingham and Deda Dance Centre Derby.**

Comments from participants of previous Play & Perform projects:

**"Accessible and inspiring."**

**"A thoroughly enjoyable journey and a great educational experience."**

**"A great project – I have learned a lot."**

**"Challenging, exciting, stimulating and fun."**

**"Mature, well taught, compassionate - doesn't hold punches and teaches to a high level the art of clown and ensemble playing."**

**"Rigorous, playful, challenging."**

### **WORKSHOP FEE: £720**

**Early Bird fee: £600 if booked before 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

**Contact:** Gerry Flanagan [shiftingsandstheatre@hotmail.com](mailto:shiftingsandstheatre@hotmail.com) 07751996864