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Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

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Commedia dell'arte

(_drama, _sjanger) Komedie i en italiensk dramatradisjon der skuespillerne spiller faste karaktertyper og improviserer mye av handlingen. Masker og kostymer bidrar til stiliseringen.

Det var improvisasjonskunst spunnet rundt kjærlighetsforviklinger og konflikter mellom generasjonene og sosiale lag. Skuespillerne var ofte også akrobater og dansere (Vollmer 2011 s. 12).

Denne teaterkunsten skal ha blitt “oppfunnet” av italieneren Francesco Chèrea (Wittschier 1985 s. 116). Skuespillerne improviserte rundt en handlingstråd. Faste typer var gjenkjennelige ved sine navn, talemåter, masker og kostymer.

Noen av typene i commedia dell'arte:

Dottore: pedanten

Pantalone: den enfoldige ektemann

Arlecchino, eller Brighella, eller Pulcinella: den smarte tjener

Colombina: Arlecchinos kjæreste

Scaramuccio: den skrytende soldat

Tartaglia: en stammende mann

“Commedia dell’Arte er en av de mest mytebelagte teaterformer i teaterhistorien, sier Ferdinando Taviana, en av Italias fremste Commedia dell’Arte-forskere. Forvirringen skyldes blant annet at begrepet Commedia dell’Arte ikke dukker opp før 1750 – 200 år etter at det første profesjonelle skuespillerkompani ble grunnlagt – og dermed dekker et altfor vidt og sammensatt teaterfenomen både i forhold til sted, tid, genre, publikum, skuespillernes sosiale status og deres tekniske og kulturelle nivå. Noen bruker Commedia dell’Arte som en genrebetegnelse på den klassiske maskekomedien og dens faste typegalleri. [...] Cesare Molinari presiserer at Commedia dell’Arte bare var én teatral genre blant mange, som yrkesskuespillerne hadde på repertoaret fra midten av 1500-tallet [...]. Andre forskere – som Taviani – bruker Commedia dell’Arte i en videre betydning for å betegne det nye profesjonelle italienske yrkestheater, som dukket opp rundt 1550 – i hele dets omfang – som et historisk, teatersosiologisk og teatralt fenomen. [...] Denne

skuespillerdramaturgien bygget på montasje og integrasjon av forskjellige typer kunnskap og teknikker fra både en akademisk og en folkelig tradisjon. De blandet elementer fra lærde tekster og ordspill, regler, pikante historier, komiske og obskøne *lazzi* (gags) fra gjøglere og akrobater, og monterte disse *der og da* på scenen etter avtalt arbeidsfordeling og stikkordsprinsippet.” (Falck 1995 s. 105-106)

I *commedia dell'arte* “the masks define the relationships between the characters and give us some sense of their goals and desires. The masks set limits on the action, even though the performance as a whole is created through improvisation. The actors have mastered the possible moves or *lazzi* associated with each character, much as a game player has mastered the combination of buttons that must be pushed to enable certain character actions. No author prescribes what the actors do once they get on the stage, but the shape of the story emerges from this basic vocabulary of possible actions and from the broad parameters set by this theatrical tradition. Some of the *lazzi* can contribute to the plot development, but many of them are simple restagings of the basic oppositions (the knave tricks the master or gets beaten). These performance or spectacle-centered genres often display a pleasure in process – in the experiences along the road – that can overwhelm any strong sense of goal or resolution” (Henry Jenkins i <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/firstperson/lazzi-fair>; lesedato 12.10.10).

Vernon Lee (pseudonym for den britiske forfatteren Violet Paget) “traced the origins and dramatic conventions of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* in *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (1880) and in *Euphorion* (1884). Generic characteristics of a masque consist of the actors playing mythical or allegorical figures and the central action being a dance or ballet. The dialogue was usually sparse and always of secondary importance to the music, scenery, mechanical effects, and the dance.” (Amanda Gagel i <https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/vernon-lees-satan-the-waster-pacifism-and-the-avant-garde/>; lesedato 06.10.24)

“Like the Greco-Roman mime and Atellan farce, the *commedia dell'arte* contains stock character types, masks, farcical action, and scenes full of *bastinadoes* [= *stokkeslag*], acrobatics, and amusing stage business. The scenarios are short and simple and the action flexible enough to allow the actor freedom to improvise, mime, and clown. This improvisational element is reinforced by the use of inserted bits of comical stock business, similar to the *tricae* of Atellan farce, called *lazzi*. Along with perfected technique, the actor’s art depends upon successfully linking these *lazzi*, often transmitted from generation to generation, to the main action. Each actor specializes in a stock character, which frequently has a counterpart in ancient mimodrama or Atellan farce. Arlecchino with his shaven head and flat feet, his multicolored coat and black mask, recalls the ancient Roman buffoon, who daubed himself with soot.” (Lust 2003)

“The *lazzi* could be verbal jokes, set pieces of business, set pieces of comic dialogue, or a mixture of the three. [...] The word comes from the Tuscan *lacci*, ‘laces’ or ‘links’ (in fact interruptions) in the action.” (Howarth 1978 s. 75-76)
Den første teoretikeren om *commedia dell’arte* var den spanske dramatikeren Bartolomé de Torres Naharro. “Torres Naharro was writing for a critical and well-read audience.” (Howarth 1978 s. 82)

“*Commedia dell’arte* translates as “comedy of skills”: an improvisational style of theater which began in sixteenth-century Italy and flourished in Europe for 200 years. Traveling companies of professional actors performed outdoors in public squares, using simple backdrops and props. Each member of the company played a particular stock character – the tricky servant, the greedy old man, the young heroine – wearing masks and costumes that defined the character’s personality. The actors worked from a basic outline, improvising the dialogue and incorporating jokes and physical comedy “bits” as they went. The performers always played the same characters, changing only their situations (for example, in one scenario the greedy old man might be the young heroine’s father, keeping her away from her sweetheart; in another, he might be her elderly husband.) The translation “comedy of skills” refers to the skills that the professional comic actors developed: they each had a repertoire of jokes, funny speeches, comic insults, and physical stunts to draw from in their performances.” (http://www.humanracetheatre.org/commedia_dell'arte_AUG_7_SCREEN.pdf; lesedato 12.08.13)

“*Lazzi* (singular: *lazzo*) were jokes – a comic “bits” or gags. Each character had his or her own typical *lazzi*; a good *commedia* performer would have dozens of *lazzi* that they could draw on in any situation. Some examples: A pair of servants enter carrying a tall ladder, knocking into everyone as they try to set it up. Mixed-up words. A servant carries a message between the lovers but mangles the words, causing confusion. Pantalone has a comic “heart attack” reacting to bad news. His servants must revive him. Il Dottore gives a medical exam to another character, pulling out exaggeratedly large instruments (like a large mallet to whack another character’s knee, a painful looking dentist’s drill, etc.) Arlecchino tries unsuccessfully to swat an annoying fly: knocking things over, breaking things, and injuring himself in the process. Il Capitano threatens to beat someone up but has a long list of excuses why he can’t actually do it right now. Arlecchino is so hungry he starts to eat his own shoes. Pantalone keeps scooting close to Columbina, who manages to slip out of his grasp until he finally falls on his face.” (http://www.humanracetheatre.org/commedia_dell'arte_AUG_7_SCREEN.pdf; lesedato 12.08.13)

En stukk, som senere ble kalt slapstick, ga fra seg et høyt smell når skuespillerne slo hverandre med den, og ble opprinnelig brukt i *commedia dell’arte* (Parkinson 2012 s. 49).

“The *commedia* can be considered the very purest kind of theatre. Its basic material requirements are bare boards in the corner of any public square, masks, and a few traditional garments: the rest lies in the actor’s skill. [...] The basic framework for the *commedia* play was the scenario or *canovaccio*. There are still a thousand of these businesslike documents extant; they give the main outline of the action and contain instructions for exits and entrances, movements, recommended comic business and the content of speeches. A *maestro* or *corago* would run through the scenario with his troupe before a production, suggesting innovations and ensuring coordination of interpretation. The outline was then pinned up behind the scenes for reference. At the same time each actor had his *zibaldone* or commonplace book, containing stock speeches, jokes, songs, tirades, tricks and *lazzi* which he would know by heart and draw on as they were required. Within this system he was trained also to improvise. [...] Gherardi in his *Théâtre italien* (1694) gives a description of his friend Tiberio Fiorilli, the famous Scaramouche, keeping an audience laughing for a quarter of an hour with a wordless mime of fright.” (Howarth 1978 s. 72-73)

En lovprisning av en Sganarelle-rolle (dvs. den franske versjonen av Arlecchino) fra 1600-tallet lyder slik: “Never was anything seen so diverting as the posturings of Sganarelle behind his wife’s back. His facial movements and gestures give such a convincing representation of jealousy that even without speaking he would be recognized as the most jealous of men. . . . One would need the brush of Poussin, Le Brun or Mignard in order to do justice to his admirable antics. You never heard such a simpleton, nor saw such a foolish face; and one doesn’t know whether to admire the author more for the way he has written the play, or the way he acts it.” (sitert fra Howarth 1978 s. 104)

“The original Arlecchino was not romantic. He is first mentioned by name in 1584, by which time he has distinguished himself from Brighella; Brighella directs the plot, organized the escapes, the assignations, the marriages and disguises, while Arlecchino gets it all wrong, muddles the messages, has everyone constantly on the brink of disaster. He compensates for his foolishness by a kind of acrobatic wit; he walks on his hands and on stilts, he can fall from great heights or produce a hump without padding. Gradually the clown takes over from the devil and the beggarly porter, but for all his simplicity, he retains something of his diabolical origin. He is ugly with a black half-mask, hairy cheeks and bushy eyebrows; he has a snub nose, tiny eye-holes and a carbuncle on his forehead. He is a tremendous impersonator and will appear in disguise as anything from an emperor to an astronaut. He sometimes suffers a sex change, is astonished to find himself a bride, or a goddess, or a mother surrounded by dozens of baby Harlequins. He is the most enigmatic of the masks, stupid and cunning, clumsy and graceful, sensual and innocent, quickly grieved and quickly comforted, a child and, according to some, the reincarnation of Mercury himself.” (Howarth 1978 s. 75)

Den italiensk-franske dronningen Catherine de Medici fikk commedia dell'arte-trupper til å opptre i Paris på 1500-tallet (Fabre 1992 s. 77). Den franske kongen Henri 4. likte commedia dell'arte så godt at han i 1599 inviterte den berømte italienske skuespilleren Tristano Martinelli til det franske hoffet. Martinelli var berømt for sin rolle som Arlecchino (Coron 1998 s. 290). Italienske komedie-skuespillere spilte 5. mars 1684 *Keiser Harlekin på månen* for den franske kongen (Florence March i <https://episteme.revues.org/958>; lesedato 02.06.16).

“Karnevalets tradisjoner tjente også som inspirasjon for det sterkt satiriske teater *Commedia dell'arte*, der langede ud efter alle slags autoriteter. Det førte gang på gang til politiske problemer, og komedianernes improvisasjoner var generelt kilde til bekymring og blev af samme grund ofte mødt med forbud (Berger, 81).” (Møller 2013)

Italieneren Tristano Martinelli, en av de mest berømte harlekin-skuespillerne gjennom tidene, publiserte boka *Herr Don Harlekins retoriske komposisjoner* (1601), som delvis består av et sammensurium av italienske, spanske og franske ord, og delvis av en rekke blanke sider – det er en bok som er “en inversjon av en bok” (Chatelain 2003 s. 178-179).

En fornyer av commedia dell'arte var italieneren Giambattista Fagioli, som levde på slutten av 1600- og begynnelsen av 1700-tallet (Wittschier 1985 s. 122). I 1611 samlet italieneren Flaminio Scala en del av scenariene innen commedia dell'arte og skriftliggjorde dem, det samme gjorde senere Giovanni Battista Locatelli (Barner et al. 1981 s. 124).

“Outside Italy, the form had its greatest success in France, where it became the Comédie-Italienne. In England, elements from it were naturalized in the harlequinade in pantomime and in the Punch-and-Judy show, a puppet play involving the commedia dell'arte character Punch. The comical Hanswurst, of German folklore, was also a commedia dell'arte character.” (<http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/127742/commedia-dellarte>; lesedato 03.09.13)

Den tyske maleren og designeren Oskar Schlemmer skapte i 1922 verket *Den triadiske ballett*, delvis inspirert av commedia dell'arte (Grunewald m.fl. 2011 s. 68).

Tyskeren Dieter Waldmann lot i sin komedie *Fra Bergamo til tidlig morgen*, oppført i 1960, figurene fra commedia dell'arte opptre på scenen (Grabert, Mulot og Nürnberger 1983 s. 389).

“The great silent movie comedians Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd drew on the acrobatic physical comedy of *commedia* in their films. The energetic, improvisatory humor of the *commedia* troupes is similar to the work done by contemporary improv comedy groups such as Second City, the

Groundlings, and the Upright Citizens Brigade. The stock characters of *commedia dell'arte* live on in modern sitcom characters (such as the lovable but dumb husband, the know-it-all next door neighbor, the wisecracking best friend) who deal with changing situations each week.” (http://www.humanracetheatre.org/commedia_dell'arte_AUG_7_SCREEN.pdf; lesedato 12.08.13)

Komikerne Marx Brothers – Groucho, Chico og Harpo Marx – hadde en stil som lignet *commedia dell'arte*, med “fixed types operating in a framework of thin plots which are nothing more than pretexts for their brilliant *lazzi*” (Howarth 1978 s. 178).

En som har brukt tradisjonen i sine stykker/forestillinger er “teaterlegenden og nobelprisvinneren Dario Fo, kjent for *Commedia dell'Arte*-inspirerte gjøglerstykker som *Vi betaler ikke!*” (*Morgenbladet* 27. april–3. mai 2007 s. 28)

“In the 1950s, actor/producer David Shepherd became interested in reviving the traditions of *commedia dell'arte*. He founded the Compass Players in 1955, asking noted director Paul Sills to develop the group’s improvisational skills. Sills was the son of Viola Spolin, who had developed a collection of theater improvisation exercises during her time working with underprivileged children and adults as a drama instructor in the late 1930s. Her theater games, which emphasize the development of the creative imagination, are still used in actor training programs all over the world. The Compass Players performed in a small theater attached to a bar. When the bartender asked the group to make the show longer so he could sell more drinks, the cast asked for suggestions from the audience to improvise from. Working from audience suggestions had never been done before; the audience was amazed to see how the actors created scenes on the spot. The group evolved into the Second City Company (named after an article in the magazine *The New Yorker*, which dubbed Chicago the “Second City” after New York). As the group grew, they began performing in other cities and offering classes and workshops in comedic improvisation. When producer Lorne Michaels launched his new show “Saturday Night Live” in 1975, the original cast included several Second City alumni: Dan Ackroyd, John Belushi, and Gilda Radner (joined by Bill Murray in the show’s second season).” (http://www.humanracetheatre.org/commedia_dell'arte_AUG_7_SCREEN.pdf; lesedato 02.09.13)

“I 2024 er det hundre år siden Oslo fikk tilbake sitt opprinnelige navn, og fire hundre år siden Christiania ble bygget etter bybrannen i 1624. I forbindelse med Oslos dobbeltjubileum, setter Stiftelsen Akershus festning for Kunst og Kultur opp det nyskrevne stykket “Hansken – en forestilling om byen som reiste seg fra asken”. Forestillingen får i sin urpremiere lørdag 17. august 2024 under Oslos byjubileum, og er en tidsreise fra da til nå, skildret og fremført av en omreisende trupp i *commedia dell'arte*-stil. Truppen spiller ulike roller, fiktive og historiske, og dramatiserer blant annet bybrannen og hvordan Christian IV fant ut hvor byen skulle bygges opp igjen ved Akershus festning. “Hansken” er en engasjerende og

informativ forestilling om Oslos historie.” (<https://karpedammen.no/hansken-2024>;
lesedato 06.10.24)

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