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CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

Drama: “The Word to the Action” in the Italian *Commedia dell’Arte*

PROF. LAURA BELLONI / GIORGIO BONGIOVANNI

Area of study:	Italian Culture: Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Music, Philosophy and History
Area Code:	LT/AR316
Method of Instruction:	in-person and live-streaming (dual mode)
Participation:	synchronous/live and asynchronous

Description

This course is ideal for those who have an all-round interest in the theatre. The programme combines the theory and practice of drama and creative development through a combination of theoretical seminars and practical workshops with Giorgio Bongiovanni, actor of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. The two approaches are seen not merely as complementary but as indivisible in the study of drama and theatre. The theoretical part involves the study of drama from the printed page to the actual staging and will focus in particular on the typical Italian genre, *La Commedia dell’Arte* and its great influence around the world over the centuries.

Students will thus explore the ways in which the changing forms of theatre and cultural shifts in Italian society have influenced the development of drama into its present diversity as well as the theoretical elements involved in the creation of performance. Students will be encouraged to build a script based on a renaissance *canovaccio* and oriented to the actual staging of a short play. Parallel to the historical and theoretical course, the actor Giorgio Bongiovanni will be teaching practical classes, introducing the students to *Commedia dell’Arte* and to the basic techniques of acting with masks. This part of the course will explore physical and vocal training, improvisation techniques, the use of masks on stage. We will approach the main characters of *Commedia* (Arlecchino, Colombina, the Magnifico, the Capitano, the Dottore...), tracing them throughout European theatre in their numerous metamorphoses. The students will practice on a "canovaccio" (scenario) from the XVIIth Century, writing and staging their own "Scene Di *Commedia*."

Seminars and studio-based practical courses will encourage students to explore performance through a variety of intellectual and aesthetic processes. Not only the course will enable students to explore the texts as a medium for performance but also will permit the development of organisational, intellectual and communicative skills in relation to theatre practice.

Course contents

PART 1

- Course Introduction
- Contexts and contents of *Commedia dell’Arte*
- Arlecchino and other masks: the protagonists of the Italian theatre
- The influence of *commedia dell’arte* on Shakespeare, Molière, Goldoni
- Writing a *Commedia dell’Arte* play: the language, the humor and the system of metaphors
- Dramaturgy of a 'canovaccio': creative writing on the Renaissance scenario 'The Toothpuller'
- Group Project: preparing the script

PART 2

- Basic physical and vocal training
- Masks Presentation
- Acting with masks



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Improvisation techniques
Acting practice (scenes from existing plays)
Acting practice ("canovacci")
Acting practice: it's your turn (texts written by the students)
Field trip to the workshops of Teatro alla Scala.
Preparation and Performance

Prerequisites

None

Method of instruction

Lectures, seminars and tutorials are complemented by scene-study workshops

Course requirements

In order to get their credits, students will be required to:

- Attend class regularly. More than three absences will result in halving your grade for class participation.
- Keep up with the assigned readings, bring the text to class and participate in class discussion.
- Participate to a group project to be presented shortly before the mid-term exam.

Mid-term is written. Final exams is the staging of a short play.

Credits

6 ECTS

Grading

Participation (guest-speaker and field study)	15% of final grade
Assignments (Presentation)	20% of final grade
Group Project	10% of final grade
Midterm	25% of final grade
Final exams	30% of final grade

Course readings and materials

A packet including all required readings, along with a list of suggested critical texts will be available at the beginning of the course.

Instructor bio

Prof. Laura Belloni received her degree in Languages and Foreign Literatures at UCSC in Milan, with a senior thesis on the English Opera, and a PhD in English Drama, with a dissertation on "*The Ascent of F6 (1936) and the dramatic theatre of W. H. Auden*". She attended courses in American Literature and Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, UK. After working at Radio24, a national radio, and "Airone" a national magazine, she began teaching and she is currently teaching courses in Comparative



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Literature and Literature & Drama at the UCSC Department of International Relations. Her current research areas focus on Drama, as well as Comparative Literature. Among her recent publications is "*L'artificio, l'inganno e la seduzione. Elementi metateatrali e illusioni nel teatro italiano tra commedia e opera buffa*" (Aracne, 2013) and "*Il rapimento della sposa. Fughe e rapimenti a lieto fine nel teatro comico e musicale*" (Guida, 2018).

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Prof. Giorgio Bongiovanni graduated from the "Scuola di Teatro diretta da Giorgio Strehler", drama school in Milan, Italy. He has performed in many productions for Piccolo Teatro di Milano, including: Goethe's Faust – fragments (first and second part), Il Campiello by Goldoni, The Exception and the Rule by Brecht, La storia della bambola abbandonata by Brecht-Sastre, Mother Courage from Sarajevo by Brecht, directed by Giorgio Strehler. He has been playing for thirty years the role of Pantalone in Goldoni's Arlecchino (Servant of Two Masters), which has been performed more than 1.300 times in various tournées all over the world. He has been teaching acting at the Piccolo Teatro International Academy of Commedia dell'Arte, and also teaching master-classes in Italy, Scotland, Russia, Bolivia, Estonia and Greece. Giorgio Bongiovanni has worked with outstanding Italian and foreign theatre directors, such as: Ronconi, Carsen, De Monticelli, Braunschweig, D'Amato, Iordanescu, Battistoni, Shilling, Puggelli, Warlikowski, Sinigaglia, Tofano. He has also acted in several fiction films for the television directed by Sironi and Zaccaro, broadcast on the Italian TV channels "RAI" and "Canale 5".

Beside working as a dramatic actor, he has directed several lyrical operas: Don Falcone by Jommelli, L'elisir d'amore by Donizetti, La favola dei tre gobbi by Ciampi/Goldoni, La bohème by Puccini, La traviata by Verdi, The Secret Marriage by Cimarosa, Il barbiere di Siviglia by Rossini, Don Pasquale by Donizetti. Recently he has directed Mirandolina by Goldoni, The liar by Goldoni and Two dozen scarlet roses by De Benedetti.

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