Influence of Commedia dell’Arte on Stravinsky’s Suite Italienne

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Abstract

*Suite Italienne* for violin and piano (1934) by Stravinsky is a compelling and dynamic work that is heard in recitals and on recordings. It is based on Stravinsky’s music for *Pulcinella* (1920), a ballet named after a 16\textsuperscript{th} century Neapolitan stock character. The purpose of this document is to examine, through the discussion of the history and characteristics of Commedia dell’Arte ways in which this theatre genre influenced Stravinsky’s choice of music and compositional techniques when writing *Pulcinella* and *Suite Italienne*. In conclusion the document proposes ways in which the violinist can incorporate the elements of Commedia dell’Arte that Stravinsky utilizes in order to give a convincing and stylistic performance.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

At the turn of the 20th century a centuries-old theatre form captured creative minds throughout Europe and the United States. Commedia dell’Arte, a semi-improvisatory theatre genre that was comprised of stock characters in standardized scenarios with comic interruptions, became a ubiquitous presence in the visual arts, music, and poetry. At the forefront of this trend was Sergei Diaghilev, the famous Russian impresario and founder of the Ballets Russes. In 1919, already having produced one successful ballet on a Commedia dell’Arte theme, he commissioned Stravinsky to arrange and orchestrate the music for another one. This ballet was based on the stock character, Pulcinella and incorporated the music of various 18th century composers.

Piecing together complete songs, movements, as well as sections and one fragment of pieces, Stravinsky created a 35 minute work that juxtaposed 18th century melodies with 20th century techniques of orchestration, irregular phrasing and dissonant harmonies. With sets and costumes by Picasso, choreography by Léonide Massine (who also magnificently danced the title role), the production was a huge success and an artistic triumph.

In Pulcinella, Stravinsky thoroughly integrates elements of Commedia dell’Arte. Not only does he musically express the plot but he uses musical devices that represent specific elements of Commedia dell’Arte. It is most evident in his orchestration which, for example, pairs unlike instruments such as the double bass and trombone in a
humorous repartée or uses idiomatic techniques such as glissandi and wide leaps to suggest acrobatics.

Upon first hearing the music may seem charming but frivolous. Indeed after its première critics criticized him for writing “simple” music. However, after researching the original sources with which Stravinsky worked and looking deeper into the tradition of Commedia dell’Arte it is evident to me that Stravinsky made thoughtful and deliberate decisions in order to reflect the old theatre genre in his music.

The violin and piano transcription from the ballet entitled *Suite Italienne* captures many of the elements that Stravinsky put into his original work. Though only 6 of the 18 movements are selected, the group together forms a complete and independent work that makes a rich contribution to the violin recital repertoire.

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Chapter 2: History of Commedia dell’Arte

Introduction

There are many challenges in compiling a concise history of Commedia dell’Arte. This is largely due to the fact that it survived for over 300 years during which time it went through many developments and metamorphoses. Beginning in Italy, it originally centered on rhetorical humor that satirized regional stereotypes and dialects. However, as it spread throughout Europe to such countries as Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and especially France, it became more simplified and stylized, with an increase in mime and physical humor. Additionally, as public entertainment it was meant to be highly adaptable to its audience, engaging the educated as well as the illiterate, the Italians as well as the English, etc. Thus, as a form of theatre it was dynamic and fluid, each show catering to its present audience. Keeping these considerations in mind the following is a history of Commedia and its major developments as evidenced by the limited and often subjective information that exists on this vibrant and ancient craft.

Early Years

Commedia dell’Arte was established in Italy in the early 16th century although its origins remain uncertain. Most likely it evolved from some form of rudimentary entertainment that was performed at outdoor fairs and festivals. It remained in existence well into the 19th century, although true Commedia declined in the 18th Century.
Comprised of professional actors, the first troupe was formed in 1545 and was led by Maphio dei Re of Padua. Through his troupe, dei Re developed the skills and dynamics of professional acting that helped distinguish his theatre from that of dilettantes who performed in the courts and in public especially around carnival time. Dei Re’s company became so successful that the format was copied throughout Italy.

Until the beginning of the 17th century the actors led nomadic lives, much to the displeasure of local authorities who likened them to a group of vagabonds. They travelled from town to town carrying with them their equipment and props. Often they carried around their own stage which they set up in a public place when they arrived in a new town. There they would draw an audience, collect admission, and after several days move on to another town. Though the actors lived on the fringes of society, by the 1560’s Commedia as public entertainment was a vital part of society.

The more well known troupes were invited to perform in the courts of Louis XIII and Henry III and IV and some even gained royal patronage. These elite groups are the troupes that we know most about but there were many others.

There were countless numbers of larger or smaller groups of travelling players who eked out a miserable existence or attracted the potential clientele with their appearances as assistants to mountebanks and quacks at annual markets or fairs. Little is known of these performers or their arduous lives except what can be gleaned from police reports or disparaging descriptions from the hands of clerics.⁴

Commedia enjoyed its first round of popularity from about 1570-1630 which was known for its predominance of “academic actors.” ⁵ During this period rhetorical rather than physical humor was considered more important and there was little of the farcical

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² (Erenstein 2000) 5.
³ Ibid., 9.
humor that we associate with Commedia today. Jokes involved wordplay and references to famous Latin and Italian authors. Though the servant as a comic figure appeared in the play, the play revolved around the innamorati (or the lovers), who spoke eloquently and displayed refinement and subtlety.

Much to the delight of audiences, women appeared in Commedia plays after sixteen centuries of being prohibited to act in theatre throughout the Christian world. Some important troupes such as the Gelosi were primarily known for their prima donnas such as Vinceza Armiani and Isabella Andreini, who were celebrated for their musical, oratorical, and poetic talents as well as their strong intellect. Roles for women, however, were not well developed and though women would play a lover or a soubrette, the actress playing the role was more significant than the role itself. This was in contrast to male roles such as Harlequin or Pulcinella which had long traditions behind them and actors playing them were often identified in their private lives by the character they played on stage.

Alongside these academic troupes there existed another type of acting system that centered on the buffone-actor. When troupes of this style performed, the play was more farcical and the jokes more boorish. Although audiences enjoyed both styles, the troupes themselves could hardly stand one another. One of the most famous actors of the farcical style was Tristano Martinelli (1557-1630) who played Arlecchino and was known for his acrobatic feats and dancing as well as his verbal skills.

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4 (Duchartre, The Italian Comedy 1966) 262.

During the 17th century interest for the buffone-type play became more prevalent. In Italy, political and economic changes occurred that decreased the generous patronage of some of the states. At the same time these states increased their control over the troupes, diminishing the conditions of creativity and distinction that Commedia dell’Arte actors had previously enjoyed. Their art form rapidly declined as much of their job became to provide diversions for the population or to serve some other political goal.6

In France, however, where Louis XIV ruled, the situation proved more stimulating and indeed some Italian actors who preferred artistic freedom over financial security moved there. Since the reign of Charles IX, Commedia troupes had travelled to France where they delighted audiences there. Charles Sorel (c.1599-1674) a French writer says about the Commedia dell’Arte actors:

Because they make a strong point of gesture and represent many things through action, even those who do not understand their language cannot fail to understand the subject of the piece; for which reason there are many people in Paris who take pleasure in their playing.7

During the reign of Louis XIV the popularity of the Italian actors further increased, leading the monarch to establish a permanent home in Paris for one troupe, the Ancienne Troupe de la Comédie Italienne, from 1661-1697. During its 36 years in Paris, the troupe was housed at the theatre of the Palais-Royal (which it shared with Molière’s troupe), the Hôtel de Guénégaud and the Hôtel de Bourgogne.8

6 (Erenstein 2000) 14.
7 (Duchartre, The Italian Comedy 1966) 22.
8 (Griffiths 1993) 91.
While firmly established in France Commedia dell’Arte went through some major alterations. The changes were due to mainly to the fact that fewer and fewer Frenchmen understood Italian as the century progressed. Thus the subtle verbal humor of Commedia became increasingly more difficult for French audiences to grasp. The Italian actors were therefore compelled to incorporate more mime into their plays until in 1680, despite opposition from rival French troupes, they were given permission to perform in French. This increased their audience reach but also presented problems to the Italians, some of whom could not speak French and none of whom could improvise in a foreign language. The Italians thus began the practice of commissioning French writers to compose isolated scenes to insert into their scenarios which they then memorized and acted out. As a result there was less and less room for improvisation in these plays and eventually authors such as Jean-François Regnard (1656-1710) began writing complete comedies in French.

In 1697 the Italian actors were dealt a severe blow from which they never recovered when the troupe staged a play called *La Fausse Prude* which made satirical references to Mme de Maintenon, Louis XIV’s wife. The Italian actors were banned from Paris and though the French continued the Commedia tradition in minor ways, interest in the genre faded there without the presence and vitality of the Italian actors.

9 (Erenstein 2000) 15.
10 (Griffiths 1993) 92.
11 Ibid., 94.
18th Century

In 1716, after the death of Louis XIV the Italian actors were allowed back into France. Despite attempts by Italian actors such as Luigi Riccoboni (c. 1676-1753) and his troupe, the Nouvelle Troupe Italienne, to revive true improvised Commedia, French audiences preferred the mimed comedy that had existed since the Italians’ departure or the polished plays of Molière. Thus true Commedia dell’Arte never recouped its earlier popularity in France.

In Italy, the tradition continued intact, although by the mid 18th century it became increasingly difficult to find actors who could improvise. Carlo Gozzi and Carlo Goldoni, two famous Italian playwrights continued the Commedia tradition by writing scenarios for Commedia troupes. These presented the basis of performances and gave actors materials upon which to and improvise. Among the last well-known actors were Antonio Sacchi and Cesare Darbes, who played Pantaloon in a troupe managed by Antonio Sacco (1708-1788). By this time, though, it was evident that Commedia had moved away from its roots and could not continue as it had in the past.

Revival 1890-1930

Around 1890 a strong revival of Commedia headed by the French symbolist poets such as Verlaine and Gautier began. From Paris it spread to Germany, Russia, London and even New York and for about 40 years, artists of all disciplines became enamored of Commedia as “a sign of adherence to modernism.”12 So strong was the presence of Commedia dell’Arte themes and stock characters in early 20th Century that some authors

12 (Clayton 1993) 7.
have called it a “cult.”\textsuperscript{13} The opera \emph{Il Pagliacci} by Leoncavallo was an influential work that fueled the fire. It premièred in Milan in 1892 and quickly swept Europe. The opera presents the classic triangle as central to the story. Pagliacci who takes the place of Pierrot is a lovesick simpleton. He loves Columbine, a frivolous wench who instead of Pagliacci loves the cruel Harlequin. Harlequin completes the love triangle with his disdainful but critical relationship with Pagliacci. The threesome appears time and again in works throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

To the artists of the turn of the century, Commedia was an expression of popular culture. The stock characters represented nostalgia combined with parody and provided a reprieve from the superhuman and mythical plots and characters of Romantic works such as Wagner’s operas.

\textsuperscript{13} (Dunsby 1992) 6.
Chapter 3: Diaghilev and Stravinsky

One of most influential figures in artistic circles during the early 20th century was Sergei Diaghilev, a Russian impresario and founder of the Ballets Russes. His initial foray into the arts was as a composer, but after showing his compositions to Rimsky-Korsakov (who discouraged him from pursuing a musical career), Diaghilev turned to the visual arts. He led the “World of Art” group, a collection of young artists based in St. Petersburg. Among other activities it published an influential journal of the same name which served and reviewed contemporary artists and writers of the day. Beginning in 1898 the group organized international exhibitions of Russian art in the West and from there Diaghilev expanded his offerings to include music and other types of performance arts. From 1906 until his death in 1929, Diaghilev presented seasons of concerts, ballets and operas in Paris.

As a person with an uncanny ability to recognize a successful trend, Diaghilev was an ardent crusader in the revival of Commedia dell’Arte and has been called “the greatest comedic personality of the century.”14 Diaghilev first heard some of Stravinsky’s music when he attended a concert organized by the conductor, Alexader Ziloti, in St. Petersberg in 1909. He was immediately taken by the two pieces that were written by Stravinsky, Scherzo Fantastique and Fireworks and asked him to orchestrate some pieces by Chopin and Grieg to be incorporated into the ballets that his company was performing.

14 (Green 1986) 57.
the next season. Upon the satisfactory completion of these commissions Diaghilev then asked the 27-year-old Stravinsky to write the music for a new ballet that he was working on for the 1910 season, *The Firebird*. This turned out to be a great success and almost overnight, Stravinsky was thrust onto the international stage.

Thereafter, Stravinsky was commissioned to write several more works, the ballets *Petrouchka* (1911)\(^\text{15}\) and *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and the opera, *The Nightingale* (1914). In these five years Stravinsky’s close association with Diaghilev and his ballet company made him famous throughout Europe. His ballets were performed in London, Paris and other European centers and he was recognized as one of the most exciting and talented composers of his generation. Stravinsky fondly recounts his close relationship with Diaghilev during these early years:

> At the beginning of my career he was the first to single me out for encouragement… Not only did he like my music and believe in my development, but he did his utmost to make the public appreciate me. He was genuinely attracted by what I was then writing, and it gave him real pleasure to produce my work, and, indeed, to force it on the more rebellious of my listeners.\(^\text{16}\)

With the outbreak and continuance of World War I, however, circumstances in both their lives changed. For Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, engagements and prospects declined and the impresario struggled to keep his company solvent. Stravinsky, too, had come to dire financial straits once his income from Russia ended with the Russian Revolution. In addition, the death of his beloved nurse and his brother, and illnesses that he and his family members suffered, made life for him even more difficult. Living in

\(^\text{15}\) Some authors consider this to be Stravinsky’s first Commedic ballet.

\(^\text{16}\) (Lederman 1949) 165.
Switzerland at the time, though, he developed friendships with other artists there. This included the Swiss author C.F. Ramuz, with whom Stravinsky collaborated on the work, *L'Histoire du Soldat* which premiered in Lausanne with much success.

When Stravinsky and Diaghilev met in Paris in 1919 they had not seen each other for over a year. The two men had been arguing over unpaid performance fees for *The Firebird* and *Petroushka* and relations between them were not as carefree as they had been before. Stravinsky tried to interest Diaghilev in *L'Histoire du Soldat* but the impresario was unreasonably jealous of Stravinsky’s collaboration with his Swiss colleagues and would have nothing to do with it. On the other hand, Stravinsky showed little interest in Diaghilev’s proposal to create a danced version of the symphonic poem, *The Song of the Nightingale*, which had been produced earlier as an opera. Though Diaghilev proposed costume and sets by Henri Matisse and choreography by Léonide Massine, Stravinsky told Diaghilev that the piece would only work on the concert stage and refused to participate in the project. Diaghilev, however, persisted in bringing Stravinsky back into his fold and eventually enticed the composer to join him in the *Pulcinella* project that already included Picasso and Massine. Says Stravinsky:

> the proposal that I should work with Picasso, who was to do the scenery and costumes and whose art was particularly near and dear to me, recollections of our walks together and the impressions of Naples we had shared, the great pleasure I had experienced from Massine’s choreography in *The Good-Humoured Ladies*-all this combined to overcome my reluctance.

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17 It was however made into a ballet by the Ballets Russes and performed in February 1920 with Ansermet conducting.

18 (White 1966) 286.
Diaghilev asked Stravinsky to provide the music for the ballet and though Stravinsky agreed, differences between them continued throughout the rest of their lives:

It is obvious that my relations with Diaghilev could not but undergo a certain change in the later years in view of the broadening of the field of my personal and independent activities, and of the fact that my collaboration with the Russian Ballet had lost the continuity it had earlier enjoyed. There was less affinity than before in our ideas and opinions, which, as time went on, frequently developed in divergent directions. 19

After Pulcinella, Diaghilev produced three more of Stravinsky’s works, Renard in (1922), Les Noces (1923) and Apollon Musagettes, which was one of the final works that Diaghilev produced just before his death in 1929. Upon the news of his passing Stravinsky writes, “I gave myself up to my grief, mourning a friend, a brother, whom I should never see again.” 20 As it was, upon Stravinsky’s death 42 years later in 1971, following Vera Stravinsky’s wish, Stravinsky was buried on the cemetery island of San Michele near Venice, only a few yards from the Diaghilev’s grave.

19 (Lederman 1949) 166.

20 Ibid.
Chapter 4: Pulcinella

To Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, the combination of 18th century Italian music and a Commedia dell’Arte plot had already proven to be successful. In 1917 Diaghilev and the Ballet Russes produced a ballet called The Good-Humoured Ladies which was based on a play by Goldoni and choreographed by Léonide Massine. The music for the ballet was provided by Vincenzo Tommasini, who orchestrated the harpsichord works of Domenico Scarlatti. It was a public success and Diaghilev was eager to produce another Neapolitan ballet. In 1919 when Diaghilev proposed to Stravinsky that he write the music for Pulcinella, Commedia dell’Arte was familiar subject matter to them. Two years earlier, Massine, Picasso and Stravinsky had travelled to Naples together and seen a Commedia play. Stravinsky writes:

We were all agreeably entertained by commedia dell’arte performance that we saw in the crowded little room of garlic. The Pulcinella was a great drunken lout whose every gesture, and probably every word, if I had understood, was obscene.  

The score for the ballet was titled, Pulcinella, ballet in one act, for small orchestra with three solo voices after Giambattista Pergolesi (hereafter referred to as PBS) and composed between 1919-1920. It was written for a small chamber orchestra using only 33 players. Compared to his previous ballets such as The Firebird and Rite of Spring the ensemble was unexpectedly small but Stravinsky wished to emulate an 18th century

21 (Stravinsky and Craft, Memories and Commentaries 2002) 139.

22 PBS for Pulcinella Ballet Score. The entire ballet production will still be referred to as Pulcinella.
orchestra. Aside from the inclusion of a trombone and piccolo (doubled by the 2nd flute), and the omission of clarinets, percussion, and a second trumpet, the remaining instrumentation is typical of a classical orchestra with 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, and 2 horns. The orchestra includes a string quintet concertino and ripieno strings. In addition, he uses three singers, a soprano, tenor and bass who sing from the pit as part of the orchestra. The texts they sing are taken from the operas from which the music is taken, thus they do not relate to the action on stage. Nor are the singers identified by any certain character on stage.

At the start of the project, Diaghilev presented Stravinsky with 34 manuscript copies, a selection from which he asked Stravinsky to orchestrate for the ballet. The manuscripts consisted of chamber music and solo keyboard works and opera arias and canzonas that at the time were all believed to be by Pergolesi. Questions about Pergolesi’s true authorship however began surfacing in 1949 among many Pergolesi scholars. To add further confusion to the situation, Stravinsky makes several contradictory remarks regarding the various conditions of the original sources. In one instance he suggests that he did not alter the music very much. He says, “The remarkable thing about Pulcinella is not how much but how little has been added or changed.”23 In his Autobiography, however he claims something different:

The material I had at my disposal—numerous fragments and shreds of compositions either unfinished or merely outlined, which by good fortune had eluded filtering academic editions—made me appreciate more and more the true nature of Pergolesi while discerning ever more clearly the closeness of my mental and, so to speak, sensory kinship with him.24

23 (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 128.

24 Quoted from (Brook 1988) 44.
Since 1983, however, the original sources of PBS have become accessible to researchers as part of the Stravinsky Archives housed at the Paul Sacher Stiftung in Basel. This has allowed scholars to gather more information about the original sources and dispel much of the mystery surrounding them.

It is now known that the manuscripts that Diaghilev gave him were in fact written by five different composers: Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736); Domenico Gallo, a Venetian composer born ca. 1730, Carlo Monza (1735-1801), a Milanese composer known for his operas; Alessandro Parisotti (1853-1913); and Count Unico Wilhelm van Wassenaer (1692-1766), a Dutch diplomat and composer. 25

From the music Stravinsky received from Diaghilev, he chose 19 selections to include in the ballet. Of these, ten pieces were by Pergolesi. Nine of them were vocal selections from two of Pergolesi’s comic operas written in Neapolitan dialect, Lo Frate ‘nnamorato and Il Flaminio as well as the cantata, Luce degli occhi miei. The tenth piece was the fourth movement of Pergolesi’s Sinfonia a Violoncello. In addition to the 19 works contained in Diaghilev’s collection, Stravinsky used two other pieces that, according to Brooks, Stravinsky may have found himself from published copies. 26 If so, the following

25 Indeed recent research has asserted that of the nearly 330 works that have been attributed to Pergolesi, only 10 percent are authentic. Brooks says:

This is typical of the piracy rampant in the eighteenth century. Pergolesi’s name, famous in the 18th century for the Serva Padrona, the Stabat Mater, and as the catalyst of the Parisian Querelle des Bouffons, was borrowed indiscriminately by publishers and copyists alike.

(Brook 1988) 42.

26 The two original sources were Gallo’s Trio no. VII, third movement and the aria “Se tu m’ami,” by Alessandro Parisotti although this authorship is questionable.
comment that seems to contradict earlier comments makes sense:

My ultimate selection of pieces derived only partly from Diaghilev’s examples, however and partly from published editions, but I played through the whole available Pergolesi before making my choices.37

Despite Stravinsky’s claim that there were “numerous fragments and shreds of compositions,” there is only piece that could be considered as such. Oddly enough it is a photocopy of a fragment from Checca’s canzone from the third act of Pergolesi’s Il Flaminio. The two pages of photocopy contain the opening seven measures of the aria, of which Stravinsky uses the first six for the Più vivo from Scene 1. [EX 1] Where or from whom Stravinsky received this copy is not known, but most likely it was not part of the collection that Diaghilev gave him.

Music

In composing the work, Stravinsky takes entire pieces, sections, or in one case a fragment of a piece, and reworks them into an uninterrupted, cohesive 35 minute work. For the most part, Stravinsky maintains the melodic and bass line of the original work, but then adds his own stamp mostly through inventive and idiosyncratic orchestration. Some examples are: the unique pairing of instruments such as the trombone and double bass in the Vivo; contrasting sections of large and small ensembles such as the concertino and ripieno in the strings or the chamber wind ensemble in Variation II of the Gavotte vs. sections of full orchestra; and the use of unique instrumental and vocal timbres such as the portamento in the vocal line [EX 2] or the manner in which the strings supply dry, rhythmic support in place of the missing percussion part. [EX 3]

27 (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 127.
Harmonically, he adds dissonant harmonies and especially prevalent is the ninth chord used as an ostinato. [EX 14] Additionally he writes non-traditional cadences such as in the Scherzino in the *Suite Italienne* where the piece ends on a dominant chord. [EX 4]

Rhythmically he adds and subtracts measures and beats, and repeats melodic fragments to create interest and break up the formal symmetry of the original music. For example in m. 19 of the Allegro in PBS he extends the upward scale by one beat to make a ¾ measure, breaking up the regularity of the phrasing. [EX 5]

The original playbill for *Pulcinella* claimed that the music is “by Pergolesi, arranged and orchestrated by Stravinsky.” Stravinsky, though, actively objected to his title as an arranger partly due to the fact that he could receive higher royalties as the composer. As we have seen he did add much to the original sources. However, his contradictory remarks have resulted in confusion and misunderstandings about the extent of his actual contributions.

*Scenery*

When Diaghilev commissioned Picasso to do the sets and scenery the artist was already working for the Ballets Russes on *The Three-Cornered Hat*. According to Stravinsky, “Picasso accepted the commission to design the *décors* for the same reason that I agreed to arrange the music [-] for the fun of it.” However, all did not go smoothly. Picasso’s first sketches for the set were rejected by Diaghilev because they did

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28 (Stravinsky and Craft 1978) 183.

29 (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 129.
not concur with the Commedia theme and after a heated argument Picasso created a new scene. In the final version, the scene showed a 17th century Venetian street with houses squeezed together and a moonlit night sky. It was painted in neutral colors of blue, gray, dark brown and the entire stage was covered with a white drop cloth.  

Costumes

Originally Picasso had shown Diaghilev sketches of “Offenbach-period costumes with side-whiskered faces instead of masks.”  

Like the drawings for the sets had done, these sketches also offended Diaghilev, who wanted genuine Commedia dell’Arte costumes. Reportedly he threw them on the floor, stomped on them and stormed off. Although Picasso was extremely insulted he eventually drew a second set of sketches. The second series is described in the following way:

Picasso chose the exquisite colors of male dancers’ boleros and of female dancers’ tutus, and he made but a single maquette showing the costume that was worn by Massine, the white blouse, the red stockings, and the beautiful black mask with the grotesque nose. The result was a certain, perhaps delectable, disagreement between the style of the costumes and that of the decors in the marvelous spectacle.

He made use of typical Commedia style costumes with tights, a ruffled collared shirt, and jacket for men, and a loose fitting blouse for Pulcinella. Women wore long full skirts with fitted bodices and Pimpinella was dressed as a peasant woman. Says Stravinsky of Picasso’s contributions, “...he worked miracles, and I find it difficult to decide what was

30 (Brook 1988) 45.
31 (White 1966) 286.
32 Jean Hugo quoted in (Stravinsky and Craft 1978) 181.
most enchanting—the coloring, the design, or the amazing inventiveness of this remarkable man.”

**Choreography**

Léonide Massine’s choreography, like Stravinsky’s music, closely followed the plot and incorporated the character of Commedia dell’Arte. In keeping with the Commedia tradition, he retained Pulcinella’s traditional mask that depicted a half laughing and half crying face with a hooked nose. As a result, Massine, who also danced the title role, was compelled to express the “unscrupulousness and ambiguity of Pulcinella’s character” mostly through movement such as the tilt of the head and body.

Additionally, Massine used varying dance styles to portray differences between the characters. For example, Pimpinella’s dances were in peasant form whereas Rosetta and Prudenza’s dancing was more stylish. (An extensive description of the choreography is listed in Table 2.) Although Stravinsky describes the final choreography as “one of Massine’s finest creations,” all did not go smoothly between him and the choreographer.

Problems surfaced when Stravinsky began attending rehearsals. Massine, (who had started working on the choreography from piano scores that Stravinsky sent to him bit by bit as they were completed) was under the impression that the music would be scored for a large orchestra rather than the small orchestra that Stravinsky had in mind. As a result,

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33 (Lederman 1949) 154.

34 (Noton 2004) 77.

35 (Lederman 1949) 154.
the choreography that Massine created was often out of proportion to the music. Says Stravinsky,

It often happened that when I was shown certain steps and movements that had been decided upon I saw to my horror that in character and importance they in no wise corresponded to the very modest volume of my small chamber orchestra. They had wanted, and looked for, something quite different from my score, something it could not give. The choreography had, therefore, to be altered and adapted to the volume of my music, and that caused them no little annoyance though they realized that there was no other solution.  

In the end, however, problems were sorted out and, with the exception of the Gavotta con due variazioni of Scene VI which is scored for only winds, Stravinsky was satisfied with the choreography.  

Première

The first performance was held on May 15, 1920 at the Paris Opera House with Ernest Ansermet conducting. The result was spectacular and even the highly critical Stravinsky was pleased. It was “one of those productions where everything harmonises, where all the elements-subject, music, dancing and artistic setting-form a coherent and homogenous whole.” After this success, the company went to London and repeated the performance at the Royal Opera House in Convent Garden on June 10, 1920.

The initial reception of the music was divided. There were those who believed Stravinsky was abandoning his modernistic path and those who thought he was corrupting Pergolesi’s music. In the end, though, most recognized the wit and humor in the piece. Significantly, the piece marked a turning point in Stravinsky’s career. As it was

36 Ibid.
37 (Stravinsky and Craft, Memories and Commentaries 2002) 139.
38 (White 1966) 287.
the last piece he was to compose before his move to Paris, he calls it “the swan song of my Swiss years.” Musically the piece marked his turn to neo-classicism, which in some capacity would occupy the rest of his musical life. “Pulcinella was my discovery of the past, the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible,” he says. Transcriptions

From PBS Stravinsky extrapolated four pieces for the concert stage which are as follows:

1. *Pulcinella Suite for Orchestra (PSO):* This orchestral suite was arranged in 1922 using eleven of the eighteen movements of PBS. The vocal parts were removed and assimilated into the orchestral score. It was first performed in 1922 by the Boston Symphony conducted by Pierre Monteux. In 1949, another version of the orchestral suite with minor revisions was published.

2. *Suite for violin and piano, after themes, fragments and pieces by Giambattista Pergolesi (VS1)*: This arrangement for violin and piano was completed in 1925 and published in 1926. It contains five of the six movements contained in the later violin arrangement of *Suite Italienne* (See Table 1) and was dedicated to the violinist Paul Kochanski (1887-1934). The first performance was given in Frankfurt on Nov. 25, 1925, with violinist Alma Moodie and Stravinsky on the piano.

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39 (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 157.

40 Ibid., 128-129.

41 VS1 for Violin Suite 1.
3. *Suite Italienne for cello and piano (SIC)*\(^{42}\): In 1932 Stravinsky wrote, with the help of Gregor Piatigorsky, this arrangement for cello and piano. Published in 1934, it is in five movements and is the only arrangement that contains the 9th movement from PBS, which was originally a bass solo taken from the opera *Il Flaminio*.

4. *Suite Italienne for violin and piano (SIV)*\(^{43}\): This final arrangement was also published in 1934. It was co-authored by Samuel Dushkin, a well known violinist with whom Stravinsky concertized. Though similar in title to SIC this work is in six rather than five movements and is based on slightly different movements of PBS than the cello work. (See Table 1) Compared to VS1, this work is more accessible and straightforward melodically, eliminating many of the double stop passages and accompanimental figures of the first arrangement.

In addition to these transcriptions there are two other transcriptions for violin and cello. One is performed by Heifetz and Piatigorsky in the Heifetz Collection, volume 31, put out by RCA, and the second one is performed by Eleonor Turovsky, violin, and Yuli Turovsky, cello, and is transcribed by Katherine Rife.\(^{44}\) Both are recorded but unpublished.\(^{45}\)

The following is a table of the ballet movements used in the various transcriptions.

\[^{42}\text{SIC for Suite Italienne for Cello}\]
\[^{43}\text{SIV for Suite Italienne for Violin}\]
\[^{44}\text{On the CD Russian Music for String Duo by Chandos, 1988.}\]
\[^{45}\text{(Hsieh 2005) 23.}\]
<table>
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<td>Allegro Assai</td>
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<td>8b</td>
<td>5b</td>
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Table 1. Movements of Ballet vs. Transcriptions

As we can see in VS1, selected movements are taken from POS. In SIV and SIC, however, he puts one movement in each of the versions that is not included in POS.
Although intuitively, one may assume that the arrangements were taken from POS, the table suggests that the transcriptions were actually derived from PBS.

*Comparison of SIV with PBS*

*Voicing*

In transcribing PBS to SIV Stravinsky retains conventional voicing. Usually he gives the violin the main melodic line, which in the ballet is fragmented and divided amongst various instruments. As a result, SIV consists of a more coherent and prominent melodic line. One thing which Stravinsky does that adds richness to the violin part in SIV is to have the instrument at times play both the second and first violin parts simultaneously. An example of this is in the first movement where the violin plays both violin 1 and 2 parts of PBS for two measures with the violin 1 line brought down an octave. [EX 6]

The bass line of PBS on the whole is transferred to the LH piano part in SIV. It is taken mostly from the cello and bass parts, sometimes from the bassoon and once in a while from another instrument such as horn and viola. Stravinsky takes advantage of the piano’s capability to play multiple lines and therefore in general the bass line in SIV is more active than any single bass part in PBS.

The right hand of the piano reinforces an accompanimental rhythm or fills out the harmony although once in a while, it carries the tune. Rather than follow any one part of the orchestra it switches from many of the inner voices such as violas, violin 2, oboes and bassoons and sometimes violin 1 if the part is playing an accompanimental line.

*Markings in PBS vs. SIV*

One striking difference between PBS and SIV is the articulation markings. In PBS Stravinsky is much more specific with his markings and exhibits more of “his obsessive
concern for the precision of his scores.\textsuperscript{46} An example of this is the violin solo in the final movement in the ballet which is marked with detailed markings including fingerings, dynamics, and the string on which it should be played. None of these however, are marked in SIV although the violin plays the identical line. [EX 7]

*Other Changes in the Arranging of SIV*

On the whole Stravinsky left much the same when he arranged SIV. However, he did make some changes that show that he felt free to recompose some parts. For example the first movement of PBS is a 44 measure piece but the first movement of SIV is 45 measures. The added measure falls between mm. 23-24 of SIV. The extra measure interrupts the rising sequence so that when the last 1 ½ beats return they sound like a pick-up to new material as the violin accompanies the melody in the LH. [EX 8]

Other small changes that occur in SIV include the omission of accidentals such as in EX 9 where the sharp on the third is left out changing the chord from major to minor. Whether these omissions, like the markings, that occur in SIV are deliberate or accidental is debatable. However a further line of research would be to investigate the sketches for the violin and piano arrangements which are maintained at the Stiftung houses in Basel alongside the sketches for PBS and POS.

\textsuperscript{46} (Brook 1988) 47.
Chapter 5: Influence of Commedia dell’Arte on Pulcinella (PBS) and Suite Italienne (SIV)

Description of Commedia dell’Arte varied as it went through numerous developments in its three hundred years of existence. From the many definitions that exist the following are the main characteristics of the Commedia dell’Arte play:

A. Improvisation
B. Stock Characters
C. Physical stunts
D. Intrigue plots
E. Humor and satire
F. Music

In addition to containing these elements, Commedia dell’Arte was unique among farcical entertainment in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries because it had a specific structure that made it resemble regular plays. The Commedia play was divided into three acts, and within each act there was a proposition, a development and a solution.47

A. Improvisation

Improvisation in Commedia dell’Arte

Although Commedia is often defined as being improvisatory, much of it was actually

47 (Smith, 1964) 18.
structured and predetermined. Furthermore, the improvisations that did occur were based on exceptional technique that was practiced and mastered by professional actors. Before a performance scenarios were established and the details of the play were rehearsed or discussed. Such details included determining the characters involved in the scenarios, the location of the action, the distribution of the comic episodes, and the required props. During the performance a description of the scenarios would be posted behind the scenes to remind actors of the order. An example of a scenario outline is put forth by Carlo Gozzi, an Italian dramatist of the 18th Century:

Act 1 (Leghorn, Italy)

BRIGHELLA enters, looks about on the stage, and seeing no one, calls. PANTALOON, frightened, comes on. BRIGHELLA wishes to leave his service, etc. PANTALOON recommends himself to him. BRIGHELLA relents and promises to aid him. PANTALOON says (in a stage whisper) that his creditors, especially TRUFFALDINO, insist on being paid, that the extension of credit expires that day, etc.

At this moment: TRUFFALDINO (scene of demanding payment). BRIGHELLA finds a way of getting rid of him. PANTALOON and BRIGHELLA remain.48

As we can see, these descriptions were detailed enough to guide the actors but left enough room for improvisation and unplanned diversions from the plot.

The text of the play was divided into two main varieties, the dote which were fairly regular and of stock variety consisting of soliloquies, narratives and rhetorical passages; and the generici which were emotional laments, ravings, florid descriptions and

48 (Duchartre, 1966) 50
The former were used at specific points in the play and the latter at the actors’ discretion. Actors learned and memorized many lines of texts and jokes that they either had created themselves or copied from other actors and troupes. They carefully guarded their repertoire in notebooks that they carried around with them called a zibaldone or gag book. Contained in the zibaldone are extant examples that we have of the actual text of the plays. Though only a comparatively small number of them have been found, they have given historians valuable insight into what otherwise was strictly an oral tradition.

Another improvisational element of Commedia was lazzis, comic interludes that were inserted within the play. They interrupted the plot and were often added when the action waned. Most often they were of physical nature, and if actors could perform acrobatic stunts, lazzis gave them the opportunity to do so. They were often the funniest part of the performance and were eagerly anticipated by the audience. In time lazzis became conventionalized and familiar to audiences. Some examples are the “lazzo of fear,” or “of weeping and laughing,” and “of crying loudly.”

The determination of the scenarios, the combination of the dote and the generic, and the insertion of lazzis all served to create a framework that was predictable yet fresh. The improvisatory aspects of Commedia began to become obsolete, however, as playwrights such as Marivaux in France and Goldoni later in Italy began writing the plays down. Although the scripting of the plays, its characters, plots, and techniques gave Commedia

\[49 \text{ (Smith, 1964)}\]

\[50 \text{ (Smith 1964) p. 13-14.}\]
higher literary stature, it also distanced it from its popular origins. Still, in some troupes such as Sacchi in Italy and Colalto in France, the traditions of improvisation were kept alive up to the second half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Furthermore, in its revival in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the improvisatory aspect of Commedia was highlighted as it showed actors’ artistic independence from playwrights.

\textit{Improvisation in PBS}

In PBS Stravinsky makes use of improvisational characteristics in two ways: orchestration that mimics reparté between two characters and sudden changes in the music. Repartées between two characters were common in Commedia. These quick-witted exchanges displayed the actors’ talents for thinking quickly on their feet and Stravinsky copies this type of banter in his music. This is most evident in the second variation of the Gavotte con due Variazioni originally from Carlo Monza’s Harpsichord Suite No. 3. In Stravinsky’s orchestration of the piece, the single melodic line is played alternately between the flute and the French horn. The conversation between the two instruments that have very different timbres as well as the elisions that interrupt the phrasing result in a comical exchange between the two. More specifically, on the repeat of the B part of the variation the horn does not let the flute finish the phrase but interrupts it before the last note. In answer to this, the flute does not wait for the horn to complete its phrase but comes in early as well. [EX 10] At the same time in the bass line, the bassoon plays running sixteenth notes. The added articulation of two slurred and two separate notes adds buoyancy and a sense of action to the music.

In Stravinsky’s writing of PBS the transitions between the movements are often smooth displaying Stravinsky’s skilled hand in bridging together two completely
different compositions. However, occasionally Stravinsky adds a jarring jolt that contrasts to the usual seamless transitions. This suggests a Commedia play when the plot is interrupted by a spontaneous outburst by an actor. Such is the case in the first scene at the Più vivo between the Scherzino and the Allegro. [EX 1] This 15 measure transition introduces a unique timbre and melodic motif from the preceding and following material. It is also in a different tempo and time signature than the music surrounding it that further accentuates the difference.

B. Stock Characters

Stock Characters of Commedia dell’Arte

Stock characters were so familiar to audiences that just by their appearance, people could predict the character’s identity, habits and often his/her role in the plot. Even so, it was common for different actors to portray the same character with slight variations, modifying the character to fit their own personal strengths and talents. Stock characters, thus can be thought of as “accumulative” personalities that have evolved over centuries. For example, the character, Scaramouche was originally known as a braggadly Capitano. In the hands of Tiberio Fiorilli (1604 or 1608-1694), however, he developed into a character famous for his acrobatics, singing, dancing, and musical skills.

The spread of Commedia to other European countries resulted in many changes but the costumes and masks that the each of the stock characters wore remained fairly consistent and served as a unifying and distinguishing feature of Commedia. In paintings such as those by Watteau or Picasso, Commedia characters are easily recognizable by

their costumes and/or masks and even today we recognize the ruffled collared blouse with large buttons that Pierrot wears.

Masks also helped define the function of the character in the play and held a symbolic significance. In general, the more comic the role, the greater part of the face the mask concealed. Thus servants often had their entire faces covered and played roles that involved more physical movement. Il Dottore, for example, a serio-comic character, may have worn a mask that only covered his head and nose. Serious characters, on the other hand, were unmasked. These were usually the lovers with whom the audience most readily identified. In France, actors did away with the mask and put flour on their faces instead.

Indeed stock characters had universal appeal and although they may have appeared one-dimensional, in fact they were more complex. Rudlin sums up the characteristic of a stock character:

Each Mask represents a moment in everyone’s (rather than someone’s) life. That is not to say that the fixed types of Commedia are simplistic or reductive of life: each contains and expresses at least one paradox and its seemingly obvious physicality usually implies a metaphysical quality which it may take an actor years to acquire.

On average, a troupe consisted of a minimum of ten actors to perform the play and in classical form the two pairs of innamorati formed a central position with the zanni and vecchi in supporting roles. The main categories of stock characters were as follows:

52 (Erenstein 2000) 7-8.

53 (Rudlin, 1994) 35.
**Zanni (Servants):** This was the common name given to servants. As such, they were always from a humble background and usually served the principal character. Their main function was to be funny. Some famous servants were Harlequin, Pierrot, Pulcinella, Scaramouche, and Columbine.

**Vecchio (The Old Man):** Most often called Pantalone and the Doctor, sometimes Tartaglia, these men played different roles but were often the father of a young lover. They were often lustful and were themselves in love with a young woman.

**Innamorati (The Lovers):** These were two pairs of lovers who represented the idealized image of civilized man and woman. They were never masked and were often the children of the elderly men. Usually, they were kept apart by some obstacle or person and their dilemma was often at the center of the plot. Some common women names were: Isabella, Flaminia and Florinda. Common men names were: Ottavio, Flavio, and Lelio.

**Il Capitano:** a much disliked character who was cowardly but yet a braggart. He was modeled after the Spanish conquerors of Italy in the 17th century.

**Stock characters in Pulcinella**

In *Pulcinella*, the standard group of stock characters appears except for the captain. The original cast included the following characters:

**Zanni**

**Pulcinella:** (danced by Léonide Massine) Literally his name means “little chicken” and traditionally he was thought of as a bully. Ducharte describes him as “brutal and often cruel.” Similarly, Rudlin says he is “a complete egotist. His good-humoured exterior conceals a ferocious interior and he cares no more for human life than for that of a flea…”
he sees all nature in his own image: brutal, ugly and destructive."

From Naples, his outstanding physical characteristics were his humped back and his hooked nose. He was agile, able to mask and unmask himself quickly and appear and disappear from the scene. This often baffled the slow witted old characters much to the audience’s delight.

*Pimpinella:* (danced by Tamara Karsavina) As a servetta she is more down-to-earth and outspoken than the other women in the ballet. Traditionally the character can also be racy or of doubtful morals in addition to being crafty. In the ballet she is also Pulcinella’s lover and displays a possessive nature.

*Fourbo:* Another servant type and is Pulcinella’s friend and sidekick.

*Lovers*

*Rosetta* and *Caviello, Florindo and Prudenza* make up the two couples. In the ballet the men are frustrated by the lack of response they are receiving from the women at their attempts to woo them. In their view, the “obstacle” that is keeping them apart is Pulcinella whom they plot to get out of the way.

*Old Men*

*Il Dottore* (danced by Cecchetti, the company’s veteran ballet-master) and *Tartaglia.* They are the old fools and fathers to the women. They are relentlessly baited by the young men in the ballet either as victims of Pulcinella’s pranks or as defenders of their daughters’ virtues. Traditionally, their roles were partly serious and partly comic and in Massine’s version they are mime parts.

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54 (Rudlin 1994) 141.
Stravinsky's musical depiction of stock characters

In *Pulcinella*, “the whole ballet is dominated by the character of Pulcinella who is hardly ever off the stage, and who has to express all kinds of varied emotions while dancing”\(^{55}\) describes Beaumont of Massine’s choreography. In PBS the Tarantella movement contains some good examples of the way in which Stravinsky musically depicts Pulcinella’s character. This movement was taken from the fourth movement of Unico Wilhelm Count of Wassenaer’s *Concerto II* from his set, *Concerti Armonici*. It was originally a symphony for strings with the violins playing the active line accompanied by the rest of the strings and perhaps continuo playing only \(\uparrow\) and \(\downarrow\) [EX 11]

What Stravinsky does in orchestrating the piece, however, is insert elements that bring out Pulcinella’s character. For example, he writes folk-like open fifths and octave pizzicato in the accompaniment figures that suggest Pulcinella’s humble peasant/servant background. [EX 12] In addition, Stravinsky implies Pulcinella’s propensity for fighting and aggressiveness through sudden outbursts of \(ff\) passages [EX 13], strong contrasting rhythms (hemiolas) [EX 13], and dissonant harmonies (continuous ninths in the bass line).[EX 14]

Without the tool of orchestration, in SIV illustrates Pulcinella’s mischievousness and nastiness mainly through means of sharp dissonances and pronounced rhythms in the violin and piano parts. Examples of how Stravinsky does this are prevalent throughout the work and one example is in the Serenata movement. Originally the movement was a

\(^{55}\) (Beaumont 1937) 908.
tenor aria from the first act of Pergolesi’s opera, *Il Flaminio*. A look at a piano reduction of the original source shows the last two measures where the piano plays a lyrical phrase ending. [EX 15] When Stravinsky comes to this part in SIV he removes the tuneful phrase and replaces it with a sharp rhythmic figure of pizzicato and double stops on the violin that fluctuate between B flat major and B flat minor.[EX 16]

Another example of Stravinsky’s use of musical expression to exemplify Pulcinella’s unsavory character is in the Minuetto movement in SIV. In this case the clash between the C and the D flat causes a harsh dissonance especially brought out by the accents in the piano. [EX 17]

C. Physical Stunts

*Physical stunts in Commedia dell’Arte*

According to Ducharte, all the players of the Italian comedy were acrobats. The extent of their skills varied but they were often tight-rope dancers and tumblers. Over the centuries the use of acrobatics within the Commedia play gained prominence as mentioned earlier. Examples of some famous actors known for their acrobatics are Tristano Martinelli (1557-1630) who was the first person to play Arlequin. Later on a French actor, Jean-Gaspard Deburau (1796-1846) who developed the modern version of Pierrot further incorporated acrobatics into a circus-like show. In his hands, Commedia became a pantomime infused with acrobatics and his performances were a phenomenal success. Acrobatic skill was not only limited to men, but women too were known to have

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56 (Duchartre, The Italian Comedy 1966) 24.
physical ability. Some women were even known to be able to combine acrobatic stunts with other talents such as performing on a tightrope while playing the viol.

Musical depiction of physical stunts

In Stravinsky’s music we see examples of expressive devices he uses to indicate musical acrobatics two of which are glissando and wide leaps. The former is a gesture that invokes an effect of falling if it is moves downwards or jumping if it moves upwards. The most well known example of the use of glissandi is in the Vivo movement with the trombone and bass solos. Based on Pergolesi’s Presto movement from his *Sinfonia a Violoncello and Continuo* originally there were no glissando markings. [EX 18] However, Stravinsky adds them in the trombone part displaying an inventive use of idiomatic writing. [EX 19] Another gesture that Stravinsky incorporates is wide leaps that suggest jumps and physical action. [EX 20] In this example we see large intervals in the flutes, strings and French horn parts.

In SIV an example of glissandi can be found in the Variazione 2 from the Gavotte. They are written in the piano part and the violin part also contains glissandi-like gestures. [EX 21]

Another example of acrobatics is in the last five measures of the Scherzino movement. In this example Stravinsky writes an extremely large interval for the violin from the D to the octave D. Because of the open A this interval has to be played on the E string and is equivalent to a 12\textsuperscript{th} if it were to be played on two strings. Also the resulting interval between the open A and the high D is extremely large: two octaves and a 4\textsuperscript{th}. The double stops leading up to it are very tricky as well. [EX 22]
D. Intrigue Plots

*Intrigue Plots in Commedia dell’Arte*

The Intrigue Plot involving scheming, secrets and mistaken identities was integral to the play and all the predicaments and revelations that resulted from the schemes was the source of much of the humor.

*Intrigue plot in Pulcinella*

The story of Pulcinella was taken from an old manuscript dating from 1700. The book contained several comic episodes featuring Pulcinella and from there, Diaghilev and Stravinsky selected certain episodes from which to construct the plot. The ballet is in one act, not three, but it is in typical Commedia style insofar as the plot involves stock characters in a plot that includes a problem, development and a dénouement. A short synopsis follows:

Two young women of a village are in love with Pulcinella and show their affection by flirting and dancing with him. This makes their fiancés as well as Pulcinella’s sweetheart very jealous. The young fiancés seek their revenge, pursuing and finally stabbing Pulcinella. The fiancés run off leaving him for dead when the villagers find Pulcinella’s body. They are in the midst of grieving when a magician appears and brings Pulcinella back to life. In truth however, the real Pulcinella has only pretended to die. He has changed places with his friend Fourbo and Pulcinella has donned the disguise of the magician. The fiancés, eager to impress their loved ones, return dressed as Pulcinella.

This account is taken mainly from (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 127 although in (White 1966) 283 there is a slightly different account.
this point Pulcinella takes off his magician’s disguise and much confusion ensues as to which of the four Pulcinellas is the real one. In the end, identities are disclosed, the couples are united and Pulcinella harmoniously oversees the lovers’ marriages.

When Stravinsky was writing PBS, he had the plot of the ballet very much in mind. He worked closely with Massine so that the choreography and music went along together to illustrate the story line. He refers to *Pulcinella* more as an “action dansante,” a genre in which the music is directly related to the stage action and follows each episode closely, than a ballet. Below is a listing of the movements of the ballet and the action that possibly went along with it. This is compiled from several sources but is mainly based on a written description of the original choreography by Cyril Beaumont in his book.

\[58\text{ (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 127.}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene No. &amp; Music</th>
<th>Stage Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overture*</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serenata (Tenor)*</td>
<td>Caviello enters dancing and stops in front of Rosetta’s house expressing his love for her outside her window. His friend Florindo enters in the same way only stops in front of Prudenza’s house with imploring gestures directed at Prudenza’s window.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scherzino</td>
<td>Rosetta and Prudenza appear at their respective windows but are not very enamored with their suitors. They leave and return with pitchers, throwing the contents of them onto the men below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Poco] Piu Vivo</td>
<td>Prudenza’s father, the Doctor emerges from his house carrying a stout stick. He lashes out at the young men who avoid his blows and run away as the man is left in a rage. (Both the Doctor and Tartaglia, Rosetta’s father are mime parts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>From an inner door from the left hand house, Pulcinella appears. He is mysterious yet attractive. He is masked and wears a voluminous white blouse from which he brings out a small violin and bow. He dances, leaps into the air, plays his violin or whirls it up in the air, and stomps his foot to the rhythm of the music. At the end he throws his violin away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andantino</td>
<td>Prudenza comes out of her house and flirts with Pulcinella, but he avoids her advances and manages to drive her back into her house. Then Rosetta, with her father Tartaglia, comes out of her house. She confesses her love for Pulcinella to her father who shows strong disapproval. Rosetta bows her head but then goes to Pulcinella and tries to embrace him. Pulcinella is indifferent until she dances for him. He then kisses Rosetta and lifts her on his shoulders, sets her down and they glide to and fro and Pulcinella dances her to the right-hand side of the stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegro</td>
<td>Pimpinella, Pulcinella’s mistress, dressed as a peasant girl comes out the left-hand house. Evidently she has witnessed Pulcinella’s actions and she gives Pulcinella a hostile look. Pulcinella professes his love for her but Pimpinella is incredulous. Eventually she succumbs to his attempts to reconcile and they dance a lively measure where they clap, squat on their heels and glide along the floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegretto [Ancora poco meno] Soprano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Music vs Stage Action in *Pulcinella*
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allegro assai</th>
<th>Meanwhile Caviello and Florindo appear in the shadows of the houses. They jump on Pulcinella and beat him up. Pimpinella wrings her hands and calls for help. Rosetta and Prudenza hearing her cries come out of their houses and chase the young men away. The three women run to help Pulcinella and surround him with adoring and sympathetic gestures. The Doctor and Tartaglia appear on the scene and lead their daughters home, leaving Pulcinella and Pimpinella alone where they restore their senses and affection for one another. Caviello and Florinda enter again, this time disguised in long black cloaks and each carrying a sword. Pulcinella, sensing danger takes Pimpinella and tries to flee, but the two men intervene and Florindo stabs Pulcinella. He falls to the ground and the two men, assume he his dead and leave the scene.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Scene III  
Allegro [alla breve] (Bass) | After the two men leave Pulcinella rises and with slow steps walks away. Then four little Pulcinellas, with similar costumes and masks as the real one enter carrying another Pulcinella on their shoulders. They set the body down, then form into a line, walking quickly to and fro with jerky movements. They turn round on one foot, jump into the air, and dance in a circle. |
| Scene IV  
Andante (Trio)  
Larghetto  
Allegro  
Presto* (Tenor)  
Larghetto  
Allegro  
Tarantella* | The Doctor and Tartaglia enter with their daughters. All are deeply saddened by the sight of Pulcinella’s body and after the Doctor examines Pulcinella, he pronounces him dead. A person dressed as a magician, carrying a long pole enters. He announces that he can bring Pulcinella back to life. After dancing around the pole and beating the body with his hand, he rests his foot on Pulcinella’s chest and orders him to rise. As the crowd looks on, Pulcinella rises to his feet and stands on his heel. Rosetta and Prudenza are delighted and the three celebrate in a dance. The four Pulcinellas happily bound in the air and then leave. The Doctor and Tartaglia are immobile as they gesture at Pulcinella in amazement. The magician then takes of his wig and gown and reveals the real Pulcinella with the close-fitting mask. It is known that meanwhile, Fourbo has been impersonating Pulcinella. The four little Pulcinellas dance around the motionless Doctor and Targalia, dividing into couples and whirling each other around. Then leave. |

continued
Table 2 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene V</th>
<th>Allegro [Toccata]</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andantino (Soprano)</td>
<td>Pulcinella and Fourbo gently lead the Doctor and Tartaglia respectively to the sides of the square. Pimpinella enters tiptoeing on one foot and does several graceful dance movements. Pulcinella and Fourbo enter and watch her but when she notices the two men, she becomes frightened and runs away. Pulcinella has Fourbo chase after her. Florindo and Caviello emerge wearing Pulcinella masks. They leap and dance, play tricks on each other, then feeling secure in their disguise, renew their attentions to Prudenza and Rosetta and enter the houses of their respective love interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene VI</th>
<th>Gavotta con due variazioni*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene VII</td>
<td>Vivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene VIII</td>
<td>Tempo di minué* (Soprano, Tenor, Bass) Allegro Assai*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By following Pulcinella’s plot through the music Stravinsky integrates the element of the Intrigue Plot into his work. A specific example of this is the Allegro assai that follows the interlude with soprano (Ancora poco meno). On stage Pulcinella with his lover Pimpinella dance lovingly when suddenly two men, Caviello and Florindo in pursuit of Pulcinella appear. The soprano aria which is marked Ancora poco meno, comes to an
abrupt end as the meter, key, and tempo abruptly change to musically illustrate the appearance of the avenging Caviello and Florindo. [EX 23]

Moreover, Stravinsky musically creates an actual intrigue plot through his composition. In the first movement we hear only a slight hint of Stravinsky’s original hand in the arrangement. Except for a few added and subtracted beats we still have a sense that this is a delightful 18th century piece. As we continue listen further, though, we hear more of Stravinsky’s influence and what seemed as a mere shadow at the beginning emerges as a more pronounced figure. The previously discussed example [EX 23] is one of the first clear glimpses of Stravinsky that we hear. With the whole orchestra playing repeated accented and syncopated chords echoes of Rite of Spring are evident, but this passage retreats after 21 measures. In the final movement of both SIV and PBS, however, Stravinsky’s individualistic style is very prominent. Originally taken from the last movement of Gallo’s Trio Sonata #12, Stravinsky inserts syncopated rhythms and thick chords between fragments of the original tune. Here his presence is palpable. Like a true Commedia intrigue plot, disguises are removed and true identities are revealed at the end. [EX 24]

E: Humor and Satire

_Humor and Satire in Commedia dell’Arte_

As in modern comedy, satire in Commedia was very prominent. Some would argue that Commedia gained popularity because it parodied so-called legitimate theatre of the time. This was especially true in France where Comédie Française was a frequent target of Commedia dell’Arte actors. Early Commedia was based on rhetorical jokes and parodied regional stereotypes and dialects in addition to satirizing social and economic
situations. Politically, commedia actors tried to stay neutral because as itinerant players, they were often disliked by local church and state officials. Serious consequences, including death or banishment, could befall players who angered the local citizens through their comedy.

**Humor and Satire in PBS and SIV**

PBS is filled with satirical humor that is evident to listener. Whether it was intentional or not Stravinsky says:

I began without preconceptions or aesthetic attitudes, and I could not have predicted anything about the result. I knew that I could not produce a “forgery” of Pergolesi because of my motor habits are so different; at best, I could repeat him in my own accent. That the result was to some extent a satire was probably inevitable—who could have treated that material in 1919 without satire?—but even this observation is hindsight. I did not set out to compose a satire and of course, Diaghilev hadn’t even considered the possibility of such a thing.  

Indeed, Diaghilev “was disappointed with Stravinsky’s music. He had expected a strict, mannered orchestration of something very sweet and disliked its satirical tang.” An example of Stravinsky’s use of satire in PBS is in the Presto of Scene 4. It is taken from the middle section of a Canzona (Vannella) from Pergolesi’s opera *Lo Frate ‘nnamorato* II/vii. In the original it is sung by a soprano, but in the ballet, Stravinsky changes it to a tenor.

The verse of the song is:

Chi disse ca la femmena
Sa cchiù de Farfariello
Disse la veretà

*There are those who speak of woman*
*And they say she knows more than the devil*
*Those who say it speak the truth.*

---

59 *(Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 112.*

60 *(White 1966) 71.*
It continues with the following:

Una te fa. La nzémprece  \textit{One kind plays the innocent}  
Ed è malezeosa. \textit{But is really mischievous}  
Nautra fa la schefosa \textit{Another acts very prim}  
E bo’ lo maretiello. \textit{but wants to catch a husband}  
Chi cchillo tene ‘n core \textit{A third kind teases her lover}  
E a chisto fegne ammore; \textit{By pretending to love another}  
E lo sta a reppassa’.

Nce sta quaccuna po’ \textit{There is one kind}  
Che a nullo vole bene, \textit{who doesn’t love a soul}  
Ecciento ‘n frisco tene \textit{But she sponges off}  
Schitto pe scorcoglia’. \textit{at least a hundred men}  
E tant’aute mmalizie \textit{Who could ever begin to count all}  
Chi maie le ppo’ conta’? \textit{the tricks that women play?}

While the words describe how devilish women are, the tricks they play in order to catch men, and even say that some women do not have the capacity to love, the action on stage tells a very different story. In the ballet, Caviello and Florindo use tricks such as donning the disguise of Pulcinella to win over their loved ones and are even willing to succumb murder in order to quell the competition. At the moment this movement is being sung the women are victims of yet another pair of roguish men, Pulcinella and Fuorbo. After grieving over what they believe to be Pulcinella’s death Rosetta and Prudenza watch a magician who is really Pulcinella in disguise cast a spell over Fuorbo who is masquerading as the dead Pulcinella. The two women and their fathers watch in amazement as Fuorbo comes back to life and are thrilled to have Pulcinella back. Rosetta and Prudenza exemplify trusting and naïve women easily fooled and manipulated by men in direct opposition to what the text of the music describes.
In PBS another humorous moment is the well-known trombone and double bass solo about which Stravinsky says:

Volumes, incidentally, are all too rarely recognized as a primary musical element, and how few listeners have remarked on the real joke in the *Pulcinella* duet, which is that the trombone has a very loud voice and the string bass has almost no voice at all.\(^{61}\)

The duet highlights the absurdity of the pairing of the two very different instruments.

Another type of comic device that Stravinsky uses is a musical equivalent of Commedia’s rhetorical humor where the characters use “general variations of literary or scientific language.”\(^{62}\) Servants often tried to imitate their masters’ eloquence but often ended up mutilating and distorting famous phrases and quotes. An example of this is a quote from Virgil, “Ancora fundabat naves et litora curvae,” translated as, “The ships dropped anchor off the coast.” In the Commedia play this quote would be altered to, “L’ancora sfonnava la nave e mannavе na letterа co lo cuorvo,” meaning, “That anchor bored the ship into the ground and sent a letter by raven-post.”\(^{63}\)

Stravinsky uses a very similar satirical device. He subtly changes the regular phrasing, conventional harmony and constant rhythm of the original music. What sounds conventional at first, on closer inspection we find to be dissonant and irregular. One example is from the first movement of SIV. Originally it was taken from the first movement of Gallo’s Trio Sonata #1. The most striking thing about this movement is how Stravinsky plays with the melodic motif by adding and subtracting beats. [EX 25] In

\(^{61}\) (Stravinsky and Craft 1961) 34.

\(^{62}\) (Erenstein 2000) 16.

\(^{63}\) (Erenstein 2000) 10.
m. 11 he adds an extra beat to the theme causing a meter change to accommodate 5 beats in what originally was 4/4. Likewise in m. 43 at the end of the movement, Stravinsky takes away 2 beats from the original version. The changes are hardly perceptible, but musically, Stravinsky has added surprise to the regular. [EX 26]

F: Music

*Music of Commedia dell’Arte*

Music played an important part in Commedia though little was written down. What has been passed down appears in popular song anthologies published in the early 17th century and in publications by the famous actor/musician Francesco Gabrielli in his *Villanelle di Scapino* (1624) and *Infermità, testament, e morte di Francesco Gabrielli ditto Scapino* (1638). Most actors could sing and dance and for women it was especially important. In addition to singing, all the women could play instruments such as the guitar or bass-viol.

Often the music performed was in character with the role played. *Innamorati* for example, sang in a refined style either a capella or with soft accompaniment on the guitar, flute or lute. On the other hand, servants or *zanni* male actors sang rude songs and played exotic instruments. Francesco Gabrielli, whose career spanned the first part of the 17th century, was known to have an unusual collection of instruments. He brought them to the Commedia stage in the form of a tree of instruments. So unusual was his collection that it sparked the interest of Monteverdi. However it appears that they were only visually innovative as Monteverdi writes in a letter, “I have never seen them [the instruments] myself, but from the little information I am sending, it seems to me that they are new as
regards shape but not in sound, since all fit in with the sounds of the instruments that we use.”

Music that was played during the performance of a play was varied. An example of a comedy with its accompanying music is documented by the composer Massimo Trojano in 1568. During this play, madrigals were sung between the acts of the play and a staged dance was performed at the end. The instrumental ensembles accompanying the madrigals included five viola da gambas for one song and an ensemble consisting of two lutes, mandolin, recorder and a bass viola da gamba for another song. Also during the play one of the actors who in this case was the Franco-Flemish composer, Orlando di Lasso, dressed in an elaborate costume and wearing a mask, sang a short verse, accompanying himself with a lute.

Music in PBS and SIV

In the ballet, Stravinsky uses several forms of music that depict the musical interludes that were common in the Neapolitan comedy. For example in Scene I when Pulcinella first appears, he takes out a small violin and plays it. According to Table 2 this staging would have taken place during the Allegro of Scene 1. This movement has an extensive and lively violin solo that includes a wide range and double stopping. [EX 27] Stravinsky’s version is more virtuosic than what would likely have been played during a Commedia play, but it suggests a similar character and musical gesture that would have occurred during the play.

64 (Macneil 2003) 27.
The scoring of voices in the otherwise strictly orchestral ensemble also greatly enhances the Commedic flair of the ballet. The voices allow for the incorporation of accompanied songs that were heard either between the acts or within the play itself. One example of an accompanied vocal piece is the Serenata which was originally a tenor aria from the first act of Pergolesi’s opera, *Il Flaminio*. In the opera score, when the vocal line begins, written directions, “canta accompagnandosi con un chitarrino” are given although nothing is written down. In Stravinsky’s arrangement of this movement, he retains the tenor line but then incorporates the chitarrino-type accompaniment into the orchestration. The strumming of the chitarrino is depicted with a repeated ricochet figure in the strings and bowed octave tremolo. [EX 28] With the vocal line kept intact Stravinsky’s version and instrumentation resembles what Pergolesi intended with the Spanish guitar.

In SIV, the violin plays the vocal line. The guitar-like ricochet accompaniment in the strings that is very prominent in the ballet is left out in the violin version. The one effect that Stravinsky retains is the harmonic-octave tremolo in the strings which he gives to the RH of the piano. The syncopated ♩ on every third eighth note is played with the LH rather than open harmonics in the cello and bass parts.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

By examining the background and the factors that influenced Stravinsky when composing PBS and SIV violinists are better able to perform the piece in a stylistic and convincing manner. There are several integral elements that we have examined that are important to keep in mind when performing the piece.

Gestures that reflect the humor and vividness of Commedia dell’Arte, such as glissando-like runs, slides, and passages in high registers with large intervals, appear throughout the work. Like the Italian actors who crossed language barriers with their vitality and panache, performing these gestures in a virtuosic and exaggerated manner is in keeping with the character of the piece.

Secondly, Stravinsky continually reminds us of the presence of Pulcinella, a quarrelsome and mischievous character, by infusing the piece with dissonant intervals and forceful rhythmic figures within the melodious 18th century pieces on which the piece is based. Often these insertions appear abruptly such as in the Serenata and the Minuetto movements. When this occurs the performer can bring out the element of surprise by making a stark contrast dynamically and exaggerating and accenting the dissonances.

Thirdly the element of dance is an integral part of the piece. The music is often light and graceful appropriate to classical ballet but at other times peasant-like and heavy, reflecting the popular culture on which the ballet is based. Stravinsky uses early dance
forms, such as the sicilienne, gavotte and minuet and as such it is important to retain the rhythmic integrity of these dances.

This is the case in the Serenata movement which is a Sicilienne. Retaining the lilt of the dotted 6/8 figure and emphasis of the 1st and 4th eighth notes keeps the character of the stately dance despite bursts of syncopated accented chords. This avoids the “turgid” rhythmic movement that Stravinsky disliked in performance of 18th century music.65

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the entire piece was created to correspond to a choreographed ballet and is a programmatic piece. From Table 2 we know that the minuet depicts a nuptial scene and the serenata is played during a courtship scene between the two pairs of lovers. Knowing these extra-musical factors gives the violinist added depth in performance.

As we have seen, Suite Italienne for Violin and Piano by Stravinsky is a compelling and dynamic work. The juxtaposition of opposites like the paradox of stock characters in Commedia dell’Arte is successfully translated in Stravinsky’s music by the combination of the old with the new, the refined with the popular and the humorous with the serious. The subtle yet deliberate way in which Stravinsky writes makes it all the more enticing for violinists to play.

65 (Stravinsky and Craft, Expositions and Developments 1959) 128.
Musical Examples

Example 1. *Pulcinella* Scherzino mm. 40-43 and Più Vivo mm. 1-11
Example 2. *Pulcinella* Allegro (alla breve) mm 33-43
Example 3. *Pulcinella* Allegro (alla breve) mm. 1-8
Example 4. *Pulcinella* Presto mm. 32-34
Example 5. *Pulcinella* Allegro mm. 16-22
Example 6. *Pulcinella* Ouverture mm. 10-13

Example 7. *Pulcinella* Allegro assai mm. 58-71
Example 8. *Suite Italienne* Introduzione mm. 20-27
Example 9. *Pulcinella* Ouverture mm. 31-33
Example 10. *Pulcinella* Variazione IIa from Gavotta con due variazioni
Example 11. *Concerto II/iv* from *Concerti Armonici* by Unico Wilhelm Count of Wassenaer mm. 30-37
Example 12. *Pulcinella* Tarantella mm. 1-6
Example 13. *Pulcinella* Tarantella mm. 50-58
Example 14. *Pulcinella* Tarantella mm. 34-41
Example 15. *Il Flaminio* Serenata by Pergolesi
Example 16. *Suite Italienne* Serenata mm. 15-20

Example 17. *Suite Italienne* Minuetto mm. 36-42
Example 18. *Sinfonia a Violoncello and Continuo* Presto by Pergolesi

Example 19. *Pulcinella* Vivo mm. 1-4
Example 20. *Pulcinella* Allegro-all breve mm. 52-58
Example 21. *Suite Itallienne* Variazione 2 from Gavotta mm. 8-16
Example 22. *Suite Italienne* Scherzino mm. 58-70
Example 23. *Pulcinella* Ancora poco meno mm. 27-29 and Allegro assai mm. 1-9
Example 24. *Suite Italienne* Finale mm. 13-40
Example 25. *Suite Italienne* Introduzione mm. 10-15

Example 26. *Suite Italienne* Introduzione mm. 41-45
Example 27. *Pulcinella* Allegro mm. 38-72

Example 28. *Pulcinella* Serenata mm. 25-26
Bibliography


