A MOVEMENT ANALYSIS OF THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE
IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE
WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON HARLEQUIN AND SCARAMOUCHE

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by
Robin Claire Garner, B. A.

The Ohio State University
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Approved by

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of Dance

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** ........................................... 1

**Chapter**

I. THE **COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE** .......................... 7

- The Origins of the **Commedia dell'Arte** .............. 11
- The Masks .............................................. 18
- **Commedia Staging** .................................... 29
- Social Status of the Actors of the **Commedia dell'Arte** 31

II. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH THEATER AND THE **COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE** ........................................... 34

- The **Commedia dell'Arte** in France before 1610 ........ 34
- The Development of the **Commedia dell'Arte** during the Reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV .................. 38
- The **Commedia dell'Arte** and Molière .................... 42
- Summary of the Cross Influences of the **Commedia dell'Arte** and the Late Seventeenth Century French Theater ........... 45

III. A MOVEMENT ANALYSIS OF THE MASKS OF THE **COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE** WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE VALETS HARLEQUIN AND SCARAMOUCHE .......... 51

- Characteristic Movement of the Masks .................... 58
- Summary .................................................. 75

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ........................................... 77
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Molière as the Mask Sganarelle
   Engraving by Simonin, ca. 1665-1670 . . . 33

2. Tiberio Fiorilli and his Pupil Molière
   Seventeenth Century French Print by
   L. Weyen . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 43

3. The Expulsion of the Italian Comedians
   from Paris, 1697. Engraving by
   L. Jacob after Watteau, 1697 . . . . . . 50

4. From Jacques Callot's Balli di Sfessania,
   ca. 1622 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 53

5. Pas de Scaramouche from Gregorio Lam-
   branzi's New and Curious School of
   Theatrical Dancing, Plate 25 . . . . . . 66

6. The Four Attitudes of Harlequin by
   Claude Gillot, (1673-1722) . . . . . . . 70
Dedicated to

William Thomas Garner and Janet Williams Garner
Introduction

By the middle of the sixteenth century, a distinct form of theater, the *commedia dell'arte*, had emerged amid the excitement of Renaissance Italy. It was popular Italian professional theater, characterized by plays which were sometimes partially, or often completely, improvised, and by colorful, acrobatic players cast in the roles of readily identifiable stock characters known as Masks. Throughout its development in Italy, the *commedia dell'arte* made full use of verbal puns and satire, and the artists established their reputations through the quickness of wit, as well as the physical dexterity essential to this form of improvised theater. However, as early as the late sixteenth century, many of the better known *commedia* companies were invited to travel outside Italy into France, Spain and later, into England, where they played before royalty and the public alike. The plays of these Italian companies were, for many years during their earlier travels, still presented in their native language. Consequently, the emphasis once placed on verbal skills declined, and the more universal language
of mime, gesture and dance began to be more fully developed.

In France, as in each country which hosted the Italian comedy, the plays of the commedia reflected their newly adopted society in their themes and presentation. It was in France, however, that the commedia was most fully supported by the court, and there, amid the reign of the Sun King, that it made its greatest influence upon the native theater.

This research will focus on this period in the history of the commedia dell'arte, analyzing the movement, mime and dance characteristics of the most popular and active Masks of the commedia in relation to their heritage, and to their adopted country, seventeenth century France.

Within the last fifty years, a great deal has been written concerning the commedia dell'arte. This surge of interest in a now almost extinct form of theater has centered on the brief scenarios and the more plentiful iconographic evidence which has been rediscovered and much of which has been made available through recent publications. Almost without exception, those who have studied the commedia, and recently published their findings, have chosen to deal with the commedia dell'arte as an unusually unified form of theater, and, appropriately, have been inclusive of the
history of this form of theater, the lives of the artists, the staging, costuming, and the style and themes of the plays. Among these general works, Pierre Louis Duchartre's The Italian Comedy, translated by Randolph T. Weaver, is an outstanding example. In addition to a comprehensive definition and history of the commedia dell'arte, a wealth of iconographic material is included. Among the reproductions of many engravings and paintings, are the forty-two plates of sixteenth century engravings of the Recueil Fossard, (ca. 1574-1589) and additional plates from the Compositions de rhétorique de M. don Arlequin, written by the famous Harlequin, Tristan Martinelli (c. 1556-1630); both rare works which were re-issued and published in the same volume by Duchartre in 1928 (Duchartre et Van Buggenhoudt, Paris). Other valuable general sources include Cyril W. Beaumont's A History of Harlequin, K.M. Lea's Italian Popular Comedy, Fausto Nicolini's Vita di Arlecchino, which includes significant iconographic offerings, and Winifred Smith's The Commedia dell'arte.

An invaluable insight into the themes and the form of the plays characteristically presented by the commedia can be found in the collection of scenarios of Flaminio Scala, first published in 1611 as Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative, and now translated by
Henry Salerno. The works of Luigi Riccoboni are other primary sources which deal with the theme and presentation of the Italian comedy as well as its history. Although much of Riccoboni's work deals with eighteenth century popular theater, numerous references are made to the earlier commedia, and his works should not be overlooked.

Also important to this study are works which provide a general view of the theater of seventeenth century France, and in particular, those sources which deal with the social influences of theater, including the commedia. Vera Mowry Robert's On Stage, Roy Strong's Splendor at Court, and Leo Orville Forkey's dissertation, The Role of Money in French Commedy During the Reign of Louis XIV, all provide an informative and revealing picture of the influences of French society in the theater of the period.

From these sources, and many other works on the commedia, the history of the art form, the lives of the artists, the staging and costuming, and the style and themes of the plays have been revealed and extensively studied. However, one prominent feature of the commedia dell'arte which has not received an equally careful or extensive analysis as its counterparts, and which is the subject of this research, is the movement, mime and dance which were characteristic
of the commedia.

One of the few sources which attempts to define the stock characters of the commedia in terms of movement, is Giacomo Oreglia's The Commedia dell'arte. Along with a general history, Oreglia has speculated on the typical postures, and habitual gait of the more important commedia characters, and it is for this reason that it has been an especially useful work. Also helpful in discovering the characteristic movement of the Italian Masks, is the marvelous dance manual of Gregorio Lambranzi, entitled The New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing. The edition translated by Derra de Moroda and published in 1966 with an introduction by Cyril W. Beaumont, and the edition published in 1972 are substantially different due to F. Moroda's recent discovery of the original drawings in the Bavarian State Library. Both editions are wonderful sources of seventeenth century theatrical dance. Lambranzi originally published his work in 1716, and it was, even then, an unusual manual, since it did not attempt to preserve the exact sequence of steps in some form of notation or verbal description. Instead, Lambranzi chose to describe and illustrate, through a total of one hundred and one engravings by J.G. Pushner, the 'spirit' of the dance. One can vividly imagine each of these characters, many of whom are
from the Italian comedy, dancing in the style which Lambranzi assures us is appropriate to his character. In addition, a musical phrase is provided above the dancer, and may be able to lend further clues to the dancing style.

However, the most valuable sources in a study of the dance in the commedia dell'arte, have been largely iconographic collections, such as the Recueil Fossard and Compositions de rhétorique de M. don Arlequin. In addition, Evariste Gherardi's Le Théâtre Italien, first published in 1694, with its many engraved title plates, has been helpful. The eighth volume of the Denkmäler des theaters, a wonderful collection of thirty-nine plates published in Munich between 1926-1930, has also been extremely valuable. This work includes much of Jacques Callot's well known Balli di Sfessania, as well as many works of Claude Gillot's famous pupil, Watteau.
CHAPTER I

THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

The commedia dell'arte was many things, and so, not easily defined. Among the many names given to this genre of professional popular Italian theater were: the Italian comedy; commedia improvise all'italiana; comédie à l'improisptu; and the Comedy of Masks. From such descriptive names alone, two outstanding features of the commedia can be gleaned: its use of improvisation, and the consistent appearance of the familiar stock characters, or Masks. These lively characters were the heart of the Italian comedy from its very beginnings in sixteenth century Italy. One of the most common theories concerning the Masks relies on the idea that each of the Masks developed from a distinct region of Italy, speaking the dialect of that province, dressing in the manner of the inhabitants, and displaying the personal characteristics commonly associated with the countrymen of his birthplace. Thus, there appeared the unusually vast array of personal temperament, dress, language, gesture and mannerism characteristic of the commedia stage; yet each Mask was quickly and easily identified
and his personality well known. Had a heavily patched valet entered the stage in a black half-mask and with his bat in hand, the audience of sixteenth century Italy would immediately recognize the Mask Harlequin. If his master entered calling for him, the audience would likely have seen a tall, thin, older man with a long nose and pointed beard, dressed in red and wearing a full, black cape, and immediately recognized Harlequin's master as Pantalone, the miserly merchant and Mask of Venice. So it would go throughout play after play, one readily identified character after another, entering in his particular gait, wearing his unchanging habit, responding to one of his familiar names, reacting in a manner typical of his established character.

The plays changed in the setting of the time, place and the relationship of one character to another, but the characters themselves remained much the same, reappearing again and again throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, with only gradual modification.

The commedia demanded much of these professional actors. A company seldom had more than a dozen members, often less, yet there were always several who could play a variety of instruments, several more who sang both during the play itself
and entertained during the interludes, and most could dance and perform the acrobatic feats that consistently drew the crowds to their performances in the town squares. What was most remarkable about these players, however, was their use of improvisation in their presentations. A brief synopsis, stating the relationship of one Mask to another and the outcome of their adventures, was agreed upon beforehand, and from this scenario, the manager of the company would instruct the players in their parts. From most accounts, it appears that such instruction was usually brief, as Evaristo Gherardi, a famous Harlequin of Louis XIV's commedia company of the late seventeenth century attests:

The Italian comedians learn nothing by heart; they need but to glance at the subject of a play a moment or two before going upon stage. It is this very ability to play at a moment's notice which makes a good Italian actor so difficult to replace.¹

Often a traveling company would delight a town by incorporating the local gossip into their dialogue so that even the same scenario was never delivered in the same manner twice. Thus, the art of the play

lay in the skill with which the *commedia* players improvised their parts, and equally important, in the skill with which they placed one another in situations advantageous to the development of the play.

What were the themes of these plays? The great majority of the repertory consisted of action packed, improvised comedy, although the players did, in addition, take "great pride in performing other types of plays with written dialogue: tragedies, pastorals, tragi-comedies, *commedia erudita* and, frequently, parodies or satires of classical masterpieces."² It was also certain that even those plays with specific, written dialogues, seldom escaped some unwritten passage interjected by a mischievous actor, who undoubtedly was not appreciated by the author. However, most plays were comedies, and the central theme of almost all focused on troubled, youthful romance. The young lovers, around whom the action of the play evolved, were constantly kept from fulfilling their desires by an aged guardian, parents, a scorned suitor determined to

to have the unwilling maiden promised him, or even by the lovers' husbands and wives. Whatever the obstacle, the outcome was made certain through the confusing antics and the situations contrived by the Zanni, or servants, who always sided with the young lovers; the parents reluctantly consented, the unwanted suitor relinquished his claim, the husbands or wives were outwitted, and all ended in the lovers' shared bliss.

Since the audience was well acquainted with the character of each of the Masks, and usually had a good idea of the outcome of the play, it then becomes apparent that the interest of such performances rested on the often outrageous spoken and physical improvisations newly invented with each play by actors known for both their quick witted retorts, and for dazzling footwork at times when speech was less likely to retain a demanding audience's attention. This colorful collection of spirited dialogue, song, mime, dance and acrobatics, was the basis for the great success of the Italian popular theater, the *commedia dell'arte*.

**The Origins of the Commedia dell'Arte**

There has been much speculation as to the origins of the Italian improvised comedy of the
sixteenth century. The very fact that this form of unified, masked theater, incorporating the elements of song, mime, dance, improvisation and stock characters, had not appeared in other parts of Europe during this period, was one cause for speculation of an ancient heritage. It was not forgotten that here, in Italy, hundreds of years earlier, ancient Greek and Roman players had presented impromptu comedies, dancing, singing and often improvising the satire of recent, classical plays. Moreover, the commedia players had apparently retained a similar form of rowdy, unified theater: "For vigor, art and vulgarity of the commedia are certainly reminiscent of the early Greek comedies and the Atellan farces. . . ." ³

The atellanæ were rustic farces early imported into Rome. They were played in masks and used traditional figures in ridiculous situations. The emphasis was on horseplay and obscene jest. Originally completely improvisational. . . .It is an interesting speculation that the character masks of these actors persisted into the Renaissance commedia dell'arte. There seems to be some evidence for the persistence of mime through the Dark Ages, and it may well be that this form, generally played without masks, absorbed the masked atellanæ and emerged in the Renaissance as the commedia. ⁴


⁴ Ibid., pp. 65-66.
Much of the costuming could, with scant imagination, also find its origins in the Atellanae theater. The similarities in dress alone pose a very convincing argument for searching for the origins of the commedia in the Atellanae, and, in a list of such similarities between this ancient theater and the early Italian comedy, Pierre Louis Duchartre includes:

The head-bands or false scalps, which hid the hair of the actors, gave the effect of the shaved heads in vogue among the mimes in ancient times. The phallus was worn by Cerimonia, Smaralo, Scaramuccia, Spezza Monti, and Pantalone. . . . The slap-stick, or bat, belonging to Punch, Harlequin, and Scapin was the favourite weapon of ancient comic characters also. . . .

. . . and the fact that the Italian comedy was the only theatre in Europe which adopted the ancient custom of wearing the mask.  

This evidence, so convincingly presented, is by no means the only connection, or even the majority of the evidence used by many scholars in their attempts to trace the origins of the commedia. Allardyce Nicoll in Masks, Mimes and Miracles, draws similarities found in ancient terra-cotta statuettes and the comic Masks of the commedia and expresses the idea that non-literary drama, such as the

5Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 29.
commedia, is "a thing passed down from generation to generation, changing its name and its medium, but preserving fundamentally the outlines which had been established in dim days before history began, just as, in our own times, the itinerant puppet-players and the essentially popular clown have retained something of that tradition which was fully established in Renascence Europe by the commedia dell'arte."⁶

Surely, it is this train of thought that Katherine Walker is referring to when she states that "some authorities believe that the link between the Pappus, Maccus and Bucco of Roman days and the sixteenth century Pantaloon, Clown, and Punchinello is firm and complete."⁷

Those who find a continuous thread from the ancient Greek farces through the commedia, often trace these roots through the 'bald' mime of Rome, and with the fall of Rome, to Constantinople:

It is known that Byzantine mimes of the Eastern Empire were faithful to the antique tradition that arose in the West. It is probable, though not verifiable, that when, with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, they left the Eastern Empire and emigrated


to Italy, they brought with them a recognisable form of the old stock types in their traditional costume, whose long forgotten origin still set the pattern.\footnote{Thelma Niklaus, Harlequin, or the Rise and Fall of a Bergamask Rogue (New York: George Braziller, 1956), p. 24.}

However, a detailed analysis of this argument is not within the scope of this research, and while not wishing to either ignore or deemphasize these findings, certain other factors should be taken into account before embracing what appears to be almost conclusive evidence of the ancient origins of the \textit{commedia dell'arte}.

Many of the parallels of the Italian comedy and the ancient classical theater were first drawn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Winifred Smith indicates the implications of this:

\begin{quote}

The theory concerning the derivation of the Italian masked plays from the Atellanae, took its rise among the classicists of the Renaissance, admirers of antiquity so enthusiastic that they traced every element in their own experience back to a Latin Prototype.\footnote{Winifred Smith, The Commedia dell'Arte (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1964), pp. 21-22.}
\end{quote}

Her skepticism seems entirely likely.\footnote{"About 1589 Niccolo Rossi wrote 'Nor will I ever name as comedies these that are carried here and}
little is new, but it does not appear reasonable that a direct heritage was for many hundreds of years quietly continued until its sudden blossoming in sixteenth century Italy, when the first accounts of what is recognized as the commedia dell'arte appeared. Many of the similarities are undeniable, and that there may have existed some influence retained from the Atellanae, as well as from many other sources, is well founded. However, it is at least as likely that the Italian comedy was not, unlike much of the theater of the period, a conscious attempt to recreate or preserve the ancient farce theater; nor was there an awareness of this possible heritage in the 'invention' of the stock characters and costuming of the sixteenth century commedia dell'arte.

Much more likely are the more immediate connections which apparently existed between the nonprofessional actors of the medieval church plays and the early commedia. Lincoln Kirstein's suggestion that Harlequin and Punch could find their

there by sordid and mercenary folk introducing therein Gianni, Bergamasco, Francatrippa, Pantalone and such like buffoons, did we not wish to resemble them to the Mimes, Atellanae and Planipeses of the ancients." Joseph Spencer Kennard, Masks and Marionettes (New York: Macmillan, Co., 1970), pp. 6-7.
ancestors in the devils of the morality plays, finds much support; both in the tracing of Harlequin's name itself, and in the personality of this famous valet and that of his ancestors. The term, 'Herlequini', referring to the Devil's tumultuous servant, had been used in the plays of the French Church at least by the twelfth century, and by "the thirteenth century one of the 'mesie' is singled out as the leader and the plural 'Herlequini' finds its singular 'Herelequin'."¹¹

Somewhat later, in Italy, secular drama was given a steadily increasing foothold as the Church preceeded the presentation of each Biblical story with a lively, and often only vaguely related introduction, which grew ever longer and more secular to the delight of the populace. It may not have been unlikely that the same players who presented this popular introduction may have decided to take their audience up the street and continue their story, or, even more likely, that wandering gypsies, perhaps the first commedia troupes, decided to parody the Church's productions. Certainly this seems as likely a beginning for the commedia as the

idea of tracing their heritage from the ancient Greek farces.\textsuperscript{12}

Whatever the true beginnings of the commedia dell'arte, by the middle of the sixteenth century, Italy had seen this form of rowdy, unified theater become a distinct genre, and from this point, its development can be traced with certainty.

The Masks

The stock characters of the commedia varied to some extent with both the time and the country in which the players presented their plays, but the two 'old men' of the commedia, Pantalone and Il Dottore, and the two chief Zanni, Brighella and Harlequin, could be counted upon to appear in the majority of these plays. Their personalities and costumes developed and changed, but they will only be discussed within the context of their appearances in seventeenth France.

Pantalone was the miserly merchant and Mask of Venice. He was an older man, usually thought to be in his sixties or older, and he most often played the role of the father, guardian, or equally

\textsuperscript{12}Interview with Louis Harold Campbell, Assistant Professor in The Ohio State University Theater Department, Columbus, Ohio, 27 February 1979.
often, the cuckold husband or mocked suitor of the young and beautiful Inamorata, the principle female lover of the commedia. As parent or guardian, he was always outwitted, and his charge invariably escaped into the waiting arms of her lover despite Pantalone’s usual attempts to marry her to a more suitable, i.e. older and richer gentleman. As husband, he was bound to be made a cuckold. What was even more infuriating was the fact that he seldom was granted significant revenge for his loss of honor. He was as often beaten by the intruding lover as he was the beater, and in the society of seventeenth century France, he received little sympathy from an audience whose convictions lay more with the support of young, free love, rather than with the ideal of the chaste wife.

From these situations come such plays as The Jealous Old Man recorded in the scenarios of Flaminio Scala’s Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative. In this play, Pantalone, given the name of Pantalone di Bisognosi, jealously attempts to guard his young and beautiful wife from her lover. 13

Finally, he is forced to admit defeat, and in a very

13 Scala, Scenarios of the Commedia dell’Arte: Flaminio Scala’s Il Teatro delle favole rappresentative, pp. 47-54.
generous gesture, that is not atypical of Pantalone, allows his wife to be free to marry her lover. This unexpected sympathy which only appeared in Pantalone once he had admitted his defeat, is what endeared him to his audience and made him one of the most popular characters of the commedia. Always ridiculous in his lusty desires and miserly with his possessions, he is nonetheless capable of allowing his kinder sympathies to prevail in the end.

The seventeenth century French Pantalone wore a costume consisting of vivid red pants, which could be either trousers or, more often, knee breeches, a red vest, and a full, black cape. His shoes usually had slight heels and his "red stockings [were] either secured by ribbons or else rolled at the top."\(^{14}\) The large phallus he boasted during the sixteenth century, had disappeared, and the dagger he had carried in his belt, was, if still there, less apparent. The masks of all the commedia characters were made of pliable leather, and slightly larger than life size to emphasize the personality of the Masks.\(^{15}\) They were dyed to compliment the

\(^{14}\) Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p.188.

\(^{15}\) Interview with Arne Zaslove, Guest Lecturer in The Ohio University Theater Department, Columbus, Ohio, 05 March 1979.
the costume or character of the Mask, as in the instance of Brighella, who wore a green tinted mask. Pantalone's mask consisted of, most notably, a long, curved nose, busy white or silver eyebrows and often fairly long, scraggly white hair under his hat. He always had a long, white, pointed beard which fluttered comically as he spouted his advice, and which served as a convenient handle for his irritated wife to lead him home. 16 Needless to say, he also had too many wrinkles for his extreme vanity. The flamboyancy of his huge, black cape, the bright red costume, and alas, the telling white beard, provided very appropriate apparel for one who had wished to present himself as young and viril while obviously never perceived as such by any but himself.

Il Dottore was the commedia's Mask from Bologna. Bologna was the center of learning in Renaissance Italy, and so "when the Doctor finally reached the stage in 1560, there was precious little he did not know. He was a philosopher, astronomer,

man of letters, cabalist, barrister, grammarian, diplomat, and physician."\textsuperscript{17}

The good Doctor also dressed as did the learned men of Bologna; all in black robes. A white ruffle around the neck was added in the middle of the seventeenth century when one of the prominent actors of the time changed the costume to add a "jacket in the style of Louis XIV, short trousers, and a wide, soft ruff about his neck."\textsuperscript{18} Other than this, the Doctor's somber robes changed relatively little throughout this Mask's lifetime. Sometimes the Doctor also sported a very small beard and moustache; his hair was covered by a skull cap, and he wore a hat which increased in size dramatically in the seventeenth century. A very unusual mask belongs to this character. Only a black, pointed nose and black forehead compose his mask, and it has been suggested that the reason for this unusual form may have been a desire to emphasize the prodigious, intellectual \textit{modus operandi} formulating behind this solemn forehead.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} Duchartre, \textit{The Italian Comedy}, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 201.

\textsuperscript{19} Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.
Not only was the doctor an inhabitant of such a center of scholarship, but he was also familiar with the outstanding cuisine of Bologna and obviously enjoyed his city's famous dishes without restraint. A rather portly figure and waddling gait portray this well fed gentleman as distinctly as his robes.

The Doctor's role within the commedia was that of the second old gentleman. As such, he was usually a very close friend of Pantalone, and in no small number of plays they do one another the favor of playing matchmaker for their friend. Like Pantalone, the Doctor is interested in beautiful ladies half his age, although perhaps not to as great an extent as his friend. It could undoubtedly be said that the Doctor's greatest interest was in hearing himself speak, and the advice, trivialities, cures and anecdotes he has to offer know no bounds. If he ever arrives at the point of his speech, it is only after a painfully long digression to any number of unrelated topics which have been well dispersed with a dozen mangled 'Latin' quotations of equally little importance. Nonetheless, Pantalone could only find his intellectual equal in his high-brow friend, and they enjoy many long walks and conversations with one another.
Often, like Pantalone, the Doctor is the parent or guardian on one of the young lovers, and suffers many of the same problems which Pantalone encounters. Between his comic position as would-be lover, outwitted guardian, unscholarly scholar and portly windbag, he offers many comic episodes to the plays of the *commedia dell'arte*.

Brighella is often referred to as the first Zanni, or servant, of the *commedia*, and Harlequin as the second Zanni. Both Zanni are said to have their origins in Bergamo, but Harlequin is said to have come from the lower town of Bergamo, supposedly inhabited by none but dullards, while Brighella was spawned in the upper town, and so was inherently clever. However, Brighella seldom used his witts for kindly purposes. Brighella was a rogue; lazy, malicious, completely dishonest and concerned for none but himself. Nor were his evil qualities passive. The audience of later seventeenth century France, where the Mask of Brighella reached its greatest popularity, could expect to see a somewhat softened Brighella, one who unsheathed his dagger less often, but even so, murder was by no means out of the question for this character.²⁰ This Mask's usual

²⁰Duchartre, *The Italian Comedy*, p. 164.
stimuli were money and revenge; it took large sums of money to satisfy him, and very little to incur his revenge. Oddly enough, Brighella was also very musical, and often provided accompaniment and song in the commedia plays.

The mask of Brighella is distinctively sinister. Prominent cheeks, a very large, hooked and pointed nose and tiny slits for his narrow eyes, all set in his traditional "olive half-mask."21 Completing this image were a full, twisted moustache and a beard and soft cap over his loose, raven locks. The green tint of Brighella's mask was also reflected in his costume which consisted of a white jacket and trousers, both of which were trimmed in green. Other significant parts of his costume were his purse, no doubt filled with stolen goods, and a dagger which was willingly used against anyone who had offended him, unless, of course, his intended victim looked even more menacing than Brighella himself.

Within the plays of the commedia dell'arte:

His job is to guide the action of the comedy, to stir it up with intrigues and to give it movement. Therefore Brighella is indefatigable in weaving complicated intrigues; he breaks up some marriages and arranges

21 Ibid.
others, insinuates suspicions, flatters vanity, prepares 'talisman, the philosopher's stone, the magnetic poultice, love potions...'; he does not merely play the role of servant but can also adopt himself to the most diverse professions: soldier, tavern-keeper, hangman, fortune-teller, professional thief... .22

One could only hope that Brighella's interests were one's own, because little could stop so crafty and unscrupulous a Zanni.

The second Zanni of the commedia dell'arte is, perhaps, one of the best loved characters of theater. Halequin, born in the lower town of Bergamo, was originally a stupid, but incredibly agile servant, and throughout the course of the commedia, he would use this amazing physical ability to escape situations that a Brighella would have been able to overcome through intellectual prowess. Still, Harlequin was not completely without a brand of wit, and as his character was developed in the seventeenth century, he became ever brighter and more refined.

In many ways, Harlequin was a simple character. He was callow, usually good natured, and even though he could be the cause of tremendous confusion,

he was by no means malicious. He was only concerned for the present; he seldom displayed any foresight, never, never learned from the past, and was content to live for the moment. His needs were simple, too. Enough food to stave off hunger, although he could also be a glutton if given the chance, an occasional encounter with the somewhat cleverer maidsevant, and Harlequin was content. He had no strong sense of morality, attempting to secure his simple desires through whatever means were available much in the fashion of a young child. Also childlike were his almost constant merriment and nonstop pace, both of which made this acrobatic servant so popular.

His costume originally was a hodgepodge of patches. He wore a loose jacket belted below the waist, and long trousers down to his soft shoes. A hat with a tuft of rabbit hair in the fashion of the people of Bergamo, and his purse and liberally used slap-stick thrust through his belt completed his costume. His half-mask was black with somewhat rounded features. Harlequin's nose was smaller than that of most of the commedia dell'arte characters, and he had only tiny, round holes for eyes. On his forehead could always be seen a huge carbuncle, and the lower edge of the center of the mask protruded
in such a fashion as to give the impression of having buckteeth. He also wore a small beard. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Harlequin's patches became a more regular, formal pattern, but otherwise, his costume remained much the same.

Within the plays of the commedia, Harlequin's function was to keep the action going. He would pick up the pace of a lagging comedy with bits of 'funny business' or lazi, diverting the audience's attention until the action of the play picked up again. Harlequin also was invaluable in accomplishing the mechanics of the plot. He was the messenger for the two young lovers, with whom he usually sided, or the intervening servant when Pantalone or Il Dottore were about to untimely discover the usual intrigues. In short, Harlequin filled the gaps in the improvised plays and added to sustaining the delightful confusion of these comedies.

Other prominent characters of the commedia in seventeenth century France included the braggart, but cowardly Spanish Captain, who declined in popularity, giving his place to one of his descendants, the crafty, black costumed valet, Scaramouche; Pulcinella, who later would evolve into the cruel Punch of the English puppet theater; and Pierrot, the white
faced valet our present day classic mimes resemble. The maidservants, such as Harlequin's counterpart, Columbine, and, of course, the Lovers, around whom most of the plots of the commedia comedies were fashioned, were not Masks. These actors were free to portray various individuals in their roles, and for this reason, they did not wear masks, and usually appeared in the finer dress of the day.

In short, the exaggerated personality and fantastic costuming of all the Masks of the commedia dell'arte helped these characters to "do away with realism while still retaining it. The actor must be able to be everything-realistic and unrealistic-larger than life."23

Commedia Staging

The commedia dell'arte was originally a street theater as evidenced by such engravings as Jacques Callot's Balli di Sfessania. Many of the earlier, small companies would sing, dance and give acrobatic performances in any relatively large, cleared area or street without the benefit of any type of staging. Some companies did carry simple, platform stages which could be quickly and easily erected. These

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23 Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.
stages appear as small, square, wooden platforms on simple supports which were usually about five feet high. "If the platform were high enough, it was curtained off and the understage area used as a dressing room." 24 Often, a plain backdrop curtain was hung, and if it were painted "the scene was either a street or a forest." 25 Props were impractical for traveling companies and so few were used, but this presented no problems to a theater which emphasized the skill of the actors in improvisation and mime. "Miming by a good actor would, of course, at once remove the necessity for many of the pieces of stage set." 26 In fact, many have suggested that this creative use of the few props available, and the clever substitutions found or created for unavailable props, added to the success of the plays. 27

The commedia performances, either staged or unstaged, would be performed wherever a crowd


25 Ibid.


27 K.M. Lea has suggested that the scenic luxury supplied to the commedia company under the patronage of Louis XIV had "sapped the old vigor of improvisation" and been part of the cause of the French commedia's loss of character. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, p. 336.
large enough to make a performance profitable could be gathered. Often this would be a large street, market place, or even the town square if chances of being ousted by town officials or irritated churchmen were thought to be scant.

Social Status of the Actors of the Commedia dell'Arte

Most commedia plays, especially the plays of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were known for their rowdy, often crude performances, some of which included unquestionably obscene gesturing and puns. That "the Church...had regarded with an unfriendly eye the Commedia dell'Arte from its inception"28 was well known, and the Church still retained great influence during this period. When more townspeople gathered to see a commedia play than attended Mass, it was certain that the company would promptly be sent packing.

Due to the nature of some of the plays and the coarseness of many of the inferior companies, commedia actors did not enjoy a high social status; and this was supported by the Church's refusal

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to inter any professional actor in sacred ground. The commedia players of later seventeenth century France fared somewhat better in this area, even mingling with members of the court. However, it does not appear that they were ever very secure in their social standing, as many records can be found of letters written to defend, as well as to degrade, their profession, and the actors themselves. "Even the great Domenico, [the famous Harlequin of Louis XIV's commedia company] lying on his deathbed in Paris, sought salvation by renouncing the theatre."²⁹

²⁹Ibid., p. 82.
Molière as the Mask Sganarelle
Engraving by Simonin, ca. 1665-1670
CHAPTER II

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH THEATER

AND THE

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

The Commedia dell'Arte in France before 1610

In late sixteenth and early seventeenth century France, visiting commedia companies encountered a theater quite different from that of their rich Italian heritage. In fact, these comedians might have more readily termed what they found as a lack of theater. France was, until the turn of the seventeenth century, deeply involved in the Wars of Religion; an effort which drained much of the resources and energy that a more unified nation at peace might have been able to contribute to the development of the arts.³⁰ Vera Mowry Roberts, author of On Stage, a history of theater, expresses the opinion that France only began to settle into a lifestyle more conducive to the development of French theater with the

entrance of the first Bourbon king, Henry IV, into Paris in 1594: "It was not until the seventeenth century, then, that France possessed the elements of nationalism and an atmosphere ripe for the development of a national theater."\textsuperscript{31}

Theater in France had not, of course, been inactive during these wars, but its theater had largely been restricted to the farces of the professional mountebanks and strolling players, to the non-professional productions of the Renaissance Humanists, and to a lesser extent, the Church. Within Paris itself, the Confrérie de la Passion had held a continuous monopoly of the theater since 1402. Productions staged by the Church had become ever more secularized, and secular productions, to which the Confrérie de la Passion had been restricted by the middle of the sixteenth century, continued to labor under the Humanists' preoccupation with the themes and forms of antiquity. The reverence for the harmony of the ancient theater among such groups as the Pléiade, had great influence on the formal French theater, and so it is not surprising that tragedies, comedies and pastoral

plays, adhering to a prescribed formula, were the mainstay of the secular, non-professional theater. Still, this theater could hardly be called either native, or popular, and, if compared in 1600 to the commedia dell'arte of Italy, or to the bold, popular theater of Shakespeare's and Ben Johnson's England, France would rightly deserve Roberts' observation of a "notable absence of flourishing theater."  

Perhaps it was this lag in the development of a native theater that allowed the commedia to exert its greatest influence on the theatrical history of France. The influence of the commedia dell'arte in France probably did not begin to be significant until the 1570's when the better known Italian companies were invited to visit France with greater frequency. Before this, there had only been a few scattered performances of the Italian comedians, such as the performance given at the court in 1548 in honor of Henry II and his bride, the Italian Catherine di Medici. The comedians also briefly toured the provinces; but their

32 Ibid.

33 Jeffery, French Renaissance Comedy 1552-1630, p. 13.
greatest success, in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century, was in the court. Italian commedia players were invited to perform for the court of Charles IX at his marriage in 1571, and later the next year they performed at the marriage of Henry of Navarre and Charles' sister. Also, throughout the reigns of Henry III (1574-1589) and Henry IV (1589-1610), the Italians continued to be very popular entertainers at the court.

The seventeenth century was the beginning of a more flourishing theater in France, and outside the strolling players, mountebanks and a very few companies of native actors, the court was the great center of activity. This was especially true in Paris, the center of theatrical activity. The Confrérie de la Passion did have the control of Parisian theater outside the court, but by 1578, it no longer wrote all the plays presented in Paris' only public theater, the Hôtel de Bourgogne. This made it possible for a greater variety of theatrical performances to appear, and as early as 1583, there are records of a commedia company leasing the theater. In addition, the kings, upon whom the Confrérie de la Passion was dependent for the continued renewal of their monopoly, were making ever
more and more exceptions of this monopoly to the advantage of such companies as the early commedia troupes. Still, the obstacles presented by the Confrérie de la Passion and by the town officials, who thought commedia plays both immoral and too expensive for the townspeople, kept the companies from successfully establishing themselves in Paris for residencies of any more than a few months at a time.

The Development of the Commedia dell'Arte during the Reigns of Louis XIII and Louis XIV

With the continuing rise in the King's authority during the reign of Louis XIII, and the protection of both his, and indirectly, Cardinal Richelieu's patronage, the commedia began to fare better in Paris. Indeed, it was in Paris that the commedia established itself most firmly and developed this genre of theater with greatest influence on, and by, the French theater:

At the beginning of the seventeenth century in Paris, which had already welcomed in the second half of the preceding century the companies of Alberto Naselli (Zan Ganassa), of the Gelosi and others, became the focal point of the new style and development of the Italian dell'Arte comedians.34

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34 Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, p. 144.
Most forms of French theater also fared better and began a period of rapid growth during Louis XIII's reign. Louis himself participated in the planning and performance of the court ballets, while Louis' mother, Marie di Medici, continued to delight in the performances of the commedia dell'arte. The drama of the French Humanists found a strong and generous patron in Cardinal Richelieu. In fact, it was the Cardinal who first effectively broke the monopoly of the Confrerie de la Passion, when, in 1634, he insisted that the actor Montdory and his company be allowed to reside in Paris, performing regular French drama for the court and public alike, and thus encouraged the "development of a great national theatre."  

Not only was Paris introduced to a greater variety and quantity of theater, but it now began to see a development of a new genre of theater. Montdory's company performed such plays as Pierre Corneille's Melite which was written in 1629 and "did in fact inaugurate a new type of comedy in France. . . ." 

\[36\] Ibid., p. 199.  
"the social structure has been relegated to the background. . . . The emphasis has changed from dealing with external perils to examining the affectations of the characters." 38 Certainly a more precisely weaved and formalized form of comedy than the plays of the commedia, but nonetheless, a true native product of a more classically inclined society. Also, until this time, tragedy had been the leading genre of theater, but "for the first time in the history of the French stage, tragi-comedy becomes the leading genre." 39

The height of theatrical productivity in seventeenth century France is generally accepted as occurring between 1630-1680. During this period, interest began to decline in the forms of the ancient theater. Tragedy, which predominated written theater at least until the 1620's, and still remained an active, important portion of theater productions through the first half of the century, also began to lose its position, as interest shifted to tragi-comedy and comedy. It seems somewhat strange that

38 Ibid., p. 35

in this period of rising interest and distinction in social class and status, that comedy should become the leading genre of theater. Comedy, particularly that of the commedia dell'arte, and later, of Molière, tended to serve as a kind of equalizer. Certainly it was true that "always, the Commedia dell'Arte depicts human frailties, parodies human foibles"\(^\text{40}\) and places everyone on a more equal plane. This was particularly interesting because not only would the nobility be offended at such suggestions of basic equality, but they would have been able to demand a change in the type of plays presented, as they were also the very ones who controlled the theater:

> When the French theater began to flourish in the 1630's, under Richelieu's patronage, it provided entertainment for the elite, . . . . The French drama remained closely tied to the royal court throughout its period of greatness, 1630-1680. Corneille, Racine, and Molière never wrote for the kind of huge and diversified audience which had thronged to the Elizabethan and Spanish playhouses at the turn of the century. Their audience was sophisticated but limited. In seventeenth-century Paris there were never more than three theaters, playing three

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\(^{40}\) Kennard, *Masks and Marionettes*, p. 3.
evenings a week. Playwrights and actors could not make ends meet without royal patronage. 41

Yet this was the type of theater that began in the reign of Louis XIII, and flourished during the reign of that of his son, Louis XIV (1643-1715).

Louis XIV was a great patron of the arts and theater, both in his support of his academies and in his support of the actors themselves. In the theater alone, he "kept afloat five acting companies: three French, one Italian, and one Spanish" and he also supported such writers as Racine and Chapelain. 42

The Commedia dell'Arte and Molière

Molière's company was one of the three French companies which Louis supported for many years, and the Italian commedia dell'arte company, which Louis first authorized to stay in Paris in 1660, was lead by the famous Scaramouche, Tiberio Fiorillo. These two companies were to have a very famous and influential relationship both on one another, and on the history of French theater.


42 Ibid., pp. 227-228.
MOLIÈRE INSTRUIT PAR SCARAMOUCHE

Tiberio Fiorilli and his Pupil Molière
Seventeenth Century French Print by L. Weyen
Molière's original company first performed in Paris in the early 1640's, but they were not successful and were forced to travel in the provinces surrounding Paris to support themselves. During their travels, Molière worked with wandering commedia dell'arte companies and began to incorporate their bold acting style, ideas, and even some of their stock characters into his own repertory. Shortly after his successful return to Paris in 1658, he was again to work with the Italian comedians, as they were, for many years, housed in the same theater, the Petit Bourbon, and later, again playing together in the Palais-Royal. In the Petit Bourbon, Molière's company "played on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, with the Italians performing on Tuesdays and Sundays, the most lucrative days."\(^{43}\)

During this period, Molière took acting lessons from Tiberio Fiorillo, whom he held "in great esteem for his natural acting," and who provided the "model which Molière followed in training the best actors of his troupe."\(^{44}\) As Duchartre so neatly


\(^{44}\) Duchartre, *The Italian Comedy*, p. 99.
summarizes: "Suffice it to say, then, that Molière was indebted to the commedia dell'arte not only for the 'movement' with which he imbued his plays, but also for various plots, scenes, episodes, stage 'business,' intrigues, and characters."\textsuperscript{45} Certainly no small amount of influence on one of the greatest playwrights and actors of seventeenth century France! It would not seem unlikely then, that the commedia, with its constant emphasis on the frailties of human nature, had substantial influence in the shift "from the strong emphasis placed on tragedy in the first half of the century . . . to the comedy of character and the comedy of manners which predominated in the second half of the seventeenth century."\textsuperscript{46}

Summary of the Cross Influences of the Commedia dell'Arte and the Late Seventeenth Century French Theater

The natural acting style of the commedia exerted influence in many areas of French theater. Even in the dance, which, in comparison to other theater arts, was typically somewhat latent in

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46} Forkey, The Role of Money in French Comedy During the Reign of Louis XIV, p. 12.
adopter ideas of the period, "a widening and freeing of gesture, alacrity and vitality" would be inherited from the commedia. In Molière's invention of the comedie-ballet, the Italian comedians themselves took part. In short, the influence of the commedia can generally be accepted as one that freed many actors, and later, dancers, of an unduly reserved or artificial style of acting and brought an emphasis to the characters of the play and to their individual affectations. It can also be said that in accomplishing this, the commedia dell'arte, in its "aggressive and unusual popular appeal exploded into a bitter and corrosive satire which, even beyond the quips and sallies and the scurrilous plots, contributed greatly, if not completely consciously, to the breaking down of barriers between classes." The remarkably universal stock characters, placed in the environment of the generally cynical and corrupt upper class society of later seventeenth century France, and possessing "no physical sophistication whatsoever," accom-

48 Ibid., p. 29.
49 Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, p. 4.
50 Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.
plished much the same results as Molière's The Misanthrope, or The Bourgeois Gentleman.

While the commedia may have contributed a special kind of freedom to its adopted country's native theater, it by no means remained impervious to the native theater's influence on its plays.

One of the greatest influences upon the commedia was that of the elaborate stage equipment which they readily adopted in France. No need to mime the miraculous descent of Harlequin in his flying horse drawn chariot when Torelli's amazing machinery could be employed. Perhaps this did have negative influence on the innovative spirit of the commedia, and, as Lea suggests, this "prosperity was not altogether wholesome. Scenic luxury sapped the old vigor of improvisation and the Commedia dell'arte lost character under French patronage."51 Another change which became evident in the plays of the later seventeenth century commedia, were a general refinement in both the stock characters and in their sallies. The type of plays presented changed, too, especially in the last two decades of the century. The adaptation of more written dialogue,

51 Lea, Italian Popular Comedy, p. 336.
relying on less improvisation, began to appear in
the usual 'comédie mixte' of Evariste Gherardi's
time; and the gradually increasing use of the French
language, may have had the effect of lessening
some of the need for mime or physical display.
Still, from such evidence as one of Louis' warnings
sent to the Italian companies in 1688, "to cut out
of their script all mots à double entendre qui sont
trop livres" it can be surmised that they did not
easily give up the viril spirit characteristic of
the commedia dell'arte. It would appear that they
did not change quickly enough for the refinement
of tastes that was beginning to prevail in the
aristocracy, and there were more warnings from the
King as late as 1696, only shortly before Louis
withdrew his support from this company after they
foolishly renamed one of the plays in their reperto-
tory after the current "romance published at this
time in Holland which on account of the scandals
regarding Madame de Maintenon it was rumored to
disclose, was strictly forbidden to be imported
into France." Not only did the king withdraw

52 Roy Strong, Splendor at Court (Boston:
his support, but he forbade them to come within thirty leagues of Paris, a restriction which, while popular with few more than Madame de Maintenon and the Church, nonetheless held until the death of the King in 1715.

From here, then, the Italian comedians who had enjoyed the court's patronage for nearly forty years, returned to the fairgrounds where many other lesser companies of Italian players had presented their plays and acrobatic feats, and as some would attest, "it was really their expulsion which aroused the 'Theatres of the Fairs' to a new and more vigorous life."\(^{54}\) In the sense that many of the upper class then returned to the fairgrounds to see what they could no longer find at court, this may have been true.

CHAPTER III

A MOVEMENT ANALYSIS OF THE MASKS OF THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE WITH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE VALETS HARLEQUIN AND SCARMOUCHE

The characteristic movement of the commedia dell'arte as it first appeared in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as it was taken and developed in France during this period, can be summarized as naturally expressive, earthy, large, open, direct movement. This characteristic movement style of the commedia should not however, be confused with a codification of movement, as this genre of theater was, above all else, spontaneous. Thoughts, emotions and intentions were as often as not conveyed through a full use of movement as through the dialogue of the presentations. This use of movement could, with equal validity, be referred to as a particular acting style, or as the use of mime, gesture and dance, for these elements were so closely interwoven in the commedia as to make a separation all but impossible.

The spirit of the early Italian commedia is perhaps best conveyed in Jacques Callot's famous
Balli di Sfessania, a set of twenty-four etchings which were completed by the year 1622. Here, the commedia dell'arte is clearly depicted as a theater of grotesque, acrobatic Masks attracting a casual audience to their impromptu farce. What is especially notable about these engravings is that in each of the scenes, there is both a detailed study of two of the characters, and a 'background' setting that ably renders the atmosphere of these farces. There are many things to be seen beyond these emphasized characters: men and women of the commedia dancing lively steps to their own accompaniment, or to the music provided by another comedian; a mask perched high atop a pair of stilts and encircled by half a dozen players dancing vigorously around his base; a confused character mounted backwards on a donkey and riding through the streets; meetings of the Lovers; a staged commedia dell'arte performance; the ever popular dueling; and in many instances, the audiences viewing these performances can be seen. In other background settings of the Balli di Sfessania there appears a patched character, perhaps a Harlequin, leaping high into the air and brandishing his bat in a dance with one of the ladies of the commedia; another Harlequin-like character
From Jacques Callot's *Balli di Sfessania*, ca. 1622
being chased by a bat wielding lady, and in yet another of these etchings, Harlequin can be seen in an acrobatic display performing a handstand beside a somersaulting woman.

Then, among the principal subjects found in Callot's etchings, are numerous pairs of Zanni, performing grotesque dances in which large, angular gesturing, inward rotation of the limbs, protruding pelvises, tongues and conspicuous phalli are unabashedly displayed. Metztein and Riciulina skip to a lively tune Metztein plays, Scaramucia and Fricasso collide back to back in a comic duel, and a kneeling Mask pleads with an Inamorata. Certainly Callot's etchings have provided an unusually rich source for a movement study of the commedia.

What becomes most outstanding in these movement filled engravings, is the element of the grotesque, and the fanciful. The Masks are rarely reserved in their gestures, and their rippling physical renderings provide a marked contrast to the occasional appearance of a leading lady. Elbows, wrists and knees are sharply bent and comically rotated inward. Fingers are prominently pointed, tongues and chins are mockingly extended, and all ride on top of the Masks' characteristic lunges.
The usually low to the ground, heavy, earthy poses are contrasted by the punctuation of an occasional character on tiptoe, or a frantic Zanni springing vertically into the air.

Callot's work, then, can give a very vivid idea of not only the 'spirit' of the commedia dell'arte, but, more specifically, of the movement typically employed by the Masks. Analysis of other early sketches of the commedia, such as those found in the Recueil Fossard and in Tristan Martinelli's Compositions de rhétorique de M. Don Arlequin, while somewhat less vibrant, do support these observations of Callot's work.

Having made the general assumption that the theater of the commedia did have an early, specific, characteristic movement style, it will be helpful to begin to focus on the individual movement traits of the Masks, to see what each contributed to this viril collage, and to trace the development of the character's movement in relation to the general refinement of the commedia dell'arte in France in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The actors of the commedia had specific movement roles which were directly related to their character's social status, sex, age, and in the
case of the Masks, to their set personality. The women of the commedia and the Lovers, however, were not Masks, and so were free to change with the personality of the individual they portrayed. Nonetheless, there were certain general assumptions which can be made of their movement usage. The women of the early Italian street players thrilled their audiences with acrobatics and were not opposed to performing similar feats, including tightrope walking, on their later journeys to the fairgrounds of France. However, the maidservants and Inamoratas of the outstanding companies invited to perform at the courts of seventeenth century France did none of these. The women of these companies, often even those taking the parts of common serving women, 'costumed' themselves in the best fashion of their respective classes, and restricted their movements accordingly. The servants could, of course, indulge in a wider range of movement than the Inamorata, who was extremely limited in her gestures. Usually portraying a member of the privileged upper class, she gave herself noble carriage, correctly danced the fashionable court dances of the day with her lover, and offered little excitement through means of physical agility. A serving maid could be
required to outwit or outrun a Harlequin, but the
Prima Donna was usually saved from any such dis-
plays. In short, she was generally most noted for
her grace and beauty. Likewise, her lover was the
most reserved of all men of the commedia. He too,
often was of high social rank, but not quite so
restricted, or so seriously regarded as his counter-
part. Since he was the aggressor, and constantly
attempting to steal his lady from her husband or
guardian, he could expect to be stuffed into the
closet, made to portray an idiot and carry out all
the antics of a madman or, as became ever more
popular in the middle and late seventeenth century,
be placed in constant danger of one duel after
another. As Duchartre suggests, the "wooers of
the commedia dell'arte were always just a trifle
ridiculous," and their beauty was their chief con-
tribution to the plays. However, aside from the
Lovers and maid servants, all the remaining actors
were Masks, and had distinct movement traits par-
ticular to their fantastical character, which would
be well preserved in many engravings and paintings

55 Scala, Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte:
Flaminio Scala's II Teatro dell favole rappresenta-
tive, pp. 149-156.

56 Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 286.
of the famous commedia companies who performed in seventeenth century Paris.

Characteristic Movement of the Masks

The movement characteristics of the old, vain Mask, Pantalone are not easily classified because he is a vulnerable character, and capable of many rapid changes, which in itself is unusual for one of his age. Pantalone is most often represented as a tall, thin, old man who still perceives himself to be the striking youth of his past. His slight belly protrudes, his shoulders slump forward and his white bearded chin extends to such a great extent that he appears to have a prominent throat in front, and no neck whatsoever in back. Seldom upright, Pantalone thrusts his pelvis forward when at rest, and backward as he shuffles along. Yet should his young, beautiful and usually distaining wife enter the room, his stomach disappears, his shoulders right themselves, and with head still protruding markedly forward, his shuffling gait becomes a confident stride. "Pantalone is a bird; he struts

57 When the pelvis is referred to as being 'forward,' it indicates that the waist is positioned behind the thighs. When the pelvis is referred to as being 'behind,' the waist will be tilted forward of the thighs.
like a peacock" for, after all, lust and vanity conquer all in the presence of an attractive woman; and in the thoughts of this ridiculous character.

Pantalone, although most often adopting the gait of an old man, still had to have a remarkable agility. Oreglia contends that "the actor who plays the part of Pantalone must be good at ridiculous backfalls, his reaction to the receipt of bad news or startling revelations." Since Pantalone is forever the duped lover or unsuccessful merchant, it can be imagined that such bursts of agility were not uncommon. "He moves slowly, hunched up, but in moments of fury is capable of baffling feats of agility which will later be atoned for by heavy, asthmatic panting." He is the old man who refuses to acknowledge his loss of youth, and insists on summoning flashes of vitality at great effort, and usually no gain. No doubt the audiences loved this hopeless struggle all the same.

In the late seventeenth century, however, a shift in Pantalone's personality occurred as he gradually gained a bit more dignity and was more

58 Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.
59 Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, pp. 80-81.
60 Ibid., p. 80.
frequently portrayed as the "respectable head of the family" than as the lusty old man.\footnote{Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 185.} The sword drawn Pantalone recorded repeatedly throughout the Recueil Fossard, has been calmed, and appears to have gained both maturity and several additional years by the late seventeenth century. Still, he remained just as easily fooled as ever, and was just as often the butt of the Lovers' jokes in the commedia.

Il Dottore, the second 'old man' of the commedia and the 'learned' Mask from Bologna, is a "busybody, a muddler and exceedingly presumptuous.\footnote{Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, p. 84.} He varies in stature from a very short fellow to the tall Pantalone's equal, but during his stay in seventeenth century France, he was most often a shorter Mask. Whatever his height, his width remained constant, for he was always portrayed as "'the learned and the fat' [and,] being obese, he is the least agile."\footnote{Ibid.} Yet there are any number of commedia scenarios in which the Doctor is to chase a rival lover, or be chased by him.\footnote{Scala, Scenarios of the Commedia dell'Arte: Flaminio Scala's Il Teatro dell favole rappresentative, pp. i-10.} He is, however,
essentially a windbag and much prefers to explain himself out of awkward situations rather than to take to his heels.

Slightly tilted forward from the pelvis, he gives the appearance of a very careful man, but it would seem that the Doctor was also a somewhat clumsy Mask, occasionally bumping into and turning over the objects of his meddling curiosity. 65 "He is grave and clumsily dignified in a highly stylized manner. He sways as he walks mincingly with tiny steps. Often he holds a small but very thick book in one hand and gesticulates professorily with his index finger." 66

Like Pantalone, he tries to disregard his age when courting the ladies. Even in his work, his cures, in accordance with his comic lust, include attempting to calm distraught young women by making love to them. 67 Also like Pantalone, the Doctor is usually rejected, and miserly, but when the two get together for a walk, there could not be a more striking contrast. The short, black robed, portly Doctor, constantly expounding on various weighty

65 Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 197.
66 Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, p. 86.
matters which he illustrates with articulate Italian hand gestures, is clearly Pantalone's counterpart, and as he mincingly steps beside his tall, thin, red costumed friend, the commedia plays another if its many visual jokes.

Just as the second old man of the commedia dell'arte provides a striking contrast to Pantalone, Brighella is the antithesis of a Harlequin. Brighella is a slow, menacing mover, a lazy Mask who is usually a little fat and undeniably nasty: he is completely concerned with number one.68 Only moving when he needs to satisfy one of the few basic drives he acknowledges:

He is of the sort who lie prone asleep in the sun along the waterfront until hunger brings them to life again. On awakening he stretches himself with the lithe ease of a cat, and rises to his feet in a gliding movement without apparent muscular effort. When he is standing up his slender figure casts a rod-like shadow. His quick and piercing eyes survey his kingdom with a look of interrogation, alive to every opportunity. Brighella does not walk in the ordinary sense; he prowls, rather, making a faint pattering noise with his sandals when he is not actually barefoot. 69

68 Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.

69 Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 161.
Still, he is quite capable of moving quickly, and is, without question, the cause of a great deal of commotion.

There was another side to the seventeenth century Brighella, although audiences were probably convinced a false side. Brighella was a musician and a flatterer. He "is an excellent singer and expert player of various instruments... Though he is much less agile than Harlequin, his mime is marked by a rhythmic cadence of arms and legs."\(^70\) This softer, musical Mask apparently became more usual at the end of the seventeenth century when this Mask was most popular. He became less malicious and threatening, and by the beginning of the next century, the Brighella-like character of Watteau's engravings,\(^71\) is so softened as to make this Mask almost unrecognizable. It is certain that Watteau gave a somewhat poetic rendering of these commedia characters, but it can also be assumed that Brighella's personality, and his movement, did reflect a general softening throughout the seventeenth century French commedia plays.\(^72\)

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\(^70\) Oreglia, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, p. 72.

\(^71\) Joseph Gregor, ed., *Denkmäler des theatres* (Munich: R. Piper, 1926-1930), vol. 8, plate XXIV.

\(^72\) Ibid., vol. 8, p. 15.
Another valet became very popular in France during the seventeenth century; this was Scaramouche. Scaramouche was an ancestor of the Spanish Captain, who had appeared in the early commedia plays as a parody of the Spanish soldiers then dominating the Italian countryside. Understandably, then, the Italians gave to their hated enemy a ridiculous, hated character which helped to satisfy their desire for revenge. A huge, stupid fellow filled with grandiose boasts, but deeply cowardly, was the pompous figure of the Captain.

As the Captain traveled to France, however, the significance found in this character by late sixteenth and seventeenth century Italian audiences, was not realized in the audiences of seventeenth century France. His popularity declined, and one of his cousins, Scaramouche, emerged to take the spotlight. The Mask Scaramouche was:

born in Naples toward the close of the sixteenth century, . . . [and] grew up into a Captain of the time, but he was a captain made for skirmishes only. He buzzed about with a long sword, stinging first this enemy then that, like a bee darting from flower to flower. He is black from head to foot, like a bumble-bee, and it is to be noted that this colour was a feature which he retained without variation throughout the evolution of his character.73

73 Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 236.
The seventeenth century French Scaramouche was tall, thin and extremely agile. He was also occasionally malicious and a skilled thief although seldom a confirmed villain.

Scaramouche's characteristic movements appear to be especially appropriate to this agile, skirmishing fellow dressed all in black. "Scaramouch is gravely absurd as the character is intended, in overstretched tedious movements of unnatural length of lines." 74 Such a statement could be confidently made after analysis of Gregorio Lambranzi's work, New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing. Although his work was not published until the beginning of the eighteenth century, it is assumed that the typical positions and suggestions for movements given for the Masks portrayed are not far removed from the movement typically employed by them only two decades before. As such, Lambranzi provides a very promising indicator of, in particular, Scaramouche's movement.

In the author's foreword, he expresses his ideas concerning the performance of the dances he has created for the Masks:

74 Kirstein, Movement and Metaphor, p. 23.
Pas de Scaramouche from Gregorio Lambranzi's New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing, Plate 25
The lively and burlesque types represented in [plates] Nos. 23 to 49, such as Scaramouch, Harlequin and the like, must be expressed in the eccentric style of dancing; . . . Hence it would be quite out of place for a Scaramouch, Harlequin or Purrcinella to dance a Menuet, Courant, Sarabande or Entree, since each has his own droll and quaint pas. Thus Scaramouch dances his long, unformed and heavy imitations such as the pas de scaramouche; 75

With the aid of the brief description below each of the eight plates dedicated to dances for a Scaramouche (plates 23-31), much is revealed about this Mask's characteristic attitudes and repertory. In his first dance, he conceals himself in his cape, crouching very low until he suddenly springs into the air "keeping his knees straight and stretching his legs as far apart as possible, and comes to the ground with his knees straight." 76 In the second plate, Scaramouche is pictured posing on a pedestal in an elongated second arabesque, from which he jumps to perform a dance filled with long strides, high jumps and turns. The third plate illustrates the famous pas de scaramouche, an extremely long, low stride that was as distinctive a trademark as his

75 Lambranzi, New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing, p. 16.
76 Ibid., p. 23.
solid black costume. Other plates have Scaramouche in skits which incorporate more long, arabesque like poses, lunges, turns, jumps and even one dance in which Scaramouche, the great mime of the early commedia, mimics Harlequin.77

From such descriptions as this, Scaramouche would be one of the most active masks of the commedia, second only to Harlequin. Much of the growth in popularity and skill in acting, mime and movement of this Mask can be attributed to the development of the role by the great French Scaramouche, Tiberio Fiorilli.

Fiorilli played the part of Scaramouche before Louis XIII, his wife, Anne of Austria, Cardinal Mazarin, and later became the leader of the commedia company which Louis XIV patronized. It was Fiorilli who first removed the mask from his character, taking advantage of his great acting skill to add unusually mobile facial expressions to his role. His skill must have been tremendous for not only did Moliere praise him as an outstanding actor and teacher, but Fiorilli was later to be called "the first great modern mime...[and] one of those

who revived the Commedia dell'Arte which with him reached its summit of universality."\(^78\) So, Scaramouche is the agile, comic and slightly cowardly dueling Mask of Callot's Balli di Sfessania, a tradition he takes with him throughout the seventeenth century; the grave, striding villain of Lambranzi's engravings; and he became, in the hands of Fiorilli, one of the greatest mimes of the commedia.

Harlequin, the famous second Zanni, was the great mover of the commedia dell'arte.\(^79\) He was the most popular Mask in Paris during the latter part of the seventeenth century as was so clearly demonstrated through the scenarios and engravings of Evariste Gherardi's Le Theatre Italian, an extensive record of the activities of Louis XIV's commedia company in the decade before their eviction. Harlequin's charm undoubtedly lay in his great simplicity. Nothing was out of the question for this Mask. He could indeed be the Harlequin, Emperor of the Moon, found in Gherardi's collection, for his childlike naivete allowed him to continuously

\(^{78}\) Oreglia, The Commedia dell'Arte, p. 113.

\(^{79}\) Zaslove, Interview of 05 March 1979.
The Four Attitudes of Harlequin by Claude Gillot, (1673-1722)
tackle any task he chose, while neither wanting to foresee, nor ever being able to foresee any of the consequences of his actions. He was not clever in the usual sense, had scant moral convictions, was neither cruel nor especially kind, and though known to be lazy on occasion, he was generally good natured and willing to undertake his master's tasks with zeal.

The early Harlequins were the least clever and the most lazy of their line, but even as early as Martinelli's *Composition de rhétorique de M. don Arlequin*, the Mask of Harlequin appears to have both wit and energy enough to make him a sparkling character. Certainly his personality and use of movement did develop into a slightly more refined and sophisticated Mask with Domique's (1640-1688) interpretation of the role, and thereafter; but much of the essentially simple, bustling servant remained in this character, and it is well to remember his distinctive personality, as it "depends partly on his suppleness."30

The Mask of Harlequin was usually taken by a smaller man, and always by a very agile one since it was essential that a character with so little wit as to always put himself in threatening situations, have enough physical prowess to remedy those circumstances. Harlequin never stopped. His movements ranged from his sweeping reverence and bold acrobatics to the quick, constant shifts of his head. This aspect of Harlequin's movement was determined by the style of his mask. The black half-mask Harlequin wore had only tiny holes for his eyes, and so Harlequin was literally forced to see only straight ahead as if to parody his own lack of prudence. The sharp, searching, almost bird-like quality typical of this Mask, then, was more than just part of his personality; it was the necessary means for his surveyance of his surroundings. This was one of Harlequin's traits that was preserved through notation as well as through pictorial evidence. A 'Chacoon for Harlequin' was composed by Roussau, a dancing master of the early eighteenth century, and recorded in Feuillet notation. While not particularly representative of the rich, open movement of a commedia Harlequin as a whole, it is accurate in the frequent use of
head inclinations and the vertical 'bobbing' head gestures which were special to this Mask. Below this 'nervous' head, were actively twisting wrists, sharply pointed index and little fingers, and arms which were rotated inward to come to rest on his waist or cap. His pelvis took on his childlike personality in a backward tilt that became less exaggerated toward the end of the seventeenth century. The sharp, angular movement of the commedia in general was strengthened by Harlequin's addition of similar movements of the "hands and feet...which shoot out as it were from the body in straight lines, or are twirled about in little circles." 81

Certainly these are the movement characteristics of a very vivacious character, one filled with enough energy to make Harlequin's frequent handstands and somersaults appear effortless. His 'dance'—for his gestures, mime and acrobatics formed an almost continuous dance during his appearance—was one characteristically filled with leaps, small jumps, and numerous sharp, partial turns. Even in

81 Kirstein, Movement and Metaphor, p. 23.
his walk, Harlequin's movement was special. In picture after picture, he arrives on tiptoe, bouncing lightly across the stage, his arm ready on his bat, in a happy, airy, confidant walk. He prances even as he dances with a Columbine, and especially here his wit may grow sharper, as he, along with other Masks of the commedia, loves to satirize the dance and dancers of the court:

Commedia burlesques the actual moves of the dance that the aristocratic people held. Very often we would find a very fine court dance that is made completely ridiculous by a character who is on the court who had some scandal... Someone would use that tidbit to base a dance on and in making it a strict court dance, they would on top of it have this improvisation ridiculing the scoundrel character.\(^\text{82}\)

Though Harlequin danced, sang, and mimed, he evidently was not clever enough to play an instrument as did so many of the other Masks. However, his agile movement repertory knew no equal within the commedia, and what he lacked intellectually he more than compensated for through physical skills.

Summary

Just as the type of plays and style of acting of the commedia had great influence on the plays presented in the theater of seventeenth century France, so the constant use of full body expression and the vigorous, open, direct movement of the commedia had far reaching influence on the movement style of the actors and dancers of the period. Molière's use of the acting style in his comedy of manners has already been noted, and their influence on the dance may have gone a long way toward reviving the ballet as well: "Ballet would not have developed in the same manner—in fact, it could scarcely have developed at all without the Italian comedians as a motivating force."^83

Dance, acting style, the change in the genre of plays from tragedy to the comedy of manners; all seem to have been influenced by the vitality of the commedia dell'arte:

the Italian Comedians were an integral part of the French theatrical scene, where they had a longer and more sig-

significant influence than in their native land. . . .

The commedia flourished during the sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the boundaries of its influence were very wide. Perhaps never before or since has there been a form of theatre which so focused attention upon the individual performer, or expected so much skill of him."84

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