

A NIGHT ALL'IMPROVVISO

Life, death and miracles of Commedia dell'Arte

*A lecture-presentation
with
Giovanni Fusetti*

Commedia dell'Arte, also known as *Italian Comedy*, is a milestone in the history of theatre. The historic commedia has seen its glorious times between the 16th and 18th century, throughout all Europe. A multitude of companies traveled performing shows (*canovacci*) based on improvisation, stock characters with and without masks and a unique talent of physical performing, integrating text, pantomime, music singing and improvisation. Characters like Patalone, Arlecchino, Zanni, Il Capitano, the Lovers (*Innamorati*) Colombina became world heroes and their theatre had profound influences on the coming generation of actors and play writers. From Moliere to Shakespeare, from Melodrama to Puppet theatre, from French pantomime to contemporary physical theatre, commedia is at the roots of an actor based creative theatre making.

It's a play of urgency and survival. All passions and drives of the characters are pushed to the extreme. The characters, transposed by the half mask into types, require from the performer a high level of playing where the body is fully engaged, alive and always playful. For these reasons *Commedia dell'Arte* is a physical celebration of rhythm, attitudes and improvisational madness.

Commedia dell'arte is a melting pot of tradition and creation, in which the historical roots inspire contemporary actors into a journey of rigor, fun and clever observation of the society.

During this presentation, the Italian theatre master and fool Giovanni Fusetti will guide the audience through an historic overview of *Commedia dell'Arte* and will bring to life various traditional types, performing a set of half-masks. He will play *all'improvviso*, constantly nourishing the types through improvisation into virtuous developments of comic themes (*lazzi*), and will show how *Commedia* is an amazing training ground for contemporary physical comedy.