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NASSIF, MARY SHEILA. A Dramatic Interpretation of the Role of Isabella in William Glennon's The Adventures of Harlequin. (1975) Directed by Miss Kathryn England. Pp. 156

The purpose of this thesis is to research the historical and social areas of the commedia to develop an interpretation of the role of Isabella in William Glennon's The Adventures of Harlequin. This specific purpose is achieved by studying the script, acting in the play, and evaluating the production after a number of public performances.

Part One includes the following: (1) three theories describing commedia origins, (2) particular styles belonging strictly to the commedia, (3) various types of stock characters, (4) important commedia troupes, (5) a description of Isabella Andreini, (6) a description of other historical commedia actresses, and (7) a synopsis of the script and the actress's approach to the role.

Part Two consists of the script, which contains the actress's (1) blocking, (2) characterization, (3) stage business, (4) rhythm, (5) tempo, and (6) pace in the production of Harlequin which was performed on April 20 through April 27, on the main stage of the W. Raymond Taylor Speech and Drama Building at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In addition, a daily journal describing rehearsal and production events is included in this chapter.

The final chapter of this thesis consists of the actress's criticism and analysis of the role through discussions in four areas. They are: (1) achievement in the interpretation of the production, (2) actor-director relationships, (3) audience reactions, and (4) personal observations.

Mary Stella Davis

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1971

Approved by
Kathryn Boyland
Chairman

A DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE OF
ISABELLA IN WILLIAM GLENNON'S
THE ADVENTURES OF HARLEQUIN

by

Mary Sheila Nassif

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Kathryn England
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Thesis Adviser Kathryn England

Committee Members Thomas Belm
Herman Middleton

May 2, 1975
Date of Acceptance by Committee

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The author wishes to express her appreciation to all of the members of her thesis committee. A very special thank you is expressed to her thesis adviser, Miss Kathryn England; to her director, Mr. David Leong; and to the Harlequin cast and crews. The author is especially grateful to her parents for their endless amount of emotional and financial support.

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The commedia dell'arte was not only a "study of the grotesque and the facetious . . . but it was also a portrayal of real characters traced from remote antiquity down to the present day, in an uninterrupted tradition of fantastic humour which was, in essence quite serious, and thus, one had to almost say, it was quite sad, like every satire which laid bare the spiritual poverty of mankind."¹

This popular Italian comedy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, drew much applause and support during that time. It competed successfully with other plays of the period, and it won the favor and protection of the royal courts of France. It was also popular in the English courts. Though it was banished by English Parliament and French officials for short periods of time, its troupes of players always managed to reappear with renewed energy and added flair.

¹illardyns Nicoll, *Masks, Rimes and Miracles* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), p. 17.

CHAPTER I
PRE-PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

Introduction

Definition of the Commedia Dell'Arte

The commedia dell'arte was not only a "study of the grotesque and the facetious . . . but it was also a portrayal of real characters traced from remote antiquity down to the present day, in an uninterrupted tradition of fantastic humour which was, in essence quite serious, and thus, one had to almost say, it was quite sad, like every satire which laid bare the spiritual poverty of mankind."¹

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¹Allardyce Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963), p. 17.

Description of The Adventures of Harlequin

The Adventures of Harlequin, a modern play for young people, by William Glennon, reflects the mood and style of the Italian commedia of the sixteenth century. Though the play's script is updated, many remnants of the commedia style remain. William Glennon, a current professional actor, director, producer, and playwright, stresses the importance of audience involvement during the run of the play. His colorful and vivid commedia characters are thus designed, chiefly, to entertain a young audience of playgoers. Since Mr. Glennon is also very active in many new and experimental teaching programs for young people, his Harlequin play is a rich mixture of sixteenth century commedia style and twentieth century entertainment.

During the sixteenth century, the names Harlequin and Isabella spelled out comedy and romance. In his day, Harlequin used many forms and guises. In those early times, Harlequin, the chief character in many plays, was also referred to as Arlecchino or Arlequin. He "leaped on and off the stage, and with a sudden fantastic gesture, he was gone. It was as difficult to catch the real Harlequin as it was for other characters to hold him on the stage."²

Some historians declared him a god of all the thieves and beggars, while others traced his black mask to

²Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of the Theatre (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1937), p. 108.

"Phallic Negro slaves of Roman mime."³ When he was first introduced upon the stage, Harlequin was literally, "a thing of shreds and patches."⁴ He wore a black half mask and carried a wooden sword. As time went on, he traded in his patches for a gaily colored costume.

Isabella, on the other hand, was the leading lady of the commedia. She was referred to as the Inamorata. The comica innamorata usually had a handsome and gallant lover who played opposite her. In very early times, she was rather uninteresting and subdued in tone. She often played "a young girl, curbed by hard parents. Sometimes she was merely a kind of a doll, or a puppet for the plot. Isabella was a fashionable young person of the time and had no special characteristics."⁵

The Inamoratas of the sixteenth century went by such names as Isabella, Cornelia, and Flaminia. The types, like the names, ranged from "the most noble, innocent, and tender of lovers, to the loose apprentice wenches who were saved just in time, by a virtuous love."⁶ As time passed on, Isabella's character developed more fully.

In several of Flaminio Scala's commedia plays, Isabella appeared as the wife of Pantalone, Graciano, Coviello, and other popular commedia characters. She also

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid., p. 110.

⁶Pierre Louis Duchartre, The Italian Comedy (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), p. 271.

played the part of the happy young widow at times. Her roles were all purely comical ones, and she constantly enlivened the stage with her fantasies, satires, and wit.

Historical Study of the Commedia

Origins of the Commedia

The *commedia dell'arte* made its first appearance in Italy during the middle of the sixteenth century. This type of theatre "depicted human frailties and parodied minor weaknesses of human character."⁷ Early actors stood on rocks and tree stumps, or by evening fires and entertained their audiences with stories, jokes and songs.

The *commedia* was defined and described as "Art and Psychology. It was a theatre of all people, of all arts, of all moments, when life winged up out of drab reality. It was a theatre of music and dance; of song, color, and light; of plays on wagon stages; of festivals in streets, in courts, in great squares; on rivers; at weddings and funerals and coronations; of actors with and without masks; sometimes in extraordinary costumes."⁸

There were three distinct theories that described the development of the *commedia dell'arte*. One theory stated that the *commedia* originated in the ancient city of

⁷Pierre Louis Duchartre, Masks and Marionettes (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 3.

⁸Ibid.

Atella located near Naples. Atella was one of the first Italian cities that owned a theatre. The comedies produced there in the third and fourth centuries were described as comical and satirical in nature. The presentations were based upon several early plays derived from the Greeks. This type of comedy was supposed to resemble the modern day commedia form. When these plays appeared in Rome, they were referred to as Atellanae. A certain amount of obscenity was present in this type of entertainment. Thus, the term Atellanae was applied to any form of comedy that was coarse and indecent in content. The Atellanae thus consisted of comedies and popular farces, and parodies and political satires. Though the plots varied, the "roles" and character types were always constant. The dialogue was improvised during each performance, however, it was based upon a plot outline, or scenario, that was decided upon in advance.

A second theory described the origin of the commedia in a different manner. Some historians stated that the commedia dell'arte was related directly to the early mimes of Asia and Europe. Studies revealed that the characters found in Byzantine mimes in the 1400s greatly resembled the characters found in the Italian commedia of the sixteenth century.

A third and final theory stated that this type of entertainment originated when wandering jugglers and comedians set up stands in the public squares of towns and

villages during the Middle Ages. These performers drew the crowds with their rough, bawdy jokes and improvised dialogues. It was believed that many stage tricks were borrowed from these early comedians. Their "lazzi," or stage business, greatly contributed to the body of the later improvised plays.

Styles of the Commedia

The Improvisation

The commedia was a "genre" of theatre that was very distinctive from any other type of theatre. Commedia dell'arte, all'improvviso, as it was referred to in its early years, depicted a type of play in which improvisation was the dominant characteristic. The actors performed with only a bare plot outline in their minds. This outline was given to them by their actor-manager. Actors were free to do and say whatever they liked, as long as they based their words and actions on the given plot. Thus, they performed in a very creative and spontaneous manner. They were forced to develop a theme through the use of perfect teamwork on everyone's part. There were no memorized lines or actions; however, actors developed and maintained certain characteristic gestures which were used repeatedly during their performances.

Plots were usually taken from novels, plays, and the classics. Dialogue for each given theme was improvised

each time the play was presented, thus, no two performances of the same play were ever identical. The talent required of a commedia dell'arte troupe had to be of extremely high order. Many of the actors and actresses identified themselves so closely with the characters they portrayed that they eventually assumed the stage name of that character in everyday life as well as during performance time.

The Lazzi

"When the human element entered into the work of an actor to such an extent that it caused the fountain of his inspiration to run dry, or when it became necessary to animate a play or to brighten a scene, the actor resorted to what was known as lazzi."⁹

Lazzi was defined as "stage tricks designed to evoke laughter."¹⁰ These tricks did not relate to the play's plot at all, though they were one of the chief resources of the Italian improvisations. Historians described the lazzi as "something that was foolish, witty, or metaphorical in word or action."¹¹ The lazzi was often described as vulgar. "Most of the verbal lazzi was rather crude of type, and the action lazzi was mostly rough and tumble."¹²

⁹Paul Schwartz, Commedia Dell'Arte (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), p. 10.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes and Miracles, p. 220.

¹²Ibid.

The Scenarios

"The scenario was to the play what the skeleton was to the human body."¹³ A scenario was the barest outline of the play's plot. Actors added their own versatility, jokes, and acrobatic tricks to this plot. It was the only tangible element of the commedia that existed after that form of theatre lost its popularity.

The scenarios had three centuries of brilliant fame and success, yet they belonged strictly to the period in which they were created. "Their original merit depended, not upon the subject or the text of the scenario, but rather upon the proficiency of the troupe that interpreted them."¹⁴ During the period, scenarios were also referred to as soggettos. "Only the barest plot outline found its way into the official soggetto."¹⁵

In very early times, the words commedia all'improvviso or commedia a soggetto were used when the scenarios were incorporated. Both of the terms reflected the new ways in which the actors improvised their words in each scenario (all'improvviso), and, thus, they relied upon the scenarios for the basic plot, theme, or subject.

¹³Schwartz, Commedia Dell'Arte, p. 29.

¹⁴Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 50.

¹⁵Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 225.

Written forms of the scenarios were only put down in outline form. The actors were made familiar with the basic plot of the skits, and then went on to improvise the details of the playlets. The scenari of the commedia dell'arte were attached to the walls behind the wings of the stage. The leader or manager of the troupe presented the scenario plot to his actors before the play opened. In doing so, he "read the scenario and explained the characters by name and characteristics, expounded the argument of the story and the place where it was staged, fixed the entrance houses, and interpreted the jokes and all the smallest details."¹⁶ Actors were then left to their own creative resources when the play was presented before an audience.

The Masks

The commedia dell'arte was often referred to as the Comedy of Masks. The principal characters of the commedia usually wore light weight masks that were made of thin leather. These masks were pliable and rather close fitting ones.

Some of the early traveling troupes performed on a type of collapsible stage. This stage tucked away, with all of its accessories, in a covered wagon when it was not in use. The floor of the stage was elevated to the level of an average man's eyes so that all the spectators were

¹⁶Joseph Spencer Kennard, Masks and Marionettes (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 49.

given a very distant view of the entire figure of the actor. Many facial expressions were thus lost because the actors were so far from their audiences. The dim candle light that illuminated the stage also intensified the poor sight factors. Consequently, masks were first used to alleviate the many sight and distance problems.

Stock Commedia Characters

Commedia characters were created by a welding of many human traits and by direct observation. "The characters were not only heirs to the traditions of the theatre of antiquity, and thus traced their descent from classic prototypes, but they also possessed striking traits which stamped them with distinct personalities of their own."¹⁷ They had, for instance, their own manner of speech and gesture. "They were individual down to their own warts and moles. They represented people not of the dead and forgotten past, but of the living and growing cities of Venice and Bergamo."¹⁸

Many of the most famous commedia troupes, such as the Gelosi, the Confidenti, and the Uniti, developed and popularized these characters during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The character of Pulcinella first appeared in Naples, and Coviello made his first appearance

¹⁷Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid.

in Calabria. "In that manner, each town created a representative type of character which was its own boast, and to which its jealous neighbors usually added, effectively, a touch of caricature."¹⁹ Thus, the various "roles" were stylized. During that period, the commedia was extremely popular in Italy, and it was destined to flourish. It appealed to all classes of people, for its subject matter dwelled upon the aspects of everyday life. Historians declared that this commedia was successful in Italy because "the theatre was so popular that even the working man deprived himself of food in order to have the wherewithal to go to the play, for almost everyone had a love as well as a talent for pantomime and song."²⁰

There was no end to the list of names given to the various characters of the commedia. Most of the names that finally remained with the characters were found in documents that were dated from the Renaissance to the time of Moliere. The success of the characters and the form of theatre itself was due to the talented and professional actors that performed in the commedia plays. These actors never completely escaped from the influence of literature. Many academic themes were used as a basis for the improvisations that developed. When the actors based an improvisation upon such a theme, they usually increased their actions and speeded up the dialogues. They then added bits of lazzi and other

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 20.

tricks of the improvised stage which created laughter and excitement to their art.

Actors who portrayed the stock characters of the original plays adapted the names of their on-stage characters to their own private lives. They also adapted a five-act literary play to a scenario which consisted of three acts.

The temperament and natural talent of the individual actors and the gaiety that was natural to the Italian spirit that was expressed on stage in the actor's lazzi, tumbles, blows, kicks, songs, dances, and obscenities, were the factors that raised a comedy out of the growing monotony of classic imitations.²¹

Each actor also possessed a "stock" of speeches that was appropriate to the type of character that the actor represented. Some of the speeches were taken, bit by bit, from plays and from other speeches that were repeated at various times during performances. They were part of an actor's repertoire. These speeches were presented in a "spirited manner, free from slavish adherence to memorized lines and stage cues. The actors were always free to choose what was to be said, and it was this freedom of choice that made the commedia dell'arte a creative art."²²

An Important Commedia Troupe--The Gelosi

The Gelosi troupe was one of the most popular commedia troupes of the sixteenth century. Two of the most important actors in the history of the commedia worked with

²¹Schwartz, *Commedia Dell'Arte*, p. 38.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 22

this troupe. They were Francesco Andreini and his wife, the famous Isabella Andreini. Isabella depicted the role of the Inamorata, or the leading lady. Francesco made the role of the "Capitano" extremely popular during the period. This troupe toured Venice, Mantua, and Genoa, and also appeared at the royal French court many times. The Troupe peaked in its success when it presented its great piece, referred to as La Princesse qui a perdu l'Esprit, in many Italian cities.

Flaminio Scala was the first leader of this popular troupe. He was of high intelligence and had a good educational background. He left some of the first written scenarios to the troupe of players upon his death. His scenarios included not only comical works, but also several written tragedies and pastorals. The players of this troupe were also good dancers, acrobats, and orators. They also "possessed thorough knowledge of human nature so that they adequately brought alive the characters they interpreted."²³ Scala succeeded in making his troupe the most unified of all the troupes of the commedia. He worked out the commedia characters more definitely than they had ever been presented before and gave them a consistent type of style and form.

²³Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 266.

The Importance of Women in the Commedia

During the early years of the commedia, the parts of the leading women of the commedia were played by beardless young men, or clean-shaven older men. Niccolo Barbieri, in an essay, described the youths who portrayed the early female roles:

These young men did not know how to dress themselves in the attire of the female sex, and they therefore dressed at home with the aid of their wives or some feather brained maid with whom they made free and lively. . . . These lads then passed openly through the city, chatted and romped together and often arrived at the theatre so completely dishevelled that their friends and teachers were forced to comb their hair again. These friends were also forced to refurbish their paint and rearrange their finery. The young boys never managed to arrive at the theatre on time; they had to be flattered and cajoled for encouragement. Indeed, they were enough to exhaust the patience of those who had to care of them.²⁴

Beltrame summed up his account when he stated:

"only women could play women's roles, and any other custom was frankly indecent."²⁵ Consequently, women were later given parts in this entertainment. When they became a part of the theatre, it was declared:

Their very names and figures were redolent of dreams, the gracious names of these leading ladies (Inamoratas), some of whom were tender and some of whom were false. To mention them was to evoke the glamorous Italy of bygone days, the Italy of Casanova, for they recalled old chronicles of Renaissance splendours in which the charm and loveliness of the women of the Italian comedy was captured and preserved forever. Their gentle memories swayed us far back into the past . . . We thought of these women as being both voluptuous and exquisitely cultivated; Such women as belonged to every age in which hypocrisy did not usurp the place of innocence.²⁶

²⁴Ibid., p. 226.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 262.

Until the beginning of the Renaissance, the church was fearful that "the pleasures of the flesh and the devil"²⁷ would destroy the universe if the Christian world allowed women to participate in the area of the theatre. When important and talented women such as Isabella Andreini, appeared on stage with the famous Gelosi troupe, the ban against women was lifted in several Italian states.

"It was due to this absence of women from the stage for so long a time that the female roles were not developed to any great extent in the commedia dell'arte, and hence, never were as important, characterwise, as Harlequin and other male leads who had long traditions behind them."²⁸ The history of the character of Isabella or Zerbinette, Francesquina, Flaminia, or Columbine, as the leading lady was sometimes called, was rather "that of the actress who played the role rather than of the role itself."²⁹

A Character Analysis of Isabella Andreini

"The name Isabella spoke of tender and devoted love."³⁰ Early in the sixteenth century there was an Inamorata by the name of Isabella. The actress who first portrayed this character was Vittoria degli Amorevoli. However, an actress by the name of Isabella Andreini had the honor of "bestowing her own name permanently upon the idealized type of woman in love."³¹ This remarkable

²⁷Ibid. ²⁸Ibid., p. 263. ²⁹Ibid., p. 264.

³⁰Ibid., p. 272. ³¹Ibid.

actress was "as celebrated for her virtue as for her beauty, and she brought such glory to the profession of acting that the name of Isabella Andreini was destined to be held in veneration as long as the world endured and unto the end of the ages."³²

Isabella was born in Padua in 1562, and was of Venetian heritage. She was educated classically and possessed all the qualities of a great lady. Historians described her as a good poet and dramatist who devoted herself from the day of her marriage, principally, to her husband's theatrical profession.

At the age of sixteen, she was described as beautiful, virtuous, and talented. She married Francesco Andreini in her sixteenth year. Francesco started his own career as a soldier and later became an actor. During his career as a soldier, he was captured by the Turks, and escaped only after seven years of slavery. He succeeded in returning to Italy, whereupon he soon joined the famous Gelosi troupe. He made his acting debut in the "role" of a "Lover." Francesco soon developed into a poet, musician, and gifted linguist. "His life read like a tale out of a story book. He then married the sixteen year old Isabella, a girl whose beauty and talents caused many a prince and poet to sing her praise in eager rivalry. He loved her devotedly and was in turn beloved."³³

³²Ibid. ³³Ibid., p. 232.

After their marriage Francesco was later made head of the Gelosi troupe and Isabella held the title of leading lady in the troupe. Before that time, she was enrolled in the troupe headed by Flaminio Scala at Florence. She was described as an exceedingly cultivated woman who knew Latin perfectly. "During her life time she was feted and honoured and admired throughout both Italy and France."³⁴ She was admired and praised by many famous and influential men. Tasso wrote a sonnet about her which read:

When fostering mother nature
Fashioned the fair veil of
Isabella's physical graces,
She sought out beauty
And gathered it as a flower,
Taking jewels out of the earth
And stars from the heavens.³⁵

Isabella was the most celebrated actress of her time and was admired and applauded by all. She was thus elected a member of the academy of the Intenti of Pavia very early in life. Cardinal Aldobrandini gave a party in her honor in Rome during that time. Isabella was admired by many cardinals, princes, and sovereigns. These men of high authority described her as "the soul, the honor, and the pillar of the Gelosi company."³⁶

In the year 1584, the Gelosi troupe ventured to France to perform at the royal courts. Isabella achieved

³⁴Ibid., p. 272. ³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Maurice Sand, The History of Harlequinade, vol. II (New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1915), p. 135.

in France, as she had in Italy, the same degree of distinction by her "modest and reserved conduct as by the versatility of her talents."³⁷ She revisited France in 1600, when the Gelosi troupe was invited by Henri IV. During this period, Francesco was made director of the Gelosi troupe. Like Isabella, he received many honors from the French court. In his Place Universelle, Thomas Garson wrote:

The graceful Isabella Andreini, the most brilliant ornament of the stage and the theatre, as praiseworthy for her virtue as for her beauty, rendered so illustrious her profession that as long as the world shall last, and down to the end of time, the name of the famous Isabella Andreini will be held in veneration.³⁸

Francesco Andreini called his wife "Signore Isabella, which meant, beautiful of name, beautiful of body, and most beautiful of mind."³⁹ This talented woman was the creator of many poems, sonnets, and songs. It was proven that she was a strongly intellectual woman when she wrote:

. . . . Now I, sent by the Creator of this world to be its citizen and having had born in me, by chance, a desire for knowledge, far more ardent than it is in many women of our age. . . . wished with all my strength to nourish this knowledge . . . I have always been very far from a state of leisure. . . . In order not to wrong the talent which God and nature gave me, and nature gave me, and in order that my life might not be called a continuous slumber, and because I know that every good citizen is bound to his utmost to benefit his fatherland, I could, so to speak, hardly read before I devoted myself to the composition of my poems.⁴⁰

³⁷Ibid., p. 135.

³⁸Ibid., p. 136.

³⁹Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 237.

⁴⁰Winifred Smith, Italian Actors of the Renaissance (New York: Coward-McCann), p. 51.

Isabella's efforts to improve her mind and her countrymen's morals were well received. "She was accepted and crowned with laurel by the members of the Academy of the Intenti of Padua."⁴¹ Acting and writing were not Isabella's only interest however. She was also the mother of seven children, all of whom praised her as an excellent mother. She had four daughters, all of whom were "hidden safely away from the world's temptations in Mantuan convents."⁴² She also had one son who was a monk, and another son who was a soldier. Giambattista Andreini, another son was an actor-poet, and "the inheritor of Isabella's talents."⁴³

In 1603-1604, Isabella received the most marked favor from the French Court, especially from Henry IV and his wife Marie de'Medici. Upon writing her sister, the Duchess of Mantua, Marie de'Medici praised Isabella by saying:

My Sister: Isabella Andreini, the actress, is returning to Italy soon, so I write you a word in her behalf and beg you to help her and honor her with your good graces and kindness in whatsoever she may need, assuring yourself that while she was here, she gave the greatest satisfaction, both of her own and troupe's performances and both to the king, my lord, and to me. Therefore I recommend her to you with affection. . . .⁴⁴

Pierre Mathieu also wrote an historical account about the Andreini "troupe" when it played before the king and queen of France in 1604.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 52. ⁴²Ibid., p. 54. ⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 61.

Isabella is an Italian woman, learned in poetry, whose equal has not yet been found for elegance, readiness, and ease in all sorts of styles suited to the stage. If she had lived in Greece when comedy was in vogue, statues would have been raised to her and she would have been crowned with flowers in the theatre. . . . She was seen and listened to with great applause in France, and her comedies were serviceable to morality. . . .⁴⁵

On her departure from Paris in 1604, a poem was written to Isabella by du Ryer. In translation it read:

I do not believe that Isabella
can be mortal woman.
She must be one of the gods
who has assumed woman's guise
In order to ravish away our souls
through our eyes and ears.⁴⁶

Though Isabella was begged by many people to remain in Paris a while longer, she departed on July 10, 1604. She was forced to delay her journey in Lyons for she grew suddenly ill, and died there in childbirth, before the troupe reached Italy. Nations mourned her death and her funeral was marked by "great pomp and ceremony."⁴⁷ Francesco Andreini disbanded his troupe after his wife's death and devoted the rest of his life to the publication of his wife's writings. This famous woman was granted a very public and magnificent funeral in Lyons. Her husband wrote an epitaph which read:

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁶Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 273.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 91.

A woman preeminent for virtue,
 the ornament of mortality,
 Faithful to her marital
 relations, religious, pious,
 a friend to the Muses, the chief
 of theatrical artists, who here
 awaited the Resurrection.⁴⁸

Her writer-son, G. B. Andreini, called her "The loveliest Siren of the Stage, the Phoenix of the Italian Theatre, and one of the gods disguised as a mortal."⁴⁹ Upon her death, her entire family was greatly loved and admired by all. Of her seven children, one was adopted by the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, and another child was adopted by the Duchess of Mantua.

Isabella left behind her many beautiful and fine works. A pastoral called Mirtilla, which was printed in Verona in 1588 was one of her greatest achievements. Some fragments of her writings were collected by her husband and by Flaminio Scala, and were published as Frammenti in 1625. Her poems were collected and bound under Rime, a volume which was published in Naples in 1696. For these works, Isabella was honored in numerous articles. Because of her fine literary abilities, her statue was set alongside the busts of Tasso and Petrarca. This same statue was adorned with laurel time and again.

Seventeenth century literature praised her highly. Isaac Ryer, De la Roque, and endless poets admired her

⁴⁸Smith, Italian Actors of the Renaissance, p. 238.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 54.

unceasingly. Gherardo Borgogni, a poet, referred to her as "an actress illustrious and clear."⁵⁰ In his own poetry, Borgogni declared that he has lived, and lives, and will continue to live for Isabella."⁵¹ She was the theme for several of his sonnets. It was said that Isabella was made immortal by the poems that were written about her as well as by the poems that she, herself, wrote so well. Isabella's son, G. B. Andreini, also praised her works and put her above Ariosto, Tasso, and all the poets of her time.

Other Important Women of the Commedia

Besides the name Isabella, such names as Ysabella, Yzabella, and Zirzabelle were used to denote this character. In the years from 1530-1560, leading ladies also bore the names of Lelia and Beatrice. However, unlike Isabella Andreini, most of the other actresses were publicly recognized by their stage names only, and they were thus unknown in the way of their private lives. In 1570, the beautiful Aimiani was recognized as a celebrated poetess, musician, and comedienne. She was a member of the Intronanti troupe. In 1572, the Confidenti troupe that played in France had with them a leading lady of marked beauty. Her real name was Maria Malloni, and she was described as having some literary talents. Her stage name was Celia.

⁵⁰Nicoll, Masks, Mimes, and Miracles, p. 238.

⁵¹Ibid.

A second actress who was described as brilliant as well as beautiful, and who was also one of the most successful actresses of the commedia was Vittoria Pussimi. Vittoria and Isabella Andreini played, side by side, on many occasions, alternately as prima and seconda donna, in the Gelosi troupe.

Tommaso Garzoni, in his writings, praised the two women equally. He said:

Vittoria was a beautiful witch of love . . . with harmonious and pleasing speech, accomplished and graceful actions, affable and sweet style, enticing and charming sight, savorful and sugared smiles-- and a carriage that was haughty and noble.⁵²

Historians declared that "both Isabella and Vittoria must have been of virtuous life as well as of professional excellence, or Garzoni would not have been so enthusiastic. He slandered actors who shamed human nature with their vices, and only praised those whose careers showed the most moral habits of living."⁵³

A final leading lady of significance was Françoise-Marie Biancolelli, the daughter of the famous Harlequin Domenico Biancolelli. She made her first appearance in the role of leading lady in 1683. She also took the name of Isabella as her stage name. During that period, it was said that "never was the Comedie-Italienne so applauded

⁵²Smith, Italian Actors of the Renaissance, p. 46.

⁵³Ibid., p. 49.

as it was in that year."⁵⁴ The characters that Harlequin and his daughter played, won applause all over Paris. When this Isabella was described, it was said: "Never had there been so much intelligence for comedy, combined with so much youth."⁵⁵ Although Françoise Biancolelli was not endowed with great beauty, she "had a gift of pleasing spread all over her person. She was full of grace, very well made, and had a physiognomy that was sweet and charming."⁵⁶

Thus, the stage character of Isabella was fully developed by the end of the seventeenth century. It was completed by Françoise Biancolelli.

Isabella was fully developed by the end of the seventeenth century. It was completed by Françoise Biancolelli. Isabella was then not so much of a tender, loving woman, as a flirtatious young miss, who ruled both her parents and admirers with a rod of iron. She possessed, moreover, a somewhat masculine turn of mind and a lively, picturesque wit.⁵⁷

Effects Women Made Upon the Commedia

By the introduction of actresses into the *commedia*, the "dramatic value of the lady was completely changed. She was suddenly the active centre of the play. However, for the convenience of academic representation and in accordance with the convention that honest women were not

⁵⁴Sand, The History of Harlequinade, vol. II, p. 141.

⁵⁵Ibid. ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 147.

⁵⁷Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 276.

seen in the street or at the windows, the object of the technique of the commedia was to conceal the lady."⁵⁸ Though this lady was the subject of conversation in many cases, she was never seen and rarely heard during the early commedia days when youthful boy actors portrayed the female characters. Thus, when the practice of using boy actors was done away with, it was the immediate concern of the playwright to invent instances that allowed actresses to appear on stage as much as possible. By 1646, it was observed that a company with no women had a very small chance for audience appeal, applause, or survival. The early company cast lists showed that the importance of actresses was recognized by the middle 1600s.

Properly speaking, there were no masks for the women in the improvised comedies, because the masks were standardizations of character, and no matter how frequently and how variously the Inamoratas, soubrettes or matrons were introduced, the Isabelles and Flaminias changed in character and personality as often as different actresses were found to interpret them.⁵⁹

Also, masks were not suitable because they covered the female character's beautiful facial attributes, and her face was "obviously the chief requisite of her "role."⁶⁰ However, at times, a tiny black velvet mask, or loup, was sometimes worn by the female characters. The loup was not

⁵⁸K. M. Lea, Italian Popular Comedy (New York: Russell and Russel, 1962), p. 113.

⁵⁹Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 226.

⁶⁰Ibid.

considered a true mask though, for it was used in everyday life as well as in the theatre. During the period, it was as much a part of a woman's dress as her lace and jewels.

Audience appeal was raised even higher by the use of elaborate costumes for the leading ladies. The actresses "revelled in bodices and ruffles embroidered in gold and silk, jewels of every description, earrings of pearl or of gold, beads in rings and twisted strands. The most beautiful of the costumes were those of the Inamoratas and Courtesans."⁶¹ However, the costumes for the women were very fanciful and bore no true relation to the subject or setting of the play itself.

On the whole, the commedia women were represented as "having more courage and resource than the young men."⁶² Isabella and Flaminia went beyond mild abuse when they were annoyed:

They scratched and pinched like vixens; they came to blows and pulled hair. Their passions and their actions were very brazen. At times, Isabella relieved her feelings on stage by smashing dishes. In more romantic circumstances, her passionate nature drove her to stab the men who had wronged her, or to offer to commit suicide in desperation after an old lover's desertion.⁶³

Isabella was the "most shameless type in manners and morals when she portrayed the wife of Zanni. She traded

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Smith, Italian Actors of the Renaissance, p. 117.

⁶³Ibid., p. 119.

herself to all the town and allowed her lover to make love to her over her husband's shoulder."⁶⁴ However, at the end of the play, it was always regarded as a "sufficient sop to morality that when this woman got all she wanted, she always promised to reform and to live honestly ever-after."⁶⁵

Conclusion

Acting Approach to the Character of Isabella

The witty escapades and pantomimes of the commedia players in William Glennon's production of Harlequin allow the actors many opportunities to react spontaneously to create imaginative characterizations. In Glennon's play, the character Isabella, sees herself as the most important member of the commedia troupe, and she "reigns over" Dotorre, Capitano, and Pantalone throughout the play. She delights in feeling supreme over her comrades. Like many of the historical commedia figures, the actress who portrays Isabella has to be satirical, witty, and energetic throughout the play.

Since the actress also sings a song during the run of the play, as did the songstress of the early commedia times, the actress has to entertain the audience with a type of song and movement routine that is reminiscent of the classical commedia style. However, historical accounts state that "every Isabella was as unique and individual as

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 120.

⁶⁵Ibid.

the actress who portrayed the character."⁶⁶ Consequently, the modern day actress who portrays the role is not forced to adapt her role to a "stock" type of character.

In Glennon's modern adaptation, Isabella does not wear a half mask or loup. Masks were used in early commedia days to remedy the many distance problems; however, since the modern production will be presented in a three-sided arena, the audience will be very close to the players; consequently, there are no distance problems. Thus, the modern actress's main purpose is to recapture the style of the Renaissance commedia with the use of an updated script and in cooperation with a "troupe" of updated actors.

Summary of the Commedia

It was written that "the commedia dell'arte was a kind of enchanted place where lovers never lost their happiness and were never troubled by domesticated love or by the communion of souls or deficits in household budgets. All the inhabitants of that land lead a carefree, sprightly, and fantastic life to the accompaniment of quaint seductive music. The characters were swayed by impulses as swift and precipitate as rockets, by moods of fleeting melancholy and by wild spirits of farce."⁶⁷

The commedia always exercised "a mysterious power over the minds of men of spirit and imagination. It bore

⁶⁶Duchartre, The Italian Comedy, p. 226.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 293.

a glamour, an eerie fascination, compelling yet intangible, much the same as those distant isles of melodious and seductive names which men dreamed of but hardly ever reached. They were places invisible upon the blue expanse of the world's surface--haunting, alluring, and unvisited. The Italian comedy, then, was a shadowy country, an earthly paradise of fancy, filled with many strange and delightful people; characters and personalities whose conversation was as subtle as their antics were unexpected. The characters were our closest friends and they never grew tiresome, because their faults were too numerous and amusing. They lived a charmed life, for they were secure in their ultimate good fortune. Their every enterprise and adventure was destined to a happy end. . . ."68

The commedia offered individuals a type of world where "each person could find his own level and field of activity. Poets, musicians, writers, and painters of the most diverse talents and temperaments were brought together by their common devotion to the commedia."69

68Ibid.

69Ibid., p. 294.

Character Fact Sheet on Isabella

Physical Traits

SEX	Female
AGE	Twenty-four
FEATURES	Attractive
FIGURE	Properly proportioned; curvy
VITALITY	Energetic
COORDINATION	Very skilled; graceful movements

Mental Traits

I.Q.	Average: Educated in a worldly manner, but not a scholarly one.
EDUCATION	Knowledge acquired from actual living instead of from schools
PRINCIPLE CAPABILITY	Artistic and creative in dance and song
CREATIVE ABILITY	Talented--to the point of upstaging the other members of the troupe at times
BACKGROUND	Common; happy; carefree

Emotional Traits

EMOTIONAL TYPE	Very extroverted
EMOTIONAL STRENGTH	Extremely strong--strongest of all the "players"
EMOTIONAL CONTROL	Tendency to become "carried away with herself "at times"
PERSONAL SECURITY	Completely secure

Social Traits

SOCIAL TYPE	Extroverted
EGO	"Reigned" above other players
SOCIAL ABILITY	A leader--drew people to her
SOCIABILITY	Made friends easily; fascinated all people
ECONOMICAL STATUS	Poor struggling actress
RELIGION	Conventional
POLITICS	Democratic--almost to the point of a Socialist
MORAL VIEWPOINT	Liberal--"lived for the moment"

CHARLOTT

What are you doing, Charlot?

CHARLOTTEN SHOWS NO PARTICULAR SURPRISE. HE
"SHE'S LIVING AND STUNTS THE SAME WAY AGAIN, FALLING
AROUND, HEARING HIS MASTER CALL, TAKING THE TRAY, ETC.
(SHE WATCHES WITH INTEREST AND BEGINS TO COMMENT.)

CHARLOTT

You're alright? I see! Somebody calls you. Your master!
Oh, you're a servant. He's hungry. Very hungry. So you
take his name food, ah? Oh-oh, too bad, you dropped the
tray. I'll bet he's going to . . . oh--he did! He's not
well! I'd call a very kind waiter, kissing you that way.
Are you all right? Here, let me help.

(SOMETIMES THEY PANTOMIME RESTORING THE VARIOUS
THINGS TO THE TRAY.)

CHAPTER II

MASTER SCRIPT FOR THE ADVENTURES OF HARLEQUIN

(DANCE BEGINS ACT I. ENTIRE COMPANY PERFORMS STYLIZED FOLK DANCE OF THE PERIOD ON ALL THREE STAGE LEVELS. DANCE ENDS AND ALL EXIT. THEN BLACKOUT. A BOY ENTERS, DRESSED AS A POOR ITALIAN PEASANT OF THE 16TH CENTURY. WHAT HE LACKS IN INTELLECT, HE MAKES UP WITH HIS AGILITY AND ENGAGING WIT. HE SPEAKS. HARLEQUIN: "WELL, NOW, IT'S TIME TO PRETEND!" HE EXECUTES A KIND OF DANCE-PANTOMIME WITH MUSIC IN THE BACKGROUND, PRETENDING TO BE A SERVANT. AT FIRST, HE IS ASLEEP, THEN WAKENS SUDDENLY WHEN HE HEARS A SUMMONS. HE RUSHES TO GET A TRAY OF FOOD FOR HIS IMAGINARY MASTER, APPROACHES, CARRYING THE HEAVILY-LADEN TRAY AND WHEN ABOUT TO PRESENT IT, DROPS IT. AS HE IS TRYING TO APOLOGIZE FOR HIS CARELESSNESS AND AT THE SAME TIME ATTEMPTING TO PICK UP THE FOOD, HE RECEIVES A TERRIFIC KICK FROM HIS "MASTER" WHICH SENDS HIM SPRAWLING. AGAIN HE TRIES TO RETRIEVE THE FOOD AND ALSO AVOID FURTHER BLOWS. ATTEMPTING TO APPEASE HIS ENRAGED EMPLOYER, HE JUGGLES VARIOUS "ITEMS"--OBVIOUSLY DROPPING THEM AND BREAKING THEM. HE IS NO AMATEUR. AT THIS POINT, ANOTHER BOY ENTERS, THROUGH THE THEATRE, STOPS AS HE SEES HARLEQUIN SO ENGAGED. THE BOY'S NAME IS LUIGI. HE WATCHES FOR A MOMENT.)

LUIGI

What are you doing, Quino?

(HARLEQUIN SHOWS NO PARTICULAR SURPRISE. HE "SHH'S LUIGI AND STARTS THE SAME SCENE AGAIN, FALLING ASLEEP, HEARING HIS MASTER CALL, TAKING THE TRAY, ETC. LUIGI WATCHES WITH INTEREST AND BEGINS TO COMMENT:)

LUIGI

You're asleep? I see. Somebody calls you. Your master? Oh, you're a servant. He's hungry. Very hungry. So you take him some food, eh? Oh-oh, too bad, you dropped the tray. I'll bet he's going to . . . ugh--he did! He's not what I'd call a very kind master, kicking you that way. Are you all right? Here, let me help.

(TOGETHER THEY PANTOMIME RESTORING THE VARIOUS ITEMS TO THE TRAY.)

LUIGI

Here. A big orange. And a banana. Two bananas. Why don't you take the day off?

(HARLEQUIN TAKES THE TRAY OF FOOD, DROPS IT ON HIS MASTER'S HEAD, AND THEY BOTH MAKE A RUN FOR IT, CIRCLING THE STAGE, LAUGHING. ONCE THEY STOP, THEY PANTOMIME PEELING AND EATING A BANANA DURING THE FOLLOWING:)

LUIGI

Pretending again, huh? (HE NODS.) Like the strolling players? (HE NODS.) But you just pretend by yourself. The players put on shows for everyone. That's very different.

(LUIGI WATCHES HARLEQUIN "EAT" THE BANANA, TOSS THE SKIN AWAY, GET UP, BID FAREWELL, START MOVING AWAY AND SLIP ON THE SKIN AND CRASH TO THE GROUND.)

LUIGI

You should be careful where you throw a banana skin. (HE SIGHS, GETS UP AND STARTS TO LEAVE.) I'm not much in a mood for pretending today. I'd rather have a real banana. Goodbye, friend.

(HARLEQUIN IMMEDIATELY BEGINS AN ELABORATE SCENE OF GRIEF--HE WEEPS, WAILS, INDICATES HIS HEART IS BREAKING.)

LUIGI

Let's see. I'll try and guess. You're happy I'm going? No? Well, what?

(HARLEQUIN INCREASES THE TEMPO AND DRAMA OF HIS GREAT SORROW.)

LUIGI

My! Very good, amico. Very good. I am, indeed, touched. I thought you were only pretending to be so sad, but you really are heartbroken, eh? Tst, tst, tst. I cannot bear to see such grief. I'll stay.

(HARLEQUIN CHANGES QUICKLY FROM HIS CRYING TO NEAR-HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER--NOT MAKING ANY SOUNDS DURING ANY OF THIS BUSINESS, JUST PANTOMIME.)

LUIGI

Here. We don't have to pretend. Some fresh bread my mother made this morning. Half for me and half for you, amico.

HARLEQUIN

Thank you, Luigi. (AN EXAGGERATED, COURTLY BOW AND THEY SIT ON THE APRON.)

LUIGI

He speaks! I'm amazed--I'm happy--you found your tongue.

HARLEQUIN

My empty stomach will be amazed and happy to welcome this bread. I've had nothing to eat this morning.

LUIGI

No food at home?

HARLEQUIN

I left too early for breakfast.

LUIGI

Why?

HARLEQUIN

Don't you know, Luigi?

LUIGI

To be alone?

HARLEQUIN

Yes

LUIGI

So you can pretend?

HARLEQUIN

More than that. More than pretending. Working, practicing, learning.

LUIGI

You pretend you're a servant boy and you take a make-believe tray of food to a master who isn't really there, and you call that working?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, working. Hard work, but great fun, too.

LUIGI

Fun? Yes. Work? No. Eat the bread.

HARLEQUIN

Work, yes! Umm, bread's good. Let's share it. (THEY GIVE IT TO MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE AND RETURN TO THE STAGE.)

LUIGI

Tell me, all this secret work you do so early in the morning. Where will it lead you?

HARLEQUIN

To fame and fortune.

LUIGI

Oh?

HARLEQUIN

And happiness. But, not just for me.

LUIGI

No?

HARLEQUIN

I'm going to be an actor, Luigi.

LUIGI

An actor?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, with the strolling players.

LUIGI

Uh-huh.

HARLEQUIN

I'll help them give shows all over Italy.

LUIGI

And that's going to make you and everyone happy?

HARLEQUIN

Everyone happy!

LUIGI

Including your Mama?

HARLEQUIN

My mama . . . well. . . .

LUIGI

Yes, your Mama, and your sister, and your brother. . . .

HARLEQUIN

(HIS MOTHER--MAMA--TINA, HIS YOUNGER SISTER, AND RENATO, ENTER TO MUSIC.)

LUIGI

Will they be happy if you leave them to become an actor with the strolling players?

HARLEQUIN

Well, I'm not sure . . .

LUIGI

Oh?

MAMA

That boy!

TINA

That boy!

RENATO

That boy!

MAMA

That boy. I've got to find that boy!

RENATO

Mama, what are you going to do when you find him?

MAMA

You'll see!

TINA

Running off before breakfast.

MAMA

The idea--and it's not the first time.

RENATO

I had to do his chores this morning.

MAMA

You're a good boy, Renato.

TINA

I did them yesterday.

MAMA

You're a good girl, Tina.

LUIGI

I'll do them tomorrow.

MAMA

You're a good boy . . . Who said that?

LUIGI

(HIDING HARLEQUIN.) I did.

MAMA

Luigi! Have you seen that boy?

LUIGI

That boy?

MAMA

Yes. That boy. My boy.

LUIGI

Well . . .

MAMA

You just wait till I find him. Just wait.

RENATO

What are you going to do, Mama?

TINA

Yes, what, Mama? When you find him . . . what will you do?

MAMA

Why, I'll . . . I'll . . .

HARLEQUIN

(JUMPING OUT FROM BEHIND LUIGI.) It's my Mama, my beautiful, beautiful Mama!

MAMA

(COMPLETELY MELTED AND OVERCOME WITH WARMTH.) It's my boy! My beautiful, beautiful boy!

(THEY RUSH TOGETHER WITH A WILDLY EMOTIONAL EMBRACE AND ARE QUICKLY JOINED BY TINA AND RENATO--ALL CARRYING ON AS THOUGH YEARS, NOT MINUTES, HAVE SEPARATED THEM. LUIGI MOVES TO ONE SIDE, FIRST AMAZED, THEN AMUSED. THOUGH HARLEQUIN MAY HAVE STARTED THE GREETING WITH MOCK EMOTION, WHAT HAPPENS IS ABSOLUTELY GENUINE AND THEY ALL ENJOY THE MOMENT.)

MAMA

Now, tell me, where have you been?

RENATO

It doesn't matter, Mama, all the chores are done!

MAMA

I want to know. Where have you been? When I wake up, I go to see if my three little angels are still fast asleep. I peek in the room. And there, Tina, my little angel, sound asleep--dreaming nice dreams. She is smiling, so I smile too. And then I peek again. There! My fine, big angel, Renato, sleeping quietly. And in his sleep he sighs. I sigh too. And then I peek once more. My dear, sweet Quino? That devil! He is gone. And I scream. "Where are you, you devil? Off playing again?"

RENATO

She woke us up.

TINA

She screamed so loud I fell out of bed.

MAMA

So tell me, where were you? Where were you when you should have been sleeping? When you should have been doing the chores with your brother and sister? Huh?

HARLEQUIN

I got up early and left the house so I could work.

MAMA

So you could work. What kind of work?

HARLEQUIN

Learning how to dance and sing and act. . . . Like the strolling players!

MAMA

Dancing and singing and acting, eh? This is work?

HARLEQUIN

Yes, work.

MAMA

Well, suppose we go home and play some games. Like chopping the wood and milking the cow, and sweeping the floor.

TINA

Mama, we've done all the chores.

MAMA

No! My poor little boy has been working since sunup. I must see that he plays for awhile. A brand new game. I call it "Mending clothes to earn money for food." Come along!

HARLEQUIN

Mama, look!

MAMA

Huh?

HARLEQUIN

An old lady with clothes to mend. See?

MAMA

No, I don't see an old lady with clothes to mend. I don't see anyone.

(HARLEQUIN SLIPS THE SHAWL FROM AROUND HER SHOULDER, MOVES OUT IN THE HOUSE, PUTS IT ON, AND RETURNS AS AN OLD LADY.)

HARLEQUIN

(NEW VOICE.) "This tattered shawl needs mending. 'Twas once so nice and new. Please use your magic needle and I'll give some coins to you!"

MAMA

Here, now, you. . . .

RENATO

Bravo!

TINA

Wonderful, Quino!

MAMA

Don't encourage him.

HARLEQUIN

"Needle running in and out, zippity, zippity, zip. Patching up each little hole, each little tiny rip."

MAMA

(BEGINNING TO MELT AGAIN.) Zippity, zippity, zip . . .

HARLEQUIN

"Pray, lady fair, take the thread, and find the needle's eye . . ."

MAMA

Maybe he knows more about sewing than I do, huh?

HARLEQUIN

(HIMSELF AGAIN.) You're the greatest seamstress in all of Italy, Mama.

MAMA

Well . . .

HARLEQUIN

Just as I'll be the greatest actor. You'll see.

MAMA

And I'll see that you stop all this foolishness and get to work.

HARLEQUIN

I made up a new dance this morning. Watch.

MAMA

I am not going to waste any more time here, not another minute, and neither are you.

HARLEQUIN

The dance tells a story about a little boy . . .

MAMA

Who'd better get himself home, pronto.

HARLEQUIN

About a little boy who finds some gold . . .

MAMA

How much?

HARLEQUIN

A pot full of it.

MAMA

Where? Where does he find it?

HARLEQUIN

At the end of the rainbow.

TINA

What does he do with the gold?

HARLEQUIN

I'll show you.

MAMA

The end of the rainbow. Don't bother to show me . . .

TINA

Please, Mama.

MAMA

No.

RENATO

Pretty please?

MAMA

No.

HARLEQUIN

Pretty please, with sugar on it?

MAMA

No.

LUIGI

Pretty please, with sugar and cream and strawberries on it?

MAMA

Show us.

(THEY ALL LAUGH. MUSIC IS HEARD, AND HARLEQUIN BEGINS THE DANCE. THE OTHERS SETTLE DOWN AND THEN BEGIN TO COMMENT AS THE DANCE CONTINUES.)

MAMA

He's out for a walk.

ALL

Ssshhh.

TINA

It started to rain.

ALL

Sh!

LUIGI

He's found shelter.

ALL

He's all wet.

ALL

Sh!

MAMA

Must have stopped raining. Hmmm, quick storm.

ALL

Sh!

TINA

There's the rainbow. See.

(ALL TURN WITH BACK TO AUDIENCE AS HARLEQUIN CROSSES BEHIND THEM.)

MAMA

No, where?

RENATO

There. Up there.

MAMA

Such eyes my children have.

LUIGI

You've got to use your imagination.

MAMA

I must have left it at home.

TINA

He's found it.

MAMA

What?

TINA

The gold, the gold at the end of the rainbow.

MAMA

He has, huh?

(PLAYERS ENTER FROM 1:00 ENTRANCE. ISABELLA ENTERS AFTER PANTALONE AND DOTORRE.)

RENATO

Yes.

MAMA

Well, let's see what he's going to do with it.

TINA

He's giving it away!

MAMA

All of it?

PANTALONE

We have competition, Dotorre, see.

DOTORRE

It must be a new band of players!

(ISABELLA PUSHES PANTALONE AND DOTORRE ASIDE AND STANDS BETWEEN THEM ON THE THIRD STAGE LEVEL.)

MAMA

Are you talking to us?

PANTALONE

Yes, madam, we are!

DOTORRE

Are you the head of the troupe?

ISABELLA

Of course she is. She's a woman!

CAPITANO

Ha! I suppose you think you're head of this troupe?

ISABELLA

I don't think I am--I am! (ISABELLA SPINS LEFT TO CAPITANO AND SHOVES HIM DOWN ON PROPS TRUNK.)

DOTORRE

You need your head examined. I, Dotorre, will do it.

HARLEQUIN

Mama! It's the players! The strolling players!

PANTALONE

You hear that? The boy knows who we are.

ISABELLA

Of course he does. Everyone knows the strolling players. (ISABELLA WHIRLS AROUND IN A CIRCLE VERY MAJESTICALLY.)

PANTALONE

(RECITING IN AN ELEGANT MANNER.)

Pantalone at your service; a dottering fool sometimes,
A creature of mirth, of wealth and of worth
A stopper of terrible crimes.

DOTORRE

A stopper of terrible crimes? What rot!
He stops me from having fun!
It's easy to see, he's jealous of me,
Dotorre! The talented one.

ISABELLA

(ISABELLA STEPS DOWN TO GROUND STAGE LEVEL TOWARDS 5:00 ENTRANCE FOR SONG.)

His talent is all in his bottles
With medicines filled up each day.
He thinks he's so smart, but he knows in his heart
Isabella's the star of the play. (ISABELLA CROSSES UP TO SECOND LEVEL AND SITS ON PROPS TRUNK--CENTER STAGE.)

CAPITANO

I, Capitano, am the greatest of all,
So brave and courageous and daring,
My enemies flee like a cat up a tree
When they see what a great sword I'm wearing.

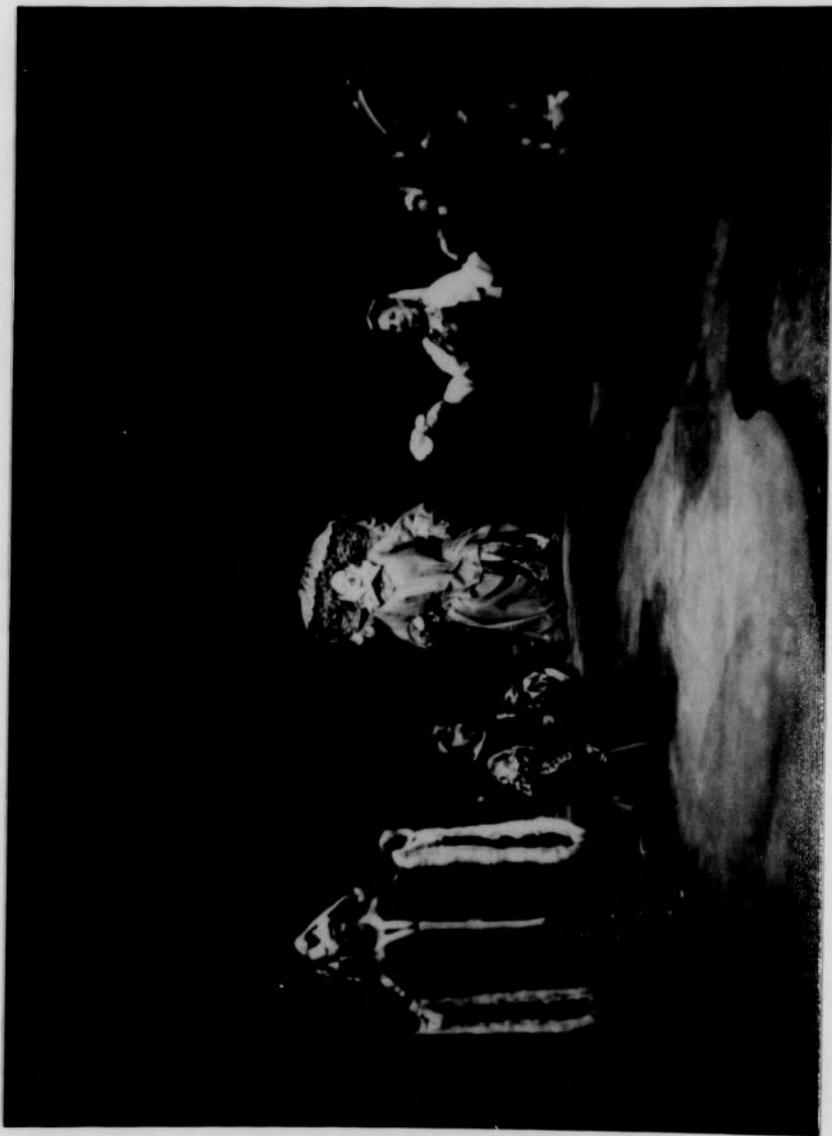


Figure 1

(HE TRIES IN VAIN TO GET THE SWORD OUT OF THE SCABBARD.)

MAMA

You want to be one of them?

HARLEQUIN

Si, Mama, I do, more than anything in the world, but . . .

PANTALONE

One of us? Then you are not already strolling players, eh?

MAMA

Do I look like a strolling player? I'm a poor widow, a seamstress, and I must work for my living. Not play. I have three fine children to support.

HARLEQUIN

May I present them?

MAMA

Never mind.

PANTALONE

Please! We would be delighted.

DOTORRE

But we haven't much time. I've got to prepare many marvelous medicines before tonight's performance.

PANTALONE

That's right. We've got to see the Duchess . . . at once.

CAPITANO

Best we should see a general. A Duchess is only a petty official, no army at her command, no horses, no swords . . .

DOTORRE

A general? We should see a man of science--a doctor, like me.

ISABELLA

(RISES AND GOES BETWEEN CAPITANO AND DOTORRE.) Hush, you two, the Duchess is the one we've got to see.

DOTORRE

I don't see why. Can she operate, amputate, conglomerate? She's just the head of the town.

CAPITANO

And I'm the head of the world's greatest army. My forces do not know the meaning of the word "fear," and neither do I. Together, we will fight valiantly, bravelessly, fearfully. . . .

DOTORRE

Quiet, or you'll have a case of bumble-bee-itis of the lower blah-blah--and I'll have to operate.

CAPITANO

What is bumble-bee-itis of the lower blah-blah?

DOTORRE

Every time you talk too loud--or tell a fib--or eat raw onions--your eyes will water and you'll get a gurgle in your lower blah-blah. And I Dotorre, the greatest doctor in the world, will have to operate. (HE EXAMINES CAPITANO'S HEART WITH A STETHESCOPE.) Hmmm. No heart at all. (HE PEERS IN CAPITANO'S EAR. CAPITANO COVERS AND UNCOVERS HIS OTHER EAR WITH HIS HAND. AS HE DOES, DOTORRE SAYS:) Daylight, darkness. Daylight, darkness. Daylight, darkness. Oh, you're a sick man, Capitano.

ISABELLA

Oh, you two act better off-stage than during the plays. (CROSSES DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL AND GOES TO 5:00 ENTRANCE TO ACKNOWLEDGE HARLEQUIN'S FAMILY.) Go ahead, boy, present your family.

HARLEQUIN

Presenting--My Mama, so modest, so gay--In every conceivable way. She'll patch up your pants--So they're fit for a dance. . . .

MAMA

. . . Cause I work while the rest of you play! (CHEER FROM THE OTHERS.) My daughter's as pretty as spring-- (ISABELLA COUNTERS UP TO 3:00 ON GROUND LEVEL.) Like a birdie she's learned how to sing. Now Tina, my sweet, let your song be our treat . . .

(TINA RESPONDS WITH A GHASTLY, BUT BRIEF, SOLO.)

RENATO

. . . Like a vulture who's injured one wing.

(THEY POO-POO THIS, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE GROUP BEGINS TO SOAR.)

RENATO

I may not have talent like that--But you'll love me wherever you're at. At the end of the show--When you've (ISABELLA CROSSES ON GROUND LEVEL TO 6:00 AND FLIRTS WITH RENATO.) bowed very low--It's my money that fills up your hat!

PANTALONE

Indeed we love you.

HARLEQUIN

Luigi's a very good lad--Who will smile even though he is sad. There's a problem you see--Though he's good as can be, He'd really much rather be bad!

TINA

Listen everyone--My brother's the one you must see! He can sing even better than me!

MAMA

He's a very fine boy.

RENATO

He's a treat.

TINA

He's a joy.

LUIGI

He's a player, unquestionably.

PANTALONE

So! We have a player here?

ISABELLA

(CROSSES UP TO SECOND LEVEL NEAR 5:00 ENTRANCE.) The boy
want to be an actor?

MAMA

(SEEING HARLEQUIN STRANGELY SILENT.) That's what he says.

PANTALONE

If he's an actor, let him act.

MAMA

Now?

PANTALONE

Now. We're looking for an actor.

ISABELLA

Hush, Pantalone, we must first see the Duchess.

PANTALONE

We were on our way to see the Duchess when we stopped here.
We want to ask his advice. Seek his help . . .

MAMA

What about?

DOTORRE

About finding someone to join our troupe--to help me with
my potions--my medicines.

LUIGI

Quino! Your chance. They need an actor!

LUIGI

Search no further. You need not go to the Duchess for help. Your answer is here. Presenting my good friend--the talented, lovable, laughable, the greatest actor in town--Quino!

PANTALONE

Not a very good name for an actor, is it?

ISABELLA

(CROSSES DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL AND FACES AUDIENCE AT 6:00.)
Very bad.

PANTALONE

Well, what harm can it do to see what the boy's like?

CAPITANO

Is he brave and courageous and daring?

MAMA

Yes.

DOTORRE

Is he intelligent, learned, and profound--like Dotorre?

MAMA

Show them, Quino.

PANTALONE

Yes, let the performance begin. What can we lose?

MAMA

Nothing, my friend, nothing at all. You'll see. My son can sing and dance and act as good as any of you.

HARLEQUIN

Mama, please. . . .

MAMA

Why, he's up every morning before the birds, working . . .

HARLEQUIN

Mama, perhaps it might be better. . . .

MAMA

. . . Working and working to learn everything the Strolling Players do. Practicing his singing, making up dances. . . .

HARLEQUIN

Mama.

MAMA

So you just show them, Quino. You just show them how good you are.

LUIGI

Yes, show them.

TINA

He's going to be the greatest actor in Italy.

RENATO

Maybe even the world!

MAMA

The world!

(THEY ALL SETTLE DOWN, EXPECTING TO SEE HARLEQUIN PERFORM, BUT HE STANDS MUTE AND STILL. THIS UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY HAS PARALYZED HIM AND HE CAN DO NOTHING BUT SUFFER IN SILENCE.)

PANTALONE

Well? We're waiting.

ISABELLA

(TURNS AND FACES HARLEQUIN AND 12:00.) Give the lad a chance.

CAPITANO

Let's see you fight a duel, or lead an army to battle.

DOTORRE

If he's going to play a servant, he needn't know that.
He should know how to make potions and medicines and . . .

CAPITANO

My army is full of servants.

DOTORRE

And you're full of prunes.

CAPITANO

Say not so. Say not so. Unless you care to defend your-
self against my anger.

DOTORRE

Better watch your blah-blah.

ISABELLA

(CROSS UP TO SECOND LEVEL--CENTER STAGE.) Quiet, you two.
Well, boy?

MAMA

Go on. Show them how you found the pot of gold at the
end of the rainbow.

LUIGI

Or how you serve your master's breakfast.

TINA

Or how you sing . . .

RENATO

And dance. . . .

HARLEQUIN

I . . . I can't.

MAMA

Huh?

HARLEQUIN

I can't. I just can't.

MAMA

You can't? Why not?

HARLEQUIN

I'm scared. That's why.

(ISABELLA CROSSES DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL AND RUNS TO 7:00 EXIT AFTER HARLEQUIN. HE RUNS OFFSTAGE. THERE FOLLOWS A MOMENT OF SILENCE.)

LUIGI

He . . . he really is very good. When he's not scared, I mean.

MAMA

He's only scared of not being good enough.

ISABELLA

I understand. (TURNS AND CROSSES TO SECOND LEVEL TO MAMA.)

PANTALONE

I like the boy, and I'd like to help him. But, well, we would have to see him perform.

MAMA

I hope so. I really do. Maybe you'll give my boy another chance? Later on?

PANTALONE

Maybe. But for now, farewell--The Players must be on their way! May we meet again some day! (ISABELLA AND PLAYERS EXIT AT 5:00 EXIT.)

(MUSIC IS HEARD AS THE PLAYERS BOW AND MAKE A GRAND EXIT. THERE ARE AD-LIBBED GOODBYES FROM THOSE ON STAGE, THEN SILENCE. THEY ALL TURN AND LOOK AS HARLEQUIN ENTERS AGAIN, VERY SHEEPISH AND ASHAMED. THERE IS AN AWKWARD MOMENT. FINALLY MAMA BREAKS THE GLOOM:)

MAMA

Well, all I can say is, I'm certainly glad you didn't bother to show those silly players how good you are! (SHE IS ALL HEART, A MILE WIDE.) No, my boy has more talent in his little finger than all of them put together. And you were right--I could see that immediately. Why waste your talent on them? You wait for a really good troupe of strolling players to come through town, then show what you can do. He's smart, he is, just like his mama!

HARLEQUIN

Mama, they're the best strolling players I've ever seen.

MAMA

The best! They can't be.

HARLEQUIN

Why not?

MAMA

They haven't got you.

(HARLEQUIN LOOKS AT HER, THEN RUSHES TO HER OUT-STRETCHED ARMS. THEY COMFORT EACH OTHER. TINA AND RENATO COMPLETE THE PICTURE, COMFORTING HARLEQUIN. LUIGI STEPS OUT OF THE SCENE AND WALKS TO FRONT OF STAGE. THEY "FREEZE.")

LUIGI

(SHAKING HIS HEAD.) This family! They have been my friends since . . . well, since I can remember. Maybe even longer. They fight, they laugh, and they love each other so much, it does your heart good just to be near them. Quino has always been my best friend. In fact, he's "best friend" to most of the people in this part of the village. He plays tricks on you, and before you have a chance to be angry, you find yourself laughing. Yes, he carries laughter around with him in his pockets the way some people carry money. And he's always giving it away. Now I'm not really worried because he couldn't show the Players how good he is just now. I've been frightened at times myself. If I know his family, and I do, well, I'm sure they'll think of something.

MAMA

(BREAKING THE MOOD WITH FINE GUSTO.) Well, enough of this.

HARLEQUIN

I'm sorry, Mama. I'm sorry I couldn't perform.

MAMA

Nonsense. You've nothing to be sorry for.

TINA

Of course not.

HARLEQUIN

But I want to be an actor, and I missed my chance.

MAMA

Tell me, how do you know which end of the rainbow has the pot of gold? Come along, we're going now.

RENATOR

Home?

MAMA

Home can wait. We're going to the Duchess's house.

TINA

What for?

MAMA

What for? Well, maybe we'll find the pot of gold there.

(THERE IS GENERAL LAUGHTER.)

LUIGI

See? I knew they'd think of something.

(A BLACKOUT. DURING THE BLACKOUT, ISABELLA AND THE PLAYERS TAKE THEIR STAGE POSITIONS. ISABELLA IS ON GROUND LEVEL FACING AUDIENCE AT 3:00.)

PANTALONE

Once more. Three rousing cheers for the Duchess. (ISABELLA TURNS A FULL CIRCLE IN PLACE AFTER EACH CHEER.) (THEY CHEER.) And three more for her son. (THEY CHEER.)

DUCHESS

So! One of your actors has left you, eh?

PANTALONE

Yes, good Duchess. The one who plays the foolish servant.

DUCHESS

And you have come to me for help?

PANTALONE

Yes, good Duchess. You know the people of this village better than we do. Surely you know of someone who can join our troupe. A talented, versatile, captivating performer--like me?

ISABELLA

Ha! (TURNS TO 6:00 AND GRIMACES AT PANTALONE AND THEN WHIRLS BACK TO 3:00.)

DUCHESS

Well, now this presents a problem, a serious problem. I must think, and ponder, and meditate.

(HER SON, DANIELLO, AN ELEGANTLY-DRESSED LAD, WHOSE FINE GARMENTS UNFORTUNATELY HIDE THE REAL BULLY, HAS WANDERED NEAR CAPITANO. HE IS "INSPECTING" THE STAGE SWORD.)

PANTALONE

Think . . .

ISABELLA

And ponder . . .

DOTORRE

And operate. (ISABELLA TURNS TO 9:00 AND GIVES DOTORRE A LOOK OF DISGUST AND THEN FACES BACK TO 3:00 AUDIENCE.)

Oh, I mean--meditate.

DUCHESS

Yes.

DANIELLO

Look, Mommy.

DUCHESS

What is it, Daniello?

DANIELLO

His sword is made of wood. What kind of a soldier is this?

DUCHESS

Now, son, he's an actor. He isn't supposed to have a real sword.

DANIELLO

(TAKES THE SWORD AND BEGINS TO TEASE CAPITANO.) Look out! My great sword will run you through. A wooden sword. Ha, ha, ha . . . !

CAPITANO

Stop it . . . Stop it . . . Give me my sword.

DANIELLO

Try and get it.

DUCHESS

Do be quiet, dear boy, I'm trying to think.

DANIELLO

You don't have to, Mommy.

DUCHESS

Don't have to think? But I must. The players have a problem, and I must solve it. They are in need of an actor to join their troupe.

DANIELLO

I'll join them. Their problem is solved.

DUCHESS

What?

DANIELLO

I said I'll join them. I'll be the new actor. Daniello the great! Daniello the daring, the . . .

PANTALONE

But can you sing?

ISABELLA

And dance? (CROSSES UP TO SECOND LEVEL AND FACES 12:00.)

DOTORRE

And mix medicines?

ISABELLA

And act?

DANIELLO

Well, if you can do it, so can I. (ISABELLA CROSSES DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL AND FACES 3:00.)

PANTALONE

But we've been doing it for many years--and before that, we worked just as long and very hard to learn how.

DANIELLO

It might be fun, Mommy.

DUCHESS

Well, now, I don't know.

PANTALONE

Neither do I.

DANIELLO

What do you mean, you don't know? Listen, I'm the Duchess's son!

(AT THIS POINT, HARLEQUIN, HIS FAMILY, AND FRIENDS ENTER.)

PANTALONE

Yes, we are aware of that.

CAPITANO

Painfully aware.

DANIELLO

And I get what I want, see?

DUCHESS

Now, now . . . musn't be headstrong.

DANIELLO

And I've decided I want to be an actor.

PANTALONE

Good Duchess, I appreciate your son's ambition, but we came to you, hoping to find someone with experience and training.

DANIELLO

And you found me. Well?

(THERE IS A SLIGHT PAUSE. THEY ALL LOOK AT THE DUCHESS FOR HELP.)

(ISABELLA CROSSES UP TO SECOND LEVEL TO PANTALONE AND WHISPERS TO HIM.)

DUCHESS

Well, now, you know something? I've always felt my boy had a great deal of natural talent. And frankly, I've been wondering about his future. It might be good for him to join your troupe, go out and see the world, so to speak.

PANTALONE

(URGED ON BY THE OTHERS.) But, good Duchess, I don't think. . . .

DANIELLO

Listen, Mommy's right. I've got a lot of natural talent. You should see me scare people.

CAPITANO

I'll bet.

DOTORRE

I can see the audience running away now.

DANIELLO

And I can fight, and throw rocks at people . . .

PANTALONE

But the strolling players don't try to frighten people or fight with them or throw rocks at them. We try to entertain them.

DUCHESS

Well, I do think you might give the boy a chance.

PANTALONE

May we discuss this among ourselves? (PANTALONE AND ISABELLA CROSS DOWN CENTER TO GROUND LEVEL AND TALK TOGETHER.)

DUCHESS

If you wish.

DANIELLO

And I'll bet I can shout louder than any of you.

(HE LETS OUT A SCREAM THAT NEARLY KNOCKS CAPITANO OVER.)

CAPITANO

(WHEN HE HAS RECOVERED.) If he comes, I go.

(ISABELLA AND PANTALONE RUN TO 8:00, GROUND LEVEL, AFTER DANIELO SHOUTS AT THEM. THE PLAYERS GATHER ON ONE SIDE OF STAGE AND GO INTO HEATED CONFERENCE.)

ISABELLA

Whose idea was it to ask the Duchess's help?

PANTALONE

I didn't know she had a boy.

CAPITANO

He's not a boy. He's a beast.

DOTORRE

Well, what are you going to do now? We're worse off now than we were before. I'll have to mix a special rhubarb potion, or we'll all be ill.

(THEY CONTINUE IN PANTOMIME THEIR DISCUSSION AND FOCUS SHIFTS TO THE OTHER SIDE--TO HARLEQUIN AND HIS COMPANY.)

LUIGI

Did you hear that?

TINA

The Duchess's son. Surely they won't take him.

RENATO

They might have to. Maybe they won't have any choice.

MAMA

Well, suppose we give them a choice.

HARLEQUIN

What do you mean, Mama?

MAMA

Now, listen to me, son. Listen well. Both ears.

HARLEQUIN

Yes?

MAMA

Since we lost your Poppa, I have watched over you, cared for you, and loved you enough for two people. And I want you to be happy. Do you really think you could be happy if you joined these Strolling Players?

HARLEQUIN

Oh, yes, Mama, I know I could.

MAMA

And if you had another chance to perform for them, would you be frightened again?

HARLEQUIN

No.

MAMA

Well, then, I think we'd better get started. (SHE LEAVES THE BEWILDERED CHILDREN AND STEPS FORWARD.) Excuse me!

(THE PLAYERS DON'T HEAR. PLAYERS ARGUE LOUDLY IN THEIR HUDDLE.)

MAMA

I beg your pardon!

(THE CONTINUE TO ARGUE.)

MAMA

If I could have your attention for a moment . . .

(NO RESPONSE.)

MAMA

You are the best strolling players in Italy!

(INSTANT RESPONSE AND A BOW FROM PLAYERS. ISABELLA AND PLAYERS TURN AND FACE MAMA AND AUDIENCE AT 3:00. THEY GIVE ELABORATE BOWS AND SHOUT "THANK YOU.")

PLAYERS

(TOGETHER.) Thank you very much.

MAMA

I'm learning. Now then, you said maybe you'd give my boy another chance . . . later on. Is this later-on enough?

PANTALONE

Please don't think me rude, but right now we're rather busy.

MAMA

A little entertainment might help you solve your problem.

ISABELLA

She's right, Pantalone, it might.

MAMA

Well?

PANTALONE

This is indeed "later-on-enough." Proceed!

DUCHESS

Just a moment, what's going on here?

DANIELLO

Some stupid peasants from the lower village. They don't matter, Mommy.

MAMA

Oh, no? Ready, son?

HARLEQUIN

(WITH EXCITEMENT SHARED BY OTHERS.) Yes, Mama, I'm ready! (ISABELLA SITS DOWN ON PROPS TRUNK AND FACES HARLEQUIN AT 12:00.)

(EVERYONE SETTLES DOWN TO WATCH; AND HARLEQUIN COMES FORWARD, THIS TIME WITH CONFIDENCE. HE GETS A LUTE FROM LUIGI; MUSIC BEGINS.)

HARLEQUIN

(SONG.) (RECITING TENDERLY WITH GREAT CHARM AND STYLE.)

If I were a player, I'd dance and I'd sing,
And I'd try very hard to be good.
I'd whistle a tune,
Or I'd bay at the moon,
Or I'd go around knocking on wood.

If I were a player, I'd reach for the sky
And touch all the stars with my hand,
Then sprinkle their light
Through the darkness of night
Like the dawn sprinkles dew on the land.

For I know each player is able to do
A thousand impossible things; (ISABELLA AND PLAYERS
WHISPER AND NOD APPROVINGLY.)
Perhaps they can't fly
But still they must try
The Players are people with wings.

If you see a player, who's trying his wings
Whose antics are fun from the start,
Please give him a smile--
Or a coin is worthwhile--
But first of all, give him your heart.
(ISABELLA AND PLAYERS APPLAUD EXCITEDLY.)

(THE MUSIC RISES IN THE BACKGROUND AND HARLEQUIN
BOWS. THE SHEER JOY OF THE PERFORMANCE SEEMS TO AFFECT
EVERYONE; EXCEPT, OF COURSE, THE DUCHESS AND HER SON.
AND SOON THEY ALL JOIN IN CHEERING AT THE CONCLUSION.)

PANTALONE

Well, well, well! Not bad, not bad at all!

MAMA

Pretty good, huh?

ISABELLA

(CROSSES UP CENTER TO SECOND LEVEL AND SHAKES HARLEQUIN'S
HAND.) Yes, pretty good. The boy does have talent.

MAMA

Yes.

DUCHESS

Just one moment.

DANIELLO

Stand aside, we've had enough of this!

DUCHESS

Yes, and if I may remind you, we were discussing the possibility of your taking my dear son, Daniello, as a player. Well?

(ISABELLA CROSSES BACK DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL AND PLAYERS AT 8:00.)

PANTALONE

True, good Duchess, we were. But now I think . . . well . . .

DUCHESS

Perhaps I can help you, and I think you should take him.

PANTALONE

But . . .

DUCHESS

And I'm the high official of this town.

LUIGI

What about Quino?

DUCHESS

Who?

LUIGI

Quino.

DANIELLO

So that's your name. It's as silly as you are.

LUIGI

Watch what you're saying.

DANIELLO

Look, I'm the Duchess's son. So you watch what you're saying. Well, is it decided then? I'm to join the troupe?

PANTALONE

(AFTER A MOMENT.) Perhaps you can show us what you can do.

DOTORRE

Yes, we don't want to get a pig in a poke. (THEY ALL LAUGH.)

DANIELLO

What's that?

PANTALONE

Just a bit of dancing, singing . . . to give us an idea.

CAPITANO

I've already got an idea.

DUCHESS

Well, if you insist.

DANIELLO

Huh?

DUCHESS

Go ahead, son. Sing for them. Do a little dance.
(ISABELLA SITS DOWN ON TRUNK.)

DANIELLO

No.

PANTALONE

Quino wants to be an actor, and he proved it by performing for us. Suppose you prove you want to be an actor too.

DANIELLO

But I haven't had a chance to practice. (ISABELLA RISES AND FACES 9:00 AUDIENCE.)

DUCHESS

That's true. This other boy--this what's-his-name, obviously has had a chance to prepare himself. My poor son has been taken unaware. Is that quite fair?

PANTALONE

How much time do you need?

DANIELLO

Well . . .

LUIGI

(A SUDDEN IDEA.) Why not hold a contest? (ISABELLA TURNS AND FACES 11:00.)

DUCHESS

What?

LUIGI

(EXCITED BY THE IDEA.) A contest. Let Quino and your son compete for the chance. (ISABELLA AND DOTORRE AD LIB IN WHISPERS.)

DUCHESS

That sounds interesting.

LUIGI

Your son could have a chance to . . . prepare himself, and everyone could see which boy--your son or Quino--really deserves the opportunity.

DANIELLO

I'm the Duchess's son--I deserve it!

LUIGI

You mean you're not willing to compete with a peasant boy called Quino? I should think you'd seize the opportunity

to show everyone how much better you are.

DUCHESS

We will hold a contest!

DANIELLO

But, Mommy . . .

DUCHESS

And see which boy is better. That's the fair way!

(GENERAL AD LIBS.)

DANIELLO

(APPROACHING HARLEQUIN.) So, I'm to compete with you, eh? Well, I'm glad. You don't have a chance. Not a chance.

PANTALONE

That remains to be seen. When will you hold the contest?

DUCHESS

When? Well, let's see. I'll have to . . .

LUIGI, TINA AND RENATO

. . . Think--

PLAYERS

--Ponder--

DUCHESS

(BEATING THEM TO IT.) And meditate!

ISABELLA

(CROSSES UP TO SECOND LEVEL TO FACE DUCHESS AT 11:00.)
What about Mardi Gras?

PANTALONE

Mardi Gras?

ISABELLA

Yes, in two weeks we celebrate Mardi Gras. Why couldn't the contest be part of the celebration?

DUCHESS

Yes. A very good idea.

ISABELLA

(CROSSES DOWN TO FIRST LEVEL AND FACES 7:00 AUDIENCE AND WINKS AT PLAYERS.) That is, if two weeks is enough time for your son to practice.

DUCHESS

Is it?

DANIELLO

I guess so. Two days would be enough.

DUCHESS

Then it's settled. We hold the contest two weeks from now, as part of our Mardi Gras celebration.

DANIELLO

(EYEING HARLEQUIN.) Fine. (ISABELLA CROSSES CENTER AND FACES DANIELLO AND 3:00 AUDIENCE.) I'll wear a new costume. The Players all wear very fancy costumes, don't they?

PANTALONE

Yes, they do, but--

DANIELLO

And they have to provide their own, don't they?

PANTALONE

Well, yes, I suppose they do. . . .

DANIELLO

What kind of a costume will you wear, Quino? Something very fancy, I'll wager. Will it be made of silk or brocade or fine, rich satins?

MAMA

We'll surprise you.

DANIELLO

I'm sure you will.

DUCHESS

Come along, my boy, I've work to do, and you'd better start practicing. I want to be proud of you.

DANIELLO

Oh, you will be, Mommy. Very proud.

DUCHESS

We meet again in two weeks. On the eve of Mardi Gras! Until then, my friends, farewell. (ISABELLA FACES 6:00 AUDIENCE AND FANS HERSELF WITH DAISY FAN.)

(GENERAL AD LIBS AS THE DUCHESS GOES OUT.)

DANIELLO

(FOLLOWING HER.) You'd better practice, too, peasant boy. I'm really worried about you. You and your splendid costume may outshine me! (HE LAUGHS AND GOES OUT.) Mommy, wait a minute. You forgot something. (HE IS GONE.)

MAMA

This costume? Does he have to have one?

PANTALONE

Well, generally, the new players do provide their own costumes, but--

ISABELLA

(CROSSES TO MAMA AND FACES 1:00.) But that's not the most important thing.

HARLEQUIN

We can't afford a costume, can we, Mama?

MAMA

Of course we can't. But that doesn't mean you won't have one.

HARLEQUIN

But where will it come from? You can't make a costume out of thin air.

MAMA

I'm so proud of you, my boy, I almost think I could.

LUIGI

I expect everyone will have a new costume for the Mardi Gras.

TINA

Except Quino.

LUIGI

Wait a minute. I've got an idea!

HARLEQUIN

Good old Luigi. Always helping.

PANTALONE

Look! Here comes the Duchess and her dear son again. What do you suppose they want?

ISABELLA

I'm afraid to guess. (CROSSES TO FACE 10:00 AUDIENCE.)

DANIELLO

(RUNNING IN.) Oh! My dear friends, I'm so happy you're still here. My Mommy has something to tell you. Don't you, Mommy?

DUCHESS

(WHO HAS FOLLOWED HIM IN.) Yes, silly of me to forget. Good thing I have such a wise son. Well, now. Guess what we forgot?

ISABELLA

(CROSSES TO FACE DUCHESS AT 11:00.) Forgot? About the contest?

DUCHESS

Yes, the contest. We completely forgot something.

DOTORRE

The time of day we'll hold it?

DUCHESS

Of course not. I said the eve of Mardi Gras, didn't I?

CAPITANO

So you did.

DUCHESS

Guess again . . . No guesses?

DANIELLO

They're not very bright, are they?

DUCHESS

Well, now, if we're going to have a contest, then we most certainly need a judge, don't we?

PANTALONE

Certainly. But I assumed if the two boys were competing for a place with the Players, then naturally we should be the ones to . . .

DUCHESS

Not so. That doesn't sound fair at all. Not to me, it doesn't. We have to have someone with an official capacity, someone with a learned background. (ISABELLA CROSSES TO FACE 10:00 AUDIENCE.) So I've decided to judge the contest myself. (ISABELLA AND PLAYERS TURN AND STARE AT DUCHESS IN HORROR.)

PANTALONE

But you're the mother of one of the contestants.

DUCHESS

My dear sir, as an official of the town--the leading official, I might add--I have never--not once--let my own personal feelings come between me and my job. I assure you that I shall judge the contest impartially--not as the boy's mother--but as Duchess of the Town. And I believe that's all we really have to say, eh son?

DANIELLO

Yes, that's all.

DUCHESS

Well, once more I bid you farewell, and I shall certainly look forward to seeing all of you in two weeks. Mardi Gras is always so much fun, and this year I'm sure will be the best celebration of all. (SHE GOES.)

DANIELLO

(LOOKS AT THEM FOR A MOMENT SMILING.) Silly of my mommy not to remember we'll need a judge. Good thing I reminded her, isn't? Well, I guess we'd all better get to work. See you in two weeks, Quino.

(DANIELLO EXITS AND THEY ALL STAND SILENT.)

MAMA

That's not fair.

PANTALONE

Of course it isn't. But she's the Duchess, what can we do?

(ISABELLA AND PLAYERS GROUP TOGETHER AT 8:00.
ISABELLA SITS ON TRUNK.)

LUIGI

Well, one thing, you're going to have a costume, we'll see to that!

TINA

What good will a costume be . . . now?

(THEY ALL SIGH. THE MOOD IS HEAVY. THEN SUDDENLY HARLEQUIN SPRINGS INTO ACTION.)

HARLEQUIN

Well, I haven't lost yet. Costume or no costume--judge or no judge, I haven't lost yet. "Perhaps I can't fly--but still I must try. The players are people with wings." Come on, laugh with me. I know I'm trying to reach out for a star, but who knows? I just might make it!

(MUSIC IS HEARD AS THEY ALL BREAK INTO LAUGHTER AND JOYOUS DANCING.) (BLACKOUT.)

Act II

(ISABELLA AND PLAYERS ENTER AT 5:00 ENTRANCE. ISABELLA LEANS AGAINST OPEN PROPS TRUNK. THEY ALL FREEZE IN THEIR POSITIONS. LIGHTS GO UP AND WE SEE THREE GROUPS ON STAGE: THE DUCHESS AND HER SON, THE PLAYERS, AND HARLEQUIN AND HIS FAMILY. LUIGI IS BY HIMSELF. THEY ARE ALL CAUGHT IN A PICTURE-LIKE POSE, ENGAGED IN PREPARING FOR MARDI GRAS. LUIGI STEPS FORWARD AND SPEAKS:)

LUIGI

Well, everyone in our village is really busy--rich and poor--old and young. All year long, we're a very quiet people. We spend the days exchanging what little money we have. I give my coins to the farmer for food; then he gives them back to me when I gather wood for his stove. And so it goes. But once a year, we all dress up in a fancy costume and dance and shout and sing and celebrate . . . Well, you just wouldn't know the place--loud, noisy and exciting. Mardi Gras, like all your birthday parties rolled into one! Watch!

(HE TURNS AS THE MUSIC COMES UP. THE SCENE COMES VIVIDLY TO LIFE, EACH CHARACTER BUSY AT SOME TASK; SEWING, MAKING COLORFUL PROPS, TRYING ON PART OF A COSTUME, ETC. . . . AND ALL EXCEPT DANIELLO LAUGHING HEARTILY.)

LUIGI

Greetings!

DUCHESS

(NOT HEARING HIM.) But my dear boy, you've got to decide soon. There isn't much time. Why not be blue? (HOLDS UP A SAMPLE OF BLUE CLOTH.)

DANIELLO

No. I think it should be silver or gold.

DUCHESS

Oh dear. If you don't decide soon, there isn't going to be time to have the costume made.

DANIELLO

You're the Duchess, you can have it done.

LUIGI

Troubles?

DANIELLO

None of your business.

LUIGI

Been practicing for the contest?

DANIELLO

Listen. You just tend to your own affairs.

DUCHESS

As a matter of fact, you haven't done much practicing, have you?

DANIELLO

So?

DUCHESS

Well, my boy, I do want to be proud of you. I expect you to bring glory to our good name.

DANIELLO

Oh, don't worry--I'll win the contest.

LUIGI

How's your singing coming?

(DANIELLO RESPONDS WITH AN UNMUSICAL, UNPLEASANT SCALE.)

DUCHESS

Splendid. Don't you think so?

LUIGI

I'm speechless. Is your dancing as good?

(FOR AN ANSWER DANIELLO EXECUTES A VERY BAD DANCE STEP.)

LUIGI

Your dancing is every bit as good as your singing.

DUCHESS

Nice of you to say so.

DANIELLO

He's not being nice, Mommy. He's laughing at me--and you.

DUCHESS

Really?

DANIELLO

But it doesn't matter--not at all. They'll stop laughing when I win the contest. You'll see.

LUIGI

Not when you win the contest. If you win!

DANIELLO

Aren't you forgetting something, peasant boy?

LUIGI

That you're the Duchess's son?

DANIELLO

Yes.

DUCHESS

He is, you know. He's my son, and I'm his mother.

LUIGI

And you're the Duchess, and if you ask me, I think you've been a much better Duchess than a mother.

DUCHESS

(ASTONISHED.) What's that?

LUIGI

(PRESSING ON.) Yes. Strange that a woman who has been loved by all the people of the town for so many years could have a son so mean, so conceited, so unpleasant, so . . .

DANIELLO

Wait a minute . . .

DUCHESS

Yes, you go too far . . .

LUIGI

And it might be good for you to remember that unless an absolutely fair decision is made at the contest, you just might find yourselves in a lot of trouble. I, for one, would not care to face the anger of everyone in town. No.

(THE ARE TOO STUNNED BY THIS OUTBURST TO SPEAK.)

LUIGI

Well, I hope you find a suitable piece of cloth for your costume. The color should match your personality--black. See you at the Mardi Gras.

(HE GOES AND DANIELLO LUNGES AFTER HIM BUT IS RESTRAINED BY THE DUCHESS.)

DANIELLO

Why, you . . .

DUCHESS

No, son. Let him go.

DANIELLO

After what he said about us?

DUCHESS

He's started me thinking . . .

DANIELLO

What about?

DUCHESS

You'd better get home and practice.

DANIELLO

Why? That's just a waste of time.

DUCHESS

GET HOME AND PRACTICE!!!!

DANIELLO

Huh?

DUCHESS

YOU HEARD ME! (WHACKS HIM WITH THE BOLT OF MATERIAL.)

DANIELLO

Yes, Mommy. (THEY EXIT.)

LUIGI

(TO THE AUDIENCE.) Sometimes it's good for you to speak your mind. Well, let's see what the Players are up to. (ISABELLA BEGINS TO BRUSH HER DRESS AND FILE HER NAILS. LUIGI TURNS AND APPROACHES THE PLAYERS. HARLEQUIN AND HIS FAMILY EXIT.) I see you're very busy today.

PANTALONE

Of course we're busy.

ISABELLA

We're always busy. Putting on plays isn't as easy as it looks.

LUIGI

Tell me, how are we going to hold the contest?

PANTALONE

How? The fair way. Give each boy an equal chance.

LUIGI

Which one do you think will win? (THEY ALL PAUSE.)
Perhaps it isn't fair of me to ask.

PANTALONE

We can only wait and see. And now there's work to be done.
My costume needs mending . . .

ISABELLA

(PUTS BRUSHES INTO PROPS TRUNK.) I've got to dress my
wig . . .

DOTORRE

I must mix a green potion to make people fall in love . . .

CAPITANO

If I can't have a real horse . . .

ISABELLA

(FACES CAPITANO.) And you can't.

CAPITANO

Then, I'll make a wooden one!

LUIGI

I'll see you at the Mardi Gras!

PLAYERS

At the Mardi Gras! (ISABELLA AND PLAYERS EXIT AT 7:00 AISLE.)

(HARLEQUIN ENTERS, TO THE BEAT OF A WOODEN BLOCK
CARRYING A SCRUB BUCKET AND BRUSH AND BEGINS TO SCRUB THE
FLOOR.)

MAMA

No time for work. Practice and play.

(MAMA EXITS WITH HARLEQUIN FOLLOWING. HE RE-ENTERS WITH A BROOM.)

HARLEQUIN

No time for work. Mama says to practice and play.

LUIGI

How goes it, amico?

HARLEQUIN

(WITH HUMOR.) Very strange. Mama won't let me do anything but play. Watch! (HE RAISES HIS VOICE A LITTLE.) Well, I think I'll scrub this walk. (HE GETS A BUCKET AND BRUSH AND GETS DOWN ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES. IN A FLASH, MAMA APPEARS.)

MAMA

What's this? How many times do I have to tell you? Stop working!

HARLEQUIN

But I want to help.

MAMA

You help yourself. Practice for the contest. Isn't that right, Luigi?

LUIGI

Yes, of course.

MAMA

You've got to practice every minute, every hour of every day, so your singing, dancing, acting will be best in every way . . . Well, listen to me! I made a poem! Pretty good, huh? Tell me, Luigi, tell me something.

LUIGI

What is it?

MAMA

You'll speak the truth?

LUIGI

Of course.

MAMA

Well. . . .

LUIGI

I'm listening. With both ears, I'm listening.

MAMA

Well, it's just that . . . well . . .

(HE IS GETTING CONCERNED. SHE IS SO SERIOUS.)

LUIGI

Yes?

MAMA

I just wondered . . . do you think that . . . well, oh, it's hard to ask . . .

LUIGI

I am your friend. I will speak the truth.

MAMA

Well, tell me then. Don't you think I'd made a good Player.

(THEY BURST OUT LAUGHING.)

LUIGI

No, I don't think you'd make a good Player.

MAMA

What?

LUIGI

Not good--the best.

MAMA

Luigi? I'm worried about Quino's costume. There isn't much time left . . .

LUIGI

Don't worry--our friends will help.

MAMA

For the very first time in my life, I'm wishing I were rich.

(TINA AND RENATO ENTER.)

TINA

Sorry we're so late.

RENATO

There's still enough time, isn't there?

TINA

Anna said she'd have to wait and see if she'd have any material left over from her costume. She just finished it today.

RENATO

Marco's mother used up almost all of the material she bought up, too. All but this. (HOLDS IT UP.) It isn't very much, is it?

MAMA

Such a good heart you have, Renato, always helping. Let's see. (SHE TAKES THE MATERIAL AND LOOKS AT IT.) My, look at the color!

(SHE HOLDS IT UP AGAINST HARLEQUIN. IT IS, OF COURSE, PITIFULLY SMALL. THE OTHERS TAKE EQUALLY SMALL PIECES OF MATERIAL AND LOOK AT THEM.)

RENATO

There . . . there isn't even enough to make a handkerchief.

LUIGI

Sometimes my good ideas are very bad.

MAMA

Wait! Wait a minute. I've got an idea! How many pieces of material do you have?

TINA

Quite a few . . .

RENATO

Me, too.

TINA

But they're all so small . . .

RENATO

And not even the same colors. . . .

MAMA

Doesn't matter. You just give them to me. Then, at Mardi Gras, you'll see . . . you'll see what I can do. Someday Quino will be the best actor in Italy . . . but I'm already the best seamstress!

TINA

I still feel so ashamed and so silly, thinking these little pices of material could make a costume.

MAMA

Wait and see! Now! I've got to get to work. Mardi Gras will be here before we know it.

(MUSIC COMES UP, AND THEY ALL AD LIB AS THEY EXIT IN RHYTHM. LUIGI IS LEFT ALONE ON THE STAGE.)

LUIGI

Yes. The time will fly. Mama is right, as usual. Mardi Gras will be here before we know it. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't be at all surprised if the days go by like minutes. Oh, just a moment, I want to show you something.

(HE GOES TO THE WINGS AND COMES BACK CARRYING HIS MARDI GRAS COSTUME.) See? My costume for Mardi Gras. Oh, it's not quite a new one . . . I'm as poor as Quino. This is one I've had for quite a while. I'm afraid it's a little tight for me, but I still think it's quite splendid, and I'll have to admit I like to get it out and wear it once a year. There! I may look like a fool, but I feel like a Prince or a King or at least a Duke. And guess what? The days have slipped by like minutes, and here it is, the eve of Mardi Gras!

(BLACKOUT.)

(ISABELLA LEADS PLAYERS ON. THEY ENTER AT 7:00 ENTRANCE, CARRYING TRUNK AND STOOLS. THEY DANCE UNTIL THE LIGHTS COME UP. ISABELLA SITS ON TRUNK.)

LUIGI

Wait a minute! Where is Quino?

MAMA

He's not here yet.

TINA

And wait until you see his costume.

RENATO

Yes, just wait.

TINA

Look! Here he comes now. Quino, come on. (ISABELLA FACES 5:00 ENTRANCE.)

(AD LIBS AS HE REACHES THE STAGE.)

DANIELLO

What kind of costume is that? Made of bits and pieces.

HARLEQUIN

Well, you may be clothed in silk and brocades . . .

DANIELLO

Indeed I am.

HARLEQUIN

But I am clothed with love.

DANIELLO

You call that "love"?

HARLEQUIN

Yes. Each little bit of material represents the love of a friend. And if I prove worthy of all this love, then I shall keep it and wear it always.

DANIELLO

Ha! It'll probably wear out and fall apart in no time at all.

LUIGI

But he can always repair it and mend it.

DANIELLO

Ha!

DUCHESS

Come now, my friends, let the celebration begin. Let me welcome you--all of you--to our Mardi Gras and the special events: a contest between my dear son, Daniello, and this other boy, uh . . .

LUIGI

Quino.

DUCHESS

Yes . . . to determine which of these lads is best-suited to join the strolling players. And a fair contest it will be--as I have promised. If my son, Daniello, happens to be the winner--I shall, as a mother and a Duchess--be doubly proud. He'll be able to travel all over the country and study how our great cities are governed so that some day he can better fill my shoes as the leader of this town.

PANTALONE

If he wins, good Duchess, he'll be an actor--a player--not a town official.

DUCHESS

Well, you surely can't expect him to spend the rest of his life as a player . . . an actor?

PANTALONE

Why not?

DUCHESS

But, my dear sir, a leader has importance . . . responsibilities. And a player? Well, what is a player?

PANTALONE

We, dear friends, are the clowns. The people who believe in make-believe. And I, for one, say: the world needs clowns! I hope you agree. And I hope you help us. You see, we need a place to live--a room, a little room--a home in your hearts. Once we're there, once you let us in, we can tickle your funny bone and make you laugh, open your tear-ducts and make you cry: And make you believe in make-believe, too. You see, we need each other. Listen!

CAPITANO

Most people think my sword and my head are made of wood--not so! Not quite so. A wooden sword, yes. But my head is made of dreams. Oh, I know I'm not really a general--a fighting man--a soldier of steel. I'm only pretending. And why? Well, good friends, I'll tell you why. And I'll say it again and again--on the streets--in the battlefields--with thousands of soldiers to back me up--the world needs clowns, the world needs clowns. . . .

DOTORRE

The world needs doctors--(DOTORRE PUSHES ISABELLA OFF TRUNK. ISABELLA CROSSES TO FACE 9:00 AUDIENCE.) especially doctors like me. Oh, I'll admit my knowledge of medicine is, well, rather shaky--but I've discovered the cure for a terrible, terrible sickness. The sickness, dear friends, is unhappiness--and the cure? Well, the cure is laughter. Now, you take one part laughter, mix it with some colored lights, and serve it up with a generous portion of music and just a pinch of dancing--and you'll agree too . . .

ISABELLA

(FACES 9:00 AUDIENCE.) The world needs clowns! (CROSSES TO THIRD LEVEL TO 12:00 TO FACE DUCHESS AND DANIELLO.)

If you're laughing at us--you'd best think awhile and consider the things we do. Don't say (ISABELLA CROSSES TO 2:00 AND FAMILY.) they're too silly before you recall: we learned them by copying you. (ISABELLA POINTS TO DUCHESS.)

PLAYERS

We learned them by copying you.

PANTALONE

Yes, we need you, and--

PLAYERS

(ISABELLA AND PLAYERS TURN CIRCLES IN PLACE.) --the world needs clowns. The world needs clowns. The world needs clowns.

PANTALONE

(BREAKING THE MOOD WITH EXCITEMENT.) We are met! So the performance will begin.

DOTORRE

Tonight's play will be the story of--

CAPITANO

A brave soldier who is forced to--

ISABELLA

(CROSSES TO SECOND LEVEL.) Quiet down and listen to the song of a lovely young lady. (SHE RECITES AND THEY JOIN HER, CARRYING A LARGE PROP DAISY.) (SINGS.)

When the daisies start blooming (FACES 6:00 ON SECOND LEVEL.)

My heart gives a leap

And I sigh "What a wonderful thing

That the daisies remember to bloom every year."

(CROSSES TO FACE 7:00 ON SECOND PLATFORM.)

But how do they know that it's Spring?

(MEN REPEAT LAST LINE. ISABELLA CROSSES TO GROUND LEVEL AND FACES 6:00.)

How can they tell when they're under the ground

That the sky's getting bluer each day?

How do they know when they can't hear a sound

(ISABELLA JUMPS ON TRUNK.)

That everyone's shouting: "It's May!"

(ISABELLA JUMPS OFF TRUNK.)

(REPEAT AGAIN.) (ISABELLA DANCES.)

(ISABELLA CROSSES UP TO THIRD LEVEL TO DUCHESS AND DANIEL-
LO.)

Now I have a theory--I've reasoned it out
And I hope you're inclined to agree;
Daisies must know when there's love in the air
And they're anxious to help you and me.

(ISABELLA WINKS AT DANIELLO.)

(REPEAT LINE AGAIN.)

How else can we know if our love's true or false?
(ISABELLA CROSSES DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL TO TRUNK.)

Without daisies we'd be up a tree:

Now watch and I'll show you . . .

(BUSINESS OF EACH PICKING PETALS OFF FLOWERS AND MURMURING
"LOVES ME," "LOVES ME NOT" CAPITANO CAN'T GET THE PETAL
OUT. ISABELLA STANDS ON TRUNK AND FLINGS DAISY STEM AWAY.)

Ah, yes. My true love loves me!

CAPITANO

(THE SOLDIER SUDDENLY.) But see! The foes of this lovely
young lady advance! (CAPITANO KNOCKS ISABELLA OFF TRUNK.)
By the hundreds they advance! Fear not, fair lady. Away,
enemy! Away, fiend! Away, I say. (ISABELLA FALLS TO
GROUND ON SECOND LEVEL.)

DOTORRE

She's wounded! I must operate. Immediately! Poor dear,
her life is ebbing slowly away. Oh, alas, alas, alas!

CAPITANO

Wounded? How can that be? The enemy hasn't even attacked
yet.

DOTORRE

Really? Well then, she's been poisoned. (ISABELLA IS
DRAGGED AROUND STAGE AND PUSHED INTO CHAIR ON SECOND LEVEL.)
Yes, that's it. She must be poisoned. Now then. (HE
EXAMINES ISABELLA.) Stick out your tongue. Oh, too long.
We'll have to cut it off. Let me see your thumb. Oh, no
expression at all. Ah, yes, it's quite plain.

CAPITANO

It is?

DOTORRE

Yes. She's got a horrible swiggle in her middle frim-fram, and the gazzle in her goopety-goop-goop has turned purple-green--which indicates a hush-hoop in the whim-wham of the terrestrial tweet-tweet.

ISABELLA

What about me?

DOTORRE

Oh, yes, you. You're--ah, oh--you're poisoned.

CAPITANO

Is it serious?

DOTORRE

No. One whiff of left-handed cabbage soup. One drop of pine smoke. And she'll be as good as new.

CAPITANO

Left-handed cabbage soup? Do we have any?

DOTORRE

No, but we will have.

(CAPITANO GETS A RUBBER LEFT HAND HOLDS IT IN HIS SLEEVE.)

DOTORRE

(TO CAPITANO.) Now, while I'm preparing my potion, you'd better turn your eyes inside out and look at your liver spots. If they're all blue, you need have no fears. If they're orange--well--that's a different story.

CAPITANO

I though you said left-handed cabbage soup.

DOTORRE

I did? (CAPITANO GIVES HIM THE FAKE LEFT HAND.) Thank you.

PANTALONE

Cease.

DOTORRE

Cease? Why?

PANTALONE

Simply because I have something to say.

DOTORRE

I see.

CAPITANO

May we listen?

PANTALONE

Please do.

DOTORRE

We shall.

PANTALONE

Thank you.

DOTORRE

Thank you.

CAPITANO

Thank you.

PANTALONE

Thank you.

DOTORRE

Thank you.

CAPITANO

Thank you.

PANTALONE

Thank you.

DOTORRE

Thank you.

CAPITANO

Thank you.

ISABELLA

You're all welcome. (RISES AND FACES 6:00.)

PANTALONE

And now it's time to start the contest. (ISABELLA CROSSES TO FACE 8:00 ON SECOND LEVEL.) Time to add another actor to our band of players. Step forward, young men, into the light. May it shine brightly on one of you for years to come. These boys will act in a play . . .

DANIELLO

What kind of a play?

PANTALONE

That is for you to decide.

DANIELLO

Me?

PANTALONE

Do you mind, Quino?

HARLEQUIN

No. let him decide.

DUCHESS

Isn't that nice? Well, dear boy, what kind of a play shall it be?

DANIELLO

Well, I don't know for sure. Except I should have the most important part.

PANTALONE

As you wish.

DANIELLO

(TAKING OVER.) Well, let's see. I'll be the master of a great house--a castle--and you'll all be my servants--especially you!

HARLEQUIN

Good master.

DANIELLO

I'm not a good master. I'm a horrible master. I beat you all the time. That'll be fun.

HARLEQUIN

Still, I say, "Good Master!" To your face, that is. But behind your back, I'll mock you and poke fun at all the things you say and do.

DANIELLO

You will not. You'll get another beating.

HARLEQUIN

Good master.

DANIELLO

Stop that! The play hasn't even begun yet.

PANTALONE

Ah, but it has. (ISABELLA CROSSES TO 5:00, GROUND LEVEL.)

DANIELLO

What do you think you're doing?

HARLEQUIN

Preparing your breakfast, good master. (ISABELLA CROSSES TO 7:00 TO TRUNK AND PANTOMIMES COOKING BREAKFAST. PLAYERS AND HARLEQUIN ACT OUT BREAKFAST PANTOMIME.)

(BREAKFAST PANTOMIME ENDS.)



Figure 2



Figure 3

DANIELLO

Mommy, what'll I do now?

DUCHESS

If you're the master, and they're the servants, have them sing and dance a little.

DANIELLO

Sing and dance a little.

PLAYERS AND HARLEQUIN

Sing and dance a little? (ISABELLA AND PLAYERS PERFORM SHORT DANCE STEP.)

DANIELLO

(TURNING TO DUCHESS AGAIN.) Mommy, what'll I do now?

DUCHESS

Oh, er . . .

DANIELLO

(TO PLAYERS.) I don't think that was long enough.

HARLEQUIN

(WITH A LOUD CRY, LEAPS OFF PLATFORM TO DOWN CENTER, CLUTCHES HIMSELF AND FALLS TO THE FLOOR.)

DOTORRE

(CROSSING TO HARLEQUIN AS OTHER PLAYERS CLEAR PROPS FROM THE STAGE.) He's a sick boy. Yes, he's a very sick boy. I'll have to operate.

DANIELLO

No. Don't operate on him. Operate on me!

(ISABELLA CROSSES TO THIRD LEVEL. SHE FACES 2:00.)

DOTORRE

Operate on you? With pleasure. (HARLEQUIN RISES IMMEDIATELY AND GRABS DANIELLO'S LEGS AS CAPITANO AND PANTALONE CROSS

DOWN AND GRAB HIS ARMS AND CARRY HIM TO THE STOOL, SPINNING AS THEY GO.)

DANIELLO

You get your dirty shoes off my brand new costume!

DOTORRE

(FORGETTING DANIELLO, PUTS STETHESCOPE TO CAPITANO'S CHEST AND GASPS.) Take a deep breath. And another. And another. And another. (AS CAPITANO DOES THIS.) Poor old Capitano! He's going fast!

HARLEQUIN

We must save him!

DOTORRE

You're right! We must! Breathe out. Let me see your hand. Now the other. And the other.

(PANTALONE STICKS HIS HANDS UNDER CAPITANO'S ARM.)

DOTORRE

Now the other.

(HARLEQUIN STICKS HIS HAND UNDER CAPITANO'S ARM. IT NOW APPEARS THAT CAPITANO HAS FOUR HANDS. DOTORRE SEES THIS AND DOES A VOCAL TAKE. AS HE DOES THIS:

1. HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE PUT THEIR HANDS TO CAPITANO'S HEAD.

2. CAPITANO PUTS HIS HANDS TO HIS HEAD--HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE CROSS THEIR HANDS ACROSS CAPITANO'S CHEST.

3. CAPITANO PUTS HIS HANDS ON HIS KNEES. HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE PUT THEIR FINGERS IN CAPITANO'S EARS.

DOTORRE

What's the matter? Having trouble hearing?

(HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE TAKE FINGERS OUT OF CAPITANO'S EARS.)

DOTORRE

Seeing?

(HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE PUT THEIR HANDS OVER CAPITANO'S EYES.)

DOTORRE

Talking?

(HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE PUT THEIR HANDS OVER
CAPITANO'S MOUTH.)

DOTORRE

What's the matter? Cat got your tongue? Answer
me, answer me!

(DOTORRE FELS CAPITANO'S HEAD AND JUMPS BACK IN
HORROR.)

DOTORRE

I suggest you say your prayers.

(1. CAPITANO CLASPS HANDS AND PRAYS. HARLEQUIN
AND PANTALONE CLASP THEIR HANDS BELOW.)

(2. CAPITANO SEES OTHER SET OF HANDS AND CLASPS
HARLEQUIN'S IN ONE HAND AND PANTALONE'S IN THE OTHER. HE
SWITCHES HANDS AND THEN LETS GO.)

(3. HARLEQUIN AND PANTALONE REACH FOR HIS NECK AS
CAPITANO FAINTS IN THEIR ARMS.)

PANTALONE

Perhaps we are not being fair, and fairness is part of our
tradition. We are sincerely at your service.

(ISABELLA RISES AND BOWS TO DANIELLO. ISABELLA
SITS ON STOOL AT 6:00.)

HARLEQUIN

And I, too, am sincerely at your service.

DANIELLO

(STARTING TO "PERFORM.") If I were a player, I'd wear all
the best costumes.

And everybody would like me
Because I'm good looking
And the Duchess's son besides.

DUCHESS

That's very nice, but it doesn't rhyme.

DANIELLO

If I were a player
I'd get a lot of money
Because my talent is so fine
Like sunshine!

That rhymes.

(THE DUCHESS IS THE ONLY ONE THAT APPLAUDS AT FIRST, BUT THERE IS FINALLY SOME SCATTERED, WEAK APPLAUSE FROM STAGE AUDIENCE WHEN THEY REALIZE THEY SHOULD BE POLITE.)

DANIELLO

Now, I'll sing. (HE SINGS, WEAK APPLAUSE.)

DANIELLO

Now, I'll dance. (HE DANCES. WEAK APPLAUSE.)

PANTALONE

(INDICATING HARLEQUIN AND DANIELLO.) And now, together.

(QUINO, IN RAPID SUCCESSION, EXECUTES A SERIES OF MOVEMENTS AND POSES, WHILE DANIELLO TRIES--AWKWARDLY AND UNSUCCESSFULLY--TO IMITATE.)

DANIELLO

I could do that, but I don't want to get my new costume dirty. (DANIELLO KNOCKS ISABELLA OFF STOOL. ISABELLA RISES AND FACES 7:00.) I'm a big, brave soldier on my hobby horse. (HARLEQUIN TRIES TO JOIN HIM BUT DANIELLO PUSHES HIM OFF AND MOVES AS IF TO FIGHT HIM. HARLEQUIN FACES AUDIENCE WITH MOCK FEAR.)

HARLEQUIN

Boo, hoo, hoo, hoo. (ISABELLA TURNS AND FACES 12:00.)

ISABELLA

Boo hoo, hoo, hoo? Ha, ha, ha, ha.

(HARLEQUIN REPEATS THE LAUGH, AND THEN DANIELLO REPEATS IT SCORNFULLY.)

PANTALONE

Hahahahahahaha! (HARLEQUIN, ISABELLA, DANIELLO REPEAT.)

CAPITANO

Ho ho ho! (OTHER REPEAT IN TURN.)

PANTALONE

Have you finished, Daniello? (HE NODS.) Quino? (HE NODS.)
The contest is officially over!

(THE CONTEST ENDS AMID GENERAL AD LIBS. FINALLY
THEY QUIET DOWN AND TURN TO LOOK AT THE DUCHESS, WAITING
FOR HIS DECISION. HE LOOKS PUZZLED.)

ISABELLA

Well, good Duchess?

PANTALONE

You are the judge. Tell us, which boy is the winner?

ISABELLA

(CROSSES TO DANIELLO AT 4:00 AND THEN TO QUINO AT 8:00.)
Yes, do you think Quino or Daniello should join our troupe?

DUCHESS

Well, now . . .

DANIELLO

Go on, Mommy, tell them.

DUCHESS

Well, now . . .

DANIELLO

Tell them how foolish it is for a peasant boy to compete
with the son of the Duchess.

DUCHESS

Well . . .

DANIELLO

Think what it would mean for the players if they could say
they have Daniello, the Duchess's son with their troupe.

DUCHESS

He's got something there, you know. Might be very good for your business.

PANTALONE

His name means nothing.

DUCHESS

Nothing?

PANTALONE

Nothing. You see, we all take new names when we join the Players. I was Guiseppi before I joined.

ISABELLA

(CROSSES TO FACE 6:00 AUDIENCE.) I was Maria . . .

DOTORRE

I was--great day, I forget who I was!

CAPITANO

I've got a feeling I was always Capitano.

PANTALONE

We're not interested in what he's called. It's what he can do. The contest, I believe, was fair. (ISABELLA SITS ON STOOL.)

DUCHESS

Yes . . .

PANTALONE

Your boy had an equal opportunity with Quino.

DUCHESS

Yes.

PANTALONE

So, what is your decision?

DUCHESS

Well, now, this what's-his-name is fairly good . . .

ALL

Yes?

DUCHESS

But, you'll have to admit that my boy is--well--loud!

ALL

Yes.

DUCHESS

What's-his-name is rather amusing . . .

ALL

Yes?

DUCHESS

But my boy is--well--loud.

ALL

Yes.

DUCHESS

Now, what's-his-name is able to entertain . . .

ALL

Yes?

DUCHESS

But there's no getting around the fact that my boy is--well--loud.

ALL

Yes.

DUCHESS

Which reminds me of a story I heard some time ago . . .

PANTALONE

Good Duchess, we haven't much time. We must leave in a few minutes. . . .

DUCHESS

In a few minutes?

PANTALONE

Yes--to the hills for the night. Then on to the next town tomorrow.

DANIELLO

You sleep in the hills at night?

PANTALONE

We do. Attended by ghosts.

DANIELLO

Ghosts?

PANTALONE

The ghosts of other players, friendly ghosts. So you see, good Duchess, we must be off.

DUCHESS

Yes. Well now. I'll admit this what's-his-name is able to sing and dance and entertain but my dear boy . . . (LOOKS AT HIM. DANIELLO SMILES.) . . . my dear boy--is a lazy, good-for-nothing loud mouth!

DANIELLO

Mommy!

DUCHESS

A lazy, good-for-nothing loud mouth. But, don't worry, I intend to see that he changes his ways.

PANTALONE

Good for you!

(SOMEONE GIVES THE DUCHESS ONE OF THE SLAPSTICKS.)

DUCHESS

(WAVING THE PADDLE.) Come along, dear boy.

DANIELLO

But--but I'm the son of the Duchess.

DUCHESS

More's the pity. Because I'm the Duchess. MARCH!

PANTALONE

Good Duchess?

DUCHESS

What is it? And do be quick. We've got a great many things to do.

PANTALONE

The contest? Who wins?

DUCHESS

What a silly question. What's-his-name, of course!

(DUCHESS EXITS WITH DANIELLO. ALL CHEER AND AD LIB CONGRATULATIONS TO HARLEQUIN.)

PANTALONE

Come along now. Our ghosts are waiting.

(ISABELLA RISES AND CROSSES TO 7:00 EXIT, THEN STOPS.)

ISABELLA

His name!

PANTALONE

His name?

ISABELLA

His new name. What shall he be called? (CROSSES TO FACE 5:00.)

PANTALONE

Well, now . . .

MAMA

Why not call him by his real name?

PANTALONE

Quino?

MAMA

Quino is just a pet name. His real name is Arlecchino.

PANTALONE

Arlequino?

ALL

Hmmmmmm . . .

PANTALONE

Well . . .

ISABELLA

Arlequino . . . Arlequin? (CROSSES TO FACE 6:00.)

PANTALONE

Arlequin?

ALL

Hmmmmmm . . .

PANTALONE

Well . . .

DOTORRE

Lechino?

PANTALONE

Lequino?

ALL

Hmmmmmm . . .

PANTALONE

Well . . . Well, that's how they took harlequin.

CAPITANO

Harlequeen?

PANTALONE

Harlequeen?

ALL

Hmmmmmm . . . LEAVES THE SCARFARD CASTLE. HE IS SINGING.

PANTALONE

Well . . .

ISABELLA

Har . . . harle . . .

PANTALONE

Harlequin!

ALL

HARLEQUIN! Yes.

(ISABELLA TURNS AND FACES 12:00. CROSSES TO 7:00 AND THEN FREEZES.)

MAMA

Harlequin! Not a bad name for an actor, is it?

PANTALONE

Not bad . . . of course, it all depends on him.

MAMA

You see you make a good name of it, eh?

HARLEQUIN

I'll do my best, Mama.

LUIGI

(TO AUDIENCE.) Well, that's how they took Harlequin from us . . .

MAMA

. . . and gave him to you.

CAPITANO

Into the fray! (COMPANY APPLAUDS CAPITANO.)

(HE PULLS HIS SWORD, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME DURING THE PLAY, IT LEAVES THE SCABBARD EASILY. HE IS STUNNED. THEY ALL BEGIN LAUGHING, AND HE JOINS IN.)

(BLACKOUT.)

Acting Journal

March 17
Production Meeting

Tonight the cast and crews for Harlequin met for the first official meeting. David Leong, our director, talked about his ideas concerning the show. He said the show would be presented in a very "presentational style." Harlequin would reflect the mood and style of the commedia, but it would not be done in a total, true to form commedia style. Arthur Alvis, the set designer, showed us the floor plans of the set. The show, designed primarily for children, would be done in the three-quarter round. The set consisted of platforms joined together on three different levels. No set items of furniture would be placed on the stage. The actors would carry on and off such items as trunks, boxes, and chairs, for specific scenes only. Music, dancing, and singing would add to the spirit and light heartedness of the production.

David referred all the actors to specific books and articles on the commedia history, background, and characters. Since I chose to do my acting thesis on the show, his choice of references greatly supplemented my own book research.

After the production meeting and read through, I talked to David about my character. In doing the historical research on the commedia and the commedia players, and in relation to my historical study for my first chapter.

I felt that the character, Isabella, was a "shrew" in her very own sincere and feminine manner. David and I both agreed that Isabella was a totally "two-sided" character-- she presented one type of personality "on stage" and a totally different type of personality off stage during the show.

March 20

This evening marked our first blocking rehearsal. It was rather boring, as blocking rehearsals usually go. Since the show is in the round, a great deal of the gesturing and movement has to be instinctively added by the actors themselves. In some instances, the players (Isabella, Dotorre, Capitano, and Pantalone) have long pauses within the show where we just "stand around" for long periods of time. During these lengthy times, we must make up some business that seems appropriate and yet does not draw the attention away from the main point of concentration on stage.

After working through the first pages of the script, I believe that we are going to run into problems later, as we have such long periods on stage where we just "stand" or move at will, with no real motivation behind our movements.

March 21

During blocking rehearsal tonight, I had the opportunity to think a great deal about my character. At

this point, I realized that I was very confused as to how to approach the role. Teri Hayden, a New York actress, has been down, conducting acting workshops that are based upon the Strasberg method of acting. I find the method fascinating and I have been working in this direction in acting class. My work is based on a scene from A Delicate Balance.

The real problem for me right now, is that it is virtually impossible to use "the method" when working in a commedia play. The commedia style demands a very technical type of acting method. However, I want to use a small fragment of the Strasberg method if it's at all possible. After rehearsal, I talked to David about the bind that I am finding myself in at the moment. It is very frustrating to be working on this type of show right now, as I really crave a part that allows me to be more subjective--a part that demands a more realistic style of acting. I feel that at this particular point in my life, I need to work on a very realistic character in a realistic situation. My present attitude and feelings have made me extremely apprehensive and depressed about the days to come. I must concentrate on this play and on the commedia style--a superficial and technically oriented form of period theatre. I want to do an excellent job since it is my thesis show, and I can learn a great deal about the commedia technique by concentrating wholly on

it. However, I also value all that I'm learning from Teri at the moment, and I feel that if I am to grow at all, as an actress and as a person, I must practice her technique now also. I feel as though I'm caught in the middle of two different worlds and until I can find a way to combine these worlds, (the world of the commedia and the world of Strasberg) I will not be able to do justice to the role or the show.

March 23

Thank goodness we had a music rehearsal today. I believe that we need to begin work on the music (at least I do, for I'm no Barbara Streisand when it comes to singing) because these extra music rehearsals will give me a little more time to come to terms about how I can incorporate and combine Strasberg and the sixteenth century commedia dell'arte form.

As I look back over the events of the day, I can first of all honestly report that we had FUN! We kicked off our shoes and opened wide the doors of Aycock (spring is well on its way) and rehearsed our dance steps for the opening dance number with Joe Conger, our choreographer. I was a bit hesitant after we completed warm-ups and began to work through the first few steps, for I have a tendency to be rather clumsy at times--especially when I'm working in a floor length rehearsal skirt (I'm no Martha Graham when it comes to dancing either). Yet, with Joe's skillful

direction and thoughtful hints, we all picked up the steps quite well, and managed to dance through the whole number several times before we called it quits for the day. Perfect we were not--but I have no doubts that we will be by showtime!

March 24

Another blocking rehearsal took place on this Monday evening. I can't wait until the show is completely blocked, so that we can get rid of these scripts and really work! Still, I'm glad we're still in the blocking process at this point. It gives me a bit more time to let my head "float" so that I can "gear" my system in order that I might find a medium in which to work using the Strasberg method while still maintaining the commedia technique and flair.

We worked out our first long pantomime tonight. It involved the scene in which the four players prepared a breakfast feast. We were totally free to play around with the pantomime idea after David gave us the general direction in which he wanted us to go with it. I must admit that we got a bit carried away with it at times, and the "ham" in all of us tended to lead us astray for the most part. I believe though, that a couple of very fine ideas developed from our menagerie of exploits. Yet, only time will tell. . . .

March 25

I don't ever want to hear that song again! I am referring to our "theme" music for the opening dance number of the show. Everyone in the cast was thinking about something else besides the order of the dance steps, I believe, for we were not together at all tonight when we first began rehearsing. Colin Thompson, the assistant director, lead us in some warm-up exercises before rehearsal began, and his exercise techniques seemed to help the whole cast relax a great deal. Everyone was breathing and moving quite easily--until we began the actual rehearsal. What a pathetic sight we were! Poor David and Joe simply stared at us in total horror and disbelief. I think that my main problem was right there--I was so concerned and absorbed with David and Joe's ghastly reactions, that I failed to concentrate on the number. Finally, though, it clicked and I was furious at myself for being so absentminded and unprofessional on stage. God, I don't deserve the part if I continue to approach the dance in such a shoddy manner.

During the break, we all realized the tragedy in our half-hearted efforts. Isabella Andreini (the commedia character upon which a great deal of my historical research is based) would have never performed or rehearsed in such a limp and weak manner. She would have put her whole heart and soul into it--she would have enjoyed it profusely!

And that is just what I did during the second part of rehearsal. As I started to have fun with the dance, the steps as well as my concentration were almost flawless. Apparently the other "players" and "Harlequin's family" decided to develop the same type of attitude, and before the rehearsal was half over, we were dancing, on cue, more or less, with enough vigor for once. Surely the vigor and energy level will increase in scope as we grow more comfortable with our characters and our roles.

What seems to be helping me a great deal is listening to the music cues on a tape each night before rehearsal.

March 26

The Players worked out three more bits that were totally slapstick, but almost funny, at rehearsal. I've been analyzing Isabella today. I don't want her to be a two-dimensional, surface character. Harlequin is a show designed primarily for children in many respects, consequently, I feel that Isabella must be a real and feeling individual that children, as well as adults, can identify with in some respects. Characters on stage must be people, and no one (no matter what his intellect or background may be), can be only "one or two-dimensional" in scope. Personally, I do not really like the terms, one and two-dimensional. It makes the character sound like a mechanical robot.)

David wants Isabella to have two very distinctive sides. When she is on stage, but not "performing" as a Player, Isabella is rather robust and lusty, in a rather peasantlike fashion. When she is "on stage," and performing for Harlequin and his family, she is totally feminine and graceful in movement and speech. Thus, the character now has two well-defined natures. Yet, I, personally, want to develop her one more step beyond that. I want her to be, and to come across as a sincere and caring woman who loves life and people, and who also, on occasion, loves herself and her own talents. I think that it is virtually impossible to write down everything that I want to bring out in her, for people and emotions are intricate and varied, that by the time I write down that "I want her to have certain emotions there," she becomes too "set" and she is then a mechanically oriented being.

I enjoy keeping this journal, but it is extremely frustrating for me, as an actress also, because I want to share and describe Isabella fully in this script. However, if I write too fully, I will completely destroy her. No one can ever know or analyze a person fully--not even themselves. I don't want to even try to do that, for then Isabella would cease "to be"--she would become dulled and muted. I only want to show, on paper, that I have a full awareness that Isabella is a creature of a hundred emotions and moods that change rapidly. At times, these moods are

almost undefinable. Yet, the emotions are there, and if I print each one of them down on paper, they then fail to be true emotions--they are only preconceived notions that lack any type of real feeling--that's when the character would become two-dimensional, and in my book, that's the only way that I can conceive or even begin to guess at what an actual "two-dimensional character" really "is" or "is like."

March 27

Tonight officially ended our blocking rehearsals! So much of the movement could not be blocked beforehand, and it took hours to get through it this evening. David was also interested in characterizations, and so, right in the middle of blocking, he called out to the actors and asked why we were behaving in a certain manner. There was rather an undertone of dissatisfaction, for a few of the actors felt that blocking rehearsals were not opportune times to work out characterizations. Personally, I was delighted with the mixture. Character work should start developing from the very first rehearsal, whether it be a blocking rehearsal or a read-through. I realize that blocking rehearsals, as such, are totally essential, but I can't help feeling that unless some characterization work is done here simultaneously (on the actor's part, at least!), the actors will stagnate and cease to grow as characters.

I must admit that I am not real pleased with our pantomime and lazzis right now. They seem so pieced together and overdone! David constantly speaks of "cutting out" and/or simplifying all of our bits, but each time that we go through them, more and more unnecessary movements are added instead of negated. I feel that if the four Players can work together as more of a team, we can eliminate a great deal of the exaggerated movements. In the sixteenth century, the commedia players were so "well versed," so to speak, in their art, that even their most intricate bits came off as totally smooth and effortless. Consequently, we, as modern day commedia players, must work to recapture a little bit of that same smooth rhythm and tempo in our own art. However, in order to achieve this type of style, we must work as simply and yet as totally as possible so that we, too, can achieve a type of perfection--or at least a fair amount of skill and enjoyment in our modern art.

March 28

We plugged our way through the whole show this March 28, with scripts in hand. Because this was the first time that we had ever gone through the whole show with blocking, we had a long, but fruitful rehearsal.

Today, during class break, I took a long walk and did some interesting thinking about Isabella. When I drew up my character fact sheet on Isabella, for my first

chapter, I stated that this lady was "common, happy, and carefree" for the most part, and that she was "educated in a worldly manner, but not a scholarly one." I thought about what it would be like to roam about from town to town, across sixteenth century Italy and France. Each new day would be totally different and new, for there would always be an unfamiliar town to see and different people to meet. This constant movement from place to place was what made Isabella so enthusiastic and vibrant. She was exciting because she found her world to be an exciting place. She was the type of person who lived day by day. She traveled from one village to the next so that she could entertain people and make them happy. She had an artistic gift--she loved to sing, dance, and act. Isabella was an open, happy, and generous being who presented this artistic gift to people over and over again. It was not what she did for a living; it was completely what she lived to do.

As I shuffled this idea about in my mind, I suddenly realized that this figure was my secret ideal. I saw in Isabella, all of the things that I would like to see in myself. At times, I do possess a few of these qualities, but they tend to shift in and out of my own daily living patterns, because of the normal and ever-present pressures that modern Twentieth Century inflicts upon us all. If I could select specific instances when I felt that I experienced the same or similar emotional highs and

applied these experiences to Isabella's moods throughout the show, then hopefully, I could create a believable and realistic character who still abided by all of the "com-media rules" and modes of the day.

March 31

We did a great deal of detailing and work on Act II this evening. We're still trying to clean up the lazzi bits and refine many of the crowd scenes.

Today for lunch, I had a hot dog and a cone of rum creme at the Yum Yum, and as I sat and munched my dog, I wondered what Isabella would have eaten for a typical lunch. She probably would have eaten her lunch in the great outdoors--a green wood with huge trees and much blue sky overhead. She and her commedia companions would feast on huge loaves of thick, soft bread and aged, mellow cheese. Their drink would consist of a dark, dry wine, lusty red in color. They would make a toast to each other before they ate: "To their health--to the show--to love--and to life!"

The historical Isabella, Andreini, was a cultivated and very educated, young woman. However, other Isabellas of the period were not as well-bred or as clever, book-wise, as was the great Andreini. Thus, I chose to base my written study on Andreini, but developed my own special character from the various Isabellas that I encountered during my reading and research. It was stated that each

and every Isabella that existed is as different and as unique in her own right, as was the actress who portrayed her at the time. Consequently, I felt totally justified when I declared that my own interpretation would be based upon history as well as on my own personal and instinctive beliefs and moods.

April 1

April Fool's Day is the perfect day to have a complete music rehearsal--total and including Isabella's solo song. Debbie Overton, the music director, has been working with me on my song. At this point in time, I believe that this song is going to be my downfall. The song is written in a very high key and I feel that it is beyond the limits of my voice range; however, Debbie keeps telling me that it is within full range of my voice capabilities. I feel very insecure when singing before any type of audience, and this really disturbs me, because Isabella relishes every note of a song. She enjoys singing before an audience, and every muscle in her throat reaffirms this fact. Whenever I try to sing, I feel awkward and self-conscious, and every muscle in my own throat tightens up to the point where I can't even whisper the notes.

After rehearsal, I left the theatre, only after promising David that I would work on my song all day tomorrow so that I would not totally destroy the morale of the rest of the cast.

Now, relaxed and comfortable at home (and sipping a cup of hot tea to soothe my shattered nerves), I'm pondering over the problem of how to relax and enjoy a song that totally petrifies me each time that I try to sing it. I remember a time a while back (I was a junior in high school, to be exact), when I, along with some high school friends, formed a rock group. We performed on all types of occasions and for all types of people. I was nervous the first time we performed, but after that initial time, I forgot about the people watching us, and concentrated on the music. I also played the tambourine. This instrument gave me a bit of security--whenever I felt myself growing the least bit fearful, I would grip the tambourine very securely and my apprehension would vanish. I learned to have fun with the band. Perhaps tomorrow I can use the same tactics with my song for the show. I carry a large cloth daisy throughout the song, and at intervals, I do various bits with it. If I use the daisy as I did the tambourine, maybe this same "Linus blanket" technique will give me the security that I need so that I can sell the song to myself, my fellow cast members, and the audience.

April 2

We ran the show--total and in full--with music and singing and dancing--and we got all the way through it! It ran for almost three hours, but we got through it.

In order of occurrence, I can report that the dance went well, my song wasn't a complete disaster--but there was plenty of room for improvement--and the characterizations were finally beginning to develop and grow.

After rehearsal, I talked to David about my character. He felt that I leaned a bit too much towards the lusty, "woman of the world" side, and thus, lost some of my graceful femininity and charm along the way. I did not agree with him totally and I still don't believe I ever shall agree. We've always held opposite viewpoints when it came to the amount of emphasis I should place on each of Isabella's two sides, anyway. However, since David is the director, I shall try to tone down my "gusty side" and emphasize my more "attractive and charming side."

April 3

I realized for the first time tonight what Isabella's feelings were as well as what my own feelings and attitudes towards other people were like, when I talked to David about myself after rehearsal. During one point of rehearsal tonight I was directed to cross to Harlequin. I proceeded to him after he sang his song. Later, David asked me: "Would you, as Isabella, a talented and famous actress, have gone up and hugged a village peasant boy, just because he sang a song well?"

I couldn't say anything for a moment, as I was stunned by his question. Then, I realized that I had not

thought out sincerely why I did hug him--that bothered me because I do that in my everyday life at times. In some instances, I don't bother to think about why I think, or do the things that I do. I believe that I would be able to understand the overall why, if I would just take more time to think about it. Consequently, I feel that the major fault in my own acting technique centers around this "suddenly conceived" fact. I need to take more time and delve deeper into the interior of people and events in order to find out the real why. When David repeated his question, I realized that I would not go up to Harlequin and hug him. (I, Sheila, might go up to Michael Allen and hug him, because we're good friends--and that's what I did.) I was reacting as Sheila, not Isabella, to Michael, not Harlequin.

Isabella is a sincere person--a giving woman who likes to flirt, but, she would not go up and caress a young boy unless she felt very close to him, and she does not feel that close to him at this point. Isabella might embrace Harlequin in the future, but not upon first encountering him.

In thinking back, I realize now that I am very much like Isabella in that respect. I would not go up to a person and embrace him upon first meeting him either. Since Isabella is an outgrowth of my own character, I can now understand why I would not embrace Harlequin--it would feel totally wrong.

Main point for the evening: I must think about why as I work on the play and as I go through life.

April 4

When I first arrived at rehearsal tonight, I was totally exhausted and very worried about how I was going to work and concentrate with such a tired mind and body. Since just about all the cast is off book, many new and interesting relationships are developing quickly. As the detailing of the show progressed, I forgot about my weary state and became completely engrossed in our work. My chief problem for the evening was how to deal with my new reactions to Harlequin when he was first introduced to the Players, and how to react to him after his solo song. I thought about a show that I had recently worked on for studio theatre--The Bear. When I first saw Steve Washer, a drama student who played Smirnov in The Bear, I was very curious to see what he would do on stage. From the very first moment that I saw him work, I was extremely pleased. I thought how refreshing it was to see a genuinely good, new talent in our department. As I watched Harlequin in the opening scene, I could vividly recall the first time I observed Steve at auditions--and suddenly, I, as Isabella, felt thrilled to see a new and good talent for a change. In my own head, I had envisioned that the Players had visited endless towns and villages where they had seen

many bad amateurs "perform" for them. However, when Isabella saw Harlequin, something inside her clicked.

I found that the link up with the incident in the play and the incident in the Studio was both helpful and fascinating. The linking up of a true event to match the event found within the play's own content enabled me to react more naturally and honestly to the situation at hand.

April 5

Ten o'clock on a Saturday morning is a heck of a time to have a voice rehearsal--especially when one is not very proficient in the singing field. As far as my song has progressed, I believe that I can sing it pretty well at times, although the key range is still so high that I feel as though I must strain to reach the keys in some instances. However, if I concentrate too fully on the song, I cease to breathe properly, and then I really lose all sense of concentration. When Joe Conger added all of the dance steps to the number this morning, I found it even more difficult to sing correctly. The dancing was easy--the singing was quite another story, and I feel at this point that "never the twain shall meet." However, I shall grow immensely from this experience. I've always had a true and deep sense of concentration, but it should grow even deeper as I work to master the song routine. During this number, Isabella is supposed to be very graceful, but Sheila is rather clumsy, so, I must merge the two

characters somehow, if this number is ever to improve. The two selves are fighting each other at this point. If I can overcome this one special problem, I will feel that I have grown drastically, both as a person and as an actress.

April 7

We rehearsed the whole show for the first time-- with everyone off book! It ran very slowly and we all had to call for lines, but we ran through it with no major difficulties to speak of. I believe that characterizations were a bit off tonight, but that was to be expected with everyone searching for specific line cues at times.

At this point my main problem is trying to make myself visible when playing so closely with three six-foot guys. In my own eyes, ever since I began my research on the commedia, I have envisioned Isabella as being one of the first supporters of women's lib in history. She's a true trouper who firmly regards herself as the leader of the Players. This notion is rather hard to follow through in some instances. However, I think that I am beginning to overcome my problem. Perhaps this is the reason that David and I disagree about the extent of Isabella's "shrewish side" and the extent of her more gentle side. I hope that I'm beginning to establish a good medium with her two sides, but it is taking a fair share of time. As I continue to grow more confident in the role, and as I

gain the respect of my fellow Players, I feel that I can allow Isabella's softer self to come forth a little more freely.

April 8

Today I worked through some thoughts that I have been playing with in my head and in my own imagination for a long time. When considering Isabella's moral outlook on life, a phrase that always stands out in my mind is one that I printed in an earlier chapter of my thesis. She definitely "lived for the moment." Really, in developing Isabella these past few weeks, one of my main objectives was to present her in this particular manner as much as I possibly could. In creating the history and background for this lady, I based my final analysis upon historical accounts of the various Isabellas that performed in the commedia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus, I feel justified in concluding that she did indeed live totally "for the moment." She enjoyed life and people, and I tried to make this fact very obvious from the very first moment she appears upon the stage. She flirted with all of the male characters--both young and old--because she genuinely enjoys it. Isabella has a sincere concern for people, and I always try to make this very obvious in my movements and in my lines after Harlequin flees the stage in shame when he is unable to perform for the Players.

"We understand (his nervousness and embarrassment), I tell Mama. "Really we do." Here, Isabella projects her more serious, softer side. She is the possessor of so many sides and emotions, at least in my eyes, that I believe it would be very hard for anyone to see her as anything but believable and human.

I also see this woman as one who feels the bonds of human relationships so strongly, that she has fallen in love, and will continue to fall in love with many men during her lifetime. This is not to say that she is a "loose woman" or a woman with a promiscuous past of sorts, for all of her lovers have been genuine in her own eyes. Isabella is the way she is because of her background, her environment, and her present life. The earth, the fields, and all the different towns are her homes. The people that she encounters are her friends and her lovers, and she lives for just these things. These people and events keep her alive. More than anything, I want this quality of aliveness to come forth each time that Isabella appears. She's a free spirit in her own right and I want the audience to know this through her performance. In creating this background for my character, I hope that I can present Isabella in just this type of manner. I want the audiences to see her as a good and loving woman, full of "gutsy" spirit and overflowing with life.

April 9

We worked hard tonight and David seemed pleased. Even Colin had some very kind words for us! I felt that I was really "there" tonight and my sense of concentration and of "being" was total. I spent about thirty minutes before rehearsal began, just thinking about Isabella's past and present life. I went out and sat under a tree in the park behind the theatre and closed my eyes, and tried to feel and experience what it was like to sleep on the ground each night. I felt the air blowing across my face and I heard the birds overhead. It was very peaceful and I felt very content. It was as though I was drifting away from reality and the pressures and hurried atmosphere of the present. I felt like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz, when the toronado whisked her up and planted her in another land in another time.

I've always had a great gift for "imagining." I can close my eyes and create a whole different world from the one that I'm living in at present, and then I can open my eyes and really believe that I am a part of that new world. Anyone reading this journal will probably think that I'm crazy--but I'm not. That is exactly what I did tonight before rehearsal--I put myself into Isabella's world and I lived and breathed and concentrated on living in that world until the run through ended. It was quite a remarkable experience to go through to say the least, and

I don't expect anyone to understand it unless they have gone through a similiar experience themselves.

April 10

There seems to be a type of inconsistency in the acting styles of the four Players. At times, I feel that Al, David, and Tony are playing stereotypes instead of playing people. I've been fighting and working so hard to remove any type of stereotyped speech or movement in my own character, that I fear I may have gone too much in the opposite direction from the other three players. After all, the four of us are a group--a team--and we should all be working very closely in order to develop a type of "comradeship" that surely existed in the lives of the sixteenth century troupes. However, there is a definite lack of communication between the four of us at times. Tonight, there just didn't seem to be enough "give and take" on anyone's part--I know that I'm just as guilty as anyone else. If the four of us worked to help each other more, especially during the pantomimes, and during the "crowd" scenes, I believe we would all profit by it. If we all continue to do our own little bits, and draw attention mainly to our own characters, the Players will probably come off as four comedians instead of four human beings who play at being entertainers during a part of the show.

April 11

Al, David, Tony, and I talked about our difficulties before rehearsal tonight. We are all aware of our special problem areas, and we've all agreed to work harder to eliminate these trouble spots.

David Leong felt that certain members of the cast were not giving enough of themselves or their talents to the show, so, tonight he instructed most of us to overlay our roles. "Give it your all," he said, "then, we can pull it back tomorrow night." It was interesting to note that he instructed a couple of characters to underplay their roles, simply because he felt they had gone totally beyond their levels of believability.

It's funny how there are so many levels of acting in this show. Everyone seems to be in a different locale right now, as far as character development goes. Since we were instructed to more or less "have fun with the roles" and "ham" them up, rehearsal took on a very lighthearted mood tonight. We ran through the show in record time and most of us felt generally good after we completed our run. I even enjoyed doing my song tonight. I think our work was very beneficial.

April 13

We had a serious run tonight and it was very fine. Everyone seemed to be on a more even level and it was very gratifying.

Tonight, I made a point of concentrating on one particular scene that had been giving me a little hassle in the past. My problem lies in the final scene of the show. Pantalone describes to the Duchess exactly what it is like to sleep in the hills and under the stars each night. During this part of the show, I am seated on a box cube facing the audience. I feel that his words must register on my face very distinctly at this point. Since I am by nature and by habit, a more "indoorsy" person when it comes to night sleeping (I much prefer a firm mattress and fluffy feather pillows to hard earth and grass), I usually try to recall a time when I worked as a camp counselor and took a group of kids on a weekend camping trip in the woods. We cooked a pot of stew on the coals, sang verses of camping songs, and slept under hundreds of age-old fir and pine trees. I have found that if I can recall this incident each night, as we approach this part of the show, I can grasp and appreciate Pantalone's description, both inwardly and outwardly on stage.

April 14

This is our final night of rehearsal in Aycock basement. Thank goodness! The show progressed well tonight and the music even sounded quite good. We now have a set of drums to accompany us as we sing and dance. David Wells and his drums are a very welcome asset to the show.

We worked hard and long tonight and I feel worn out but rather pleased at this point. To say or write anything else at this hour seems futile.

April 16

It was a typical technical rehearsal--terribly long and drawn out with "Stop, hold it, run that one more time," still vibrating in my head. We worked for the first time on Taylor stage this evening, and it made me terribly aware of just how close our audiences will be to us. Since the show will play to so many young people, I am well aware of how important our powers of concentration are now. I've had experience working in the round and performing for a child audience in the past, but I've never had the experience of working in the round with a child audience before, so I should be in for a unique experience on opening night.

We worked in our costumes for the first time this evening also. I feared that my beautiful, but heavy costume was going to be a hindrance. However, once I became accustomed to its length and weight, I found it to be a great asset. The long, blue satin dress greatly improved Isabella's graceful movements and gestures. I could fling the skirt in a hundred different ways to reflect my particular mood of the moment. I love the costume--my only gripe is that it is so hot!

April 17

We had another tech. tonight, and it seems as though the lights and other cues are now all set.

I made two observations this evening:

1. I find it much easier to sing on Taylor stage than in Aycock basement--the music is easier to hear and my voice does not echo on the stage;

2. My concentration is at its peak except for one brief moment--when I first see Carole McGee's gigantic headpiece as she makes her entrance.

I still have grave doubts about my song--especially when I realize that we only have two more rehearsals before opening.

Overall, the show is fine, and I find it a very pleasurable experience to work with this particular cast.

April 18

We had a complete dress rehearsal and the show progressed at a good pace, though timing was a bit off in certain spots. We had a substitute piano player this evening and I was in a bit of a panic. The opening dance, as well as our songs, were total disasters! I really felt sorry for the girl who attempted to accompany us, but I also felt greatly disturbed and depressed--we need every music rehearsal that we can possibly get in before opening. I managed to work for a little while on my number after rehearsal, which helped the song, but not my state of mind.

We only have one chance per show to do it right and opening is just too close at hand for any type of foul-up or mishap.

April 19

As I sit here, I realize that there will be no more rehearsals and no more music runs. In a way, it's a great relief to know that we have worked so hard and progressed to the point where we will do two performances tomorrow to live audiences.

We had an audience of sorts at dress rehearsal today--mostly friends and students. The final dress ran with little or no difficulties and David's notes were generally very good. We are still rather worried about the length of the show--it still seems to run a bit too long. We're all determined to set a record on opening tomorrow!

April 20--Opening

The time is now 11:00 p.m. I feel totally drained, but happy. We had two performances today. I must admit that when the lights went out and the music began, and we all stepped onto the stage for the first time, I felt one brief moment of total fear. It suddenly hit me that this was my thesis production, and all the planning and work that I had done for the past four months was going to be acknowledged, judged, discussed, and criticized very soon, and the discussions would depend upon what I did in

two hours time. After I overcame that gross realization, I managed to fling all thoughts of fear aside and thus, enjoyed playing the carefree and happy Isabella. I didn't have a fear in the world--as long as I was on stage.

The second show was much easier, performance-wise, and our audience was just as delightful.

I am happy.

April 21

Nine-thirty a.m. is certainly not the most wide awake time of the day for me on most mornings, but this week, it's a different story. This morning's show ran too long, but I rather attribute that fact to the earliness of the hour and the physical state of the actors. All in all, the one pick-up was good and most of the bits worked. I believe the audience was asleep though. The kids just were not responsive, and I wonder if it is the faulty time of day or the fault of the actors.

April 22

I received a note from David after the performance today. He was pleased with my work, but urged me to "relax" more during my song. After thinking about the show, I've come to the conclusion that I'll never be a number one singing artist of high notes, so instead of concentrating on the vocal quality of the song, I'm going to concentrate on just selling the song in my own unique style of

singing. Overall, I'm going to just enjoy doing it--no matter what.

April 23

We signed autographs after the 9:30 show this morning. I was curious to hear some of the comments and opinions that the children had concerning the show. One little boy said he "liked sitting so close to the action and the people on stage." Another little boy liked the Players and their "silly ways." Still another child thought the costumes were beautiful, and a final little girl told me that she was going to go to a costume party, "dressed as Isabella!"

On the whole, the afternoon performances usually go much better than the morning ones. Both shows ran well today though. Part of that could be attributed to the fact that we received very favorable newspaper reviews and we were all "up" for the shows today.

April 24

The cast was well aware that many of our friends and "drama department critics" were going to see the late show today, so I guess I'd say that the 9:30 production was a type of dress rehearsal for the afternoon show. We all "held back" a great deal in the a.m., which I felt was very unfortunate and unfair to our morning audience. I had to hold back on my song in the a.m., because of the

hoarseness in my throat. This hoarseness is probably a mixture of nerves and strain, because I am not accustomed to singing every day in such a manner. I hope that I make it through 15 performances.

The afternoon show was, by far, one of the best, if not the best show that we've done. Timing and cues were almost perfect, and everyone was out to give all that they possibly could give the other actors and the audience. I feel that I sold my song in an easy-going manner--even David said that it was the best he had ever heard me sing it. That really was a boost for my morale and my self-confidence. For the first time, I felt good singing it. I did not feel like Sheila, trying to be Isabella, and trying to give the impression that I was enjoying myself. I was Isabella, and I was singing the song, and I did enjoy it!

April 25

Since we only had an afternoon show today, we had the morning off to recuperate and we needed a free morning.

I've grown so accustomed to the nearness of the audience, that I am really not aware of them now--except when I am supposed to be aware, of course. When we first opened last week, I was afraid that my ability to concentrate would be marred in this type of setting with this type of audience. After this afternoon's performance, I've found that my concentration has grown even stronger

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since this show opened. I've been determined that the audience was not going to destroy or break a single ounce of my concentration, and thus far, I've been successful in maintaining my stand. At times, events in the show have become so "old hat," that I feel we have a tendency to let them slip by almost too effortlessly on our own part. This afternoon, I feel that the Players got "a bit" carried away with a few of the "bits." The "stick out your finger, your tongue," etc. bit after my song was much too long and drawn out, as was the breakfast pantomime.

At one point in the second act, Al reached into his "doctor bag" and pulled out a giant rubber snake and threw it at Daniello who quickly ducked. I was very unaware of this new and lovely prop, and when he pulled it out, my screams of dismay were completely unrehearsed and natural. The situation grew even worse when Daniello ducked and the rubber snake landed on top of my headpiece, its tail dangling down in front of my face. This new episode brought down the house, as well as adding ten years to my life in one afternoon. Looking back now, the incident was funny--we even considered leaving it in, but we feared the timing and placement of the snake would never be as perfect as it was in that one instance. It's days like these when I wish that I could perform in a show, everyday, for the rest of my life.

April 26

This was the day of days that we, as TYP actors, refused to discuss or even think out until the absolute time of the event was upon us. Today was Saturday--the one and only day in which we did three performances of Harlequin, the first show beginning at 10:00 a.m. What kid in his right mind would care to see a show--any show--at that time of day? Obviously not the 200 sleepy kids that piled into the theatre this morning. They, like the actors, were totally hung over and out of sorts. Instead of The Adventures of Harlequin, the show should have been titled after Woody Allen's insane flick, Sleeper, because, generally, that's exactly what everyone was thinking about--sleeping.

I can not even criticize or analyze that early performance, because I do not remember it. I do know that it was especially difficult to sing "when the daisies start blooming, my heart gives a leap, and I sigh what a wonderful day . . ." to 200 snoring kids who were wishing that it was still night.

As a postscript here though, I might add that one kid was awake at the end of the show, and thus managed to rip off my beautiful daisy prop from off the stage floor. Some people really have a lot of nerve!

Seriously, I should add that the actors did a pretty good job despite the early hour and the lack of

sleep, although it was about the slowest show we've done during the entire run.

The 1:00 show was very fine, and I even had a new daisy prop by then. The 3:00 show was super and the comments were very good after the show. Only two more performances to go. . . .

April 27

This is it, gang! The show's are all over, and I am writing down my final thoughts and observations with mixed feelings and emotions. My family saw the 2:00 show today, and I was determined it would be a fine show. It was, except for the fact that my hoarse voice cracked during the beginning of the second act, and I was horribly afraid that I would not get through my song. I managed somehow, but by the end of the first show, I couldn't speak above a whisper. Three throat tablets and one-half hour later, systems were all go for the one final showing of Harlequin. Everything ran perfectly--the songs, the bits, and the general dialogue were all of very fine quality. My voice was even clear and normal in range.

The show ended, the curtain calls were taken, the applause ebbed away, the lights went out, the music died, and so did my voice.

Everything is over now, including strike, and I can sit and contemplate on all that was said and done. All in all, we had a fine director, a very creative cast, and

plenty of good experience. I only wish that I could gather all of the knowledge that I've gained from this show and from this thesis work and begin all over again, for I believe that I have grown greatly--mentally and emotionally--as an actress and as a human being, from this beautifully frustrating experience. One little boy in the audience summed up my overall feelings toward the production and toward all of the people who worked with the show when he said to me "I loved it all!"

Achievement of Interpretation

for the Production

William Shaxton's Measure for Measure is a modern play for young people which is based upon the sixteenth century comedy of the same name. The Director and the actors attempted to illustrate this type of drama through the dialogue, the song and dance numbers, and through the costumes. Costumes and makeup were also representative of the sixteenth century.

Since the cast was unfamiliar with the historical background of the play, the Director instructed the actors to read various books and articles which dealt with the sixteenth century and the historical characters. The Director also instructed the actors to read the play and to discuss the various scenes and characters.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The four areas of evaluation include the following:

- (1) The relationship of interpretation to the actual performance,
- (2) the evaluation of actor-director relationships throughout the rehearsal and performance period,
- (3) the evaluation of the audience reaction to the production, and
- (4) the evaluation of the total production based on personal observations by the actress.

Achievement of Interpretation for the Production

William Glennon's Adventures of Harlequin is a modern play for young people which is based upon the sixteenth century commedia dell'arte. The director and the actors attempted to illustrate this type of theatre through the dialogue, the song and dance numbers, and through body movements. Costumes and make-up were also representative of the art form.

Since the cast was unfamiliar with the historical background, the director instructed his members to read certain books and articles which dealt with the acting styles and the historical characters. Conferences between Isabella and the director covered such subjects as (1) the author's intentions as the director interpreted them,

- (2) the author's intentions as the actress interpreted them,
- (3) the two opposing sides of Isabella's character, and
- (4) the daily life of the troupes in the sixteenth century.

Harlequin was directed in a presentational and theatrical manner and these two styles were consistent throughout the production. The presentational approach was most beneficial during the musical segments because the actors played directly to their audience. The use of theatricalism greatly emphasized the costumes, make-up, pantomimes, and line interpretations. However, these elements were all updated enough to hold the interest of a twentieth century audience. Two problems which lessened the overall effectiveness of the production must be cited.

First of all, the opening dance never achieved a true perfection in style or in performance. If the dance had contained more detailed movement patterns, all of the actors probably would have maintained higher concentration and energy levels. Secondly, the focus was greatly impaired during blocking rehearsals. The set, which was designed for the three-quarter round, had very poor sight lines. Thus, during the final week of rehearsal, the director and the actors were forced to make several blocking changes in order to give the audience full-face view of the actors instead of only back and profile views. The children were fascinated by the performers' animated facial features.

On the other hand, the pace was quick and spirited throughout the production. The tempo set for speech, action,

and movement captured and "held" the audience. Pantalone, Dotorre, Capitano, and Isabella, referred to as the four "Players," presented their own playlet during the course of Harlequin. During two performances, the pace lagged in the middle of the playlet's breakfast pantomime because the four actors lacked energy and concentration. The tempo remained consistent throughout the run except for one slow ten o'clock performance on a Saturday morning when an exhausted cast could not summon up the energy to entertain the child audience.

Actor-Director Relationships

A very fine relationship was established between the director and his company. On the whole, there were no major problems, and that brought about a relaxed atmosphere in which to work and grow. Since the Harlequin cast was composed mainly of graduate students, most of whom the actress knew quite well, she felt that she could go about her work in a self-confident manner. Most of the cast had worked with each other at least once before this production, in either an acting or technical capacity, and were able to add many new ideas and to develop character interpretations during all of the rehearsals. Only in one street scene did Isabella feel as though she was unable to work with the three other Players. During the "crowd" scene in which the four Players milled around amongst themselves, communication levels were slightly down because

the actors were not given specific blocking directions. Consequently, the actors were not motivated to react or to communicate with each other. After the problem was discussed with the director, specific blocking instructions were issued and the Players were able to create their own stage business.

Since both the actress and the director were doing thesis work on Harlequin, the director, David Leong, always had an open and "giving" attitude towards the cast. David regarded Isabella's comments highly, and so allowed her the freedom to create and develop her own character extensively. He was always willing to discuss new ideas and movement patterns after rehearsals and during any other free periods of time.

Throughout the rehearsal and production schedule, the company gave Isabella specific criticisms so that she learned and grew more fully from her experiences. Cast members were most helpful and cooperative and there was a maximum amount of "give and take" on the part of everyone during the rehearsals and throughout the run of the production.

Audience Reaction

The Adventures of Harlequin, by William Glennon, was presented ten times in the W. Raymond Taylor Drama and Speech Building, April 20 through 27, 1975, to audiences of two hundred and fifty people per performance, and at

four special times to audiences of four hundred people each. Though the production was primarily designed for young theatre goers, many adults attended the various performances and reacted favorably towards the production.

Jerry Kenion, a staff reporter and theatre critic for the Greensboro Daily News, wrote in her review:

"The world needs clowns! That line from The Adventures of Harlequin is one of the reasons that the current Theatre for Young People production is such a success with both youngsters and their parents.¹

Ms. Kenion continued to praise the actors when she elaborated on their noteworthy talents.

Not only are the actors from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro filling the need for clowns, but they are doing it quite well and with ease, enthusiasm, marvelous timing, and no small measure of physical dexterity.²

Within the content of her review, Ms. Kenion also described the audience that previewed the opening show.

Though commedia dell'arte is quite a mouthful for a preschooler, the youngsters at Sunday's opening performance of The Adventures of Harlequin had no trouble at all appreciating the slapstick humor characteristic of the sixteenth century strolling Italian Players . . . the TYP production is well paced, with never a dull moment for wiggle-prone young audiences.³

Isabella was favorably cited by this same reporter.

¹Jerry Kenion, "Harlequin Wins Young Hearts," Greensboro Daily News, 22 April 1975, sec. B, p. 12.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

The Players, stock commedia dell'arte figures, were all marvelous. Isabella (Sheila Nassif), the "beautiful heroine," was lovely, exaggerating her obvious charms with eye-batting and coy looks, and lapsing into loud-mouth tendencies for added comedy.⁴

During autograph signing sessions, the audience members reacted positively to the presentation. Isabella received impressive comments from both children and adults. Many of the enthusiastic reactions were based upon the intimate mood that the three-quarter round seating arrangement provided. The young people enjoyed seeing the actors, the make-up, and the costumes in such a "close" actor-audience atmosphere. The three-quarter round set was also mentioned in Jerry Kenion's review.

There is a sense of immediacy and intimacy with the audience seated on three sides of the players, and the actors pull the youngsters into the show with judicious use of asides to audience members.⁵

In summing up this unique experience, audience reaction was very positive toward the performances as well as toward the intimate atmosphere that was created through the use of "theatre in the round."

Personal Observations

All aspects of the rehearsal-production period were extremely beneficial. Rehearsal schedules were well devised and the blocking, detailing, technical, and dress rehearsals ran smoothly and in accordance with the specified day and time. On the whole, the role, the director, and the actors

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

were stimulating and consequently, the acting thesis was a major "growing" experience.

Though the actress had anticipated definite movement problems with her costume, she found it to be a helpful asset. She was also worried about special vocal and singing problems; however, she discovered that she was pleased with her final efforts. Since Harlequin played in the three-quarter round, Isabella feared that her level of concentration would diminish because of the close contact with such young audiences. Yet, she learned that her powers of concentration grew immeasurably from the demanding experience.

In conclusion, the actress had hoped to become involved in an acting experience that would enable her to learn how the sixteenth century commedia actors lived their daily lives. She quickly realized that she grew immensely through the vast knowledge that she gained in her background research. Isabella grew from the personal contacts that she made with her director and the cast and crew. She also benefited from the comments and criticisms that she received from audience members. A very difficult production schedule increased her powers of physical endurance. The total success of the production was her greatest reward.

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APPENDIX A

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR THE ADVENTURES OF HARKLEIGH

January	13	M	Tryouts
	14	T	Tryouts and Cast List Posted
March	17	M	7:30 Production Meeting
	18	T	7:30 Rehearsal: Opening Parlorline
	19	W	7:30 Rehearsal and Logic: Opening Parlorline
	20	Th	7:30 Block Act I, pages 1-15
	21	F	7:30 Block Act I and II, pages 16-30
	23	S	1:00 Music--Everyone
	24	M	7:30 Block Act II, pages 31-40
	25	T	7:30 Dance--Everyone
	26	W	7:30 Block Act II, pages 41-43
	27	T	7:30 Block Act II, pages 44-47
	28	F	7:30 Entire Show. Check for Blocking
	31	M	7:30 Detail Act II, pages 38-45
April	1	T	7:30 Music--Everyone
	2	W	7:30 Entire Show with Music
	3	Th	7:30 Detail Act I, pages 1-15
	4	F	7:30 Detail Act II, pages 30-43
	6	S	7:30 Detail Act I and II, pages 16-29

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR THE ADVENTURES OF HARLEQUIN

January	13	M	Tryouts
	14	T	Tryouts and Cast List Posted
March	17	M	7:30 Production Meeting
	18	T	7:30 Harlequin: Opening Pantomime
	19	W	7:30 Harlequin and Luigi: Opening Pantomime
	20	Th	7:30 Block Act I, pages 1-15
	21	F	7:30 Block Act I and II, pages 16-30
	23	S	1:00 Music--Everyone
	24	M	7:30 Block Act II, pages 31-40
	25	T	7:30 Dance--Everyone
	26	W	7:30 Block Act II, pages 41-43
	27	T	7:30 Block Act II, pages 44-47
	28	F	7:30 Entire Show, Check for Blocking
	31	M	7:30 Detail Act II, pages 37-45
April	1	T	7:30 Music--Everyone
	2	W	7:30 Entire Show with Music
	3	Th	7:30 Detail Act I, pages 1-15
	4	F	7:30 Detail Act II, pages 30-45
	6	S	7:30 Detail Act I and II, pages 16-29

April	7	M	7:30 Entire Show (No Books)
	8	T	7:30 Detail Entire Show
	9	W	7:30 Entire Show
	10	Th	7:30 Entire Show (Work on Problems)
	11	F	7:30 Entire Show
	12	S	2:00 Entire Show
	13	M	7:30 Entire Show
	14	T	11:00 Move Set on Taylor Stage
	15	W	7:30 Technical Rehearsal
	16	T	8:00 Technical Rehearsal
	17	F	8:00 Dress Rehearsal
	18	S	2:00 Final Dress Rehearsal
	19	S	2:00 and 4:00 Performance
	20	M	9:30 Performance
	21	T	9:30 Performance
	22	W	9:30 and 4:00 Performance
	23	Th	9:30 and 4:00 Performance
	24	F	4:00 Performance
	25	S	10:00, 1:00, and 3:30 Performance
	26	S	2:00 and 4:00 Performance and Strike

APPENDIX B

Sixteenth-Century Slapstick Spans Ages**'Harlequin' Wins Young Hearts**

BY JERRY KENION

Daily News Staff Writer

"The world needs clowns!"

That line from "The Adventures of Harlequin" is one of the reasons that the current Theatre for Young People production is such a success with both youngsters and their parents.

Not only are the actors from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro filling the need for clowns, but they are doing it quite well and with ease, enthusiasm, marvelous timing and no small measure of physical dexterity.

Though commedia dell'arte is quite a mouthful for a preschooler, the youngsters at Sunday's opening performance of "The Adventures of Harlequin" had no trouble at all appreciating the slapstick humor characteristic of the Sixteenth Century strolling Italian players. A pratfall, a bucket of confetti, an imaginary pie in the face or an honest-to-goodness wooden slapstick are the same in any language, any century.

Directed by MFA candidate David Leong, the TYP production is well-paced, with never a dull moment for wiggle-prone young audiences. The cast of 11 players moves well in the small arena provided for their very physical comedy. There is a sense of immediacy and intimacy with the audience seated on three sides of the players, and the actors pull the youngsters into the show with judicious use of asides to audience members.

Against a simple, but lovely lavender lighted backdrop, the period costumes of the actors (designed by Joseph Conger) provide all the scenery necessary for the story. Repeating motifs used on the earth-toned clothes of Harlequin and his family and on the rich and sometimes outrageous garb of the band of players make the characters easy to identify. The rich and funny costume for the Duchess should be a prize-winner in some sort of contest. Her

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at her son when he disappointed her, but remaining warm and supportive of him and his dream.

headpiece, shaped much like an upside-down bassinet, seemed to defy gravity and added to the fun and stature of the character.

Michael N. Allen, in the title role, was outstanding in his use of mime and falls. Even some adults held their collective breath when it appeared that Harlequin would really fall and get hurt. He never did.

As Harlequin (Quino) sets out to join a band of players, he is at first chastised and then encouraged by his mother. Susan Metz was a good Mama, fussing

The players, stock commedia dell'arte figures, were all marvelous. Isabella (Sheila Nassif), the "beautiful heroine", was lovely, exaggerating her obvious charms with eye-bating and coy looks, and lapsing into loud-mouth tendencies for added comedy. Capitano (David Grapes), the "bragging but cowardly soldier," was an audience favorite, an underdog with his wooden sword and "head made of dreams." Even the little folk wanted to help this soldier who sounded like the Cowardly Lion.

More "bad guys" than the other players, Pantelone (Tony Clay) and Dotorre (Alexander Nazaruk) used very successfully a louder, more aggressive form of humor in their characterizations, bringing to mind some of the old vaudevillians.

As the Duchess, Carole McGee was very convincing in her change from the original stage mother to a fair city official who revamped her child-rearing methods. As Daniello, Michael Childers was the brattiest son of a Duchess ever to grace a stage. His spider and web costume was most eloquent.

Rounding out the cast were Thomas McClary as Quino's

friend Luigi, David Fitzsimmons as Renato and Martha Carlson as Tina, brother and sister of Quino.

A particular treat for this production was the music, composed and directed by Debbie Overton and performed by David Wells on drums and a piano player not named on the program.

"The Adventures of Harlequin" will be presented in Taylor Theatre Wednesday through Sunday. Single tickets are available for a few performances, and reservations can be made by calling the TYP box office at UNC-G.

APPENDIX C



THE ADVENTURES OF HARLEQUIN