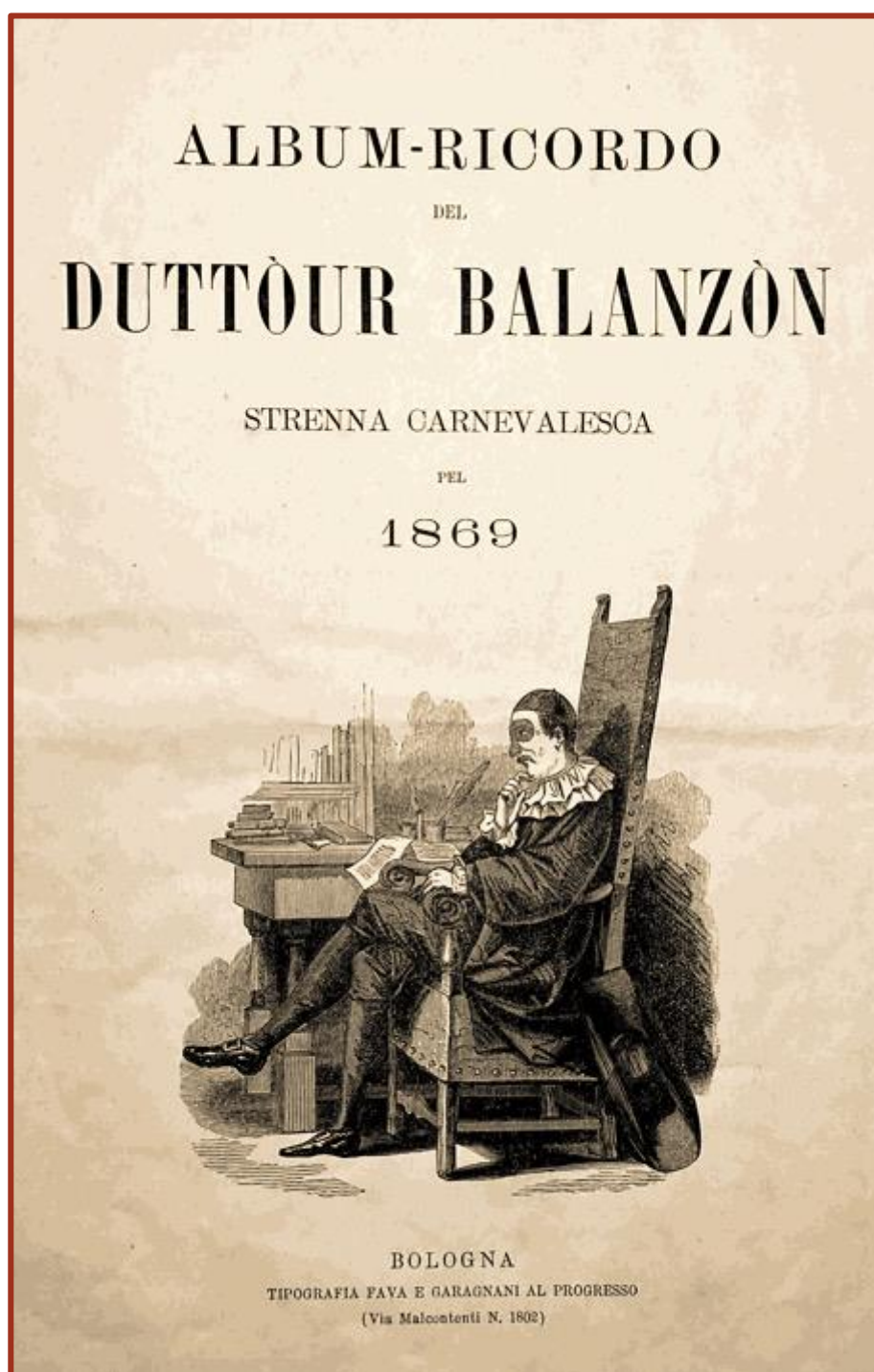




Issue 11 – Spring 2025





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To view and download the Zannizine, at high resolution, along with the archive edition of the *Album-Ricordo*, in full, visit our website here:

<https://www.commediazannizine.co.uk/issues/issue-11-spring-2025>

“Zannizine is for the now. Gathering inspiration from the past, fostering experiment and collaboration in the present and securing a future for the Commedia dell’Arte”

- Barry and Bill

INTRODUCING ISSUE 11 OF ZANNIZINE

Welcome to Zannizine's eleventh appearance.

An entirely imaginary conversation between Barry and Bill, founders of the Zannizine in Spring 2021...

- Bill: Barry, are you seriously suggesting that we bring out a new edition of The Zannizine after all this time?
- Barry: It's not so long. What's two or three years in Commedia's five-hundred-year history?
- Bill: You can't bring poor old Zanni back to life; he's dead and should have been buried.
- Barry: Why not? Pulcinella died and came back to life several times, as we both know! And Harlequin, if not Arlecchino, did, to say nothing of Isabella in at least a couple of scenarios.
- Bill: But what about our readers? We left them without so much as a word?
- Barry: I think they will forgive us if the new one is as good as I think it will be. It would be churlish to deny them all the things that we have accumulated in the last few months.
- Bill: *Churlish!*? Where on earth did you get that word from? Was it The Times Word of the Day?
- Barry: No, it just came up
- Bill: Barry, you need to be careful of what comes up at your age.

Our cover illustration

This is from the rare and rather wonderful *'Album-Ricordo del Duttòur Balanzòn - Strenna Carnevalesca pel 1869'*. In this image, the 'Duttòur' – the author of this commemorative carnival gift – appears to be contemplating the satirical trivialities he has just shared in this novel publication. We are delighted to reproduce and share with you this artefact, in its entirety, in this issue in [From The Archive](#)

SIMON CALLOW

on

COMMEDIA

We are, all of us in the theatre, haunted by the idea of commedia, partly because the prints and engravings of it that have come down to us so clearly embody an essence of theatre, but also because the whole corpus of dramatic literature until the nineteenth century is haunted by it too: Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Molière, Marivaux, Beaumarchais, Goldoni (it goes without saying), Nestroy, Holberg. Wherever there are witty servants and domineering masters, young wives and old husbands, pompous pedants, thwarted lovers or bragging soldiers, the commedia is there in spirit and also very often in form. What we respond to in it is the energy which leaps out of the old illustrations, a fundamentally theatrical vitality which takes hold of and possesses its characters, fabulously exotic but somehow instantly recognisable. All over England and America at this moment there are people trying to bring back to life that energy, popular, earthy, and rude, and to inhabit those characters. The books on commedia fill shelves, beautifully crafted masks can readily be purchased off the peg, the repertory of physical gestures have been researched and reconstructed, the scenarios translated and updated. And yet, somehow, stubbornly, no matter how much energy, scholarship, ingenuity and artistry are thrown at it, the thing fails to live. As audience members at these re-creations, we sit frozen in attitudes of amusement, our faces set in a mirthless rictus. Laughter dies still born. For some people, indeed, the word commedia has acquired the dread connotations of the word clown, and for much the same reason: a ritual of comedy is enacted which is devoid of actual laughter, all that remains a calcified outline of something which once must have had a starting point in reality but is now of merely archaeological interest (and not much of that).

Then from time to time someone emerges who is able to warm things up from within, and the ossified shapes suddenly become filled with meaning and life. In the case of clowns, Slava Polunin, the great Russian clown, has recently performed this miracle of resurrection. His physical appearance is, give or take a detail or two, no different from that of all the wretched clowns who have turned the lively responses of circus audiences into glum, nearly suicidal despondency. Yet the moment Slava steps on stage, your heart stops, a laugh rises in your gorge and a tear starts in your eye: you know that you are in the presence of

something very old and absolutely of the moment. It is not that one becomes a child again and laughs as a child laughs: it is that one recognises oneself, lonely, absurd, full of hope, full of pretensions, doomed to disappointment, but eternally in quest of happiness, friendship, love, glory. The potential for comedy is immediately immense: he wants something which it is not going to be easy for him to get. Everything that Slava does in his act is about his attempt to escape his loneliness and discover his dream.

Antonio Fava, the great Pulcinella of our day, has achieved something very similar for commedia, but perhaps his is the more extraordinary achievement because he has brought back to vibrant life a whole art form. In his own gloriously funny performance, he embodies the elusive, grounded energy – above all mental energy – that one knows to be central to commedia, creating a character of precise, articulated logic expressed in abundant and constantly varied physical life. Here he comes, with his rolling self-contented walk, his idly vacant eye, his ever-rumbling belly, perfectly at ease with the world until out of the blue he receives a kick up the bum from his master, he gets caught in the crossfire between neighbours, or a pigeon defecates on his head. His face is fixed into the expression of his mask, but one instantly sees a whole human being, both type and individual, full of wants, problems, anxieties: slothful, starving, ingenious but not clever, surviving from minute to minute. It is almost unbearable to see him glory in his small triumphs because as the day follows the night, they will be short-lived and in a second, he will be shocked out of his skin, knocked flat, have the food snatched out his hand and the clothes off his back. We can all, as the saying goes, relate to that.

Somehow, too, there is a kind of splendour in his indestructibility: he is Everyman, the lowest common denominator, the basic unit out of which life is built. Perhaps even more remarkably, in his presentations with his company, Antonio brings to vivid life not just Pulcinella but the whole world of commedia, the astonishingly rich series of characters, relationships and situations that make it up. In so doing, he reveals them to constitute an entire view of human life. This complex panorama of society, though intensely theatrical in form, is perfectly recognisable from observed experience, every motive crystal clear, every problem understandable, each character's centre rooted, their bodily expression complete. Every one of them is driven along by strong impulses in the grip of which they find themselves pushed to the extreme of their temperaments. There is no attempt in commedia to explain why anyone is the way they are: character is a given fact. The entire focus of the piece is on how they pursue their objectives: how they deal with the challenges that face them, overcome the obstacles in their way – which may be ones they create themselves. This celebration of desire, this demonstration of want and its desperate manoeuvres, is deeply

funny, both in the ingenuity of the protagonists and in their battle with their limitations – the cause of so much human trouble.

Intrigued from early youth by what I had read about this wonderful form of theatre, a couple of years ago I seized on a chance opportunity to join a commedia workshop Fava had come to London to give as a preparation for work that a group of us were doing on a version of Punch and Judy under Daniel Kramer's direction. Punch, of course, is a derivative of Pulcinella, and his and Judy's show has some points of comparison with commedia scenarios, but what we were really interested in was the ability to create large characters who were also filled with life and truthful impulse. In one week, under Antonio's fierce tutelage, we each played all the commedia characters, attempted some of the classic lazzi, and worked on scenarios of our own invention. My fellow actors were mostly from what is called the Physical Theatre tradition. I was the odd one out, the only one from what is called "the straight theatre", though I rather fancied myself as a more physical actor than most: the word made flesh was my gospel as a performer. I believed passionately that the actor's whole instrument had to be engaged at all times.

I quickly learned my limitations and self-delusions. I can't speak for the others, but it was one of the hardest weeks I have ever spent in the theatre. Partly this was because Fava, one of the greatest teachers I have ever encountered, works by demonstration. To watch this shortish (slightly shorter than me), stocky, fuzzily-bearded man transform instantly and absolutely from one of the fearful, hungry, cunning Zanni (Pulcinella, Arlecchino) into the swaggering, flamboyant Capitane, to the pompous, blinkered Dottore, to an idealistic young lover (female) or the fussy, outrageous and frankly camp Pedrolino, and then be told to get on with it oneself, was profoundly daunting. Apart from anything else, it is physically draining: the focus and concentration required – even for a sleeping Zanni or a swooning lover – is a shock to the system, a system, that like mine, is accustomed to relying on voice and subtly nuanced words to convey so much. For me, too, the loss of my face and all its expressive possibilities leaves me feeling bereft. All the expressive energy has to be relocated to the spine, into the muscles, into the feet, the arms and the hands – to the very tips of the fingers. Even more demanding is to suspend the familiar, Stanislavskian process of creating character by accumulating detail. In Commedia you have to completely surrender to the needs, the instincts and the self-image of a creature dominated by very simple drives. Psychology as such is by no means absent: on the contrary, the psychology of each of the types is absolutely water-tight and organically consistent: it is simply that the emphasis is on what it is to be human, rather than what it is to be this particular human. There is a Zanni in all of us, a Dottore, a Brighella, waiting to be released, and that is what the commedia is concerned with, rather than Zanni X, Dottore Y, Brighella Z. The collective

creative act that created the commedia put onto the stage a representative and abundant selection of humankind going about its daily business, making love, looking for food, impressing the neighbours, earning money: it's a Ship of Fools, perhaps, or a human Noah's Ark, and this is what we as Commedia performers have to strive to realise. I felt at the end of the week that I needed to reconsider everything I knew about acting.

The closest to the living, breathing practice of Commedia I have ever come across in this country was Max Wall, the last extant survivor of Music Hall and Variety at its zenith. Half civilised, tailcoat-wearing man and half ape, he seemed to regard the world and his audience as bizarre, and possibly insane. He humoured us, feeling ever more convinced of our derangement the madder he got. It is in this essential centred sense of self that the Commedia exists. All the characters have a strong sense of their own being. They have no complexity in themselves: it is only the outside world which brings doubt, frustration, rage. Left to their own devices, like Slava Polunin's Clown, they are perfectly happy. For the most part, they don't care what the world thinks of them, as long as their basic appetites are catered for. Max Wall's Archie Rice was of this ilk. We need to have more performers like Max, the great eccentric movers.

They are Everyman and Everywoman.



Figure 1 – Max Wall

Credit: <https://www.maxwallsociety.org>

Simon Callow



Low, Vulgar and Naughty: Mark Ravenhill Does Commedia

by Cheryl Stapleton

When the notice went out on social media for actors to take part in a comedy workshop with Mark Ravenhill, they came in droves. It proved so popular that it quickly expanded into a series. The premise was unique: each workshop group would delve into a different play based on early 17th-century Commedia dell'Arte scenarios from Flaminio Scala's *Il Teatro delle Favole Rappresentative* (1611), culminating in a final showcase. Ravenhill himself was surprised by the project's rapid growth as he shared in conversation during rehearsals:

"I found this old book of commedia scenarios – outlines from the early 17th century for improvised comedies. I wrote pages based on one of these outlines, as a starting point for the first workshop. I added more pages each day and soon had a ninety-minute play. When I started this project, I never imagined I would be writing ten full length comedies in five months!"

These scenarios offered skeletal plot structures with character entrances, exits, and typical actions, traditionally allowing Commedia troupes to improvise dialogue. Unearthing this collection, Ravenhill realised he had struck comedy gold: here were fifty plot outlines begging to be worded! Starting with just one, he examined the four-page text and discovered a solid three-act plot, with a clear narrative arc. He began writing, and the dialogue flowed.

Despite being new to Commedia dell'Arte, Ravenhill, a seasoned playwright known for his vivid characters and nuanced dialogue, skilfully captured the comic contrast, the foibles of the stock types, the pace and the rhythm required for these fast-moving farces. He observed the recurring characters, appearing in different situations, akin to a sitcom format. It was indeed the characters that secured the enduring popularity of these "renaissance sitcoms."



Ravenhill collaborated with production company [RUN AT IT SHOUTING](https://runatitshouting.co.uk/)¹ for this venture and they titled the project '*Run At It Laughing*', dubbing each play with a similar theme:

1. *Run At It Horny* – based on Scala's scenario *Isabella's Trick*
2. *Run At It In The Countryside* (*The Jealous Old Man*)
3. *Run At It Toothless* (*The Dentist*)
4. *Run At It Feuding* (*The Tragic Events*)
5. *Run At It Babies* (*The Fake Magician*)
6. *Run At It With A Vengeance* (*He Who Was Believed Dead*)
7. *Run At It Twins* (*The Jealousy of Isabella*)
8. *Run At It With A Plan* (*The Pedant*)
9. *Run At It In Disguise* (*Flavio's Disgrace*)
10. *Run At It Backstage* (*The Picture*)

Commedia is often described as 'improvised' theatre, but 'devised' is perhaps more accurate. Working from a plot outline, performers drew on a repertoire of stock speeches and well-rehearsed *lazzi* (comic gags), often recorded in personal notebooks (*zibaldoni*). Rehearsals established scripted sections, especially where timing was key – slapstick, acrobatics, entrances, and exits – while other moments remained loose to allow extempore dialogue, incorporating local references and social commentary as the troupe toured.

As a participant in Ravenhill's workshops, I found it a refreshing approach to work from a script, rather than solely from commedia conventions. Starting from the words, allowed us to explore characterisation in a new way, utilising a wider range of acting techniques – like tension states, gestural planes and Laban efforts – to connect words to characters. This offered an invigorating, new lens through which to rediscover Commedia, and left me feeling empowered by, rather than restricted by text.

Ravenhill wrote these plays quickly, yet without compromising quality, delivering new pages weekly, working from Henry J. Salerno's 1967 translation of Scala's 1611 publication. The collection preserves scenarios, likely refined through numerous performances by *i Gelosi* (active 1568–1604), and as many scholars and performers have noted, a degree of meaning is also somewhat lost in translation.

While many scenarios flowed easily, Ravenhill admitted that others demanded inventive interpretation. Unsurprisingly, certain references were difficult to decipher. They would have been well-known to company members through simple textual cues, but for a modern

¹ RUN AT IT SHOUTING is a London production company and platform for creating and producing industry workshops, entertainment and events. They offer a range of services to actors.

<https://runatitshouting.co.uk/>

newcomer, meaning is more elusive. One recurring challenge was the stage direction of 'madness': "*He acts mad and then goes off*". In the 16th and 17th centuries, madness became a cultural curiosity, so commedia embraced it as theatrical spectacle, but for today's audiences, this isn't enough. Drawing on visual and often toilet humour, Ravenhill crafted moments that would both startle and entertain. A notable example from *Run At It Toothless* features Arlecchina inexplicably floating and creating "rain":

PEDROLINA: Oh, that's all we need now.
Rain when I'm tethering Arlecchina.
ARLECCHINA: Pedrolina that's not rain.
PEDROLINA: No?
What is it then?
Oh! Arlecchina!
ARLECCHINA: It's frightening stuck up here.

Later, Arlecchina 'wafts' and farts herself through the air to hold onto Pantalone's house to avoid floating away – a scene that generated much belly laughter in our workshop, convincingly staged without any special effects. Ravenhill was drawn to Commedia's base humour and brazen sexuality, aiming for playful and fun productions:

"There's humour of our bodies that's as old as the ancient Greeks... and that's all there in *Benny Hill*, *Are You Being Served*, *Carry On*... Because we wanted to step away from social prejudice, we slightly threw the baby out with the bath water, and this is partly a way of reclaiming that cheeky, saucy, rude humour."

However, he also recognised that these plays contained far deeper depths to plumb. What stood out to Ravenhill was the commanding presence of the leading lady—a strength unmistakably evident in Flaminio Scala's texts. In scripting Isabella's lines, Ravenhill said they seemed to write themselves; she emerged as a complex and intriguing character, holding a darkness, layered with provocative passion. She is the only role that really evolves consistently across the plays, suggesting that the scenarios were written by Scala to reflect the aging and shifting identity of Isabella Andreini, the lead actress of *i Gelosi* troupe. Taking his lead from Scala, Ravenhill deliberately reimagined and empowered other female roles, reversing genders for some zanni (Arlecchino becomes Arlecchina, Pedrolino becomes Pedrolina). Pedrolina, in particular, gains an assertive voice against female oppression and exploitation, adding a contemporary layer of resistance and agency.

Ravenhill, a renowned playwright with numerous productions at major British theatre, is known for his bold, provocative and often politically charged writing. His work is expansive and eclectic, ranging from 'in-yer-face' gritty realism to opera librettos, yet many of his defining theatrical threads come together unexpectedly in commedia, providing fertile

ground for his ongoing exploration of identity, power and the human condition through satirical farce.



Figure 2 – Wilton's Music Hall, Mark Ravenhill introduces the rehearsed reading of 'Run At It Backstage'

The ten plays were presented as rehearsed readings in a commedia marathon at Wilton's Music Hall, London, on 9th and 10th May 2025, with proceeds benefiting **nia**, a charity addressing violence against women and children. Commedia aficionado, **Didi Hopkins** who was in the audience on both days, praised the project:

"Mark Ravenhill's fantastic ability to write dialogue for the original Scala scenarios boosts our tapestry of Commedia and we end up with more – and much needed – examples of what might have been played, and for that we are richer. It is easy to see, with Ravenhill's scripting and directing, the energy and vitality of the commedia jumping out from his page. He made ten, ninety-minute, extraordinary pieces of old story, come back to life. We see How Commedia Works."

Does Mark Ravenhill's ambitious project hold the potential to be a catalyst for a renewed appreciation and exploration of commedia dell'arte? I sincerely think it just might. These ten new scripts born of Scala's original *scenari* are to be published in 2026 for performance, but Ravenhill has announced that he's offering these scripts for free, for rehearsed readings in 2025², asking only that profits are donated to his chosen charity, the [nia project](#).

Cheryl Stapleton



² For permission and access to the scripts for a private or public rehearsed reading, contact RUN AT IT SHOUTING: info@runatitshouting.co.uk

The Rise of Quick-Change:

From Commedia Trickery to Record-Breaking Transformation

by Cheryl Stapleton

Pavarotti, a familiar figure in his signature fedora, white scarf, and tuxedo, stands centre stage. With a theatrical flourish, he sweeps aside a curtain, and in the blink of an eye, the iconic tenor has morphed into Elvis Presley, complete with a shimmering jumpsuit and signature quiff. Lightning-fast magic metamorphosis is the hallmark of the quick-change artist, a master of disguise who performs seemingly impossible transformations in mere seconds. At the pinnacle of this art form stands Arturo Brachetti, a showman who has astounded audiences since the 1970's, packing hundreds of breathtaking character changes into a single show.

Brachetti's remarkable talent reflects theatre's long-standing fascination with transformation. As a space of illusion, theatre invites suspended disbelief, but in today's tech-saturated world, audiences expect more. Illusionists must now be faster and smarter and deliver increasingly incredible stage wonders and spectacles to keep enticing the audiences.

Brachetti's own journey into the world of illusion began as a shy eleven-year-old sent to a seminary³. There, he encountered Don Silvio Mantelli, a priest whose theological teachings were augmented with a passion for magic. Witnessing Mantelli, known on stage as 'Mago Sales,' perform classic tricks with flair at parish events, ignited a spark in the young Brachetti. Soon, all his spare moments were spent in Mantelli's studio, a treasure trove of magical paraphernalia, consuming a book on the great 18th century master of quick-change, Leopold Fregoli, who executed seemingly impossible transformations between numerous characters with astonishing speed⁴. With new-found knowledge and passion, Brachetti quickly progressed to become the Mago Sales' onstage assistant, seamlessly changing



Figure 3 - Poster from Arturo Brachetti's show 'Solo' running since 2016.

<https://brachetti.com/en/>

³ More on Arturo Brachetti's early career in his TEDx Talk here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL28ZPzak7E>

⁴ See a collection of Fregoli films from 1898-99 here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KylEv9eQxvw&list=PLEktmphegg330bh87WPdIDrilOJUhVzpf&index=2>

costumes to embody a variety of sidekicks for the magician – the beginnings of the internationally renowned quick-change artist he is today.

Intrigued by the power of instant metamorphosis, Brachetti delved further into the history of this captivating convention, tracing its roots back to Commedia dell'Arte, where the very essence of performance revolved around masking – be they physical masks, painted white faces, or melodramatic facial expressions of the Innamorati. For Commedia performers, the act of putting on a mask was a total metamorphosis, going beyond costumes and face coverings to alter posture, gait, rhythm, voice, gestures, and energy. Brachetti recognised that these physical and visceral transformations were the mark of a true quick-change master:

“Every character has its own voltage – like electricity. To jump from one energy state to another is the real challenge – changing the character energy is much more difficult than changing the costume,”

Arturo Brachetti, in conversation with Cheryl Stapleton, May 2025

It is known that many Commedia actors dedicated their entire careers to a single stock character, allowing this embodiment to become second nature. These stock characters were the bedrock of Commedia's enduring popularity, becoming as famous then, as the characters of *Friends* or *The Simpsons* are today.

Scenarios from the 16th and 17th centuries are replete with characters adopting disguises, leading to mistaken identities and intricate deceptions. The trope of identical twins, very likely played by a single actor, was a staple plot device, showcasing a form of instant character change. Isabella Andreini, famed as the first diva of theatre, was renowned for her acting talents and her versatility in disguise (of which there were many). In Flaminio Scala's Twenty-Fifth Day canovaccio, *The Jealousy of Isabella*⁵, Isabella plays twins: the ingénue and her brother Fabritio. In another 'twins' scenario from a rare Corsiniana collection, *La Zingara*⁶ (the Gypsy) features twin Ortenzias. In both these scenarios, the costume change time between characters is so short, rapid costume and character changes would have been essential.

Sixteenth century chronicler, Giuseppe Pavoni, offered a compelling glimpse into the extraordinary impact of Isabella Andreini's ability to morph and embody madness in “*La*

⁵ Scala, Flaminio (author), Salerno, H.F. (translator) *Il Teatro della Favole Rappresentative*, Limelight Editions, 1990. Original available to view online here: <https://archive.org/details/ilteatrodellefau00scal/page/n23/mode/2up>

⁶ *La Zingara*, from *Codici 651* (pg 121r), Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana

Pazzia d'Isabella" (The Madness of Isabella). Within one scene, she demonstrates exquisite skill, with an astounding series of transformations, leaving the audience agog.

"Isabella ... like a madwoman, went running through the city ... speaking now in Spanish, now in Greek, now in Italian, and many other languages, but all without reason ... imitating the languages of all her comedians...of Pantalone, of Gratiano, of Zanni, of Pedrolino, of Francatrippa... so naturally and with such absurdities that it is not possible to put into words the worth and virtue of this woman. Finally, through the deceptions of the art of Magic ... she returned to her former self ... leaving such whispering and wonder in the audience..."⁷

Brachetti also drew my attention to a pivotal Commedia performer: Giovanni Gabrieli, known on stage as "Il Sivello." Active around the turn of the 17th century, Gabrieli was renowned for his street shows in which he completely transformed into multiple Commedia stock characters right before the audience's eyes – an extraordinary feat in an era when most actors devoted their careers to a single role. His talent extended to convincing vocal impersonations of women, earning praise from 18th-century historian Francesco Saverio Quadrio⁸, who wrote that Gabrieli could,

"... perform an entire comedy by himself alone, portraying various characters; and when he would portray a woman, he would not appear dressed in female clothing, but would instead, on stage, make the female voice heard by the spectators — with admiration and uncommon delight."



Figure 4 - Giovanni Gabrieli, c. 1599, engraved by Agostino Carracci, Rijks Museum, Netherlands, <https://id.rijksmuseum.nl/200169248>

His fame was such that in 1633, Agostino Carracci engraved his portrait with the inscription *Solus instar omnium* – “a company unto himself”.

⁷ Pavoni, Giuseppe. *Diario descritto da Giuseppe Pavoni. Delle feste celebrate nelle solennissime nozze delli serenissimi sposi, il sig. Don Ferdinando Medici, & la sig. Donna Christina di Loreno gran duchi di Toscana*. Printed by Giovanni Rossi, Bologna, 1589, accessed: <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2112239> English translation: MacNeil, A. *Music and Women in the Commedia dell'arte* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003): p 49-51

⁸ Quadrio, Francesco Saverio. *Della storia e della ragione d'ogni poesia, Volume III, Part II*. Milan: Francesco Agnelli, 1744. This comprehensive, seven-volume encyclopedia delves into various forms of poetry and performance.



Figure 5 - *Tabarino* (1618), by Maurice Sand, *Masques et Bouffons*, Vol 2, plate 47, Paris: Frederic Henry, 1862

Around the same period, in Paris, Anthoine Girard – known as ‘Tabarin’ – gained fame as a charismatic street charlatan. Performing farcical dialogues with his brother in a Doctor-Zanni-esque double-act, Tabarin’s act served as a vehicle for selling quack medicines. Tabarin’s unique showstopper was his hat – a simple, circular, flat, felt ring that could be manipulated into a myriad of shapes to instantly suggest different characters. With a mere twist, Tabarin could transform from a peasant farmer to a nobleman, a soldier to a shepherdess. His notoriety led to his stage name becoming a term used in French for all comic street performers.

A Commedia mask named ‘Tabarrino’, featuring a large felt hat and yellow and green attire, emerged around the same time, suggesting this vagabond mountebank was most likely appropriated by Commedia troupes, adding the hat-transformation lazzo to the repertoire.

Tabarin’s hat tricks evolved into a recognised performance art. In the 19th century, French vaudeville performer Félicien Trewéy incorporated these techniques into his Music Hall act, firmly establishing the art of ‘chapeaugraphy’. Trewéy showcased the captivating power of rapid hat transformations as a form of instant character change. Bracchetti also adopted the Tabarin Hat trick and still uses this today.

Another commedia character who is often associated with mutability and often described as a ‘shapeshifter’ is Arlecchino. Comical transformations, gender fluidity and absurd disguises were and still are hallmarks of this maverick trickster. With origins variably rumoured to trace back to Dante’s *Inferno* or to mystical figures from Arabic Sufism, Harlequin embodies a sense of mystery and potential for magical abilities.

When Commedia dell’Arte was adopted in England morphing into the English Harlequinade, the concept of transformation became a crucial source of visual spectacle. The ‘Transformation Scene,’ frequently involving Harlequin’s magic slapstick or a Fairy



Figure 6 - Félicien Trewéy, *Chapeaux à transformation* (Catalogue Lumière), 1896 Lumière, France: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrOX8VcUG-w>

wand, was designed to thrill audiences. As pantomime plays matured, the Harlequinade fulfilled the role of a dynamic interlude, marking a pivotal juncture where the initial narrative would dissolve or undergo a dramatic metamorphosis. While not always involving full costume changes, the sheer speed and theatricality of the changes were showstopping. W.S. Gilbert's *The Fairy's Dilemma* aptly illustrates the seamless and rapid nature demanded of these transformations, as evidenced in this extract from the Grand Transformation Scene (Act II, Scene 3)⁹:

Rose: You'll soon learn – it's quite easy. Come, Mr. Parfitt, you must do as you're told.

[She touches him with wand. His clothes fly off him, and he is changed to Harlequin, retaining his spectacles]

Aloy: But this is most embarrassing. I beg you will return me my coat and things at once. What on earth have I got on? This is certainly not the underclothing I put on this morning.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the specialisation of the quick-change artist in the vaudeville era, led by the incomparable great illusionist Leopoldo Fregoli (performing between 1889-1925). Many others tried to emulate the 'Fregoli Style' but after Leopoldo Fregoli's retirement, quick-change artistry faded from the spotlight, overshadowed by the rise of cinema and changing theatrical tastes. The art form lay largely dormant for nearly 50 years until Arturo Brachetti burst onto the scene in 1979.

Today, the multi-award winning, *Guinness World Record* breaking Arturo Brachetti stands as the contemporary heir to this rich theatrical lineage. The spirit of disguise and the thrill of rapid change, born on the stages of commedia, continue to enchant audiences, proving that the magic of seeing metamorphosis is truly timeless and reminds us of the boundless possibilities of the stage.

⁹ Gilbert, W.S. *The Fairy's Dilemma, An Original Domestic Pantomime, In Two Acts*. London: Chappell & Co., 1904.



Figure 7 - Leopoldo Fregoli in several inset portraits. Public Domain Mark. Source: Wellcome Collection.
Published Milano: Garzini e Pezzini, 1903: <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/du7puyct15>

Notes:

You can watch highlights of Arturo Brachetti's quick-change wizardry here:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEktmphegg330bh87WPdIDrilOJUHVzpf&si=I6Ce1V1eGx3VU7I5>

Special thanks to:

Arturo Brachetti for sharing his memories and historical knowledge, and his agent Silvia Bianco.

Jay Cross, commedia historian and Artistic Director of i Sebastiani, Boston, for sharing his knowledge of the lesser known, 'lost' scenarios from the 16th century.

Cheryl Stapleton





From the Archive: **An Introduction to** ***Album-Ricordo del Duttour Balanzon*** **by Barry Grantham**

Joan and I are inveterate collectors, or should I say 'accumulators'? The term 'collector' indicates careful study and applied attention. Long hours at auction rooms and early mornings at street markets. Good eyes for that 'hair crack' and a cultivated taste.

On the other hand, my dictionary tells me 'Accumulate' means 'to gather in increasing numbers and quantity', which seem to be the way we ended up with some of our treasures, (but also necessitating frequent 'clear outs'). Our aims varied over time but always included theatre and especially dance - from Ballet to Broadway. Our accumulations include the wonderful colour souvenirs of the De Basil company and even more rare programmes of the Diaghilev Ballet visits to London – much too on Pavlova. On the Broadway side, there's a programme with Fred and Adele Astaire in London 1926

This is all by way of explaining how we came by '*Album Ricordo*' featured here. For this, we must thank Joan's father who, after years working on the Survey of India in Calcutta (yes, Joan was born there), retired to Haywards Heath, where he would spend his Saturdays at fairs, jumble sales and other local events. The results were often offered to us. On this occasion, he said something along the lines of "I thought this might be in your line," and produced the '*Album Ricordo*' between protective cardboard covers

My thanks to Michael Daulton who lovingly photographed each precious page

Cheryl has given us some revealing translations and promises more!

I will postpone (or leave to others) any analysis of the work just pointing out the interesting point that whereas, as students of Commedia history we know of each Masks' association with a particular town, the '*Album Ricordo*' shows that the Mask was also important and celebrated by the town itself.

We would love to have your reaction to '*Album Ricordo*' be it from a few words to a considered article of a 1000!

Barry Grantham, May 2025



Historical Context

'*Album-Ricordo del Duttòur Balanzòn - Strenna Carnevalesca pel 1869*' is a publication that was associated with Bologna's carnival traditions. This album was produced by the *Società del Duttòur Balanzòn*, an organisation established in 1867 to rejuvenate public festivities in Bologna. The society aimed to promote carnival celebrations, support commerce and industry, and contribute to public welfare¹⁰.

The album would have been presented as a light-hearted, commemorative gift (*strenna*) for the 1869 carnival season, serving both as a souvenir and as means to document and preserve cultural traditions. This 'memory album' is written from the viewpoint of *Duttòur Balanzòn* (*Duttòur* spelt this way suggests a Bolognese dialect). True to Dottore Balanzone's nature, the content is humorous and satirical, with elements of the Bolognese dialect coming through.

The copy reproduced here belongs now to Barry and Joan Grantham. Another copy exists at the *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio in Bologna* in the *Collezione Brighetti*, a collection that includes various documents related to Bolognese social and cultural life from 1867 to 1995. This collection features items such as statutes, membership lists, carnival programs, and other memorabilia linked to the *Società del Duttòur Balanzòn* and similar associations¹¹.

The *Società del Duttòur Balanzòn* played a central role in organising elaborate carnival events in Bologna during the late 19th century. These celebrations included masked parades, theatrical performances, and unique traditions like the "*corso del gesso*," where participants engaged in playful battles using bags of gypsum powder. The character of *Duttòur Balanzòn* was emblematic of these festivities, often depicted as the master of ceremonies.

For those interested in exploring this album or related materials, houses the *Collezione Brighetti*, which includes the "*Album-Ricordo del Duttòur Balanzòn – Strenna Carnevalesca pel 1869*".

Cheryl Stapleton

Credits for the following pages:

- Images scanned for duplication by Michael Daulton
- Translations acquired by Cheryl Stapleton using AI - ChatGPT.com

¹⁰ Bologna Online, *Cronologia di Bologna dal 1796 A Oggi*, access here: https://www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/bolognaonline/lang/it/cronologia-di-bologna/1867/la_societ_del_duttour_balanzon_e_il_carnevale [May 2025]

¹¹ Digital Humanities, un progetto della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio in Bologna, 2025, access here: <https://digital.fondazioneclarisbo.it/artwork/unita-archivistica-146-societa-e-circoli-cittadini-societa-del-duttour-balanzon-la-fameja-bulgneisa-societa-pro-via-farini>

ALBUM-RICORDO
DEL
DUTTÒUR BALANZÒN

STRENNÀ CARNEVALESCA

PEL
1869



BOLOGNA
TIPOGRAFIA FAVA E GARAGNANI AL PROGRESSO
(Via Malcontenti N. 1802)

Prefaziòn.

Bulgnis! Furastir! Tùtt quant!

L'è za un ann ch' a sòn turnà a Bulògna, e in ste tèimp a pssi figurarev ch' a-i ho vèst che natta e-d differènza, e d cambiamèint ch' ha fatt la nostra Bulgnazza. — Oh! me a-n l' arvis più: e la srev lúnga s' a-v' avess da cuntar tútti egl' impressiòn ch' la m' ha fatt. — Da grassa cmod l' era, l' è dvintà una carta franzèisa. Da qula *Bononia docet* ch' l' era sèimper stà, adèss l' è indrì cm' è i mlùn. L' ha una *rana* ch' la fà a-l terscòn: e po tant alter coss ch' a-n' importa dirli.

Mo adèss a-i sòn me! — A-i vol curag'g e fermèzza, e a vdri ch' la dvintarà più granda e più récca d premma: forsi anc la capital d' Italia! (*Dall'uditorio parte un suono, fatto colla bocca, cui non è duopo spiegare*).

Chi è qu' impertinèint ch' n' a-l crèdd?...

A-v rèplic che adèss a-i sòn me!... e *quando ci sono io* a-i è a-l Duttòur. — A-l Duttòur l' è un omen d criteri: cùn a-l criteri a-s cundus bèin la baracca: la baracca, quand la và bèin, la 'n và mai mal: a-l mal *non sempre nuoce*, dis a-l pruverbi: i pruverbi disen la verità: la Verità i la dpènzen tútta nuda: in t' una cossa nuda a-n' i è püesì: la püesì l' è un fúm: a-l fúm l' è un gnéint: cùn gnéint a-n s cuntèinta brisa e-l donn: e-l donn.... *Sufficit*.

A-n la vúi tgnir tant lúnga, perchè a-l più interessant ch' a vúi direv l' è sòuvra a-l presèint *Arcord*, ch' a-v mètt sotta a-l nas.

Un *Album* cùn di dsegn; purassà cussléin scrètti, e dla musica e tútt. — Fai bona zira cumprandel, s' a vli che st' altr ann a fazza méi.

DUTTÒUR BALANZÒN

Preface.

Bolognese! Foreigners! Everyone!

It has been a year since I returned to Bologna, and in this time, I can say that I have seen many differences and changes in our beloved Bologna – Oh! I can't believe my eyes anymore: it would take too long to tell you all the impressions it has left on me. What was once rich and grand has now become like French paper. That famous saying, *Bononia docet* (Bologna teaches), which was always true, now seems lost. A frog has taken its place – just like many other things that, frankly, I don't even want to mention.

But now, here I am! I want courage and determination, and I will see it become even greater and more admired – perhaps even the capital of Italy! (At this point, a sound is heard from the audience, made with the mouth, which doesn't need explanation.)

Who is the impertinent one who doesn't believe it?

I reply that now I am here... and when I am here, I am the Doctor.

The Doctor is a man of principles: with principles, one can keep a house in order. When things go well, they don't go bad; evil doesn't always harm, as the proverb says. And proverbs tell the truth: Truth is always naked, but if you dress it up a little, it looks like smoke; and smoke is a genius; and geniuses don't need much to be happy – just a lady, a lady... Sufficit.

I won't go on much longer, because what really matters is what you will find inside.

An Album full of drawings, pure secret whispers, and music too. – Make a good purchase if you wish, otherwise, I'll have to make do!

DUTTÒUR BALANZÒN

IL BALANZONE

SCHERZO

Fra quante maschere
Sono in arnese
Sui palco-scenici
Del bel Paese,
Non v'ha simpatico
Gioviale omone
Come di Felsina
Il Balanzone.

Oh! Meneghino
Sen vada a scuola
Con quel suo strascico
Della parola!
Oda il perspicuo
Schietto sermone
Del Dottor celebre,
Del Balanzone.

Messer Tartaglia
Vi toglie il fiato
Con quell'asmatico
Gergo scempiato;
Mentr'è sì limpida
La locuzione
Del Babbo nobile,
Del Balanzone.

Insomma è celebre
Per senno e sale
In fra le maschere
Del Carnevale,
Questo felsineo
Giocondo omone,
Quest'ente cosmico
Il Balanzone.

Chi è Brighella?
Un fanfarone,
Un birbo maschera
D'ogni stagione;
Ma, onesto e candido
È il bravo omone,
Legale e medico
Il Balanzone.

E Stenterello?
Gli è un furbo sciocco;
Vuol fare il bindolo
Ed è un allocco;
Ma uomo lepidò,
Uom di ragione
È il Dottor Prôteo,
Il Balanzone.

Faceto e stolido
È l'Arlecchino,
Or dolce or òstico,
Sempre meschino;
Ma ognor ti sfolgora
In sua canzone
Enciclopedico
Il Balanzone.

S. Muzzi

IL BALANZONE

A Satirical Jest

Among the many masks
On stage,
Of the land,
There is none as likable
As the joyful giant
From Felsina,
Il Balanzone.

Oh! Meneghino
Should go to school
With his dragging
Speech!
Let him hear the clear
And simple sermon
Of the famous Doctor,
Il Balanzone.

Messer Tartaglia
Loses his breath
With that asthmatic
Broken speech;
Yet so clear
Is the diction
Of the noble father,
Il Balanzone.

Who is Brighella?
A loudmouth,
A trickster mask
For every season;
But honest and candid
Is the brave giant,
Lawyer and doctor,
Il Balanzone.

And Stenterello?
He is a foolish rogue;
He wants to deceive,
Yet he is a fool;
But a refined man,
A man of reason,
The Doctor Proteus,
Il Balanzone.

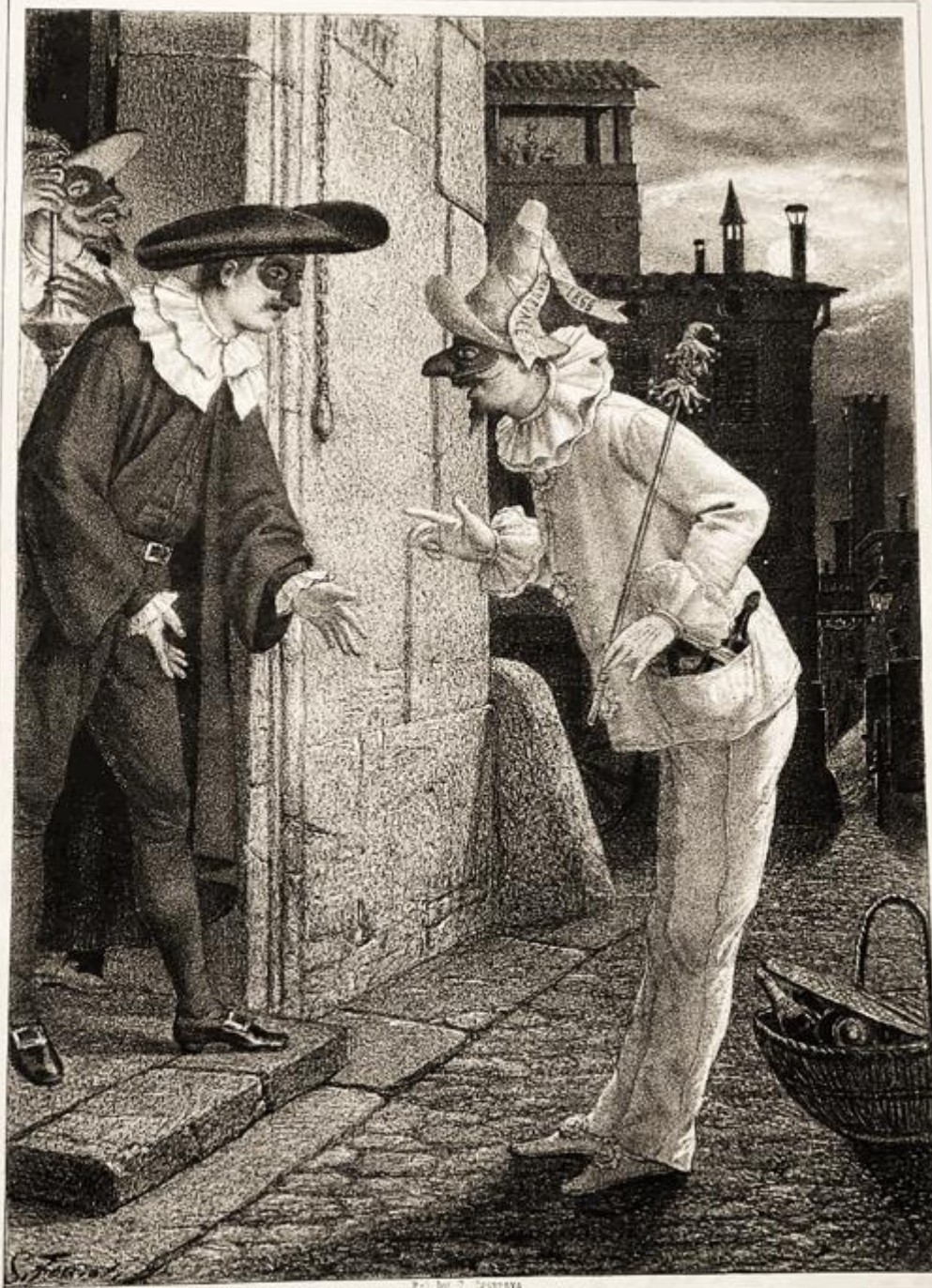
Witty and silly
Is Arlecchino,
Now sweet, now harsh,
Always petty;
Yet always radiant
In his song,
Encyclopaedic,
Il Balanzone.

Thus, he is renowned
For wisdom and wit
Among the masks
Of the Carnival,
This Bolognese,
Jolly giant,
This cosmic being,
Il Balanzone.

S. Muzzi

THE RETURN

IL RITORNO



— Eccomi di ritorno signor Dottore! Andiamo a divertirsi! ... viva l'allegria!
 — Oh! carésem Carenval: a s' vù ch' favi st baccan, ste malann, ste sgumbéi, e ch' picciava e ch' smartlava, e ch' sunava la campanella dla porta dutturála?
 — Meno filastrocche, signor Dottore. Le belle bolognesi vogliono divertirsi. Presto dunque: denari nel borsellino, e abbasso... la bolletta.

- Here I am back, Mr. Doctor! Let's go have fun! ... long live joy!
- Oh, dearest Carnival would caress! were you making this racket, these ailments, these convulsions, and were you pricking and were you hammering, and were you ringing the little bell of the doctor's door?
- Less idle chatter, Mr. Doctor. The beautiful Bolognese want to amuse themselves! So quickly: money in your little purse, and down... the bill.

AMOR CHE PASSA
Polka Mazurka per Piano Forte
ENRICO DRUSIANI

scherzando
Mazurka

FF

F *FF* *P* *FF* *F*

F *FF*

CLARINET *FF*

TRIO *FF*

FF *F* *FF*

FF *P* *F* *FF*

F *FF*

al fine

The musical score is written for Piano Forte and includes parts for Clarinet and Trio. The title is 'AMOR CHE PASSA' by Enrico Drusiani, described as a 'Polka Mazurka per Piano Forte'. The tempo/mood is 'scherzando' and the genre is 'Mazurka'. The score consists of several staves. The piano part starts with a forte (FF) dynamic. The clarinet and trio parts enter later. The score includes various dynamics such as FF, F, and P. The piece concludes with a 'fine' marking.

ADAMO ED EVA AL VEGLIONE DEL TEATRO COMUNALE

IN BOLOGNA

STORIA BIBLICA-ANTIDILUVIANA.

PARTE PRIMA

(La Scena rappresenta il *paradiso terrestre* — a destra un *fico d'India*, sotto al quale *Adamo* ed *Eva* stanno sdraiati su un *letto cogli... elastici* — La *Luna* non ha neppure acceso il *cerino da notte*). (*Eva* si smania, e tirando le orecchie ad *Adamo*, che s'ostina a dormire, grida) — *Adamo!* — (*Adamo* svegliandosi di soprasalto). — *Eva!* — (ed *Eva*) *Abbracciami!* (e *Adamo*) — Non rompermi i... sonni, che adesso... *dormo!!* — Orrore!! dopo 25 giorni di matrimonio tu dormi *Adamo?* (così grida *Eva* e inginocchiatasi avanti al marito prorompe con *Giulietta*:

« Deh! se tu dormi svegliati...
Sorgi mio ben, mia spene... »
(E *Adamo*) *Eva...* se mi vuoi bene...
Oh lasciami... dormire!

Scena muta in cui *Adamo* si riaddormenta, *Eva* si strappa la cuffia da notte, e balzando dal letto, fugge pel paradiso.

Intantò la *Luna* accende il *cerino da notte*.

— *Eva!* — (*Eva* si ferma a un tratto guardandosi attorno).

— Signora *Eva!!* (*Eva* sente che la voce parte da un albero, s'accosta all'albero, e s'accorge che attortigliato intorno al medesimo evvi un *serpente*).

— *Madama Eva!* (è il *serpente* che parla).

— Signor *Serpente!* (è *Eva* che risponde).

— Voi siete irritata contro il Signor *Adamo!* (così il *serpente*).

— Sì! *Adamo* è un imbecille che preferisce il sonno alla... moglie; il maschile al femminile! (così la donna).

— *Eva*, volete vendicarvi? — (comincia il *serpe*).

— Magari!... (continua la donna).

— *Eva...* ti vendicherai! — ciò dicendo il *serpe* si trasforma in elegante giovinotto in guanti e frack — *Eva* stupisce: — il giovinotto fischia: al fischio s'avvanza una cittadina chiusa. Il giovinotto estrae da quella un elegante abito da maschera, facendo vestire prontamente *Madama*. — *Madama* si veste — Il giovinotto la spinge nel legno, gridando al vetturino — 10 Centesimi di buona mano se in un'ora ci conduci al Veglione del Teatro Comunale in Bologna!

La cittadina parte: — la *Luna* smoccola il cerino: e *Adamo* si sveglia tastandosi..... la berretta da notte!

ADAM AND EVE AT THE MASKED BALL OF THE MUNICIPAL THEATRE

IN BOLOGNA

BIBLICAL-ANTIDILUVIAN STORY

PART ONE

(The scene represents the earthly paradise — on the right, a fig tree under which Adam and Eve are lying on an elastic... couch — The Moon has not even lit the night lantern.)

(Eve wriggles around and, pulling Adam's ears, who insists on sleeping, shouts) — Adam! —

(Adam, waking up startled) — Eve! — (Eve) — Hug me! — (Adam) — Don't disturb me...

dreams... let me sleep! — Horror!! After 25 days of marriage, you're already sleeping, Adam? —

(Thus cries Eve, and kneeling before her husband, she bursts out like Juliet:)

— Oh! If you sleep, wake up...

Rise, my love, my hope...

(and Adam) — Eve... if you love me...

Oh, leave me... to sleep!

(Silent scene in which Adam falls back asleep, Eve rips off her nightcap, jumps out of bed, and flees from paradise.)

Meanwhile, the Moon lights the night lantern.

— Eve! — (Eve stops for a moment, looking around)

— Madam Eve! — (Eve hears the voice coming from a tree, leans against the tree, and realizes that she is entangled by none other than a serpent)

— Madam Eve! (It is the serpent speaking)

— Mr. Serpent! (Eve responds)

— Are you annoyed by Mr. Adam? (says the serpent)

— Yes! Adam is a fool who prefers sleep to... wife! The masculine over the feminine! (says the woman)

— Eve, do you want revenge? (begins the serpent)

— Yes! Adam is a fool who prefers sleep to... wife! The masculine over the feminine! (says the woman)

— Eve, do you want revenge? (begins the serpent)

— Maybe... (the woman continues)

— Eve... take revenge! — (At these words, the serpent transforms into an elegant young man in gloves and a tailcoat—Eve is astonished—the young man whistles; at the whistle, a closed carriage approaches. The young man pulls out an elegant dress and mask, and quickly dresses Madame)

— Madame gets dressed, the young man helps her into the carriage, shouting to the coachman: — "10 cents for a good ride, and in an hour, take us to the Masked Ball at the Municipal Theatre in Bologna!"

(The scene fades: the Moon dims the lantern, and Adam wakes up groping around... his nightcap is gone!)

- 8 -

PARTE SECONDA

Adamo svegliatosi, guarda intorno e s'accorge che *Eva*, non è al suo fianco — S'alza pauroso e messesi le pianelle s'incammina a cercarla pel *paradiso*. — Non trova *Eva*, ma trova invece la sua *Cuffia da notte*. A questa vista grida — *Sacr...estia!*

— *Adamo!* (*Adamo* si ferma e tende l'orecchio).

— Signor *Adamo!* (*Adamo* guarda su un albero e vede su quello una *civetta*).

— Caro *Adamo* cerchi tua moglie? (così la *civetta*).

Sì — (risponde *Adamo*) — e la *civetta* allora: — Mentre dormivi il *serpente* ha sedotta tua moglie e l'ha guidata in cittadina chiusa al *Veglione del Comunale* in *Bologna*.

— Vendetta! io mi batterò col *serpente!* (*Adamo* irrompe).

— (E la *civetta* tosto) — Vendichiamoci insieme! (ciò dicendo la *civetta* si cangia in una bella *saltatrice* di rango *Inglese*, e montato un superbo cavallo arabo, toglie seco in groppa *Adamo* trasportandolo in un lampo al *Veglione del Comunale* in *Bologna*).

Nessuno storico narra ciò che accadesse in quella notte fra *Adamo*, *Eva*, la *Civetta* e il *Serpente*, ed io non voglio certo forare un buco nel velo che ricopre l'errore della prima coppia generatrice. — Solo a complemento della storia riprodurrò il Capo IX dell'*Evangelo...* scritto da *Lucca* (non l'editore musicale *Milanese*).

« Erano le 10 del mattino del primo giorno di quaresima, anno primo della Creazione del mondo.

« *Adamo* ed *Eva* mangiavano una costoletta di vitello alla triffola.

« Un *Signore*.... ben vestito si fe' loro innanzi.

« E siccome *Eva* non s'era pettinata, così vedendo il *Signore*, corse a mettersi il *cignon*.

« *Adamo* voleva correre anch'esso a porsi l'*occhialino*, ma il *Signore* lo trattenne.

« *Adamo* disse al *Signore* offerendogli una sedia: — S'accomodi a sedere.

« E il *Signore* — Non importa: chiamate piuttosto *Eva*.

« *Adamo* chiamò *Eva*, ma *Eva* non venne.

« Allora il *Signore* andò a prendere *Eva* per un orecchio, e condottala davanti ad *Adamo* disse a lei. — Dove hai passata la notte?

« Ed *Eva* — A riposare con *Adamo*.

« E il *Signore* — Bugia! — poi voltosi ad *Adamo* disse:

« — E tu *Adamo*? — E *Adamo*: — A fianco di mia moglie.

« E il *Signore* — Bugia! — Entrambi questa notte siete stati al *Veglione del Teatro Comunale di Bologna* — Tu *Adamo* colla *Civetta* e tu *Eva* col *Serpente*; e là gustaste la mela. Fuori adunque dal *Paradiso* e tornate a *Bologna* ad accrescere la progenie dei.... peccatori!

Morale

Adami in... *frack* ricordatevi di questa storia, e nelle ultime notti di carnevale abbracciate le vostre *Eve*, e non dormite, rammentando il proverbio che dice: « Chi dorme non piglia pesci, ma piglia invece.... qualche altra cosa ».

X. Y. Z.

PART TWO

Adam wakes up, looks around, and realises that Eve is not by his side — He gets up fearfully, puts on his slippers, and sets off to search for her through paradise — He does not find Eve, but instead, he finds her nightcap. Upon seeing this, he shouts:

- Sacrilege!
- Adam! (Adam stops and listens.)
- Sir Adam! (Adam looks up at a tree and sees an owl perched there.)
- What! Are you looking for your wife? (says the owl)
- Yes — (Adam replies)
- Then, the owl continues: While you were sleeping, the serpent seduced your wife and took her to the Masked Ball at the Municipal Theatre in Bologna.
- Vengeance! I will fight that serpent! (Adam exclaims and rushes off)
- (The owl immediately) Let's take revenge together! (Saying this, the owl transforms into a beautiful high-ranking Arabian dancer, mounts a magnificent Arab horse, lifts Adam onto its back, and in an instant, transports him to the Masked Ball at the Municipal Theatre in Bologna.)

There are no historical records what happened that night between Adam, Eve, the Owl, and the Serpent, and I do not wish to remove the veil covering the error of the first procreative couple. Only as a complement to the story, let us refer to Chapter IX of the Gospel... written in Lucca (not by the Milanese music publisher!)

- It was 10 in the morning on the first day of Lent, the year before the Creation of the world.
 - Adam and Eve were eating a truffle-flavoured omelette when...
 - A Lord... well-dressed... appeared before them.
 - And since Eve's hair was unkempt, upon seeing the Lord, she rushed to put on her chignon.
 - Adam also wanted to put on his glasses, but the Lord restrained him.
 - Adam offered the Lord a chair, saying: "Please, have a seat."
 - And the Lord: "That's not important; rather, call Eve."
 - Adam called Eve, but Eve did not come.
 - Then, the Lord went over, grabbed Eve by the ear, and brought her before Adam. He asked:
 - Where did you spend the night?
 - And Eve: Resting with Adam.
 - And the Lord: Liar! (Then, turning to Adam, he said:)
 - And you, Adam?
 - Adam: At my wife's side.
 - And the Lord: Liar! Both of you were at the Masked Ball at the Municipal Theatre of Bologna
 - You, Adam, with the Owl, and you, Eve, with the Serpent, and you ate the apple.
- Expelled, therefore, from Paradise, they returned to Bologna to increase the progeny of... sinners!

Moral

Adams, dressed in tailcoats, remember this story, and during the last nights of Carnival, embrace your Eves and do not sleep, recalling the proverb: "He who sleeps catches no fish, but rather... something else."

X. Y. Z.

NON SEPPI DIR DI NO!

Questa che scrivo adesso, dovrebbe certamente
Essere cosa allegra, piacevole, divertente.
Scrivo per una strenna, strenna da carnevale
In cui le cose serie figurano assai male.
Quando ciascuno allenta il freno alla mattina,
Bisogna fare il matto e andar colla fumana;
Star serio, fare il muso con grave dignità
Allor che invece spira vento di serietà.
Almeno è tal, si dica, tale il modo secondo
Il quale noi dobbiamo vivere a questo mondo.
Così, ve lo ripeto, capisco che dovrei
Far tutti dalle risa crepar, coi versi miei.
Ma qui mi casca l'asino: per mia grande sfortuna
Son uomo nato fatto sotto una triste luna.
La quarta fu cattiva, lo seppi sol di poi,
E ci ho la stessa colpa che avreste avuto voi.
- Piano, se farvi carico di tanto non si può,
È giusto d'altra parte il dirvi che però
Umore e viso arcigno e quindi arcigna penna
Non debbono mostrarsi in un'allegria strenna -
Miei cari, sta d'incanto; puffandò troppo bene
Portaste vasi a Samo e notte ad Atene.
Avete da rivenderne, non mica una ragione
E sono della stessa, stessissima opinione
Ma, santo cielo! così son fatto che non so
Risponder, come tanti rispondono, un bel **no**.
- Non seppi dir di no - Quest'unica ragione
D'infinte sciocchezze può dare spiegazione,
Che sembran tutto giorno d'origin misteriosa
E in fondo non dipendono se non da simil cosa.
Fra le quali vi do pienissima balla
Di metter; se credete, in fascio anche la mia.
- Vorrei... mi seusi... - Dica - Vorrei... ecco, un impegno
Ho preso verso il pubblico - Ma... - Lei che ha molto ingegno... -
- Io? ma lo par... - Dovrebbe... - Che cosa? - Non vorrà
Negarmi il suo favore - Si spieghi - Eccole qua.

Faccio una strenna... - Oh cielo! - Strenna... dirò così,
Una raccolta... - Avanti, avanti - Eccole qui -
- Perdoni, se si tratta di spendere, l'avverto
Che non posso. I miei mezzi... brutti momenti... - Certo -
Ci scapita la borsa, e la mia, glielo giuro,
Sta male, e molto male; mi capirà... - Sicuro! -
- Dunque... - Se l'è per questo, si de' rassicurare;
Io la sua borsa non gliela voglio toccare.
Desidero soltanto da lei una giocosa
Composizione in versi, o se le piace, in prosa.
Un qualche scherzo insomma, pei nostri buontemponi
Da metter nella strenna del Dottor Balanzoni -
- Intendo... - Mi risparmi un rifiuto, La prego -
- Non sono al caso - Via, negar non giova - Nego -
- Son disusato ai versi... - Della prosa mi fuccia -
- E poi non è il mio genere, farò della robaccia -
- Volendo, non potrebbe. Non mi dica di no -
- Ma l'assicuro... - Andiamo! - Basta, vedrem... vedrò! -
La tinea ai tincolini disse - Siam fritti, o cari -
Bisogna che il maestro lo paghino, i scolari.
Ora ci sono, è fatta, ho dato nello scoglio;
Per mia colpa mi trovo in un curioso imbroglio.
Dal bivio non si sfugge: mantenere o mancare,
E farsi in tutti e due i casi corbellare.
Non che mi trovi privo, o a corto di materia,
Come tanti scrittori di penna allegra e seria;
Anzi al contrario: abbondano le cose alla mia mente,
Ma quando sto per dirle, non son più buono a niente.
Se poi mi metto in testa di riuscir giocondo,
A lagrime di sangue so' piangere mezzo mondo.
A Balanzoni! e due! E dico due perché
Una m'ha fatto adesso, e l'altra già mi fe'.
Quando nel carnevale ultimo, ristorato
Da questo eccellentissimo signor laureato,
Ebbi dagli scortesi proiettili di gesso
Un abito seinpato e un occhio compromesso.

"I Didn't Know How To Say No!"

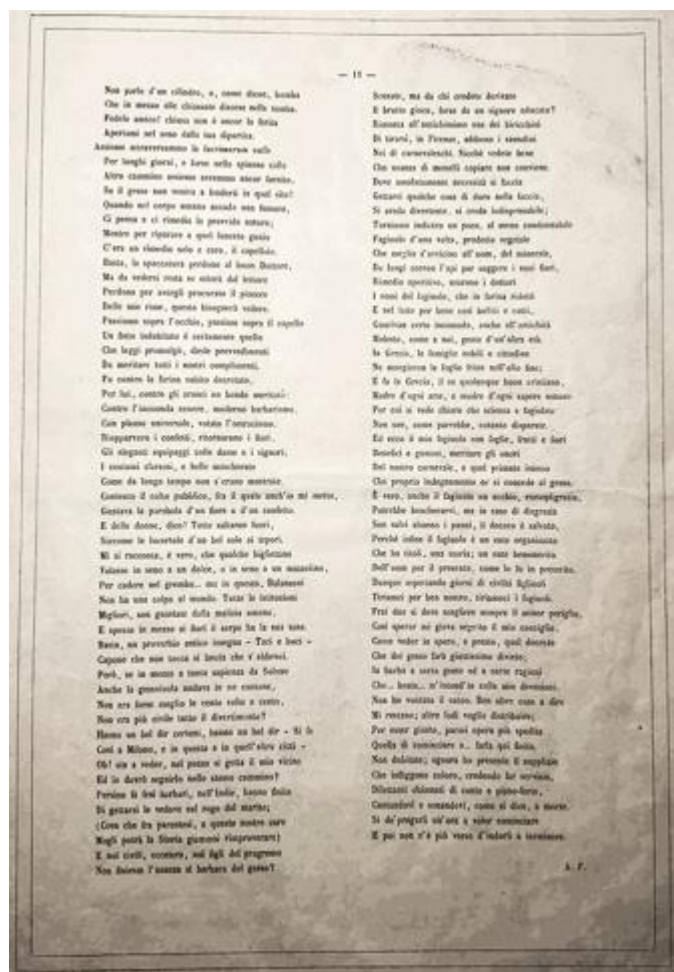
This that I write now, should certainly
Be something cheerful, pleasant, fun.
I write for a carnival gift, a gift for carnival,
In which serious things figure very badly.
When everyone loosens the reins of madness,
One must play the fool and go with the flow;
To remain serious, to frown with grave dignity
When instead a wind of seriousness blows.
At least that's how it is, so they say, the way we
should live in this world.
Thus, I repeat, I understand that I should
Make everyone burst with laughter, with my verses,
But here's where I fail: to my great misfortune I am a
man born under a bad star.
The fourth one was bad - I only realised that later -
And I bear the same fault you would have had.

Hush, if you cannot bear such a burden,
It is fair to say, on the other hand, that a sullen mood
and face – and therefore a surly pen –
Should not appear in a cheerful gift.
My dears, it's enchanting; but by speaking too well,
You carried vases to Samos and owls to Athens*
You have plenty of reasons – more than just one
And I'm of the same, very same opinion.
But heaven help me! I'm just not the sort
Who knows how to answer, as many do, with a firm
'no'.
– I didn't know how to say no – This sole reason
Can explain countless follies,
Which have mysterious origin every day,
And in the end, they depend on nothing but such a
thing.
Among them, I give you full permission
To bundle up mine as well, if you so believe
I would... excuse me... – Tell me – I would... here, an
engagement
I have taken towards the public – But... – You who
have much wit... –
Me? But you jest... Should... – What? – You wouldn't
Deny me your favour? Speak up! Here you are.

I make a gift... Oh heavens! A collection... Go on, go
on... A gift... I'll say it – here it is.
– Pardon me, if it's a matter of spending, I warn you,
It's not possible. My means... bad times... Certainly –
My purse suffers, and mine, I swear to you,
Is bad, very bad; you will understand... of course!
So ... if that's the case, rest assured;
I don't want to touch your purse. I only desire from
you a playful composition in verse, or if you prefer,
in prose.
Some joke, in short, for our enjoyment to put in the
gift of Dottor Balanzoni.
– I mean... spare me a refusal, I beg you.
– I am not in the mood. Come on, denying is useless.
I deny –
– I am unused to verses... – if it's prose, let me do
that – but it's not my style, I'll make something
trashy –
– If I wanted, I couldn't. Don't tell me no –
– I assure you... Let's go! Enough, we'll see... I'll see!
The tench to the tenches said: "We are fried, dear
ones, The teacher must be paid by the pupils." **
Now I am here, it's done, I have run into a reef;
Through my own fault I find myself in a curious
mess.
From the crossroads there is no escape: to continue
or to fail,
In both cases, one is made a fool of. Not that I find
myself lacking, or short of material,
Like many writers of cheerful and serious pen;
On the contrary: things abound in my mind,
But when I am about to say them, I am no longer
good for anything.
If then I put it in my head to succeed in being funny,
I could make half the world weep tears of blood.
To Balanzoni! And two! And I say two, because One
happened to me just now, and the other happened
before,
Back at the last Carnival, when – revived
By this most excellent, learned gentleman –
I was struck by those rude gypsum missiles,
And ended up with a ruined suit and a damaged
eye.

* This is an Italian idiom, meaning 'to bring something unnecessary' – Samos was famous for its pottery; Athens was known for its abundance of owls; it's equivalent to the English expression "carrying coals to Newcastle".

** Another idiom using the image of fish (tench) facing a dire situation (being fried) to express a situation where a group is collectively facing the consequences of one individual's actions.



Non parlo d'un cilindro, o, come dicono, bomba
Che in mezzo alle chiassate discese nella tomba.
Fedele amico! chiusa non è ancor la ferita
Apertami nel seno dalla tua dipartita.

Assieme attraversammo la *lacrimarum valle*
Per lunghi giorni, e forse nello spinoso calle
Altro cammino assieme avremmo ancor fornito,
Se il gesso non veniva a fenderti in quel sito!
Quando nel corpo umano accade una fessura,
Ci pensa e ci rimedia la provvida natura;
Mentre per riparare a quel funesto guaio
C'era un rimedio solo e caro, il capellaio.
Basta, la spaccatura perdono al buon Dottore,
Ma da vedersi resta se otterrà dal lettore
Perdono per avergli procurato il piacere
Delle mie rime, questo bisognerà vedere.
Passiamo sopra l'occhio, passiam sopra il capello
Un fatto indubitato è certamente quello
Che leggi promulgò, diede provvedimenti
Da meritare tutti i nostri complimenti.
Fu contro la farina subito decretato,
Per lui, contro gli aranci un bando meritò:
Contro l'immonda cenere, moderno barbarismo,
Con plauso universale, votato l'ostracismo.
Riapparvero i confetti, ritornarono i fiori,
Gli eleganti equipaggi colle dame e i signori;
I costumi sfarzosi, e belle mascherate
Come da lungo tempo non s'erano mostrate.
Contento il colto pubblico, fra il quale anch'io mi metto,
Guatava la parabola d'un fiore o d'un confetto.
E delle donne, dico! Tutte saltaron fuori,
Siccome le lucertole d'un bel sole ai tepori.
Mi si racconta, è vero, che qualche bigliettino
Volasse in seno a un dolce, o in seno a un mazzolino,
Per cadere nel grembo... ma in questo, Balanzoni
Non ha una colpa al mondo. Tutte le istituzioni
Migliori, son guastate dalla malizia umana,
E spesso in mezzo ai fiori il serpe ha la sua tana.
Basta, un proverbio antico insegna - Taci e buci -
Capone che non tocca si lascia che s'abbruci.
Però, se in mezzo a tanta sapienza da Solone
Anche la gessnuola andava in un cantone,
Non era forse meglio le cento volte e cento,
Non era più civile tutto il divertimento?
Hanno un bel dir certuni, hanno un bel dir - Si fa
Così a Milano, e in questa e in quell'altra città -
Oh! sta a veder, nel pozzo si getta il mio vicino
Ed io dovrò seguirlo nello stesso cammino?
Persino là frai barbari, nell'Indie, hanno finito
Di gettarsi le vedove sul rogo del marito;
(Cosa che fra parentesi, a queste nostre care
Mogli potrà la Storia giammai rimproverare)
E noi civili, eccetera, noi figli del progresso
Non finirem l'usanza sì barbara del gesso?

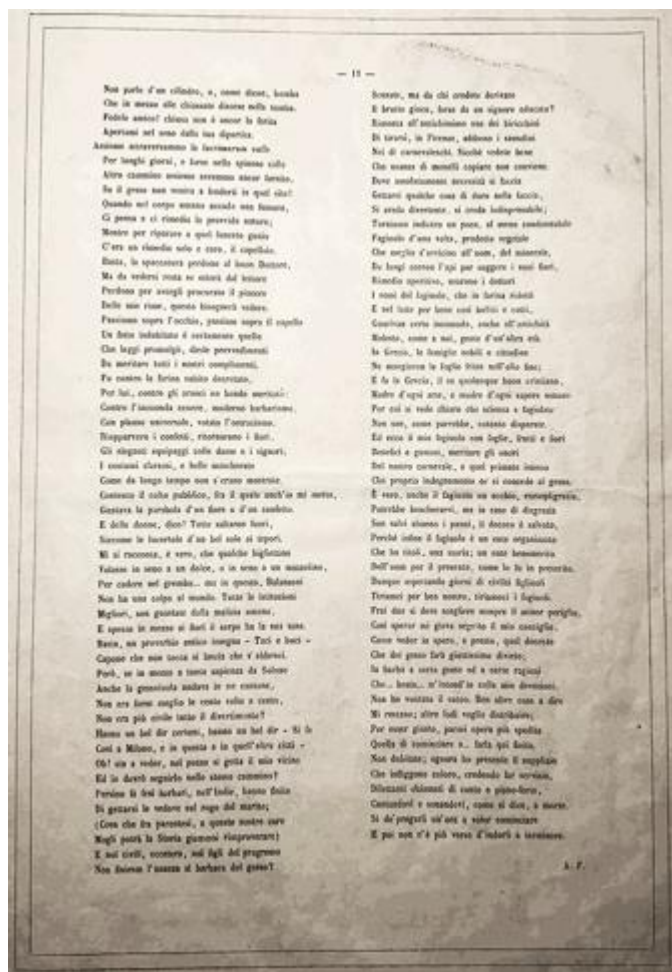
(First column)

I'm not talking about a top hat, or, as they say, a 'bomba'
 That amidst the clamour descended into the tomb.
 Faithful friend! The wound is not yet closed
 Opened in my breast by your departure.
 Together we crossed the valley of tears
 For long days, and perhaps on the thorny path
 We would have still had another journey together,
 If the plaster hadn't come to split you right there!
 When a fissure occurs in the human body,
 Provident nature thinks about it and remedies it;
 While to repair that dreadful trouble
 There was only one remedy, and an expensive one: the hatmaker.
 Enough of that; I forgive the good Doctor for the hat's split,
 But it remains to be seen if the reader will forgive me
 For having offered him the pleasure
 Of my rhymes; this remains to be seen.
 Let's pass over the eye, let's pass over the hair
 It is an undoubted fact that
 He promulgated laws, issued provisions
 That deserve all our compliments.
 It was immediately decreed against flour,
 For him, a deserved ban against oranges:
 Against the foul ash, that modern barbarism,
 With universal applause, ostracism was voted.
 The confetti reappeared, the flowers returned,
 The elegant carriages with ladies and gentlemen;
 The sumptuous costumes, and beautiful masquerades
 That hadn't been seen for so long, came back.
 The cultured public, among whom I also count myself, was content,
 Watching the gentle descent of a flower or a piece of confetti.
 And of the women, I say! They all jumped out,
 Like lizards emerging from a beautiful sun to bask with the hares.
 One recounts, it's true, that some confetti
 Flew into a sweet, or in a little bun,
 To fall into the lap... but in this, Balanzoni
 Has no blame in the world. All better
 Institutions, when tainted by human malice,
 Even among flowers and sceptres have their den.
 Enough, a proverb says—Shut up and bite—
 Capone who does not cook ends up burning.
 Yet, even among such wisdom as Solon's,
 Even the wise went astray at times,
 Wouldn't it be better the hundred old and wise, than all this fun?
 They have a fine set of certainties, they know how to say—So it goes
 As in Milan, and in that other cultured city—
 Oh! stay true, into the well I throw my nearby voice
 And must I follow the same path?
 Worse than among barbarians, in India, they ended
 By tossing widows onto the pyres of husbands;
 (Which parenthesis be granted, to these dear
 Wives History will never cease to blame)
 And in civilized times, children of progress—
 Shall we not end the barbaric custom of plaster?

The meaning of this playful, rambling verse is hard to follow, but it seems to be a lament for the 'death' of a top hat (also known colloquially as a bomba). The hat is personified as a faithful friend and the cause of its 'death' seems to be a split in its 'plaster'. The poem shifts to praise the Doctor (the hat's owner) for his civic actions. These actions, despite being described in a somewhat bizarre way (banning flour and oranges, ostracizing ash as 'modern barbarism'), are presented as having led to a revival of public life, festivities, and elegance.

The second column is translated as best I can on the next page...

CS



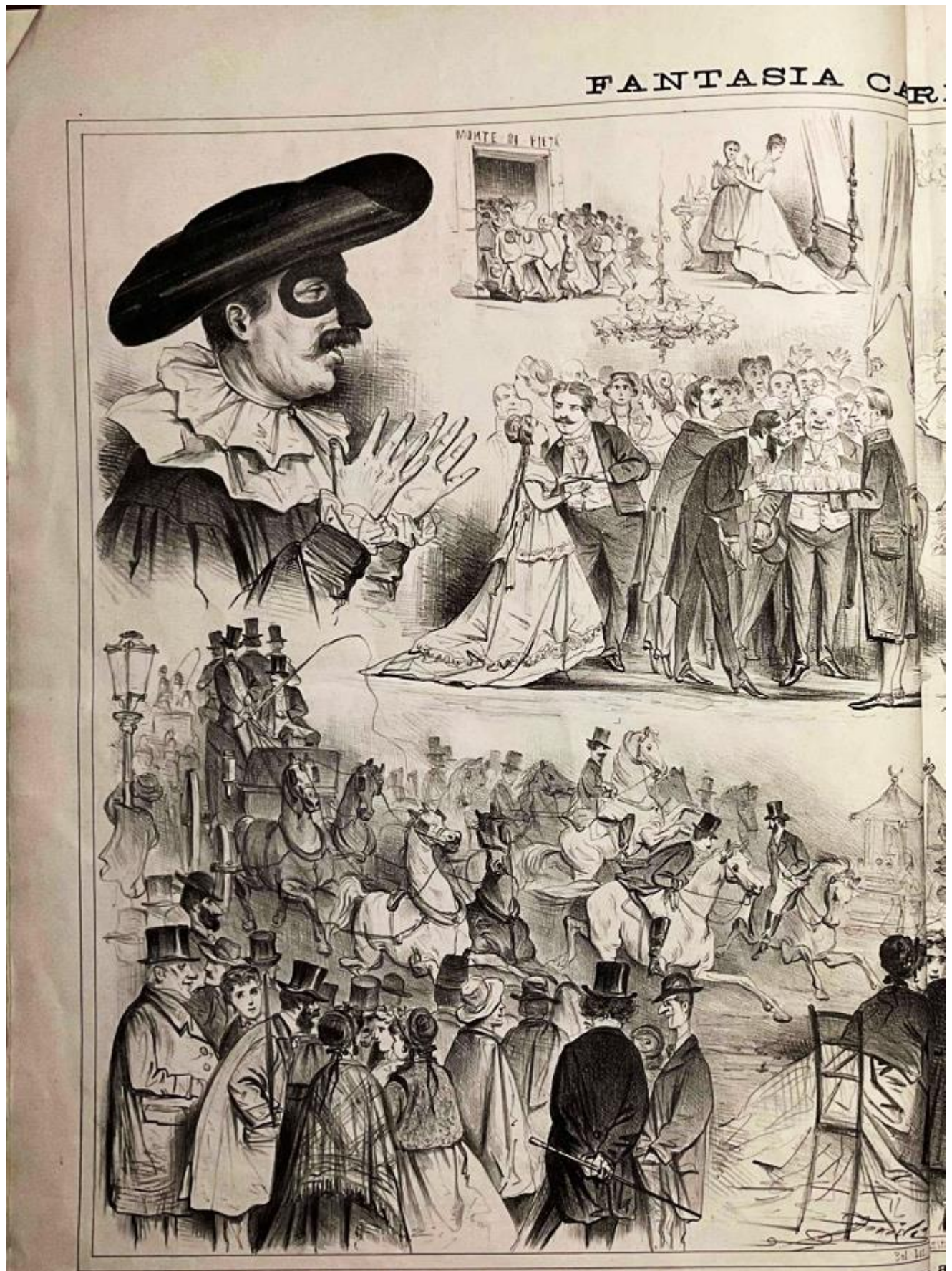
Scusate, ma da chi credete derivato
Il brutto gioco, forse da un signore educato?
Rimonta all'antichissimo uso dei biricchini
Di tirarsi, in Firenze, addosso i sassolini
Noi di carnevaleschi. Sicché vedete bene
Che usanza di monelli copiare non conviene.
Dove assolutamente necessità si faccia
Gettarsi qualche cosa di duro nella faccia,
Si creda divertente, si creda indispensabile;
Torniamo indietro un poco, al meno condannabile
Fagiuolo d'una volta, prodotto vegetale
Che meglio s'avvicina all'uom, del minerale.
Da lungi corron l'api per suggere i suoi fiori,
Rimedio aperitivo, usarono i dottori
I semi del fagiuolo, che in farina ridotti
E nel latte per bene così bolliti e cotti,
Guarivan certo incomodo, anche all'antichità
Molesto, come a noi, gente d'un'altra età.
In Grecia, le famiglie nobili o cittadine
Ne mangiavan le foglie fritte nell'olio fine;
E fu la Grecia, il sa qualunque buon cristiano,
Madre d'ogni arte, e madre d'ogni sapere umano
Per cui si vede chiaro che scienza e fagiolate
Non son, come parrebbe, cotanto disparate.
Ed ecco il mio fagiuolo con foglie, frutti e fiori
Benefici e gustosi, meritare gli onori
Del nostro carnevale, e quel primato istesso
Che proprio indegnamente or si concede al gesso.
È vero, anche il fagiuolo un occhio, esempligrizia,
Potrebbe buscherarvi, ma in caso di disgrazia
Son salvi almeno i panni, il decoro è salvato,
Perché infine il fagiuolo è un ente organizzato
Che ha titoli, una storia; un ente benemerito
Dell'uom per il presente, come lo fu in preterito.
Dunque aspettando giorni di civiltà figliuoli
Tiriamoci per ben nostro, tiriamoci i fagioli.
Frai due si deve scegliere sempre il minor periglio,
Così sperar mi giova seguito il mio consiglio,
Come veder io spero, e presto, quel decreto
Che del gesso farà giustissimo divieto;
In barba a certa gente ed a certe ragioni
Che... basta... m'intend'io nelle mie devozioni.
Non ho vuotato il sacco. Ben altre cose a dire
Mi restano; altre lodi voglio distribuire;
Per esser giusto, parmi opera più spedita
Quella di cominciare a... farla qui finita.
Non dubitate; ognora ho presente il supplizio
Che infliggono coloro, credendo far servizio,
Dilettanti chiamati di canto o piano-forte,
Cantandovi e sonandovi, come si dice, a morte.
Si de'pregarli un'ora a voler cominciare
E poi non c'è più verso d'indurli a terminare.

(Second Column)

Excuse me, but from whom do you believe
 This nasty game came, perhaps from a well-bred man?
 It harks back to the ancient custom of little rascals
 Throwing pebbles at each other, in Florence
 On carnival days. So, look at that custom
 Of rascals copying men—it's not fitting.
 Where necessity absolutely demands
 Throwing hard things in someone's face,
 Let it be believed to be amusing, if not indispensable;
 Let's go back a bit, to the least condemnable
 The bean, once upon a time, a prized vegetable
 Closer to man than minerals.
 From afar, bees run to suck its flowers,
 An aperitive remedy, used by doctors
 The seeds of the bean, ground into flour
 And into the milk for making good boiled and cooked food,
 It healed certain discomforts, even in ancient times
 Troublesome, like to us, to people of another age.
 In Greece, noble or citizen families
 Ate its leaves fried in light oil;
 And in Greece, as any good Christian knows,
 Mother of all art, and of all human knowledge
 From which it is clear that science and bean-dishes
 Are not, it would seem, so very disparate.
 Here is my bean with leaves, fruits and flowers
 Beneficial and tasty, deserving of honours
 Of our carnival, and that sacred gesture
 Which, if undeserved, is given with plaster.
 It is true, even the bean has an exemplary eye,
 It could blush, in case of disgrace—
 If at least the clothes are safe, decorum is salvaged,
 Because the bean has a well-organised life
 With titles, a story; a true benefactor
 Of man for the present, as it was in the past.
 So, awaiting days of civilized beans
 Let us throw beans well, let us throw beans.
 Among two evils always choose the lesser peril,
 So I hope my advice is followed,
 As soon as seen and heard, this decree
 Of plaster will be justly banned;
 In spite of certain people and their reasons
 Who... enough... I understand myself in my devotions.
 I have not emptied the sack. Many things
 Remain; others I wish to distribute;
 To be fair, the most efficient action
 Is to begin it... and finish it.
 Do not doubt; now is the punishment
 That they inflict, believing it a service,
 Those amateurs called singers and pianoforte players,
 Singing and playing, as they say, to death.
 Let's pray they never begin again
 And then there's no way to make them stop.

In this second column the writer turns their focus to what they first criticise as a 'nasty game' of throwing pebbles at each other during carnival but then goes on to humorously champion the bean as a better alternative projectile, praising the bean for its medicinal properties, its popularity on dinner tables in Greece and its status, having titles and a story. The writer then digresses again, ending with a satirical comment about bad amateur singers and piano players!

CS



Folla su tutta la linea — dal Zio, alle feste signorili, dove c'è da ristorar

Crowds all along the line — from Uncle's place, to the elegant parties, where there's dining, at the popular dance, at the masquerade parade, and at the gala, because it's free; etc., etc

CARNEVALESCA



al ballo popolare, al corso delle maschere, e di gala, perchè gratis; eo. ec...

UN DRAMMA EXPRESS

Semina la mattina la tua semenza, e la
sera non lasciar posare le tue mani.
Ecclesiaste XI. 6.

PREFAZIONE

Lettor mio caro: poichè hai fatto il sacrificio di spendere i tuoi quattrini nel comprar questa Strenna, compisci il tuo atto di sublime abnegazione col leggere il mio dramma. Ha mille difetti; è vecchio, è melenso, è stupido, ma nondimeno brilla per due gran pregi: la brevità, e la verità. Vi troverai qualche leggiero anacronismo, ma pensa che l'avrò commesso apposta per coprire di un denso velo gli eroi del dramma, de' quali il Protagonista... sono io! (Sono diventato rosso?)

Del resto se ti vien sonno, io ti insegnerò una ricetta infallibile per mandarlo via: fatti fare il solletico dalla cameriera di tua moglie.

E se non hai moglie fa come puoi.

L' AUTORE

ATTO PRIMO

SCENA I.

(Teatro Comunale. Decima rappresentazione della Favorita. Nel palco N. 127 dell' ordine VIII sta un angelo in compagnia di una madre che farebbe fuore nelle Gioie di Bologna. Nella sedia di Orchestra N. 203 fila 91 sta il Sottoscritto. (Mettete questi numeri al lotto). Scambio di occhiate incendiarie fra l' angelo ed il Sottoscritto. Quest' ultimo si volge al suo vicino di destra e dice:)

SOTTOSCRITTO — Chi è quella signora al N. 127 in ottavo ordine?

IL VICINO — È la signora Carina Pignatta (*).

SOTTOSCRITTO — (Col canocchiale incollato sugli occhi). Oh! angelo, trono, dominazione! Oh! Venere dei medici, dei chirurghi, dei flebotomi! etc. etc.

MONGINI — Spirto gentil de' sogni miei.....

IL PUBBLICO — Beeeene! Braaaaavo! Immensone!

SOTTOSCRITTO — (In estasi ed approfittando del baccano). Viva la signora Pignatta!

IL VICINO — El srà matt?

SCENA II.

Atrio del Comunale.

LA SIG. PIGNATTA — Fiaccherista! In via del Babbuino N. 16 (la carrozza parte).

SOTTOSCRITTO — (Segnando l' indirizzo nel portafogli) Spirto gentil.....

UN INDUSTRIALE — Canditiini, crocantiniini.

ATTO SECONDO

SCENA I.

(Camera del Sottoscritto al quarto piano. Il Sottoscritto è seduto al tavolino colla penna in mano ed una bottiglia di vino).

SOTTOSCRITTO — Ahimè, l' estro non viene! (beve). O tu Lambrusco diletto, fammi degnamente cantare quella inarrivabil Pignatta..... quella Pignatta d' oro e di rose..... bella idea questa (beve, indi scrive).

(*) So mai qualche signora avesse il poetico nome di Carina Pignatta, è pregata a credere che qui non si tratta di lei, ma di una persona che ha lo stesso nome.

AN EXPRESS DRAMA

"Sow your foolishness in the morning, and in the evening do not let your hands rest."

Ecclesiastes XI. 6

PREFACE

My dear reader, Since you've already made the sacrifice of spending your coins to buy this nonsense, complete your act of sublime self-denial by reading my drama. It has a thousand faults; it's clumsy, sappy, and stupid, but nonetheless it shines with two great virtues: brevity and truth. You may find a slight anachronism here and there, but think that I may have included it on purpose to cast a dense veil over the real hero of the drama, of which the Protagonist... is me! (Have I turned red?)

Otherwise, if you feel sleepy, I'll teach you a foolproof recipe to chase it away: have your wife's maid make you a footbath.

And if you have no wife—do what you can.

THE AUTHOR

ACT ONE

SCENE I

(Municipal Theatre. Tenth performance of "La Favorita." In balcony No. 127, row VIII sits an angel in the company of a mother who would outshine the Jewels of Bologna. In Orchestra seat No. 203, row 91, sits the Undersigned. (Note: these are lottery numbers).

Exchange of fiery glances between the angel and the Undersigned. The latter turns to his neighbour and says:)

UNDERSIGNED — Who is that lady in No. 127, eighth row?

THE NEIGHBOUR — That's Mrs. Carina Pignatta (*).

UNDERSIGNED — (With opera glasses glued to his eyes). Oh! angel, throne, dominion! Oh! Venus of doctors, surgeons, and phlebotomists! etc. etc.

MONGINI — Spirit gentle of my dreams...

THE AUDIENCE — Boooo! Braaavo! Magnificent!

UNDERSIGNED — (In ecstasy, taking advantage of the uproar). Long live Mrs. Pignatta!

THE NEIGHBOUR — Is he mad?

SCENE II

(Foyer of the Municipal Theatre)

MRS. PIGNATTA — Carriage driver! To Via del Babuino No. 16 (the carriage departs).

UNDERSIGNED — (Writing the address in his wallet) Gentle spirit...

AN INDUSTRIALIST — Candiiniiies, crocantiinii!

(*) If any lady happens to have the poetic name of Carina Pignatta, she is kindly asked to believe that this is not about her, but about someone with the same name.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

(Room of the Undersigned on the fourth floor. He is seated at a small table with a pen in hand and a bottle of wine.)

UNDERSIGNED — Alas! The inspiration does not come! (drinks). Oh, you beloved Lambrusco, grant me the power to worthily sing of that inimitable Pignatta... that golden and rose-hued Pignatta... beautiful idea this (drinks, then writes).

(continues on next image...)

O gentle Pignatta, rose and gold,
O among other pots, honor and light...

No, no, that won't do: it's too blatant a plagiarism. Let's change the meter (drinks and writes)

To you, angelic Pignatta
Let my unworthy song offer
The buttery and warm
Joy of a great design...

Ah! Ah! This is no longer just plagiarism, it's a fine and faithful copy; nay, even better... Blessed Muse! (drinks)

THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE — Go to bed, you drunkard.

UNDERSIGNED — Be silent, barbaric voice; I'll obey you, since I think you're not entirely wrong...

(He stands up from the table.)
The Earth spins! Galileo said so long ago...
O supernatural Pignatta!

When the night is calm,
When the night is done,
You visit my dreams,
Magnificent Pignatta!

(Crash! A chamber pot falls and shatters.)

... Magnificent Pignatta
Alas, that I lost you,
Behold my agony,
Broken at your feet!...

(The moonlight goes out, and the Undersigned begins snoring after once more shouting:)
Long live the lady Pignatta!

— 15 —

O Pignatta gentil di rosa e d'oro,
O dell'altre pignatte onore e lume.....

No, non va bene: c'è un plagio troppo manifesto. Mutiamo metro (*beve e scrive*).

A te Pignatta angelica
Porga il mio canto indegno
La butirrosa e tiepida
Gioia d'un gran disegno.....

Ahi! Ahi! questo non è più un plagio, è una copia bella e buona; anzi non molto bella..... Maledetta Musa! (*beve*).

LA VOCE DELLA COSCIENZA — Vatti a letto che sei ubbriaco.

SOTTOSCRITTO — Taci, barbara voce; ti ubbidirò, poichè mi pare che tu non abbia tutti i torti.....
(*si alza alla meglio*). La terra gira! Già l'ha detto Galileo..... O Pignatta soprannaturale!

Quando la notte è placida,
Quando la notte è fatta,
I sogni miei deh visita
Magnifica Pignatta!.....

(*Pauff! cade un vaso notturno e si rompe*).

..... Magnifica Pignatta
Ahimè ch'io ti perdei,
Ecco ti miro esanime,
Infranta ai piedi miei!.....

(*Si spegne il lume, ed il Sottoscritto comincia a russare dopo aver gridato ancora una volta*

Viva la signora Pignatta!

ATTO TERZO

SCENA I

(Il Sottoscritto getta sulla finestra della sua bella la seguente lettera:)

« Donna infinita!

« Il Sottoscritto si prostra nel fango dinanzi ai tuoi stivaletti! Io ti amo!!!..... Quando i tuoi occhi
» s'incontrarono coi miei al Teatro Comunale, io mi sentii ardere come se una pietra infernale fosse
» scesa a medicare l'ulcerato mio cuore! Deh! balsamo de' mali miei, rispondi all'amor mio ed a questa
» lettera, dicendomi dove e quando ti potrò parlare del forno che ho nel petto! Io ti amo come un
» asino, e l'amore mi fa anche cantare! Getta uno de' tuoi luminosi sguardi sul seguente sonetto, ed ama

IL SOTTOSCRITTO »

ALLA MIA CASTA DIVA

SONETTO

« Bella qual faccia di cadente sole,
» O qual di luna tremolanti rai,
» Collo splendor di tua bellezza fai
» D'invidia impallidir le *bragareole*!
» Io rimasi un minchion senza parole
» Quando la prima volta ti mirai!
» Tu mi feristi ed io non dissi ahi! ahi!
» Più non mangiai bisticche e non bracirole!
» Non giocai più alle carte e non a *mora*;
» Mi prese una mortal malinconia,
» E quel ch'è peggio la mi dura ancora!
» Deh, se com'è sei bella anche sei pia,
» Se un poco m'ami, e se non vuoi ch'io mora,
» Dammi un appuntamento, anima mia!!!!!! »

ACT THREE**SCENE I**

(The Undersigned throws the following letter out his window to his beloved):

"Infinite Woman!

The Undersigned prostrates himself in the mud before your dainty boots! I love you!!!

When your eyes met mine at the Municipal Theatre, I felt myself burn as if a hellish stone had descended to inflame my wounded heart!

Oh balm of my wounds, answer my love and this letter, telling me where and when I may speak to you of the oven burning in my chest!

I love you like a donkey, and love makes me even sing!

Cast one of your luminous glances upon the following sonnet, and love me.

— The Undersigned"

TO MY CHASTE DIVA**SONNET**

Fair face of setting sun,
Or trembling rays of moon,
With the splendor of your beauty,
You pale even the brightest fireworks!

I stood there a dumb fool without words
When I saw you the first time!
You wounded me and I said nothing! Ah!
I ate no steak and no chop!

I no longer played cards or dice;
A dark melancholy seized me,
And that's worse than a gallows rope!

Alas, if you're as kind as you are fair,
If you love me even a little, and if not —
Give me a date, at least a meeting... ah me!!!!!!

SCENE II

(The Diva replies with the following letter)

"My darling Cocchino,
Your Zerudella pleased me immensely — it's clear you're from the school of that Dante
who risked it all for love of Madam Laura. And if you truly mean it when you say you love me,
come tomorrow night at midnight beneath my window
and make the sound of the rooster — cock-a-doodle-doo — and the one who loves you will open up,
though it seems impossible!

— 16 —

SCENA II.

(La Diva risponde colla seguente epistola)

« Cocchino mio.

- » La vostra Zerudella mi è piaciuta dei mondi e si vede bene che sei della scola di quel Dante
 » che pericolò d'amore per Madama Laura, e se dici da buono che mi volete bene vieni doman sera
 » a mezzanotte sotto la mia finestra e fate il verso del gallo chiricchi che vi aprirà
 » Quella che vi ama che pare impossibile!
 » P. S. — Bisognerà che ti contentiate che ti riceva allo scuro perchè se no destassimo tutti ».

ATTO QUARTO

(Camera oscura in casa Pignatta).

N. B. — Quest'atto si ommette per amor di..... brevità, e si sostituisce la seguente terzina del Berni.

In me ritroverai di buone parti,
 Ma la miglior io non te la vo' dire;
 S'io la dicessi farei vergognarti.

ATTO QUINTO

SCENA I.

(Porta di casa Pignatta. Un fanale a gaz).

LA SIG. PIGNATTA — (*Riconducendo il Sottoscritto*). Addio.... a rivederci.... dammi un bacio, cocchino mio!

SOTTOSCRITTO — (*Vedendo il grifo della signora Carina illuminato dal gaz*). Come!.... Che?.... Ma lei è la vecchia?!.... Ah dura terra, perchè non t'apristi!.... Voleva ben dire io!.... ed io bestia non accorgermene!.... solo al puzzo del fiato!.... Puali!.... (*sputa*).

SIG. PIGNATTA — Cosa è stato adesso?... con chi l'hai?

SOTTOSCRITTO — L'ho, che cercava la figlia, non te, vecchia strega!....

SIG. PIGNATTA — Come, la figlia?.... Io strega?.... aspetta canaglia, cane etc. (*Si cava una ciabatta, ma il Sottoscritto scappa che centomila diavoli se lo portano*).

SCENA ULTIMA.

(Camera del Sottoscritto. Questi scrive il presente dramma e sull'ultima pagina pone i seguenti versi di Clemente Marot).

Bren, ma plume, n'en parlez plus,
 Laissez-le là, ventre Saint George,
 Vous me fairiez rendre ma gorge.

L. STECCHIETTI

ACT FOUR

(Dark room in Pignatta's house)

N.B. — This act is omitted in the name of brevity
and replaced with the following tercet from Berni:

In me you'll find good qualities,
But the best one I won't reveal to you;
If I did, you'd be ashamed.

ACT FIVE**SCENE I**

(Outside the door of Pignatta's house. A gas lantern is lit.)

SIGNORA PIGNATTA – (Seeing him off)

"Goodbye... until we meet again...
give me a kiss, my darling Cocchino!"

THE AUTHOR – (Seeing Signora Carina's face lit by the gaslight)

"What!... What?!..."

But you're the old woman?!...

Oh cruel earth, why didn't you open up and swallow me?!

I knew it!...

And me, the idiot, didn't realize...

only the stench of your breath gave it away!...

Puah! (spits)"

SIGNORA PIGNATTA –

"What's going on now?... Who are you angry with?"

THE AUTHOR –

"I'm angry because I was looking for your daughter — not you, you old witch!"

SIGNORA PIGNATTA –

"What? My daughter?!... Me, a witch?!... Just wait, you scoundrel, you dog, etc.!"

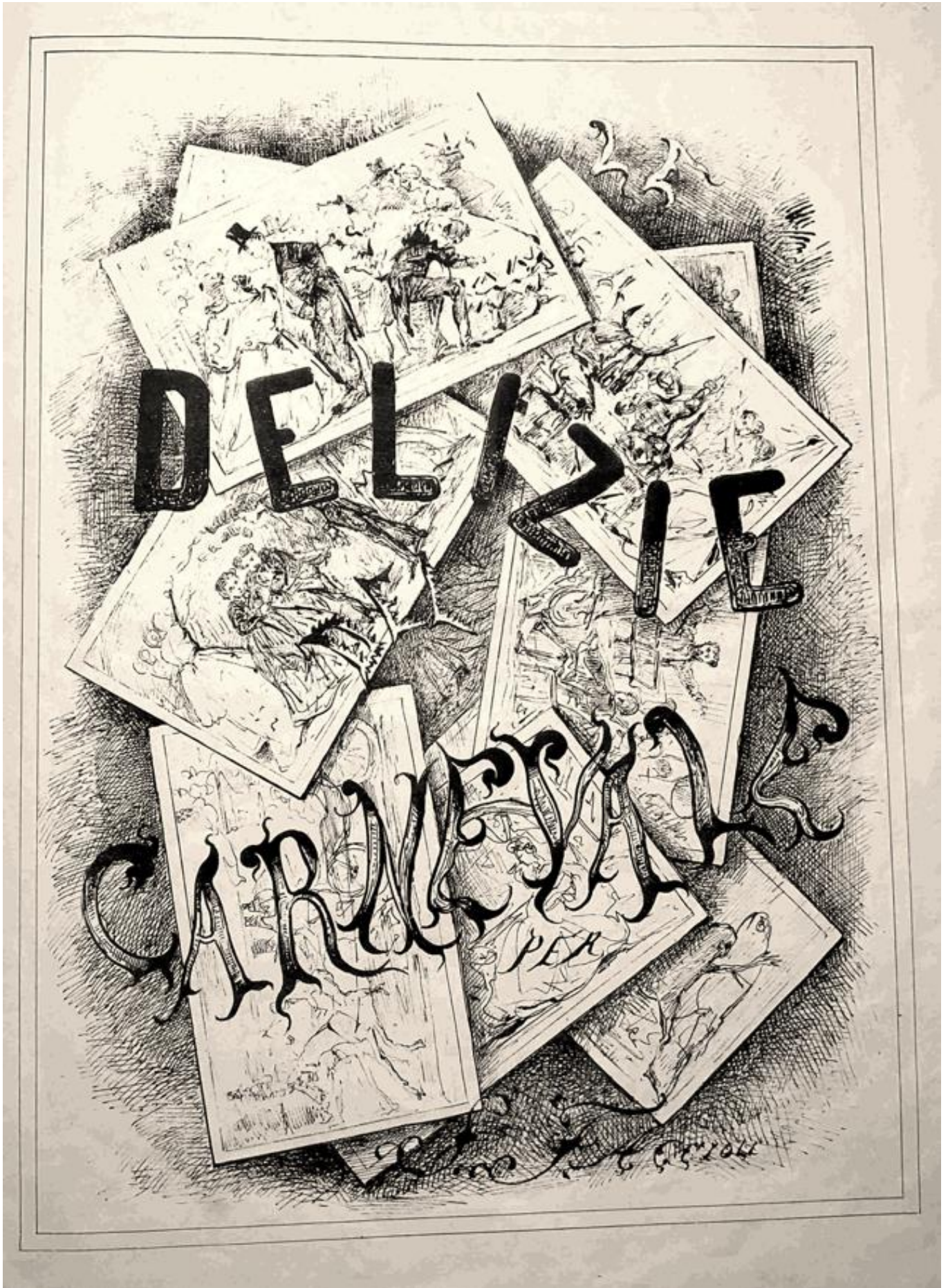
(She takes off a slipper, but the Author runs off like a hundred thousand devils were after him.)

FINAL SCENE

(The Author's room. He is writing the present drama and on the last page writes the
following verses by Clement Marot):

Burn my pen, say no more of it,
Leave it be, by Saint George's belly,
You'll make me throw up my guts.

— L. Stecchetti



AT THE MASKED PROCESSION



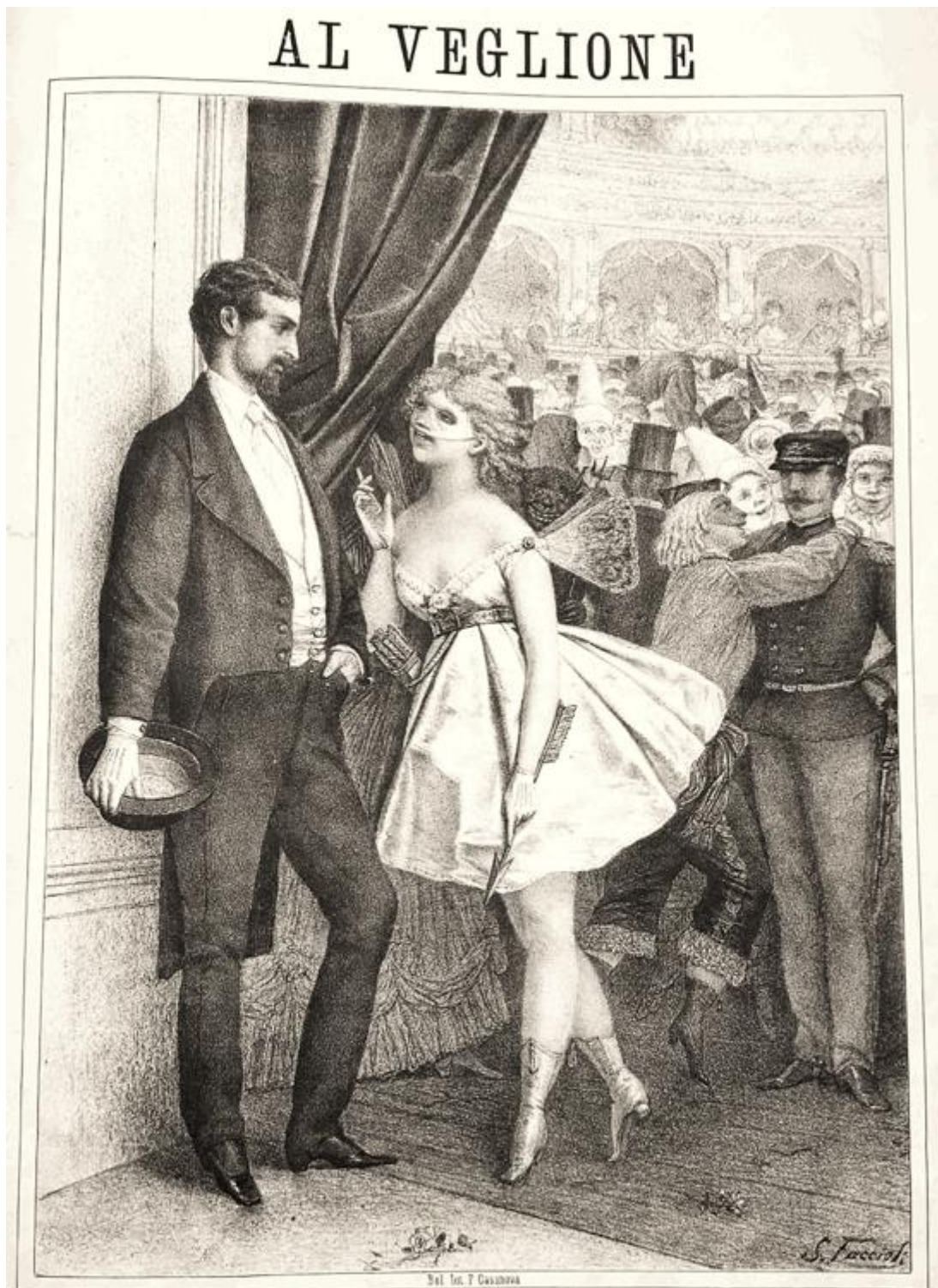
- Io preferisco dei dolci nelle bomboniere e non dei biglietti.
- Non sai amica che questo biglietto, è per me più dolce di tutti i dolci che abbiamo avuti,... è di Alberto.
- Piano! che non senta papà... se no può diventarti amaro!

"I prefer sweets in the favour boxes, not notes."

— "Don't you know, my friend, that this note is sweeter to me than all the sweets we've had?... It's from Alberto."

— "Shhh! Don't let Papa hear... or it might turn bitter for you!"

AT THE BALL



— Io sono Amore e vò cercando un cuore...
 — Di **buoncuore** non è vero Mascherina?
 — Certamente! oggi Amore non istà ira le nubi, non campa d'aria, non
 va sempre ignudo.....
 Capisco! Amore oggi ha progredito **POSITIVAMENTE**.

"I am Love, and I am searching for a heart..."

"Willingly, isn't that right, little Mask?"

"Certainly! These days, Love doesn't stay up in the clouds, doesn't live on
 air, and doesn't always go around naked..."

"I see! Love today has made **POSITIVE** progress."

AT THE GALA PARADE

AL CORSO DI GALA



— Ritornate dalla caccia e non avete cacciagione?
 — La polvere e il piombo non ha saputo colpire la cacciagione del bosco
 — Ora si proverebbe se i fiori e i confetti siano **proiettili** che sappiano
 colpire la bella **cacciagione** di città.
 — Qui avete colpito, ma non nel **centro**.....

- "You've returned from the hunt and brought back no game?"
- "The powder and lead couldn't hit the game of the forest."
- "Now we'll see whether flowers and sugared almonds can be projectiles that strike the beautiful game of the city."
- "Here, you've hit — but not the bullseye..."

SOR STÉLLEINA

PARODÌ

• Súbit, prèst, a-l mi *kepi*,
 La mi daga, i pantalón!
 Súbit, prèst. Mo, Dio! a-n sintì
 Tútt sti stiupp, tútt sti cannon?
 A-n vdi brisa qula bandira
 Sú in tla tòrr dèl Campanazz?
 Súbit, prèst! quèll ch'e-s ritira
 L'è un vigliacc. Andèin, ragazz. »

Aqusé dseva — e pr'i linzù,
 Com s'a-l füss dvintà mèzz matt,
 Sú e zò di scamazzù;
 E, inspirtà cmod srev un gatt
 Quand la nott a-l stà a mutlar
 Cún la mrousa pr'i caméin,
 A-l pareva ch'a-l vless zercar
 La montura e a-l so sabléin.

L'era Guardia Nazional,
 Tútt i i dseven Luigiott,
 L'era d Budri, un liberal,
 I ott d' Agòst dèl Quarantott
 A-l s batté in tla Muntagnola,
 L'andò innanz, e a-l s fé unòur,
 Mo a-l fù fré, — e i cumpagn d scola
 I a-l purtoon al Spdal Mazour.

Una bèlla Surinéina
 Stava in znoc'c lé vséin al lètt,
 E se dsprava, puvrinéina,
 Vdènd a-l zòuvn in quèll brútt stat;
 L'era dvota, l'era bona,
 La biassava di *patâr*,
 E la dseva alla Madona:
 A-m' arcmand, fâl arturnar!

Com a-l fúm d' una zigala,
 Ch'a-l vâ in alt séin ch'a-n s vèd più
 I *patâr* d qula povra cvèlla
 I arrivaven féin là sù.
 E quèll pover nazional,
 Ch'oramai j era passà
 E-l mattiri pral zervèll,
 L'era un poch più sullivà.

Coss' è mai ste vâg bisbéi
 Vséin al lètt d' un muribònd?
 Pur a-m par e-d séntrem méi,
 E da mort turnar al mònd.
 Bèin: coss' èl quèll vâg bagai
 Ch' t' hâ in tla tèsta? Ah! t' i una sora!
 Perchè smerglet pr' i mi guai?
 A stag buéin; a-la scapp fora.

Aqusé dsènd, a-l s' era mess
 Cún i gómd sù pr' i cusséin,
 E a-l guardava cún i uc'c fess,
 Cún du uc'c da biricchéin!
 E la sora, ch' paterzava,
 Ròssa ròssa com' è un tocc,
 Accurzènds che lù i guardava,
 La sinteva a-l técc e tocc.

Passò un mèis, e Luigiott,
 Mess in carn, e più rubúst,
 A-l durmeva tutta nòtt
 E a-l taffiava propri d gúst;
 E, più affabil, la suréina
 La i andava un poc più avséin,
 E s lù i dseva — Cm' a si bléina! —
 A-i scappava fatt zriséin

SIGNOR LITTLE STAR
(PARODY)

"Quickly, quickly, my kepi!
Hand me my trousers!"

"Hurry, fast — my God! Don't you hear
all those bangs, all those cannons?
Don't you see that flag
up there on the bell tower?
Hurry! The one who retreats
is a coward. Come on, boys!"

That's what he was shouting — and for
his linens,
like he'd gone half mad,
up and down he went, scrambling,
just like a cat when night is falling
and it's prowling the rooftops,
mewing near the chimneys —
He looked like he was searching
for his uniform and his little sabre.

He was a National Guardsman,
everyone called him Luigiott.
He was from Budrio, a liberal,
back in August of '48.

He fought at the Montagnola,
led the charge and earned honor.
But he got hit — and his schoolmates
carried him to Mazzuoli Hospital.

A lovely little Sister
was on duty there near his bed,
and she was desperate, poor thing,
seeing the young man in that terrible
state.

She was devout, she was kind,
she prayed to all the saints,
and to the Madonna she whispered:
"Take pity, bring him back to us!"

Like the smoke of a thin candle
rising up until it disappears,
her prayers, that poor little girl's,
rose all the way to Heaven.

And that poor National Guard,
now with his mind returning
and the fever less in his head,
started to feel a bit better.

"What's this little noise
near a dying man's bed?
Yet I feel strangely well again —
like coming back from the dead."

"Well then, what's this little whispering
in your head? Ah, it's a nun!
Why are you fussing over my troubles?
I'm fine now — off you go!"

Saying this, he propped himself
on his elbows over the cushions,
and stared with a sly sparkle,
two eyes full of mischief!

And the sister, shyly trembling,
red as a rosebud,
realizing he was looking at her,
felt her heart go thump-thump.

A month passed, and Luigiott,
back in shape, stronger than before,
slept through the nights
and snored contentedly.

And the sister, now more tender,
came a little closer still —
and if he said: "How sweet you are!"
she'd giggle and laugh just a bit.

— 28 —

Za in tla cisa, pr' a-l cunvèint,
In cuséina, dé e nott,
Li l'aveva séimpr in mèint
A-l pinsir d'quèll bèll zuvnot.
Malinconica e più smorta
La dvintava tutt i dé,
Sècca, zalla cm'è una morta,
La pareva fénnà insmé.

La pruvava, per quèll, li
E-d scappar al tentaziòn
Cùn *Patâr* e *Ave Mari*:
Mo a-i vol alter che uraziòn!
Cùn i uc'c séimpr bass bass,
Cùn vizèlli e cùn i dzòn,
Li zercava s' a-l zuvass
Per dscurdars!... E di minción!!

II.

Un dé più smorta d'un strazz lavà
Tutta mal-messa, tutta sminglâ
A lû ch'fumava la s mæss avseîn,
Dsènd: « Luigien,
Vèdet mo? a-l Sgnòur, lû ch'è tant bòn,
L'ha ascultâ sùbit e-l mi uraziòn!
Te t n'hâ più gnéint: fra a-n sò quant dé
T'e-n srâ più qué
T n'ha più bisògn nè di mi briv,
D tutt qui vsigant; d qui lavativ,
D tutt quell medseîn, d tutt qui arlut...
Dònce a-t salut!
Da per me sèimpr, srâ in quell stanziéin,
Pinsarò a te tutt e-l mattéin;
E-d te, a-n i è dúbbi, me a-m dscord brisa,
No, gnanc in cisa.
Mo gnanc s' a-m vgnéss un a...dèint:
A-t'arò sèimpr, mo sèimpr in mèint. —
A-l Sgnòur e-n ciappa méga cappèll:
N' i è gnéint e-d mal. »
T' en vi? L'è inùtil far di lunari
Nuater in st' mònd a ni psèin stari
Mo srèin vseîn prèst — l'è al cor ch'm'al dis
In Paradis.
Un sudòur frèdd, 'na termari,
I uc'c inspirtâ, drétt i cavi,
A-l déss, ciappandla con espressiòn
Mo dit dabbòn?...

« T'e-m vù lassarem, t'e-m vù, Stelléina,
Te ch'ti agusé bona, te ch'ti agusé bléina?
Se te t'è-m lass cos vut ch'a fazza?

Bsò ch' a-m' amazza.

Cosa vut ch'em fazen un soquant dé
Sa j' ho da viver luntan da te
Te t'vu ch't lassa, ma t' en capèss
Com a patèss?

Mo t'e-n sâ brisa ch'ti, a-l mi turmeint
E ch't'ho sèimpr, mo sèimpr in mèint,
Mo t'e-n sâ brisa ch'ti al mi tesor,
La vètta, a-l cor?...

« Stâ zétt, Luigiott! stâ zétt, stâ zétt.
Mo Dio! z'i-s sèinten. a sèin bi e frétt!
E chi è po quèlla ch'i-n paga a-l fio?
Mo me, per Zio!

Mo t'a-l sâ pur ch'a sòn ligâ,
Che sòul a vèdret per me l'è un peccâ!
Mo za l'è inùtil dscòrrer d'amour:

Me a sòn dèl Sgnòur!

Vséin al to lètt a véins 'na nott,
E po a-t guardava. — Che bèll zuvnot!
Là a-m'inscuffiava da vèccia matta,
E la fû fatta.

Mo, spavintâ d qui pinsirazz,
Alla Madona me a-m méss in brazz,
E a pregò tant e a scunzurò

Tant... ch'l' a-m passò.

Pur srev inùtil far da gradassa
E dir: l'è vgnù dònce cla passa,
Vit? vséin a te, bèin ch'a sia sora,
Pur a-i ho pora!

E-n me guardar quse languissòn!
Mo Dio! no, spazzet qui laghermón!
Stâ bòn... nò brisa!... oh Dio! l'è tropp!

T'e-n vi ch'a stiopp?

Oh Madunéina, âv compassiòn
D'una ragazza qué in st'uccasiòn!
S' a-n m'aiutâ, a-m la vèdd brúttâ;

A fazz 'na fúttâ.

Ma nò, Luigiott, sièt dònce bòn
Rispetta i urden, téin zò quell man:
Mo no, Luigiott: mo e-n me tuccar,

Lassem scappar. »

Aqusé la i déss, e cùn un' ucciâ
La i guardò in fazza tutta inspirtâ
Po, com l'avess i sbèrr dedrî,

La scappò vi.

RAPBÈL

There in the church, near the convent,
In the kitchen, day and night,
She always had him in mind,
Thinking of that handsome young man.
Melancholy and paler,
She grew every day,
Thin, yellow like a dead woman,
She seemed like a phantom.

She tried, for that reason,
To escape the temptation
With Our Fathers and Hail Marys:
But it takes more than prayer!
With her eyes always downcast,
With young men and with older ones,
She looked if she could amuse herself
To forget him... Oh, fools!!

II.

One day, paler than a washed rag,
All dishevelled, all confused,
She drew near to him who was smoking,
Saying: "Luigi,
Do you see now? The Lord, who is so good,
Has listened quickly to my prayer!
You have nothing left: in I don't know how many days
You will no longer be here.
You no longer need my shivers,
All those vigils; those enemas,
All that medicine, all those doctors....
So, goodbye!
As for me, forever, I will be in that little room,
I will think of you every morning;
And of you, there's no doubt, I won't forget,
No, not even in church.
But not even if an a... came to me:
I will always, always have you in mind –
The Lord doesn't wear a hat:
There's nothing wrong.
Do you see? It's useless to make calendars,
We can't stay in this world.
But we'll be close soon – my heart tells me –
In Paradise.
A cold sweat, a shiver,
Her eyes wide, her hair standing on end,
She said to him, seizing him with expression,
"But really?...
You want to leave me, you want to, Stelléina,
You who are so good, you who are so beautiful?
If you leave me, what do you want me to do?
I need to kill myself.

What do you want me to do for a while
If I have to live far from you?
You want to leave, but don't you understand
How I would suffer?
But you don't know that you are my torment
And that I always, always have you in mind,
But you don't know that you are my treasure,
My life, my heart?...
Be quiet, Luigi! be quiet, be quiet.
But God, they are listening. We are beautiful
and young!
And who is it then who will pay the bill?
Me, by Jove!
But you know well that I am bound,
That even seeing you is a sin for me!
But now it's useless to talk of love:
I belong to the Lord!
Near your bed I came one night,
And then I watched you – What a handsome
young man!
There I was getting all worked up like a crazy
old woman,
And it was done.
But, frightened by those thoughts,
I threw myself into the Madonna's arms,
And I prayed so much and I conjured
So much... that it passed.
It would still be useless to act tough
And say: that's why that passed,
See? Near you, even though I'm a nun,
I'm still afraid!
Don't look at me so languidly!
Oh God! no, wipe away those tears!
Be good... don't break it... oh God! it's too
much!
Do you see that I'm bursting?
Oh little Madonna, have compassion
On a girl here in this situation!
If you don't help me, I see it badly;
I'll run away.
But no, Luigi, please be good,
Respect the orders, keep that hand down:
But no, Luigi: but don't touch me,
Let me escape.
Thus she spoke to him, and with a glance
She looked him in the face, all wide-eyed,
Then, as if she had snakes behind her,
She ran away.

RAFBÈL

THE DEPARTURE

LA PARTENZA



— L' auròura dspunta, e la Quareisma anca li. Dònce, bon viazz, Carenval! a-ze vdrèin st' altr ann... A-n ve poss gnanc basar cùn' tùtt a-l piaseir cùn quell zert nas ch'avì, ch' a-i ho pora ch' a-m cavadi un oc'e.
 — Signor Dottore stia bene, e non pensi se l' ho messo al **verde**. — Quest' altro anno farò egualmente — Viva l' allegria, abbasso la bolletta.

The dawn breaks, and Lent is also there. So, farewell, Carnival! We will see each other next year... I can't even kiss you with all the pleasure with that certain nose you have, because I'm afraid you'll poke out an eye.

Doctor Mister, take care, and don't worry if I've emptied your wallet. - Next year I'll do the same - Long live merriment, down with the bill.

ULTIME BRICCIOLE

UN PRIGUEL

Du puer vedov dèinter da una cà!!
 Vdiv ch' cundiziòn priglòusa e singular?
 Masti l' ún, fèmma l' altra: maraviar
 Se un qualc imbroi suzzeda chi mai prà?
 Vèira è che a-i masti cùn l' età è per dlà
 D quell termin che i malègn pol far suspttar;
 Mo la fèmma è un cuvléin da imberiar
 Un Jusèff Giúst: e alloura... srà quell ch' srà.
 La lèscà avseín al fug l' è un priguel tal
 Che a nssùn a-i par'rà nov s mai la s' impiass,
 Ch' a-i srev quèst un effètt bèin natural.
 Una sòula rasón ch' tutt acquietass
 Srev quèlla: che a quell vedov tal di tal
 La forza (oh gua' ch' suspètt!) a-i ammancass.

R. BURIAN.

(A UNA FESTA DA BALLO SIC)

(Io). Madama v' *impegno* per l' ultima contraddanza!

(Essa). Non posso sono tutta *impegnata*!

(Un Sordo). Verissimo! la Signora ha *impegnato* tutto, sino gli orecchini, per comprare i guanti bianchi!

D' imminente pubblicazione!

DIZIONARIO TASCABILE DELLA LINGUA ITALIANA ad uso di... certe mascherine Bolognesi.

TRATTATO DI... PROFANA ELOQUENZA a comodo di quelle mascherine che non sanno dire altro che — *vi divertite?* — *Io vi conosco* — *state bene?* —

Entrambi questi libri trovansi vendibili ai camerini del teatro Brunetti, *Contavalli*, *Corso*, e... (pare impossibile!) anche *Comunale*.

(Nota perduta a un ballo, dalla Contessa X. stimata per una delle più belle dame della festa).

Treccia finta, Cignon finto L.30
 Per far pulire la dentatura » 10
 Rosetto, Biacca, Polvere, ec. » 20
 Alla Sarta per due fianchi
 nuovi » 15

GRAN DEPOSITO DI NASI
 di proporzioni straordinarie
 Vendibili dal 1.º giorno di quaresima

in avanti, presso molti mariti e molti amanti bolognesi.

PREZZI RIDOTTI

L' ULTIMA DOMENICA DI CARNOVALE

L'ultima domenica di carnevale è un bel giorno, se non piove! Arlecchino eletto Re, domandò a che ora s' andava a pranzo: — A mezzo giorno,

gli fu risposto — Ebbene — continuò Arlecchino — ordino che nella mia Corte, il mezzo giorno suoni sei volte al giorno! — Se fossi Re io, ordinerei che tutte le domeniche fossero l'ultima di Carnevale... Oh le *Maschere!* io le amo le maschere... quando son belle... e non vi danno stoccate! Sentite a proposito che cosa mi accade al Teatro della Scala di Milano l'ultima domenica di Carnevale! — Una bella maschera, mi ferma e mi dice — V. S. è X. Y. Z. collaboratore del *Giornale Galante*? — Già — Ebbene — io sono una *principessa* (tutte le maschere sono *principesse!*) e voglio stare sotto al suo braccio, perocchè essendo V. S. un forestiere non è conosciuto, ed io stando con lei non mi farò conoscere. — Principessa mi onora. — L' onore è il mio... Signor X. Y. Z.: — vogliamo andare al Restaurant? — (Ah Ah!) — Volontieri, continuo subito, però se permette anderei prima all' Ufficio del *Giornale Galante* ove ho dimenticato il mio *portamonete!* — Oh! — qui la *principessa* fuggì! — Dove? forse in cerca del mio portamonete? — Mahhh! —

(Avviso per coloro che vanno a Milano nelle ultime Domeniche di Carnevale!.)

DEPOSITO D'OMBRELLI MONSTER

indispensabili a quelle *mascherate*, o a quelle persone che devono passare nei giorni di corso sotto ai palchi

Frati.

Dette ombrelle preservono dai *benis* e dai *sacchi vuoti*, e sono valevoli tanto pei *leoni*, quanto pei *cavalli*, ec. ec.

LAST CRUMBS

<p>A DANGER</p> <p>Two poor widows inside one house!! Do you see what a perilous and singular condition? He a widower, she a widow: who would be surprised if some kind of trouble were to happen there? It's true that for the widower, with his age, it's difficult to reach that point that evil minds could suspect; but the woman is a lure to intoxicate even a Joseph the Just: and then... what will be will be. Leaving them alone by the fire is such a danger That it will seem new to no one if it ever catches, As that would be a very natural effect. One single reason that would quiet everything Would be this: that for that widower, on such and such a day, the strength (oh what a suspicion!) might fail him.</p> <p>R. BURIAN.</p>		<p>(Note lost at a ball, by Countess X, esteemed as one of the most beautiful ladies of the party),</p> <p>False braid, false chignon Lire 30 For having the teeth cleaned » 10 Lipstick, White lead, Powder, etc. » 20 To the Seamstress for two new side panels » 15</p>		<p>GRAND DEPOT OF NOSES of extraordinary proportions</p> <p>For sale from the 1st day of Lent onwards, at the homes of many Bolognese husbands and many lovers.</p> <p>REDUCED PRICES</p>
<p>(AT A BALL - SIC)</p> <p>(I). Madam, may I have the last Contra-danse with you?</p> <p>(SHE). I cannot, I am completely engaged!</p> <p>(A DEAF MAN). Absolutely! The Lady has pawned everything, even her earrings, to buy white gloves!</p>		<p>THE LAST SUNDAY OF CARNIVAL</p> <p>The last Sunday of Carnival is a beautiful day, if it doesn't rain! Harlequin, elected King, asked what time lunch was: - At noon, he was answered - Well then - continued Harlequin - I order that in my Court, noon strikes six times a day! — If I were King, I would order that every Sunday were the last of Carnival... Oh the Masks!. I love the masks... when they are beautiful... and don't give you thrusts! Listen to what happened to me at the Teatro della Scala in Milan on the last Sunday of Carnival! - A beautiful mask stops me and says to me — Are you Mr. X. Y. Z., collaborator of the Galant Journal? - Yes - Well then - I am a princess (all masks are princesses!) and I want to be under your arm, because since you are a foreigner you are not known, and I, being with you, will not be recognized. - Princess, you honour me.</p> <p>— The honour is mine... Mr. X. Y. Z.: — shall we go to the Restaurant? - (Ah Ah!) - Gladly, I continue immediately, but if you allow, I would go first to the office of the Galant Journal where I forgot my wallet! - Oh! - here the princess fled - Where? perhaps looking for my wallet? - Mahhhh!</p> <p>-</p> <p>(Notice for those who go to Milan on the last Sundays of Carnival.)</p>		
<p>Of imminent publication!</p> <p>POCKET DICTIONARY OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE for the use of... certain little masks of Bologna.</p> <p>TREATISE ON... PROFANE ELOQUENCE for the convenience of those little masks who know how to say nothing else but — are you having fun? - I know you - are you well? -</p> <p>Both these books can be found for sale in the dressing rooms of the Brunetti, Contavalli, Corso theatres, and.... (it seems impossible!) also the Municipal one.</p>		<p>MONSTER UMBRELLA DEPOSIT</p> <p>indispensable for those <i>masquerades</i>, or for those people who have to pass during the days of the Corso under the Friars' balconies.</p> <p>Said umbrellas protect from good things and empty <i>sacks</i>, and are useful as much for <i>lions</i> as for <i>horses</i>, etc. etc.</p>		

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CHIUSA

(CHE NON È QUELLA DI CASALECCHIO)

— Che cosa c'è dopo questa pagina?... — Un'altra pagina bianca. — E dopo quella? — I Cartoni! — Dunque la Strenna è terminata: ecco una cosa che va su due piedi... o su quattro se più vi piace, e che la comprenderebbe l'uomo più duro di testa... il *gigante* di piazza p. es. Mah!... tutto deve terminare a questo mondo! tutto, fatta eccezione dalle Tasse, dai discorsi del Deputato Castiglia, dai Capricci delle Donne, dai Debiti, dagli aggiotatori, dai seccatori... dai *criticatori*... oh i *criticatori*!... Scommetto, — Che cosa?... — 5 centesimi!... contro 100,000 mila lire che vi saranno degl'individui i quali oseranno *criticare* questa Strenna, questo *capo* d'opera, — (UN LETTORE) (*interrompendo*). Come l'*opera* ha il *capo*? — (Io) Che meraviglia!.. — (IL LETTORE) È che ora vi sono tante *opere* che non hanno nè *capo* nè *coda*!... — (Io) Taccia lei che parlo io! dove sono rimasto?... ah... — che criticheranno questo *capo* d'opera di *Strenna*, e di più anche questo *capo* d'opera di *Chiusa*! Ebbene questi criticatori... io li *sfigderò*. — (UNA LETTRICE) Un duello! — (Io) Che duello d'Egitto! li *sfigderò* a pagarmi una colazione al Caffè Cavour e vedrete che per non pagare, non criticheranno.... — Mo guardate! — (UN ORGO) Che cosa — (Io) Va a cadermi un *frate*!... oh i *frati* non li posso soffrire, e sempre ne devo avere fra i piedi. — (UN CODINO) *Retro satana*, siete scomunicato... non potete soffrire i *frati*! — (Io) Ma di che *frati* parlate?... (IL CODINO) Oh bella di quelli i quali sono stati soppressi, e girano nonostante in *tonaca* per Bologna... — Che che, parlavo d'uno *Scarabocchio*... che mi è caduto sulla pagina...

(IL DOTTOR BALANZONI) Ebbene *cos'è sté pladur*? — (Io) Un *frate*.. — (IL DOTTORE) *Che fra', finila una volta... dormire volo!* Felice notte (*il dottore ammorza il lume e dorme*).

(Io) Ecco che nel più bello sono al buio... come si fa a finire adesso la *Chiusa* — (UN SATIRICO) Finiscila *al buio*; oggi si fa tutto *al buio* — (Io) Signori, Signore e Signorine... giacchè siamo al buio... andiamo a letto: la *Strenna* è terminata... quindi non ci resta a fare di meglio!

PEL DOTTOR BALANZONI (*addormentato*).

X. Y. Z. (*che sta per addormentarsi*).



CLOSE

(WHICH IS NOT THE ONE OF CASALECCHIO)

— What's after this page?... — Another blank page. — And after that? — The Cartoons! - So the New Year's Gift is finished: here's something that goes on two feet... or on four if you prefer, and that even the thickest-headed man would understand... the giant in the piazza, for example. Bah! ... everything must end in this world! everything, except for Taxes, the speeches of Deputy Castiglia, the whims of Women, Debts, speculators, bores...

critics... oh, the critics!... I bet,

— What?... — 5 cents!.., against 100,000 thousand lire that there will be individuals who will dare to criticize this New Year's Gift, this masterpiece, - (A READER) (interrupting). How does the work have a head? — (I) What a marvel!.. — (THE READER) It's that now there are so many works that have neither head nor tail!... (I) You be quiet, I'm talking! Where was I?... ah.. — that they will criticize this masterpiece of the New Year's Gift, and what's more, even this masterpiece of "Closed"! Well, these critics... I will challenge them. — (A FEMALE READER) A duel! - (I) What an Egyptian duel! I will challenge them to buy me breakfast at the Caffè Cavour and you will see that to avoid paying, they won't criticize... — Now look! - (A BLIND MAN) What? - (I) A friar is about to fall on me... oh, I can't stand friars, and I always have to have them underfoot. - (A BIGOT) Get thee behind me, Satan, you are excommunicated... you can't stand friars! - (I) But what friars are you talking about?.. (THE BIGOT) Oh, the ones who were suppressed, and still go around in cassocks in Bologna... — What what, I was talking about a Blot... that fell on my page..

(DOCTOR BALANZONI) Well then, what's this fuss? - (I) A friar. - (THE DOCTOR) What friar,

finish it once and for all... time to sleep! Good night (the doctor dims the light and sleeps).

(I) Here I am in the dark at the best part... how can I finish "Closed" now — (A SATIRIST)

Finish it in the dark; today everything is done in the dark — (I) Ladies and Gentlemen... since we are in the dark... let's go to bed: the New Year's Gift is finished... so there's nothing better left for us to do!

FOR DOCTOR BALANZONI (asleep).

X. Y. Z. (who is about to fall asleep).





Book Review

Border-Crossing and Comedy at the Théâtre Italien, 1716-1723

by Matthew J. McMahan, published by Palgrave-MacMillan, 2021. ISBN: 978-3030700706

by Olly Crick

The first thing to say about this book is that, if you want to know about the second wave of Italian comedians in Paris (Luigi Riccoboni's company,) then this is for you and very good it is too. The second thing you need to know is do not, unless you have more money than sense, go out and buy it. Sadly, new it costs over £100, and even second hand the price doesn't drop much. I got a bit lucky and so will try to pass on its strengths and some of what it contains (should you wish to part with your hard earned scudi).

It is an academic book but is (to its credit) also well written and does not allow itself lengthy excursions into jargon. It is a part of a themed series called '*Transnational Theatre Histories*' and it does that very well: dealing with the hard work undertaken by an Italian Theatre troupe to 'make it' in Paris. I recommend it for both theatre historians, and for (though it needs a bit of deeper read) theatre makers. It provides both an inventory and analysis of practical theatre solutions to performing in a city where one does not speak the language.



On May 18th, 1716, Luigi Riccoboni and his troupe were invited by the Regent of France, Phillipe d'Orleans, to perform in Paris. They would be the first troupe of Italians to perform in Paris for twenty years: the last troupe having had to leave in 1697 due to performing an unwelcome satire about the King's mistress, Madame Maintenon. The Parisian audiences, according to McMahan's extensive reading of contemporary accounts, had a very clear idea of what the Italian Comedians were like twenty years ago, and, on that basis, initially flocked to see the new troupe. What the Parisians wanted was the froth and frivolity of the improvising and largely naturalised and (importantly) French speaking troupe led by

Everisto Gheradi. What they got in Luigi Riccoboni was a dedicated and well-organised troupe leader who had a far more serious opinion of what Italian theatre was, and could be. They still, largely, employed the stock characters, but spoke memorised lines in formal plays – rather than improvised texts, riffing off their audience – which was not quite as frivolous as the Parisians craved. Their first performances had large crowds, and their box office income was high, but once the theatre-going public realised the new Italians were not like the troupe they remembered, and that they performed largely in Italian, the crowds dropped off rapidly. What was Riccoboni to do?

How the new troupe coped with this, and eventually began to draw audiences back to them, is the matter of this book, and expands both eruditely and practically on the strategies the company employed, bringing into the argument themes familiar to commedia students everywhere: physical acting, multi-lingual performance, prologues and direct addresses to an audience, and the debated crossover between written text and improvisation.

The argument that troupes of travelling players, from the late Renaissance onwards, were skilled in performing in different languages and dialects, which led to a physical style of acting and recognisable stock characters, is very often taken as a given assumption by students of commedia. Did Isabella Andreini not perform her famous mad scene in many different languages and gain great kudos from it? Indeed, she did, but she was one person. What McMahan does is skilfully expound how Riccoboni's troupe navigated a much wider range of issues relating to language. The Parisians did not, in the main, speak Italian, and the bulk of the troupe did not speak French. Initially this language barrier was seen as exotic, and to be 'in' on the latest theatrical fashion, groups of well-to-do theatre goers would hire live translators to accompany them on their theatre visits. This increased the volume in the auditorium considerably, and annoyed Riccoboni who was concerned that the nuances of his text were being drowned out, or else misrepresented by poor translation. He wanted to present a more serious Italian theatre to his public and wanted to avoid performing improvised farces. He saw these as being the domain of fairground performance in Paris, whose performers were willing to provide light-hearted frivolous improvisations if Riccoboni could or would not.

The company decided to learn French. However, as anyone who has learned, or tried to learn a new language knows, this is easier said than done. Some members of the troupe learned quicker than others, some couldn't lose their Italian accents and for some performing in a 'foreign' language proved highly nerve-racking. Pragmatically and strategically, the company aligned each actor's French-speaking ability with the role they were assigned within the play. This simple act brought into play notions of nationality, national stereotypes, misunderstandings and 'othering' as devices and as new source material for

comedy and comic plays, all of which were situated and carried out within the confines and strictures of the prevailing Parisian cultural norms.

This is certainly different from the days when Isabella Andreini, declaring herself a citizen of the world, performed with the *Gelosi* across Europe. Riccoboni and his company may have regarded themselves as an autonomous artistic group, but they had to adapt and negotiate with what was around them in the capital of France. To survive, they had to adapt to Parisian culture, and one of the ways they did this was to perform their Italian-ness. Those in the troupe who could speak good French became representatives of French culture, and played characters recognisable as French, through a variety of patriotic and comic tropes, whilst those who were happier in Italian played Italian characters and played up the stereotypes of how the French perceived them in their roles. And yes, it did mean that they could once again indulge themselves in bursts of *al'improviso* frivolity in the plays. That is, after all, what the French expected of the Italians. The nature of Italian and French identity became a necessary part of Riccoboni's playbook, albeit in the main, comically and sympathetically. There were always the English and Germans to add into the mix if a play needed a genuinely unsympathetic character or object of ridicule.

In *Le Naufrage au Port-a-l'Anglaise* (The Shipwreck at Port-a-l'Anglaise), a play written by painter-turned-playwright Jacques Autreau (1657-1745) specifically for the Riccoboni troupe, an Italian family – Lelio, Silvia and Flaminia – are en route from Italy to Paris. A storm forces their ship into a port where they stay at an Inn called the Port-a-l'Anglaise, run by ex-pat Pantalone and his wife, and various comic shenanigans ensue, with the amatory manners of the French and the Italians colliding headlong. Italian servants knew little or bad French, and when couples with no knowledge of each other's language became smitten, the translator – fancying one of the pair – provides unreliable and devious advice, though their machinations are ultimately defeated. The play even opened with a prologue in which three of the actors, playing versions of themselves, and one actor playing 'the author', talk among themselves, and to the audience, about the difficulties of performing in a foreign language. However, they are all reassured by the 'author' who tells them (and the audience too, by extension) that all their characters are matched to their linguistic abilities, and that they play characters very like them: newly disembarked Italians coping with an unfamiliar Parisian cultural milieu. This bilingual model of theatre, focusing on performed nationality, became in itself a successful genre, and Riccoboni and troupe prospered for a while. Even Molière, in his comedy-ballet *The Sicilian*, 'borrowed' this trope in a three-way comic discussion of French, Italian and Sicilian national characteristics.

There are many examples and fascinating anecdotes in this book concerning the anxiety of performing in a foreign language and simultaneously coping with outdated expectations on

behalf of its potential audience. The Harlequin in Riccoboni's company, Thomassin, was not a great French speaker, and felt threatened by the expectation of performing the (by then historical) comic voice associated with the role, in French. His strategy was to avoid speaking as long as possible in any given drama, focussing on physical lazzi, and hoping the audience would like him enough by then to forgive the lack of 'comedy' voice. He was lucky (or very skilful) as this strategy appeared to work. His professional anxiety was hardly lessened however, by the arrival of a second Harlequin into the company, who was none other than the (French speaking), Pierre-Francois Biancolelli, the son of the famous Domenico Biancolelli who had entertained Parisian audiences twenty years before. There is speculation as to why Dominique-fils became part of the company, but the most likely explanation is that it was the wish of their patron, the Regent of France. Such wishes must, of course, be obeyed. And apparently both Harlequins managed to work together well.

Below are McMahan's eventual conclusions about Riccoboni's work in Paris. These are his headings, though the gloss following the headers are my own precis.

The comic as diplomat: By performing versions of national identities the audience becomes more familiar and less censorious of the perceived differences, with laughter at both one's own and other nations' manner and behaviours, helping to break down often-jingoistic perceptions of nationality.

Stereotypes as short-hand for cross-cultural communication: When cultural stereotypes are performed on stage, clashing or negotiating or befriending other cultural stereotypes, it demonstrates behaviours that, through the developing complexity of the plot, will eventually show the humanity behind them. In commedia, the stock roles may be seen as socially and nationally immobile, but they are brought to life by an actor who performs the behaviour of a human in that social position. Eventually, within the dramatic landscape of a performed comedy, the human being behind the mask is revealed, and whilst we first laugh out of recognition of the 'type' and its typical actions, we later laugh at difficulties we share with the rapidly developing type, coping with an unfamiliar language and culture.

Language as both a barrier and an opportunity to create comedy: Comic misunderstandings and the urge to communicate in difficult circumstances are one of the mainstays of dramatic and comic plots. Riccoboni was forced into this situation by circumstances, but with the aid of Autreau and other writers, came out smiling.

Those styles of performance, especially improvisation, were a valuable source of cultural capital: The French both liked the Italian improvised style of performance, and admired the

skill required to do it well. When carefully managed it contributed to an accepted identity for the Italian actors in Paris.

Parody as a tool to cultivate a transnational sense of belonging: The comic world of Riccoboni's plays, ultimately showed that both French and Italians can behave ridiculously, and the common thread that binds us all together is our shared humanity.

All in all, this is fascinating book that uses detailed and original research to chart the strategies used by the 'second wave' of Italian comedians. If you can find a second-hand copy, I most certainly recommend it, otherwise join me in cursing the price of some academic books.

Olly Crick



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