

I was so excited to hear we were doing a workshop on commedia dell'arte. I've done some commedia work before, through school, workshops, and a show with a company which does a lot of commedia work. I am always eager to learn more about it. From what I understand, it's a difficult form of theatre that takes years to master. What I find most interesting about commedia there seem to be many ways to teach it. Every time I've encountered commedia in a learning setting, there seems to be a different interpretation of how certain characters move, and what character traits they possess, even which characters are the most core to commedia. Arlecchino, Colombina, Pantalone, The Lovers, Doctoro, Capitano seem to be the most consistently brought up in a commedia setting. There are however, some characters such as Brigella, The Old Servant, The Old Female Servant and The Scheming Woman that seem much more open to debate. I suppose the inclusion of a character hinges on how well the story can progress without them. I digress. Another very interesting part of commedia is how persistent in our culture it is without most people realising it. Romeo and Juliet from *Romeo and Juliet* are commedia characters, along with many other characters from the works of Shakespear. It's widely believed commedia dell'arte was a large influence on Shakespeare. For more recent examples, look at Mr Burns from *The Simpsons*. Mr Burns is a classic Pantalone. One of the reasons I think these archetypes have survived so long is that they are an easy source of conflict. Commedia seems to be the best example of character driven shows. I was once taught that the reason we have so few written commedia dell'arte plays is because traditional commedia was performed by actors who knew their characters so well and had such a mastery of improvisation that they didn't need a script. They just performed. Another reason I think commedia or at least its influence, has lasted so long is because it's

just plain stupid fun. Even back in 16th century Italy. There weren't any major morals or warnings for the upper class. It was just stupid and often lewd humor. Cycling back to the workshop, I think prefacing the works of European classics with a physical learning experience about its influence is genius. It's a good way to not only place context to the characters but it also gives a modern audience a link to the zanniness that can be found in classic theatre works. It makes *Twelfth Night* so much more enjoyable as you go on a proposturous journey and you remember the plain stupid fun it comes from just to name one example. My thanks again to Angela. It was very informative, and ridiculously fun.