

History of Commedia Dell'Arte

History

**What inspired
Commedia Dell'Arte?**

History

**Commedia is about the
common man**

History

**Commedia comes from
Carnevale**

History - Carnevale

Partying, **Fun**, Food!



Mardi Gras



History - Carnevale

Celebrations during winter



History - Carnevale

- (1) Lent - 40 days prior to Easter
- (2) People would “give up” something for Lent

History - Carnevale

**Very restrictive period
for people of the 14th-16th
century Europe**

History - Carnevale

**People got all the excess out
of their system before going
into a period of restriction.**

History - Carnevale

Class structure:
Master or Servant

History - Carnevale

- (1) Structured society
- (2) Religious event for 40 days
- (3) Giving up something
- (4) Short period before lent to “let loose” and celebrate

Great Chain of Being

Great Chain of Being

**Order of the universe
dictated by God**



The Great Chain of Being

Great Chain of Being

You had a **predetermined**
place in society

History - Carnevale

**Lent
Great Chain of Being
Carnevale Celebrations**

Topsy Turvy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emmpnBDM0R8>

Day of Constructed Chaos

History - Carnevale

It was legal because it was an annual tradition

History - Carnevale

There was **singing** and **dancing**

History - Carnevale

People wore **masks** and **costumes** as they celebrated

History - Carnevale

Dressing up as characters
allowed them to
disguise themselves

Greenman

Half man **half tree**



History - Carnevale

**Entire families dressed as
the same character**

History - Carnevale

**It was like a medieval
comic-con!**



History - Guilds

Tradesmen tended to
be in **guilds**



History - Guilds

Guild members could share information about their trade

History - Guilds

Members of the guilds could be the same characters

History - Carnevale

IMAGINE...

**Parades
Costumes
Stilts
Music
Food
Mythological characters**

History - Carnevale

**Master/Servant characters
meet and improvise**

Let's put on a play!

History - The Guilds

**Guilds would put on shows for
money or to win **favor****

History - The Guilds

Guildsmen eventually became **actors** and toured with their shows



History - Carnevale

People on stage
Stereotypical characters

History - Carnevale

People on stage
Stereotypical characters
Commedia

History - Carnevale

Carnevale is the **spirit**
of Commedia

Commedia dell'arte

Commedia is a comedy of
stereotypical characters

Commedia dell'arte

Commedia Characters:
Masters with power
Servants without power

Commedia dell'arte

**Plays tended to comment
on society**



Commedia as Social Satire

Commedia dell'arte

Satire:

humor that shows the weaknesses or bad qualities of a person, government, society, etc.

Commedia dell'arte

**Commedia was for the
common man**

Social Satire



Character Stereotypes

**The Simpsons
Family Guy
Bob's Burgers
The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
Big Bang Theory**

Character Stereotypes

**Many of our modern comedic
characters come from
Commedia**

Commedia dell'arte

**What happens in a
Commedia play?**

Commedia dell'arte

**Comedy in commedia comes
from the **clashing** of desires
or appetites**

Characters Stay the Same



Commedia dell'arte

**Came from Carnevale
Social Satire
Masters and Servants
Character appetites**