



# ZANNIZINE

A QUARTERLY ON-LINE MAG DEVOTED TO COMMEDIA

## Issue 9 – Spring/Summer 2023





## CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

1. [Introducing Issue 9 of Zannizine](#)
2. [Cyril W. Beaumont: A Recollection](#) (Barry Grantham)
3. [Dance in Commedia – Part I](#) (Bill Tuck)
4. [Cyril W. Beaumont: An Appreciation](#) (Barry Grantham)
5. [Choreographing Callot](#) (Klaus Abromeit)
6. [Cyril W. Beaumont and Cecil Sharp](#) (Bill Tuck)
7. [The Changing Fortunes of Mr Punch](#) (Bill Tuck)
8. [Stage Craft – Part II](#) (Barry)
9. [Book Reviews:](#)
  - i. John Rudlin's *"The Metamorphoses of Commedia dell'Arte, or Whatever Happened to Harlequin"* (Olly Crick)
  - ii. The collected articles in *"Commedia dell'Arte in Context"*, editor Balme (Bill Tuck)
10. [Ends and Odds: Highlights from World Commedia Day, 25 February 2023](#) (Cheryl Stapleton)

*“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 9 OF ZANNIZINE

### Welcome to Zannizine’s ninth appearance.

This issue of Zannizine offers you a splendid collection of articles for your delectation. Most are clustered around just one character – or personality – the noted bookseller, publisher, bibliophile, writer, dance historian, critic, balletomane and commedia enthusiast Cyril W. Beaumont (1891-1976). With his dapper dress, wing collars and colourful cravat, he could easily have been a Commedia dell’Arte character in his own right.

Cyril Beaumont in many ways stands as a symbol of his time, the period between the First and Second World Wars. The people and institutions he cultivated formed a large and important segment of the cultural life of Britain during these years, from composers such as Peter Warlock, the poets Sacheverell and Osbert Sitwell, along with much of the dance fraternity, including, of course, the Ballets Russes. At the same time, his direct involvement with Commedia dell’Arte – as theatrical performance in its own right, rather than in the context of ballet - appears to have been minimal.

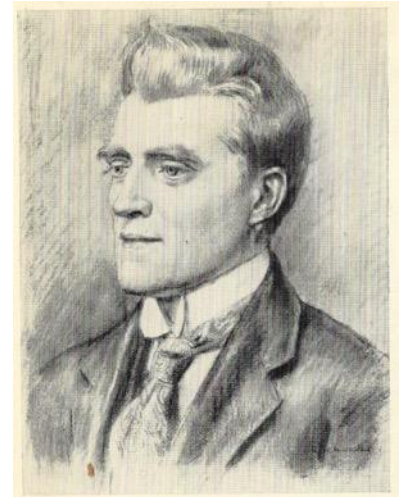
This is not surprising as, in truth, the 1930s were a rather bleak period for Commedia, which did not begin its 20<sup>th</sup> century revival until the 1960s, and then primarily in Italy, its country of origin. In England, Commedia during this period largely thrived through offshoots such as the perennial seaside entertainments of the Punch & Judy show or the Pierrot Troupes - at least until cheap flights and package holidays put paid to the traditional British seaside vacation (discussed in one of our earlier issues).

### Our cover illustration

The cover for this issue is a compilation linked to one of the most significant books in the Commedia dell’Arte cannon: Gregorio Lambranzi’s *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul* (Nuremberg 1716), one of Cyril Beaumont’s most important publications (in an English translation by Derra de Moroda). The illustration is not, however, from Beaumont’s version, but from an earlier manuscript discovered in a Bavarian archive by dance historian Derra de Moroda. It is by the graphic designer Georg Puschner and represents what may be regarded as preliminary drawings for his later illustration of Lambranzi’s work.

# A RECOLLECTION AND AN APPRECIATION OF CYRIL W. BEAUMONT

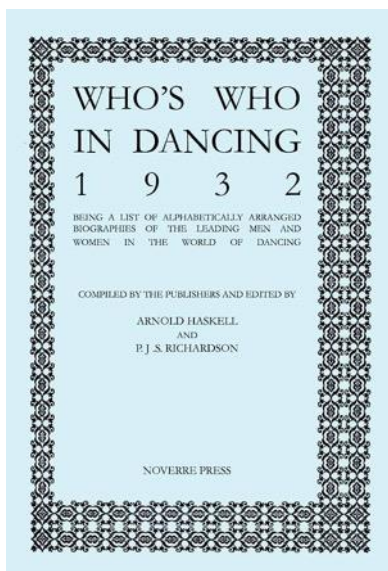
.... PART ONE



'Who's Who in Dancing' for 1932 tells us that. . .

"Cyril W. Beaumont was a critic, historian, and writer on dancing; Hon. Fellow of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and Vice-President and Member of the Examining Board of the Classical Ballet Branch (Cecchetti Method); Editor of the *Dance Journal*; served for three years (1922-1925) as critic of theatrical dancing to *The Dancing World*; and in 1922 he organized the foundation of "The Cecchetti Society". When Maestro Cecchetti went to Italy in 1923, Mr Beaumont was made President of the Company, at the former's request. The following year the Society amalgamated with the "The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing" and Mr. Beaumont became Vice-President of the Classical Ballet Branch, which position he has continued to occupy. In the same year, he was elected honorary fellow of the Imperial Society and appointed Editor of *The Dance Journal*."

"Mr Beaumont has written a number of themes for ballets and dances, several of which, such as *Bal Mabille*, *Circus*, *Touch*, *Promenade*, etc., have been publicly performed. He furnished the historical article *Costume for Ballet* for the collective volume on theatrical costumes entitled *The Robes of Thespis*, 1928. He has written a number of books relating to dancing besides making available in English translation, three of the most important classics of French dance literature: *Orchesographie*, by Thoinot Arbeau, *Lettres sur la Danse et les Ballets*, by J.G Noverre, and *Le Maître a Danser*, by Pierre Rameau. He has also contributed critical and historical articles on dancing to *Artwork*, *Dance Journal*, *The Dancing World*, *Fanfare*, *The Mask*, *The Observer*, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, etc.



Mr Beaumont is the author of many books and pamphlets including the following: *A Manual of the Theory and Practice of Classical Theatrical Dancing (Cecchetti method)* in collaboration with S. Idzicowski, *The History of Harlequin*, *Enrico Cecchetti a memoir*, *The Theory and Practice of Allegro in Classical Ballet* (in collaboration with M.Craske), *A History of Ballet in Russia*, *A French-English Dictionary of Technical Terms used in Classical Ballet*, *Fanny Elssler - a Portrait*, and *A Bibliography of Dancing*."

Fifteen years later, then a young ballet student, I found myself approaching that same address. I had just attended my first class at Maestro Idzikowski's Studio in nearby West Street. Two months before, I had experienced the shock of his guest appearance at the

Suffield and Tweedy Academy of Dancing, Dean St Manchester. A shock that resulted in my leaving my home and family to study in London.

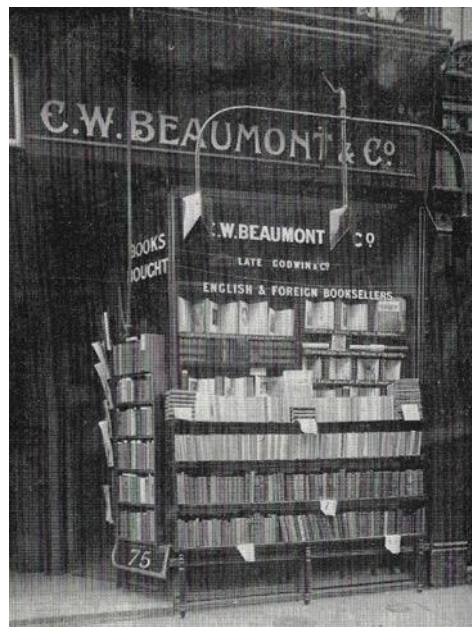
Unlike today's teachers, Idzikowski would hold class formally dressed in a three-piece suit, collar and tie and outdoor shoes. This did not prevent him from demonstrating every movement - even a double *Tour en l'air* on odd occasions. Each student was greeted by Maestro; the boys with a handshake, the girl with a kiss. Then each was expected to greet Madame Evina, Idzikowski's pianist, partner, and fellow dancer from the Diaghilev days, all with a kiss. A ritual I failed to observe on that very first day. My mother was with me (for a few days before returning to her life in Manchester.) She had been given permission to watch the class, shook hands with Maestro, and, quick on the uptake, kissed Madame Evina for me. All this was performed in ritual silence, not broken until each dancer's left hand was on the barre and Madame struck up a rattling chord on an out-of-tune piano.

Then we were on our way to 73 Charing Cross Road to buy a copy of *The Manual of Classical Theatrical Dancing* and meet the famous Cyril W. Beaumont. I recall that the shop was very narrow; even the shop door was set at an angle to accommodate the premises next door - a tobacconist.

My perception of the shop's front window and the interior were confounded by more recent memories – John O Brian's 'Ballet Bookshop' and David Drummond's 'Pleasure of Past Times', both, until recently, in Cecil Court -- that is, until I found the picture above in *Bookseller at the Ballet*. But my image of Mr Beaumont himself is clear, if surprising because by 1945, few people would still be wearing a bow tie and wing collar. But a couple of rare photos prove I was right he is wearing a wing collar. He was also dressed in black (could it have been a morning suit?). I found him elegant and, for my mother's sake, charming and attentive (my mother was a rather pretty woman.) We bought the *Manual*, along with *The Art of Stanislas Idzikowski* (a folio of loose paintings and photos of Idzikowski's many roles). Also, I find on my shelves *The Diaghilev Ballet in London*, inscribed by my mother 'Barry Grantham met Mr Beaumont Aug 1945'.

Through the years, I visited him frequently to buy items, but mainly to ask him questions:

"Mr Beaumont, would you please tell me who wrote the music for 'Le Diable Boiteux'?" He hesitated momentarily, then ascended the movable ladder to reach the highest shelf. There he removed a small volume, studied and replaced it. And descended safely, thank God. Would I have been held responsible if he had fallen? "Yes, as I thought - Casimir Gide," he said. Another time I persuaded him to write an article on *Russian Dance Training* for my 'World Ballet News'. I paid him £5 (half his usual fee).



*Who's Who in Dancing* 1932 gave his address as 75 Charing Cross Road, London WC2, shown here.

- Barry Grantham

To be continued . . .

## DANCE AND COMMEDIA – PART 1

That Commedia dell'Arte has had an enormous influence on dance – from classical ballet to modern – is well-known and frequently remarked upon: from the incorporation of commedia characters into the productions of the Ballets Russes to more modern works, including some by such well-known choreographers as Merce Cunningham, whose work *Deli Commedia* was designed as video<sup>1</sup>.

What is less clear is the way in which dance was incorporated into Commedia as part of its traditional performance style. Going back to the beginnings of Commedia in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup> it is generally assumed that whatever popular forms of dance then current would simply have been adopted by the Commedia troupes. Our best guide to these dance forms is the book by Thoinot Arbeau entitled *Orchesography*, published in 1588 but generally regarded (and acknowledged by the author) to be describing the dances of some 40 years earlier. The link here is with the opening article of this issue of our Zannizine: Barry Grantham's exploration of the life and works of Cyril Beaumont, for it was Beaumont who published the first English translation of *Orchesography* (in 1925).



Attributed to Ambrogio Brambilla, *Il Bellissimo ballo di Zan trippu* ...1583, published by Antonio Carenzano, Rome (Oxford Ashmolean Museum)

Although *Orchesography* is describing what were essentially French dances, it is reasonable to assume that in many respects a similar repertoire would have been current throughout Europe. In any case, the early commedia troupes were themselves quite widely travelled and could well have picked up French dance styles on the way. The first mention of a company in France is in 1570–71, although earlier Italian influence on the French court, following the marriage of Catherine de Medici to Henri II, may have been significant<sup>3</sup>. In 1577, the Gelosi were summoned by the King of France to perform at Blois. They later returned to Paris where the Parisians embraced the Italian theatre with great enthusiasm, leading to the formal creation of the Comédie-Italienne in 1653.

What then might the dances of the early commedia troupes have looked like? Undoubtedly the display of virtuoso dances such as the galliard would have been a major feature, but the more communal 'round' dances as shown in our illustration were no doubt also prominent.



A Commedia troupe dancing – possibly *La Volta*

The introduction to Beaumont's publication of *Orchesography* was written by the composer Peter Warlock, famous for his *Capriol Suite* composition, based on the dance tunes collected in Arbeau's treatise. In his introduction Warlock gives a useful description of the galliard and its origins:

"The Pavan, which was set in duple or quadruple time, was generally followed by a Galliard, a sprightly dance in triple time, of which the tune was sometimes, but by no means invariably, a rhythmic transformation of that of the Pavan preceding it. Morley says:

*"After every pavan we usually set a galliard (that is, a kind of musick made out of the other) causing it go by a measure, which the learned call trochaicam rationem, consisting of a long and short stroke successivelie, for as the foote trochaeus consisteth of one sillable of two times, and another of one time, so is the first of these two strokes double to the latter: the first being in time of a semibreve, and the latter of a minime. This is a lighter and more stirring kinde of dauncing than the pavane consisting of the same number of straines, and looke howe manie foures of semibreves yorr.put in the straine of your pavan, so many times sixe minimes must you put in the straine of your galliard. The Italians make their galliardes (which they tearme saltarelli) plaine, and frame ditties to them, which in their rnascardoes they sing and daunce, and many times without any instruments at all, but instead of instruments they have Curtisans disguised in mens apparell, who sing and daunce to their owne songs."*

The word galliard is, of course, derived from the French gaillard, meaning lively (Shakespeare refers to the "nimble galliard"), and the dance is said to have originated in the Campagna, where it was known as the Romanesca. In its original form it consisted of five steps and was in consequence sometimes referred to as the Cinque-pas or, in English, sink-a-pace, but towards the end of the sixteenth century many new steps were added to it, and we find Barnabe Riche, in his *Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581) saying:

*"Our galliardes are so curious, thei are not for my daunsyng, for thei are so full of trickes and tournes, that he which hath no more but the plaine sinquepace is not better accounted of than a verie bungler."*

Given its lively and increasingly virtuosic nature – along with its supposed origins in the Italian region of Campagna – it seems likely that the galliard was indeed a familiar dance in the commedia repertoire. There would have been others, of course, and most are almost certainly to be found in the pages of *Orchesography*, including voltas, moriscos, buffens, and branles.

Many of Jacques Callot's illustrations from *Balli di Sfessania* likewise show dancing, though it is difficult to determine exactly what sort of dance, though usually it is of one character dancing while the other accompanies. The nature of the accompaniment likewise varies, though most frequently

it is some form of lute or other stringed instrument played solo. Occasionally we find (though not in Callot) an illustration – such as the one shown at the beginning of this article -- in which the accompaniment is on pipe and tabor. Interestingly, this is the preferred instrument mentioned by Arbeau and illustrated frequently in his treatise.

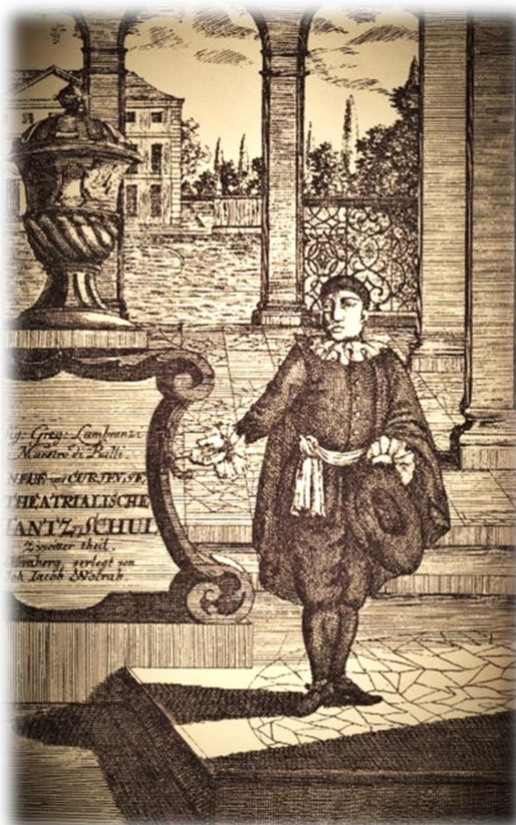
As dance fashions changed from the 16<sup>th</sup> through to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries so, too, did those adopted by the Commedia troupes. Commedia characters dancing in the paintings of Watteau, for example, are more likely to be engaging in a French saraband rather than an Italian galliard.

The next important document that gives some insight into commedia dancing is Gregorio Lambranzi's "New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing", published in Nuremberg in 1716 under the title *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul*, with illustrations by Johann Georg Puschner. The first English publication of this work was again by Cyril Beaumont in 1928, translated from the German by Derra de Moroda and with an extensive introduction by Beaumont himself. The book, published in two parts, gives detailed descriptions for some 100 dances designed for theatrical performance, along with the music for each, but no actual choreographies. Roughly a quarter of the dances shown involve commedia dell'arte characters: Harlequin, Scaramouche, Pulchinello, Mezzetino, Pantalone, Il Dottore, etc., along with their wives or partners. Lambranzi depicts himself on the frontispiece of both parts – appropriately -- in the role of the "Bolognesischen Doctor". Something of Beaumont's enthusiasm for commedia and dance is conveyed in his introduction to *Orchesography*, which is worth quoting in full:

*"I cannot convey the excitement that possessed me when I discovered, some years ago, a copy of this work in the Museum catalogued under early music. Nor can I express the delight and quickening anticipation with which I turned over the plates. Even now I have only to look through the book to imagine myself seated in some eighteenth century theatre, watching these lively dancers glide and step, jump a stamp, twirl and bounce before my eyes. Is there any other book in the world which contains such marvellous character dances?"*

*The author's plan is quite unusual. Instead of making use of the Feuillet system of steno-choreography, or some analogous method, by which to record his dances, he gives the theme and air for each, suggestions for steps, and, by means of an engraving conveys the style-atmosphere and setting of the dance, and the costume to be worn.*

*From such indications, the professional reader is expected to be able to arrange a dance. True, this presupposes a certain power of invention and an instinct for style; but the plan of giving a rough outline and leaving the dancer to fill in the details is worthy of emulation. It permits the composer to interpret the theme in his own manner and create a living thing. this is far*



Frontispiece of Part II of *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul*, showing Gregorio Lambranzi as *Il Dottore*



*preferable to the laborious deciphering of signs which, however well they may preserve the skeleton, cannot endow it with life.*

*What a different state of affairs obtains in Lambranzi's method! The artist, with the author to serve him as model, has really succeeded in conveying not only the manner in which the dancer stood, but the way in which he moved. The head, face, arms, body and legs-all are expressive to a degree; and every pose is distinguished by a nice feeling for line."*

He goes on:

*"The settings for the dances are very interesting. In general, they consist of three or four pairs of 'wings' and a backcloth. They are comparatively simple, far removed from the elaborate architectural conceptions, with their rich baroque ornaments, of such masters as the Bibienas, Juvarra and Piranesi. Nearly all are designed on vertical lines, possibly to enhance the curved lines presented by the movements of the dancers.*

*These scenes have one great merit in that they leave the stage free for the dancers. Representational scenery is generally distasteful in colour, but it might be an interesting experiment to set dancers in coloured costumes, not too high in key, against such style of scenery as in these plates, but painted in monotone, to suggest an etching or engraving.*

*As the reader turns over the enchanted pages of this book, he will be impressed by two things. First, the ingenuity, resource and originality possessed by the author. Second, the extreme difficulty of accomplishing anything really new. When Nijinsky produced *Jeux* in 1913, the idea of using a branch of sport as a theme for ballet was acclaimed as a stroke of genius. Yet here is a dance of tennis-players produced almost two hundred years ago! In the acrobatic dance which is given towards the end of Part II., look at No. 47. Does this not suggest the work of Massine in his latest ballet *Ode*? Consider No. 48; does this not recall his *Pulcinella*?*

*I have dwelt somewhat on this point, because I regard the study of dance literature as an important part of the dancer's education, and one far too often neglected. So many dancers, alas, believe the physical training to be the alpha and omega of their art. And what after all is the purpose of this training? First and foremost, to make the body malleable, to make it plastic, so that when the mind commands the limbs to perform a certain movement, they are fitted with the requisite strength and balance to obey on the instant. In the hands of a good teacher, any person, of suitable age and endowed with the right kind of body, can acquire the graces and physical abilities which mark the well-trained dancer. A certain amount of personality, if inherent, may be developed. A certain professional ease of manner may be gained from appearing before the public. But, from the purely dancing standpoint, there is little difference between such a dancer and a hundred others who have been similarly trained. They might all have been stamped from the same die. And, as a general rule, the young woman who on the completion of her physical training is honestly convinced that she is a finished dancer, more - an artist, is nothing but a beautiful machine, a robot.*

*been left to vegetate. What does she know of the history of dancing, of the great dancers of the past, of style-atmosphere, of costume? A few dates, a few names, and that is all. It is a common failing with dancers to regard books as dull, useless things which harbour dust and take up room; prints and engravings are treated with a little courtesy simply because they may serve to decorate the walls of the studio.*

*This attitude of indifference must be changed. Not only must books be read and their message be assimilated, and prints and engravings be studied, but this knowledge must be distilled, and re-distilled, and preserved with care. Faust bartered his soul for a brief renewal of his youth.*

*Here is a better bargain. The power to become an artist in exchange for a short period of daily study. Look at the visions imprisoned in this casket. Who so cold but cannot thrill at the sight of them? Study them and they will be bound to your will. And as you continue your studies, you will command more and more visions. To you they will yield up their secrets, that rare knowledge which goes so far towards transforming the dancer into the artist.”*

Cyril W. Beaumont



Plate 40 from Lambranzi's *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul* (Nuremberg 1716)

In part II, we shall look into some of the later manifestations of dance in Commedia, including the role it played in the pantomimes of John Rich during the eighteenth century and such terpsichorean luminaries as Hester Santlow, dancing as Arlecchina, choreographed dances in Feuillat notation (Chacoon for a Harlequin) and the role played by dance in the Victorian Harlequinade.

- **Bill Tuck**

<sup>1</sup> Stefano Tomassini: [Commedia dell'Arte in Dance, from Commedia dell'Arte in Context](#) (Balme, Vescovo and Vianello (eds) Cambridge University Press, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> The first date certainly associated with an Italian commedia dell'arte troupe is 1545. The most famous early company was the [Gelosi](#), headed by [Francesco Andreini](#) and his wife, [Isabella](#); the Gelosi performed from 1568 to 1604.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine de Medici was Queen of France from 1547 to 1559 and the mother of French Kings Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III.

# A RECOLLECTION AND AN APPRECIATION OF CYRIL W. BEAUMONT

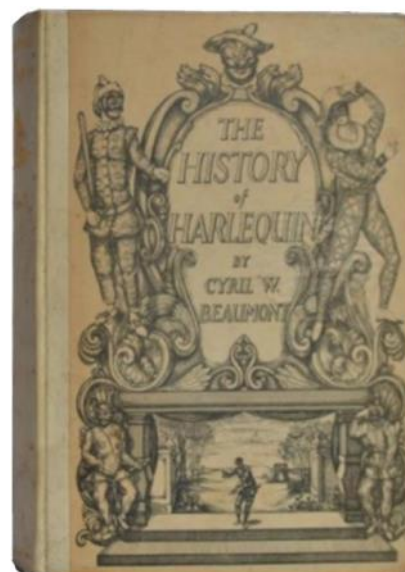
## ... PART TWO

To fully appreciate Cyril Beaumont, one should know that he was a bibliophile as well as a balletomane. He published nearly all his work from the shop in Charing Cross Road, with many fine-numbered editions on handmade paper and with luxury bindings. I have two of these before me as I write. First, that all-time treasure for dancers and Commedia players,

**THE NEW AND CURIOUS SCHOOL OF THEATRICAL DANCING** by Gregorio Lambranzi, (Nuremberg 1716) which Mr. Beaumont had discovered in a file of early music buried in the British Museum. My copy is in quarto, bound in blue cloth with a gold embossed representation of one of the book's engravings. The book is No. 121 of a limited edition of 300. Edited with a preface by Cyril W. Beaumont and published by him in 1928 for the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (I bought it from Dance Books in 1981 for £75).

The other is:

**THE HISTORY OF HARLEQUIN (1926)**. Here, the spine has gold lettering on white vellum. The cover features a 'monumental' engraving by Claudia Guerico, who also provides a roundel of 'Arlecchino raising his hat' for the back cover and delightful, if not particularly relevant, decorations to the text. It is No 145 of 350. There is an inscription by Beaumont to R Boyd Morrison dated 1927, and a bookmark shows that it had once belonged to Edward Carrick, artist son of theatre practitioner Gordon Craig. (A pencilled note on the last page tells me that I bought it in 1983 from Sunderland Books for £100).



Almost everything Beaumont wrote, translated, or edited is worthy of critical attention and appreciation, but I will limit myself to *The History of Harlequin*, leaving my colleagues or myself at some future time to pick and choose at will.

So, reverentially, I turn the pages of the volume just described. To face the title page there is Mr. Lewis Polworth, as Harlequin; red bi-corn hat, domino mask and black chinstrap (originally published, Sept 1844 by J.B. Green, 16 Park Place, Walworth). Turning to the next page, a dedication to Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell, which shows we are in good company. Next, a preface by Sacheverell: It is more than a preface, being a study of 'Harlequin in Art' by a master of evocative writing. He tells us that Jacques Callot never depicted an Arlecchino. However, those of you who



studied Mr. Rudlin's article *Balli di Sfessania* in Issue 6 of Zannizine, will know this to be an error. For example, there is the well-remembered 'Arlecchino with donkey and a pair of bellows' in the background of the two warring Captains in Plate 34 (shown here). The error was pointed out by Gordon Craig in an issue of *The Mask* in 1926, the very year that *The History of*



Harlequin was published.

The following page is merely thanking those who granted permission for the use of engravings in their possession. It is however quite instructive because it indicates that, though these images are familiar to us, even over-familiar they are likely to have been seen first in Beaumont's book.

For those who want to know 'Who said it first?', here is a list of the main British Commedia publications:

Winifred Smith	<i>The Commedia Dell'Arte</i>	1912
Maurice Sand	<i>The History of the Harlequinade</i>	1915
P. L. Duchartre	<i>The Italian Comedy</i>	1925
Cyril W. Beaumont	<i>The History of Harlequin</i>	1926
K. M. Lea	<i>The Italian Popular Comedy</i>	1934
Allardyce Nicoll	<i>Masks, Mimes and Miracles</i>	1931

So, back to turning the pages. The first four chapters are devoted to Arlecchino, as distinct from Harlequin. It is familiar material but would have been fresh reading when it was published. We can now progress to *Harlequin in England* first tracing the sporadic visits of Italians to our shores and the gradual metamorphosis to a very English creation. As a change from Venice, it is nice to find oneself in London; the Prince Regent holding the throne; Dr Johnson still at his dictionary; Garrick at the Theatre Royal; and Lunn making his triumphal return to Covent Garden.

As we turn the pages, we learn of a whole sequence of British Harlequins, their lives and the pantomimes they illuminated. Although we can learn the same story in numerous histories of the London theatre, I think *The History of Harlequin* stands out as a unique record of their passing by.

I think I read in *Bookseller at the Ballet* (1975) that Beaumont's family had intended him to become a research chemist. He went along with this for a time, but came to feel that it was not his true bent and that he had leanings towards Art and Literature. An indulgent father bought him a bookshop - yes, No. 75 Charing Cross Road. I mention this anecdote because I feel that, behind everything he

wrote, there is a research chemist manqué at work, searching, discovering, checking... One has only to consider *The Complete Book of Ballets* where, from earliest days at the French Court, he lists the choreographers of the time and the ballets they created, with the dates, principal performers, descriptions of the scenery, and an outline of the story. No wonder Lincoln Kirstein, co-founder of the New York City Ballet, refers to it as “a work of incomparable magnitude”.

So, we can praise, admire, and yes, criticize his immense output, but I would also like you to celebrate the quiet, learned gentleman who was so kind and generous to a callow youth.

- **Barry Grantham**

An article on [Cyril W Beaumont in Wikipedia](#) gives a list of all his work, including those subsequent to the 1932 *Who's Who in Dancing*.

# CHOREOGRAPHING CALLOT

In an earlier article in this issue of Zannizine the importance of Gregorio Lambranzi's New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing was discussed as a starting point for the creation of Commedia dance. With its expressive illustrations of commedia characters (among others); its brief but tantalising scenarios; and its accompanying musical outlines, it gives just enough suggestions to enable the choreographer to create a meaningful dance. Such a choreographic creation was demonstrated in one of the earlier Commedia Festivals (February 2017) by dancer/choreographer Klaus Abromeit of L'Autre Pas (Berlin) under the title *The Dream Journey of Captain Scaramuzza*. Over the course of eight plates in Lambranzi's treatise, the travels of Scaramuzza (Scaramouche) are illustrated and briefly recounted in the accompanying text. From this material, Klaus created his ballet, part of which may still be viewed on the [Commedia Festival's YouTube](#) channel.

Some 100 years earlier, Jacques Callot created a similar series of intriguing illustrations of commedia characters, many clearly in dancing poses, under the title *Balli di Sfessania*. Unfortunately, he gives no descriptive text, apart from the names of the characters, and there is no accompanying music. But as with Lambranzi, there are intriguing illustrations of commedia scenes in the background. The challenge is to use these pictures in a similar way to those of Lambranzi as the basis for choreographic creation. In the following notes, Klaus describes his approach to such an enterprise. The results were presented as a workshop at the **Early Dance Circle's May 2022 Conference**.

## ***Balli di Sfessania*: an inspiring document of Italian stage dance from the first half of the 17th century**

### ***About the Artist***

The draughtsman Jaques Callot (1592-1635) in his extensive output of illustrations documents the crafts and daily life of the first half of the 17th century. He gives, for example, detailed information about martial arts in groups suggestive of early Italian football or man-on-man combat, but he also notates the terrible results of war.

In the collection called the *Balli di Sfessania* he informs us about the Italian stage dance of his time. It is a work of a young man. The structure of the information is not so obvious as that which one finds in his later picture series. But if you crack the nut, the *Balli di Sfessania* gives quite unexpected information.

### ***The Breugel-Trick***

On all pictures of the series *Balli di Sfessania*, Callot uses a combination of two perspective points of view – the landscape, the scenery and the accompanying groups of people in the background are seen from upside down – in Germany this would be called *the bird perspective*. The protagonists in the foreground are seen from downside up: *the frog perspective*. Art historians call this astonishing combination of contrasting points of view – *the Breugel Trick* – because Pieter Breugel the Elder



Frontispiece from *Balli di Sfessania*  
Jacques Callot (ca. 1622)  
[The Metropolitan Museum](#)

used this construction to build his big tableaux. The part of the picture where both points of view overlap has a special visual intensity. The images you find in this area of the picture are automatically seen first. In the case of Callot's *Balli die Sfessania* you start a journey through each picture from the feet of the protagonists.

### **Six Stand Points**

Every stage dancer knows about the importance of the feet and no other European artist has given the viewer such precise *portraits* of dancers' feet. With the help of little shadow images, we can differentiate between six different standpoints: extreme back, on the whole foot, slightly front, extreme front; while the second possibility - the whole foot - he shows in three versions: central, on the inside and on the outside ankle.

### **Six Weight Points**

If you see these beautiful standpoints, you ask yourself about the consequences to the rest of the body. The first challenge is to find the weight point in the torso. The rule of thumb here is: if the standpoint is **front** you have to look in the upper part of the torso – the shoulder region or upper neck. To find the weight point connected to the standpoint of the **whole foot** is tricky: You have to decide between the breast, diaphragm or belly region. The standpoint **back** is easy: It must be the pelvis region of the torso. In the normal process of observation, this takes place subconsciously.

### **Three Focus Points**

The next step in the journey is the head. With the focus or turning point, we come to the most exciting moment during the process of sketching a dancing body, because the relation between standpoint and **weight point** is given. If you use the wrong one the figure is seen as collapsing. But the focus or **turning point** is optional. You can follow the line you initiated with standpoint and weight point. In dance, we call this line *demi caractère*. We can hold the head straight to the line. Also, very eccentric movements become moderated in this way. Callot is using this strategy for the noble, costumed female characters who take part in the *Balli di Sfessania*. On the other hand, these pictures became famous largely because of the grotesque movements of many of the male dancers. To produce these movements, you have to break the line sketched by standpoint and weight point.

### **Leg Gestures and Port De Bras**

All visual artists and dancers know that arm and leg gestures have a tricky relationship. Like in the case of the focus or turning points they are not given but optional. Arms and legs are used symmetrically or unsymmetrically, the unsymmetric version has two options: in opposition or parallel.



### **First Summary**

A young artist from Nancy in the North of France – Jaques Callot – went to Italy and was confronted with a Commedia dell'Arte-based theatre dance that he had never seen before. The silly titles of the pictures of *Balli di Sfessania* make clear that he had no interest in trying to understand the dramaturgical background. He was simply fascinated by the expression of the bodies and noted what he saw. These notations are so systematic that we can copy these pictures 300 years later, line by line, with excellent results.

### **A Remake 100 Years Later**

It is not surprising that Callot gained no resonance in Italy. They did not need him at all. But his drawings made Italian theatre dance interesting for the audience in the north of Europe. The permanent political crises in Italy during the 17th century forced many artists to leave their country. For these artists, it was a great help that the educated audience in northern Europe knew the copper prints of Callot in original or more or less good copies. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the dancer and choreographer Gregorio Lambranzi and the graphic designer Georg Puschner produced an interesting remake of *Balli di Sfessania* under the title *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul*, Nürnberg 1716.

### **The Curious Invention**

Callot subsumes all his observations in a short number of rather crowded pictures. This strategy reproduces the overwhelming experience he himself had in Italy.

Lambranzi and Puschner use more than 100 pictures, always concentrating on one, two or at most five dancing bodies. The viewer of these images is thus able to concentrate on just one aspect of the subject. In addition, the authors have added a melodic line of music and short instructions about the steps to be used and their interpretation. In these commentaries, Lambranzi animates the reader/viewer of the picture book to invent variations on the given images and if you look carefully, you always get hints about how to do it.

- Use one common dance step and find different endings.
- Use different dance steps and give them similar endings.
- Use one dance step and invent the corresponding jump and turn.
- Use a significant combination of two dance steps and find variations.
- Use a box of 4 dance steps and invent a contrasting way to dance the steps.
- Transform a stable position into a dancing step.
- Transform a dancing step into a stable position.
- Do a dancing step and get bigger.
- Do a dancing step and get smaller.
- Show a dancing step slow and suddenly get rather quick and the opposite way round.
- Show a significant gesture and develop a dance step appropriate to it.
- Show a significant gesture and invent a contrary gesture.
- Two figures mirror one step to make the audience imagine that they are one.
- One side of a figure is doing different moves than the other.
- The legs and arms of a figure seem to belong to different persons.
- Two figures start together then one is leaving.
- One figure is starting alone and a second is coming.
- Four figures start together and then get less and less so, ending the opposite way round.



**Second Summary**

If we combine the information of *Bali di Sfessania* by Jaques Callot and *Neue und Curieuse Theatralische Tantz-Schul* of Gregorio Lambranzi und Johann Georg Puschner, we get a complete picture as to the specific tools of Italian theatre dance during the 17th and early 18th century. The outstanding **observer**, Jaques Callot, informs us about the **posing**, while the experienced **theatreman** Lambranzi informs us of the **action**.

- **Klaus Abromeit**

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<sup>1</sup> *Balli di Sfessania* by Jacques Callot (ca. 1622-23) can be viewed online at [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) or [The Royal Collection Trust](#)

# CYRIL W. BEAUMONT AND CECIL SHARP

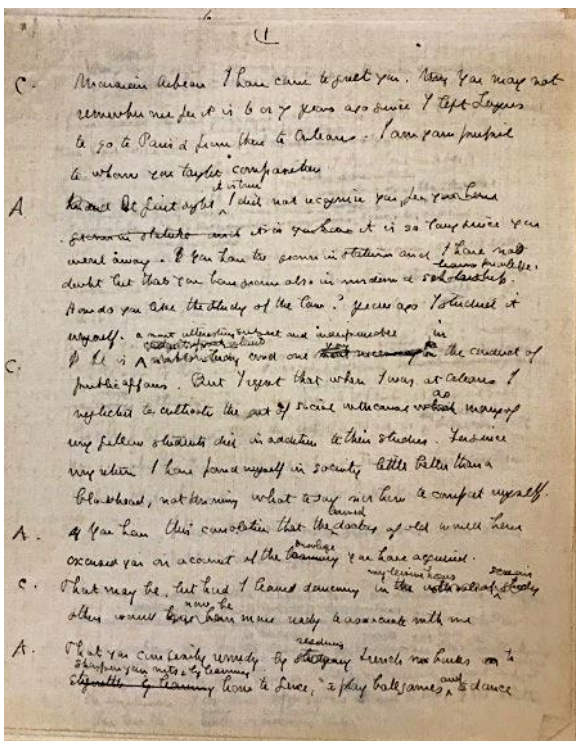
## A study in differences

Two more different characters can hardly be imagined than Cyril Beaumont and Cecil Sharp. The latter is, of course, best known for his great collection of English folk song and for his role in reviving the old English morris dance. Apart from their mutually fastidious dress sense, they appear at first sight to have little in common: Sharp detested ballet in general and had little regard for the Ballet Russes, in particular, while Beaumont in all his extensive writings seems never to have said anything at all about the newly revived art of morris dancing. Yet there is one area in which their interests overlapped to a surprising extent: both were working simultaneously on English translations of Arbeau’s *Orchesography*, a book which both held to be singularly important in the history of dance.



Cecil Sharp (1859-1924)

Next year (2024) is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cecil Sharp, who died on 23 June 1924. While primarily recognized these days as a collector of folk song and for instigating the revival of morris dancing, his important role as a dance historian has been largely overlooked.



The opening page of Cecil Sharp’s translation of Arbeau’s *Orchesography* – Vaughan Williams Memorial Library

For Sharp, the song-collecting expeditions into the Appalachians during and after WWI had resulted in a vast quantity of new material that then needed to be processed, arranged, published and lectured about. At the same time, his health – never of the best – began to deteriorate. He moved to Montreux in Switzerland for several months in October 1922, in company with his faithful amanuensis Maud Karpeles, in the hope that the change of climate would help him recuperate. While there, he spent his time trying to master French – without any great success in the spoken form – but his ability to read and translate was more in keeping with his character. This led to him making a full translation of Arbeau’s *Orchesography*. On his return to England, he made the acquaintance of Cyril Beaumont while browsing in his Charing Cross Road bookstore. Learning that they were both working on the same project of bringing Arbeau to the attention of the English-speaking public, he passed over his completed manuscript (now in the collections of the Vaughan Williams Library).

Karpeles remarks that “Cecil invited Mr Beaumont to dinner and met his enquiries about the interpretation of certain obscure passages by placing his manuscript in Mr Beaumont’s hands, an act of generosity which Mr Beaumont accepted with the remark that he felt as though he had his hands in another man’s till.”<sup>1</sup>

Beaumont published the first English translation of *Orchesography* in 1925, with an extensive introduction by Peter Warlock, composer of the well-known *Capriole Suite* based on Arbeau’s tunes. There is no acknowledgement of Sharp in Beaumont’s publication, despite the close relationship described by Karpeles. At the time of their meeting, probably early in 1923, Sharp would have been 64 and Beaumont some 30 years his junior. It is interesting to speculate on the influence this age difference may have had on the relationship between the two men. Would Beaumont have regarded Sharp as no more than an old fuddy-duddy, with his dismissal of the current craze for the Ballets Russe and other ‘modern’ inventions? Or would their mutual interest in the long past history of dance over-ridden such fashionable concerns?

There is, of course, another area in which the interests of Sharp and Beaumont overlap, and that is around the much-discussed link between Commedia dell’Arte and the traditional Mummers Play, a mainstay of morris dancers at Christmastime. But this is a subject best left for another time!

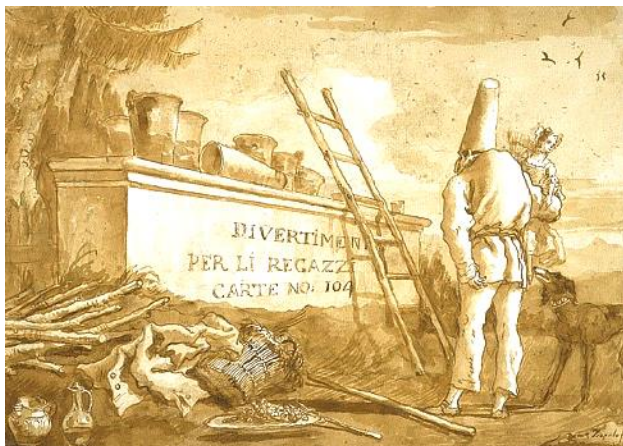
- **Bill Tuck**

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<sup>1</sup> Maud Karpeles: *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work*. There are in fact two manuscript copies by Sharp in the Vaughan Williams library, one with many crossings out - probably a rough draft - the second as a clean copy apparently ready for publication.

# THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF MR PUNCH

In the iconography of Commedia, alongside the great works of Jacques Callot and Gregorio Lambranzi stands the equally famous series by Domenico Tiepolo *Divertimenti per li Ragazzi* (Entertainments for children), now generally referred to as *The Punchinello Drawings*. Created in Venice in the closing years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as *La Serenissima* witnessed its own decline, they lay untouched for many decades until the title sheet, shown here, along with 102 pages from the series were discovered unbound in 1920 at an auction in London, where they were bought as a single lot by the Colnaghi gallery for £610.



Frontispiece to: *Divertimenti per li Ragazzi*  
Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (Venice 1727-1804)  
Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

The group was subsequently sold to Richard Owen, a British dealer based in Paris, who exhibited them in full in 1921 at the city's Musée des Arts Décoratifs. Not long afterwards he began to sell off the sheets in small groups, or sometimes individually.

It wasn't until the 1986 publication of the book by Adelheid Gealt - *Domenico Tiepolo: The Punchinello Drawings*, that the series was ever documented and reproduced in full,

Today, many of the sheets from the series are in museums. The [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) and [Cleveland Museum of Art](#) both have nine; five are at the [Morgan Library](#) and two are in the [J. Paul Getty Museum](#). The [British Museum](#) holds two more; the Ashmolean and the Louvre hold one each.

On 3 December 2019, during Classic Week in London, Christie's sold six drawings from the series — all acquired from Owen by the British art historian Sir Brinsley Ford — for a combined £3,871,500.

Lot 45, *Punchinellos Feasting*, with its unmistakable allusions to Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, sold for £995,250 alone, more than triple its low estimate. On 27 May 2020, Christie's in Paris sold a seventh, *Punchinello in the company of a lady with two children and a horse*, for €562,000. On 29 July 2020, as part of Christie's [Classic Art](#)



Lot 45, Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo: *Punchinellos Feasting*

Evening Sale in London another three drawings from the series — also from Ford’s collection — went up for sale and achieved a total price of £953,000.

With a current estimated price of around £300,000 each, the original collection of 104 drawings might be valued at something over £30 Million, a substantial gain on the original sale price of £610! Perhaps this is simply a reflection of the rising status of this humble Neapolitan figure and his growing appeal at a time of anxiety and crisis: similarities between the decline of Venice in the closing decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the current global situation may not be so far-fetched after all.

At Christie’s today you can still see several of the original drawings, including the macabre finale (number 104) depicting Punchinello as a skeleton. All are for sale (price on application) but it may be better to buy the book: good second-hand copies of the original 1986 publication of the Adelheid Gealt collection, containing 80 or so of the 104 drawings, all in excellent reproductions and only slightly reduced in scale, can currently be had from Abebooks or Amazon for £100 to £150 – which must be considered a bargain compared to £30M!



Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo (Venice 1727-1804)

*The Apparition of the Skeleton of Punchinello before his Tomb*

On view at Christie’s London, listed as ‘property from a distinguished private collection.’

The surprise to me is that **Cyril Beaumont** was not among the early purchasers of these drawings. He was a noted collector, after all, of prints, paintings and drawings of celebrated dancers (which he would then re-sell through his Charing Cross Road shop) and had an avowed interest in Commedia. His extensive *History of Harlequin* was published in 1926, only a few years after the initial Punchinello sale, so his background research into Commedia must have been well underway by this time. But perhaps Punchinello, unlike Harlequin, had no appeal to Beaumont? After all, his then current incarnation in the 1920s as Mr Punch of the seaside Punch & Judy show, unlike Harlequin of the Edwardian pantomime, was not noted for his dancing skill!

- **Bill Tuck**

## STAGE CRAFT . . . Part II

This article is a continuation of - you guessed it - Part I. It deals with what we used to call 'Stage Craft'. It consists of awareness and experience in choosing the optimum on-stage position for a particular scene and how 'stage location' can influence performance. The term can also refer to the craft of turning the designer's sketches into a thing of canvas, plaster and paint, but that is for a different article and another writer.

I should explain that this article, including the first part already seen, is not what might be called book-lore or book-law - it is unwritten law, which I have learnt through experience and through working with actors and performers over a long life in the theatre. It is not to be found in any manual on acting. It is yours to accept or refute, to add to and adapt.

My first experience of theatre come to me from my parents; I have told elsewhere of how they met while touring with the Matherson Lang company and playing among other roles Ford and Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Matherson Lang was one of the last 'actor/managers' like Donald Wolfitt, Robert Atkins, tracing their origins from Harley Granville-Barker, Ben Greet, John Martin-Harvey, H.B. Irving and the 'Governor' - Henry Irving

### ON AND OFF STAGE

To begin with, I would like to consider the implications of the terms 'On' and 'Off Stage'. At first glance this may seem obvious, but on closer consideration it borders on a fundamental aspect of theatre and perception in general. The raising of the house curtain reveals a created reality, with cast members discovered or about to enter. This applies only to conventional theatre, be it opera house or village hall, where there is a clear distinction provided by proscenium and wings, formed by canvas scenery or curtains. This does not apply to 'open air', 'theatre-in-the-round', and to much of Commedia where a traditional aspect

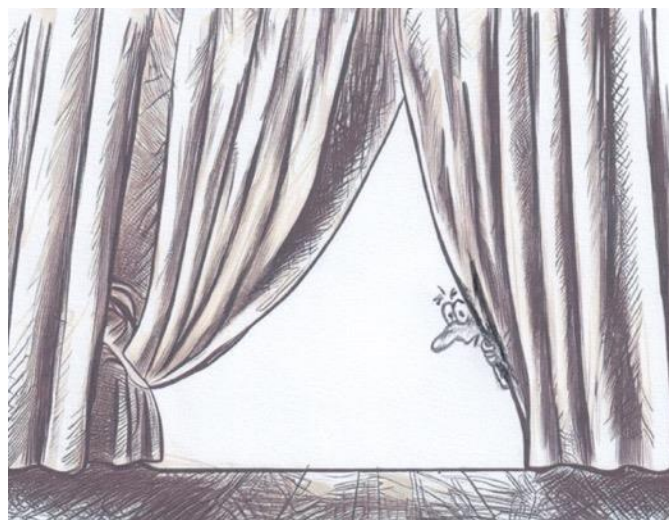


Illustration by Cheryl Stapleton

of theatre is lost. This raises an interesting question - when is the open-air or theatre-in-the-round player said to be 'On' stage? Surely it is the moment he is seen to be 'in character' either by donning a Mask or a disguise, or by arriving through the audience or from across the street.

There are many occasions where the distinction is blurred. In a 'drawing-room' drama the *French window* leads onto the garden, very much part of the plot: Lovers are observed from it; Sherlock Holmes has just found a footprint; through it the prodigal son returns. In Pantomime there is a convenient tree (traditionally U.S.R.) behind which *The Robbers* learn of the *Goose that lays golden eggs*. They are 'Off Stage' but still 'There' in the audience's imagination.

There are also unusual entrances; less usual methods of getting from 'Off' to 'On'. From the flies ('Deus ex machina'), *The Slave of the Lamp* (panto again) from a star-trap, Toy Soldier from a box (*Nutcracker*) and *Giselle* from the grave. Rapid 'On' and 'Off' are part and parcel of both Comedy and Drama (not to mention Horror), including several characters rapid appearances/disappearances across different parts of the set.

## HALF ON AND HALF OFF STAGE

Then there are a number of 'lazzi' where only part of the body is shown and withdrawn: a hand, leg or just a face; or perhaps with a knife or a gun. This brings us to the 'Peekaboo', most typically seen when Pierrot sticks his head between the central parting of transverse curtains with a fixed expression of fear or tears. Unlike other 'Masks' he doesn't break through; this is all he dares to show and then he vanishes so swiftly we wonder if we really did see him. Should Harlequin put his head through the curtains, it would only be to check to see if Pantaloon is about. Having found it safe, he would burst through to continue the mischief he set upon.

'Clown' from the Harlequinade, the Circus, and the Opera often use the 'Peekaboo' as a first appearance. It gets its name from a game played by a mother and child and said to be a valuable aid in developing the child's cognitive powers ([an interesting entry in Wikipedia](#)).

So, we are discussing the partial appearance of the performer - a shapely leg, a booted foot, a hand waving, or a hand holding a gun or knife. To many 'Early Dance' and 'Commedia' enthusiasts this will bring to mind the engraving of Scaramouch from Lambranzi's 'New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing' in which a dancing leg appears from the wing on 'Stage Right' and then the other leg is seen across on 'Stage Left'. Towards the end of the fifties, I recall seeing a Scottish comic of the time do his 'Shy Version' - almost certainly he will never have heard of Tiberio Fiorilli. To him it was just one of the traditional 'Bits of Business', handed down over the years. It went like this:

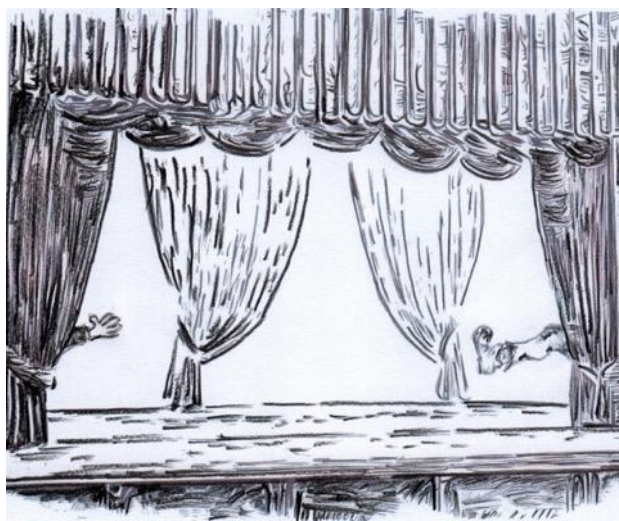


Illustration by Cheryl Stapleton

Entering from a D.S.R. wing, he became aware of the audience and made a quick exit backwards. Longish pause, then peeped his head out and withdrew it. Then just a hand and a wave. Then a kicking leg. He was now getting good laughs. He came on stage and did a silly little dance. Applause. He got embarrassed and exits. He now makes it obvious that he is running behind the set, hitting the back cloth. He repeats the routine from the D.S.L. wing. Then we are made aware of a hand from the original wing. The comic enters from the original wing to accept the laughter and applause.

- Barry Grantham



## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Metamorphoses of Commedia dell'Arte, or Whatever Happened to Harlequin*

by John Rudlin

(Palgrave, Macmillan 2022)

Whilst I recommend this book wholeheartedly for students of the history of commedia, I am very aware of the price of academic textbooks (this one is £39.99 online for the paperback edition) which may depress the average commedia bibliophile. Consequently, I will, for purposes of information, and certainly not to swindle Mr. Rudlin out of his deserved royalties, recap some of his arguments. This book is a very welcome addition to the Commedia canon, as it puts together in one volume, a range of information previously spread over a wide range of publications, some of which are currently unavailable, and some of which base their arguments on unverifiable opinion. Accepting that many people who may read this will follow (and why not?) their own idea of what 'the spirit of commedia' actually is, I hope you will find it refreshing to have the evolution of this fascinating form discussed both in such detail and in one place.

Mr. Rudlin begins his history in the Renaissance, citing records of Commedia troupes' existence in England at the time of Elizabeth I, and extrapolating educated guesses as to the particular skillsets the actors possessed in order to successfully export their 'art' to the damp foggy climes of Shakespearean England. This is relevant because, behind every successful theatre style, there is a



Figure 3.5 from Rudlin's Book. *Rich's Glory or his Triumphant Entry into Covent Garden*, Hogarth engraving, 1732. John Rich being the first British Harlequin, and 'inventor' of UK Pantomime.



background of skill or virtuosity within its performers that make the performance entertaining and attractive to an audience. Rudlin notes that, within Shakespeare's texts, there are many namechecks and references to 'Pantaloone', indicating a knowledge, if not widespread then at least among those trying to make a living from the new art of professional theatre, of the practices of the Italian comedians. His opinion is that there was likely to be initial forays into England by knockabout Magnifico and Zanni double acts, and when these proved successful, they were followed by larger troupes. This indicates that not only were the troupe members skilled actors, but also acrobats and tumblers and (as per the required social skills of the time) also singers, dancers, fencers and musicians.

Perhaps if one were constructing a universal 'commedia theory' one might say that its actors possessed enough 'street-smart' skill to create a show that would please most alfresco passing viewers. A second part to this theory might be to add that the troupes also were able to identify a potentially good revenue stream and then be able to adapt and alter their performances to milk it for all that it was worth. The second chapter of Rudlin's book follows the fortunes of the Italian comedians in Paris, from their first arrival in 1492, to several visits by larger troupes (such as those led by Tristano Martinelli and *I Gelosi*) and of their successful domestication into Parisian life as the semi-permanent *Comédie Italienne*. Rudlin adds great local colour by detailing the somewhat traumatic expulsion of the Italian comedians from Paris in 1729, when it appears the by now resident troupe, spectacularly managed to read the room very badly. Trying to keep up with the 'in' events and gossip in Paris, they produced a play called *La Fausse Prude* (the false prude) which 'allegedly' lampooned King Louis XIV's mistress. Unsurprisingly they were told to leave Paris. This might have been the straw that broke the camel's back: when the comedians first became established in Paris, they were supported by the French monarchy's habit of marrying Italian women, and that consequently the French court ingratiatingly all learned and publicly spoke Italian. As the Court language slipped back into French over time, the Italians also changed their performances from Italian to French and started to perform more scripted plays. Arguably, this lost them the cutting edge that improvisation and extemporizing in their native language gave them, and, losing their unique position as favourites of the Royal Queens, they became a victim of a change in fashion and hence dispensable. Rudlin leads us clearly through these political and cultural machinations in good clear fashion, which is quite a feat considering the next phase of the Italians' existence in Paris was composed of rapidly changing theatrical forms (probably worth a Zannizine article in its own right) each one a clever and popular response to a barrage of laws specifically designed to stop them performing. The implicit adaptability in what the Italians considered their craft or 'arte' certainly stood them in good stead here, together with the fact that, amazingly, none of them ended up in prison.

There is a considerable amount of space in this book devoted to the origins of the mask of Pulcinella in Naples, and the how the 'southern' style of commedia dell'arte differs from its northern counterpart. This, in turn, leads onto how the marionette version of this mask ended up in London's Covent Garden in 1662, as noted in Samuel Pepys' diary, and its subsequent anglicization into the glove puppet, Mr Punch who, despite political correctness and wokeness, still manages today to peddle his uplifting and obnoxious brand of nihilistic violence. Rudlin similarly takes the time to tell the story of the second Zanni, Pedrolino, his evolution into a Francophile and moonstruck Pierrot, the darling of the art deco movement, and final evolution into the 20th century British seaside entertainment style, The Pierrot Troupe. The 'theft' of the commedia masks from Paris in the 19th century by UK theatrical entrepreneurs leading to Joey Grimaldi turning Zanni into 'Clown' and the development of the seasonal Pantomime tradition is also dealt with effectively.

Rudlin writes clearly, and the book is well illustrated. As well as the hoped for delights of historical incident, this book manages to provide an accessible and relevant running commentary on the evolving political and cultural situations that frame the various stages of Commedia's existence. Although the historical period immediately preceding Commedia dell'Arte is equally fascinating in terms of the relationship between art and culture, I think Rudlin is right to start his discourse where he does. The likes of Calmo, Ruzante, Carnival, The Venetian Republic's obsession with masks, and the *Commedia Erudita* all exist as ingredients that eventually became the Commedia dell'Arte, but the origin story of Commedia is a different one from the story of its struggles and successes in the world. That is another book, and we hope someone will take this as a prompt.

- **Olly Crick**



### ***Commedia dell'Arte in Context***

**Edited by Christopher B. Balme, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; Piermario Vescovo, Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia; Daniele Vianello, Università della Calabria, Cosenza**

(Cambridge University Press, 2018)

This book is the product of a serious review of Commedia dell'Arte: its documented history, performance style, relationship to art, dance, music, politics and the church; plus, its different manifestations in different countries: Italy, France, Russia, England and the German-speaking lands, over several centuries. An obvious criticism would be that it is simply trying to do too much, leading to the creation of a dense, but rather unwieldy collection of separate chapters, each composed by a different, but very knowledgeable author. Yet, that is not to deny its seriousness or the wealth of valuable information contained within. My basic question is whether the 'book form' is really the best way of presenting such material?

For example, there are no pictures! Can you really have a book about Commedia without pictures? All of which reminds me of Alice's comment in similar circumstances: "What is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'"

The intention, however, was honest. It grew out of a project to separate the mythology of Commedia from the reality. Over the past twenty years a revolution in Commedia dell'Arte scholarship has taken place, generated mainly by a number of distinguished Italian scholars, which, up until now, has largely remained untranslated. This project, in turn, was sparked by the idea of applying to UNESCO for recognition of Commedia dell'Arte as part of Italy's 'Intangible Cultural Heritage'. The application may have failed, at least initially, but is still on-going and the inauguration of 'World Commedia dell'Arte Day' (25 February) - celebrated for the past seven years by our own mini-Festival at Sands Film Studio - is one positive outcome of this process.

The book, however, demands a proper review, and I can do no better here than point to an article published recently by Pavel Drábek in the journal *Early Theatre* (2019), pp 199-216, which can be found online on JSTOR (accessible through any good academic library).

- **Bill Tuck**

## ENDS AND ODDS

25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 marked the annual **World Commedia Day**, bringing together Commedia enthusiasts the world over to share performances, workshops, dances, parades, talks, banter and laughter. This year was particularly special here in London as we celebrated not only World Commedia Day but also, another momentous occasion: Barry Grantham's gargantuan 76 year contribution to British Commedia!

The weekend kicked off with a lively parade of dancing and frolicking Pulchinelli, all strumming, tooting and drumming as we rattled the roads of Rotherhithe. Friends old and new came together at Sands Film Studio, the charismatic and quirky, treasure-trove venue that is, itself, rich with theatre history. Across two days, we welcomed around 100 visitors taking part in workshops, open rehearsals and watching performances.

A highlight of the weekend was Barry's Masterclass, accompanied by the talented musician Ewan Bleach. Still teaching and ever eager to engage new generations of commedia performers, Barry drew together a throng of keen workshop participants, who jostled for places on the magnificent music hall stage at Sands, alongside the Maestro, eager to soak up his every syllable and gesture.

Then, on to a performance delivered by my troupe, Punch's Progress, joined for this special event by Gerry Flanagan of Shifting Sands Theatre, to perform an experimental 'work in progress'! Entitled *Love and Madness*, it was based on Flaminio Scala's canovaccio, *The Madness of Isabella*. With six characters and three actors, and just two days of rehearsals, this fast-moving piece had no shortage of madness and mayhem, even bringing in a chorus of performers fresh out of the workshop that Gerry and I ran on festival Saturday.

The festival finale on Sunday evening brought a medley of vignettes, kicked off with Barry performing not one, not two but three performances! With joyful panache, Barry revived his Capitano Spavento telling of his *Last Stand at the Val d'Inferno*. Capitano Spavento was then joined by the sumptuous Patricissia as the saucy Abbess, who attempted to lure the braggard Captain in. The evening of music, dance and commedia proceeded with Bill Tuck and Barbara Segal's delightful and wonderfully costumed rendition of *The Magical Toymaker* and closing the evening, Barry took to the boards, for one last time, to reprise his biographical piece *The Last Days of Mezzetino*, ably supported by the hugely talented Rein van Schagen.

A gathering of visitors and friends on Sunday afternoon of the festival marked a special and poignant moment as Barry recounted tales from his years of performing alongside his darling wife Joan. Rein van Schagen delivered a heartfelt tribute to Barry for all that he has given to teaching, training and nurturing young performers, like himself, and for the boundless inspiration he has sewn through his decades of performing commedia. Barry, for all the passion and inspiration you have given and still give for future generations, thank you.

- Cheryl Stapleton

# 6<sup>th</sup> MINI COMMEDIA FESTIVAL 2023



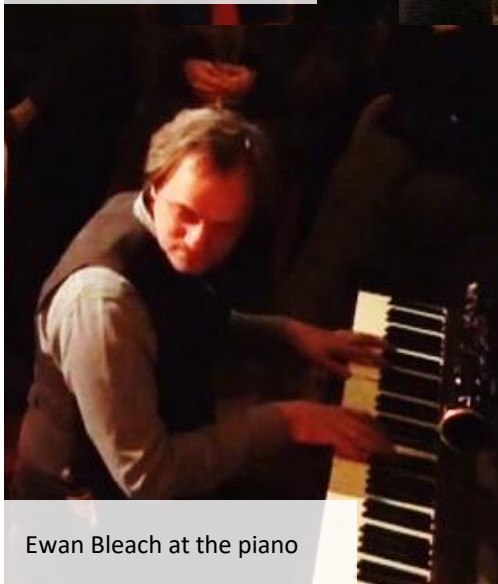
Pulcinella's Parade



Dawn Purkiss: Master of Ceremonies



Rein & Barry in *The Last Days of Mezzetino*



Ewan Bleach at the piano



Barry's Commedia Masterclass

**Barry & Bill's  
6th Mini Commedia Festival**

**Saturday 25th February 2023**

**12.00noon - Pulcinella Parade** meeting at Sands travelling to the Norwegian Church. All welcome!

**2.00-4.00pm - Performing Commedia Workshop** with Gerry Flanagan, Cheryl Stapleton & John Broadbent

**4.30-7.00pm Love & Madness open rehearsal** followed by informal performances.

*A Celebration of Barry Grantham's  
76 Year  
Contribution to British Commedia*

**\*Sunday 26th February  
\*Live streamed!**

**Book an actual or virtual seat  
3.00-4.30pm  
Barry's Commedia Masterclass** (all welcome!)

**5.00-5.30pm  
Performance: Love & Madness**  
followed by a gathering of friends old and new

**7.30-9.00pm  
Commedia Medley** - Commedia sketches, mime, music and dance from Barry, his friends and special guests.

**Tickets: £10** (suggested donation) **each day, for a day pass**  
**Booking: <https://minicommediafest.co.uk>**



Gerry, Cheryl & John in *Love and Madness*

# ...IN PICTURES



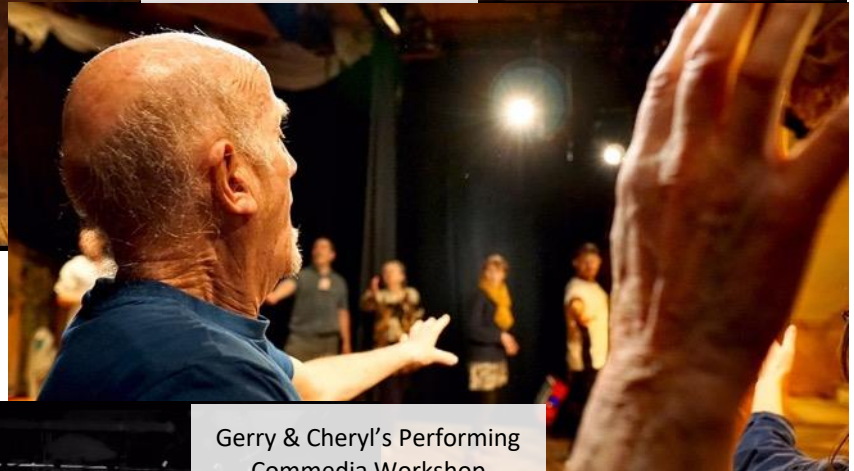
Barry as Captain Spavento in his *Last Stand at the Val d'Inferno*



Barbara Segal & Bill Tuck in *The Magical Toymaker*



Barry in *The Last Days of Mezzetino*



Gerry & Cheryl's Performing Commedia Workshop



Patrissia & Barry in *Capitano and the Abbess*



Rein van Schagen as the Gaoler in *The Last Days of Mezzetino*



# THE END