

English

House of Carlo Goldoni — The Home of his Theatre



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THE LIFE OF CARLO GOLDONI

The life of Carlo Goldoni can be traced from Venice – where he was born in 1707, at Ca' Centanni – to Paris, where he died in 1793.

A child with uncommon wits bestowed upon him, he expressed his passion for the theatre from a very early age. Soon after the turn of his eighth birthday he was playing intently with toy puppet-theatres and composing his first theatrical plot. His family affairs led him to travel frequently around Italy: Perugia, Rimini, Modena, Milan... He would also be involved in military skirmishes and even in war. Following various mishaps with tutors and schools, he finally achieved his degree in Law in Padua, in 1731.

He was to be assistant-clerk and lawyer, then a consul of Genoa to Venice.

None of these professions appealed to him, his thoughts and his time always lent towards satisfying his theatrical yearning.

He avidly read Italian and foreign playwrights, composing pieces in various genres (librettos for musical operas, tragicomedies, dramas, tragedies, satires and entr'actes, poetry).

He entered into direct contact with the theatre world: impresarios, authors, actors and lovers, handmaids, masks, organisers; from 1734 to 1743 he worked for the Grimanis' at the theatre of San Samuele.

In 1747 he met the theatre impresario Gerolamo Medebach and signed a contract for the theatre at Sant'Angelo.

His task of reforming Italian theatre therefore began at this point; his comedies would no longer be tangled mannerisms but true and 'modern' theatre texts, entirely scripted, with the various roles defined and assigned, line after line.

No more ribaldry and weird plots, no more repertoire cues, little to no masks: enlightened and bourgeois, modern theatre was born at last.

In 1750 Goldoni engaged in a reckless challenge of a sort, composing 16 new plays in a single season. Goldoni managed his task, albeit at the cost of severe depression and among the new plays were some masterpieces like *La bottega del caffè* (*The coffee shop*). In those same months he penned *La famiglia dell'antiquario* (*The antiquarian's family*), *Il teatro comico* (*Comic theatre*), *Il Bugiardo* (*The liar*). Over the following decade fundamental plays such as *Il Campiello* (*The little Square*), *La locandiera* (*The inn mistress*), *Le donne curiose* (*The curious women*), *La casa nova* (*The new house*), *I Rusteghi* (*The boors*), *Sior Todero Brontolon* (*Grumpy Mr. Todero*), *Le baruffe chiozzotte* (*The chiozzotte scuffles*) (1762) followed. In 1753 he transferred to the theatre at San Luca, owned

by Francesco Vendramin. By then, the topics of his plays were almost exclusively the world of the bourgeoisie, that new and increasingly characterised social class which had increasingly supplanted the old traditional aristocracy due to its dynamism, business acumen, cultural feelings and gusto for the modern. Having been summoned to Paris by the Théâtre-Italien, before leaving Venice Goldoni wrote *Una delle ultime sere di carnevale* (*One of the last carnival evenings*), a heart-rending farewell, of a kind, to his city. He reached Paris in November in 1762; he was to experience one last season of activity and success there, living between Paris and Versailles. In 1771 he committed to writing his *Mémoires*, an ironical and amusing autobiography, in a detached and cultured spirit. He died in Paris on 6 February 1793 in total poverty. Goldoni's theatre output includes five tragedies, sixteen tragicomedies, one hundred and thirty-seven comedies, to which must be added, in the service of music, two sacred pieces, twenty entr'actes, thirteen dramas, forty-nine drammi giocosi, three farces and fifty-seven scenarios.

CA' CENTANI: THE HOUSE WHERE CARLO GOLDONI WAS BORN

“Je suis né à Venise, l’an 1707, dans une grande et belle maison, située entre le pont de Nomboli et celui de Donna onesta, au coin de rue de Ca’ Centanni, sur le paroisse de St. Thomas”

(“I was born in Venice, in 1707, in a large and beautiful house, situated between the Nomboli and Donna onesta bridges, on the corner of calle di Ca’ Centanni, in the parish of San Tomà”).

Thus, in the prologue of his *Memoires*, the eighty year old Carlo Goldoni – who had by then been in Paris for twenty-five years – recalled his first home, Ca’ Centani, or Centanni, better known as “Casa di Carlo Goldoni”, built in the 15th century. It is a typical, not overly large, Gothic palace, which, despite several renovations, displays the layout and typical elements of 14th and early 15th century civil Venetian architecture. The wide and equally-proportioned palace façade curves following the bend of the narrow canal it overlooks.

Its most striking element is its beautiful quadruple-mullioned window, which, with its slender columns and inflected arches, corresponds with the main or noble floor. The ground floor, where the typical terracotta flooring confers a pleasantly old-fashioned and multi-coloured appearance, is composed of the porticoed hall towards the water-gate, a charming courtyard, its open stairway, supported by progressively shrinking pointed arches with a handrail in Istrian stone and simple small cylindrical columns, a little lion and a pine-cone.

The upper floors feature a small through-salon (the traditional portego or lobby in Venetian houses) onto which the other rooms of the house open; although the irregularity of the floor-plan has partially removed the central hub function, which a portego of this kind almost always has in a building.

Owned by the Rizzi family (the hedgehog carved in relief on the family arms can be seen on the well inside the courtyard) the palace was rented to the Zentani or Centani family, from whom its future name stemmed. It also hosted a thriving artistic and literary Academy. Around the end of the 17th century Carlo Goldoni’s paternal grandfather, Carlo Alessandro, a solicitor with origins in Modena, settled here. The Goldoni family remained in this house, where Carlo was born on 25 February 1707, until 1719.

In 1931, Ca’ Centani was bequeathed to the Venice Municipality so it might be restored and become a Goldoni museum and a centre for theatrical studies.

from *Casa di Carlo Goldoni*, Marsilio 2001

Portego

Ground Floor



You're in the Portego, the place that joins the water-gate to your right with the gate of the courtyard with its open stairway.

The stairway, supported upon progressively shrinking pointed arches, has a handrail of Istrian stone, a little lion and a pine-cone.

This space with its typical terracotta flooring, now, as in the past, is used to load and unload the goods. To your left you will see a hedgehog carved in relief on the arms of the family who built the palace.

Here you will find a reproduction of the topographical plan by Lodovico Ughi (1729) which has been superimposed on an educational game-board in the portico on the ground floor, not far from the water-gate.

It is the most detailed ordnance-survey document which presents the urban conditions of 18th century Venice: the highlighted areas depict the various town dwellings of Goldoni, as well as where many buildings which made Venice one of the capitals of theatrical culture in the 18th century stood.

The houses where Carlo Goldoni lived

Carlo Goldoni spent only about thirty years of his long life in Venice, spread out over a period stretching from 1707 to 1762 - the year in which he departed Venice for Paris. He lived in at least nine different houses, at various times, during the course of his Venetian life.

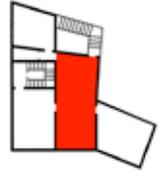
Theatres in Carlo Goldoni's age

During the 18th century, Venice went through an animated season of innovation and of transformation in terms of its theatrical structure.

Although a few play-theatres were shut down due to their being obsolete or inadequate, others were inaugurated; the most important theatres were subject to renovation, updating and new decorating. In the age of Goldoni the city could still count on around fifteen theatres, which united authors, actors, singers, musicians, stage -designers – the main players in these extraordinary spectacles - in one intense show of quantity and variety.

Portego

First Floor



This is the traditional portego or lobby. This space was originally used both as a means of accessing the other rooms of the house from a central point, and to welcome guests. Your journey into the works of Goldoni starts here.

MARCELLO MORETTI

Marcello Moretti (Venice 1910 – Rome 1961) was an actor whose seminal role is considered to be Harlequin in *Harlequin the servant of two masters* by Carlo Goldoni, directed by Giorgio Strehler, a part for which he was beloved by critics and applauded by audiences world-over during many tours. He was succeeded by Ferruccio Soleri, a devout student of the fine acting technique Moretti displayed in the role of Harlequin.

Arlecchino servitor di due padroni (Harlequin. The servant of two masters)

The Comedy

Written in 1745 upon request of the famed actor Antonio Sacchi, the comedy was performed in Milan and Venice in 1746 with great success. Goldoni, who had used a French plot in his first draft, rewrote it entirely in 1753 for the Paperini edition. Latterly G. Strehler's direction and a change of title to *Harlequin, servant of two masters*, have contributed to this piece gaining international recognition.

The Story

The action is centred on Truffaldino's character. Following the news that her suitor Federigo has been killed in a duel by Florindo, Clarice is betrothed to Silvio by her father Pantalone. In the meantime Federigo's sister Beatrice arrives in male garments and using her brother's name, looks for her beloved Florindo, who ran off following the duel. Truffaldino, Beatrice's servant, also becomes the servant of Florindo without her knowledge, and the comedy continues to flow from the confusion and misunderstandings caused by Truffaldino. Finally all is cleared: Florindo marries Beatrice, Silvio marries Clarice, and Truffaldino marries Smeraldina, Clarice's maid.

The comedy is packed with comedic effects, such as when Truffaldino makes Beatrice believe that Florindo is dead and Florindo that Beatrice is dead, in order to cover up a mistake of his: this is a simple Goldonian trope.

THE SEDAN CHAIR

A way of getting around town without tiring

Its use can be traced back to antiquity: according to Cicero and Juvenal it dates back to the Kings of Bithynia.

In its most ancient form, it was used by the Greeks and Romans and was known as a *lectica* (lectus) and consisted of a stretcher covered with mattresses and pillows where one could lay and reach, by means of straps, slaves.

The sedan chair visible here, which was used in England in the second half of the 17th century and had spread into Italy and France by the 18th century, was held up, for short trips, by two men using two sturdy side poles and consists of a small enclosed cabin with glass windows and a door for entering.

On this the ladies of 18th century went to ceremonies, mass, to stroll and to coffee: sometimes they travelled, for shorter journeys. In Venice not only the ladies used the sedant chair: the Doge descended the golden staircase of the Doge's Palace upon a sedant chair in order to board gondolas.

La finta ammalata (The fake patient)

The scene shown here is inspired by the second Act - Scene 5, 6

Despite suffering from the pangs of love, Rosaura has not lost her appetite, which she satisfies lavishly behind the backs of her friend Beatrice and her servant Colombina, who are worried about her.

The scene consists of a dormeuse in carved wood a 19th century imitation of the 18th century original, an Andrienne garment (a robe used for stage or fancy-dress balls) of the 20th century; an 18th century silver mirror by a screen with three doors an imitation of an 18th century original and four apothecary pots in faience (1650ca. - 1749 ca.)

The Comedy

Presented successfully during carnival in 1751 with the title "*The apothecary, or the fake patient*"; this comedy concerns the comical theme of the imaginary sick person, a recurrent one in theatre traditions. Goldoni created a drama giocoso from *The fake patient*, which was set to music in 1768 by F. J. Haydn.

The Story

Anguish reigns in the home of the wealthy Pantalone, seeing that for some time now his beloved daughter Rosaura has been showing symptoms of an illness. So far all attempts to cure her have been carried out by Pantalone and Beatrice, a friend of Rosaura's: the girl claims she cannot breathe and refuses food. The spectator will later realise later she is not all that she seems-the girl eats with gusto. The young woman reveals to her servant Colombina and to her friend Beatrice that she is in love, but she is reluctant to admit that she loves the very doctor who comes to check up on her, Doctor Onesti.

In addition, the girl has no intention of showing any signs of healing, since her illness is the only way for receiving visits from the man she loves. One day, tiring of the lack of improvements and ignorant to his daughter's true situation, Pantalone decides to replace Doctor Onesti, and he summons various doctors, amongst whom is doctor Buonatesta, an alleged luminary of medical science, for a consultation. In spite of Rosaura's rage and desperation, Buonatesta visits the girl and suggests a very lengthy cure. Beatrice thus decides to intervene and to go secretly to Doctor Onesti's house to reveal to him that Rosaura's illness is only lovesickness, but the doctor threatens he will not return to visit his young patient any more, so as not to put his professional ethics at risk and in order not to fan the girl's amorous passions. Pantalone sees no improvements in Rosaura's state: on the contrary it even appears that the girl has lost the ability to speak. A further consultation with the doctors is therefore decided upon, which sees Doctor Onesti himself triumphing, as he is able to loosen the girl's tongue. At this point Beatrice intervenes, revealing the young woman's secret love publicly, and in spite of the first perplexities and class differences, Rosaura's father and Doctor Onesti are persuaded to accept a betrothal: Rosaura therefore receives the very cure she needed all along.

La figlia obbediente (the obedient daughter)

The scene shown here is inspired by the second Act - Scene 4, 5 and 6

Rosaura, who is obliged to obey her father, who has betrothed her to Count Ottavio, decides to inform her lover Florindo that despite her heart belonging to him, she will follow her father's orders. But how can she get the letter delivered to her lover? Her friend Beatrice intervenes, leading Florindo right into Rosaura's chamber. The reproduced picture recalling the afore-mentioned scene can be found in volume 8, Pasquali Edition (1761) of the "Comedies by Carlo Goldoni, Veneto Lawyer".

The scene is represented by the console and chair of the 18th century.

The Comedy

A comedy in three acts, performed for the first time in 1752, the romantic elements of which appealed greatly to the audience of the time.

The Story

Florindo, the son of a merchant from Livorno, loves Pantalone's daughter Rosaura, but when his father gives him permission to marry her, she has already been betrothed by Pantalone to the rich and eccentric Count Ottavio. Florindo's plight unravels around the distressed and anguished submission of Rosaura to the agreement her father has entered with Count Ottavio. Pantalone also suffers due to seeing his daughter being sacrificed in this

manner. The background action features the affairs of Brighella, a somewhat degenerate father who became rich due to the success of his daughter Olivetta, a ballerina, and from whom a servant is stealing everything but is eventually caught by Count Ottavio. After various mishaps Count Ottavio decides to give up Rosaura, who will finally be able to marry her beloved Florindo.

S C E N A V.

BEATRICE, FLORINDO, E DETTA.

LA FIGLIA UBBIDIENTE
COMMEDIA
DI TRE ATTI IN PROSA.

Rappresentata per la prima volta in Venezia nell'Anno dell'Anno MDCCLXI.



ATTO SECONDO.

S C E N A IV.

BEATRICE, E DETTA.

Beatrice. R. Oscura, siete sola?

Rosaura. Sì, la vedete.

Beatrice. Scritta?

Rosaura. Scritto.

Beatrice. A chi?

Rosaura. Oh Cielo! Al Signor Florindo.

Beatrice. Volete fargli capitar la lettera pressa?

Rosaura. Sentitela, e ditemi il parer vostro.

Beatrice. Non vi è tempo da perdere. Se volete fargliela avere, l'occasione è opporuna.

Rosaura. Come?

Beatrice. Purgatela subito. Ora vi troverò chi gliela porterà senza dubbio.

Rosaura. Salvo?...

Beatrice. Sì, subito, in un momento. (parte.)

Rosaura. Sia, come esser si voglia. Parmi non aver scritto, così scrivendo. LA manderò....
(va pigliando la lettera.)

Beatrice. Ecco chi gli porterà la lettera.
(considerando per mano Florindo.)

Rosaura. Oh Cielo! Infelice la lettera sul favoloso, e l'alta!

Florindo. (Ingrata!)

Rosaura. Voi qui?

Florindo. Sì, barbata, io qui a rimproverarvi della vostra incoerenza...

Beatrice. Oh! Io non vi ho qui condotto per far il bravo. Parlate con civiltà; Rosaura è ragazza da darvi soddisfazione.

Rosaura. Già fra me stessa ne dubitai, che voi mi credete a parte della risoluzione di mio Padre. Ah! Florindo, non mi fate così gran torto...

Beatrice. Poverina! Ella non ci ha colpa.

Florindo. Ma voi non mi direste?... (a Beatrice?)

Beatrice. Che suo Padre, vi disse, l'ha promessa al Conte.

Florindo. Ed ella...

Beatrice. Io l'ho veduta piangere per amor vostro.

Florindo. Non so, che cosa credete. Rosaura, per amore del Cielo, svelatemi sinceramente la verità. In amate voi? Siete voi fedele a chi v'ama? Se siete in necessità di lasciarmi, penetratelo a farlo!

Beatrice. Che domande! Guardatela.

Rosaura. In questo foglio, substituita di non voi voi, e voi in manifestava il mio cuore. Leggetelo, e comprendete da questo... (mostri della lettera.)

Beatrice. Che bisogno vi è di una lettera, quando potete parlare a bocca? Diregli i vostri sentimenti con libertà. Non vi predate soggezioni di me. Sia vostra amica, vi compatisca, e dove posso ajutar l'uno, e l'altro, lo faccio volentieri.

Florindo. Sì, cara, ditemi, se mi amate.

Rosaura. Oh Cielo! Vi amo, ma...

Beatrice. Quello non lasciatelo sulla penna. Ella vi ama; e voi l'amate!

Florindo. Sapete, ch'ella è l'anima mia.

Beatrice. Profumo al rimedio.

Rosaura. Qual rimedio, Beatrice? Voi sapete poco...

Beatrice. So tutto; ma il Mondo è pieno di questi casi. Anche Livia si è maritata sui mesi loro coerto il volere di suo Padre, ed ora tutte le cose sono accovolate. Non ho tanti capelli in capo, quante ne contava io, che hanno fatto l'istesso.

Rosaura. L'esempio delle somme patre non dee replicare le favie. Livia si è maritata coerto il voler di suo Padre; ma che disse il Mondo di lei? Come si parlava nei circoli della sua impudenza, della sua audace risoluzione? Dopo tal mesi si acquiesce, e v'è, e di lei Genitore, persuaso dall'amore paterno, e dalla necessità, che dopo il fatto consiglia, ma ha ella pertanto riacquistato il decoro? No certamente. Ella non si affacciò ad una conversazione, che di lei non si moveva dalle medesime amiche sue. Ad ogni sua lode si contrapposero la passata sua debolezza, e si ricoverò ad una tale memoria, qualunque volta venisse disprezzata. La spose istesso, e molto più i di lei congiunti, e la pangeranno talora su questo punto, e farà ella posta per esempio delle patre risoluzioni, come una femmina, che non si deve imitare.

Beatrice. Belle parole, ma non tagliate un fico.

Florindo. Signora Rosaura, capisco benissimo, e lode il vostro modo, con cui pensate. Non andrai né meno in di proporsi una risoluzione, che offende il vostro decoro. Usate ciò, che mi pare accettabile dall'amore vostro....

Beatrice. Se vi trattate la chiacchiere, perdersi il tempo.

Florindo. Signora Beatrice, permettetemi, ch'io parli.

Rosaura. Cara amica, in questo contingente non si precipitano le risoluzioni.

Beatrice. A quell'ora lo avrai risolto.

Florindo. Come?

Illustration of *The obedient daughter* of Carlo Goldoni, Pasquali edition, 1761, volume VIII

CARLO'S PORTRAIT

On the Wall

Portrait of Carlo Goldoni with cap

Giambattista Piazzetta, Marco Alvisè Pitteri, etching, 1754

This portrait dates back to the very first months of 1754, which can be deduced from the letter dated 17 July 1754, sent by Goldoni to Marco Pitteri. In this letter the playwright expresses a most sincere appreciation of his work, thanking Pitteri for “the loving care in making me truly eternal with the excellent work of your hands” and also giving a first critical evaluation of it: “Bizzarre is this invention of a cap and my natural hair, making the resemblance more constant.

The etching is moreover of such worth, that it will place this further work of yours alongside the most esteemed ones by your hand” and in truth, the etching is of the highest quality, characterised by noteworthy vitality and freshness in its engraving and particularly enlivened by the informal cap which conveys a jovial and youthful appearance to the then forty-seven year-old Goldoni.

Unfortunately very few prints were made from this etching, because Pitteri altered the copper almost immediately, replacing the cap for a wig.

Filippo Pedrocco

Portrait of Carlo Goldoni with wig

Giambattista Piazzetta, Marco Alvisè Pitteri, etching, 1754

This is – in fact – the second stage of the portrait with the cap, the cap being substituted by the more formal wig. The reasons that led Pitteri to making this decision are not clear; the most credible theory is Bottari's, who thinks that the makeover initiative may have been taken autonomously by Pitteri “for having changed his mind”, perhaps wishing to avoid a break from the canons on “dignified” portraiture in that age. The effect of the cap replacement partly worsens the quality of the engraving, both due to the poor execution of the renewed section, particularly where the wig hairline joins the forehead, and because in general the portrait lacks freshness, assuming a more formal tone, perhaps less attuned with Goldoni's personality.

Filippo Pedrocco

L'avvocato Veneziano (The Venetian lawyer)

The scene shown here is inspired by the first Act – Scene 1

Alberto Casaboni, a Venetian lawyer, is at his desk, intent on studying with great concentration a lawsuit in which he has to defend Florindo against Rosaura, a client of Doctor Balanzoni, who he loves. The scene comprises of a desk and two small armchairs from the second half of the 18th century; two mirrors in gilded wood with arms; candle-holders; a stage-costume: cloth embroidered with multicoloured threads, 20th cent. Martinuzzi Collection.

On the wall is a portrait of Carlo Goldoni by Alessandro Falca called Longhi from the second half of the 18th century.

The Comedy

In *The Venetian lawyer*, a comedy performed during the 1749-50 theatre season, Goldoni, not forgetting the profession he practised in Pisa, presents the Venetian lawyer as a positive character, in contrast with theatre tradition which represented men of law as being quibbling and meddlesome.

He wrote in his Foreword: " 'twas most just that I should convey to my much honoured profession that prominence, which rightly becomes it".

The comedy was met with considerable success and was also performed abroad.

The Story

Lawyer Alberto Casaboni defends Florindo in a lawsuit against Rosaura and, having met his client's adversary, he falls in love with her. This instigates a struggle between duty and passion, which ends in both virtues being triumphant: Rosaura loses the lawsuit but finds a compassionate and honest husband in Alberto.

ERMETE NOVELLI

Ermete Novelli played the part of Lunardo a character in the comedy *I Rusteghi* (the Boors). Born in Lucca, son of a prompter, Novelli made his first appearance in 1866, and played character and leading comedy parts in the best companies between 1871 and 1884. By 1885 he had his own company, and had great success in Paris in 1898 and 1902. In Rome in 1900 he founded a new theatre inspired by the Comédie-Française, the Casa di Goldoni.

He dramatized Émile Gaboriau's *Monsieur Lecoq*, and alone or in collaboration wrote several comedies and many monologues. He appeared in a number of early silent films. He died in Naples in 1919, aged 67, and was survived by one child, his son, Enrico "Yambo" Novelli.

I Rusteghi (The Boors)

The Comedy

Also known as *The Cantankerous Men* (Venetian: *I rusteghi*), is a comedy by Carlo Goldoni. It was first performed at the San Luca theatre of Venice towards the end of the Carnival in 1760. It was published in 1762. The 'boors' are four merchants of Venice, who represent the old, conservative, puritanical tradition of the Venetian middle classes, who are pitted against Venice's "new frivolity".

The Story

Lucietta is always at odds with her stepmother Margarita; she would like to marry to escape from boring and cramped family routines, due to the stubbornness of her authoritarian father, the stingy and bad-tempered Lunardo, a true "boor". Unbeknown to Lucy, his father has already arranged a marriage with Filippetto, the son of Mr. Maurice, a rigid and uncompromising sort. At the same time Filippetto goes to visit Aunt Marina, who warns of future marriage, and confesses to her that he has never met his future bride. Marina asks and obtains the blessing of Mrs. Felice, wife of Canciano. Mr. Lunardo has invited guests for dinner, in order to formalize the marriage: they come into the house, Marina with her husband Simon, Felice and Canciano, accompanied by count Riccardo. Thanks to a disguise Filippetto and Lucy meet each other, but they're discovered. The shame caused by the disobedience of women stains the family of Lunardo, who levels a punishment and wants to call off the marriage. Only the final clarification of Felice restores peace.

CESCO BASEGGIO

Cesco Baseggio (Treviso 1897 - Catania 1971), played the character of Pantalone in the comedy *The Liar*. Baseggio debuted in theater in 1913, playing a minor part in the comedy *The Locandiera*. Three years later he participated in the First World War and was the director of the “theater of the soldier” in Albania. In 1921 he received an invitation to join the company of Giachetti “Ars Veneta” as a character actor. Here he fine-tuned his studies of this art and six years later in 1926, founded, his own theater company. Later he took on the role actor-manager and that led to his company mainly specializing in Goldoni’s repertoire of prose comedies, for which, it turned out, he was a very suitable actor.

Il Bugiardo (The Liar)

The Comedy

The Liar is a comedy by Carlo Goldoni. It was written as part of Goldoni’s fulfilment of a boast, which he had inserted into the epilogue of one of his plays, that, for the next season, he would write sixteen comedies.

The Liar, along with the fifteen other comedies, was staged in the 1750-51 season at the Teatro Sant’ Angelo in Venice.

It plays upon commedia dell’arte conventions and stock characters.

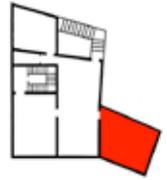
The Story

Lelio, a Venetian who has spent years away from home, returns to Venice. He courts the two daughters of Doctor Balanzone, Beatrice and Rosaura, simultaneously, without revealing to them which one he truly loves. Meanwhile, each girl has another suitor, Florindo for Rosaura and Ottavio for Beatrice. Florindo is shy, however, and will not tell Rosaura that he loves her. This allows Lelio to concoct fabulous lies and convince Rosaura that he wishes to marry her. Whilst this is happening, Lelio’s servant Arlecchino tries to woo the Doctor’s servant Columbina away from Brighella, Florindo’s friend.

Lelio’s lies get him into deeper and deeper trouble with the girls, their father, and his own father Pantalone. At the end, it is revealed that whilst he was in Rome he married a Roman lady, Cleonice Anselmi. He departs to go to her, leaving Rosaura and Beatrice free to marry Florindo and Ottavio, and Columbina free to marry Brighella.

Hall of Theatre

First Floor



THE PUPPET THEATRE

The toy puppet theatre, «A delightful amusement» – according to the autobiographical memoir by the author – which Giulio Goldoni, Carlo's father, had made in this house for his son's entertainment.

Even if such documented quotes are contested, by virtue of their undoubted symbolic "truth" it has been deemed appropriate to set up an historic theatre within the house where the playwright was born and spent all of his childhood. In any case, a puppet theatre represented a playful training medium during the Venetian 18th century for literary and musical contests and was a resourceful domestic surrogate in lieu of public theatre seasons.

In addition it also embodied a sort of "chamber theatre", as opposed to a "piazza theatre", enlivened by puppet performances (a type of theatre, the latter, that was more elementary, popular and rough, with few rudimental characters; it was staged in the many "casotti", or booths, for puppets in the city squares and streets, as may be seen in paintings by Longhi and Canaletto, Bellotto and Carlevarij). The 18th century puppets exhibited here (as well as the original and rare proscenium) come from the collection of the toy theatre owned by the Grimani ai Servi family in their palace (in the district of Cannaregio, not far from the church of the Serviti friars): they attest the excellence of Venetian craftsmanship in this sector very well, one of the most sophisticated which came closest to representing a clever imitation of real life. It is enough to merely observe the lavishness of the various characters' clothing, made with precious fabrics and fashionably cut: aristocrats and servants, some masks from the Commedia dell'Arte, dames, handmaids, knights, Turks and soldiers in a vibrant and curious tangle, faithful interpreters of the cosmopolitan life in 18th century Venice.

The theatre has been made workable for the creation of potential shows. More puppets, further acknowledging and admiring not only the particular sophistication of these artefacts but also the extraordinary "engineering" of their mechanisms, are also on display in dedicated cabinets.

Scenes from famous paintings by Pietro Longhi, who shared singular cultural and artistic affinity, as well as explicit and sincere esteem with Goldoni, are reproduced enlarged on the side walls.

The scene represented in the toy theatre is inspired by the third Act - Scene 13 and 14 of the comedy "The servant of two masters".

Clarice playing hard to get, now that she is sure Silvio loves her and that all the misunderstandings that happened took place due to his love for her, does not wish to grant him her hand any longer; therefore everyone present, from the Doctor to Pantalone, from Smeraldina to Truffaldino and to poor Silvio, busily intervene to make her change her mind. Between a sigh from Clarice and a “soul of mine” uttered with a sigh by Silvio, the two young people finally reunite. In the meantime, following the reproaches received from Pantalone, Brighella enters announcing the arrival of Beatrice dressed as a man...

The puppets on Stage: Pantalone, Brighella, Truffaldino, Smeraldina, Doctor, Clarice.

Il giocatore (the gambler)

The scenery shown here is inspired by the first Act - Scene 2 and 4

After playing all night and strangely winning, Florindo wishes to sort out his small treasure-trove, but fatigue and tension overcome him, and he falls asleep at the gaming-table while counting the gold coins he has won. But he who is addicted does not know when it's best to stop, therefore upon awaking he imagines further, much larger and more substantial gains compared to those of the night before, and this sparks a “Florindo thought”: “I play like a man, I know my quarter-of-an-hour, and it's impossible for me not to win in the long run”

The scene comprises of a small table with folding top, four armchairs in carved wood from the second half of the 18th century, playing cards and coins.

The Comedy

It is one of the sixteen famous new comedies that Carlo Goldoni performed in 1750; in three acts, it takes up themes and characters close to the author's heart. Addiction and subjection to gambling, disappointments over losses, contrasted with the continual hopes of winning, incessant anxiety about the next deal, the one that will surely be the “great deal” are the themes detailed by the Author, so real and entrenched in the Europe of the 18th century and more so latterly.

The Story

Florindo falls into the hands of Lelio, a dishonest gambler.

Meeting his ruin through gambling, he loses his fiancée, Rosaura, his friends, and only the intervention of old Pantalone, who will force Lelio to return a part of the ill-gotten gains, will save him from the peril of wedding Gandolfa, an elderly, frivolous and depraved aunt of Rosaura's.

IL PARLATORIO THE PARLOUR

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
second half of the 18th century

La conversazione (The conversation)

The scene shown here is inspired by the first Act - Scene 14

Don Fabio arrives to scrounge the umpteenth meal at Madama Lindora's house, but it is set back by Lucrezia, who invites all the guests present to enjoy themselves with a few games. The discussion moves on to what it is that they most enjoy with everybody offering us an insight into the customs as well as the leisure activities in vogue at the time. The scene comprises of a gaming-table for the "biribisso" game and by the chairs of the late 18th century.

The Comedy

With music by maestro Giuseppe Scolari from Vicenza, the drama was staged at the theatre of San Samuele during the 1758 carnival and some of the best Italian artistes of the comic genre acted in it. In this dramma giocoso for music, Goldoni describes the conversation at Madama Lindora's house, where they laugh, jest, shout, quarrel and especially play and dance. Action is used sparingly but the scenes run on quickly, wittily, naturally and, with regards to the script, it is one of the best of Goldoni's compositions in this genre.

The Story

In the house of Madama Lindora's, a happy widow, a gathering of several characters takes place to in order to spend time laughing, joking, shouting, fighting, and above all playing and dancing. At this gathering the participants include Monsieur Giacinto, the affected traveller, who uses thousands of languages out of context, the comic characters of Don Fabio, a poor aristocrat, and Sandrino, a rich plebeian, ready to boast and waste his money in any sort of game currently in vogue. Also present are the independent-spirited Lady Lucrezia and the timid lovers Filiberto and Berenice.

IL BIRIBISSO

The biribiss, biribisse, biribissi, biribisso: these are all variations with which a game, also of pure gambling, was known, in which a player's skill was not absolutely necessary, and that had considerable popularity in Venice.

The game is very simple and is made up of a special board divided into a certain number of boxes in varying quantity, but often thirty-six; these boxes are numbered and also bear a characterising figure to distinguish them.

Wooden balls, inside which are slips of paper each bearing a number and figure corresponding to those on the board and are also mostly pierced to guarantee maximum secrecy, correspond to the same number of boxes.

The design of this game normally leans towards the sphere of animals, fruit, masks, birds, flowers. Once all the balls are put into a pouch, the bank-holder proceeds to extract one and then calls the number and figure out loud.

The winner is the person who places money on the box corresponding to the winning figure. The number of players can be unlimited.

Dining Room

First Floor



Chi la fa l'aspetta (Avenging wrongs)

The scene shown here is inspired by the second Act - Scene 7 and beginning of 8

The guests arrive in a trickle making a jolly racket about their table-placing.

The various courses will be spiced-up by their pranks and their jests. Luncheon is over and Lissandro orders the waiters to clear the table and return later to collect the soiled tablecloths. *“Putti desparecchiè. Mettè tutto in quella credenza, piatti, possade, biancheria; mettè tutto là che po’ li vegnirè a tor.”*

(Lads, clear it. Put everything in that dresser, plates, cutlery, linen; put it all there and come back later to collect it).

We have tried to recreate the atmosphere in the painting *“La colazione in villa”* reproduced below and present in the room are a dining-table, chairs, wall console and a cabinet dresser of the second half of the 18th century.

The Comedy

The typographical title for this comedy in three acts in dialect was presented to the public at San Luca on the evening of 5 January 1765 with the suggestive title *I chiassetti del carneval (The carnival lanes)*.

In this choral comedy each one of the characters has a specific well defined personality.

According to contemporary accounts, it did not benefit from good acting and this was the main reason for its failure, conversely from the end of the 19th century it was reappraised until it became a mainstay for many of the best companies in dialect in the Veneto.

The Story

Lissandro, a false-bauble merchant, wishes to trick the stingy marriage-broker Gasparo, by making him pay for a luncheon and thus allowing Zanetto to approach his beloved Cattina, Raimondo’s daughter. To avoid raising suspicions, Zanetto pretends he is married, but he is exposed by Raimondo, who will not only get Lissandro to pay for the luncheon, but will bestow his daughter to Bortolo, Zanetto’s rival.



PAINTINGS PRESENT IN THE ROOM

The luncheon at the villa

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century
Series: Pastimes in villas

The kitchen

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

Luncheon with masks

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

The concert

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

The music lesson

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

The woman from Friuli

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

Portrait of Carlo Goldoni

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

The doughnut vendor

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

The Ball

Oil on canvas
School of Pietro Longhi
18th century

A large screen-printing between the two walls reproducing "Portrait of Carlo Goldoni", Lorenzo Tiepolo.

This portrait is found in the first volume of the Pasquali edition of the *Commedie* (1761) and is taken from a black-pencil drawing by Lorenzo Tiepolo preserved at the Albertina in Vienna. The drawing is in its turn a copy of a youthful painting by Alessandro Longhi. Pitteri's etching respects Lorenzo's premises, partly accentuating his chiaroscuro play. The painting was probably not appreciated very much by Goldoni, who denies a resemblance in his letter from Paris dated 3 December 1764 to Francesco Albergati Capacelli.

Filippo Pedrocco

CERAMICS

Ceramics tableware in porcelain is featured. It is painted in polychromy to create a floral decoration and racemes.

Manifattura Cozzi, Venice, mid-18th century

The Library

First Floor



For those interested in delving further into reading those texts by Carlo Goldoni introduced by the exhibition itinerary and, furthermore, broadening knowledge on his entire theatre production, it is possible to access the Library of the Centre for Theatre Studies, on the third floor of Goldoni's House.

With over 30,000 works on theatrical art, today this is one of the main libraries specialised in this field. It represents one of the centres of highest importance in the international area of studies on this topic, both for the typology of its specific books and documentary resources, due to its position as an active centre for culture, by means of an information service and its support to scholars.



**You are kindly requested
to return this booklet
upon ending your visit**