



Commedia Dell'arte

Table of contents

1. Preamble	7
2. Unit Focus and Outcomes	8
3. Course Overview – Scope and Sequence	9
4. A Teaching Program	10
5. Assessment Task – Appreciating	16
6. Marking Guidelines – Appreciating	17
7. Assessment Task – Making/Performing	18
8. Marking Guidelines – Making/Performing	19
9. Reflection Prompt Sheet	20
10. Peer Evaluation Sheet	21
11. Mask Resource Sheets	22
12. Annotated Bibliography	26

Preamble

Commedia dell'arte is an enjoyable and energetic dramatic form that reflects the objectives of the additional content. This dramatic form provides students with challenges to their established physical and vocal repertoire. As a consequence the students will have opportunities to extend their individual performance skills.

The stock characters of Commedia, in their stylised realisation, allow students to build on the knowledge already gained in the essential units on role. In teaching this unit a central focus in developing those elements of Deep knowledge, Deep understanding, Metalanguage and Substantive communication is maintained to promote intellectual quality. This close study encourages students to explore and extend their understanding of characterisation with particular consideration of complexity and dimension.

The context of Commedia and its recognised use of theatre as a tool to make social and political comment is an aspect of this topic that adds to the overall understanding of the important role that drama and theatre has played historically.

The three areas of the syllabus are addressed through this unit. All activities have been sequenced to allow students to develop more sophisticated practical responses. Placed as it is at the end of Stage 5, it encapsulates the aims, objective and skills of the 7 to 10 Drama syllabus and provides students with a dramatic form that can enrich the Playbuilding activities of Stage 6 students.

Unit Focus and Outcomes

Focus

In this unit of work students will be introduced to Commedia Dell'arte stock characters. They will explore some social and historical aspects of the form through improvisation, lazzis and scenarios and use masks where appropriate. The students will be able to recognise and negotiate improvisation problems and solve them individually and in a group.

Outcomes

Making

- 5.1.1 A student manipulates the elements of drama to create belief, clarity and tension in character, role, situation and action
- 5.1.4 A student explores, structures and refines ideas using dramatic forms, performance styles dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies

Performing

- 5.2.1 A student applies acting and performance techniques expressively and collaboratively to communicate dramatic meaning
- 5.2.2 A student selects and uses performance spaces, theatre conventions and production elements appropriate to purpose and audience
- 5.2.3 A student employs a variety of dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques, theatrical conventions and technologies to create dramatic meaning

Appreciating

- 5.3.1 A student responds to, reflects on and evaluates elements of drama, dramatic forms, performance styles, dramatic techniques and theatrical conventions
- 5.3.2 A student analyses the contemporary and historical contexts of drama
- 5.3.3 A student analyses and evaluates the contribution of individuals and groups to processes and performances in drama using relevant drama concepts and terminology.

Course Overview – Scope and Sequence				
Week	Focus	Outcomes	Suggested Strategies	Reflecting, Appreciating Assessment
1	Introductory Sophisticated vocal and physicalisation techniques	Making 5.1.1	Physical warm-ups that allow students to prepare for the strenuous nature of Commedia performance skills. Advanced Breathing exercises with movement. Improvisations based on role work. Watch stylised slapstick comedy routines – Keaton, Laurel and Hardy, Marx Brothers, Peter Sellers et al.	Journal entries that reflect on the skills required for this dramatic form. Issue research task to be due and presented in persona week 4
2	The Stock Characters The servants The Masters	Performing 5.2.1	Teacher led workshops on the stylised physicalisation, movement, vocalisation, objective and mask of the following: Zanni, Arlecchino, Il Dottore, Panatalone. Provide examples of Improvisation, repertorio Lazzi Canovaccio Divide class into groups to workshop responses	Journal entries. Issue cut and paste of Stock Character information; status, origin, costume and mask. Continue work on research task
3	Stock Characters: A military Man and a female	Making 5.1.4 Performing 5.2.2	Introduce the following characters Il Capitano and Colombina Create own Canovaccio Issue group task description and requirements	Journal. Relevant information on characters
4	Oral Presentation Group –Devised task	Appreciating 5.3.3	Assess individual presentations. Allow students to work on group devised tasks	
5	Rehearsal and presentation of group devised task	Appreciating 5.3.2 Performing 5.2.3	Preparation for performance warm-ups relaxation, focus activities and vocals. Allow students to refine and polish performances Assess performances	Evaluation of performances.