

SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS

PRELIM SOUND CONCEPT

RESEARCH:

PLAYWRIGHT

- **Carlo Goldoni** and his 18th Century Venice Italy's treasured playwright, Carlo Goldoni, was born in Venice in 1707. Eighteenth century Venice was a contemporary metropolis and a playground for the rich and nouveau riche. It was also a cultural hub, attracting wealthy foreigners and also providing work for the poor. Venetians loved to party by gambling and going to the theatre. This accounted for the popularity of carnevale where everyone enjoyed months of festivities whilst wearing masked disguises to ensure a 'good time' without disclosure! The theatre was a significant part of this culture and Goldoni showed a keen interest in the artform. From age fourteen he became involved with various companies of travelling players and enjoyed the bohemian artist lifestyle around Italy. Goldoni was also a practical man, earning a law degree and practicing law, but his love for the theatre always drew him back in. He wrote over 150 plays, including some of his most famous: The Venetian Twins, The Mistress of the Inn and The Servant of Two Masters. His intention was to reform commedia by eliminating obscenity and improvisation that had been commedia's trademark. He began writing dialogue and creating more multidimensional characters, often meeting with resistance from actors who were accustomed to improvising and working in the traditional commedia style. Likewise, Goldoni's contemporary and sometimes nemesis, Carlo Gozzi, wanted to preserve the masked tradition but Goldoni saw its decline and was determined to develop a new form. Eventually stripping the masks entirely from his plays, he went on writing clever satires that reflected an analytical view of social attitudes and behaviours between the sexes and different classes. Goldoni had such an artistic rivalry with Gozzi that it eventually prompted him to leave his beloved Venice to work in Paris where, despite all his lifelong successes, he eventually died a poor man. Goldoni was ultimately credited with reforming the Italian comedy. He was undoubtedly a genius playwright and his works have stood the test of time and continue to engage contemporary audiences globally.
- **ROSA CAMPAGNARO Translator, Adaptor, Director** This is a translation for the stage and the result of a development process that included translating Goldoni's original Italian and Venetian text and then collaborating with the actors to edit and adapt for a contemporary

audience. I wanted to maintain a Venetian spirit, and so found it necessary to create a new translation in order to obtain a clear understanding of Goldoni's original intention. There were some challenges during this process and questions were often raised and discussions had about how important it was to truly translate the text as opposed to use a phrase or word that still gives a sense of what Goldoni meant. For example, on Page 40, Pantalona refers to the word 'spuzzeta' and she says: "...Oh here comes that peacock son of his. In Goldoni's Venetian text it was 'spuzzeta' which is a bit like saying 's*&\$head' but we don't say 'shithead' because that's offensive. So don't say 's*&\$head' okay?" 'Spuzzeta' is Venetian for little stinker not peacock. However, the animal peacock gives a sense that the character is narcissistic and perhaps stupid. We debated as to whether we should use the literal translation for 'spuzzeta' or another mildly offensive word which still gives an idea of what Goldoni intended, something that may have more impact and still be comic, like s*&\$head'

THEATRICAL STYLE

- Commedia dell'Arte and use of mask Commedia dell'Arte, at its peak of popularity in the 16th century, was performed on outdoor stages in piazza (town squares). The spaces were large and actors were often challenged by hecklers, church bells and the distance between them and the audience. Perhaps for this reason their gestures, movements and voices needed to be exaggerated, larger than life and non-naturalistic. Likewise, actors often broke the fourth wall and interacted and played with the crowd. Goldoni's 18th century commedia was performed in theatres and written for an erudite audience and therefore demanded more refinement and less 'sporchi lazzi' (dirty gags) and vulgarity which was typical of the 16th century style. This adaptation is a hybrid between these two eras of Commedia dell'Arte and with a non specific contemporary time.
- The stock characters and use of mask maintain the non-naturalistic and stylised tradition. These characters are universal archetypes that can be easily identified. For example, the rich, old and stingy Pantalona is similar to 'Mr Burns' in the Simpsons and low status trickster and sometimes simpleton, Truffaldino is a 'Bart Simpson' type. Likewise, Smeraldina (servant and mistress to Clarice) has similar traits to 'Gloria' from the sitcom, Modern Family. The actor's process, when developing a masked character, is to research the character's needs and wants, but more importantly to take inspiration from the individual mask itself and the animal features in that mask. The animal is a starting point to help the actor create an exaggerated physicality and voice. Commedia dell'Arte is a combination of the following: • stock characters • masks • parody

and satire • exaggerated and stylised movement • lazzi (comic business and visual gags) • improvisation • gibberish or grommelot * In this form of theatre, actors would devise a performance by improvising the dialogue and action around a scenario. Commedia dell'Arte was innovative and ahead of its time for the 16th century. For example the term, dell'Arte, loosely translates to 'professional'. This meant that commedia troupes were profitable businesses and actors were recognised and respected as professionals. Commedia was also revolutionary for inventing the concept of the actress. It was the first theatre tradition that allowed and encouraged women to perform on stage, like pioneering actresses, Vincenza Armani and Isabella Andreini. Who became the first celebrity actors of the era! Social and political satire was a major element of commedia. It was the foundation and inspiration for the stock characters and scenarios. Although Commedia is hundreds of years old the concept of satire is still current. Audiences are delighted by impersonations of character types that exist in our society, hence the popularity of brilliant modern day commedia like, 'Kath and Kim' or 'Family Guy' or 'The Simpsons'. The exaggerated, larger-than-life characters are similar to the exaggerated grotesque quality of the masks used in commedia. The stock characters from the Commedia dell'Arte may have been re-invented in our modern day comedies but they are still easily identified and relevant. For example Pantalone (or Il Magnifico) is the archetypal rich, stingy old man. Here we can easily associate, Pantalone, with Mr Burns from 'The Simpsons'. The masks in, commedia can be inspired by animals or a natural element (fire, air, earth or water) that reflects the character's traits or idiosyncrasies. The actor then embodies these qualities in their development of the character. For example, Arlecchino's physicality and attitude reflect his mask, a cross between a cat and a monkey! * Grommelot is a convention of Commedia dell'Arte that derives from the French word grommeler, which means to grumble or mumble. Il Dottore speaks his own version of the Latin language. Sometimes, by chance, he manages to get it right.

LAZZO

- There are a few theories on the origins of the word lazzo. It is commonly believed that the word lazzo comes from the Italian word meaning joke or jest. It could also be derived from the Italian word lazzarone, which translates to slacker or scoundrel. The word may even originate from laccio, which means lace or shoelace, to 'tie up the action'. Whatever the origins, most seem to agree that lazzi are physical and verbal games, jokes or gags performed by the actors on stage including the interaction or 'play' with the audience. Lazzi can be silly slapstick, comic business or a variety of comic routines, rehearsed or improvised. In this new translation

the stage directions will indicate where a rehearsed lazzo is required and a description as to the type of lazzo it is. The intention is to give actors and director the opportunity to play and develop their own lazzo, in the spirit of the 16th century improvised commedia.

DESIGN

○ **BIG THOUGHTS**

- The show itself lends itself to have a hybrid of classical tones with pops of modern comedy. I think to do this, using sound effects that allow themselves to be cheesy and cliché is what is going to be the bread and butter of this show.
- The play is set in mid eighteenth-century Venice over the course of one day **outside**.
- The music I think should be more classical Italian and let the comedy come from the sound effects and the actors voices and movements.
- Slaps/ Swords/ Knocks can be either live foley or a sound effect or a mixture of the two.
- The box of foley sound tools has been given to Matt, and I encourage the use of these. The text begs for those live foley moments of comedy. If there is something the students think of, we can order it. But the art of foley and seeing the actors participate in the sound is another level of comedy
- The speaker placement will be surrounding sound with speakers in each corner of the Locke. I want to emersed the audience into the world. Since the place of the set is specially and outside area, the use of environmental sounds can support this. Also, because course of events occurs in one day, sound can be an indication of time, from morning, noon, to night.
- I think the aside moments are really funny, but do you want it supplements with a sound effect?
- Don't say the word bit... what are your thoughts on those bits?

○ **SMALLER THOUGHTS**

- What does the opening look like in your mind Matt? I have this thought of a big opening, introducing the characters to a song, but what are your thoughts?
- Act 1 \ \ Scene 2 \ \ Page 6 – The Devil and Angel
 - When I first read this, my thought was to record the lines, put effects on the voice to suggest angelic or demonic, and then

have one voice come from the house right corner, and the other from house left.

- Scene 4 \ \ Page 11
 - The re-enactment of the sword fight. Underscore?
- End of Act 1, what are the thoughts so far?
- Beginning of Act 2?
- Act 2 \ \ Scene 2 \ \ Page 21
 - Underscore fight sequence?
- Act 2 \ \ Scene 4 \ \ Page 26
 - Brighella listing the food, I think this could be a funny sound moment.
- Act 2 \ \ Scene 4 \ \ Page 27
 - Lazzo Serving Dinner Scene?

PRELIM SPEAKER PLOT FOR SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS

OUTPUTS:

1. Proscenium
2. Over Audience
3. House Left Back Corner
4. House Right Back Corner
5. House Left Pit
6. House Right Pit
7. Stage Right Back Corner
8. Stage Left Back Corner
9. Stage Manager Feed

