

**McGill University**  
**Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures**  
**Italian Studies**  
**ITAL 290 – Commedia dell’Arte**

**Lectures:** Monday - 05:00 PM - 08:00 PM      **Class** SH 688 - ROOM 223  
**Theatre venue** Friday March 31, 2023 - 7:00 PM      **Class** LEACOK 132  
**Instructor:** Denise S. Agiman      **Email:** denise.agiman@mcgill.ca  
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***Course Description***

*Commedia dell’Arte* is a theatrical phenomenon that originated in Italy around the 16th century, and rapidly spread across Europe, influencing the most famous playwrights and the development of the Western drama. This form of theatre revolves around the use of masks and improvisation. The actors used to play the same stereotyped roles, while their lines were improvised on some sketched scenarios (*canovacci*) which replaced the traditional written play. This course examines the historical phenomenon of *Commedia dell’Arte* (origins and main characteristics). At the same time, the classes are based on a acting practical approach that incorporates a rehearsal processes that will culminate in a public Italian performance of a play shaped by the students.

***Course Work***

The students will be provided with the fundamental theoretical notions of *Commedia dell’Arte* and will also be guided through all of the aspects of a theatre production. They will be able to take on particular tasks that best fit their interests and skill sets. In particular, the students will be invited to adapt/write a play, be on stage (as an actor, singer, dancer, narrator, musician, etc.) and take up a backstage role.

***Course Material***

There is not a course-pack associated to the notions of this course. All the theoretical information and concepts will be provided during the class lectures and the PowerPoint on MyCourses. A collection of excerpts for the play script will be suggested by the teacher, posted online or photocopied.

In anticipation of the final theatrical performance, the students will be asked

1. To find some text/excerpt or choose between the ones provided by the teacher
2. To adapt the set of excerpts in order to create a sketch to be performed
3. Learn by heart their role.
4. The students are also responsible to find/the costumes & props for their character and stage decor.

**Evaluation**

1. MINI-TEST	20%
2. WRITING, EDITING AND SUBMISSION of the theatrical sketches to be played	30%
3. PARTICIPATION AND PERFORMANCE (learning the lines by heart, be present at the rehearsals, take a task for the backstage work, commit and being involved in all the production process)	50 %

**1. MINI-TEST**

One written mini-test will take place at the beginning of February 2023. The test will be based on 10 multichoice questions (Yes/No; True/False, etc.) of 2 pts. each. All the notions to be studied for the test are on the PowerPoint on *MyCourses* and/or provided by the teacher during the lectures in class.

**DATE:** **Monday, February 6**

**VALUE:** **20%**

**2. COLLECTION, WRITING, DRAFTING AND SENDING OF THE ITALIAN PLAY SCRIPTS**

The subject of the excerpts of the final play should revolve around the theme of *Love*.

The students submit a theatre excerpt from plays, poems, essays, etc. of their choice. The teacher will provide some suggestion and document, but the students are free to submit the text of their choice.

The length of the sketch should be around 5 - 10 minutes, accordingly to the number of students who want to act. The final scripts must be written mainly in Italian, but some lines in other languages are also accepted.

The teams will be decided during the second week/class and they will accomplish the drafting/editing process during and outside the class hours. Each student will be evaluated for both the individual and teamwork.

The final texts must be submitted by email by February 7, 2023 at 1 pm. N.B. Considering that the performance should last max. 45 minutes, the teacher might cut/rearrange the texts in order to reach a suitable length.

**DEADLINE:** **Tuesday, February , 7 at 5 pm**

**VALUE:** **30%**

### **3. PARTICIPATION & PERFORMANCE**

The theatrical experience creates interdependence among the performers. Each person is necessary for the successful outcome of the project. That is why student attendance at the rehearsals and participation (such as learning the lines by heart, shaping his own character, collaboration between students) are essential and will be graded. Any unjustified absence (= - 5%) or lack of commitment incurs the risk to have a lower final mark. The technical and dress rehearsals and the final performance will take place at Lea 132 on March 28-30-31, 2023.

**DEADLINE:** **From January 09 to March 31, 2023**

**VALUE:** **50%**

<b><u>CALENDAR</u></b>			
<b>MONDAY 05:05 PM - 07:55 PM - Room SH688 - 223 (N.B. EXTRA REHEARSALS MIGHT BE ADDED, IF NEEDED)</b>			
<b>DAY</b>	<b>HOURS</b>	<b>CLASS CONTENT</b>	<b>ROOM</b>
Monday January 9	17h00-20h00	Syllabus and course plan presentation. Explication of the context of the play	SH688 - 223
Monday January 16	17h00-20h00	Introduction to theatre: an outline of the main drama aesthetic movements <b>TEAMS CREATION: Who does what? + Chose the text to play</b>	SH688 - 223
Monday January 23	17h00-20h00	Elements of <i>Commedia dell'Arte</i> : masks, <i>canovacci</i> , costumes, props, stage	SH688 - 223
Monday January 30	17h00-20h00	Historiography: from <i>giullari</i> & <i>saltimbanchi</i> to Goldoni's reform	SH688 - 223
Monday February 6	17h00-20h00	<b>MINI-TEST</b> In class teams work (time devoted to finalizing the writing of the theatre script) <b>N.B. TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7 = Deadline for the submission of the final play scripts (sent to the teacher by Email at 5 pm at the latest)</b>	SH688 - 223
Monday February 13	17h00-20h00	Casting + Play reading + Acting exercises	SH688 - 223
Monday February 20	17h00-20h00	Rehearsal	SH688 - 223
Monday February 27	17h00-20h00	Rehearsal	SH688 - 223
Monday 6 March	XXXXXXX	<b>NB: No Class</b>	----
Monday March 13	17h00-20h00	Rehearsal	SH688 - 223
Monday March 20	17h00-20h00	Rehearsal	SH688 - 223
Monday March 27	17h00-20h00	Final Rehearsal	SH688 - 223
<b>TUESDAY March 28</b>	<b>18h00-21h00</b>	<b>TECHNICAL REHEARSAL</b>	<b>LEA 132</b>
<b>THURSDAY March 30</b>	<b>18h00-21h00</b>	<b>DRESS REHEARSAL</b>	<b>LEA 132</b>
<b>FRIDAY March 31</b>	<b>18h00-21h00</b>	<b>FINAL PERFORMANCE</b>	<b>LEA 132</b>

#### **READINGS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**

There is no book to buy for this course. The teacher will suggest some references to guide the students in their choices for the content of the written play

##### **Italian theatre history and acting**

Alonge, R. *Nuovo manuale di storia del teatro*. Novara, UTET, 2008.

Antonucci, G. *Storia del teatro italiano*. Roma, Tascabili Newton, 1995.

Biblioteca italiana elettronica <http://www.liberliber.it/libri/index.php>

Caprioli, E. *Dioniso e Arlecchino. Introduzione storica all'arte del teatro*. Milano, Ed. A. Vallardi, 1969.

Dal Piai, G. *Dizione e fonetica. Un'esperienza didattica per il teatro*. Firenze, Casa Usher, 1981.

D'Amico, S. *Storia del teatro drammatico*. Roma, Ed. Bulzoni, 1982.

Fo, D. *Mistero buffo*. Torino, Ed. Einaudi, 1980.

Guglielminetti, M. *Il teatro contemporaneo*. Torin.o, Societa editrice internazionale, 1973.

Lunari, L. *Centro trame del teatro italiano*. Milano Ed. BUR , 1993.

Mendolesi, C., *Fondamenti del teatro italiano : la generazione dei registi*. Firenze, Sansoni Editore, 1984.

Molinari, C., *L'attore e la recitazione*. Bari, Edizioni Laterza

##### **Commedia dell'arte**

David, A., Blom B., *The commedia dell'arte*, New York, Blom, 1964.

Ferrone S. *Attori mercanti corsari. La Commedia dell'arte in Europa tra '500 e '600*. Torino, Einaudi, 1993.

Gambelli, D. *Un Arlecchino a Parigi. Dall'inferno alla corte del Re Sole*. Bulzoni Editore.

Gervasoni, G. *Il teatro italiano nel Settecento*. Torino, 1970, Lattes & C.

Mango, A. *Cultura e storia nella formazione della commedia dell'arte*. Bari, Ed. Adriatica, 1972.

Mariti, L. *Alle origini del teatro moderno. La Commedia dell'Arte*. Roma, Bulzoni Ed.,1976.

Martinelli, M., *Di quando andammo a recitare i 22 infortuni di Arlecchino*. Faenza, Filodrammatica, 1998.

Molinari C., *La Commedia dell'Arte*. Milano, Ed. Mondadori, 1985.

Nicoll A., *Il mondo di Arlecchino*. Milano, Ed. Bompiani, 1965.

Padoan G., *La commedia rinascimentale veneta*. Vicenza, N. Pozza, 1982.

Salepicchi A. *Maschere. Le intramontabili figure della Commedia dell'Arte*. Ed. Nuovi Equilibri, 1990.

Smith, W. *The Commedia dell'Arte. A Study on Italian Popular Comedy*. NY, Columbia University 1912.

Taviani F., Schino M., *Il segreto della Commedia dell'Arte*. Pontedera, CRSTP, 1982.

Tessari, R. *Commedia dell'Arte. La Maschera e l'Ombrá*. Milano, 1981, Ed. Mursia.

Zorzi, L. *L'attore, la commedia, il drammaturgo*. Torino, Ed. Einaudi, 1990.

##### **Theoretical essays about the concept of Love**

Fromm, E. Ed. Il Saggiatore

Platone *Il Simposio Dialogo* Ed Garzanti

##### **Video**

Arlecchino, servitore di due padroni (C. Goldoni/G. Strehler):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LypNIHuHPOg> - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfQ\\_gVA4n8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfQ_gVA4n8)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dqs5dTL-SZ0> - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNWIW-pABQs>

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