

# Commedia dell'arte



The Characters

Commedia dell'arte  
relies on the use of  
*stock characters.*

## Character Categories

- ▶ Vecchi = Villains or the **Masters**
- ▶ Zanni = **Servants**



## Vecchi, or the Masters

- ▶ Pantalone
- ▶ Il Dottore
- ▶ Il Capitano
- ▶ Innamorati



# Pantelone

- ▶ Elderly
- ▶ Vigorous merchant
- ▶ He is miserly!
  - ▶ Usually has a big bag of money on his belt!
  - ▶ He is IN LOVE with his money!
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Gullible
  - ▶ Anxious
  - ▶ Obnoxious & nosy
- ▶ Believes he is irresistible to the ladies!
- ▶ Resembles a rooster in his manner & appearance!



# Il Dottore

- ▶ Has a big belly
- ▶ Very pretentious
- ▶ Supposed man of learning!
  - ▶ Is a lawyer, doctor, astrologer, & a professor
  - ▶ Learns everything but knows nothing
  - ▶ Often speaks in latin
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Opinionated
  - ▶ Captain Obvious
  - ▶ Loves to talk!
  - ▶ Pompous
- ▶ He loves to eat!
- ▶ Resembles either a pig or a goose in his manner and appearance!



## Il Capitano

- ▶ Macho Man! – Big & Bold
- ▶ Military man
  - ▶ Swaggers & exudes confidence on the outside
  - ▶ HUGE coward on the inside!
  - ▶ Well-versed in past wars & conflicts
  - ▶ Lives in his imagination
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Extravagant & greedy
  - ▶ Egotistical
  - ▶ Braggart
- ▶ The question is: has he actually ever been a captain??
- ▶ Resembles either a rooster or a dog in his manner and appearance!



## Innamorati, or the Lovers

- ▶ Children of Pantelone or Dottore
- ▶ Fall in between Masters & Servants in status
- ▶ Movement is light and airy – almost as if they're floating!
- ▶ Know poetry and love songs
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Romantic (in love with the idea of love)
  - ▶ Vain & fashionable
  - ▶ Older Lovers are intelligent
- ▶ Resemble a dove in manner and appearance!



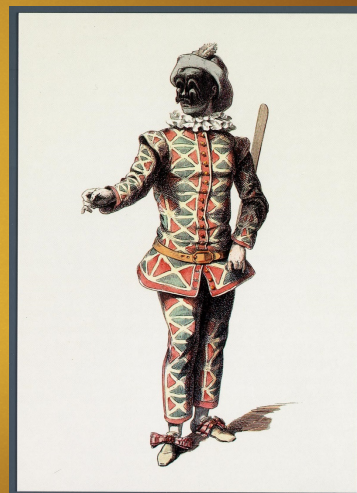
## Zanni, or The Servants

- ▶ Arlecchino
- ▶ Columbina
- ▶ Brighella
- ▶ Pulcinella



## Arlecchino

- ▶ The ultimate servant!
- ▶ Often carries a slap stick
- ▶ Wants to stay out of trouble but is always IN trouble!
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Greedy
  - ▶ Charming
  - ▶ Impulsive
  - ▶ Amorous
  - ▶ Always hungry!
- ▶ Easily hurt and quickly comforted
- ▶ He is simple but NOT stupid!
  - ▶ Although he tends to think AFTER he acts!
- ▶ Resembles a cat or monkey in his manner & appearance!



# Columbina

- ▶ A maid
- ▶ Smarter than the other Zanni
- ▶ Smarter than the other men around her, in fact!
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Very smart
  - ▶ Bright
  - ▶ Cunning
  - ▶ Speaks her mind
  - ▶ Impertinent to old men
  - ▶ Helpful to her mistress
  - ▶ Charming
- ▶ She is Arlecchino's female counterpart!
- ▶ Resembles a cat or monkey in her manner & appearance!



# Brighella

- ▶ Often carries a money pouch or a knife
- ▶ Brighella is a brawler and a thief!
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Cunning
  - ▶ Dishonest
  - ▶ Vengeful
  - ▶ Egotistical
  - ▶ Opportunistic
  - ▶ Ill-tempered
- ▶ He respects no one!
- ▶ Braggart
- ▶ Resembles a tiger in his manner & appearance!



# Pulcinella

- ▶ Tends to have a pot-belly and hunchback
- ▶ Pulcinella is very contradictory!
  - ▶ He may go from stiff to suddenly acrobatic
  - ▶ He may go from cowardly to suddenly reckless
- ▶ Personality traits:
  - ▶ Dull-witted
  - ▶ Deliberately rude & obnoxious
  - ▶ Abuses others
  - ▶ Abused himself
- ▶ He loves to talk and has a somewhat out of tune voice!
- ▶ The question is: is he really stupid or just pretending to be stupid?
- ▶ Resembles a chicken in his manner & appearance!



## Some other Commedia characters...

(We are not going to worry about these characters in class.)

### ▶ Other Vecchi:

- ▶ Cietrulo
- ▶ Geronte
- ▶ Ruffiana
- ▶ Scaramouche
- ▶ Tartaglia



Scaramouche

### ▶ Other Zanni:

- ▶ Burrattino
- ▶ Coviello
- ▶ Mezzetino
- ▶ Pierrot
- ▶ Scapino
- ▶ Zanni



Scapino