Masks and Masked Performance in Giorgio Strehler's Vision of the Commedia dell'Arte

by

Gabrielle Houle

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies
University of Toronto

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2013

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of solid and painted masks in Giorgio Strehler's successive stagings of Carlo Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan between 1947 and 1997. Through my description and analysis of documentary evidence about these stagings, the Piccolo Teatro, Giorgio Strehler, his mask-makers Amleto and Donato Sartori, his actors, and lighting designer, I demonstrate that masks were used in the above-mentioned productions as rhetorical tools that expressed Strehler's relationship with Goldoni (the man and his work), communicated his political convictions on stage, partook in his attempted reform of the Italian theatre after World War II, displayed his vision of theatre history, proved his endorsement of the actors' potential in performance, and helped position the Piccolo Teatro within an Italian and pan-European artistic elite.

My examination of video recordings and photographs of the productions, letters of personal correspondence, theatre reviews, transcriptions of interviews, and programme notes, among other documents, traces the evolution of Strehler's interpretative vision of the Commedia dell'Arte over fifty years. This vision, as I argue in the introduction and conclusion to my thesis, helped shape how other theatre directors, educators, as well as actors, mask-makers, and,
arguably, academics have come to imagine Goldoni's work, Commedia dell'Arte, and masked performance. A close study of Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* and of the use of masks within them will therefore allow for a better understanding of Strehler's trajectory in the theatre, but will also exemplify how the use of a particular theatrical object (the mask) in a series of productions that were successful worldwide influenced how many of us now perceive a performance tradition (Commedia), a theatre (the Piccolo Teatro), and a play (*The Servant of Two Masters*).
Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Professor Domenico Pietropaolo, for his precious guidance and constant encouragements during this project; his wealth of experience in the field helped me navigate smoothly through the various stages of my doctoral thesis. I also want to thank the two other members of my dissertation committee, Professor Martin Revermann and Professor John Astington, for their insightful comments, advice, and generosity. Thank you also to my external examiner, Professor Christopher Innes, whose questions and comments opened up onto fields of inquiry that I plan to pursue in the next stages of my research. Thank you, finally, to Professor Stephen B. Johnson, to the various faculty members of the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies, and to the technical and administrative staff of this Centre (especially Luella Massey, Robert Moses and Marc Goodman), whose teachings, support, and good humour enhanced my learning experience at the University of Toronto.

This thesis would not have been possible without the financial support of the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program, as well as the School of Graduate Studies, University College, and the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. I am truly grateful for this support.

My project also owes a great debt of gratitude to the archivists, academics, and artists I met in 2009 when I conducted field research in Italy. Many thanks to Piccolo Teatro archivist Franco Viespro and to his assistant Giovanni Venegoni. Thank you also to Eleonora Vasta, who helped me organize a series of interviews with several Piccolo Teatro actors in Montreal in
2008, and in Milan in 2009. I am most grateful to actors Giorgio Bongiovanni, Enrico Bonavera, Tommaso Minniti, and Ferruccio Soleri; to actresses Giulia Lazzarini, Narcisa Bonati, and Andrea Jonasson-Strehler; to mime instructor Marise Flach; to lighting designer Claudio De Pace; and, last but not least, to architect Paola Piizzi and mask-maker Donato Sartori from the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali in Abano Terme. Their generosity in interview gave me more material to work from than I had hoped for.

Special thanks, as well, to Lia Cotarella, from the Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi; to Matteo Sartorio, archivist at the Biblioteca Livia Simoni - Palazzo Busca (Fondazione Teatro alla Scala); to Anna Claut, from the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice; to the archivists of the Centro APICE (Archivi della Parola, dell'Immagine e della Communicazione Editoriale) at the University of Milan, where I consulted the large and helpful Fondo Scheiwiller; to the archivists of the Centro per la Storia dell'Università di Padova at the University of Padua; and to Mariella Magliani from the Biblioteca civica di Padova for making my documentary research easier and fruitful.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to Professor Paolo Bosisio, whom I met at the University of Milan in 2009, and to Damiano Pietropaolo. Both of them gave me documents on Giorgio Strehler that served me well during my project.

Thank you also to the teaching staff of the School of Graduate Studies’ English Language Writing Support (ELWS) at the University of Toronto, and to my dear friends Amanda Lockitch and Jennifer Heywood who helped me revise the phrasing of my English translations of French and Italian documents during the last stages of my project.
Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, Berthe Jacques and Serge Houle, for their encouragements and support. Thank you also to my partner Justin Blum, who has patiently listened to me talk about this thesis for the past few years.

I dedicate this project to tante Hélène, who would have enjoyed it.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1. Strehler as Goldoni redivivus</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Strehler on Goldoni</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Goldoni's reform: towards character comedies and realism</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Strehler's theatre discourse: renewing the Italian stage in the twentieth century</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 “Undoing” Goldoni to materialize his vision: the example of <em>The Servant of Two Masters</em></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2. On the first Arlecchino mask: a painted face</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 On Marcello Moretti's initial refusal of the mask</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 <em>First challenge: the general ignorance of masked performance in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition</em></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 <em>Second challenge: the inadequate masks in the production</em></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 <em>Third challenge: the actor's psychological resistance to the mask</em></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The painted face: description of Moretti's make-up</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 On the press' reactions – or lack or reactions – to Moretti's painted face</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The ideology behind the 1947 production of <em>The Servant of Two Masters</em> at the Piccolo Teatro</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3. Amleto Sartori's masks and mask-making process for <em>The Servant of Two Masters</em></strong></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Sartori's masks for the theatre prior to the Piccolo Teatro</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.1 <em>The early years part 1: birth place, social class, and the grotesque style</em></td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 <em>The early years part 2: apprenticeships, art school, and unemployment</em></td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3 Gianfranco De Bosio, Jacques Lecoq and the Teatro dell’Università</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Of paper and leather: Amleto Sartori's masks for <em>The Servant of Two Masters</em></td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 On Sartori's mask-making process</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2 On Dottore, Pantalone, Brighella and Arlecchino's leather masks.</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Of learning from the actors: the correlations between acting style and the design of a mask</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4. Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters from 1952 to 1997 ................................................................. 121

4.1 Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters from 1952 to 1973 ...................... 123
  4.1.1 2nd production: 1952 .................................................................................................................. 123
  4.1.2 3rd production: 1956 ................................................................................................................. 135
  4.1.3 4th production: 1963 ............................................................................................................... 150
  4.1.4 5th production: 1973 ............................................................................................................... 160

4.2 Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters from 1977 to 1997 .................. 170
  4.2.1 6th production (“Edizione del Odeon”): 1977 ......................................................................... 170
  4.2.2 7th production (“Edizione dell’Addio”): 1987 .................................................................... 179
  4.2.3 8th production (“Edizione del Buongiorno”) and 9th production (“Edizione del
      Bicentenario”): 1990 and 1993 .......................................................................................... 188
  4.2.4 10th production: 1997 ........................................................................................................... 198

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 215

List of Works Cited ............................................................................................................................... 226

Copyright Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................ 242
List of figures

Figure 1: Marcello Moretti wearing make-up instead of a solid mask in Strehler's staging of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro in 1947. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano–Teatro d'Europa. By permission.................................................................77

Figure 2: Marcello Moretti (Arlecchino), Agostino Contarello (Pantalone), Franco Parenti (Brighella), and Checco Rissone (Dottore Lombardi) in Strehler's second staging of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro, in the theatre season 1952-1953. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.................................................................120

Figure 3: A room in Pantalone's house. The Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro in 1952. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.....................................................................................167

Figure 4: Marcello Moretti in Strehler's second staging of The Servant of Two Masters, in 1952. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.....................................................................................167

Figure 5: One of Ezio Frigerio's drawings for the set of Strehler's third staging of The Servant of Two Masters, in 1956. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.....................................................................................168

Figure 6: From left to right: Checco Rissone (Dottore Lombardi), Marcello Moretti (Arlecchino) and Gianfranco Mauri (Brighella) in Strehler's 1956 staging of The Servant of Two Masters. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.....................................................................................168

Figure 7: Trestle stage and carriages in front of Villa Litta at Affori. Strehler's staging of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters in 1963. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.................................................................169

Figure 8: Arlecchino exits on a cloud inspired by Baroque stage design and machinery. The Servant of Two Masters, theatre season 1977-78). © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.................................................................212

Figure 9: Stage and lighting design of Strehler's staging of The Servant of Two Masters, theatre season 1977-78. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.................................................................212
Figure 10: A room in Brighella's inn. *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro, theatre season 1987-88. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission..........................................................213

Figure 11: Opening scene of Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, theatre season 1987-88. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission..........................................................213

Figure 12: The characters' doubles sitting at the spectators' level waiting for their moment to go on stage. *The Servant of Two Masters* stage by Strehler at the Piccolo Teatro in 1990. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission..........................................................214

Figure 13: Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1990. Note the duplication of Pantalone. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission. .................................................................215
Introduction

[The Servant of Two Masters] has dominated Strehler's theatre. It formed part of the Piccolo's first season in 1947 and it has remained in the repertoire ever since, a point of reference for the whole of Strehler's work. [...] From a rather generalised exercise in commedia dell'arte, the play has become the key to the company's style and an ever-changing index of its condition. (Hirst 40)

From 1947 to 1997, Italian theatre director Giorgio Strehler (1921-1997) signed ten different productions of Carlo Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, the theatre he co-founded with Paolo Grassi and Nina Vinchi in 1947, and which David Hirst, in his brief but insightful study of Strehler's work, readily labelled “Italy's leading repertory theatre.” (n. pag.) By 1997, Strehler's successive stagings of Goldoni's play had already been performed 2394 times in 36 countries (Bolognetti 176), making it, according to Hirst, “the play which has been most consistently toured in Italy and abroad [...].” (40) Because it evolved and changed over fifty years with Strehler, his actors, his mask-makers, the Piccolo Teatro's material conditions, its technical crew and its public, it is hardly surprising that The Servant of Two Masters has often been compared to a living organism. “Hence,” as Strehler once declared,

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1 The original title of the play is Il servitore di due padroni, but I use the translated title in English throughout this thesis. I, however, chose to discuss other plays by Goldoni using their original titles in Italian. I finally chose to refer to other plays by other authors in this thesis using titles in English translation, whenever it was possible.

2 More precisely, between 1947 and 1997, the show was performed in Italy, but also in Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Japan, Libya, Luxemburg, Monaco, Morocco, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, San Marino, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, the United-States, Uruguay, the USSR, Venezuela and Yugoslavia (more specifically in cities of today's Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia). This information was taken from 1947-58 Piccolo Teatro, from Daniela Bolognetti's thesis, and from the programme of Strehler's staging of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro for the 2006-2007 theatre season (see bibliography).

3 Strehler's mask-maker was Amleto Sartori (1915-1962). After his death, his son Donato became the Piccolo Teatro's main mask-maker. While Amleto Sartori worked closely with the Piccolo Teatro's first Arlecchino, actor Marcello Moretti, Donato Sartori collaborated with the second and third “Arlecchinos” in the production, namely Ferruccio Soleri (the Piccolo Teatro's Arlecchino since 1960-62) and his apprentice and successor Enrico Bonavera (Soleri's substitute in the role of Arlecchino since 2001). It appears from documents listed in the Piccolo Teatro's online archives that many of the masks Donato Sartori created for the Piccolo Teatro were made in collaboration with Natale Panaro.
“this eternal Arlecchino⁴ bears the signs of life that passes and renews itself. It is like blood that pulses in the veins of a theatre that is both real and imaginary, just like a human body.”⁵ (quoted in Tanant, “Introduzione” 11) The production that accompanied Strehler for most of his career even survived him after his death, and became part of his legacy to Italian and international stages.

The Piccolo Teatro's latest production of the play was signed by septuagenarian lead actor Ferruccio Soleri⁶ (Arlecchino in the production) in 2003, and still tours the world today (2012 at the moment of writing). This production – and its variations⁷ – while created well after Strehler's death in 1997, is largely based on his previous stagings of The Servant of Two Masters, aims at repeating for new audiences “what Strehler wanted” (Soleri quoted in Bosisio, Tra Goldoni e Strehler 280), and is even attributed to Strehler in the programme⁸ and on the Piccolo Teatro's website. By associating Soleri's staging – or rather his manipulation and collage of previous productions of the same play – with Strehler's, the Piccolo Teatro recognizes its importance within Strehler's theatrical legacy while it secures the patronage of large audiences whose interest for Strehler still has the power to move them to the box-office. Thus, almost two

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⁴ Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters are often referred to as “his” Arlecchino. In 1948, Strehler indeed added “Arlecchino” to the title of the play. From then on, Strehler's productions of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters would be known around the world as Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters (see chapter 1).

⁵ My translation of: “Così questo Arlecchino intramontabile ha il segno della vita che passa e si rinnova. È sangue che pulsa e scorre nelle vene di un teatro reale e immaginario, come un corpo umano.” (Strehler quoted in Tanant, “Introduzione” 11)

⁶ Soleri was born in 1929. He was substitute to actor Marcello Moretti in the role of Arlecchino during the American tour of The Servant of Two Masters in 1960 and took on the role permanently in 1962, after Moretti's death.

⁷ For example, there is a version of this production which the Piccolo Teatro's actors, technicians, and designers call the “architettonica.” The set of this version of the show was designed for touring.

⁸ The programme notes of 2006-2007 stipulate that the production was staged by Strehler (“regia di Giorgio Strehler”), but that Ferruccio Soleri, in collaboration with Stefano de Luca, signed it's mise-en-scène (“messa in scena”) (11). In other words, Strehler is identified as the primary author of the production, while Soleri gets credits for actualizing it.
decades after Strehler's death, *The Servant of Two Masters* stands strong in the Piccolo Teatro's repertoire, and arguably remains its flagship around the world.

The successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro decisively shaped the careers of many actors who performed in them. Only two actors, for example, have played the title role of Arlecchino in the production between 1947 and 1997. Marcello Moretti, who played the ever-hungry servant in the show from 1947 to 1960, notoriously feared to disappear behind his character's dark mask, and dreaded to be associated with Arlecchino for the rest of his career. While he performed in different styles in 43 other plays at the Piccolo Teatro between 1947 and 1958, Moretti is now almost exclusively remembered for his athletic performance as the central character in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*. For example, a special issue of *Quaderni del Piccolo Teatro* on Moretti published in 1962 provides a list of the roles he played in the theatre, but mostly discusses his career as Arlecchino.

Ferruccio Soleri, Moretti's substitute in 1960 and his successor since 1962, seems to have more readily embraced a career defined by Strehler's interpretative vision of the Commedia dell'Arte. "I never got bored performing in Arlecchino: it is such a beautiful show," Soleri once declared in an interview (quoted in Bosisio, *Tra Goldoni e Strehler* 280). "Yet, after four or five years, I asked Strehler to cast me in something else, [...], but everyone wanted me in Arlecchino. So at a certain point," he continues, "I understood something: do we need to play 10, 20, 100 characters to be important in the theatre, or is one enough?" (Ibid.) While Soleri did play other

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9 In four of these plays, namely Gozzi's *The Raven*, Goldoni's *Putta onorata*, *L'amante militare*, and *La vedova scaltra*, Moretti also played the role of Arlecchino or Truffaldino.

10 My translation of: “Non mi sono mai annoiato nel fare Arlecchino: è uno spettacolo talmente bello.” (Soleri quoted in Bosisio, *Tra Goldoni e Strehler* 280)

11 My translation of: “Tuttavia dopo quattro o cinque anni chiedevo a Strehler di farmi fare altro, e infatti ho recitato in diversi spettacoli, ma tutti mi volevano in Arlecchino. Quindi a un certo punto ho capito una cosa: essere importanti in teatro è fare 10, 20, 100 personaggi o ne basta uno?” (Soleri quoted in Bosisio, *Tra Goldoni e Strehler* 280)
roles in the theatre, and even staged plays and operas outside of the Piccolo Teatro,\textsuperscript{12} his career, as he admits it himself, mostly revolves around the character of Arlecchino in Strehler's successive stagings of the \textit{Servant of Two Masters}. Since 1987, for example, Soleri has taught Commedia dell'Arte at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro (the Piccolo Teatro's acting school); he also makes a living conducting periodic master classes on Commedia, movement and masked performance outside of this school, and regularly gives talks on his experience in \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} when touring in Italy and abroad. One such event, for example, was hosted by the Théâtre Maisonneuve in Montreal in May of 2008. On this occasion, Soleri addressed an exclusive group of local performers and directors as well as a large crowd of students training in the city's main theatre conservatories.

The international exposure\textsuperscript{13} and undisputed success of Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play as well as the pedagogical endeavours of some of his actors (see chapter 4 and conclusion) brought forth Strehler's evolving vision of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, and imposed it as one of the most influential models for thinking of Commedia and Goldoni in performance in the twentieth century. It is now impossible to address the topic without referring to Strehler's many stagings of what is, in reality, one of Goldoni's relatively minor plays.

One element remained constant – though not unchanged – in all of Strehler's successive stagings of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}: masks. By “mask,” I refer to the theatrical object worn by the actor that hides parts of his face,\textsuperscript{14} signifies a specific character to the audience, imposes

\textsuperscript{12} For a list of the roles that Soleri played at the Piccolo Teatro and in other theatres, see Ilaria Chinello's thesis on this actor (see bibliography).

\textsuperscript{13} By 2004 the production had already toured in at least 42 countries, including China, Egypt, Israel, Korea and Turkey, among other places.

\textsuperscript{14} I am using the masculine form because Strehler, following the Commedia tradition, only used masks for actors playing traditionally masked male characters in \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}.

\textsuperscript{15} I must agree with Patrice Pavis, however, and acknowledge that masks, in contemporary Western theatre, are not exclusively limited to the actor's face (202). In this thesis, however, “mask” refers to the object (rigid or painted) covering the actor's visage.
a non-naturalistic acting style to the performer, alters the perception he has of himself and of others in performance, potentially limits his visual and acoustic field, “denaturalizes the character by introducing a foreign body into the relationship of identification between spectator and actor” (Pavis 202), and points to the fictional nature of theatre. The masks used in Strehler's stagings of The Servant of Two Masters, as we will see in this thesis, cover only half of the actors' faces, and while the actors in some productions of this play at the Piccolo Teatro lift their masks and manipulate them in front of the spectators to reveal the theatrical conventions and the working conditions of actors, the mask in Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play remains an object sui generis, not a prop nor a part of the costume, but a face over another face that points to a specific theatrical tradition (the Commedia dell'Arte) and is inseparable from the character it represents.

Along with the set design, lighting, costumes, acting style, and the choices of mise-en-scène, the masks in The Servant of Two Masters reveal the aesthetic and ideological routes taken by Strehler and his mask-makers, Amleto and Donato Sartori (see chapter 3). This thesis explores the role of masks in Strehler's successive stagings of the Servant of Two Masters from 1947 to 1997. In what follows, I will demonstrate that these masks – solid and painted, in paper-mâché and in leather – helped Strehler articulate his vision of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, expressed his understanding of the actors' potential in performance, reflected his political convictions on stage, revealed his interpretation of the role of theatre in society, promoted the theatre schools he co-founded, and even acted as agents that helped define and secure the reputation of the Piccolo Teatro as a theatre of art outside of Italy.

16 The solid mask worn by the actor is often considered part of the overall costume particular to each protagonist.
This thesis is not an exploration of masks and masking in all of Strehler’s work, nor is it a discussion of the use of masks by other theatre directors in the twentieth century; it does not deny the importance of previous experiments with Commedia dell’Arte in Europe, but it does not focus on these; and while this thesis touches on Strehler’s political views and explains how they might have found an expression in his stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, it does not attempt to theorize the expression of Marxism(s) through theatrical masks in general. This thesis is a work of performance history that examines a specific theatrical object, the mask; it builds on exhaustive archival research conducted in four languages; it focuses primarily on what led Strehler to use masks in his productions of *The Servant of Two Masters*; and it emphasizes the importance of the process of mask-making for these productions and for the actors’ training.

Much has already been written on Strehler and his successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, from biographies to annotated collections of personal letters, and from transcriptions of interviews to scholarly work about his life in the theatre. A collection of essays published by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in 1989 perhaps offers the most important analyses of Strehler's career up to that point, with articles dedicated to his theatrical activities prior to co-founding the Piccolo Teatro to others that discuss his stagings of Goldoni's plays, and from chapters covering his “Brechtian period” to brief studies that examine his productions of lyrical theatre. This publication, I believe, has set many of the parameters, the tone and the vocabulary scholars and practitioners now use to speak of Strehler. One particular essay in this collection has provided information that I used throughout this thesis and has served as a model for chapter 4. This essay, written by Catherine Douël dell'Agnola, details and analyzes the evolution of the set design in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* from 1947 to 1977. Douël dell'Agnola's excellent study, however, does not discuss the use of masks in each staging, and while it identifies some of the ideological underpinnings of the set
design, it does not discuss at length the material and political conditions in which each staging was produced.

Another important study of Strehler's successive stagings of Goldoni's play was edited by Paolo Bosisio in 2007. This work, entitled *Tra Goldoni e Strehler: Arlecchino e la commedia dell'arte*, provides useful information on the changes undergone by the successive productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro, touches on the challenges actor Marcello Moretti met when he was first confronted with the solid mask, discusses Ferruccio Soleri's role in the productions after 1960, and identifies the many changes Strehler made to Goldoni's original text. Bosisio's book also provides a transcription of Strehler's directorial notes for what appears to be his 1963 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* in the Villa Litta at Affori, and ends with a series of interviews with some of Strehler's former collaborators on the production. An essential reading for anyone interested in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, in his relationships with actors, and in his directorial choices and working process, *Tra Goldoni e Strehler*, however, does not systematically examine the role of masks in Strehler's stagings.

While there are abundant sources for the study of Strehler's work, most of them are in Italian, French and German, with occasional Spanish translations. In 1993, David Hirst wrote what was presented as “the first book in English on Italy's leading director, Giorgio Strehler.” (n. pag.) In 2012, Hirst's work remains, to my knowledge, the only book-length publication on the topic available in English. This thesis proposes to fill this gap.

In chapter 1, I examine Strehler's relationship with Goldoni, compare Goldoni's reform of the Italian theatre with Strehler's, and explore the idea of Strehler as “Goldoni redivivus.” Chapter 2 discusses Strehler's first production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, describes the first Arlecchino mask in the production (a thick, black make-up), looks into the mind of actor Marcello Moretti who refused to wear a solid mask in Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play,
and identifies the ideological underpinnings of the use of masks in this staging. Chapter 3 introduces mask-maker Amleto Sartori to the reader. Sartori, who is often credited with the “rediscovery” of mask-making techniques with leather in Italy after World War II, was arguably the most influential European mask-maker of the last century. My third chapter examines Sartori's background and the relationships between the design of his masks and the popular neighbourhoods of Padua where he lived and worked; it also details his mask-making process and analyzes the first leather masks he created for Strehler's production of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1952. Chapter 4, finally, examines Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play from 1952 to 1997, and identifies the role of masks in each of them. The discussion of each staging, which includes descriptions and analysis of the set design, lighting, costumes, directing choices and, of course, masks, also pays attention to the political context and material conditions in which they were produced, and reveals Strehler's evolving vision of theatre in general, and of the Commedia dell'Arte in particular.

The documentary sources used in this thesis are numerous and varied, ranging from Donato Sartori's many publications on Amleto Sartori's masks to Siro Ferrone's study of Goldoni criticism in the twentieth century (see bibliography). Much of this thesis also relies on newspaper articles, theatre programmes, letters of personal correspondence, video recordings of productions, photographs, and other archival material consulted at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, the Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi, the Biblioteca civica di Padova, the Centro APICE at the University of Milan, the Biblioteca Livia Simoni (the Teatro alla Scala's library), the Centro per la Storia dell'Università di Padova (at the University of Padua), the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali in Abano Terme, the Museo Internazionale della Maschera Amleto e Donato Sartori, the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, and the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. My study also owes much of its originality to
the actors, movement coach, archivist, lighting designer and head electrician of the Piccolo Teatro, and to mask-maker and sculptor Donato Sartori who accepted to speak of their experience with Strehler, masks, and *The Servant of Two Masters* in personal interviews conducted in the spring of 2009. This thesis therefore contains many passages from the little known published and unpublished sources translated from Italian (and sometimes from French and German) into English. Most translations are mine.
Chapter 1. Strehler as Goldoni *redivivus*

[...] there are deep affinities between Goldoni and I, but it is Goldoni's observation of men's lives, and Goldoni's celebration of life's small “true” things [...] that always struck and fascinated me.¹ (Strehler, “La mia battaglia” 43)

It is generally acknowledged that Giorgio Strehler² encountered Carlo Goldoni's work in his youth, when he first attended a production of *Una delle ultime sere di carnovale* in 1936.

According to Odette Aslan, this production was instrumental in attracting Strehler to the theatre³ – his mother being a violinist, he had first been drawn to music (“Avant Propos” 7). His first

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¹ My translation of: “Per il resto, ci sono delle affinità profonde di certe cadenze tra me e Goldoni, però è il Goldoni osservatore della vita degli uomini, e il Goldoni cantore delle piccole cose ‘vere’ della vita e in quanto vere, grandi, che mi ha sempre colpito e affascinato.” (Strehler, “La mia battaglia” 43)

² Giorgio Strehler (August 14th 1921– December 24th 1997). Strehler was born in Barcola, a seaside city neighbouring Trieste. His father, Bruno Strehler, was an Italian man of Austrian origin, while his mother, Alberta Lovrič, native of Zadar, was of Franco-Slovenian background. Strehler attended the Accademia dei Filodrammatici in Milan from 1938 to 1940. In 1941, he met and worked with Paolo Grassi, who was then the director of the theatre group “Palcoscenico.” Strehler signed his first stagings of theatre plays in Novara, at the Teatro G.U.F.. There, he directed three one-act plays by Pirandello, one by Gaudioso, and another by Joppolo (Casiraghi 223). The year of these first stagings is uncertain. Some scholars situate them in 1941, others in 1943 (see chapter 2, footnote 52). In 1942 and 1943, Strehler expressed his critical position towards the Italian stage and towards theatre in general in articles he published in student newspapers, many of them affiliated with the G.U.F. (Gruppo Universitari Fascisti). It is believed that by 1943, Strehler had joined resistance groups. The same year, he left for Switzerland and was confined in a military camp in Mürren. Strehler's biographers do not explain the exact circumstances of Strehler's journey in Mürren, and while Alsan claims that Strehler was arrested and sent to Switzerland as a prisoner (“Un chemin” 18), most French and Italian scholars only speak in broad terms of his Swiss “exile.” We do know, however, that he staged plays by Pirandello with an all male cast while in the military camp. By 1944, he had received permission to leave Mürren to pursue his education in Geneva. There, he founded a cine-club with Dino Risi and attended courses at the Conservatoire de Genève. In 1945, Strehler founded “La compagnie des masques” with Claude Maritz and directed it under the pseudonym Georges Firmy. It is believed that “Firmy” was the family name of Strehler's French grandmother on his mother's side. Back in Milan, after the war in 1945, Strehler wrote a column on theatre in the newspaper *Milano sera*. He also founded and directed a theatre company, sometimes referred to as the “Maltagliati company,” probably named after actor Evi Maltagliati, who was a member of this troupe. Between 1946 and 1947, Strehler worked as an actor and as a theatre director. He collaborated with several performers who would later become pivotal figures in his career (among them were Marcello Moretti and Franco Parenti). In 1947, Giorgio Strehler founded, with Paolo Grassi and Nina Vinchi, the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. The Piccolo Teatro was the first “teatro stabile” (publicly managed theatre) in Italy (Cavaglieri 11). It is veritably at the Piccolo Teatro that Strehler's career as a theatre director was launched and prospered. For more information about Strehler's life, see Strehler, a CNRS publication edited by Odette Aslan in 1989, as well as Stella Casiraghi's “Ritratto di Giorgio Strehler” and David Hirst's book on Strehler (see bibliography).

³ The other production known to have influenced his vocation for the theatre was Max Reinhardt's staging of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Strehler attended a rehearsal of that production in 1933, at the Boboli Gardens in Florence.
staging of a play by Goldoni was in 1947; it was *The Servant of Two Masters*. From then on, Strehler followed and even re-created Goldoni's trajectory in the theatre, modelling himself after his eighteenth-century mentor and slowly presenting himself, through his work, as Goldoni *redivivus*.4

It is precisely the idea of “Strehler as Goldoni *redivivus*” that this chapter will explore. In a first section, I will attend to the connections Strehler established with Goldoni's work and life narrative. I will then summarize key elements of Goldoni's reform, paying special attention to his reform of the Commedia masks. A third section will present Strehler's project for the renewal of Italian theatre, as he communicated it in the early years of his career. I will conclude by demonstrating that Strehler modelled himself after Goldoni and then, with his first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, went against the rules of Goldoni's reform and presented his own vision of a renewed Italian stage and of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition. This first chapter is not a detailed analysis of Goldoni's reform, nor is it an exhaustive study of all of Strehler's stagings of Goldoni. Instead, it is a starting point for my exploration of Strehler's practical and ideological journey with masks in *The Servant of Two Masters*.

### 1.1 Strehler on Goldoni

Throughout his career, Strehler produced several plays by and about Goldoni, until he created his own version of Goldoni's life for television. In short, it is generally acknowledged that Strehler's work on Goldoni was that of an interpreter, promoter, emulator, critic and author.

Strehler staged eight plays by Goldoni at the Piccolo Teatro.5 These, as Myriam Tanant

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4 In his writings, Strehler never presents himself as Goldoni *redivivus* but always speaks of the playwright with admiration. The course of his career, his attempt to reform Italian theatre, and his staging choices can be paralleled to Goldoni's, hence my use of the expression “Strehler as Goldoni *redivivus*.”

observes, were produced more or less in chronological order in an attempt to follow Goldoni's theatre journey from the Commedia dell'Arte to the realism of the Enlightenment (“Strehler et Goldoni” 125). Each staging also partook in a greater enterprise: Strehler's effort to value (his conception of) Goldoni's work and to make it known to Italy. “Our violent battle,” Strehler posits, “[... ] was against the long history of bad productions of Goldoni's work that drove this extraordinary playwright away from the public.”6 (“Goldoni e il teatro” 32) By increasing the importance of Goldoni's theatre through his staging of Goldoni's plays, Strehler made known his own work as a director and expressed his understanding of Goldoni and his vision of the Commedia dell'Arte. By promoting Goldoni, Strehler promoted himself and the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. In other words, his “battle” for Goldoni was also a battle for his vision of the theatre.

Strehler's stagings of Goldoni were not the product of a spontaneous generation. In the background of Strehler's intellectual and practical research stood a vibrant intellectual scene that was also interested in Goldoni's work. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Goldoni criticism, as Siro Ferrone explains, “participates in the broader anti-positivist revision process that Italian culture is undergoing under the high patronage of Benedetto Croce.”7 (Carlo Goldoni 125) Ferrone identifies two main currents of criticism: “one that takes a historical-ideological direction, tries to establish the ideal, moral and cultural relationship between the author and his

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6 From “Goldoni e il teatro,” a text Strehler read when he received a Laurea Honoris Causa from the Autonomous University of Barcelona on June 26th 1995. My translation of parts of the following sentence: “La nostra è stata una battaglia – per voi difficile da immaginare –, una battaglia violenta contro la tradizione della cattiva rappresentazione del teatro di Goldoni, che aveva portato questo straordinario autore lontano dal pubblico.” (Strehler, “Goldoni e il teatro” 32)

7 My translation of parts of the following sentence: “Ai primi del Novecento, anche la critica goldoniana, come tutta l'attività letteraria, partecipa al generale processo di revisione antipositivista che la cultura italiana intraprende sotto l'alto patronato di Benedetto Croce.” (Ferrone, Carlo Goldoni 125)
time; the other focusing on aesthetic, studies 'the physiognomy of the dead part of his work' (Momigliano)."\(^8\) (Ibid.) To this intellectual background, which consisted of the work of Silvio D'Amico, Eduardo Rho, Momigliano, Mario Apollonio and Eugenio Levi, among others, are added the productions of Goldoni's plays on Italian stages. According to Raul Radice, Goldoni's work stood strong in the repertoire of the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica in Rome (founded by D’Amico in 1935) as well as at the Biennale in Venice (128). Whether the literary merits of Goldoni and the stagings of his plays were attracting a large public is another matter. In the twentieth century, probably few stagings attracted larger and more diversified audiences than those by Strehler. His stagings of Goldoni, along with those of Visconti, Reinhardt and Simoni, truly affected how audiences and scholars envisioned Goldoni's work. It is also generally acknowledged that Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* gave a second breath to the scholarship on the Commedia dell'Arte tradition.

In the theatre season 1957-58, Strehler explored Goldoni's life in the theatre in his staging of Paolo Ferrari's *Goldoni e le sue sedici commedie nuove*. Strehler's programming of this play, which imagines Goldoni's collaboration with Girolamo Medebach\(^9\) in the early years of his reform, arguably parallels Goldoni's writing and staging of *Il teatro comico*, a play-manifesto of a biographical nature in which Goldoni presented his reform programme. *Il teatro comico* was originally written for and performed by Medebach's company (see section 1.2).

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\(^8\) My translation of: "[...] una di orientamento storico-ideologico, attenta a stabilire il rapporto ideale, morale e culturale tra lo scrittore e il suo secolo; l'altra di indirizzo estetico, tesa a studiare 'la fisionomia della parte morta della sua opera' (Momigliano)." (Ibid.)

\(^9\) In 1747, Goldoni was hired as playwright for the Sant'Angelo theatre in Venice, which was home to the theatre company of Girolamo Medebach. Goldoni's collaboration with Medebach, whose company performed traditional Commedia dell'Arte scenarios on trestle stages in Piazza San Marco before it performed in an indoor theatre, was instrumental in materializing his reform. Goldoni's involvement with the company at the theatre Sant'Angelo lasted from 1747 to 1753. Detailed (though sometimes inaccurate) information on Goldoni's work and life during the early years of his reform at the Sant'Angelo theatre can be found in his *Mémoires* (see bibliography).
From 1969 to 1971, Strehler took authorship of Goldoni's life narrative; he wrote and perfected a script based on the playwright's Mémoires, which was destined for television but was never aired nor staged. Selected notes – written around 1970 and titled “Goldoni ‘génie de la vie’” (“Goldoni, Genius of Life”) – reveal his plan for the first four parts of the movie. A first episode proposes to explore the playwright's teenage years, his “discovery of life as theatre – his dreams made of beauty, music, and joy [which were] interrupted only briefly by some bitter moments; his father's protection; [and] some happy travels.”

A second episode is dominated by Goldoni's “passage to ‘real’ youth and to dissipation – his life is no longer a dream, but an often tragic reality [rife with] dying illusions, war, vice, treason, [and] mankind's stupidity; failed attempts in the theatre and, finally, theatre seen as a path to ‘salvation’ [...].”

The third episode was dedicated to Goldoni's “frank acceptance of a theatre mission,” the combination of the World and of the Theatre in his work, the “convergence of everything in the theatre, a life entirely devoted to it, and resulting in the mad project of writing sixteen plays in one year in the hope of immediately ‘changing’ something.”

The fourth part of the movie was devoted to the playwright's acknowledgement that his reform would not happen overnight, that men change slowly and that “theatre alone does not change the world,” or only very slightly and with too many efforts.

10 My translation of: “[...] découverte de la vie comme théâtre – rêve fait de beauté, de musique, de joie, à peine voilée de quelque amertume immédiatement oubliée, protection paternelle, voyages heureux.” (Strehler, “Goldoni ‘génie de la vie’” 81)

11 My translation of: “[...] le passage à la ‘vraie’ jeunesse et à la dissipation, la vie non plus comme son de mais comme réalité souvent tragique; les illusions qui meurent, la guerre, le vice, la trahison, la stupidité des hommes; le théâtre comme tentative manquée et enfin comme ‘salut’ [...].” (Strehler “Goldoni ‘génie de la vie’” 81)

12 My translation of: “[...] la convergence de tout dans le théâtre, une vie qui s'y engage totalement, jusqu'à la folie des seize comédies en une même année, avec l'ultime illusion de 'changer' tout de suite quelque chose.” (Strehler, “Goldoni ‘génie de la vie’” 81-82)

13 My translation of: “[...] le théâtre en soi ne change pas le monde [...]” (Strehler, “Goldoni 'génie de la vie’” 82)
Not surprisingly, this project had a mirroring function; “The story of Goldoni I have tried to tell,” Strehler confessed, “is much more my story than I thought or wanted it to be.”\textsuperscript{14} (quoted in Tanant, “Sieur G.” 154) Strehler also left extensive notes about Goldoni and gave public lectures on his life, work and teachings.\textsuperscript{15} His enduring relationship with Goldoni – the man and his work – was thus complex and multi-layered, and is perhaps best expressed in the following passage:

\[\cdots\] I owe to Goldoni, in the course of the years, a sort of tenderness that is more his than mine. I have always seen in Goldoni a great light of non pacifying goodness that was rather critical and even, in its own way, severe and almost merciless at times, but always infinitely human – Goldoni never was an easy poet! Goldoni has been a kind of older brother to me; we spoke on many evenings, in a room, eating something and drinking a little bit of wine, and often playing cards: Goldoni always enjoyed cards. He talked to me about men, their pains, their small and great vices, with a kind of malice that was both sweet and corrosive at the same time. He always helped me to research the world and mankind, and to look at it in all its anguish with curiosity, love, and irony. He has taught me insatiable love for the theatre, the courage to work for the theatre without reservation, until the end. He taught me to love life in the theatre and beyond theatre.\textsuperscript{16} (Strehler, “A Goldoni” 23)

As is revealed here, Strehler perceived Goldoni as a mentor who instructed him about the World and about the Theatre, which he considered to be the two polarities of his work, something he accepted and assimilated from Goldoni.\textsuperscript{17} But Strehler went beyond thinking of the playwright

\textsuperscript{14} My translation of: “L’histoire de Goldoni que j’ai essayé [sic] de raconter est bien plus mon histoire que je ne le pensais ou ne le voulais.” (Strehler quoted in Tanant, “Sieur G.” 154)

\textsuperscript{15} Much of Strehler’s critical work about Goldoni was published in 2004 in the very useful Intorno a Goldoni: spettacoli e scritti (see bibliography).

\textsuperscript{16} My translation of: “[...] A Goldoni devo, sul filo degli anni, una specie di tenerezza che è prima sua che mia. In Goldoni ho sempre visto una grande luce di bontà non pacificante, piuttosto critica e persino, a suo modo, severa, qualche volta quasi impietosa – non è stato mai un poeta comodo, Goldoni! – ma sempre infinitamente umana. Goldoni è stato una specie di fratello maggiore col quale ho parlato tante sere, in una stanza, mangiando qualcosa e bevendo un po’ di vino e giocando spesso a carte: a lui le carte sono sempre piaciute. Mi ha parlato degli uomini, delle loro pene, dei loro piccoli e grandi vizi, con una specie di malizia dolce e corrosiva al tempo stesso. Mi ha sempre aiutato a cercare il mondo, l'uomo e a guardarlo con curiosità, amore e ironia in tanto suo affanno. Mi ha insegnato un amore per il teatro implacabile, il coraggio di lavorare per il teatro senza riserve, fino all'ultimo. Mi ha insegnato ad amare la vita del teatro e oltre il teatro. [...]” (Strehler, “A Goldoni” 23)

\textsuperscript{17} In various writings, among them his preface to the first edition of his plays (Bettinelli edition, 1750), Goldoni declared that he took the material in his plays from two books: the World and the Theatre (“Préface de l’auteur” 85). He affirms that, on one hand, his plays are inspired by his observation of the world outside of the theatre – observation he claims to have made during his many travels and his involvement in the Venetian society. On the other hand, he insists that his plays are also tributary to a vast theatrical knowledge he eclectically acquired (he
as an interlocutor and as a teacher, and entertained a more intimate relationship with a “Goldoni persona” he created. It appears that through the image of Goldoni-as-older-brother, Strehler cultivated a romanticized vision of Goldoni and lived an almost mystical relationship with it. Ultimately, Strehler projected himself into his image of the playwright. When he speaks of Goldoni's severity, impetuosity and “non pacifying goodness,” he reveals aspects of himself as much as of Goldoni. There are therefore three “Goldonis” in Strehler's discourse—all inseparable from each other: (1) the historical Goldoni, the playwright and reformer whose plays Strehler read and staged, (2) the imaginary Goldoni who served as his mentor, and (3) the interior Goldoni who was his alter-ego, that is Strehler himself as Goldoni redivivus. This last persona is perhaps best identified and understood through the examination and comparison of both discourses of renewal— that of Goldoni, as he presented it in his play-manifesto Il teatro comico, and that of Strehler.

read Plautus, Machiavelli, Menander, Andreini, Terence, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Corneille, Molière—his favourite—and many others, and attended theatre performances on a regular basis from a young age). In the preface to the Paperini edition of L'amante militare, for example, Goldoni enumerates his relations in the military, describes his encounters with soldiers during his travels, and specifies that his knowledge of the military culture was not gained from an insider position but from that of a playwright. By recounting to what extent he is familiar with the military, Goldoni suggests that his play is based, at least in part, on his observation of reality. Yet, L'amante militare is structured as a traditional Commedia dell'Arte scenario and depicts characters typical of the Commedia tradition. This suggests that Goldoni's plays were influenced by his theatre education and that his vision of the world was also conditioned by it. Here is another example of how his observation of a people was coloured by his profession as a playwright: “In traversing the country of Harlequin [Bergamo], I was curious to observe whether there was any existing trace of that comic character which afforded such entertainment to the Italian theatre. I could see neither the black visages, nor the small eyes, nor the ludicrous party-coloured dress, but I observed the hair tails in the hats with which the peasants of those districts are still equipped.” (Goldoni, Memoirs 128) The idea that Goldoni acquired his cultural education through the observation of the World and of the Theatre was later reinforced by scholars and even stage directors. Goldoni's “two books” became a seminal notion to study his work and his life in and outside of the theatre. Strehler accepted this notion and, without explaining explicitly his understanding of it, he assimilated it and made it part of his persona as a theatre director. By using Goldoni's words almost exactly, and by inserting them in his theatre discourse (written and staged), Strehler drew an almost prophetical connection between himself and Goldoni.
1.2 Goldoni's reform: towards character comedies and realism

Goldoni's reformative discourse was first laid out in his preface to the first edition of his comedies, published by Bettinelli in 1750. He then transformed his poetics into dramatic actions in *Il teatro comico*.18 This play was written in Venice in 1750, was first performed in Milan in September of that year, then opened the Autumn season of the Sant'Angelo Theatre in Venice in October of 1750, and was published in 1751. Modelled after Molière's metatheatrical play *L’impromptu de Versailles* (“Rehearsal at Versailles”), *Il teatro comico* presents the challenges met by the various members of a theatre company transiting from the old style of theatre *all’improvviso* to Goldoni’s new *comédies de caractères*, or character comedies.19 Influenced by Goldoni's practice of law, the play reads like a plea in favour of theatre reform (Herry 36).

The premise of *Il teatro comico* is simple: a theatre troupe — based on the Medebach company — rehearses a fully scripted play by an author whose name is never mentioned, but who is none other than Goldoni himself. The spectators are invited behind the scene, at the heart of the theatre reform. There, they witness the interactions between the performers, prompter and manager who believe in the necessity of the reform but struggle with its rules.

While exposing the (desired) working process of the actors, the play comments on the behaviour of the spectators, who often watched performances from the wings, spat from the balcony, and brought attention to themselves during the performances. As expressed in the play, Goldoni's reform not only touches the artists working in the theatre: audiences too are asked to modify their habits, obey to different spectatorial rules, develop new tastes, and play a more

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18 In his *Mémoires*, Goldoni describes *Il teatro comico* as a “poétique en action” (1: 288).
19 “A caractère is presented as a set of characteristic (specific) traits of a temperament, a vice or a quality. Types and stereotypes tend to be an easily recognizable sketch and not as well-rounded as a caractère, which is much more profound and subtle.” (Pavis 43) “A character comedy focuses on an accurate description of the characters' motivations: in the Aristotelian dialectics between action and character, the action is only important to the extent that it characterizes, i.e. defines and visualizes the protagonists.” (Ibid.)
participatory role in the theatrical event. By suggesting that spectators should focus on the story enacted on stage instead of that unfolding in the audience, Goldoni invites them to pay closer attention to the message contained in his texts. This message was transmitted through the theatrical depictions of the interrelation between social types. Several critics of Goldoni agree—among them Manlio Torquato Dazzi, Walter Binni, Mario Baratto and Siro Ferrone—that his work conveyed pro-Enlightenment values such as reason, measure and a belief that social transformation was possible.\footnote{It is generally acknowledged that the eighteenth-century experience of the Enlightenment had a limited penetration of the Italian peninsula. This said, the values of the Enlightenment had a different resonance in Venice, which was perhaps, according to Dazzi, “the most receptive city in Italy,”* home to a hundred and sixty publishing houses in the 1700s and thus “one of the major centres for the diffusion of culture”** in the peninsula (27).}

With *Il teatro comico*, Goldoni thus engaged in a dialectical relationship with the public and announced the greater and long-term objective of his reform: the use of theatre as entertainment, certainly, but also as an educational tool. Goldoni discloses this goal in the first scene of the second act of the play when he writes, through the character of Anselmo:

\begin{quote}
Comedy was invented to correct vices, and to show the ridicule of bad habits; and when the plays of Antiquity were done in this way, the whole population cared [about them], for everyone recognized in himself or in somebody else the original model for the character represented on stage. When the plays became purely ridiculous, no one paid attention to anything any more, because under the pretext of creating laughter, we introduced the most enormous, outstanding nonsense [on stage]. Now that we fish once more with our plays in the great sea of nature, people feel their heart quiver again, they allow themselves to be moved by a passion or by a character, they know if a passion is well sustained, if a character is well depicted, and they pay attention.\footnote{My translation of: “[...] La commedia l’è stada inventada per corregger i vizi e metter in ridicolo i cattivi costumi; e quando le commedie dai antighi se faceva così, tutto el popolo decideva, perché vedendo la copia d’un carattere in scena, ognuno trovava o in se stesso, o in qualchedun altro, l’original. Quando le commedie son deventade meramente ridicole, nissun ghe abbadava più, perché col pretesto de far rider, se ammetteva i più alti, i più sonori spropositi. Adesso che se torna a pescar le commedie nel mare magnum della natura, i omeni se} (II teatro comico 2.1.25-38)
\end{quote}

\footnote{My translation of: “In modo particolare a Venezia, la città più ricettiva d'Italia.” (Dazzi 27)

\footnote{My translation of parts of the following sentence: “Le stamperie si contano nel secolo a 160, facendo di Venezia uno dei maggiori centri di diffusione della cultura in Italia.” (Ibid.)}

\footnote{It is important to mention that Goldoni observed the interrelations between social types and portrayed a certain social landscape on stage from the privileged position of the bourgeoisie, the social class he belonged to and which perhaps most embraced and fed the values of the Enlightenment.

\footnote{My translation of: “[...] La commedia l’è stada inventada per corregger i vizi e metter in ridicolo i cattivi costumi; e quando le commedie dai antighi se faceva così, tutto el popolo decideva, perché vedendo la copia d’un carattere in scena, ognuno trovava o in se stesso, o in qualchedun altro, l’original. Quando le commedie son deventade meramente ridicole, nissun ghe abbadava più, perché col pretesto de far rider, se ammetteva i più alti, i più sonori spropositi. Adesso che se torna a pescar le commedie nel mare magnum della natura, i omeni se}
The elements of Goldoni's reform presented in *Il teatro comico* that I will discuss below should therefore be understood as instruments aiming at a more realistic theatre – though still heavily stylized – whose ultimate purpose was to become a vehicle for social change. This idea of social change as it is expressed in Goldoni’s work should not, however, be confused with ideas of revolution. While Goldoni hoped to reform the Italian theatre, and while he was sympathetic to the values of the Enlightenment, nothing in his work (from his plays to his autobiography) suggests that he wished to overthrow the monarchy and to radically change the reality of his spectators with his plays. In other words, Goldoni was a theatre reformer with progressive ideas about women and the middle-class; he had a broad concern for education and the correction of so-called “vices”\(^{23}\), but he was not a revolutionary.\(^{24}\)

The key elements of Goldoni's theatre reform presented in his play-manifesto are: (1) the adoption of a new, realistic and yet highly codified gestural vocabulary by the actors, and hence a change of acting style; (2) the memorization and the respect of a fully written text by the performers, and thus a modification of the actors' conception of his (Goldoni's) art; (3) the almost complete abandon of generic material and improvised pieces, which is a change of repertoire; (4) the independence of the playwright from Aristotelian rules when they interfere

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23 One good example of a play by Goldoni that exposes “vices” and promotes a change of attitude toward fashion, money and appearances is the *Triologia della villeggiatura* (1761). In this play, Goldoni exposes the risks and potential consequences of living above one’s socio-economic condition, of contracting debts to follow the trends of another class, of making wrong life decisions to keep up appearances, and of getting trapped in apparently innocent love games.

24 Goldoni, as I also briefly discuss in chapter 4, died on the “wrong side” of the French Revolution; after he left Venice permanently in 1762, he earned a living writing plays for the Comédie-Italienne (which enjoyed the support of important members of the French monarchy), taught Italian to Louis XV’s daughters, and received a royal pension for his work that was cancelled after the French Revolution.
with verisimilitude, and (5) the democratization of the language spoken on stage to reflect what can be observed in nature.\footnote{In his plays, Goldoni eliminated most of the dialects used by Commedia dell'Arte actors. He however kept traces of the Lombard dialect, wrote several plays in Venetian and others in Tuscan, the literary form of the Italian language. There is therefore a formal categorization of Goldoni's plays between those written in “lingua” (Italian-Tuscan) and those in “dialetto” (vernacular, mostly Venetian with traces of other dialects in some of the characters). Contemporary critics of Goldoni often reproached him the use of the vernacular and the “original sin of Venetian-ism.” (Goldoni, \textit{Mémoires} 2: 74) I speak of the democratization of language in Goldoni's plays because in the preface to the first edition of his comedies, Goldoni specifies that he kept expressions from Lombardy in his published work because he wanted his public, which included plebeian audiences from Lombardy, to understand his plays (“Préface de l'auteur” 87-88). “As for some of the Venetian idioms,” he specified, “and for those of my plays I specifically wrote for Venice, my homeland, I will need to provide glosses that will show the graces of our charming dialect to those [readers] who don't have sufficient fluency.”* (\textit{Ibid.} 88) Goldoni's use of the vernacular was public oriented: he wrote to be understood by the majority of his spectators, regardless of their social and economic status. This choice also reflects the conditions in which his plays were produced. During the eighteenth century, most Venetian theatres were owned by members of the nobility or by wealthy middle class citizens but were attended by the general population, and not only by the cultural and financial elite. His use of language also speak to his shift towards realism. Quoting father Rapin, Goldoni stresses that: “What is represented in the theatre, [...] should only be the copy of what happens in the world. Comedy, [...], is what it should be when we feel as if we were among neighbours or in the midst of a family conversation when in reality we are at the theatre, and when we only see on stage what we see in the world everyday.”** (\textit{Ibid.} 85)\)

* My translation of: “Pour certains idiotismes vénitiens, et pour celles de mes comédies que j'ai écrites tout exprès à l'usage de Venise, ma patrie, je serai contraint de donner en note quelques explications qui feront percevoir à qui n'en a pas une pratique suffisante les grâces de notre charmant dialecte.” (Goldoni, “Préface de l'auteur” 88)

** My translation of: “Ce qui se représente sur le théâtre, dit un illustre auteur [Father Rapin], ne doit être que la copie de ce qui se passe dans le monde. La comédie, ajoute-t-il, est bien ce qu'elle doit être quand il nous semble être en compagnie de nos voisins ou dans une conversation en famille alors que nous sommes en réalité au théâtre, et quand on n'y voit que ce que l'on voit tous les jours dans le monde.” (Rapin quoted in Goldoni, “Préface de l'auteur” 85)\)

Another crucial aspect of Goldoni's reform programme concerns the traditional Commedia masks.\footnote{Here, the word “mask” not only refers to the theatrical object, it also points to the Commedia dell'Arte characters who traditionally wore solid masks.}\footnote{My translation of: “Le masque doit toujours faire beaucoup de tort à l'action de l'acteur, soit dans la joie, soit dans le chagrin; qu'il soit amoureux, farouche ou plaisant, c'est toujours le même cuir qui se montre; et il a beau gesticuler et changer de ton, il ne fera jamais connaître, par les traits du visage qui sont les interprêtes du cœur, les différentes passions dont son âme est agitée. [...] On veut aujourd'hui que l'acteur ait de l'âme, et l'âme sous le masque est comme le feu sous les}

A mask should always remain an obstacle to the actor's actions, either in joy or in sadness; when he acts in love, shy or amused, it is the same old leather that we see, and though he gesticulates and changes tone, the actor never expresses with his face — which is the window to the heart — the various passions that move his soul.

[...] [O]n veut aujourd'hui que l'acteur ait de l'âme, et l'âme sous le masque est comme le feu sous les
Goldoni implemented his reform of the masks gradually and through different means. One of them, as explained in the passage cited above, was the removal of the solid mask from the performers' face.\textsuperscript{28} By asking his actors to act bare-faced, Goldoni humanized the Commedia characters and encouraged a more realistic acting style.\textsuperscript{29} This arguably marked the transition from farcical theatricality to the illusion of reality on stage.

The practical and metaphysical repercussions of de-masking the Commedia characters were numerous. First, it seems that getting rid of the masks transformed the nature of the Commedia protagonists who, with the solid mask, have the potential to represent – in a stylized manner – “universal” and “immortal” character types. An Arlecchino mask, for example, represents one character in a given play, but also stands for all “Arlecchinos” performed cendres. Voilà pourquoi j'avais formé le projet de réformer les masques de la comédie italienne, et de remplacer les farces par des comédies”. (Goldoni, Mémoires 2: 25)

\textsuperscript{28} Goldoni understood the importance of reforming these characters progressively, over several years and with compromises – a drastic change in the characters would have harmed his project. He first eliminated from his plays some of the traditional Commedia characters (such as Tartaglia) and often only kept Pantalone, Dottore, Brighella, Arlecchino, and the Lovers or innamorati (Ferrone, Carlo Goldoni 25). He progressively resolved to remove the leather masks from the performers' face – a decision that proved unpopular with many playwrights, actors and audience members, but sometimes kept the traditional costumes of these characters or used their traditional names in his plays. This allowed the spectators and the actors to progressively transform their vision of the Commedia characters and to slowly adapt to full-rounded, more realistic characters. Goldoni finally changed the traditional Commedia characters by enriching their psychology, affirming their position in the social panorama presented on stage and, while keeping some ridiculous elements in their choices and behaviours, showed their healthier and more human side. As Ferrone explains, Goldoni's Pantalone eventually “abandons his ridiculous fads and takes on the profession of elderly and circumspect merchant; Brighella and Arlecchino detach themselves from the conventionally stupid clownish servants and acquire a name and a family name [...]. Dottore becomes a good family father who only continues to pile up confusing Latin and erudite quotations in a few plays. Meanwhile, the Lovers' psychology becomes more complex and their social position becomes more precise [...].”\textsuperscript{*} (26)

\textsuperscript{29} In Il teatro comico, the performers are bare-faced when they act “themselves,” but the four actors in the roles of the traditionally masked characters wear a mask when they rehearse the fictional play within the play. These metatheatrical devises prepared Goldoni's public for his reform of the masks. The play arguably presented two acting styles to the spectators: the “old” acting style of the masked Commedia actors (presented during the rehearsal of the fictive play), and the new acting style privileged by Goldoni, where actors performed without masks in a more realistic manner – though still highly codified.

* My translation of: “Ecco allora che Pantalone abbandona le sue ridicole manie ed assume la professione di mercante anziano e avveduto, Brighella e Arlecchino si sciolgono dai convenzionali manichini di servi buffoneschi e acquistano di nuovo un nome e un cognome [...]. Il Dottore diventa un bravo padre di famiglia che solo per qualche commedia continua ad ammucchiare confuse citazioni latine ed erudite. Intanto le innamorate vedono complicata la loro psicologia e precisata la loro collocazione sociale [...].” (Ferrone, Carlo Goldoni 26)
throughout the centuries, and even points to an ideal “Arlecchino type” that cannot exist on the page but only on stage. The Arlecchino mask transcends the individuality of the actor, the circumstances of a particular production, and the text of a play. Moreover, if a solid mask is kept in good conditions, it can be used by several actors, decades apart, and it will always point to the same character. The mask – and the character it represents – has therefore greater potential for immortality and universality than the actor's face, which is individual, shows the passage of time, and cannot be duplicated.

De-masking the characters might also have altered how audiences related to them. The mask, for example, objectifies the character. One can hit a masked Pantalone several times and, like a puppet or an animated cartoon, he will bounce back (almost) uninjured, scene after scene, night after night, year after year, as if he were not made of the same substance as audience members. When spectators watch an actor wearing a Commedia mask, they look at a fictional other, at a stylized character, and not at an individual exactly like themselves. However, once the face of the performer is uncovered and the actor expresses the character's changes of moods and intentions with facial expressions, there is no painless fall. Spectators, I would argue, are more likely to recognize the human nature of unmasked characters, to notice the similarities they share with the fictional protagonists of the play, and to create – perhaps only unconsciously – a sort of peerage with the actors. The audience's reaction to the same action may therefore differ if it is performed with or without a mask.

Arguably, Goldoni's reform of the masks also diluted the national character of the Commedia protagonists and inserted them in a more pan-European tradition. As Goldoni tells us

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I must stress that Italy, in the eighteenth century, was not a unified country. There were several states in the peninsula and each had its dialect, customs, laws and, sometimes, calendar system. The use of the terms “national” and “Italian-ness” in this chapter does not imply the existence of an homogeneous “Italian character.” I am aware of the complexity and elusiveness of these words but I use them for lack of better terms.
in his Mémoires, many of his contemporaries considered the masked characters of the
Commedia dell'Arte as a unique cultural achievement and a source of national pride. It is clear
from Goldoni's writings, that the solid masks and the characters they represented were
associated with “Italian-ness.” For some critics of Goldoni's reform, de-masking the
protagonists threatened an important manifestation of their cultural identity. On the matter,
Goldoni writes:

The people from Bologna cared for this type of comedy more than the others. There
were among them people of merit who enjoyed writing plays in the form of
scenarios, and very gifted citizens performed them very well, to the delight of their
country.

Those who loved the old comedy, seeing that the new one was making such fast
progress, claimed everywhere that it was undignified for an Italian man to attack a
genre of comedy in which Italy had distinguished itself and that no nation had been
able to imitate.

But what created an even greater impression in these revolted minds was the
suppression of the masks\(^\text{31}\) my system appeared to threaten: it was said that these
characters had amused Italy for two centuries, and that we could not spare it from a
comedy it had created and sustained so well.\(^\text{32}\) (Mémoires 2: 19-20)

Finally, getting rid of solid masks changed the actor's art, who, without his masks,
needed to learn new acting techniques and obey different theatre conventions. With Goldoni's
reform, performers needed to communicate the feelings and thoughts of their character with
their face. This called for a new use of the voice and body. It also changed how performers saw

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\(^{31}\) Here, the word “masks” takes a double meaning. Goldoni's system suppressed the solid leather masks, an action
that, according to some critics in Bologna, seemed to have threatened the existence of the traditionally masked
characters in the Commedia dell'Arte. Here, “masks” refers to both the theatrical object worn by the actors and
to the fictional protagonists identified by it.

\(^{32}\) My translation of: “Les Bolonais tenaient plus que les autres à ce genre de comédie. Il y avait parmi eux des
gens de mérite qui se plaisaient à composer des pièces à canevas, et des citoyens très habiles les jouaient fort
bien, et faisaient les délices de leur pays.

Les amateurs de l'ancienne comédie voyant que la nouvelle faisait des progrès si rapides, criaient partout
qu'il était indigne à un Italien de porter atteinte à un genre de comédie dans lequel l'Italie s'était distinguée, et
qu'aucune nation n'avait su imiter.

Mais ce qui faisait encore plus d'impression dans les esprits révoltés, c'était la suppression des masques que
mon système paraissait menacer : on disait que ces personnages avaient, pendant deux siècles, amusé l'Italie, et
qu'il ne fallait pas la priver d'un comique qu'elle avait créé et qu'elle avait si bien soutenu.” (Goldoni, Mémoires 2: 19-20)
their audiences, their acting colleagues and themselves. One can only imagine the anxiety felt by these actors who took the path of Goldoni's reform. The loss of an old performance instrument (the mask) must have caused an identity crisis among some actors. Much like the arrival of sound in film in the early twentieth century, removing the mask and revealing the face of actors must have weakened successful careers, revealed new talents, modified the audiences' expectations and open the path to new acting styles, conventions and techniques. It is this new acting style that Goldoni proposed to the public with his play-manifesto.

Strehler read *Il teatro comico*. He knew the elements of Goldoni's reform and admired the man and his enterprise. In Goldoni's plays, Strehler recognized essential truths that transcended regional and national frontiers and could propel their author onto the stages of Europe and the world. Strehler also understood the importance of Goldoni's reform at an Italian level, “This is the secret, the mystery and the great meaning of the reform: the creation of the first great national-popular Italian theatre.”\(^{34}\) (Strehler, “Goldoni e il teatro” 40)

### 1.3 Strehler's theatre discourse: renewing the Italian stage in the twentieth century

Less than two centuries after Goldoni, Strehler engaged in his own renewal project. In 1947, he created the Piccolo Teatro of Milan with Paolo Grassi and Nina Vinchi in an effort to change the face of Italian theatre and to bring his work first to the European and then to the international arena.

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\(^{33}\) Wearing a mask limits the actor's visual field. The leather masks in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition kept at the museum of the Opéra Garnier in Paris have eye-openings whose diameter is only a couple of centimetres wide. As we will see in chapter 2, the eye-openings of the mask modify considerably the physical production of the actor.

\(^{34}\) My translation of: “Questo è il segreto, il mistero e il grande senso della riforma: è la creazione del primo grande teatro nazional-popolare italiano.” (Strehler, “Goldoni e il teatro” 40)
Two decades of fascist government had slowed down the evolution of Italian theatre which, according to Strehler and Grassi, had become bourgeois, anachronistic, “senile” and “posthume” (Strehler, “Nota per un teatro postumo” 12-13).

[...] From 1930 to 1943, what triumphed on Italian stages was not even a neoclassic theatre, but a theatre of adultery, of cuckoldry, the worst boulevard theatre, the worst of French theatre. [...] It was the heyday of white telephones. The plays were set in unspecified locations – when they were not set in France, they were set in Hungary; the characters were lawyers, doctors, [and] completely unrealistic engineers in fancy living rooms full of these white telephones, precisely. There was in all of this a really idiotic contradiction: the Black Shirts were in the streets and Bernstein was on the stage (until we had to stop putting on his plays because of his Jewish background...).35 (Strehler quoted in Dort, “Préface” II-III)

The stagnation of Italian theatre during the first half of the twentieth century – here seen through Strehler's eyes – was due to the combination of government censorship with the reign of the star-actor, the commercial interests behind theatre productions, and the audiences’ expectations.36 During the first half of the 1940s and after, Strehler and Grassi imagined a

35 My translation of: “[...] De 1930 à 1943, ce qui a triomphé sur les scènes italiennes, ce n'est même pas un théâtre néo-classique, c'est un théâtre d'adultère, de cocuage, le pire théâtre de boulevard, le pire théâtre français. [...] C'était l'époque des téléphones blancs. Les drames se passaient dans un milieu anonyme qui, lorsqu'il n'était pas situé en France, se situait en Hongrie ; les personnages étaient des avocats, des médecins, des ingénieurs complètement imaginaires, dans des salons de fantaisie, pleins de ces téléphones blancs, justement. Il y avait là une contradiction réellement imbécile : les Chemises Noires étaient dans la rue et Bernstein sur le plateau (jusqu'à ce qu'on soit obligé de l'abandonner parce que juif...).” (Strehler quoted in Dort, “Préface” II-III)

36 In critics he published in Milano Sera in August 1945, Strehler exposes his views on the existing relationship between the quality of the productions on Milanese stages and the public who attends them. These views are very similar to and are probably informed by Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, with which Strehler must have been familiar. In what follows, for example, Strehler virulently associates what he seems to consider to be the mainstream theatrical industry with the bourgeoisie’s upper crust, a class he criticises and from which he apparently dissociates himself (despite having been brought up among the middle class). Strehler’s comment also implies that the “true public” of theatrical entertainment in Milan should reflect a broader social spectrum or, more simply, that it should include other – less privileged – socio-economic groups. “It seems to us that, night after night, theatres are empty,” Strehler declares. “The public,” he continues, “the true public, is absent. These aberrant buildings, dedicated to the performing arts, are located according to erroneous financial calculations for a specifically bourgeois aristocracy attracted by the price of seats and by the schedules. The theatre strictly caters to the defects specific to this group. The apparent prosperity of the crowds that gather at the box-office is only a pernicious disguise.” (Strehler, “Illusoire prospérité” 37)*

* My translation of: “Pour nous, soir après soir, les salles sont vides. Le public, le vrai public, est absent. Dans d'aberrants édifices voués au spectacle et placés n'importe où, suivant un calcul financier erroné, ne circule qu'une aristocratie bourgeoise sécrétée par le prix des places et les horaires. Le théâtre colle de la façon la plus stricte aux dégenérescences particulières de cette caste. Toute la prospérité apparente des foules qui se pressent aux guichets n'est qu'un maquillage pernicieux.” (Ibid.)
renewed Italian stage, they identified the conditions for its realization and, with the creation of
the Piccolo Teatro, gradually materialized their vision.

Like Goldoni before them, Strehler and Grassi planned (1) to democratize the theatre
event – this time by reaching to vast and popular audiences, (2) to establish a dialectical
relationship with the public, (3) to renew the content of performances, (4) to reform the actors'
working practices, and (5) to explore new acting styles. They proposed to recruit audience
members among all socio-economic classes, especially proletarian, and offered tickets and
subscriptions to their theatre season at prices they judged affordable. They planned to increase
the audience's participation in the theatrical event by giving it a choral function in the hope that
this would induce social change and contribute to nation building; “[...] perhaps,” they wrote,
“our spectators will become a living core of greater stages: and if we are not mistaken, every
civilization is built precisely through a process that combines and integrates one group to
another, creating variety and multiplicity. [...] Not, then, an experimental theatre or a theatre of
exception only open to a circle of insiders. But, instead, a theatre of art for everyone.”37

Piccolo Teatro 23) They also planned to reform the acting profession and the conditions of
production by inviting “a few well-know actors to work in a different perspective, establishing
professional norms (duration of rehearsals, acknowledgement of the actor's status), [and] by
training young performers in a new acting style [...]”38 (Aslan, “Un chemin” 24) As for the

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37 My translation of: “[...] forse il gruppo dei nostri spettatori diventerà un nucleo vivo di più vaste platee : e, se
non ci inganniamo, ogni civiltà si attua appunto secondo un processo che accosta ed integra gruppo a gruppo
nella sua varietà e molteplicità. Per questo recluteremo i nostri spettatori, per quanto più è possibile, tra i
lavoratori e tra i giovani, nelle officine, negli uffici, nelle scuole, offrendo semplici e convenienti forme
d'abbonamento per meglio saldare i rapporti tra teatro e spettatori, offrendo comunque spettacoli di alto livello
artistico a prezzi quanto più è possibile ridotti. Non dunque teatro sperimentale e nemmeno teatro d'eccezione,
chiuso in una cerchia d'iniziati. Ma, invece, teatro d'arte, per tutti.” (excerpt from the programme of the Piccolo
Teatro's first theatre season quoted in 1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 23)

38 My translation of: “[...] quelques acteurs connus de travailler dans une perspective différente, faire admettre des
normes professionnelles (durée des répétitions, reconnaissance du statut d'acteur) (35), former des jeunes à un
nouveau type de jeu, stimuler des auteurs, [...]” (Aslan, “Un chemin” 24)
repertoire, Strehler and Grassi suggested stimulating national authors and staging Italian and European plays that had been overlooked by the fascist regime. Finally, Strehler planned to renew Italian theatre by developing what he called a “dishuman theatre.” The dishuman theatre, Aslan explains, “belongs to theatricality,” it is the proclamation of the fictional nature of the theatre event (“Un chemin” 16). The materialization of a dishuman theatre would necessarily, though not exclusively, occur through the exploration of different acting styles.

The creation of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan in 1947 was driven by Strehler and Grassi's hopes, ambitions, and enthusiasm for a theatre renewal, but was also fed by youth and a post-war desire for change. The national-popular theatre for a proletarian audience they imagined deliberately contrasted with the perception they had of contemporary Italian theatre, which they associated with the bourgeoisie, private economical interests and, likely, fascism and the war.

The Piccolo Teatro's first season opened on May 14th 1947 with Strehler's staging of Gorki's *The Lower Depths* and closed on July 24th with his first staging of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters*.39 Interestingly, the latter production single-handedly addressed all aspects of Strehler's renewal project. Perhaps more than any other play presented during the first season of the Piccolo Teatro,40 *The Servant of Two Masters* had the potential to attract the broad audience Strehler and Grassi were wishing for. The play enjoyed a minor but popular place in Goldoni's repertoire. It presented characters of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition that would have been familiar to most potential theatre-goers, regardless of their age and social class. Furthermore,

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39 Fulvio Fo affirms that Grassi and Strehler did not believe in the production at first: “So, for the records, it is said that Giorgio did not want to do it, this show, he was not at all convinced.” (quoted in Fo, *Manuale minimo* 39)*

* My translation of: “Anzi, per la verità storica, va detto che Giorgio non lo voleva fare, ‘sto spettacolo, non era per niente convinto.” (Fulvio Fo quoted in Fo, *Manuale minimo* 39)

40 The three other plays in the inaugural season of the Piccolo Teatro were, in order: Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, Calderón de la Barca's *The Mighty Magician*, and Salacrou's *Nights of Anger*.
previous productions by Max Reinhardt and by the Andò-Paoli-Gandusio company\textsuperscript{41} in the first half of the twentieth century, for example, had already proven the high entertainment value of the play. Staging \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} in 1947 therefore participated in Strehler's attempt to democratize the theatre event by reaching to new audiences.\textsuperscript{42}

The first staging of Goldoni's play at the Piccolo Teatro also partook in Strehler's attempt to establish a dialectical relationship with his public. By choosing a text by Goldoni that predated his reform,\textsuperscript{43} Strehler engaged in a discussion with his spectators about the past and the future of Italian theatre. This discussion was articulated around the “rediscovery” of the Commedia dell'Arte for a contemporary stage. By revisiting an iconic theatre tradition, Strehler suggested that it was possible and necessary to re-actualize what had once been considered a “national” cultural achievement. By showing his vision of the “glorious past” of Italian theatre, “no longer as an intellectual fact, but as an exercise of present and operating life [...]”\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} Actor Antonio Gandusio, starring in the Andò-Paoli-Gandusio company, interpreted the title role in Goldoni's \textit{Servant of two Masters} between 1909 and 1912 (Douël dell'Agnola, \textit{Gli spettacoli} 30). It is believed that Gandusio and his company reduced Goldoni's text to an “exhilarating” farce that lasted about fifty minutes (Maff.).

\textsuperscript{42} At present, we do not know whether the spectators who attended Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play were part of the usual crowd of theatregoers or if they belonged to the working class and were new to live theatre. Isolated comments in theatre reviews of the time suggest that some local actors attended at least one performance of the play.

\textsuperscript{43} Goldoni first wrote \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} for the actor Antonio Sacchi, a celebrated Arlecchino/Truffaldino of the eighteenth century, and the chief actor of a theatre company who performed in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition. Sacchi suggested the theme for \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} to Goldoni. Bosio suggests that the actor took the subject of the play from a seventeenth-century scenario by Mandajors titled “Arlequin valet de deux maîtres.” According to Bosio, the play had first been performed in 1718 with Luigi Riccoboni in the title role; it was first published in “Nouveau Mercure,” and was published again, in 1729 in \textit{Nouveau théâtre italien ou Recueil général des Comédies représentées par les comédiens italiens ordinaires du Roy (Tra Goldoni e Strehler 27)}. Sacchi could have seen a performance of this scenario in Paris, for the play was performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne until 1772 (\textit{Ibid.}). It is also possible that he sent a copy of the script to Goldoni. The first version of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} that Goldoni delivered to Sacchi – in 1745 – was in the form of a Commedia dell'Arte scenario. It gave the actors the freedom to insert personal material in performance. Goldoni later wrote and published the full text of the play.

\textsuperscript{44} This passage is an excerpt of the programme note for the Latin American tour of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}. It was written by Strehler and was published by the Piccolo Teatro in 1954, that is seven years after the opening of Strehler’s first staging of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}. This passage reveals how Strehler had come to envision the place of his staging within the political context in which it was first produced. It does not necessarily represent how Strehler initially understood his work, but it certainly indicates how he wished this work to be remembered. Also, this passage, which scholars often cite when discussing Strehler’s stagings of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters},...
(Strehler, “Un segno di continuità” 62), Strehler arguably sent a message of hope to his spectators that must have had a particular patriotic resonance, especially in a post-war context. “This,” wrote Strehler, “was theatre that, with its actors, went back (or tried to go back) to the primitive bases of a forgotten scenic event. It indicated to contemporary audiences a path to simplicity, love and solidarity.” (“Un segno di continuità” 62) (see footnote 38)

The 1947 staging of The Servant of Two Masters also challenged how Goldoni's plays were presented on contemporary stages and thus addressed the issue of the national repertoire in performance. Siro Ferrone explains that between the two wars, there were two main staging approaches to Goldoni's plays; one was realistic and psychological while the other explored the musical and ballet-like potential of the plays (Carlo Goldoni 130). Both approaches, Ferrone specifies, were not mutually exclusive. But Strehler's staging did not exactly follow any of these approaches. His first staging of The Servant of Two Masters was above all a stylistic exploration characterized by “[...] an Italic enthusiasm for rhythm, for immediate invention, mimical gesture, hyperbolic images, together with classical rigour [...]”45 (Strehler, “Un segno di continuità” 63) As a result of this focus, the acting style was marionette-like46 and the

45 From “Un segno di continuità,” Strehler's presentation of The Servant of Two Masters published in the theatre programme for the Latin American tour in 1954. My translation of: “[...] un abbandono italico al ritmo, all'invenzione immediata, al gesto mimico, all'iperbole dell'immagine, insieme a un classico rigore [...]” (Strehler, “Un segno di continuità” 63)

46 Before he co-founded the Piccolo Teatro, Strehler had been a late member of the Latis company in Milan, a puppet theatre company that was active between 1939 and 1949 (Colli 36). This is not to suggest that the acting style in his first staging of The Servant of Two Masters directly reflected his activities with the puppet company. However, Strehler's theatre experiences prior to the Piccolo Teatro certainly guided his research of theatricality, non-naturalistic acting style and pure game on stage, especially in the early years of his career.
production was said to resemble a high speed “mechanical-ballet” (Mosca). Finally, the adoption of solid masks in the show\textsuperscript{47} challenged the performers, imposed a discipline, revisited acting practices, and set new professional expectations. The production thus fulfilled the three other mandates of Strehler's theatre reform: the renewal of repertoire, the exploration of different acting styles, and the reform of acting practices.\textsuperscript{48} Half-consciously, Strehler's first staging of

\textsuperscript{47} In an article he published in 1962, Strehler wrote about the first solid masks used in the production, but did not specify when actors started using them (“In margine al diario” 59). He also remained unclear as to whether these masks were used in his staging of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} in 1947 or if actors first wore them when he remounted the show the next year. The first series of performances of Goldoni's play at the Piccolo Teatro opened on July 24\textsuperscript{th} 1947 and lasted until August 4\textsuperscript{th} of the same year. The play was performed fourteen times that season. It was produced again in the subsequent theatre season, from November 24\textsuperscript{th} to December 15\textsuperscript{th} 1947, and from January 7\textsuperscript{th} to January 11\textsuperscript{th} 1948 (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 33). The available photographs of the production in 1947-48 were taken from afar, which makes it difficult to distinguish solid masks from heavy make-up. In a publication by the Piccolo Teatro titled 1947-58 Piccolo Teatro, a note suggests that in the very first production of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters} at the Piccolo Teatro, “the actors who played the masked characters and most of all Marcello Moretti, had their mask painted on their face.” (35)\textsuperscript{*} We do know that actor Marcello Moretti painted a mask on his face instead of wearing a solid mask in the first production of the play in 1947, but the article he published in 1962, Strehler mentions that the [other] actors in his first staging of the play wore solid masks. The author of the note in 1947-58 Piccolo Teatro, written eleven years after the first performance of Strehler's first staging of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}, perhaps made an error by extending Moretti's choice to all other masked performers in the production. In 1948, Strehler included solid masks in several productions. For example photographs of his staging of Shakespeare's \textit{The Tempest} show what appears to be actor Antonio Battistella wearing a finely crafted leather mask. There is no mask-maker credits for this production. It is therefore likely that the mask was borrowed for the occasion from an actor, a director or another theatre. The same year, Strehler staged Eliot's \textit{Murder in the Cathedral}. Images of the production published in 1947-58 Piccolo Teatro clearly show that some actors wore solid masks attributed to Bissietta (62). It is therefore possible that Strehler's enthusiasm for masked performance in 1948 was a continuation of the 1947 experiment with masks in \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}. It is also possible that there were no solid masks in the very first production of the play at the Piccolo Teatro and that it was only in the second theatre season that solid paper masks were used in the production. In either case, Moretti would have performed bare faced and other actors would have worn a solid mask at some point in the first production of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}, between 1947 and 1948.

\textsuperscript{*} My translation of: “[...] gli attori che impersonavano le maschere e primo fra tutti Marcello Moretti, che iniziò allora la sua gloriosa carriera di Arlecchino, avevano le maschere dipinte sul viso.” (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 35)

\textsuperscript{48} Strehler (and Grassi) was not the only theatre practitioner who was attempting to renew the Italian stage at the time. As Gian Giacomo Colli observes in his doctoral dissertation \textit{The Impossible Tempest: Giorgio Strehler or the Director as Interpreter}, other theatre practitioners, critics and intellectuals had tried to modernize Italian theatre which, during the first half of the twentieth century, was behind the work conducted elsewhere in Europe. “In spite of the cultural restrictions imposed by fascism,” Colli posits, “Italian theatre had, in the 1920s, already begun a slow process of modernization.” (36) He continues: “But this process had proceeded, so to speak, paradoxically through a climate of compromise between fascist ideals – summed up in a vague idea of theatre for the masses – and the most enlightened proposals of the catholic and liberal culture. The leftists, including Gramsci, notably, had been totally silenced by the régime.” (36-37) The “most important results of this compromise,” Colli concludes, was the creation of the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica by Silvio D'Amico (37) (see chapter 2, footnote 7).
The Servant of Two Masters was, in a way, his own “poetics put into actions,” his 1947 Teatro comico.

1.4 “Undoing” Goldoni to materialize his vision: the example of The Servant of Two Masters

Strehler used Goldoni to materialize his ideas of theatre renewal, but in doing so, he went against many rules presented in Il teatro comico, especially those concerning respect for the written text, the abandonment of improvisation, and the reform of Commedia masks.

First, Strehler did violence to Goldoni’s text by changing the name of the main protagonist from Truffaldino to Arlecchino. In the theatre season of 1947-48, Strehler also added the name Arlecchino to the title of the play. From then on, the production would be called Arlecchino servitore di due padroni (“Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters”). This step and many others sealed Strehler's authorship of the production.

Strehler also changed the dialogues in the play and asked his actors to explore the idea of improvisation. The lazzo of the fly performed at the beginning of the second act was apparently based on an eighteenth-century description by Luigi Riccoboni, but was developed by actor Marcello Moretti, who improvised it in rehearsal (Grassi quoted in Douël dell'Agnola, Gli spettacoli 69). Other lazzi were borrowed from the variety theatre or alluded to circus arts, clown, and puppetry. Many elements in the show were also generated through collaborative work between performers. “[...] Moretti's famous scene of the piece of bread, for example,

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49 Changing the name of the central character in The Servant of Two Masters and adding this new name to the title of the play seems to have been common practice in Italy. According to Siro Ferrone, various companies during the nineteenth century had replaced Truffaldino in the play by Meneghino, Gianduja, Stenterello and even Pulcinella (Ferrone, “Introduzione” 15)

50 This addition aimed to “[...] indicate more clearly to foreign audiences the [comedic] nature of the play.” My translation of: “[...] indicare più chiaramente ai pubblici stranieri il carattere della commedia [...]” (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 39)

51 Strehler referred to each new production of the show as new “editions” of it, thus imagining himself as the author of the performances.
belonged to Franco Parenti; it was Parenti,” Fulvio Fo specifies, “who invented it, and who gave it to his companion.”

As a result of such explorations, some of the dramaturgical content of the 1947 production never appeared in Goldoni's published text.

Strehler's liberties with the play also extended to the manipulation of the characters. For example, he asked Franco Parenti, who played Brighella, to stutter in a chicken-like manner, hence giving Brighella the main characteristic of Tartaglia, another character of the Commedia tradition. This animal-like quality was one step towards the dehumanization of the character in the play. Strehler also demanded frantic acting rhythm of the performers. This direction prevented the players from acting realistically and from developing a complex psychology for their characters. Another step away from psychological realism, perhaps the most radical, was the (re-)introduction of masks on stage. Because they hid the performers' face, masks forced the actors to express the characters' emotions and reactions with the entire body, and it obliged them to synthesize the character's personality in their postures and movements. “I was passionate at the time,” Strehler remembers, “like many young directors of my generation, about issues of physical expression we then called the ‘art of mime,’ and which remained mysterious to us: [that is] the relationship of the body with space, the expressive value of gesture and movement, [and] the quality of animated silence.” By using masks, Strehler engaged in a research of acting style, but he also proclaimed the fictional nature of the characters, of the play, and of theatre in general. The masks in the production testify of Strehler's

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52 My translation of: “[...] la famosa scena della mollica di pane di Moretti, per esempio, era di Franco Parenti; fu proprio Franco a inventarla, e la cedette al compagno.” (Fulvio Fo quoted in Fo, Manuale minimo 39)

53 My translation of: “[...] j'étais passionné à l'époque, comme beaucoup de jeunes metteurs en scène de ma génération, par les problèmes de l'expression corporelle que nous appelions alors l'art du mime, et qui pour nous restaient mystérieux: le rapport du corps à l'espace, la valeur expressive du geste et du mouvement, la qualité du silence animé.” (Strehler, “Le métier de la poésie” 173)
conscious effort to break away from realism – which Goldoni's reform had encouraged – and to stage heavily stylized theatre.

At first glance, it appears that Strehler used Goldoni to undo Goldoni. But Strehler deliberately chose a play that predated Goldoni's reform. *The Servant of Two Masters* originally left much freedom to improvise, add and remove material in performance. In the twentieth century, important directors, such as Max Reinhardt, had already, and successfully, manipulated the text of the play. In 1924, Reinhardt staged Goldoni's play for the inauguration of the Theater in der Josefstadt in Vienna. With this production, Gisela Prossnitz argues, Reinhardt “created a new theatre form based on the idea of combining acting, word, dance, apparent improvisation and pantomime in a total work of art.”

Reinhardt's staging also included a prologue by Hofmannsthal during which the performers saluted the audience (Prossnitz, “Catalogo” 18). This prologue not only infused new dialogues in the production, it also introduced a new character in the play, the Souffleur or “prompter” (Leisler and Prossnitz 6), who established and reinforced the idea of theatre within the theatre.

When he staged *The Servant of Two Masters* again in 1926 for the Salzburger Festspiele, Reinhardt explored the Commedia tradition even further; the players acted on a trestle stage in front of small orchestra and performed not only Goldoni's text, but also gags that had been created for the production (Prossnitz, “Catalogo” 20). Reinhardt's staging of Goldoni's play that toured Italy in 1932 likely resembled that of 1926, and thus displayed the actors' and director's inventions along with Goldoni's text. The production history of *The Servant of Two Masters* and

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54 My translation of a part of the following sentence: “Preparando ‘Arlecchino servo di due padroni’ di Goldoni, in occasione dell'inaugurazione del Theater in der Josefstadt, Reinhardt creò una nuova forma teatrale fondata sull'idea di fondere recitazione, parola, danza, apparente improvvisazione e pantomima in un'opera d'arte totale.” (Prossnitz, “Catalogo” 18)
its minor, yet popular, place in Goldoni's body of work gave Strehler the licence to manipulate it at will. The malleability of the play also made it an ideal platform for conducting stylistic and intellectual explorations. With the 1947 production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, Strehler launched (a first version of) his vision of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition and of Goldoni in performance. As we will see in chapters 2 and 4, masks were important rhetorical tools in the expression of this ever-evolving vision. But masks had first to be accepted by the performers and especially by Marcello Moretti, the first Arlecchino at the Piccolo Teatro.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{55}\) Moretti participated in the first three stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. These productions respectively premiered in 1947, 1952 and 1956.
Chapter 2. On the first Arlecchino mask: a painted face

“Marcello was one of the actors with whom we 'wanted' to make our theatre,”¹ notes Paolo Grassi on the first Arlecchino in Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* (“Marcello, un amico” 8). But convincing Marcello Moretti to take part in Strehler's production was not an easy task. After first accepting the engagement, he renounced it. “He does not feel it,” Emilio Pozzi explains, “He remembers an earlier production staged at the Accademia that was a failure, especially for the actor who played the role of Arlecchino.”² (179) Pozzi's remark could refer to the 1944 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* by the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica in Rome. The play was staged by Alberto D'Aversa, with Moretti in the title role of Truffaldino (Radice 132). The actor who “failed” in performance must therefore have been Moretti.³ This experience, as Pozzi suggests, would explain why the actor resisted performing in a new staging of Goldoni's play in 1947. Yet, upon Strehler's and Grassi's insistence, Moretti finally accepted the part that would mark his “definitive encounter with the theatre, with the mask, [and] with the production that would become his life.”⁴ (Grassi, “Marcello, un amico” 8) He played Arlecchino in Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* from 1947 to 1960.⁵ Moretti, however, only wore a solid mask in this play from

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¹ My translation of: “Marcello fu uno degli attori con cui ‘volemmo’ fare il nostro teatro.” (Grassi, “Marcello, un amico” 8)

² My translation of: “Non se la sente. Ha fresco il ricordo di una lontana edizione allestita in Accademia, praticamente fallita soprattutto per chi ha interpretato il ruolo di Arlecchino.” (Pozzi 179)

³ In his article titled “Meditazione su un mito e su una biografia,” Ruggero Jacobbi does not say that D'Aversa's staging was a failure.

⁴ My translation of: “[...] definitivo incontro col teatro, con la maschera, con lo spettacolo che sarebbe stata la sua vita.” (Grassi “Marcello, un amico” 8)

⁵ Marcello Moretti passed away in January 1961.
1952 on. From 1947 to 1952, he rejected the solid mask and instead painted his face with black make-up.

This chapter examines Moretti’s painted face, the first Arlecchino mask in Strehler’s staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*. A first section identifies the principal causes of Moretti's initial refusal to wear a mask. A second section describes his painted face and examines the advantages and disadvantages of this make-up in performance. A third part studies the reactions of the press to the presence of both solid masks and a painted face on stage, while the last section attends to the ideology expressed by Strehler's acceptance of Moretti's make-up.

### 2.1 On Marcello Moretti’s initial refusal of the mask

Conquering the mask was for everyone, including Moretti, a process filled with innumerable challenges ranging from the lack of a living tradition, thus of mental and physical precedents, to the real technical lack of appropriate “tools.”

[...] There was also the personal drama of the actors who did not “feel” [like] themselves in their masks. By a psychological phenomenon, the actor, with his face covered, did not have the right feeling about himself and his colleagues. Among other things, he felt “inexpressive”; a powerful weapon had been taken away from him: facial expressions. The actor still needed to conquer the “mobility”

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6 Photographs of the 1947-1948 production of *The Servant of Two Masters* displayed on the Web archives of the Piccolo Teatro show Moretti with a painted face. However, images of Strehler’s stagings of *The Raven* in 1948 and of *L’amante militare* in 1951 show Moretti wearing a mask. The actor who refused to wear a solid mask in Strehler's first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* therefore slowly, and perhaps reluctantly, accepted to wear a mask in a few other plays before 1952.

7 As we will see in this chapter, there are a few examples of stagings of Goldoni and of Commedia-inspired productions that took place in Venice during the first half of the twentieth century that used solid masks. These examples, while they prove that masked performance in the Commedia tradition had not completely vanished from Northern Italy, do not however suggest the existence of a thriving “living tradition” in this part of the country (the Commedia tradition in the South, on the other hand, had gone uninterrupted). These productions, many of them staged by Renato Simoni, could be marginal examples of the use of masks in professional Italian productions at the time; they do not suggest that all Italian actors and directors were familiar with masked performance techniques; and we cannot be certain of how effectively masks were used in these stagings. Finally, we do not know if Strehler ever saw these productions or any other stagings with solid Commedia masks before he staged *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1947. While masked performance and the Commedia dell’Arte were not entirely “buried”, as Strehler claims in the above citation, nothing suggests that they were particularly alive in Milan during and immediately after the war.
of the mask. He needed to “re-invent” a buried tradition that no one could teach us anymore.⁸ (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)

In this passage, Strehler identifies three main challenges the actors faced when they first wore masks in his production of The Servant of Two Masters: (1) the players' general ignorance of masked performance techniques in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, (2) the inadequacy of the masks used in the production, and (3) the performers' psychological resistance to acting with a mask. Since these challenges were potential reasons for Moretti's rejection of the solid mask, this is what I will investigate in what follows.

2.1.1 First challenge: the players’ general ignorance of masked performance in the Commedia dell’Arte tradition.

When he joined the Piccolo Teatro of Milan in 1947, Marcello Moretti was already familiar with Goldoni's work; he had studied it in his actor's training programme and even performed roles inspired by the Commedia dell'Arte in selected plays by Goldoni. Despite his training and early acting experiences, Moretti was not prepared to wear a mask.

Born in Venice in 1910 to a working class family, Marcello Moretti did not join an actor-training programme until he was almost 28 years old (Jacobbi 52). After working as a lift-boy for the Albergo Europa, and failing to join the army (he was apparently disqualified for cardiac problems), Marcello Moretti, like Arlecchino, tried several trades, from travelling shoe salesman to postman and electrician (Ibid. 51-52). Those who were to become his close friends

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⁸ My translation of: “La conquista della 'maschera' fu, per tutti e per Marcello, un cammino progressivo che si urtò contro un numero impreciso di fatti: dalla mancanza di una tradizione viva, quindi di una abitudine mentale e fisica, alla mancanza tecnica, vera e propria, di 'strumenti' idonei.

[...] Per un fenomeno psichico l'attore con il viso coperto 'sentiva' meno se stesso ed i compagni. Inoltre gli sembrava di essere 'inespressivo'; gli era stata tolta un'arma potente: il gioco faciale. L'attore doveva ancora conquistare la 'mobilità' della maschera. Doveva 'rinventare' anche in questo una tradizione sepolta e che nessuno più poteva insegnarci.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)
in the theatre never knew exactly what triggered Moretti’s passion for the performing arts. In his late twenties, encouraged by his mother, Moretti entered the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica in Rome, the first state theatre school in Italy, co-founded and directed by Silvio D'Amico, the author, director, theatre critic, and “father and guide” of many generations of Italian theatre practitioners (Grassi, “La nostra casa” 263). Moretti attended the school from 1938 to 1940 (Cacco 13). As far as I know, he first performed a role in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition at the end of his training, in 1939. The play was Gozzi's *The King Stag*, staged by Alessandro Brissoni, at the Accademia. At present, we do not know whether Moretti performed with or without a solid mask in this production. But as we will see below, he most likely acted bare-faced.

Moretti’s first encounter as an actor with Carlo Goldoni's work probably occurred at the Accademia as well. Students of this school, Raul Radice explains, were introduced to Goldoni as early as the admission process. “Among the entrance exams of this school,” he notes, “one consists in the cold reading, by the candidate, of a scene chosen by the jury; it is not unusual that the scene be selected from one of Goldoni's plays.”10 (132) Goldoni, Radice continues, was also studied in class, and the Accademia's young actors performed selected scenes from his work during public examinations held in their first and second year (*Ibid.*). The directing

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9. The Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica was founded in 1935. D'Amico was its director until 1954. The chief motive behind the creation of the Accademia, Gian Giacomo Colli posits, was “ [...] to introduce the interpretative and organizational rigour that was already established in other parts of Europe [...]” (37). The Accademia was instrumental in training not only actors, but also directors. Until about the mid-twentieth century, the capocomico of theatre companies ruled on stage. By training and sending young directors in the theatre market, the Accademia participated in changing the hierarchical model of Italian theatre practices from the inside. The Accademia, inspired by Copeau's and Stanislavski's schools in France and in Russia, also contributed to change the face of actors' training in Italy. Until then, many - though not all - working actors were likely “born” in the profession; they generally learned their craft by observing - and sometimes imitating - more experienced actors and by working as a novice in a theatre company. The Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica is still active today; it now operates under the name of Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica “Silvio D'Amico.”

10. My translation of: “Tra le prove degli esami di ammissione di quella scuola, una consiste nella lettura all'improvviso, da parte del candidato, di una scena indicata seduta stante dalla commissione giudicatrice; e non è infrequente che la scena sia scelta in una delle tante commedie goldoniane.” (*Ibid.* 131-132)
students of the school soon staged full-length plays by Goldoni in the frame-work of their training. These plays were produced by the theatre company attached to the school, the Compagnia dell'Accademia.\(^{11}\)

Though Goldoni's work had an important place in the Roman school's curriculum, masked performance in the Commedia tradition did not.

It is perfectly true that the primitive actor, in order to “become another,” appealed to the mask. This strategy is explained by recalling how, for many centuries, the setting of theatre performances was the outdoors, where, for obvious reasons, very clearly registered features were needed. And our commedia dell'arte actors held on to the mask: not only because the commedia dell'arte originated in the open, but above all because the actor, wearing it, intended to become a stylized “character type,” fixed once and for all.

As it moved from outdoor to indoor settings, the theatre performance acquired an intimate aspect, for which the conventional, puppet-like immobility of the mask was no longer appropriate. This is how the actor's mimicry, until then expressed through the entire body, was preferentially directed to the face, which is forever the seat of the most elevated human expressions. Furthermore, with the transformation of the characters and of their personalities, it became essential that the actors' faces change each time, and this made necessary the use of make-up: the modern tool \textit{par excellence}, which in modern times has produced excellent results.\(^{12}\) (D'Amico, “Scuola di trucco” 11)

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\(^{11}\) In his article “Vent'anni di regia goldoniana”, Radice lists the plays by Goldoni that were staged by the Compagnia dell'Accademia between 1944 and 1956. These were: \textit{Il servitore di due padroni} (“The Servant of Two Masters”), staged in 1944 by student director Alberto D'Aversa – with Moretti in the title role; \textit{La famiglia dell'antiquario}, staged by Orazio Costa in 1946; \textit{Il ventaglio}, under the direction of Alfredo Zennaro in 1947; \textit{Una delle ultime seres di carnevale [sic]}, staged by Giorgio Bandini in 1954; \textit{La figlia obbediente}, a 1955 staging of Giacomo Colli; and \textit{I due gemelli veneziani}, on the spring of 1956, in a staging of Giuseppe Borrelli (Radice 132). As for the style of these productions, Radice explains that the Accademia tried not to follow one stylistic tendency and left its students the liberty to “follow their own predilections.” (133)

\(^{12}\) My translation of: “Ciò è tanto vero che l’attore primitivo, per ‘diventare un altro’ ricorreva alla maschera. Espediente che si spiega soprattutto ricordando come, durante molti secoli, la sede dello spettacolo drammatico fu all’aperto: dove si richiedono, per ovvie ragioni, linee ben rilevate. E alla maschera si attennero i nostri comici dell’arte: non solo perché anche la commedia dell’arte nacque all’aperto, ma soprattutto perché, in essa, l’attore intendeva diventare un ‘tipo’ stilizzato, fissato una volta per sempre.

Senonché, trasportandosi dall’aperto al chiuso, lo spettacolo drammatico acquistò caratteri di un’intimità, a cui la convenzionale, marionettistica immobilità della maschera non conveniva più. Fu così che la mimica dell’attore, fino allora espressa negli atteggiamenti di tutto il corpo, puntò di preferenza sul suo volto: che è pur sempre la sede delle più alte espressioni umane. E poiché d’altra parte, col mutare dei personaggi e dei loro caratteri, si richiedeva che il viso dell’attore mutasse ogni volta, si affermò la necessità del trucco: mezzo, per eccellenza, moderno, e che appunto nei tempi moderni è giunto all’eccellenza dei suoi risultati.” (D’Amico, “Scuola di trucco” 11)
Though it was written almost a decade after Moretti and D’Amico’s encounter at the
Accademia, this text suggests that the director of the Roman school privileged make-up over
masks in his teaching and production methods.\(^{13}\) The changing and subtle expressions of the
face seemed to have won over the large and rigid traits of the masks. Also, the histrionic
connotations of the Commedia masks, their association with “fixed character types” and with
extempore creations would have been suspicious to D’Amico, who advocated for a theatre of
authors, the respect of the text, and the affirmation of the stage director over the star-actor.\(^{14}\)
Should Moretti have performed a role inspired by the Commedia dell’Arte in a play by Goldoni,
and under the direction of D’Amico, he would likely have done so with his face completely
uncovered or accentuated only with make-up, leaving his visage free, mobile and visible on
stage.

In 1944, Moretti played Truffaldino in Alberto D'Aversa's staging of Goldoni's *Servant
of Two Masters*, at the Compagnia dell'Accademia.\(^{15}\) Ruggero Jacobbi reveals that Moretti did
not perform with a mask in this production. Instead, he painted a “glossy black mask” on his

\(^{13}\) The school was indeed associated with a stage make-up school – or perhaps was it only a course – directed by Viotti (Grassi, “Marcello, un amico” 7).

\(^{14}\) D'Amico was well aware that the history of Commedia dell'Arte was rife with grey zones that could lead to
misinterpretation of documents and cause academic and artistic controversy. He also knew that the words
“Commedia dell'Arte” had various connotations for actors and audiences alike. In his introduction to the
Commedia issue of *Rivista di studi teatrali*, D'Amico recalls the many significations “Commedia dell'Arte” had
in Italy during the first half of the twentieth century (D'Amico, “Introduzione”). He remembers that when he
was a boy, the term “comico dell'arte” sometimes designated the old-fashion actor who had little respect for the
author's words, and who took liberties with the text (“Introduzione” 5). The term could also refer to the
versatility, mimicry, and acting techniques used by specific performers in variety shows (*Ibid.* 5-6). “Commedia
dell'Arte” could also be associated with the extempore creations of actors and the improvisation of *lazzi* by
popular comedians like Petrolini. Using Eduardo De Filippo's interpretation of Pulcinella as an example,
D'Amico also suggests that certain characters of the Commedia would be associated with the performance of a
particular actor.

\(^{15}\) Probably referring to Moretti's performance in D'Aversa's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the
Accademia, Jacobbi writes: “While he [Marcello Moretti] was too infatuated with his own body, to the point
that he made an extensive and non purposeful use of it, and still agitated from the effort and the joy of his
acting, Marcello already demanded absolute realism [of himself]; and I use ‘absolute’ in its philosophical
meaning of ‘transcendental’” (*Ibid.*)(54)*

* My translation of: “Ancora troppo innamorato del proprio corpo, sino a farne un uso ostensivo e non
funzionale, ancora troppo agitato dallo sforzo e dalla gioia dello sfogo, Marcello tuttavia poneva sin d’allora
l’esigenza di un realismo assoluto; e dò alla parola “assoluto” il senso filosofico di ‘trascendental’. “(*Ibid.*)
face (Jacobbi 54). There was therefore a precedent to Moretti's 1947 painted face. The first acting challenge identified by Strehler, the players' lack of training in masked performance, thus applies to Moretti, and certainly contributed to his initial rejection of the solid mask.

2.1.2 Second challenge: the inadequate masks in the production

Strehler highlighted a second challenge relative to masked performance in *The Servant of Two Masters*: the inadequacy of the masks used in the production. In an article dated 1962, Strehler implies that while Moretti performed with a painted face, his fellow actors in the roles of Pantalone (Antonio Battistella), Dottore (Armando Alzelmo) and Brighella (Franco Parenti) wore solid masks (“In margine al diario” 59). He does not specify, however, when these masks became available to the performers and how long they rehearsed with them. As for the actors interpreting the Lovers and the maid Smeraldina, photographs of the production show them performing bare-faced, as it is the custom in the Commedia tradition.

The rudimentary masks used in the first production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro were apparently made of superposed layers of “paper-mâché and gauze”

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16 There are discrepancies in the documents providing information on the production's first masks. In his 1962 article “In margine al diario,” Strehler reports that actor Marcello Moretti painted a mask on his face. He also implies that the other performers interpreting roles of traditionally masked characters wore masks in paper-mâché. At no point in the article does he suggest that an actor other than Moretti performed with a painted face. In “Rôle du masque dans la formation de l'acteur,” Jacques Lecoq remembers that when he first attended a production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro around 1948—Moretti was wearing black make-up that gave the “illusion” of a mask while the other actors performed with solid masks (267). The section on Strehler's stagings of the *Servant of Two Masters* in *1947-58 Piccolo Teatro*, however, tells that in the first production, “the actors” had their masks painted on their face (35). Nico Pepe, in the book on Pantalone he published in 1981, provides the same information (87). The photographs of the first production of *The Servant of Two Masters* available on the Piccolo Teatro Web archives suggest that three out of the four actors playing the roles of traditionally masked characters wore solid masks, while Moretti wore thick make-up. Only the pictures of Marcello Moretti in the role of Arlecchino are close-up images. They reaveal Moretti's painted face in detail. The pictures showing the other masked characters were taken from a distance, which makes it difficult to distinguish solid masks from painted faces. I am inclined to believe Strehler's and Lecoq's reports on the masks used in the production. It is possible that the information provided in *1947-58 Piccolo Teatro* is erroneous and that Pepe, who only joined the Piccolo Teatro in the second half of the 1950s, copied this error.
(Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59). “We made them, one might say, with our own hands,17 day by day,” Strehler remembers18(Ibid.). As a result of this process, the masks were uncomfortable and weak in performance. As Strehler describes:

The masks were “infernal,” impractical, painful. The parts in relief soon penetrated in the flesh, visibility was relative and distorted. Worn as they were so close to the face, with a primitive elastic system, deprived of flexibility, the masks did not allow the eyelids to move. The eyelashes of the actor touched the edges [of the mask] and made the eyes weep eternal and secret tears. [...] When the masks were being used, the actors' sweat penetrated the cardboard and little by little dissolved the solidity of the mask. At the end of the show, we were holding in our hands a few black rags, dripping with sweat, that returned to a certain shape and solidity only on the following day.19 (Ibid.)

The discomfort caused by the masks certainly contributed to Moretti’s initial refusal to wear one.20 More importantly, the combination of an ill-fitted mask with the fast tempo of the performance and Strehler's choice of scenography presented a high risk of injury.

The actors in Strehler's first staging of The Servant of Two Masters performed on a raised platform 7.6 metres wide by 5 metres deep (Douël Dell’Agnola, Gli spettacoli 40). On this trestle stage, Strehler’s actors – especially Moretti – performed at a frantic pace.21 “Lacking

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17 Strehler does not specifying whose “hands” made the masks. Did each actors make his own mask, or did scenographer Gianni Ratto or perhaps costume designer Ebe Colciaghi create these props? Did other collaborators and assistants at the Piccolo Teatro, or even Strehler, made the “infernal masks”? Strehler also does not tell when the masks became available to the performers and if they used them early or at all during the rehearsal process.

18 My translation of: “Le costruimmo, si può dire, con le nostre mani, giorno per giorno.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)

19 My translation of: “Erano maschere ‘infernali’, scomode, dolorose. Le parti in rilievo penetravano ben presto nella carne, la visibilità era relativa e distorta. Applicate com'erano strettamente al viso, con un sistema di elastici primitivo, prive di flessibilità, le maschere non permettevano alle palpebre di muoversi. Le ciglia dell’attore urtavano contro i bordi e facevano lacrimare gli occhi, in un pianto perenne e segreto. [...] Durante l’uso, poi, il sudore degli attori penetrava nel cartone e a poco a poco scioglieva la compattezza della maschera. Alla fine dello spettacolo, tenevamo tra le mani alcuni straccetti neri, gocciolanti, che solo all’indomani riprendevano una certa forma e consistenza.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)

20 To alleviate the discomfort caused by the poor design of the masks, the performers padded them in the inside. This, Strehler remembers, gave to the masks “a completely poetic aspect” (“In margine al diario” 59). The padding created a space between the face and the mask; it must have freed the actors’ jaw and allowed for better pronunciation. Padding must also have prevented the edges of the masks from getting into the actors’ eyes.

21 The actors' fast performance rhythm has been a trademark of the show from its beginning in 1947 until today. In an interview conducted at the Piccolo Teatro on the 7th of May 2009, actor Tommaso Minniti, who has been interpreting the role of Dottore since 2000, shared his first experience in Strehler’s show, on a tour in South
confidence in the text [...],” theatre critic Mosca lamented, “Strehler wanted 'to save' the comedy by reducing it to a ballet-farce very rapidly conducted to the rhythm of Arlecchino's movements.”22 (“I tre padroni di Arlecchino”)

The hysterical tempo of the production was closely related to the scenography. The set in 1947 had been designed with speed in mind. The performers, for example, could cross the small acting platform in only a few steps. Indeed, during the meal scene at the end of the second act, Moretti ran from one end of the stage to the other in seconds. This rapid pacing back and forth on the trestle stage was key to the success of the scene. Had the stage been larger, Strehler and Moretti would have needed to find other means to bring the second act to a culmination.23 An ill-fitted paper mask sliding down his face when he executed fast movements on a constricted platform could have physically endangered Moretti. Security, as mask-maker Donato Sartori24 once suggested in an interview,25 most likely became an argument Moretti used to convince Strehler to allow him to paint his face instead of wearing a solid mask. Strehler indeed admitted

Korea. Here is his impression of the tempo of Strehler’s staging of The Servant of Two Masters as he experienced it at the turn of this century: “ [...] Arlecchino was really a washing machine that went at a certain speed. You enter in it and there is no time to turn corners; you need to go immediately at the speed at which Arlecchino went ten years ago.” My translation of: “[...] l'Arlecchino era proprio una lavatrice che girava a una certa velocità. Tu entri dentro e non hai tempo di prendere i giri, ma devi girare immediatamente alla velocità a cui girava l’Arlecchino dieci anni fa.”

22 My translation of: “Poco fiducioso nel testo (e la scarsa fiducia in un testo di Goldoni è un bell’atto di superbia) Strehler ha voluto ‘salvar’ la commedia riducendola a un balletto-farsa velocissimamente condotto sul ritmo dei movimenti d’Arlecchino.”(Mosca)

23 Theatre critic Elizio Possenti reported: “The culmination of the play is at the second act during the famous scene where Arlecchino serves lunch to both masters simultaneously, running from one side to the other [of the stage] unnoticed by both [masters].”*

* My translation of: “Il culmine della commedia è al secondo atto nella celeberrima scena in cui Arlecchino serve il pranzo contemporaneamente ai due padroni, correndo dall'uno all'altro all'insaputa di entrambi.” (Possenti)

24 Sculptor and mask-maker Donato Sartori is a long standing collaborator of the Piccolo Teatro. He has made and restored the masks in Strehler’s Servant of Two Masters since the early 1960s. His father, Amleto Sartori, created the first leather masks for the production. He worked closely with Marcello Moretti from 1952 to 1961.

25 I conducted this interview with Donato Sartori at his residence in Abano Terme (Italy), in June 2009.
that “[wearing make-up] was easier, especially for him [Moretti], [who was] in incessant movement [...]”\(^{26}\) (“In margine al diario” 59).

The second challenge identified by Strehler thus applies to Moretti. To his lack of training in the Commedia tradition and the burden of working with ill-fitted paper masks was added another cause to Moretti’s rejection of the mask, that of a more secret resistance rooted in fear.

2.1.3 Third challenge: the actor’s psychological resistance to the mask

The last challenge Strehler mentions regarding the use of mask in his first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* is the actors' psychological resistance to this new performance instrument. Indeed, using a solid mask obliged Moretti to revisit his acting practice, to question his expressive potential, and to re-evaluate his place on stage and his relationship to his character. In other words, Moretti, with a mask, needed to rethink his identity as an artist.

This section identifies aspects of the use of masks that might have fed Moretti's identity crisis in the mask. I understand, however, that my enterprise is delicate, that the interactions between the multiple causes that contributed to the actor's psychological resistance to the mask are elusive, and that I cannot grasp the complexity of the mind of a performer who experienced anxiety more than half a century ago. My study is also limited by the documents available on the matter. To my knowledge, Moretti did not leave written traces of his experience with the mask. I therefore rely mostly on Strehler's and Dario Fo's testimonies on Moretti's early career at the Piccolo Teatro. These testimonies were published long after 1947.

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\(^{26}\) My translation of: “Era piú comodo, soprattutto per lui, in eterno movimento [...].” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)
A first cause of Moretti’s identity crisis resides in the physical limitations imposed by the mask. The mask indeed affects how the actor sees, breathes, hears and speaks. It changes how he perceives the space, his colleagues, and himself. As Dario Fo explains: “[...] wearing a mask can, in an actor, induce anxiety deriving not so much from the use itself as from the fact that the mask restricts both visual field and acoustic-vocal range. Your own voice seems to be singing at you, stunning you, ringing in your ears and, until you master it, you cannot control your breathing.” (Tricks 26) Because the mask alters the senses, the signs that compose the theatre production are perceived in a new way. Strehler's actors possibly “felt” themselves and their colleagues “less” because of mask-induced sensory disorientation (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59).

The physical limitations imposed by the mask also require the adoption of specific acting techniques Moretti and Strehler had yet to discover. With the mask, for example, every movement of the head needs to be deliberate. Domenico Pietropaolo explains that the small eye-openings on some traditional Commedia masks offer no lateral vision whatsoever, only a “tunnel vision” (“Scenario and Performance” 249). And actor Giorgio Bongiovanni27 agrees, “When you put on [the mask] for the first time, there is a sensation of disappearance and confusion since all of a sudden you lose all your points of reference; you can't distinguish left from right, you see the world through a small hole, therefore you can only see in front of you and not on the sides.”28 Performers, Pietropaolo adds, have to execute small movements of the head in order to complete the image in front of them, as if it were a puzzle (“Scenario and Performance” 249). This quick sequence of movements alters the actor's breathing, confers a

27 Bongiovanni joined Strehler's production of The Servant of Two Masters in 1990 as Brighella and Pantalone. He has been playing the role of Pantalone in the play ever since.

28 My translation of parts of an interview with Bongiovanni in May 2009: “Quando si mette la prima volta è una sensazione di smarrimento e di confusione perché, improvvisamente, si perdono i punti di riferimento; non si capisce più dov’è la destra dalla sinistra, si vede tutto il mondo attraverso il piccolo buco, quindi si vede soltanto davanti e non si vede di lato.”
nervous, animal-like, mechanical or puppet-like attitude to the character, and influences the overall performance of the actor. The need to discover and adopt new acting techniques in order to palliate to the visual limitations in the mask likely fed Moretti's psychological resistance to it.

Another factor that generated Moretti's crisis was the loss of facial expressions in the mask. Once the face is hidden, the actor needs to express emotions and intentions with the modulations of the voice and with the entire body. This supposes a highly controlled use of the body, the exaggeration of gestures, the punctuation of movements and speech with pauses (immobility and/or silence) and the spending of a high level of energy on stage. Moretti had been selected for the role because he had demonstrated a talent for vigorous acting and acrobatics at the Accademia. To my knowledge, however, he had never performed with his face covered before. Communicating without the help of facial gestures must have been unthinkable for an actor trained in a school whose director thought of the human face “as the seat of the most elevated human expressions.” (D'Amico “Scuola di trucco” 11) As Strehler recalls, “Marcello did not wear the mask because he could not wear it, but also because he kept saying [that with the mask]: 'the changes of expression would be lost’.”

Moretti also needed to discover a performance style adapted to a rigid tool that not only had a theatrical function, but also had mystical connotations. As Strehler explains:

The mask is a mysterious, a terrible, tool. It has always given me a sense of dismay. With the mask, we are at the threshold of theatre mystery; it reveals the demons, the fixed, immobile, and ecstatic faces at the roots of theatre. It is soon noticeable that the actor, when on stage, cannot touch the mask with an ordinary gesture (like putting a hand on his forehead, a finger on his eyes, or covering his face with his hands). Such a gesture becomes absurd, not human, and wrong. To recover expressiveness, the actor must make the same gesture with the hand, and not execute it on the mask in a realistic way. In short, the mask does not support the concreteness of real gestures. The mask is ritual.

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29 My translation of: “Marcello non mise allora la maschera perché non poteva metterla, ma anche perché diceva: 'si perderebbe il gioco dell'espressione'.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 60)

30 Strehler, however, does not further discuss his understanding of the mask as a ritual object within or outside of
Another challenge the actor needed to overcome was the perceived loss of personal identity behind the mask. Masked performance, especially for an actor at the beginning of his career, is an act of humility since the public recognizes the masked character before it can identify the actor playing it. Moretti might have feared to be identified with his mask and to become, for the public, Arlecchino-Moretti. There is indeed a long tradition of Commedia dell'Arte actors being identified with their roles (Truffaldino-Sacchi, for example). This reality was already acknowledged by Goldoni in *Il teatro comico*. “I will tell you, master,” Anselmo responds to Lelio in the play, “With the mask I am Brighella, without the mask I am a man […].” Moretti might also have feared that performing a Commedia protagonist with a mask would confine him to one type of roles in heavily stylized productions. In other words, perhaps he thought that performing with a mask would give a direction to his career he was not yet willing to pursue.

31 My translation of: “La maschera è un istrumento misterioso, terribile. A me ha sempre dato e continua a dare un senso di sgomento. Con la maschera, siamo alle soglie di un mistero teatrale, riaffiorano i demoni, i visi immutabili, immobili, estatici, che stanno alle radici del teatro. Ci si accorse, ad esempio, ben presto, che l’attore, sulla scena, non può toccare la maschera, con un gesto consueto (mano sulla fronte, dito sugli occhi, coprirsi il viso con le mani). Il gesto diventa assurdo, inumano, sbagliato. Per ritrovare la sua espressione l’attore deve indicare il gesto con la mano, non compierlo ‘realisticamente’ sulla maschera. La maschera insomma non sopporta la concretezza del gesto reale. La maschera è rituale.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 59)

32 “Moretti the actor,” Strehler wrote, “felt Arlecchino like a cruel ‘limitation’ of the possibilities to express himself in other dimensions on stage. This character, this mask he wore one day, ended up being his second way to be in the theatre. The actor, at a certain point, for the public and for theatre people, was identified with his mask.”* (In margine al diario” 57-58) “I almost lost my name,” Moretti declared in a 1954 interview, “everywhere I am Arlecchino”.** (Moretti quoted in Palma)

33 My translation of: “Ghe dirò, patron. Colla maschera son Brighella, senza maschera son un omo […].” (Goldoni *Teatro comico* 2.1.41-42)
Finally, Moretti perhaps experienced anxiety triggered by the intimate physical contact of the rigid mask with his face. “A singular sensation afflicts you when you take off the mask,” Fo observes, “— this, at least, is my reaction — the fear that part of your face has remained stuck to it, or the fear that the face has gone with the mask. When you remove the mask after having it on for two or three hours, you have the impression of annihilating yourself.” (Tricks 26)

The physical limitations imposed by masks, the urge to discover the mobility of a masked character in a very short period, the need to act without the use of facial expressions, to perform in a non-realistic style, the risk of physically disappearing behind the traits of the character and of getting “stuck” in a mask, figuratively and literally, could all have challenged Moretti’s perception of himself as an artist. The causes of Moretti’s resistance to the mask were undoubtedly intertwined with one another and were perhaps bounded together by the more diffused anxiety of the actor confronted to a new and challenging experience. “Fearful,” Grassi remarks, “Marcello was always fearful.”^{34} (“Marcello, un amico” 8)

Before he could find freedom within the limitations of his mask, and before he became the first actor among Strehler’s cast to discover the full expressive potential of a Commedia mask, Marcello Moretti drew a black shape on his visage. His painted face was a transitional phase between the subtlety of facial expressions and the rigidity of the solid mask. It was a step towards the de-humanization of his character. But what was the exact nature of Moretti’s make-up? And how did it affect his performance?

2.2 The painted face: description of Moretti's make-up

The make-up Moretti wore in the first production of The Servant of Two Masters was apparently black with a wax base (Fo, Tricks 26). Unlike other types of stage make-up, Moretti’s make-up

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^{34} My translation of: “Paura. Marcello ha sempre avuto paura.” (Grassi, “Marcello, un amico” 8)
painted face did not realistically enhance his natural features, it did not beautify him or correct
his facial traits, nor did it suggest the age and gender of his character. Instead, it “theatricalized”
Moretti’s body and fulfilled the convention within the Commedia dell'Arte tradition of
identifying Arlecchino with his mask.

Traditionally, an Arlecchino mask covers only half of the performer's face.35 So did
Moretti's make-up. Black paint covered his face from the forehead to the phyltrum, including the
cheek-bones and nose. His jaw remained unpainted. Moretti then traced the contour of the black
make-up with white. This detail accentuated the contrast between the dark paint and Moretti's
natural skin tone. It also set the limits of the painted mask and gave it more depth. The actor then
drew large eye-openings and traced two arched eyebrows just above his own. It appears from
photographs from 1947 that these eyebrows and eye-openings were filled with white make-up.
Moretti also painted two lines of expression on his forehead. One of these lines, over the right
eye, came down to his nose in the shape of a reversed “J”. The actor also traced rings between
his nostrils and those of the black mask, and drew small circles on his cheeks. It is unclear
whether he filled these circles with white make-up or if he left them unpainted. The effect,
however, was the same: the light-coloured details stood out from the black face and could be
seen from far away. Moretti completed his painted face by enhancing the size and shape of his
lips: he traced the contour of his mouth with a fine line of dark make-up and possibly covered
his lips with red paint. This detail enlarged the actor's lips and made all movements of his mouth
visible (see fig.1). Traced lips is the only element of the 1947 make-up Moretti kept when he
finally wore a leather mask. His successors in the role of Arlecchino, Ferruccio Soleri and, more
recently, Enrico Bonavera, adopted this practice as well.

35 To the half-mask would sometimes be attached a pastiche beard.
Though it was rudimentary and monochrome, Moretti's make-up appears to have expressed several aspects of his interpretation of Arlecchino. The general look of the make-up was non-aggressive, even friendly and youthful. The roundish lines of the painted face, the large eye-openings and light eyebrows as well as the circular dots on the cheeks – the chubbiest part of the actor's face – gave a somewhat ageless look to the character.\(^\text{36}\) The pale circles around the eyes acted like the extension of the white of the actor’s own eyes, and gave the impression that the character was fully alert, ready to act or to absorb all that he saw. The pale and large eye-openings also framed Moretti's dark pupils and made it easier for the audience to follow his gaze. Finally, the wide eyes and high eyebrows may have appeared, to the spectators, as if Arlecchino was surprised or impressed, in a constant state of alertness or of discovery.

It appears from the archival photographs of Strehler's first production of *The Servant of Two Masters* that the black make-up also de-individualized Moretti, including erasing his facial features and flattening his nose. The actor's heavy make-up certainly de-humanized him and indicated that his character belonged to the realm of fiction. Over all, Moretti's face resembled more an animated cartoon than a man.\(^\text{37}\)

There were advantages to Moretti's painted face. Unlike the solid mask, the make-up did not impede speech nor did it affect vision or breathing. Furthermore, it did not put pressure on the face. In performance, Moretti would have been able to forget his make-up. There were

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\(^{36}\) In an article on clown make-up, Paul Bouissac observes that a juvenile look is created by features that include: “roundness of the skull and face, chubby cheeks, absence or extreme lightness of eyebrows, position of the eyes halfway between the top and bottom of the face, larger eyes with respect to the total face, and shortness of the nose and other natural protuberances.” \(^\text{74}\)

\(^{37}\) Actor Nico Pepe, who played the role of Pantalone in Strehler’s production of *The Servant of Two Masters* for the theatre season 1958-59 to 1977-78, remembers that during his youth there was a cartoon strip featuring the Commedia dell'Arte characters in the popular *Corriere dei piccoli*, the children's rubric of the Milanese newspaper *Corriere della sera* \(^\text{70-71}\). Unfortunately, Pepe does not specify when this cartoon strip was published. I have not yet been able to find images of it. It would however be interesting to compare Moretti's make-up to the cartoon image of Arlecchino.
disadvantages, however, to wearing make-up and not a solid three-dimensional mask with enhanced features. When the theatre lights touch the shapes, angles and plane surfaces of a solid mask, it becomes flexible, mobile, “alive.” As the actor moves his head, new expressions of the mask are revealed. The same effect, however, does not occur with heavy black make-up. Moretti would have had to exaggerate his facial expressions for them to be seen by the spectators, mere changes of the angle of his head would not have been sufficient to convey meaning. Another disadvantage of the painted face was that it gave a non-unified look to the performance. Two kinds of masks were displayed, some were rigid and one was drawn. Giorgio Strehler, with the insistence of Moretti, accepted this. But how did the press react to it?

2.3 On the press' reactions – or lack or reactions – to Moretti's painted face

The theatre reviews of *The Servant of Two Masters* published in Milanese newspapers in 1947 rarely mention the masks in the production. Critics were strongly divided, and were generally more concerned with Strehler's manipulation of Goldoni's text, his apparently authoritarian directing style, the fast pace of the production, and the stylized gestures of the actors than with the presence of masks on stage. For example, critic Carlo Lari commented:

 [...] and in the name of his many and recognized virtues, Strehler is acquitted of his recent minor sins of which we have not yet spoken: the contamination of Brighella with Tartaglia, [and] the audacious interpolations in the text of the comedy, [...]. And, above all, the scholastic nature of the performance. An illustrious actress, for a long time retired from the stage, who was present at the performance said with an indulgent air: Not bad these kids! 38 (“Fuochi a mezzodi”)

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38 My translation of: “[...] e in nome delle sue molte e riconosciute virtù sia assolto lo Strehler per i suoi peccatucci più recenti di cui non abbiamo ancora detto: la contaminazione di Brighella con Tartaglia, le audaci interpolazioni nel testo della commedia, [...]. E, soprattutto [sic], l'andazzo scolastico della rappresentazione. Una illustre attrice, da tempo ritirata dalle scene, che era presente alla recita, diceva con aria indulgente: Mica male questi ragazzi!” (Lari)
Then, several critics mentioned Reinhardt's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* (see chapter 1), sometimes without drawing a clear comparison with Strehler's production, but always using it as a point of reference in the “recent” staging history of the play. Reinhardt's 1924 staging of Goldoni's play, with Thimig in the title role, had completed a tour of Italy in 1932 (Ferrone, *Carlo Goldoni* 130) and left a strong impression on the theatrical landscape of that country. It is unclear whether Strehler attended the production or not, but it is certain that what he knew of it influenced his directing choices. Reinhardt's staging, Ferrone summarizes, “privileged gesture over dialogue, [and] choreography over speech.”

The adepts of “pure theatricality” were ecstatic in the face of the Viennese production (*Ibid.*). Like Reinhardt before him, Strehler explored the theatrical potential of Goldoni's play; he used colourful costumes and backdrops, emphasized the actors' inventions, conducted a stylistic exploration heavily based on gesture, and explored playfulness and pure laughter on stage. Unlike Reinhardt, however, Strehler included masks — solid and painted — in his production. This crucial difference between the aesthetic of both productions went unnoticed by the critics.

Arguably, the presence of solid masks and painted face alongside bare-faced protagonists provided a mixture of visual textuality on stage. To the extent that they physically resembled the spectators (like them, they could communicate with facial expressions), the bare-faced characters could have invited the public to identify with them. The protagonists wearing solid masks, on the other hand, represented human characters by conventions more than by immediate resemblance with the spectators and, for some theatre scholars, among them Domenico Pietropaolo, they even appeared to be made of a different “substance” than bare-faced characters since their masks and the actors’ movements resulting from wearing a mask made these

39 My translation of: “[...] aveva privilegiato il gesto rispetto al dialogato, la coreografia rispetto alla recitazione.” (Ferrone, *Carlo Goldoni* 130)
characters hybrid combinations of human and animal or of human and mechanical (“Scenario and Performance” 249) (see section 2.1.3). The frozen facial traits of the masks obliged the actors to communicate with their entire body and thus induced a non-realistic acting style. Moretti’s painted face was situated somewhere between immediate resemblance and symbolic representation. There was therefore an interplay of three levels of reality on stage, embodied by the different characters. This visual mixture and its impact on the spectators were only possible in the context of a performance. Reading the play would not have enabled the audience to witness the different nature, or “substance”, of each character. It is difficult to say how spectators of Strehler’s first staging of The Servant of Two Masters reacted to the various characters on stage and to seeing them share the same fictive world. To my knowledge, no theatre critic commented on the “visual mixture” of characters in 1947.

When the word “mask” was used by reviewers, it usually referred to a traditionally masked character in the play, not to the object on the actors' faces. To my knowledge, only two critics briefly wrote on the masks as both characters and theatrical objects in the production; the theatre reviewer for L’Unità commented on the masks’ “surreal” aspect, and Raffaele Carrieri, in Omnibus, associated them with Commedia dell’Arte before Goldoni's reform. Interestingly, these critics did not mention Moretti’s make-up nor the presence of both solid masks and a painted face on stage. That most reviewers made no notice of the masks in Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play suggests that: (1) Strehler was not the only director staging a play in the Commedia tradition with solid masks, (2) it was (or had once been) common practice for actors to draw a mask on their face instead of wearing one, and (3) there were precedents to the coexistence of solid masks and painted faces on stage.

Performing a character inspired by the Commedia dell’Arte tradition without a mask was not an isolated case in Italy during the first half of the twentieth century. Cesco Baseggio and
Ermete Zacconi, two celebrated actors of the early twentieth century, were known for the psychological realism and naturalistic interpretation of the traditionally masked characters in Goldoni’s plays (Calendoli 323, 328). Emilio Zago, known for his interpretation of Pantalone, was said to act in a natural manner,40 “living” the part on stage (Bosisio, Il teatro di Goldoni 24). The images that we have of these three exceptional performers often show them wearing the traditional costume of their character, but without a mask. There were, however, performances of Goldoni's plays in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition in which actors wore masks. In Pantalone: storia di una maschera e di un attore, Nico Pepe remembers a Commedia performance he attended during his early childhood in which the actor playing Pantalone wore a mask. Unfortunately, Pepe does not recall the title and author of the play. He also omits to mention the date of the performance. Pepe, however, provides a description actor Albano Mezzetti,41 who played Pantalone in the production: “[...] his red costume under the black cloak, and the mask, hat, beard, and the actor's curvy posture, on these bended legs, and the voice that sounded hoarse from the alteration of the mask [...].”42 (72) In addition to testimonials like Pepe's, there are several images of productions of Goldoni's plays that confirm the use of solid masks on Italian stages before the war. A photograph published by Luigi Ferrante in I comici Goldoniani, for example, shows that in a 1927 production of Goldoni's Il bugiardo, produced by the celebrated Gandusio company, Arlecchino and Brighella wore solid masks, while Pantalone,

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40 I must agree with Paolo Bosisio that the use of the words “realistic” and “natural” in this context can be misleading. He specifies that when it is used to qualify the acting style of early twentieth century Goldonian performers, the word “natural” is often relative and dated. He also advocates for understanding the word as the “codified enactment of spontaneity.” The natural acting style of most early twentieth century Goldonian performers, Bosisio specifies, was not completely depraved of all mannerism inherited from the nineteenth century (Il teatro di Goldoni 60).

41 Albano Mezzetti (Venice 1850 - Milan 1923) was born in a family of actors and visual artists. “His father,” Pepe informs, “was a good painter and an acclaimed set designer.”* (Pepe, Pantalone 72) He performed in the Compagnia del Morolin and became chef-actor of other Venetian theatre companies (Ibid.).

* My translation of: “[...] suo padre fu un buon pittore e acclamato scenografo [...].” (Ibid.)

42 My translation of: “[...] il suo abito rosso sotto la nera zimarra, e la maschera, il berettone, la barbetta e quello star curvo dell'attore, su quelle gambe piegate e la voce che gli usciva chioccia nell'alterazione della maschera [...].” (Pepe, Pantalone 72)
played by Emilio Zago, was bare-faced and without thick make-up (Ferrante n. pag.). Another image, this time of a 1936 staging of *I due gemelli veneziani* starring Antonio Gandusio, shows what appears to be actors Campi (Dottore), Roveri (Arlecchino) and Garzes (Brighella) wearing solid Commedia masks (Bosisio, *Il teatro di Goldoni* 36). Though these are perhaps isolated cases of the use of masks in early twentieth-century Italian productions, they nonetheless support the hypothesis that critics might not have reacted to the use of masks in Strehler's first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* because they were already familiar with representations of Goldoni's plays both with and without masks.

There is also evidence that some actors who performed characters in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition painted their face instead of wearing solid masks. As we saw earlier in this chapter, Marcello Moretti painted a “glossy black mask” (Jacobbi 54) when he first performed Truffaldino in Alberto D'Aversa's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1944. A series of postcards of Renato Simoni's 1940 staging of *Femeile Curioase* – in which Moretti played Lelio – also proves that Moretti's blackened face was not unique. More importantly, these

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43 On the presence of masks on European stages in the early twentieth century, Aslan stresses that “After the return to the mask recommended by Edward Gordon Craig, experimented by J. Copeau, by O. Schlemmer at the Bauhaus and mostly during the first twenty years of that century, the mask appeared accidentally in a few isolated performances, without its use proceeding from a theory or from a long term research on masked performance.”* (Aslan, “L'Arlequin” 173) She, however, did not comment on the Italian context specifically, and though her assertion is likely to correspond to reality, her statement remains general.

44 A set of these postcards is preserved in the archives of La Scala, in Milan.

45 Renato Simoni (Verona 1875- Milan 1952), was a dramaturg, theatre critic, author, director, avid collector of theatre artifacts, and theatre erudite. He developed and shared his vision of Goldoni’s work through his writings and stagings. Simoni was considered to be a living resource for those who wished to learn about Goldoni and the Commedia dell’Arte tradition. He owned an eighteenth-century Arlecchino costume (1947-1958 Piccolo Teatro 38) as well as first editions of rare manuals and treatises on theatre. He also possessed a large but undetermined number of masks from different theatrical traditions that he later donated to the Teatro alla Scala. To my knowledge, no inventory of this collection was ever conducted by the personnel of La Scala. Simoni also gave this theatre an impressive collection of 40,000 books, images, figurines, magazines, costumes, masks, puppets, autographs, and manifests (*Enciclopedia dello spettacolo* 2007). The Biblioteca Livia Simoni, the Teatro alla Scala's library, was named after Renato Simoni's mother.

46 The play, dating 1753, is generally known as *Le donne curiose*. 

postcards – which are photographs of the production – reveal a precedent for the coexistence of solid masks and painted faces on stage. Indeed, while they show actors Otello Cazzola (Brighella) and Francesco Rissone (Arlecchino) wearing dark solid masks, they also reveal that Antonio Crast (Pantalone) was performing with a painted face. This suggests that the critics of Strehler's production of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1947 did not comment on the presence of both masks and a painted face on stage because they had seen it before.

After performing in Renato Simoni's staging of *Femeile curioase* alongside some actors wearing solid masks and another with a painted face, Moretti found it reasonable to blacken his visage to Arlecchino's image instead of wearing a mask. During the rehearsals of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1947, Moretti even showed to Strehler pictures of performers with painted faces to prove that wearing a thick make-up instead of a solid mask in a Commedia-inspired production was, or had been, common practice (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 60). Why, however, did Strehler, a young director with a strong vision and an equally strong personality, accept Moretti's solution?

2.4 *The ideology behind the 1947 production of The Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro*

Strehler's own acting experience, his practical understanding of the working conditions at the nascent Piccolo Teatro and the overall aesthetic he gave to the production were perhaps the main factors in his decision to allow Moretti to wear make-up instead of a solid mask. But as we will see in this last section of chapter 2, make-up and paper faces were also rhetorical tools that expressed the ideology behind Strehler's first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*.

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47 The slightly glossy finish of these masks suggest that they were made of leather.
By the time he co-founded the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, Giorgio Strehler had already been at the head of two (minor) theatre companies, he had read Craig, Copeau and Artaud, had some experience as a translator and as a theatre critic, and had directed a number of productions in Italy and in Switzerland. But he had also worked as a performer. In 1947, Strehler was still close to the actor's craft and was going back and forth between his newly shaped identity as a theatre director and his earlier role as a performer. During the first run of performances of *The Servant of Two Masters*, Strehler even played the part of Pantalone when actor Antonio Battistella was indisposed (Strehler quoted in Foradini 58). It is thus likely that he directly experienced the challenges presented by Commedia masks. Strehler might therefore have allowed Moretti to paint a mask on his face because he understood the level of anxiety an actor felt when confronted to a new, uncomfortable, and demanding performance instrument.

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48 La Compagnie des Masques (based in Switzerland), and the Maltagliati company (in Milan) (Casiraghi 223-224).
49 In articles he published about his work, Strehler mentions having read Craig and Artaud, and he generally refers to Copeau as one of his mentors in the theatre (Strehler, however, did not know Copeau personally). Interestingly, none of Strehler’s writings that I consulted for this thesis shows awareness of Copeau’s work with masks, and none discusses Craig’s ideas about masks. This is not to say that Strehler was not influenced, to a degree, by Craig’s thoughts about masking, or that he ignored Copeau’s experiments with masks and with characters inspired by the Commedia dell’Arte. But for reasons that remain elusive, Strehler did not discuss the aspects of Craig’s and Copeau’s work that are related to masks and Commedia.
50 In 1943, Strehler translated Appia's *Art vivant ou nature morte*. In 1942 and 1943, he translated *Le Coq et l'Arlequin* and wrote critical analysis on Cocteau and his work that he published in *Spettacolo* (Aslan, “Un chemin” 17).
51 In 1942 and 1943, Strehler published essays on the theatre in university newspapers such as Novara's *Posizione*, *Spettacolo-via* and Cremona's *Eccoci!*. These papers were then affiliated with the G.U.F or Gruppi Universitari Fascisti (University Fascist Groups), with the exception of *Eccoci!* which, by the time Strehler published in it, had left the G.U.F. to become an anti-fascist organization (Strehler, “Limiti di una platea” 15). After the war, Strehler also wrote a column on theatre in the newspaper *Milano sera*.
52 A detailed listing of Strehler's stagings from 1941 to 1975 can be found in *Un théâtre pour la vie*, edited by Sinah Kessler (see bibliography). A list of Strehler's stagings until 1987 was published by the CNRS in *Strehler*, Les Voies de la création théâtrale n. 16 (see bibliography). Another list is included in Ettore Gaipa's biographical book on Strehler – this list ends at the theatre season 1957-58 (see bibliography). A chronological listing of his productions from 1943 to 1991 is also included in David Hirst's *Strehler* (see bibliography). A short bibliography of Strehler, including details on his early stagings, can also be found in *Nessuno è incolpevole*, edited by Stella Casiraghi (see bibliography). A close comparison of each of these listings (and others), however, shows discrepancies in the dates of productions before 1947. For example, Gaipa places Strehler's first three stagings in 1941, and so does Kessler; the authors of a CNRS publication titled *Strehler*, however, as well as Hirst and Casiraghi situate them in 1943.
53 There is no evidence, however, that Strehler performed with a solid mask.
Strehler's decision also resulted from the difficult conditions of production in which actors were working at the time. In 1947, the rehearsal periods at the Piccolo Teatro generally lasted no longer than two weeks, and as we saw in the first part of this chapter, the players lacked training in the Commedia tradition, the masks created for the production were weak, and there were apparently no mentors who could teach masked performance techniques to the actors and to the director. In this context, imposing a rigid mask on a reluctant actor presented the risk of losing a collaborator. Although there is no evidence that Moretti threatened to quit the Piccolo Teatro if he was obligated to wear a solid mask, the actor, however, after first accepting the role, shied away from it and reluctantly reengaged in the production (Pozzi 179). It is therefore possible that Strehler agreed with Moretti's choice in order to secure the player's collaboration in the production.

Strehler also allowed Moretti to paint his face because it was harmonious with the overall visual aesthetic of the production. The style of Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play has been generally described as puppet-like, intellectual and allusive (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 35). Every scenic element, from Gianni Ratto's set design to the costumes by Ebe Colciaghi, evoked recognizable popular performance traditions without attempting any historical reconstructions. The small elevated platform on which the actors performed alluded to the stages early Commedia actors mounted in streets, inns, banquet halls, and marketplaces. This platform not

54 “[During the first theatre season at the Piccolo Teatro] We rehearsed the productions in a few days, ten-fifteen sessions, as it was the custom then.” (Strehler quoted in Foradini 57)*
* My translation of: “Provammo gli spettacoli pochissimi giorni, dieci-quindici prove, come era allora abitudine.” (Strehler quoted in Foradini 57)

55 Aslan tells that, in his attempt to convince Moretti to wear a mask, Strehler brought the actor to Bologna to meet an elderly performer who had inherited the role of Arlecchino from a previous generation of actors (“L’Arlequin” 174). The two men, however, did not obtain information on the use of masks in the Commedia dell’Arte tradition. The old Arlecchino had never performed with a mask; he could not be their mentor.

56 A number of theatre historians have come to the conclusion that, while early-modern Italian actors rapidly moved their productions to indoor locations such as banquet halls, marketplaces and public squares would have been the original settings of the earliest Commedia dell’Arte performances. As Domenico Pietropaolo suggests: “The setting in which commedia dell'arte was born was the urban marketplace of the High Renaissance, the
only evoked the popular origins of the Commedia dell'Arte, it also recalled a castelet for puppet theatre by framing the performance, imposing a physical limit to the players' movements and by directing the spectators' gaze on the constricted and colourful space. In his article “Arlecchino si addice al Piccolo Teatro,” theatre critic Pioppo indeed associated the production's set design with that of a theatre of marionettes while Mosca, in Oggi, compared the Piccolo Teatro to a “Girolamo” for adults.

The trestle stage characteristic of Strehler's first production of The Servant of Two Masters was limited in the back by three superimposed, painted backdrops, and reduced on the sides by rotating panels. Each backdrop represented, rather abstractly, a location in the play. A first backdrop indicated a room in Pantalone's house, another signified Brighella's inn, and a last curtain stood for a street in Venice. In order to indicate a change of locations in the play, the actors, in character, would slide one backdrop and reveal a new painted curtain behind it. Players would also rotate the panels on each side of the acting area; each panel had three surfaces, each of them completing the image created by the various backdrops. Changes of decor were performed in front of the spectators, and were part of the show. The production's scenography, with its trestle stage, backdrops and three-sided, rotating panels, was loosely

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mid-sixteenth century, where the economy of early Italian capitalism first began to influence dramatically the daily lives of ordinary members of society. There, unscrupulous charlatans and genuine vendors, in larger numbers than had ever been possible under feudalism, gathered to pitch their wares to a public that had quickly grown susceptible to the power of advertising. [...] The piazzas and marketplaces of Italy became the venues in which the legendary skills of commedia dell'arte players were developed and the real possibility of a commercially based entertainment industry was conceived.” (“The Theatre” 9-10) In his Mémoires, Goldoni informs that by the mid-eighteenth century, Italian Commedia actors were performing in a wide variety of venues, from the outdoor settings of Piazza San Marco and Verona's Roman arena to indoor theatres owned by investors in the entertainment industry, and from academies to salons of the nobility, and military quarters. He wrote: “Piccolo Teatro, little and cordial like a Venetian town square, you appeared this time even smaller: and your stage seemed definitely miniscule, almost like one of these stages for puppet theatre we can still find today – unfortunately only rarely – in our coastal city.” (Pioppo)


58 The Girolamo was a famous theatre of marionettes in Milan.
modelled after eighteenth-century decors and resembled set designs represented in paintings such as “L'opera seria” and “Intermezzo” (both from the Longhi school, and now apparently displayed at the Museo Teatrale alla Scala).\(^{59}\) The images painted on the backdrops and panels were colourful and heavily stylized but, as Douël dell'Agnola remarks, did not situate the play in a particular city nor in a precise socio-economic context (Gli spettacoli 40). This allusive scenography thus reminded the reviewer of Le scimmie e lo specchio of Prampolini's futurist paintings more than it evoked the elegantly ornate San Samuele theatre, for which Goldoni had written several plays. As for the costumes, they were clearly inspired by the iconography of the Commedia tradition but were not faithful reproductions of eighteenth-century attires.

Moretti's painted face was therefore harmonious with this allusive and heavily stylized visual environment Strehler, scenographer Gianni Ratto and costume designer Ebe Colciaghi had created. The black make-up referred to the solid masks traditionally used in the Commedia dell'Arte without being one. It hinted at the original outdoor settings where many Commedia performances took place before and during Goldoni's life time, and in which solid masks permitted the immediate identification of a character, even from far away. It also resembled eighteenth and nineteenth-century marionettes and glove puppets inspired by Commedia characters, and on which small darkish masks would sometimes be painted.\(^{60}\) Together, the set, costumes and painted face in the production created a visually attractive, non-illusory and metatheatrical environment most spectators would have been able to associate with the Commedia dell'Arte, as performed by live actors before Goldoni's reform, and as absorbed by puppet theatre.

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\(^{59}\) Photographs of these two paintings have been published in Pepe's Pantalone: storia di una maschera e di un attore (102-103), where I consulted them. It is likely that Strehler and his set designer Gianni Ratto were inspired by these or by similar images.

\(^{60}\) A collection of these marionettes is kept at the Casa Goldoni in Venice.
Strehler might also have accepted Moretti's painted face because, though it did not act upon the performer as a solid mask would, it forced him to express emotions with his entire body and thus participated in Strehler's research on gesture, rhythm and the physical potential of the actor. Gestural exploration in an anti-naturalistic style, Strehler indeed confirmed, was a major focus of his artistic activities in 1946 and 1947:

It is clear that many ideas I had on actors directly came from The Theatre and the Plague as well as from other texts in The Theatre and its Double. [...] we hadn't got to Brecht, but we had moved passed Stanislavski. [...] It was the time when we discovered gesture and mime [...] We were then analyzing the human body, silence, and gestures.\(^61\) ("A propos des dimensions" 159-160)

Strehler's effort to value the physical work of the actors in his vision of the Commedia tradition, Bosisio argues, was a reaction against the more mainstream theatre productions of the previous fifty years, in which speech was predominant (Tra Goldoni e Strehler 56). Strehler's use of solid masks and a painted face in the show thus contributed to shifting the main focus of the production from the author's words to the actors' performance.\(^62\) Indeed, it appears that many among Strehler's contemporaries would have had a literary knowledge of Goldoni, but only a

\(^{61}\) My translation of: "Il est clair que bien des idées que j'avais sur l'acteur venaient directement du Théâtre et la Peste comme des autres textes du Théâtre et son Double. [...] si nous ne connaissions pas Brecht, nous étions cependant en train de passer par dessus Stanislavski. [...] C'était l'époque de la découverte du geste et du mime [...]. Nous analysions alors le corps humain, le silence, la gestualité." (Strehler, "A propos des dimensions" 159-160)

\(^{62}\) Arguably, the presence of solid masks and painted face alongside bare-faced protagonists provided a mixture of visual textuality on stage. To the extent that they physically resembled the spectators (like them, they could communicate with facial expressions), the bare-faced characters could have invited the public to identify with them. The protagonists wearing solid masks, on the other hand, represented human characters by conventions more than by immediate resemblance with the spectators and, for certain theatre scholars such as Pietropaolo, even appeared to be made of a different "substance" than bare-faced characters. The frozen facial traits of the masks obliged the actors to communicate with their entire body and thus induced a non realistic acting style. Moretti's painted face was situated somewhere between immediate resemblance and symbolic representation. There was therefore an interplay of three levels of reality on stage, embodied by the different characters. This visual mixture and its impact on the spectators was only possible in the context of a performance. Reading the play would not have enabled the audience to witness the different nature, or "substance", of each character. It is difficult to say how spectators of Strehler's first staging of The Servant of Two Masters reacted to the various characters on stage and to seeing them relate on stage in the same fictive world. To my knowledge, no critic commented on the “visual mixture” among characters.
limited exposure to his plays in performance.63 By creating strong visual images with the actors' bodies on stage, Strehler made an effort to change (or challenge) the spectators' perception of Goldoni's plays from works of literature to theatre.64

This brings us to examine what many academics generally consider to be the main impulse behind the 1947 production of Goldoni's play: Strehler's formal exploration of a style he associated with the Commedia dell'Arte tradition before Goldoni's reform and which relied mostly, though not exclusively, on physical expression. What preoccupations fed this exploration? And what was the ideology behind it?

If there was little attempt from Strehler to situate the staging in a precise social-economic context, there was however a historical concern behind the production. As Ferrone explains,

“A [..] this staging [Strehler's production of The Servant of Two Masters in 1947] coincided with

63 A close reading of publications about Goldoni in performance on twentieth-century Italian stages suggests that during the 1930s and 1940s, Goldoni's plays might have been read in schools, perhaps as part of the curriculum, but were not often produced in the theatre. In his Comici goldoniani, Ferrante lists five stagings of Goldoni's plays that were signed by Renato Simoni in the 1930s, and mentions only one production by another director, Gino Rocca. These plays are: La bottega del caffé, staged by Rocca in 1934 in the courtyard of the Teatro San Luca, in Venice; Le baruffe chiozzotte, staged by Simoni in 1936 in Campo San Cosmo, Venice; Il ventaglio, staged that same year, also by Simoni, this time at the Campo San Zaccaria, always in Venice; Il bugiardo, a 1937 staging by Simoni at Campo San Trovaso in Venice; Il campiello, a 1939 staging by Simoni at Campiello del Piovan alla Bragora; and a second staging of Il ventaglio by Simoni (in Campo San Zaccaria, Venice). Ferrante does not mention any productions of Goldoni during the war, and the next stagings of Goldoni on Italian stages he speaks of are those of Strehler and Visconti in the late 1940s. My research in the archives of the Biblioteca Livia Simoni in Milan, however, revealed that Simoni staged at least one play by Goldoni during the war. This play, Femeile curioase, was staged in 1942 in Venice. Like Ferrante, theatre scholar Paolo Bosio avoids listing productions held between 1939 and 1947 in his Il teatro di Goldoni (see bibliography). The work of both Ferrante and Bosio suggests that Simoni was the director of Goldoni par excellence in the Veneto during the mid-twentieth century, and that Venice was then the epicentre of Goldonian productions. It also suggests that professional stagings of Goldoni were sparse during the war, or that Bosio and Ferrante judged that productions of that period by directors other than Simoni might not have been memorable, successful, or innovative enough to be studied.

64 In “Condizione di una polemica”, an article he published in 1942, Strehler had already denounced the predominance of the text on contemporary Italian stage and advocated for distinguishing literature from theatre. “Defending a text, a [playwright's] name,” he stated, “does not mean defending a Theatre, but only drama. [...] Theatre is 'also' [and] not 'only' drama; gestures, voices, lighting, proscenium are not additional to the drama. They are the main conditions, with equal risks and equal rights, for drama to become Theatre.”* (“Condizione” 6) I would argue that Strehler's staging of The Servant of Two Masters with masks was the materialization of ideas similar to those expressed in the 1942 article.

My translation of: “Difendere un testo, un nome, non è difendere un Teatro ma soltanto una letteratura. [...] Il teatro è 'anche' non 'solo' letteratura; gesti, voci, luci, ribalta non sono i complementi di una letteratura. Sono le prime necessità con pari rischi e pari diritti, perché una letteratura diventi un Teatro.” (Strehler, “Condizione” 6)
the need of contemporary Italian theatre to go back to the historical roots of our culture.” (146)³⁵

He continues:

Strehler, in the pursuit of the national-popular vocation of his and Grassi's theatre, faced the problem of Goldoni's reform and from the published text of 1753 went back to the presumable scenario of 1745; this way, the director was forced to gauge the original creative collaboration that might have existed between the playwright and his Arlecchino (Antonio Sacchi). What remained, in this production, was a disengaged sense of theatre as pure game, which recalled the aesthetic of Goldoni's productions before the war. (Ibid.)³⁶

The style of the 1947 production placed it within the spatio-temporal realm of an idealized “Golden Age” of Italian theatre, which Strehler actualized for a twentieth-century and post-war stage. Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play proceeded not only from a vision of a moment in theatre history, but also, and perhaps most importantly, from his understanding of the “mythology” surrounding the origins of modern Italian theatre. In his review, the theatre critic for Le scimmie e lo specchio indeed compared Moretti's gestures, walks, and acrobatics to those of Carlo Antonio Bertinazzi, who played Arlecchino at the Théâtre de la comédie italienne in the mid-eighteenth century. Though Moretti's painted face was not mentioned in this review, it perhaps also evoked Bertinazzi, who is known to have worn a dark, dog-like mask in performance. Audience members who were familiar with the scholarship available on Commedia at the time— in which the tradition was often idealized and, as it was the case in Sand's Masques et Bouffons, reduced to three essential components (masks, improvisation and archetypal characters) — might also have seen in the masks and painted face a sign of “authenticity” in Strehler's vision of pre-reform Commedia. According to some theatre critics of

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³⁵ My translation of: “[..] quella regia coincideva con il bisogno di recuperare allo spettacolo italiano contemporaneo il rapporto con le radici storiche della nostra cultura.” (Ferrone, Carlo Goldoni 146)

³⁶ My translation of: “Strehler, all'inseguimento di una cifra nazional-popolare per il teatro suo e di Paolo Grassi, affrontava il problema della riforma goldoniana e retrocedeva il testo edito nel 1753 allo stato presumibile del canovaccio datato 1745; in tal modo il regista era costretto a misurare l'originale rapporto creativo che dovette esistere fra lo scrittore e il suo Arlecchino (Antonio Sacchi). Restava, in quell'edizione, il senso ancora disimpegnato di un teatro come gioco puro, che ricordava il gusto dei goldoniani d'anteguerra.” (Ferrone, Carlo Goldoni 146)
the time, what emanated from the production was, indeed, a sense of rediscovery of a distant, defining and idealized moment in the national cultural history. For example, here is how Enrico d'Alessandro, writing for *L'Italia*, and Raffaele Carriere, theatre critic for *Omnibus*, received the production in 1947:

Giorgio Strehler's staging permitted vivid and ceaseless puppet-like performances for all the characters, and if there were many questionable choices in the first part, in the other two, and particularly in the second [part] – the dining scene is priceless – the expression was strong, harmonious and close to perfect. Marcello Moretti's interpretation of Arlecchino was decisive: it seems that he found within himself the most instinctive and genuine gifts of the Italian comedic tradition. ("Arlecchino servitore di due padroni")

Goldoni's *Arlecchino Servitore di Due Padroni* at the "Piccolo Teatro" has cooled down the hot Milanese July. [...] [It was] A refreshing Italian farce. It felt like being in the middle of the Trevi Fountain, between curtains and jets of water. [...] Laughter beat the heat. [This] Laughter was like strawberry ice cream, a great ice

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67 It is important to mention that Strehler's vision of Commedia dell'Arte before Goldoni's reform did not meet unanimous approval. "Strehler," wrote Mosca, "lost the opportunity to resurrect the commedia dell'arte since he left, at least in all appearances, greater liberty to the actors, [word erased] to improvise, to add [material in performance], to invent; these inventions, naturally, had been carefully prepared during table work, but appeared spontaneous [...]."* For the theatre critic of *Le scimmie e lo specchio*, Strehler's allusion to the history of the Commedia dell'Arte failed in the acting style, interpretation of characters and set design of the play: "Yes brought life to the Brighella of the commedia dell'arte; but at such a pace, it looked like he was racing, and instead of giving him the malicious speech of the Brighella of the reform, he gave him a stutter that dissolved when he sang, a trick that would become a 'novelty' in an entertaining French vaudeville, a hundred years or so [after the reform]. Arlecchino's changing movements; runs, chases, acrobatics and high-wire tricks were taken from the great Bertinazzi, and were given to the athletic interpretation of Marcello Moretti; the end result could not be classified as agile Goldonian wit, but rather as clownish buffoonery à la Ridolini. And when he combined the rotating panels of the most remote theatrical tradition to fantastical curtain backdrops, he did not evoke the delicate brushwork of the San Samuele's stage hands, but the paint strokes of the more violent Prampolini." ("Il grande assente ridolini")

cream picked over by a thousand teaspoons. An Italian ice cream that lasted three hours, [and was] beautiful to watch [...]. A farce that resembled a landscape, an Italian landscape full of diversions and surprises. A Goldoni in masks still attached to the Commedia dell'Arte, to tricks, stratagems, to spontaneous creation, to entertainment for entertainment's sake. [...] 

[...] [T]he stage design and costumes, the masks, the voices, everything that moves becomes malleable, invention, metamorphosis. Marcello Moretti has resurrected the Arlecchini of the old Commedia dell'Arte. Strehler could have staged the productions at the French court: this production marks the triumphant return of the Baroque style to the theatre. 69 (“Il trionfo d'Arlecchino”)

Besides re-imagining an iconic tradition of the national performance history, another concern behind Strehler's first production of The Servant of Two Masters was the democratization of the theatre event through the exploration of an anti-illusory style. In “Limiti di una platea,” an article he published in Eccoci! in 1943, Strehler advocates abolishing the hierarchy between stage and audience (15-19). To do so, he suggests to break away from a naturalistic style, to change the spacial configuration of the theatre, and to add stylizing elements on stage.

In his article, Strehler provides examples of staging choices he believes could help redefine the relationship between performance and spectators. He first mentions the anti-illusory theatrical environments privileged by Craig and Tairov, and cites the immersive theatre architecture of Gropius. He also suggests that Meyerhold's display of theatre conventions encourages the spectators to participate in the theatrical event. He then cites Veronesi's arrangements of signs and colours on stage as some sort of bridges between the performance and spectators.

the public. Strehler takes his last and perhaps most important example of a strategy to unite spectators and actors in a collective experience from a staging by Copeau in which drums and whistles were used to recall the sounds of cannons and guns. Copeau's theatricalization of a battle through auditive stylization seems to have convinced Strehler that the affirmation of theatre as a game and not as a simulacra of reality is key to getting closer to the spectator, to submerging both the performers and the audience in the lyrical atmosphere of the play, to eradicating the hierarchy between public and production, and to creating a communal and participatory experience out of the theatrical event.

This is not to suggest that Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play was the direct materialization of the ideas expressed in “Limiti di una platea.” However, the heavy stylization of his first staging of The Servant of Two Masters and the use of a trestle stage and masks in it were certainly generated by artistic inspirations similar to those revealed in his article. I would suggest that by using masks and a painted face in The Servant of Two Masters, Strehler sought to renegotiate the relationship between the performance and the audience. Masks, because they induced an acting style that was larger than life, de-individualized the protagonists of the play and avoided the intimacy of a more illusory theatre, with which many spectators would have been familiar. Masked performance in the Commedia tradition also ignored the fourth wall introduced in a more naturalistic theatre. Masked characters addressed spectators directly at various moments during the play, thus including them in the fictional world presented on stage. Masks and painted face therefore eliminated one element among others that separated the spectators from the action performed on stage. In their own way, masks and painted face contributed to blur the imaginary line between stage and audience.  

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70 In the early years of his career at the Piccolo Teatro, Strehler was in search of a style. He explored different spacial configurations, not only in his staging of The Servant of Two Masters, but also in other productions, like
Finally, the masks in the production reveal the Marxist ideology Strehler was serving at the time and continued serving throughout his adult life. In “Introduzione: Goldoni, l'altro necessario,” Myriam Tanant suggests that Strehler and Grassi's first production of *The Servant of Two Masters* adopted ideas Antonio Gramsci communicated in his *Letteratura e vita nazionale*, that is the creation of “a social, ideological theatre, a return to Goldoni, [a] popular author, and to plays written in dialect.”71 (‘Introduzione” 10) Another Gramscian idea Strehler addressed in his staging of Goldoni's play was the research of a cultural product (in this case a theatre production) that would respond to the aesthetic and political exigencies of the popular classes (Strehler's targeted audience). Building on Tanant's suggestion, I submit that the solid masks and Moretti's painted face actively participated in materializing Gramsci's ideas and expressed the Marxist ideology behind Strehler's work. First, Strehler's formal research on the physical potential of the actor, on pre-Goldonian Commedia dell'Arte and on masked performance in that tradition shows his effort to dissociate himself and the Piccolo Teatro from the kind of theatre he considered to have prevailed during the heyday of the Fascist regime72.

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71 My translation of: “[...] un teatro sociale, ideologico, un ritorno a Goldoni, autore popolare, e alle opere in dialetto.” (Tanant, “Introduzione” 10)

72 In “Nota per un teatro postumo”, Strehler claims that what prevailed on Italian stage before the war was “the worst of boulevard theatre, the worst of French theatre.” (Quoted in Dort, “Préface” II-III) Boulevard theatre, or theatre of the boulevard (in French “théatre de Boulevards”) is a popular form of performance that combines drama and comedy. It often deals with erotic material, features word play, and exploits themes that can be...
and which he and Grassi associated with the economic elite. The general aesthetic of the production and the solid and painted masks on stage evoked stagings of Goldoni that predated the war, stagings that still lived in the collective memory. To some critics of the time, for example, Moretti's Arlecchino evoked earlier interpretations by Gandusio (R).

The acting style generated by the masks in the 1947 production also challenged how most theatre aficionados – many of them belonging to intellectual and financial elite – had come to envision Goldoni's work. “During those years [the 1930s],” Pepe recalls, “[...] Goldoni was perceived as a sentimental author, prissy, [and] often boring [...].” (Pantalone 76) Carlo Lari’s review of the production supports Pepe's claim since it stresses how much Strehler's vision of the play deviated from the general opinion of Goldoni in performance:

And while he had eager actors at his disposal – though [actors who were] not sufficiently prepared to perform this kind of plays, the young and valorous director, in staging this pleasing mechanism of masks, has not been able to render a Goldonian style this time.

There lacked clarity and grace, and even, I would say, elegance. These scenic representations [Goldoni's plays] are made of their own particular substance, which we will search for in vain if our work is not based on precision, lightness, the ephemeral quality of gestures, movements, [and] diction. (“Fuochi a mezzodi”)

serious or futile. Some plays are social satires, others draw psycho-social portraits, others, still, are titillating pieces of criminal intrigue, but all of them seem to have entertainment as their primary purpose (Corvin 233). Theatre of the boulevard flourished particularly before the war and triumphed not only on Italian stages, as Strehler suggests, but also elsewhere in Europe; it was, for example, extremely popular in France, where many of the playwrights came from. Many plays of this theatre would have been performed in somewhat realistic (often domestic) settings. While the Fascist regime in Italy also supported modernist artists like Luigi Pirandello and Marinetti’s Futurists who challenged naturalism on stage, realistic modes of production, and illusory theatrical settings, Strehler nonetheless associates Italian theatre before the war with the pure entertainment of the boulevard theatre and avoids speaking of other forms of theatre that would have been available to the public at the time. This suggests that boulevard theatre was what was most produced, popular, or most easily available to Milanese audiences before the war. It could also suggest that Strehler, with his work at the nascent Piccolo Teatro, wanted to react specifically to this form of theatre – which he clearly did not consider to be at the forefront of modern European theatre. It is also possible that Strehler avoided speaking of Pirandello and of the Futurists because mentioning their work would challenge his general argument about the current state of the Italian stage.

Antonio Gaudusio is known to have successfully played Arlecchino between 1909 and 1912.

My translation of: “In quegli anni, […] Goldoni era considerato un autore all'acqua di rose, lezioso, spesso barboso [...].” (Pepe, Pantalone 76)

My translation of: “E pure avendo a disposizione attori egregi–ma non sufficientemente preparati a spettacoli di questo genere, il giovane e valoroso regista, animando quel piacevole meccanismo di maschere, non è riuscito ad ottenere questa volta un quadro di stile goldoniano.
Lari's comment suggests that he expected a somewhat delicate, light, precise interpretation of Goldoni's play, and that he valued clear and graceful delivery of lines in it. These expectations perhaps resulted from the influence Renato Simoni's stagings of Goldoni's plays had on regular theatre-goers at the time. Simoni, who produced Goldoni's work almost every year – sometimes twice a year – from 1936 to 1940, was known for highlighting the musical quality of Goldoni's prose in his stagings (Achille Fiocco quoted in Ferrante 118). As actor Cesco Baseggio describes: “rhythm, for Simoni, was as spontaneous as breathing... Simoni shocked [public opinion] when he used some traditional rhythms in his unforgettable [staging of] Baruffe chiozzotte in Venice. Today, these rhythms have become texts... It was his deepest belief that the essential [elements] in our art should be speech, the delivery [of lines], the intonations...”  

If the public in 1947 based their vision of Goldoni in performance on Simoni's productions, and more specifically on the prevalence of speech in them, then Strehler's emphasis on the actors' physical performance, on gestures larger than life and on the creation of heavily stylized images on stage (through the use of masks, among other things) certainly had the potential to challenge the general opinion and expectations.

The masks and the highly physical, unrealistic acting style they generated recalled, as discussed earlier in this chapter, various traditions of popular performances with which most working class spectators would have been familiar. In his review of the production, for example, Giuseppe Lanza compared Moretti's interpretation of Arlecchino with a marionette and with animated cartoons. Sagittario, in Il paese libero, compared the actor with renowned variety

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Sono mancate la chiarezza e la grazia: quasi direi: l'elencanza. Perché queste composite figurazioni sceniche vivono di una loro particolare sostanza che invano ricercheremmo se non appoggiandoci alla precisione, alla leggerezza, alla vaporosità degli atteggiamenti, dei gesti, dei movimenti, della dizione.” (Lari)  

My translation of: “il ritmo per Simoni [...] era spontaneo come il respiro... Simoni sconvolse alcuni ritmi tradizionali nelle sue memorabili Baruffe chiozzotte a Venezia ed oggi quei ritmi fanno testo... era sua massima convinzione che nell'arte nostra l'essenziale sia la parola, la maniera di dire, l'intonazione[...]” (Baseggio quoted in Ferrante 118)
artists such as Totò and Taranto. The reviewer of *Le scimmie e lo specchio* established an analogy between Moretti's style and that of a clown and acrobat, thus hinting at circus arts. He also compared Moretti to film actor Larry Semon, known in Italy as Ridolini. And most evidently, the solid and painted masks evoked a common cultural patrimony most potential audience members, all classes confounded, would have been able to recognize: the Commedia dell'Arte. This theatre tradition was performative rather than literary; which implies that it was not submitted to the control of the press or the academy, and had different intellectual and economic imperatives than printed texts. Because they pointed to an iconic, popular Italian performance tradition, the solid and painted masks in the production could exalt a glorious past and awake a unifying nationalistic sentiment in the public. They also had the potential to renew the Italian stage without exercising bourgeois or foreign hegemony on a working-class audience.

This is not to suggest that Strehler's staging succeeded in responding to the ideological and aesthetic preferences of this class. After all, reviews of the production came from well-to-do spectators with a public voice. However, it illustrates how Strehler might have incorporated Gramsci's ideas in his vision of *The Servant of Two Masters*.

Finally, a Marxist reading of Commedia characters could also link the use of masks in the production with Strehler's political ideology. Such reading would argue that the Commedia characters' solid masks did not point to particular individuals but to broad social types most spectators would have been able to recognize. Domenico Pietropaolo's reading of Commedia's main stock characters illumines how each one of them became the object of derision of particular social groups and powers. “The first,” Pietropaolo suggests, “is the power of money, best typified by the merchant class of Venice, which was perhaps the fastest growing concentration of wealthy people in the peninsula.” (“The Theatre” 17) He continues: “In commedia performances, Venice is represented from the perspective of the lower-class
audience, which could see the accumulation of wealth only as the result of unscrupulous business practices by undeserving, immoral, stingy, and arrogant men.” (Ibid.) The power of money and the merchant class are presented to the audience, according to this reading, through Pantalone. The “power of education” and the learned people are typified in Dottore; Arlecchino, Brighella and other servants (typically from Bergamo or from mountain villages and border-towns around that city) stood for “the economic intrusion of immigrants from the poorer regions of Italy” (Ibid.); the two couples of unmasked Lovers represented the power of courtly romance (generally unattainable by the lower classes); and the Spanish captain, who is not present in The Servant of Two Masters, embodied military oppression (Ibid.). The masks of these characters, with the exception of the Lovers, as well as their costumes permitted their immediate identification. “Standard costumes enabled the audience not only to recognize the characters,” Meredith Chilton explains, “but to anticipate their behaviour, thereby prompting an instantaneous silent communication between the actors and the spectators.” (33) Commedia's stock characters were still very much alive in the imagination of the Italian public in 1947. The mask and costume of each character in Strehler's staging must therefore have had an immediate visual impact on the spectators and established visually, by conventions, the social group to which each protagonist belonged. Drawing from Pietropaolo's Marxist reading of Commedia characters, I suggest that Strehler employed solid and painted masks in the production to highlight the characters' social position as soon as they entered the stage and to emphasize on the hierarchy presented in the play.

Inspired by Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony and fed by a Marxist ideology, Strehler's stylization of Goldoni's play through the use of masks, a painted face and a rigorously physical acting style seems to have aimed at attracting a popular audience, at exposing the regular middle-class spectators to a different aesthetic on stage, at evoking a shared cultural
memory, at presenting an immediately identifiable social portrait and, ultimately, at reforming how the general public viewed Goldoni's work.

2.6 Conclusion

When, in Goldoni's _Teatro comico_, Eugenio asks if masked characters should be completely suppressed from the reformed comedies, Orazio warns: “Woe to us if we engage in such novelty: it is not yet time to do it. In all things, it is useless to go against the universal opinion.” These two sentences reveal Goldoni's conviction that reforming the taste and habits of actors and audiences takes time, and that radical changes cannot be imposed all at once, but need to be instilled progressively. Strehler's acceptance of Marcello Moretti's painted face follows a similarly careful attitude. The actor's heavy make-up in the first staging of _The Servant of Two Masters_ at the Piccolo Teatro was a transitional phase between the individuality of the actor's face and the theatricalization of the solid mask. It accommodated the performer, while it already engaged him in the novelty of Strehler's project of reform. The masks and painted face used in performance as well as the production's athletic style also challenged the spectators, but not enough to make them flee the venue, cause turmoil or cancel representations.

As was discussed in this chapter, the reasons behind Moretti's choice to paint a mask on his face were diverse and intertwined. First, Moretti's refusal to wear the mask was due to his general ignorance of masked performance techniques. Though he had performed in productions inspired by the Commedia dell'Arte tradition prior to 1947, never before had he worn a solid mask on stage. A second cause for Moretti's rejection of the solid mask was the poor design and weak building material of the masks used in the production. The paper-mâché masks hurt the

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77 My translation of: “Guai a noi, se facessimo una tal novità: non è ancor tempo di farla. In tutte le cose non è da mettersi di fronte contro all'universale.” (Goldoni, _Teatro comico_ 2.10. 25-26)
face of Moretti's colleagues, impeded their vision and vocal production, and slid down their faces once wet with sweat. These uncomfortable tools could have caused physical injuries, especially to Moretti, who performed his role athletically and at a fast pace on a constricted trestle stage. The last reason for Moretti's painted face was the possibility of a mask-induced identity crisis. The actor feared he would be inexpressive once his face was covered with rigid material. He also experienced anxiety triggered by the limited visual field and acoustic-vocal range of the mask. The rigid face would have obliged him to adopt a specific gestural vocabulary with which he was not yet familiar. The mask would have also forced him to adapt to a non-realistic acting style that, according to Strehler, was tied to the double nature – ritual and theatrical – of the mask. Finally, it is likely that Moretti's psychological resistance to the mask was also symptomatic of the fear of being out-staged by the character or associated only with one type of roles.

The mask Moretti resolved to paint on his face in 1947 was made of black wax-based make-up. It allowed him to perform facial movements but still induced a highly stylized acting style. The make-up did not limit the actor's vision, breathing nor speech. Though it contrasted with the solid paper masks worn by the other players, the black make-up did not cause controversy. Theatre critics of the time had previously attended productions in which painted faces, solid masks and natural make-up appeared side by side. Moretti, who participated in Renato Simoni's staging of *Femeile curioase* in 1940, had witnessed his colleague Antonio Crast painting a mask on his face. It therefore seemed natural to him to draw a mask on his own visage.

The use of masks and a painted face in Strehler's first staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro finally revealed that this production was articulated around a loose vision of an idealized period in Italian theatre history. It pointed to the solid masks used by
Commedia actors before Goldoni's reform and presented itself as a necessary element of a re-imagined Commedia dell'Arte. Moretti's painted face, along with the puppet-like acting style and the stylized, visually allusive set design and costumes, was also an agent in Strehler's effort to re-negotiate the relationship between audience and performance; it rejected any attempt to create a realistic environment on stage, broke the intimacy of the illusory theatre, and ultimately aimed at eliminating the hierarchy between the performance and the spectators. Behind the production also stood a Marxist discourse, which was probably inspired by Strehler's understanding of Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony. The painted mask, which was the theatrical visage of a social type and alluded to the popular nature of Commedia, participated in an aesthetic that contrasted with that of stagings during the war. By dissociating himself from a style he deemed bourgeois, Strehler attempted to gather a proletarian public and reform the usual crowd of theatregoers.

It therefore appears that Strehler and Goldoni shared a similar concern, but used opposite strategies to address it. In Il teatro comico, Goldoni proposes to reform the Venetian public and to increase its participation in the theatre by progressively reducing the importance of masked characters on stage and by directing the spectators' attention towards the written text. Almost two hundred years later, when speech had become the “sole protagonist” on mainstream Italian stage (Bosisio, Tra Goldoni e Strehler 56), Strehler chose to (re-)introduce masked characters on stage in a play where they were the central protagonists. While Goldoni counted on the written words to change the spectatorial habits of an undisciplined crowd, Strehler, acting as “Goldoni redivivus,” exploited the entertainment value and the shock value of masks and physical stylization to achieve a similar goal.

From 1947 to 1952, Strehler accepted Moretti's painted face in The Servant of Two Masters. But from 1952 to his death in 1961, Moretti adopted the solid mask and became a
pioneer in the discovery of masked performance techniques in the Commedia tradition on twentieth-century European stages. In *Tricks of the Trades*, Dario Fo even qualifies this actor as “the father-figure of all Harlequins of the last half-century.” (*Tricks* 26) 

It was he [Moretti] who first discovered for everyone [of the cast] how the mask ‘moved’,” wrote Strehler, “[...] He discovered by himself a few expressive tilts of the mask that I recorded and that became the starting point of a work I then did with the [other] actors, patiently, with time.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 60) 

Moretti's encounter with the mask of Arlecchino, however, was emotionally charged: “At first glance we can say that Moretti did not like Arlecchino. He endured it, like some kind of tyranny of the mask over the actor.” (*Ibid.* 57) 

Throughout his career, and despite the worldwide success of his Arlecchino – he was crowned by the press “the greatest Arlecchino of the 1900’s” (*Messagero Veneto*), the “Italian Clown Prince” (JMR), the “Italian Charlie Chaplin” (Doyle), and “the Universal Arlequin” (Palma) – Moretti feared being associated with his solid mask and thought it limited the roles he could play.

Moretti, the actor, saw Arlecchino as a cruel “limitation” of his expressive potential on stage. This character, this mask he wore one day, ended up being his second nature in the theatre. At a certain point, the public and the people of the theatre identified the actor with his mask. For Marcello, it was almost a condemnation. I remember how sad he was sometimes, after a successful performance, how anxious he felt for the future. He said: “And what will happen when I get old and can't play Arlecchino anymore?” [...] There was the distress of the true actor looking at “all” the characters he had not and could never play, [...] (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 57-58) 

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78 My translation of: “E fu lui il primo a scoprire per tutti la ‘mobilità’ della maschera. [...] Scoprì da solo alcune inclinazioni espressive della maschera che io catalogai e che segnarono un punto di partenza per un lavoro che poi indicai agli attori, con pazienza, nel tempo.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 60)

79 Here, the work “mask” could mean both the Commedia dell'Arte character and the solid mask. The French edition of this text in *Intorno a Goldoni*, “mask” is translated by “Commedia dell’Arte character.” (Strehler, “A Marcello Moretti” 164)

80 My translation of: “A prima vista, si potrebbe dire che Moretti non amava Arlecchino. Lo subiva, come una specie di tirannia della maschera sull’interprete.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 57)

81 My translation of: “L’attore Moretti sentiva l’Arlecchino come nua [sic] ‘limitazione’ crudele alle sue possibilità di esprimersi in altre dimensioni sul palcoscenico. Questo personaggio, questa maschera che egli aveva indossato un giorno, aveva finito per diventare un suo secondo modo di essere, nel teatro. L’attore, ad un certo punto, per il pubblico e per i teatranti si identificava con la sua maschera. Per Marcello era quasi una condanna. Ricordo la sua tristezza talvolta, dopo un travolgente successo, la sua angoscia per il domani. Diceva: ‘E quando
Yet Moretti, who had a limited acting range according to Strehler, found freedom of expression within the limits imposed by the solid mask. “One night,” wrote Strehler, “Marcello, a modest man, secret and solitary, tells me he now feels naked without the mask. It was at that moment that Marcello, conquered by the mask, “freed” himself of all shyness and, “protected” by it, let himself go into the character.” (Ibid. 60) Moretti had finally experienced the double nature of the mask that hides and limits the actor but also reveals and frees him.

“With the mask, shy Marcello [...] could be full of vitality and imagination that, while ‘fantastical,’ remained connected to his deep popular nature. He would follow and enrich the process of rediscovery [of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition] that I, too, was engaging in, [...] and which had been resurrected among us, as if by a miracle.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 60) This “miracle,” however, could not have happened without the intervention from a party outside of the Piccolo Teatro. Strehler's research on masked performance in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition truly took off when he first met his mask-maker, Amleto Sartori, who designed Moretti's first solid Arlecchino mask.

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82 My translation of: “Una sera Marcello, uomo pudico, segreto e solitario, mi disse che gli pareva ormai di sentirsi nudo, senza maschera. Fu in quel momento che Marcello, conquistato dalla maschera, si ‘l’erò’ da ogni impiccio e , ‘protetto’ da essa, si lasciò andare al personaggio.” (Strehler, “In margine al diario” 58)

83 My translation of: “Dietro la maschera, Marcello timido [...] poté far rifluire tutta una vitalità, una fantasia non “realistica” ma ancorata tuttavia ad una sua interiore natura popolare e seguire quel processo di riscoperta e arricchimento che io stesso dal mio canto stavo facendo, sul problema della commedia dell’arte, rinata in mezzo a noi, quasi per miracolo.” (Strehler ,“In margine al diario” 60)
Figure 1: Marcello Moretti wearing make-up instead of a solid mask in Strehler's staging of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1947. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano–Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Chapter 3. Amleto Sartori's masks and mask-making process for *The Servant of Two Masters*.

It was in a coffee shop near that city's theatre [Vicenza], on a sunny day and in the shade of stones [i.e. stone walls], that I presented Sartori to Strehler, telling him of the masks he had made up until now. The Piccolo Teatro had already performed Goldoni's *Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters* with the success that we all know. [...] Sartori, [who was] always enterprising, offered Strehler to try to make leather masks for this production, going back to the tradition of masks in the Commedia dell'Arte. The promises were kept.¹ (Lecoq, “La geometria” 164)

Giorgio Strehler first met Paduan sculptor and mask-maker Amleto Sartori (1915-1962) in Vicenza, in 1951. In his description of this meeting, Jacques Lecoq (cited above) draws an almost prophetical connection between the purpose of the encounter (the fabrication of masks), its location (near the Teatro Olimpico, Palladio's final project,² a symbol of artistic achievement in the Renaissance and a constant reminder of the glory days of Italian theatre) and even the weather (a sunny day, real or imagined, that symbolically announces the success of Strehler and Sartori's future professional relationship). In other words, the details Lecoq chooses to reveal in his recollection of Sartori and Strehler's first meeting presents it as a key moment of artistic convergence in recent theatre history and suggests lineage of the Italian Renaissance. Sartori's description of the encounter, as he remembers it in his autobiography, points instead to the strong personalities of those present:³

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¹ My translation of: “Fu in un caffè vicino al teatro di questa città, in un giorno di sole e all'ombra delle pietre, che presentai Sartori a Strehler parlandogli delle maschere che fino ad allora aveva realizzato. Il Piccolo Teatro aveva già rappresentato l'Arlecchino servitore di due padroni di Goldoni col successo che tutti conosciamo. [...] Sartori, sempre intraprendente, propose a Strehler di provare a confezionargli delle maschere in cuoio per questo spettacolo risalendo alla tradizione di quelle della Commedia dell'Arte. Le promesse furono mantenute.” (Lecoq, “La geometria” 164)

² The Teatro Olimpico was completed in 1585, five years after Palladio's death, by his student Vincenzo Scamozzi.

³ Amleto Sartori does not mention Jacques Lecoq in his recollection of his first meeting with Giorgio Strehler.
My masks were seen by Strehler who had me called for. We met in Vicenza. It was almost a fight, but we soon understood each other. I started to work with the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, first by making neutral masks for the school and then the first masks in paper-mâché for L'amante volgare by Goldoni. Meanwhile I met Marcello Moretti and, after a dispute, we became friends. [...] 

[...] Much of my work's merit goes to the Piccolo Teatro, and it is to this small group of men that I am most gratefully and affectionately connected. (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 31-32)

Strehler and Sartori's first meeting, though it might have started abruptly, proved fruitful: as Sartori recalls, it led to the creation of a series of Commedia masks, those for Strehler's staging of L'amante militare in 1951 and, as Lecoq observed, it also generated the first leather masks used by the Piccolo Teatro in its 1952 production of The Servant of Two Masters. Most importantly, this meeting was the starting point of Sartori's exploration of mask-making techniques using leather.

Amleto Sartori's masks, partly because of The Servant of Two Masters' extensive touring history, enjoyed wide exposure in Europe, the United States, Canada, Latin America, North Africa and Russia (see chapter 4). Sartori became the most important European mask-maker of his generation, designing masks for Jacques Lecoq, Jean-Louis Barrault, Serge Pitoeff, Orazio Costa, Gianfranco De Bosio and Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, among others. He is also often

4 Here, Amleto Sartori refers to the Piccolo Teatro's first theatre school, founded in 1951. See 4.1.2 for detailed information on the curriculum, faculty, and mandate of this school.

5 The play was Goldoni's L'amante militare, not L'amante volgare. It opened at the Piccolo Teatro on October 27th 1951 (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 128).


7 These techniques notoriously inspired subsequent generations of mask-makers. Paris-based Stefano Perocco di Meduna, for example, makes masks following a technique similar to that of Amleto Sartori. Werner Strub, though he makes masks using fabric, is known to have decided to become a mask-maker after seeing an exhibition of Sartori's masks. Erhard Stiefel, who closely works with Le Théâtre du Soleil in Paris, did not learn his craft from Sartori directly. He, however, attended Jacques Lecoq's theatre school in Paris and, there, was exposed to and trained with Amleto Sartori's leather masks. His work and especially his early masks perhaps followed the examples provided by Sartori.
credited for the “recovery” of mask-making techniques in the twentieth century (Galli, Aghina, Crivellari and Cecconi 7).

This chapter will examine Amleto Sartori's work with masks, and especially with those he designed for *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro. A first, biographical section will attend to his training as a sculptor and a mask-maker prior to meeting with Giorgio Strehler. A second section will describe the design and fabrication process of the leather masks he made for *The Servant of Two Masters*. I will conclude by examining the reactions of the Piccolo Teatro players to Sartori's masks and by identifying the ways in which his working relationship with these actors, and especially with Moretti, shaped his work.

Amleto Sartori's masks and mask-making techniques are now widely known among European and international mask-makers. For over thirty years, Donato Sartori, Amleto's son (himself a sculptor and a mask-maker), has been conducting international master classes in which he passes on his mask-making knowledge, as well as his father's, to multidisciplinary groups of students that often include professional sculptors, actors and theatre directors. Some of the content of this course has been published by Thurston James in his useful *The Prop Builder's Mask-Making Handbook*, a practical manual of property making for the theatre (see bibliography). It has also been the subject of various articles and chapters in publications edited by Donato Sartori and Paola Piizzi, with the support of the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali (see footnote 8). Amleto and Donato Sartori's work was also discussed, to various extents, in undergraduate theses by Cacco, Chinello, Pellegrini and Toich (see bibliography). To my

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8 These master classes are currently offered on a yearly basis and take place in late June and July at the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali, in Abano Terme. This laboratory space dedicated to the study and exploration of masks and mask-making was created in 1979 by Donato Sartori, Roberto Terribile, and Paolo Trombetta (“Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali” 206).
knowledge, none of these documents, with the exception of two, is available in English. A scholarly approach to Amleto Sartori's work in English will therefore be novel.

The main documentary sources for this chapter are Donato Sartori's testimonies on his father's life and work, and on his own research with masks. Some of these testimonies have already been published\(^9\) and others were collected during three personal interviews I conducted with Donato Sartori in June and July 2009. Another important resource for this chapter is Amleto Sartori's autobiography published by Giovanni Zabai in 1969\(^{11}\) (see bibliography). Other sources include, but are not limited to, Strehler, Lecoq and Gianfranco De Bosio's available written comments on Sartori, catalogues of his work and a collection of his masks, as well as drawings and engravings now displayed at the Museo Internazionale della Maschera Amleto e Donato Sartori in Abano Terme. Two last key documents for this chapter, titled *Ricordi intorno a una maschera* and *Brevi note sullo studio della realizzazione delle maschere*, were written by Amleto Sartori himself (see bibliography). The first article tells of Sartori's friendship and working relationship with Marcello Moretti while the other describes his working process and accomplishments as a mask-maker.

Most dates mentioned in the documentary sources listed above are approximate; the year of fabrication of specific masks, for example, often differs from one publication to the other. Even time-lines given by Donato Sartori must be used with caution. Indeed, in a personal letter addressed to Miranda Sartori (Amleto's wife) soon after the death of her husband, Paolo Grassi

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\(^9\) Thurston James' book was written in English, and one publication on Amleto and Donato Sartori, namely *The Commedia dell'Arte and the Masks of Amleto and Donato Sartori*, was apparently translated in English from the original Italian. I did not, however, encounter this latter book during my research.

\(^{10}\) Many were published in *Arte della maschera nella Commedia dell'Arte; Le maschere nell'antiquità: Storia, Modi e Metodi della maschera dell'Arte; Maschera e maschere: Storia, morfologia, tecnica : Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali*; and *L'arte magica di Amleto e Donato Sartori* (see bibliography).

\(^{11}\) This document was probably made available to Zabai by Miranda Sartori, Amleto's wife, and it is unclear if she or the editor modified it prior to publication.
suggests that she collects Amleto’s work and belongings from his studio in Padua\textsuperscript{12} before others could take them and start their own mask-making venture.\textsuperscript{13} He also recommends that Miranda Sartori catalogues this large body of work as best as she can given the circumstances. Such precautions, Grassi’s letter suggests, would help to keep Amleto Sartori’s artistic patrimony within his family and would secure the direct (and exclusive) transmission of his knowledge (and the fame associated with his name) to his children. Some of the retrieved work, which probably included drawings, masks and molds for masks, had certainly already been identified by their author, but some was probably undated. This would explain the frequent discrepancies of dates and even sometimes titles associated with some of Sartori’s work.

Since many documents on Amleto Sartori have been produced postmortem by family members and close collaborators, the information available on him has been shaped and transmitted in ways that created a certain image, always positive and sometimes almost romanticized, of his life and work. Since this is the information currently available to the researcher, it is what I will use in this part of the thesis.

3.1 Sartori’s masks for the theatre prior to the Piccolo Teatro

3.1.1 The early years part 1: birth place, social class, and the grotesque style

I was born on November 3\textsuperscript{rd} 1915 in a house that has now been demolished, at the end of the Carmine [road], in the Pellettieri neighbourhood. I remember little or nothing precise from my early childhood, only dark sensations and grotesque images. It was the time of World War I, of deprivation, of fear. My family, with me and a sister, found refuge in Modena. Then we came back to Padua and moved

\textsuperscript{12} This studio was located at the Scuola Pietro Selvatico, a fine arts school where Amleto Sartori taught sculpture and mask-making during most of his adult life.

\textsuperscript{13} This document, dated March 12\textsuperscript{th} 1962, is Paolo Grassi’s answer to a letter by Miranda Sartori dated March 9\textsuperscript{th} 1962 in which she expresses concerns about the ownership of her husband’s name, work and, more generally, legacy. Copies of both letters are kept at the Piccolo Teatro archives in Milan. I consulted them in June 2009 (see bibliography).
to Santa Croce, in the suburb, which, at the time, was an open area near the countryside.\textsuperscript{14} (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 27)

The information that we have on Amleto Sartori’s childhood and early training as a sculptor and mask-maker comes mostly, though not exclusively, from his autobiography (see bibliography). This document describes how he spent his teenage years and early adulthood alternating between hours of training in antique shops, woodcarving studios, and fine arts academies. What Sartori chooses to reveal in this document speaks greatly to his political convictions, his social-economic position, and the idea he had of himself as an artist. For example, by mentioning the area where he was born, the “quartiere dei Pellettieri”\textsuperscript{15} (literally “skin-workers' neighbourhood”), in the opening sentence of his autobiography, Sartori already draws a connection between his birth place and his mask-making career. In other words, he might have felt that, being born in an area once known for its leather work, he was somehow predestined to innovate with this material.

The opening passage of Sartori's autobiography could also point to his family's social-economic background. That Sartori remembers having moved in periphery as a child could suggest that he lived among one of the 769 families that Padua's administrators planned to relocate to newly developed neighbourhoods outside of that city in 1919 and during the first half of the 1920s (Universo, “Padova negli anni Venti” 64). Most of those expropriated, as Mario Universo specifies in his article Padova negli anni Venti, had been identified as low income

\textsuperscript{14} My translation of: “Sono nato il 3 novembre 1915 in una casa ora abbattuta, sulla punta del Carmine nel quartiere dei Pellettieri. Ricordo poco o nulla di preciso della mia prima infanzia, se non sensazioni cupe ed aspetti grotteschi. Era il tempo della guerra mondiale, di privazioni, di paure. I miei furono con me e una sorella profughi a Modena. Poi si tornò a Padova e si andò ad abitare a Santa Croce, in periferia, allora luogo aperto prossimo alla campagna.” (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 27)

\textsuperscript{15} The Pellettieri neighbourhood is remarkably absent from the available literature on Padua; I was not able to find any mentions of this area in articles, maps and guidebooks of that city. This is not to say that this neighbourhood does not or did not exist at some point, but it suggests that it might not be generally known as the Pellettieri's anymore, and that Sartori referred to it by this name to make a point about his “destiny” as an artist using leather.
families (*Ibid.*). Universo, however, also notes that the municipality planned to relocate many of
the above-mentioned families in Vanzo, also known at the time as Città Giardino (*Ibid.*; Roverato 282), while the Sartoris moved to Santa Croce.

Padua's large relocating enterprise aimed at resolving that city's housing crisis and
general infrastructure problems (*Ibid.*). In other words, it proposed to bring the medieval city
into the twentieth century.\(^{16}\) Massive relocation was a first step in a radical renovation project
that included, in the original plans of 1919,\(^{17}\) the demolition and systematization of two
downtown neighbourhoods: the old Jewish ghetto and the area surrounding the church of Santa
Lucia, where Sartori's first home likely stood\(^{18}\) (*Ibid.* 64-65).\(^{19}\) While the ghetto was ultimately
spared, large residential areas neighbouring Santa Lucia's church were demolished between
1925 and 1927 (Puppi and Universo [255]; Roverato 284). Though Amleto Sartori does not
openly reveal his family's economic situation, and while it is unclear if his family relocated in
response to Padua's ambitious systematization project, the fact his first home was demolished,
and that he and his relatives moved in periphery soon after the end of the war could indicate that
they belonged to the working class.\(^{20}\)

Then, the vocabulary Sartori uses in the opening passage of his autobiography points to
his knowledge of aesthetic currents and art history, paired with his practical work as a sculptor
and mask-maker, shaped the image he had of his environment and of himself, and informed his

\(^{16}\) In his article, Universo does not fail to situate this “rehabilitation” project within Padua's political context in the
1920s, a period marked by the rise of fascism (“Padova negli anno Venti” 63).

\(^{17}\) These plans were revised (and interrupted) several times between 1919 and 1927 (Puppi and Universo).

\(^{18}\) A “Via del Carmine” located near the church of Santa Lucia can be found on today’s maps of Padua.

\(^{19}\) For a detailed examination of Padua's systematization project during the first half of the 20th century, see also
chapters 5-7 of Donatella Torresini's *Padova 1509-1969: gli effetti della prassi urbanistica borghese* (see
bibliography).

\(^{20}\) My association of Sartori's early move to the periphery with Padua's proposed rehabilitation project is only
speculative. There are, however, other details in Amleto Sartori's autobiography which suggest that he was born
into a working class family. For example, Sartori mentions that he started working for a local wood engraver
when he was nine (see 3.1.2), that his employer was a friend of his father, and that both his mother and a sister
also worked for this engraver (“Dagli apunti” 28). This information suggests that men, women, and some of the
Sartori children contributed, at least to some extent, to the household income.
life-narrative. Indeed, he describes images of his early childhood as “grotesque,” a term that, as he must have learned during his artistic training, was first used to describe an ornamental style characterized by “fantastic forms, colors, and arrangements [...]” (Cardinal Todeschini Piccolomini quoted in Kayser 20) “Grotesque” entered the fine arts' lexicon, pointing to a particular stylistic concept that evolved over time and in places, was transferred to the field of literature (as well as music and theatre), and, as Elisheva Rosen observes in Sur le grotesque: L'ancien et le nouveau dans la réflexion esthétique, still remains difficult to define satisfactorily (5). “By the word grottesco,” Wolfgang Kayser informs in The Grotesque in Art and Literature, “the Renaissance [...] understood not only something playfully gay and carelessly fantastic, but also something ominous and sinister in the face of a world totally different from the familiar one – a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statics, symmetry, and proportion are no longer valid.” (21) “Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness,” as Mikhail Bakhtin summarizes, “are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style.” (303) Influential examples of grotesque ornaments in the visual arts can be found, as Kayser observes, in Raphael's work, as well as in Agostino Veneziano's and Luca Signorelli's, in Albrecht Dürer's, and in Jacques Callot's, some of which Amleto Sartori likely was familiar with.21 Sartori's decision to speak of his early years in terms of “grotesque images” suggests that, as an adult, his world-view was inseparable from his identity as a visual artist to the extent that he even recalled and communicated intimate memories and sensations using the vocabulary of the visual arts.22

21 For a detailed description of specific work in the grotesque style by these artists, see chapter 1 of Kayser's The Grotesque in Art and Literature (see bibliography).

22 I recognize, however, that the notion of the grotesque is not exclusive to the visual arts; it has also been the subject of analysis and criticism in the field of literature, music and theatre. I speak here of the grotesque in relation to the visual arts since this is what Sartori would have been most familiar with, considering his training as a sculptor.
While Amleto Sartori does not elaborate on his childhood memories, the available information on Padua during the 1910s can help us understand what he might have seen. While the Pellettieri neighbourhood is difficult to locate on a contemporary map of Padua (it might not exist anymore), a street called “Via del Carmine” can easily be found today and could correspond to his birthplace. Via del Carmine is located north of Santa Lucia's church, nearby the bridge of Corso del Popolo, at a short walking distance from Padua's train station, and close to the Rettifilo, a boulevard completed between 1905 and 1906 (Universo, “Padova Liberty” 57-59), large enough for cars and thus allowing for speed. By 1915, the Rettifilo was already bordered by new, remarkably large buildings that mirrored the city's economic elite's eagerness for progress.23 Adjacent to the Rettifilo stood the medieval city, whose aspect had changed little since the fifteenth century (Ibid. 49). The new road and the architecture it inspired symbolized modernity that finally forced itself into Padua's old walls. The “grotesque images” Sartori speaks of in his autobiography could therefore point to the strong contrasts between horse-pulled carts (the organic) and automobiles (the mechanical), between the crumbling infrastructure of medieval neighbourhoods (the very old) and modernist constructions worth of the biggest Parisian boulevards (the very new), and between the narrow, tortuous streets from another age and the speed-friendly Rettifilo.

Sartori's recollection of “grotesque images” might also point to Padua's growing population and consequent housing crisis. Already in 1869, as Mario Universo observes in Padova Liberty, 9535 families shared 4331 apartments and houses in the city (54). By 1886, Donatella Torresini mentions in Padova 1509-1969, Padua was home to 74 817 people (64). By 1921, these numbers had almost doubled and reached 112 021 (Ibid.). Sartori's “grotesque

23 Among these new constructions were the palazzi Mion, the nuovo palazzo delle Poste, palazzo della Cassa di Risparmio, palazzo Veneze, and palazzo Folchi, all of them built sometimes between 1909 and 1916 (Universo, “Padova Liberty” 60-61).
images” could therefore include his recollection of too many bodies sharing the same, small spaces. On top of this hybrid, overpopulated environment that was Padua in the 1910s was the pending violence of the war. Vague memory of faces contorted by anxiety, crowded homes and streets as well as architectural discrepancies could all be elements of Sartori’s recalled “grotesque images.”

A parallel can be drawn between the grotesque elements of Sartori’s childhood and the aesthetic of his masks, which would suggest that his environment found an artistic expression in his work. He indeed designed masks that toyed with contrasting colours (a black face with shockingly white eyebrows, for example), distorted facial features (such as unnaturally long noses or misshapen triple-chins) and other exaggerated elements (like remarkably bushy eyebrows, very small eye-openings, popping eye-balls and contorted mouths). While some of these facial traits would be ugly in nature, they have a high aesthetic value in Sartori's work and arguably achieve beauty in his masks. Worn by an actor, these masks become an inanimate component of a character's face, rendering it half-human/ half object, unnatural and subversive, monstrous and yet compelling to look at; in other words: grotesque.

The grotesque style also features predominantly in Sartori’s literary work. He indeed wrote a book, titled Pradellavallesca, that he did not finish and was never published in its entirety. This piece, as Camillo Semenzato posits, is difficult to fully capture: “[...] it does not have a clear storyline, the plots are superposed at times, [and] the same pages are repeated.”24 (Semenzato n. pag.) As its title suggests, the background of Pradellavallesca and its true source of inspiration, as Semenzato observes, is Prato della Valle: a large, oval-shaped market place (or public garden) adorned with life-size statues of artists, intellectuals, army officers and even

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24 My translation of parts of this sentence: “Il libro non è terminato, non solo, ma non ha una trama definitiva, gli argomenti talvolta si sovrappongono, le stesse pagine si ripetono.” (Semenzato n. pag.)
legendary figures (all men) with a connection to Padua or the Veneto. This market place is limited by a small canal and is located on the South side of Padua, near the Santa Croce neighbourhood, where Sartori spent most of his childhood. When reading the excerpts of Sartori's book, as they were transcribed by Semenzato, one could argue that Padua's Prato della Valle is not only a source of inspiration to Pradellavallesca, but that it is its main protagonist. And the author's rendering of this protagonist is unequivocally done in the grotesque style. For example, architectural features of the church of Santa Giustina, located on the North-East end of the marketplace, become, in Sartori's book, anatomical details that, in concert with threatening weather conditions, create distorted, menacing, surreal images that subvert the established order of things:

... The turgid domes of the church S. Giustina looked like panting breasts, shiny and ready to explode if it were not for the restraint of the cup made of white and glowing lace that held them onto the dark, massive body of the church. The clouds were running fast, like enormous sharks falling apart in the air, rapidly cutting the quickly darkening sky into various horizons. At times, the two moons appeared through the light mist, and with each reappearance, the thick and opaque group of clouds changed place, giving the impression that the sky, beyond the unfolding storm, was lined with gigantic cyclops whose white and cold eye opened and closed lazily at irregular intervals; [...] (Amleto Sartori quoted in Semenzato n. pag.)

Sartori's Prato della Valle, as reimagined in Pradellavallesca, is not only a space with its anthropomorphic architecture and threatening, monstrous climate; it is also the crowd that populates it, a crowd made of both domestic animals and men whose figure, facial features and hands Sartori copiously details:

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25 My translation of: “... Le cupole turgide della chiesa di S. Giustina sembravano mammelloni ansanti, lucidi e pronti a scoppiare se non fosse stato per l'imposta del tamburo fatta di dentelli bianchi e spiccati luminosamente nel buio che le ancorava alla massa scura del corpo enorme della chiesa. Le nubi correvano rapide come enormi squali sfatti nell'aria tagliando velocemente in vari orizzonti il cielo che intanto veniva incupendo rapidamente. A tratti le due lune apparivano tra i vapori leggeri e le masse spesse ed opache di nubi ad ogni ricomparsa cambiavano di posto dando la sensazione che il cielo, oltre il temporale avanzate, fosse tappezzato da ciclopì giganti dall'occhio bianco e gelido che aprivano e chiudevano pigramente ad intermittenti irregolari; [...]” (Amleto Sartori quoted in Semenzato n. pag.)
Skinny bodies whose angular cavities were covered with multicoloured rags, whose precious tones had faded in the bad weather; and inexplicable, grotesque mutilations that evoked the fiery temper of men without scruple or moral boundaries; and dogs, dogs of all shapes and sizes, of all possible cross-breeds, in various and paradoxical aspects, and in poses [...]. But the faces and the hands were what expressed the very essence of the exceptional people that I saw. All the possible shapes of flesh and faces covered with or without hair or lumps or scabs were drawn by the exasperated and grotesque hand of an hallucinated master and quickly modelled without any reservation and carried out with unexpected and unprecedented precision. Roughewn profiles and black eyes where the eyeballs were just slits, and pointy cheekbones, and merciless looking jaws [...].26 (Ibid.)

In this passage, Sartori uses words to transform the faces he speaks of the same way he would use modelling techniques to create masks. In other words, he does on the page what he would with clay or wood; the many faces parading in the marketplace are nothing but masks, and the “hallucinated master” fashioning the crowd of this imagined version of Prato della Valle is no other than Sartori himself. As it inspired the mutilated figures in Pradellavallesca, the real Prato della Valle also influenced Sartori's mask-making process. Indeed, as we will see in section 2 of this third chapter, Amleto Sartori found inspiration for his masks in the people he observed in Prato della Valle (see 3.1.3).

Without a doubt, Padua, its architecture and its people, was a launching pad for Amleto Sartori's imagination. The resulting artistic products, both visual and literary, are in part expressions of the author's sensibility to his environment. As demonstrated in his masks and unfinished book, a consistent feature of Sartori's work is the prevalent grotesque style. This style was arguably inspired by Sartori's perception of his city, by his knowledge of artistic currents...

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26 My translation of: “Corpi rinsecchiti sulle cui spigolose cavità erano tesi stracci multicolori dai preziosi toni spenti dalle intemperie; e inspiegabili mutilazioni grottesche che rievocavano sanguigne tempre di uomini senza scrupolo o confino morale; e cani, cani di tutte le forme, incroci di tutte le razze supponibili, in aspetti svariati e paradossali e in pose [...]. Ma i volti e le mani erano quelli che più esprimevano la reale essenza dell'eccezionale popolo che io vedevo. Tutte le supponibili forme di carni e di volti coperti o scoperti da capelli o grumi o croste, disegnati dalla esasperata e grottesca mano di un allucinato maestro e modellati seccamente, senza alcuna riserva e portati a compimento con inaspettata e inaudita determinatezza. Profili tagliati scabramente e occhiaie livide dove i globi degli occhi erano appena ravvisabili, e zigomi puntuti, e profili di mascelle spietate [...].” (Amleto Sartori quoted in Semenzato n. pag.)
and by his sensibility to forms, shapes, and visual compositions. As we will see in the next
section of this chapter, the grotesque elements in Amleto Sartori's work can be traced back to his
early training in woodcarving.

3.1.2 The early years part 2: apprenticeships, art school, and unemployment.

Amleto Sartori was first exposed to wood engraving, cabinet making and sculpture at age
nine, when he worked for a family friend (“Dagli apunti” 28). As he remembers:

I was nine years old. Already then, to keep me off the streets in the afternoons,
and also because my mother and my older sister were working with him, my
father sent me to one of his childhood companions. This friend had just returned
from Paris with a nice little sum of money that he earned working as a wood-
engraver. This was a man who, despite the misunderstandings to which he
subjected me, had great technical skills never before observed. He looked as if he
was playing, and he enjoyed it, pulling out from the wood flowers, leaves, fruits,
[and] grotesque animals. Objects filled with freshness, with figures that had just
enough of a doll-like touch, and animals among which one could get lost, all of
which was integrated to a refined ornamentation worthy of the most beautiful
Baroque and French Rococo. I stayed with him for two years that I
consider to be
my basic training in the trade.27 (Ibid.)

That Sartori specifies having learned his trade starting at age nine reveals that he found
pride in having worked in the artistic milieu from a young age. His detailed account of his
mentor's work also suggests that he believed him to be an excellent craftsman as well as an
accomplished artist that could create a complex, fantastic world from pieces of furniture. Also,
the sculptures Sartori describes in this part of his autobiography suggest that they instilled in him
a fascination for the grotesque style. Finally, by mentioning that he trained as a child with a
master sculptor, Sartori might have sought to legitimize his position as an artist. Indeed, in an

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27 My translation of: “Avevo nove anni. Già da allora, per togliermi di strada nei pomeriggi, anche perché mia
madre e mia sorella maggiore lavoravano con lui, mio padre mi mandò da un suo amico d'infanzia che era allora
tornato da Parigi e si era portato un gruzzolo guadagnato lavorando d'intaglio in legno. Un uomo che, malgrado
le incomprensioni a cui mi ha assoggettato, aveva una capacità tecnica finora mai vista. Sembrava giocare, e si
divertiva, cavando dal legno fiori, foglie, frutta, animali grotteschi. Roba piena di freschezza con quel tanto di
aria imbambolata nelle figure e degli animali da essere sperduto, in mezzo ad una raffinatezza di ornati degni del
più bel barocco e rococò francese. Con lui rimasi due anni che ritengo basilari per la mia formazione del
mestiere.” (“Dagli appunti” 28)
interview conducted in 2009, Donato Sartori compared the first carving studio where his father trained to Michelangelo's. Arguably, for both Amleto and Donato Sartori, the master/apprentice model of training in the visual arts added legitimacy to an artistic career by placing it within a centuries-old tradition that went at least as far back as the Renaissance. It is not clear, however, what tasks were assigned to the young Amleto Sartori in this wood-carving workshop. As *ragazzo di bottega* (literally “workshop boy”), he likely spent much time cleaning the master's studio, observing him work and perhaps delivering some pieces to clients. The experienced sculptor probably taught wood carving to his young apprentice; he perhaps gave him simple sculpting tasks to execute alone before he increased the level of difficulty and assigned him more substantial work.

Once he finished primary school, Sartori then tells in his autobiography, he enrolled at the Scuola Pietro Selvatico, a fine arts institute in Padua (*Ibid.*). After class, he worked in what appears to have been a cabinet making and wood engraving workshop in Padua's ghetto, the city's Jewish neighbourhood. “Eight hours of class a day,” he recalls, “then the shop of a wood engraver in the ghetto, until night. This [work] was a kind of stage where I saw a humanity that resembled the Court of Miracles passing by. Worthy of Ruzzante*28*, [this grouping] was gathered in the highest and most extreme corner of the wings*29* in a thick interlocking that had both picaresque and dramatic tones.”*30* (*Ibid.*) According to Donato Sartori, it is in this studio, and

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*28* Ruzzante (also spelled Ruzante) is a theatrical persona created and originally performed by Paduan actor and playwright Angelo Beolco (c. 1502-1542). This persona shares similarities with the zanni, a traditional character of the later Commedia dell'Arte (Henke 50). Ruzzante is also used as a pseudonym for Beolco, who is known for his comedies in dialect inspired by the peasant class of Padua’s countryside. Beolco’s work was given attention by Copeau, Dullin, Bragaglia, De Bosio, and especially Zorzi and Baratto in the 20th century after having been generally ignored since the 17th century.

*29* Whether this is referring to the wings of the craftsman's chairs kept in the workshop, the imaginary stage, or both, is left unclear in the original text.

*30* My translation of: “Ottobre ore al dì di scuola, poi la bottega, da un intagliatore in ghetto, fino a notte. Fu una specie di palcoscenico dove vidi passare una umanità prossima alla Corte dei Miracoli unita a incastro fitto con un tono picaresco e drammatico insieme, degno del Ruzzante spinto nelle quinte più estreme e più alte.” (“Dagli appunti” 28)
During these apprenticeship years, that his father first made masks. These were not masks for the theatre, but decorative wooden masks carved on elaborate pieces of furniture. As he explains:

[...] when he was good at carving, at twelve years old, an antique dealer from Padua saw this boy who made these wood sculptures and said: “Fine... now come with me and I will give you some money, material, [and] a space to work, and you will make furniture for me.” What does “furniture” means [in this case]? He makes a table, chairs, a closet, a bed, etc., and entire house furnished with these sculptures – because these were not [only] pieces of furniture. My father took a table, [more precisely] the measurements of a table within a large piece of wood, then [he made] large legs, glued them [to the table], and after that started sculpting. And then, the legs became monsters, people anatomical details. Then, he carved silhouettes, [all kinds of] things, that is they [the pieces of furniture] became large sculptures. And then he also made sculptures on closets, a ceiling full of sculptures, a bed with elephants, monsters, snakes, people, and masks. Many masks... many masks. 31

(Donato Sartori, Personal interview)

During those apprenticeship years, Amleto Sartori's father became unemployed, a financial downturn that obliged the young sculptor to look for more work. “My father,” he remembers in his autobiography, “had been laid off because he did not want to have anything to do with fascist propaganda and had been identified as subversive due to his friendship with Matteotti.” 32 (“Dagli appunti” 28) Once Amleto graduated from the Scuola Pietro Selvatico, he lost his apprenticeship in Padua and left for Rome, where he lived with an uncle and looked for work (Ibid. 30). His job search being largely unsuccessful, Amleto returned to Padua (Ibid.).

During the following years, he studied at the Istituto [d'Arte] di Venezia, then received a first
study grant to attend the Accademia di Venezia, and another to attend the Accademia di Firenze, where he studied for two years (Ibid.). Surprisingly, Amleto Sartori only mentions these prestigious schools in his autobiography once and avoids describing his learning experience there. He perhaps believed that these academies would need no introduction, that their name would be self-explanatory, and that listing them in his autobiography would be sufficient to give an idea of his training to his potential readers. Or perhaps he associated these academies with ideas, traditions, social classes, and types of work he considered having parted from. More contentiously, perhaps he avoided speaking of his formal training in Venice and Florence to manage the perception the readers would have of him. In other words, he might have preferred to be remembered as the artist who trained in humble woodcarving workshops in Padua's ghetto rather than a sculptor trained in prestigious schools.

Upon his return from Florence, Sartori divided his time between freelancing, teaching and learning. He again attended the Scuola Pietro Selvatico, this time for a master class in stone carving (Ibid.). It is unclear from his autobiography whether Sartori took the course or taught it.

In 1943, Sartori recalls, “The thugs arrived and took everything away from the house, as usual for racial motives.”33 (Ibid. 31) While Sartori does not explicitly state his or his wife's cultural heritage, it is clear that he had strong ties with Padua's Jewish community, that he, his wife, or perhaps both were Jewish, and that he was being persecuted for it. Sartori also remains vague as to what the “thugs” took away from him; whether it was personal belongings or people, such as his wife (Miranda) and their two children (Donato, born in 1939, and Serena, born in 1942). Sartori specifies, however, that soon after the sacking of his house, it was bombed, and

33 My translation of parts of this sentence: “Vennero gli sgherri e mi portarono via tutto da casa per via sempre della questione razziale.” (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 31)
that he “spontaneously found [himself] involved in the clandestine movement.”\footnote{My translation of parts of this sentence: “Questo non impedi che mi trovassi spontaneamente nel movimento clandestino.” (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 31)} (Ibid.) The exact nature of these activities, however, remains unclear. “What I went through,” Sartori posits, “is not easy to tell. I will only say that I fell twice into the hands of the banda Carità’s cutthroats\footnote{The banda Carità was a security police unit led by Major Mario Carità. “The banda,” an online publication of the University of Wisconsin-Madison library informs, “was perhaps the most infamous of the special units of semi-autonomous security police set up by the puppet Fascist regime reconstituted by the Germans after Italy left the war in September 1943. [...] Carità’s gang, which included common criminals sprung from prison, waged a ruthless campaign of repression against Jews and opponents of the Fascist regime unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches.” (Italian Life Under Fascism) The banda Carità operated in Florence in 1944 and in Padua in 1945, and became known for the violent interrogations it conducted.} and if it's been something terrible, I would say that it was also an invaluable moral and human experience.”\footnote{My translation of: “Quello che ho passato non è facilmente dicibile. Dirò solo che per due volte sono caduto in mano degli scherani della 'banda Carità' e se da un lato è stata una cosa tremenda, direi che c'è stata un'esperienza morale ed umana impagabile.” (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti” 31)} (Ibid.) “I saw life and death from up close [...],” he continues, “[and] I came out of it with a broader vision of the world.”\footnote{My translation of: “Ho visto in faccia la vita e la morte negli aspetti più tremendi e più alti; ne sono uscito con una visione del mondo coi limiti molto allargati.” (Amleto Sartori, “Dagli appunti”31)} (Ibid.) Sartori does not detail this period of his life further in his memoirs, and only speaks briefly of his recovery after the war, when he went back to teaching, “put the family back together, and with hard work rebuilt somewhat of a house.”\footnote{My translation of: “Ricomposi la famiglia e a furia di lavoro mi rifeci un po' di casa.” (Amleto Sartori, “Degli appunti” 31)} (Ibid.) This last sentence, however, confirms that Sartori had been set apart from his family sometimes during or after 1943. It also suggests that the sacking of his house, which is mentioned earlier in the autobiography, could be a euphemism for this separation.

While Amleto Sartori’s early training in wood-carving explains his interest in the grotesque style at least in part, his experience under the fascist regime might have also played a role in the aesthetic of his visual and literary work after the war, especially during the late 1940s and early 1950s, when he started exploring mask-making techniques with a group of artists and scholars in Padua. “In 1948,” Sartori informs, “I was invited by the theatre school of the
university [of Padua] to teach art history and mask-making. It was Gianfranco De Bosio who called me after he had returned from Paris with the most urgent mission.”39 (Ibid. 31)

3.1.3 Gianfranco De Bosio, Jacques Lecoq and the Teatro dell'Università

The Teatro dell'Università, the theatre of the University of Padua, was created in the fall of 1945 “by the initiative of a group of young students who were going back to their studies after various experiences of war.”40 (“Italia: Teatro dell'Università : Padova” n. pag.) For the first three years of its existence, this theatre offered its students a generalist approach to the theatre. During its first season, it produced a programme that aired on the university radio station (Ibid.). In the 1946-47 season, the theatre staged Aeschylus' The Libation Bearers and Strindberg's The Pelican (Il rettore n. pag.). Both productions toured in Italy and abroad (Ibid.). On tour, the Teatro dell'Università became acquainted with l’Éducation par le jeu dramatique (also known as EPJD), a program that offered theatre courses of mime, movements for actors and improvisation techniques41 (Ibid.). The EPDJ, based in Paris (but also in Montrouge), was then directed by Jean-Louis Barrault and Marie-Hélène Dasté. The first exchanges between the Paduan and Parisian schools led to a series of performances by Marcel Marceau in Italy

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40 My translation of: “[...] per iniziativa di un gruppo di giovani studenti, che ritornava agli studi dopo varie esperienze di guerra.” (“Italia: Teatro dell'Università : Padova” n. pag.)

41 The EPDJ was a theatre training school founded by Jean-Marie Conty and influenced by l’École du Vieux-Colombier and by Charles Dullin’s theatre school. It included Étienne Decroux, Jean-Louis Barrault, Roger Blin, Marie-Hélène Dasté, Jean Vilar, and Jacques Lecoq among its teachers (Aslan Roger Blin 154). At the EPDJ, Odette Aslan explains, “Traditional training gave way to exercises that would develop the personality and inventiveness of the actor, stressing corporeal expression as well as diction. […] The program not only opposed traditional actor training [which, at the time, would have emphasized spoken text]. It also attacked the bourgeois prejudices and religious precepts of all conventional education, and in particular the Western rationalism that separates mind from body.” (Ibid) “The courses,” Aslan continues, “were concerned with spontaneous expression, with the unconscious, with biology; they aimed at a total integration of being, and, in order to establish new ethics, they demanded radical social change. At EDJD the focus was more on a sense of life than on stage techniques.” (Ibid.) The principles taught at this school were published in 1947 by Jean-Marie Conty, Michel Garnier, and Maurice Martenot in Faire des vivants.
organized by the Teatro dell'Università (Ibid.). During the following academic year (1947-48), Gianfranco De Bosio – then the Teatro dell'Università's director – and Lieta Papafava, one of his students, studied at the school of Barrault and Dasté. De Bosio and Papafava's goal, as stated by the Rector of the University of Padua in a letter addressed to the Ministry of Public Instruction on December 30th 1948, was to “research in details the methods and aims of modern French theatre.”42 (Il rettore n. pag.) This educational venture paved the way to the creation, in the fall of 1948, of the Scuola d'Arte Drammatica del Teatro dell'Università in Padua. This nascent theatre school offered two streams to its 40, or so, students:

One set of courses is dedicated to true theatre training that leads to [the creation of] cultural performances at a high artistic level; aside from acting, speech, [and] singing, we apply improvisation methods and mime [techniques], which are the latest [training approaches] in the dramatic arts. A second group focuses on study [i.e. theatre studies]: the study of texts, study of contemporary theatre aesthetics, character study, dramatic criticism, psychology and pedagogy.43 (Il rettore n. pag.)

This is therefore the context in which Amleto Sartori joined the Teatro dell'Università's teaching faculty. There, he met De Bosio, but also Ludovico Zorzi, who introduced him to the work of Ruzzante (“Dagli appunti” 31). Sartori also met Jacques Lecoq, who had been invited by De Bosio to teach courses of movements for actors.44 It is veritably at the Teatro dell'Università that Amleto Sartori first engaged in a research on masks for the theatre.

The first masks Sartori created for the Paduan theatre school were series of large, wooden sculptures inspired by African masks. These masks were designed for an event titled

42 My translation of: “[...] documentarsi in materia precisa sui metodi e finalità del moderno teatro francese.” (Il rettore n. pag.)
43 My translation of: “Un gruppo di insegnamento è riservato alla preparazione drammatica vera e propria in vista di rappresentazioni culturali di alto livello artistico; oltre la recitazione, la dizione, il canto, sono applicati i metodi della improvvisazione e del mimo che costituiscono l’insegnamento più moderno in fatto di arte drammatica. Un secondo gruppo di insegnamento è riservato invece alla attività di studio: studio di testi, studio dell’estetica del teatro contemporaneo, studio di personaggi, critica drammatica, psicologia e pedagogia.” (Il rettore n. pag.)
44 De Bosio likely met Lecoq in Paris, at the school of Éducation par le jeu dramatique, where Lecoq might have been a junior instructor.
Arte negro americana (literally “Black-American Art”) at the Teatro dell'Università. Arte negro americana took place in April 1948 and included poetry readings, “spiritual songs and blues” performed by Gimmy Davis, and a staging of Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* by Agostino Contarello 45 (“Programme for Arte negro americana” n. pag.). In his article *Maschera, specchio di vita*, Gianfranco De Bosio recalls that during this event, actors declaimed poems behind Sartori's large masks in an attempt to signify the “individual characteristics and the collective consciousness of the enslaved people.” 46(159) This event, as it is described in the programme, immediately evokes the “African Nights” organized by the Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire more than two decades earlier during which “Richard Huelsenbeck chanted ‘authentic’ Negro poems” (*Primitivism* 12), and for which Marcel Janco created masks inspired by African art (*Ibid.*). The Dadaists’s enthusiasm for “ideas of Negritude” (*Ibid.* 11) and African art (including masks) was shared by other artists, like Picasso, Matisse, Cézanne, and Brancusi, whose works Sartori likely knew. Sartori’s first masks, it would appear, followed in the steps of other visual artists, like Janco, who, through their experiments with masks, challenged the academic canons of Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, and arguably, as Denis Bablet suggests in *D’Edward Gordon Craig au Bauhaus*, participated in renegotiating – in the arts, at least – the hierarchy between the face and the body (138).

Sartori also created the masks for a Teatro dell'Università's production of *Le cento notti* (the translation and adaptation of a Nô play), Garcia Lorca's *Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa in his Garden*, and *Porto di mare* (a pantomime staged by Lecoq) (Programme of *Le cento notti* n. pag.). This production premiered on May 24th 1950, in Padua. It is unclear if *Cento notti* and

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45 Contarello later joined the Piccolo Teatro of Milan. There, he played Pantalone in Strehler's *Servant of Two Masters* in 1953 and 1955 (“Arlecchino dal 1947 ad oggi” 162)

46 My translation of: “[...] le caratteristiche individuali e la coscienza collettiva del popolo schiavo.” (De Bosio 159)
Lorca’s play were performed with masks, but *Porto di mare* certainly was. Sartori also made the masks used in a series of four pantomimes—*La statua*, *L’officina*, *Fan-Fan bar* and, again, *Porto di mare*—directed by Lecoq, always at the Teatro dell’Università (Programme of *Pantomime di Jacques Lecoq* n. pag.). At present, I do not know if masks were used in all four plays.

*Porto di mare* was the first production for which Sartori designed masks to be worn by actors (Lecoq “La geometria” 164). They were modelled after Lecoq’s recollection of the *masques nobles* (literally “noble masks”) that were first used by Jacques Copeau at l’École du Vieux-Colombier, and then by Jean Dasté, whose work as a director and theatre educator transmitted Copeau’s legacy to a new generation of French performers (*Ibid.* 163). Lecoq was introduced to the noble masks when he first worked with Dasté in his Compagnie des Comédiens de Grenoble in 1945 (*Ibid.*). As he remembers:

We staged a pantomime titled *The Exodus* that told the plight of farmers constrained to leave their villages and to flee on the roads to escape the invader. The war was just over and everyone still strongly felt these problems. This production was even performed in mountain villages where the public had never before attended a theatre production but easily accepted the convention of the mask, silent acting, and the metamorphoses we went through as we successively transformed into farmers, animals, [and] a crowd. (*Ibid.*)

The noble masks used in this production, Lecoq remembers, did not convey any particular expression or emotion; they aimed at neutrality—*in as much as this was possible, and*

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47 In his article *Maschera, specchio di vita*, De Bosio implies that masks were used in *Cento notti* (160), while in *La geometria al servizio dell’emozione*, Lecoq assures that noble masks were used in *Porto di mare* (164).

48 My translation of: “Avevamo preparato una figurazione mimica intitolata *L’esodo* che rievocava il dramma dei contadini costretti ad abbandonare i loro villaggi ed a scappare per le strade nel tentativo di sfuggire all’invasore. La guerra era appena terminata e tutti sentivano ancora fortemente questi problemi. Questo spettacolo fu rappresentato anche in villaggi di montagna dove il pubblico non aveva mai assistito ad una rappresentazione teatrale ma accettò senza problemi la convenzione della maschera, la rappresentazione silenziosa e le varie metamorfosi a cui ci sottoponevamo transformandoci, di volta in volta, in contadini, animali, folla.” (Lecoq, “La geometria” 163)
“represented what men and women have in common, even if the mask used by men was
different from the one destined to women.”49 (Ibid.)

Lecoq and the Teatro dell'Università's young players 50 first attempted to make these
noble masks themselves, for their production of Porto di mare, and used Sartori's sculpting
studio at the Scuola Pietro Selvatico:

We prepared clay, then plaster, and finally some glue and paper following a
technique Jean Dasté had taught me: Make a shape in clay and create a plaster
mold of it, brush the inside with glycerin to prevent the mask remaining stuck
when it comes out of the mold. We made it out of ten layers of newspapers
shredded into small pieces that we glued together with a starch paste between
three pieces of muslin: at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. All of this
was left to dry, then removed from the mold, and covered with a coat of plaster of
Paris in which we mixed a bit of sugar, a secret Jean Dasté had kept from his time
at the Vieux Colombier, but of which he did not really know the purpose. We said
it was to prevent the coating from cracking once dry. I scrupulously respected this
procedure. Then, with fine sandpaper, we smoothed the surface that we painted
brown and that we protected with a matte varnish to avoid the reflection of the
spotlights [on the surface of the masks]. 51 (Ibid. 163-164)

The results of this work, according to Lecoq, were remarkably bad; the surface of the masks was
uneven and sharp angles prevented the actors from expressing anything (“La geometria” 164).

49 My translation of parts of the following sentence: “Questa maschera priva di espressioni particolari, di aspetto
vagamente orientaleggiante (Copeau era affascinato dal teatro Nô) rappresentava ciò che uomini e donne hanno
in comune, anche se la maschera utilizzata dagli uomini era diversa da quella destinata alle donne.” (Lecoq, “La
geometria” 163)

50 Among these students was Carlo Mazzone-Clementi. Clementi later moved to the United States, where, in 1974,
he co-founded the Dell'Arte International School for Physical Theatre (Blue Lake, California). The curriculum
of this school still includes Commedia dell'Arte courses as well as mask-making and masked-performance
classes. Clementi is also known for having introduced Amleto Sartori's leather masks in the United States
through the extensive touring of his theatre performances, and through his work as a workshop instructor and as
a teacher at the Carnergie Institute of Technology and, later, at the Dell'Arte school (Doran n. pag.). See Bob
Doran's Behind the Mask: Carlo Mazzone-Clementi, 1920-2000 for Clementi's biography (see bibliography).

51 My translation of: “Preparammo la terra, poi il gesso, ed infine la colla e la carta seguendo la tecnica che mi
aveva insegnato Jean Dasté. Bisognava costruire una forma in terra per ricavarne una matrice in gesso, il cui
interno veniva cosparso di glicerina per evitare che la maschera vi restasse incollata al momento del distacco.
Queste erano costruite con dieci strati di carta di giornale ritagliata in pezzettini, incollati gli uni sugli altri con
della colla di amido, e fra i quali erano interposti tre strati di tarlatana: all'inizio, in mezzo ed alla fine. Il tutto
veniva lasciato asciugare, poi, tolt dolmente dietro la matrice, veniva ricoperto da uno strato di gesso inerte, mescolato a
zollette di zucchero: un segreto che Dasté conservava dai tempi del Vieux-Colombier ma di cui non si
conosceva molto l'utilità, si diceva che servisse ad evitare che lo strato, una volta asciutto, si scompalasse.
Rispettavo scrupolosamente questo rito. In seguito, con della carta vetrata sottile, lisciavamo la superficie che
dipingevamo di marrone e proteggevamo con una vernice opaca per evitare la rifrazione della luce dei
proiettori.” (Lecoq, “La geometria” 163-164 )
As the opening night of Porto di mare was approaching, Sartori offered to make the noble masks himself (Ibid.). He likely followed Dasté's mask-making technique, perhaps adapting the process as he went along, and probably succeeded, at least to a greater extent than Lecoq and his students had, in creating a smooth design that facilitated the actors' performance.

Sartori's interpretation of the noble masks was the first step towards the creation of the neutral mask, which Lecoq employed at the Piccolo Teatro school in the early 1950s and later in his own school, in Paris. Of the neutral mask, Lecoq would later write that it is “the fundamental mask at the core of all the other masks. It carries a referential calm that serves to grab all the various passions and dramatic states; it does not carry any previous conflict within itself, it is available to any action. It acts like a person in a state of balance.”\(^52\) (“La geometria” 166) Sartori first produced a neutral mask in leather in Padua, somewhere between 1948 and the mid-1950s, with Jacques Lecoq as a model. As Lecoq remembers:

One day [Sartori] decided to make me a neutral mask in leather. He took a long time to do it, made several attempts, he measured my face, and I went to his studio to try it on. It was sticking to my skin so much that I was not able to act in it. The leather was too flexible and we had to make another one in a more solid leather. This is how I learned that there must be a distance between the mask and the face to be able to perform. He took even longer to find the female neutral mask, going successively from the Paduan lady-farmer to the stunned young girl, before stabilizing it in the woman of all women.\(^53\) (“La geometria” 165)

Sartori and Lecoq's neutral mask is now broadly used as a pedagogical tool in numerous European and American theatre schools; it is also abundantly copied by mask-makers of both

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\(^{52}\) My translation of: “La maschera neutra è la maschera di base che sta al centro di tutte le altre maschere. Essa porta riferimento alla calma che servirà a cogliere le varie passioni e stati drammatici; essa non porta conflitti precedenti, è disponibile per qualsiasi azione. Agisce come una persona in equilibrio.” (Lecoq “La geometria” 166)

\(^{53}\) My translation of: “Un giorno decise di farmi una maschera neutra in cuoio. Ci mise molto tempo, fece numerose prove, egli misurava il mio viso, ed io andavo a provarla nel suo laboratorio. Mi stava talmente appiccicata alla pelle che non potevo lavorarci. Il cuoio era troppo morbido e si dovette farne un'altra con un cuoio più solido. Imparai così che occorre una distanza fra la maschera ed il viso per poterla utilizzare. Cercò, per lungo tempo ancora, la maschera neutra femminile passando successivamente dalla contadina padovana alla ragazza stupita, prima di fermarsi sulla donna di tutte le donne.” (“La geometria” 165)
hemispheres and has served as a point of reference for subsequent interpretations of neutral masks for the theatre.\textsuperscript{54}

Parallel to his research with Lecoq, Sartori worked on his first Commedia dell'Arte masks with Gianfranco De Bosio. “While Lecoq led Sartori on the path of 'cold' masks, ” De Bosio recalls, “I encouraged him to follow the path of the Commedia dell'Arte with my stagings of plays by Goldoni.”\textsuperscript{55} (“Maschera, specchio” 160) Amleto Sartori apparently created his first Commedia masks (an Arlecchino and a Pantalone mask) for Goldoni's I pettegolezzi delle donne (\textit{Ibid.}). This production was the Teatro dell'Università's end of year project for the academic year 1948-1949. It was presented, along with Cento notti, at the theatre festival of the Venice Biennale in 1949 (\textit{Italia : Teatro dell'Università} n. pag.). De Bosio and the Teatro dell'Università subsequently produced Goldoni's La cameriera brillante and La famiglia dell'antiquario, likely with Sarori's masks (De Bosio 160).

Much information on Amleto Sartori's research methodology for the creation of his early Commedia masks comes from his son and colleagues, whose recollection of events surrounding Sartori's work have been either published or transmitted in interviews. These events, though sometimes vividly described, often remain undated. It is safe to believe, however, that from the moment he joined the Teatro dell'Università in 1948 until at least the mid-1950s – after he started working with the Piccolo Teatro, Amleto Sartori conducted an eclectic research on masks and mask-making that included, but was not limited to, (1) academic and artistic discussions with Jacques Lecoq, Gianfranco De Bosio, Ludovico Zorzi, Agostino Contarello, and other colleagues from the Teatro dell'Università; (2) iconographic research on the Commedia dell'Arte

\textsuperscript{54} See Lecoq's \textit{Le corps poétique} for a description of how he uses the neutral mask in his pedagogy (see bibliography).

\textsuperscript{55} My translation of: “Mentre Lecoq conduceva Sartori sui cammini delle maschere 'fredde', io lo indirizzavo a ripercorrere l'esperienza delle maschere della Commedia dell'Arte con le mie regie di teatro goldoniano.” (De Bosio 160)
tradition; (3) the study of movements with masks; (4) field trips to Paris, Padua and Venice; and
(5) the observation of people whose social class and cultural background he associated with
Commedia characters and with protagonists in Ruzzante's plays.

In a personal interview conducted in 2009, Donato Sartori recalled how his family home
was often filled, late into the night, by his father's colleagues from the University of Padua. The
kitchen, he remembers, became the theatre of discussions on masks, protagonists of plays, and
teatre in general:

My house was actually some kind of forge. That is, the subject [i.e. mask work] was so novel, so little known that, even for the actors, this [discovery] of the mask was a miracle. I remember, for example, that one Pantalone from Padua, from the Teatro dell'Università, was an old – well “old,” he was in fact young – clock maker who had his shop in a square near Padua. This studio was some sort of antique shop with all the things hanging off the walls. Even when he was young, this man was always half bent over, like a miser. When we went to see him in this shop, he was always there, in the dark, preparing, adjusting watches, counting money, and he had, you know, all sorts of small boxes, things... like Pantalone [...]. He even had this long, aquiline nose [characteristic to Pantalone's mask]. And then, he often wore a cap. So, [...], when he put on Pantalone's mask, he did not change. When he took off the mask, nothing changed either: he was still Pantalone. He played the part of Pantalone in Padua and then, when he went to Milan, he became one of Giorgio Strehler's first Pantalone. His name was Agostino Contarello. And he was a chatterbox. He had this energy: [Donato Sartori imitates a
n agitated, chatty man]. And then he wrote his own plays; then he interpreted all the masked characters; then he wanted to try out some [masks]. [...] Without a doubt, by four or five in the morning, he was still there. Even the other actors brought in ideas, a thing or two, discussion topics, etc... and I was practically sleeping next door."  

56 My translation of parts of an interview conducted with Donato Sartori on July 6th 2009: “A casa mia, c'era veramente una fucina... Ciò, l'argomento era talmente nuovo, poco conosciuto che, anche per gli attori, era un miracolo questo della maschera. Quindi, io mi ricordo, per esempio, che uno dei Pantaloni di Padova, del Teatro dell'Università, era un vecchio—“vecchio”—era giovane!—orologiaio che aveva la bottega di orologiaia in campo [word inaudible, perhaps vicino] a Padova. Questa bottega era una bottega [word inaudible] come una specie di antiquario con tutte le cose attaccate ai muri. Lui, anche quando era giovane, era sempre mezzo “curvato” [i.e. curvato], tirchio. Quando andavamo da lui dentro questa bottega, era sempre lì, nel buio, che preparava, aggiustava gli orologi, contava i soldini, e aveva, sai, tutti i cassettini, le cose... come un Pantalone [...]. Aveva proprio questo naso che era lungo, aquilino. E poi spesso aveva questo berrettino. Quindi, [...], quando lui si è messo la maschera di Pantalone non è cambiato. Quando si toglieva la maschera non cambiava niente, era sempre Pantalone. Pantalone, lui, lo recitava a Padova e poi quando è andato a Milano è diventato uno dei primi Pantaloni di Giorgio Strehler. Agostino Contarello, si chiamava. Ed era un ciacolon, gli chiamavano qua, ciacolon; chiacchierone. E poi [aveva] un’ energia sempre. Poi scriveva queste sue commedie; e poi interpretava le maschere; poi voleva provarle [...]. Quindi praticamente alle quattro, le cinque di mattina era ancora lì. Anche
Amleto Sartori himself tells of artistic and scholarly discussions he held with the teaching faculty of the University of Padua, and especially with Ludovico Zorzi who, at the time, was researching Ruzzante. As De Bosio remembers, “[Amleto Sartori] shared with me the results of his readings of Ruzante\textsuperscript{57} \textit{sic.}, he benefited from my discoveries and those of Zorzi, [and] brought us to inns in Portello and to the Foro Boario to listen to the archaic echoes of the ancient Paduan language.”\textsuperscript{58} (“Maschera, specchio” 160)

Amleto’s research on masks for the theatre also included the study of the iconography of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition. In \textit{Ricordi intorno a una maschera}, for example, he describes a visit he paid with Marcello Moretti to Villa Conti,\textsuperscript{59} also known as Villa Deliciosa, in Montegaldella (24). The gardens of this property are adorned with multiple life-size seventeenth-century statues signed by Orazio Marimali (\textit{Ibid.}). One area of the gardens is home to statues of Commedia dell'Arte characters. Though he visited the Deliciosa with Moretti while he worked for the Piccolo Teatro, Amleto Sartori might have known the villa (and its statues) long before he made his first Commedia masks. These statues are only one example among others of the Commedia dell'Arte iconography widely available in the Veneto, iconography that was accessible to Sartori when he first conducted his research on masks.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{57}This name can be written either way, “Ruzzante” or “Ruzante.” I use the first spelling throughout this thesis, but keep the spelling used by other authors when directly citing from their work. Here for example, De Bosio writes “Ruzante.”

\textsuperscript{58}My translation of: “Egli mi comunicava gli esiti delle sue letture di Ruzante, godeva delle scoperte mie e di Zorzi, ci conduceva nelle osterie del Portello e al Foro Boario per ascoltare gli echi lontani dell'antica parlata pavana.” (De Bosio 160)

\textsuperscript{59}The Villa is sometimes referred to as “Villa Conti Campagnolo” and “Villa Conti Lampertico.” On its Website, the municipality of Montegaldella currently refers to this villa as “Villa Conti, Lampertico, Campagnolo.” In his article, Amleto Sartori uses “Villa Deliciosa.” (“Ricordi intorno” 24)

\textsuperscript{60}In his article \textit{Brevi note sullo studio della realizzazione delle maschere}, Amleto Sartori tells that his work was also influenced by attending a performance of a Nô play at the Venice Biennale in 1955 (170). He also recalls having seen Japanese masks during his visits at the museum of the Teatro alla Scala, at the “Museo di Arte Orientale” in Venice (probably referring to the Museo d'Arte Orientale Ca'Pesaro), and in other museums in
Though Sartori first made masks in wood and then in paper-mâché, he rapidly, around 1951, turned to leather. Not having made leather masks before, and apparently not knowing anyone who made them, Sartori looked for literature on the subject that eventually led him to Venice and Paris. As he recalls:

Once I finished studying, in as much as I could from an artistic perspective, famous specimens [i.e. masks] existing in Italy, France and Austria, I threw myself into researching for literature that would indicate me the path to follow. It would be useless and tedious to recount the story of my research; it is enough to say that I spent more than a year doing research only to gather some vague and inaccurate information on the technique of bookbinding with skin and leather in Venice in the first half of the 1500s. A decisive moment for me was when I saw wooden molds for a zanni (in the Musée de l'Opéra in Paris) over which the leather would have been stretched and shaped [to make a mask], as well as the written proof of the existence of some “lead molds used for masks” (Biblioteca Marciana, Venice). This was my starting point.61 (Amleto Sartori, “Brevi note” 169)

Sartori's quest for material and mask-making techniques was undoubtedly paired with his research on design. Researching the shape of particular masks led him to observe farmers from the Veneto, a people he associated with Commedia characters and with the protagonists of Ruzzante's plays. According to Donato Sartori, Amleto Sartori and Jacques Lecoq organized excursions in Padua's Prato della Valle to see farmers coming into town from the neighbouring countryside to buy and sell livestock. These farmers, Donato Sartori told in a personal interview,  

Paris, Vienna and Genoa (Ibid.). These masks, Sartori then suggests, influenced his approach to mask-making materials, including wood and lacquer (Ibid.). Another collection of masks also helped Sartori in his research of material and design. This collection was Renato Simoni's, who donated it to the museum of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, either in 1952 (when he passed away), or around this date. This collection, Sartori implies, included leather masks for Zanni, Pulcinella, and Arlecchino that had once been worn by actors, that shared similarities with the masks exhibited at the Musée de l'Opéra in Paris, and whose material inspired Sartori's experiments with untreated Sicilian leather and led to his creation of a new Arlecchino mask for Marcello Moretti, for the Latin American tour of The Servant of Two Masters in 1954 (Ibid.).

My translation of: “Esaurito, per quanto mi è stato possibile dal punto di vista artistico, l'esame degli esemplari famosi esistenti in Italia, in Francia ed in Austria, mi sono buttato alla ricerca di una letteratura che potesse darmi l'indicazione di una strada da seguire. Sarebbe inutile e noioso rifare la cronistoria, basti solo dire che ho speso oltre un anno in ricerche col solo risultato di trovare qualche labile e inesatta nozione sulla tecnica delle rilegature in pelle e in cuoio in Venezia nella prima metà del '500. Un fatto decisivo è stato per me l'avere visto degli stampi in legno (Museo dell'Opera di Parigi), per uno zanni, sul quale il cuoio veniva steso e modellato, e la testimonianza scritta dell'esistenza di taluni 'stampi in piombo usati per maschere' (Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia). Da qui la partenza.” (Amleto Sartori, “Brevi note” 169)

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spoke Pavan, Padua's dialect, and had coarse manners; they arrived at the market in horse-drawn carts, were wrapped up in their coat, and wore capes and hats that nonetheless revealed the hard skin of their face which, according to Donato Sartori, was burned by the sun, the wind and the cold, and resembled leather. Their gaze, he described, was not intelligent but cunning and worried; and he readily compared the looks these farmers gave to each other with those of dogs having to share the same plate of food. Then, Donato remembered, Amleto Sartori drew the farmers' silhouettes and faces while Lecoq studied their walks, postures and gestures. Slowly, Donato posited, the two men associated Paduan farmers with Commedia characters and with the protagonists in Ruzzante's plays.62

Donato Sartori's superlative recollection of his father's excursions is shared by Jacques Lecoq, who wrote in Le Corps Poétique:

In Padua, I went to the cattle market to see the farmers sell their oxen, then Sartori brought me in the city's periphery to eat smoked horse in gambling dens, among those he called “horse thieves.” I felt in these neighbourhoods what an authentic commedia dell'arte could be, wherein the characters are constantly in the urgency of living. This was not literary commedia dell'arte but that of Ruzzante, rooted in peasant life, close to the origins.63 (19)

Amleto Sartori's own Pradellavallesca (see 3.1.1) also suggests that he found inspiration for his masks in Padua's largest outdoor market. It is important to mention, however, that, according to Lecoq, Donato and Amleto Sartori's descriptions of the crowd at Prato della Valle, the people who inspired Sartori's masks were not land-owners nor wealthy, sophisticated, urban merchants, but peasants who, in the eye of the observers, appeared to emerge from another, archaic era. In

62 During these years, the early to the mid-1950s, Amleto Sartori indeed created series of masks that represented characters in Ruzzante's work. Some of these masks are now displayed at the Museo Internazionale della Maschera Amleto e Donato Sartori in Abano Terme.

63 My translation of: “À Padoue, j'allais au marché aux bestiaux voir les paysans vendre leurs bœufs, puis Sartori m'emmènait dans la périphérie de la ville manger du cheval fumé dans les tripots, au milieu de ceux qu'il appelait 'les voleurs de chevaux'. J'ai senti dans ces quartiers ce que pouvait être une authentique commedia dell'arte, celle où les personnages sont en permanence dans l'urgence de vivre. Ce n'était pas une commedia dell'arte livresque mais celle de Ruzzante, enracinée dans la vie paysanne, proche des origines.” (Lecoq, Le Corps poétique 19)
other words, those who would become the models for some of Sartori's masks were not only chosen for the appeal of their facial features, but for the manners, language, general physical appearance and overall behaviours associated with their geographic provenance and social class.

3.2. Of paper and leather: Amleto Sartori's masks for The Servant of Two Masters

3.2.1 On Sartori's mask-making process

The process Amleto Sartori developed and followed to create his leather masks, including those for Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1952, was probably close to what his son, Donato, now teaches to his students during his yearly international mask-making workshop in Abano Terme. Donato Sartori's process starts with the mask-maker imagining a character and drawing its mask on paper. Then, he makes a plaster cast of the face of the actor for whom the mask is being made. This cast “captures” the actor's facial dimensions and thus allows for the creation of a perfectly well adjusted mask. The mask-maker then creates a three-dimensional shape of his mask in clay, following and adapting the initial drawings and respecting the shape of the performer's visage. This clay sculpture is then covered with a thick layer of plaster. Once the plaster is dry, it is removed from the clay mold, plunged into water to eliminate air bubbles, and left to dry. This new plaster cast becomes a negative mold from which a first paper mask is made. Donato Sartori uses three types of paper for this mask: (1) a thin, absorbent, blue paper commonly used by Venetian mask-makers; (2) a Spanish, brown, thick and textured paper often used for building masks and puppets; and (3) a very absorbent, white paper that has a creamy texture once wet. While Donato Sartori can easily find the blue paper

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64 I participated in this month-long workshop in the summer of 2003. The mask-making process I describe in this part of chapter 3 is based on my recollection of Donato Sartori's teachings during this workshop.

65 Actress Silvie Dubois, a participant in the 2009 edition of Donato Sartori's mask-making workshop, gave me her
in Venice and purchase the textured one from a provider in Barcelona or elsewhere in Spain, it is unclear where he gets his white paper; this paper, which is probably hand-made, resembles that used by watercolourists, but is much more malleable when wet.

The mask-maker then shreds the three kinds of paper by hand, wets these pieces and carefully applies them inside of the plaster mold. Donato Sartori makes a first layer of white paper, then a layer of Venetian blue paper, one of Spanish cartapesta and finishes with Venetian blue paper. All of these layers are bound together with glue. The paper is left to dry in the mold before it is removed from it. The mask-maker then coats the surface of the paper mask with a thin, wet layer of plaster filler. Once this layer is dry, it is gently sanded off, though not completely, with fine sandpaper. The inside of the mask is then sealed with varnish and the outside is painted and sealed. The fabrication process of this first mask is remarkably close to Jacques Lecoq's description of Jean Dasté's method, which was discussed earlier in this chapter (see 3.1).

Donato Sartori's paper mask is a first proof for the final leather product. If the mask-maker is satisfied with this proof, he will seal the inside of the negative plaster mold before filling it with more plaster. The negative mold is then broken to reveal a positive plaster model of the mask, which is then used as a point of reference during the next step of the process. In a studio equipped with a table, vices and wood knives, the mask-maker sculpts a matrix of the mask from a square piece of soft wood (Norwegian pine, for example). It is on this matrix that the leather (a piece of cow leather, naturally treated with vegetable tannins, and previously softened in warm water) will be worked. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Donato Sartori's method is discussed (and illustrated) in several documents he published in collaboration with the

*notes, wherein the three kinds of paper are referred to as follow: carta zucchero (the blue paper), carta pedra [sic] (the thick brown paper) and carta cotone (the finishing, absorbent paper). These names are perhaps closer to how Donato Sartori speaks of the kinds of paper he uses in his workshop.*
Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali as well as in Thurston James' prop-building manual (see bibliography). These publications also mention some of the tools and techniques for working the leather on the wooden mold.

Did Amleto Sartori follow each step identified above? Since he had a long experience as a wood-engraver and cabinet maker, he might have sometimes omitted to create a first model in paper. With time, he might even have become comfortable enough with making leather masks to first draw the character and its mask on a piece of paper, cast the actor's face, and directly carve a wooden matrix.

Aside from Donato Sartori's recollection and transmission of his father's working method, we know of Amleto Sartori's mask-making process from the masks, wooden molds, photographs of his masks and of his workshop, and drawings he left behind. A drawing is kept at the Museo Internazionale della Maschera in Abano Terme that tells much of Sartori's vision of masked characters in the Commedia tradition. 66 This drawing, dated 1952, is a study of Pantalone's mask for Strehler's staging of The Servant of Two Masters. 67 The support of this sketch is paper, the medium is ink and gouache. This document bears three hand-written inscriptions: (1) on the upper left corner of the sheet of paper, one can read “Piccolo Teatro Milano,” (2) on the lower left corner is a signature and date that read “Sartori 52,” and (3) on the lower right corner: “Pantaloni in 'L'Arlecchino servo di due padroni'.” There are also three distinct figurative components to the document, aside from these inscriptions. On the upper left corner of the piece, below the first inscription, Sartori drew two small heads, one in profile, the other facing front. Sartori first traced the shape of two skulls before drawing a character's face over them and the basic shape of a mask. Then, on the upper right corner of the sheet, Sartori

66 This drawing has also been published in Arte della maschera nella Commedia dell'Arte (see bibliography).
67 This drawing might have been a working document for Sartori or a proof he presented to Strehler for approval, before making the mask.
drew Pantalone's full silhouette in profile, and in full costume. This image, and those of the two heads, are relatively small compared to a third illustration that covers most of the page. This last image shows the profile of an actor's head wearing Pantalone's mask. The eye of the actor is visible through the mask's eye-opening, which suggests that by 1952 Sartori thought of the performer's vision in the mask as he developed his own interpretation of Pantalone.

Another series of documents displayed at the Museo Internazionale della Maschera also tells much of Amleto Sartori's vision of Commedia dell'Arte character. These documents are in fact eight bas-reliefs, each of them depicting a specific character (namely Pantalone, Brighella, Dottore, Arlecchino, Colombina, Capitano, Tartaglia, and Pulcinella). These bas-reliefs, dated 1951, are made of plaster. Each character represented on these pieces is depicted from head to toe, adopts a dynamic posture, seems to perform carefully chosen rhetorical gestures, and displays specific facial expressions that suggest performance.

The bas-relief representing Dottore depicts him with his mouth wide open, and with a contorted face that suggests lively speech. His right hand leans on his heart while his left hand holds his stomach. Dottore's feet seem well grounded, and his weight appears to be equally distributed on both legs: the verbose character is standing still. Another bas-relief represents Pantalone holding his back with one hand, and leaning on his left thigh with the other. His head and legs are shown in profile while his torso is facing us, the bas-relief's viewers. Pantalone's knees are bent, as to show age, and his mouth is open, as if speaking. Arlecchino, depicted on a third bas-relief, is also shown with his mouth open, but with his tongue sticking out. His eyebrows are raised; his head is slightly inclined on one side; and he takes an asymmetrical exaggerated, grotesque posture typical of early depictions of Arlecchino. His head and torso, for

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68 Unlike all the other bas-reliefs, the one that pictures Arlecchino is undated. All eight pieces, however, clearly belong to the same series, and while Amleto Sartori indicated the fabrication date (1951) on each bas-relief but one, he likely made them all the same year.
example, are facing us while his knees are turned to one side. Arlecchino's left leg is bent, and his left foot, which is slightly lifted off the ground, appears to be leaning on an imaginary wall. The weight of this character rests on his right leg only; his left hand is reaching for his left thigh while his right hand leans on his hip, drawing attention to his mid-section. Finally, Arlecchino's upper body is inclined forward, exaggerating the curve of his behind, which sticks out almost mockingly. This grimacing, contorted, and arguably obscene Arlecchino wears his traditional, stylized, lozenge-patterned costume, a feathered hat, a low belt, and a pair of thin flexible shoes through which the shapes of his toes are visible.

Brighella is portrayed with his entire body facing us, the viewers. His eyes are closed, his mouth is wide open, his torso is slightly inflated, his entire body leans sideways, and his face is looking up; one of his legs is stretched while the other is slightly bent and lifted off the ground. One of Brighella's hands holds his chest while the other rests on the upper part of his stomach. Brighella appears to be singing with a passion. He wears his traditional livery, a full beard, a hat that matches his costume, no shoes, and a small cape that seems to be floating in the wind.

Each character represented on the bas-reliefs is shown in its environment. Brighella, for example, stands on a dock in Venice, in front of a canal, next to a gondola. Arlecchino stands in a public square apparently surrounded by Venetian palaces. Pantalone also appears to be standing outdoors, and in proximity of a palace. Dottore's environment, however, is less detailed and hence more difficult to identify. He stands on the tiled floor of an anonymous room, city square, or perhaps university hall. Significantly, none of these four characters wears a mask.69

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69 Sartori also made bas-reliefs representing Pulcinella, Tartaglia, Colombina and Capitano. These pieces are also dated 1951 and belong to the same collection. None of the characters depicted on these bas-reliefs wears a mask, with the exception of Colombina. Her mask, which only covers the area around the eyes, does not stand as the character's face, but as a piece of costume used for disguise that further theatricalize her body.
Amleto Sartori’s bas-reliefs suggest that he imagined the Commedia characters outside of specific plays, in an idealized Venice, or in another, fictional world. Paradoxically, specific elements of each composition (the characters' dynamic postures, rhetorical gestures, and facial expressions suggesting speech, for example) highlight the character's theatrical nature and indicate that, for Sartori, Commedia characters exist in performance and are inseparable from a potential audience. Finally, the similarities between the characters on the bas-reliefs and those portrayed by other artists (like Orazio Marimali, Jacques Callot, and Maurice Sand, for example) testify to Amleto Sartori's familiarity with the visual representations of the Commedia tradition. This suggests that Sartori had clear, specific, traditional, and, arguably, iconic images of Commedia dell'Arte characters in mind when he created the masks for Strehler's staging of The Servant of Two Masters in 1952.

3.2.2 On Dottore, Pantalone, Brighella and Arlecchino's leather masks.

Amleto Sartori's masks for Strehler's production of The Servant of Two Masters have been photographed and published in the programme of the 1966-1967 production and in catalogues of Sartori's work. Photographs of these masks are also available online, in the archival section of the Piccolo Teatro's website. Replicas are also displayed at the Museo Internazionale della Maschera Amleto e Donato Sartori in Abano Terme. The following section will briefly describe the design of the four leather masks used in Strehler's stagings of The Servant of Two Masters.

Amleto Sartori's interpretation of Dottore's mask for Strehler's staging of Goldoni's play is closely modelled on the Commedia dell'Arte iconography and evokes Callot's and Sand's visual interpretations of the character. This mask is black and covers the actor's forehead and nose only (see fig. 2). A few expressive lines are carved on it; a first horizontal line runs across
the mask's forehead, two others delineate the natural arch of the mask's eyebrows, and a pair of vertical wrinkles are carved between these eyebrows, conferring seriousness to the mask.

Pantalone's mask covers the actor's forehead, cheeks and nose; it is a traditional Commedia dell'Arte half-mask (see fig. 2). The performer's upper lip, however, remains visible. This leather mask is black and adorned with white eyebrows likely made of horsehair or coarse synthetic fibres. Pantalone's nose is long, thin, and aquiline, as it is the custom in the Commedia tradition. Two curved lines are carved under the mask's eye-openings, highlighting Pantalone's under-eye circles and bags, and conferring on him a tired and aged appearance. An horizontal line, or wrinkle, runs across the mask's forehead. Protuberant eyebrows between which short vertical wrinkles appear also add to Pantalone's aged looks. Though this mask has been adopted by most actors who played Pantalone in Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* since 1952, another Pantalone mask exists that was also designed by Amleto Sartori for the same play. This other Pantalone, called Pantalone "Grifagno," has wide, bean-like eyes, salient angles on the eyebrows and forehead, large wavy wrinkles under the eyes, several diagonal lines carved on the cheeks and near the mouth, as well as long, unruly, silvery eyebrows. The overall appearance of this mask is severe, even menacing. Unlike the first Pantalone mask described above, Pantalone “Grifagno” covers the actor's upper lip and could therefore alter the actor's speech. At present, I do not know if this mask was ever used in a performance of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro.

The leather mask Amleto Sartori designed for Brighella covers half of the actor's face and is characterized by small round eye-openings that gives it a stunned, animal expression. Two large eyebrows are carved on this mask as well as one horizontal wrinkle that runs across its forehead. Brighella's cheek bones are defined with motives in the shape of large almonds.
This mask, while it offers no peripheral vision to the actor whatsoever, does not cover the upper lip and thus allows for easier vocal production.

Describing Arlecchino's mask presents a challenge since Amleto Sartori created more than one Arlecchino mask for Marcello Moretti's performance in The Servant of Two Masters. As Giorgio Strehler remembers:

Then, Sartori's theory about Arlecchino's mask implying that this character should have a “cat-like,” “fox-like,” “bull-like” mask (his [i.e. Sartori's] convenient names for various fundamental expressions of the masks), childishly interested Marcello, who wanted to wear the “cat” (first) because “it's the most agile!” [...] Hence Marcello first wore the brown “cat-like” mask before he moved on to the “fox,” and finally (victory!) to a mask that was fundamentally original, the primitive zanni, which was naturally softened by the stylized pace of Goldoni's Servant of Two Masters.  

Archival photographs of the production confirm that Moretti wore at least two different Arlecchino masks in The Servant of Two Masters during the 1950s. One of them was either the “Arlecchino-cat” or the “Arlecchino-fox” mask mentioned above, while the other likely was the so-called “primitive zanni” (see 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). The mask generally associated with Moretti's performance as Arlecchino in The Servant of Two Masters is one of the two former masks (either the cat or the fox); it has wide, elongated, feline looking eyes, a round protuberance on the forehead, and salient cheeks defined with carved lines that recall whiskers (see fig. 2). Like Brighella and Pantalone's mask, this Arlecchino mask covers half of the actor's face. Unlike them, however, it also hides the actor's upper lip.

Each mask described above was of course the product of a long research and was the final result of a series of trials and errors. The first series of masks Sartori created for Strehler's

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70 My translation of: “La teoria, poi, di Sartori, circa l’Arlecchino che può avere la maschera tipo ‘gatto’, tipo ‘volpe’, tipo ‘toro’ (sue definizioni di comodo per diverse espressioni fondamentali delle maschere) interessò, infantilmente, Marcello che la volle (la sua prima) da ‘gato’ [sic] perché ‘el xe più agile!’ […] Così Marcello si coprì la prima volta con la maschera bruna ‘tipo gato’ [sic] per poi passare al tipo volpe, e per finire (conquista!) ad un tipo fondamentalmente originale, di zanni primitivo, addolcito naturalmente dalla cadenza stilistica del Servitore di due padroni di Goldoni.” (Strehler, “In margine” 60)
staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* was made of paper, while a second series was in leather. In a letter dated April 29th 1952, Amleto Sartori indeed announces to Paolo Grassi that he would make a Pantalone, Dottore and Brighella mask in paper-maché, and a Pantalone, Brighella, Dottore and Arlecchino mask in leather. Each paper mask, Sartori informs, would cost 5000 Lire, while the leather masks would go for 30 000 Lire each. The total amount Amleto Sartori requested from the Piccolo Teatro for these first series of masks, presumably made for *The Servant of Two Masters*, was 135 000 Lire. Grassi's willingness to pay this price, steep for the time, suggests that by 1952 masks had become key elements in Strehler's vision of the Commedia dell'Arte and essential elements in his staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*.

3.3 Of learning from the actors: the correlations between acting style and the design of a mask

Soon after Amleto Sartori met Strehler's actors at the Piccolo Teatro, he began an artistic collaboration with them that included listening to the players' concerns and personal theories on masks and masked-performance, and incorporating some of their ideas to their masks. His working relationship and friendship with Marcello Moretti particularly shaped how Sartori made masks for contemporary actors. This last section of chapter 3 will examine the contribution of the Piccolo Teatro players, and especially Moretti, to Sartori's work in an attempt to identify some of his mask-making strategies specific to the twentieth-century stage.

Sartori's close relationship to the actors for whom he created masks started before he joined the Piccolo Teatro's team. Indeed, in *Maschera, specchio di vita*, Gianfranco De Bosio remembers Sartori's working process with the Teatro dell'Universitá's performers:

Amleto sought [to reproduce the actor's] interpretation [of a character] in the masks, [that is] the synthesis between the psychology of the character and that of the actor.

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71 This letter is kept at the Piccolo Teatro archives. I consulted it in 2009.
He was constantly searching for theatrical certainties. [...] The actors playing the role [of masked characters] had to stay in his studio, accept to be observed, show him staging choices and gestures, let him hear their voice and the quality of its interpretative possibilities. Then, Amleto attended the first rehearsals in the theatre to understand other aspects of the actor's performance. Only then did he feel that the moment had come to create the mask.\(^3\) (160)

De Bosio's recollection of Sartori's activities with Paduan actors proves that the mask-maker did not only imagine the Commedia characters from the existing iconography, but also attempted to incorporate in the design of his masks his vision of a particular actor in a specific role. Sartori, who lived relatively close to the University of Padua and had his studio nearby, could easily observe De Bosio's actors in rehearsal. But when he first engaged in a professional relationship with the Piccolo Teatro of Milan, Sartori needed to commute longer distances to attend rehearsals and this might be why, at first, he did not cultivate the same geographical and intellectual proximity with the Milanese players as he did with those in Padua. Indeed, Amleto Sartori first met Marcello Moretti during a rehearsal session of *L'amante militare* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1951, when he delivered his first Arlecchino mask in leather to that actor. This mask was a close replica of a traditional zanni mask Sartori had observed at the Musée de l'Opéra in Paris. It was somewhat heavy and had apparently very small eye-openings. In *Ricordi intorno a una maschera*, the mask-maker confirms that he had not met Moretti before creating his mask (21). Had he spoken to Moretti first, Sartori might have created a piece that would have been more adapted to a performer who notoriously feared wearing a mask (see 2.1). As a result of this lack of communication, the first Arlecchino mask Sartori made for Moretti was rejected. As the mask-maker remembers:

\(^{72}\) My translation of: “Nelle maschere Amleto ricercava l'interpretazione, la sintesi tra la psicologia del personaggio e quella del suo interprete, era alla costante ricerca di certezze teatrali. [...] Gli interpreti del ruolo dovevano stare nel suo studio, lasciarsi osservare, mostrargli atteggiamenti e gesti, fargli sentire la voce ed il calore delle proprie possibilità interpretative; poi Amleto assisteva in teatro alle prime prove per capire altri aspetti dei giochi dell'attore; soltanto allora egli considerava venuto il momento della modellazione della maschera.” (De Bosio, “Maschera, specchio” 160)
I saw Marcello Moretti for the first time at the Piccolo. He was alone on an illuminated stage and was waiting for the rehearsal to begin while practising a difficult acrobatic exercise with a ladder bigger than him. [...] The rehearsal was for *L’amante militare* by Goldoni, and I was there precisely to deliver the first Arlecchino mask made expressly for him. Giorgio Strehler introduced us, and I made him [Moretti] try on the mask. It looked fine to Giorgio and I, but not to him. And he snapped, shortly after, during the rehearsal. He was furious like a wild colt forced to wear the bridle for the first time. “I cannot act with this thing on my nose, it hurts me, I cannot see...” and he slammed the mask on the ground.73 (Amleto Sartori, “Ricordo” 21)

Donato Sartori, who remembers accompanying his father for this delivery, recalls the incident slightly differently. According to him, Moretti disappeared for a moment in the wings, enlarged the eye-openings of the mask with a pair of scissors, and re-entered the stage with a disfigured mask. A fight broke out between Moretti and Amleto Sartori that was only stopped by Strehler in order to resume rehearsal. Whether Amleto's account or Donato's is the closest to what really happened is uncertain. Both accounts, however, suggest that Moretti's difficulty to see with the mask on later inspired Amleto Sartori to design an Arlecchino mask with large eye-openings. Indeed, the subsequent mask Sartori produced for Moretti had wider eyes that allowed for some peripheral vision. I would like to suggest that Sartori's professional relationship with an actor who was reluctant to wear a mask, who feared the restrictions it made to his visual field, and who had no previous experience as a masked performer led him to deviate from the traditional masks represented in the iconography of the Commedia dell'Arte and forced him to adapt his work to players with a twentieth-century theatre training largely based on a realistic acting style.

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73 My translation of: “Vidi per la prima volta Marcello al Piccolo. Era solo sul palcoscenico illuminato e stava aspettando l'inizio della prova esercitandosi da solo in un difficile gioco acrobatico con un fucile più grande di lui. [...] Si provava allora ’L'amante militare' di Goldoni, ed io ero là appunto per portagli la prima maschera di Arlecchino fatta appositamente per lui. Giorgio Strehler ci presentò ed io gli provai la maschera. Per Giorgio e per me andava bene, per lui no. E lo disse sbottando, poco dopo, durante la prova. Era furibondo come un puledro selvaggio al quale fosse stata imposta per la prima volta la briglia. 'Non si può recitare con questo coso sul muso, mi ammacca, non ci vedo...' e sbatté la maschera a terra.” (Amleto Sartori, “Ricordo” 21)
Marcello Moretti's influence on the shape of the eye-openings on Sartori's masks did not end with the creation of new styles of Arlecchino masks; it arguably taught the mask-maker specific performance conventions and techniques closely related to the design of his masks. As Sartori observes:

Marcello made me notice that the eye-openings [on the masks], especially those on the primitive masks of the Zanni, had a very small diameter, and that if these eyes gave an interesting, animal look to the mask, they also removed, or reduced to a minimum, the ability to see. This [design] created the need to perform very rapid, successive movements [of the head], arranged in a sequence that goes roughly like this: take possession of the field of action visually; constantly look at one's own feet to assess [one's position] and to avoid any obstacle; perform the movement in a minimum amount of space and time. As a result of these actions, [the actor's] gait is jerky, [punctuated by] jumps, and highlighted by movements of the limbs and of the head that are almost mechanical. ("Ricordi" 21-22)

Amleto Sartori designed several Arlecchino and zanni masks throughout the 1950s, including some with particularly small eye-openings. As we saw earlier in this chapter, one of these masks, the “primitive zanni,” was even used by Marcello Moretti in a production of The Servant of Two Masters. Once Sartori discovered the causality between the eyes of the mask and specific movements of the head, he likely created masks with a specific gestural vocabulary and performance rhythm in mind. That is, he might have enlarged or reduced the eye-openings on a given mask according to how he envisioned the character's movements in space. Thanks to Moretti's observation, Amleto Sartori likely created his masks knowing that their design would somewhat direct the actor's performance.

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74 A similar technique is described by Domenico Pietropaolo in Scenario and Performance in Commedia dell'Arte (see 2.1.3)

75 My translation of: “Marcello mi fece notare che, specie nelle maschere primitive degli Zanni, il foro degli occhi era di un diametro molto piccolo, e che se questi occhi conferivano alla maschera un interessante aspetto animalesco, toglievano d'altrò canto, o riducevano al minimo, la visibilità. Da questo nacque la necessità di movimenti successivi rapidissimi, ordinati in una successione grosso modo di questo genere: prendere possesso visivo del campo d'azione; guardare ai propri piedi per fare continuamente il punto e per non incappare in un qualsiasi ostacolo; compiere il movimento nello spazio e nel tempo minimo. Date queste necessità, ne risulta ovviamente un incedere a scatti e balzi, sottolineato da un movimento degli arti e della testa quasi meccanico.” ("Ricordi" 21-22)
After attempting to copy antique masks he had observed in museums, Sartori discovered the necessity, in a twentieth-century context, to combine the knowledge provided by the existing iconography of the Commedia tradition with a personal understanding of contemporary conditions of production and a knowledge of the actors' personality and potential in performance. While he would include in his masks essential traits of a Commedia character (Arlecchino, for example, still needed to be identified through his mask), Amleto Sartori would also adjust the design of the mask to the personality of this character as portrayed in a specific play. As he explains:

[...] an Arlecchino mask that would be valid, for example, for *La cameriera brillante* by Goldoni (in that it would represent the personality of a gluttonous but deeply naive servant) will not do for Arlecchino in *La famiglia dell'antiquario* by the same Goldoni, who, along with the basic characteristics [of Arlecchino], has something dishonest about him that needs to be expressed with [other] specific traits.76 (“Brevi note” 168-169)

Sartori’s theory thus suggests that the masks he made for Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* were conceived for this play only, for this director and for the Piccolo Teatro in particular. To my knowledge, these masks have never been used in other productions nor in any other stagings in and outside of Italy.77 They are thus exclusive to Strehler's successive productions of Goldoni’s play at the Piccolo Teatro, and have not changed much from 1952 (when they were first designed) to the present day (2012 at the time of writing), with

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76 My translation of: “[...] una maschera di Arlecchino, valida ad esempio, per *La cameriera brillante* di Goldoni, (in quanto rappresenta il carattere del servo scroccone ma profondamente ingenuo) non sarà altrettanto valida per l'Arlecchino de *La famiglia dell'antiquario* dello stesso Goldoni, il quale presenta, unitamente alle caratteristiche base, una componente di disonestà che esige particolari caratteristiche espressive.” (“Brevi note” 168-169)

77 In a letter dated November 10th 1967, Paolo Grassi informs Donato Sartori – who had taken over his father's mask-making business after his death – of an upcoming production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, staged by Maurice Jacquemont. Grassi announces that Jacquemont will contact Donato Sartori for the purchase of leather masks. More importantly, he highlights that these masks should be different from those used by the Piccolo Teatro. Grassi’s letter is kept at the Piccolo Teatro's archives. I consulted it in 2009.

78 Actors in the production did not always wear the same mask. When a mask was damaged, it was repaired or replaced by a new one made from the original mold. Amleto Sartori, and later Donato Sartori, repaired and replaced these masks. To my knowledge, no other mask-maker has had access to the masks' original wooden molds.
the exception of Arlecchino's mask.\textsuperscript{79} Each of them has been repaired and duplicated, of course; first by Amleto Sartori, then by his son and successor, Donato. New exemplars of each mask have been made for new actors in the production, but, to my knowledge, they were always replicates or close variations of the 1952 originals.\textsuperscript{80} This continuity in design, however, does not imply that masks were used in the same way in all of Strehler's stagings of \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}. On the contrary. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the role of masks differed greatly from one production to the other, reflecting the evolution of Giorgio Strehler's vision of the play, of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, of the actors' potential in performance and of the place of theatre in history.

\textsuperscript{79} A few years after Marcello Moretti passed away and actor Ferruccio Soleri took over the role of Arlecchino in \textit{The Servant of Two Masters}, Donato Sartori made a new Arlecchino mask. This mask was expressly made for Soleri, following his facial dimensions and mirroring his interpretation of the character (see 4.1.4).

\textsuperscript{80} The Sartori family still owns the wooden molds for these masks and, to my knowledge, no mask-maker outside of Sartori's exclusive circle has made masks from these molds.
Figure 2: From left to right: Marcello Moretti (Arlecchino), Agostino Contarello (Pantalone), Franco Parenti (Brighella), and Checco Rissone (Dottore Lombardi) in Strehler's second staging of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro, in the theatre season 1952-1953. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Chapter 4. Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* from 1952 to 1997

This fourth and last chapter examines each production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro from 1952 (the second production) to 1997 (Strehler's last staging of the play). I chose not to speak of Strehler's first staging of the play in this part of the thesis since I have already described it at length in chapters 1 and 2. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: a first part discusses the 1952, 1956, 1963 and 1973 productions while the other analyzes the stagings of 1977, 1987, 1990 (and 1993) and 1997.

This chronological approach to Strehler’s work is hardly original, and it has become a standard way to discuss his stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*. Some of the conclusions that I reach in this chapter are also comparable to those of other scholars who went through a similar exercise. The originality of this chapter, however, resides in its focus on masks and masking. Each section provides extensive description and analysis of the scenography, costumes, lighting design, cast (whenever relevant), and acting style of each new staging, but it also includes a detailed examination of the solid masks in the productions, of how the actors manipulated them, and of what these masks might have stood for within the play and more broadly within Strehler’s understanding of the Commedia dell’Arte. My discussion of Strehler’s eighth, ninth, and tenth stagings of Goldoni’s play are also novel; many studies on Strehler’s work were published in the 1980s and in the early 1990s and do not include examinations of these last stagings, dated 1990, 1993, and 1997 respectively. These productions are mentioned in later publications about Strehler and the Piccolo Teatro, but they are never discussed in appreciable detail. Another original component of this chapter concerns the extensive archival research on which it stands.
Much as for the previous chapters, the documentary sources for this chapter are varied. They include five archival videos of different stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro. The first recording is dated 1955; the second, 1973; another, 1987; the next, 1993; and the last one is from the late 1990s, likely from 1999. The quality of each recording varies greatly – videos of the 1955, 1973 and 1987 productions were carefully filmed for television and for other commercial uses while the others were recorded with a single camera apparently for archival purpose only. The three first recordings are available for consultation at the Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies (University of Toronto), while the other two can be viewed at the Piccolo Teatro archives in Milan. Other sources for this chapter include photographs of the productions and published theatre reviews of each staging. I systematically consulted all the reviews currently available on each new staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in newspapers published in Italian, French, Spanish, and I also consulted a few reviews of the productions in German. These documents can be found at the Piccolo Teatro's archives, online or in Milan. Finally, this chapter also relies on the testimonies of some of Strehler's former collaborators. Indeed, in May and June 2009, I conducted series of personal interviews with Piccolo Teatro actress Narcisa Bonati, Andrea Jonasson-Strehler and Giulia Lazzarini; with actor Enrico Bonavera, Giorgio Bongiovanni, Tommaso Minniti and Ferruccio Soleri; with lighting designer Claudio De Pace, and with sculptor and mask-maker Donato Sartori.

Relying on a wide variety of documentary sources, this last chapter allows for a better understanding of each production's specific components and challenges. It also discusses the reception of each new staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro to an extent that is unprecedented, and it provides many excerpts of reviews of the productions that have never been used in other scholarly discussions of Strehler’s work before, in any language. More
broadly it also guides the reader through Strehler's artistic and ideological journey at the Piccolo Teatro, with masks and Commedia dell'Arte in The Servant of Two Masters.

4.1 Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters from 1952 to 1973

4.1.1 2nd production: 1952

The Piccolo Teatro, led by Strehler and Grassi, is a true modern theatre that we must take into account, and their production [The Servant of Two Masters] is currently the most typical [example] of this famous, marvellous and eternal genre that is the Italian Comedy. It is both renewed and faithful to tradition.¹ (Barrault)

Strehler's second staging of The Servant of Two Masters premiered at the Teatro Quirinò in Rome on April 17th 1952.² The production's success was immediate, and lucrative. According to theatre critic Carlo Trabucco, the play generated 202 158 lire at the box-office on the opening night, 484 283 lire on the second evening, 595 808 lire on the third, and 199 633 Lire on the fourth and last evening, averaging ticket revenues of 370 470 lire per night (“L'ardua battaglia” 3). These numbers, he explains, were exceptional considering that the other companies that performed in Roman theatres at the same time usually earned a net income ranging between

¹ My translation of: “Le Piccolo Teatro, animé par Strehler et Grassi, est un vrai théâtre moderne avec qui nous devons compter et leur spectacle est actuellement le plus typique de ce genre célèbre, merveilleux et éternel qu'est la comédie italienne. Il est à la fois renouvelé et de véritable tradition.” (Barrault)

² Between 1947 and 1952, Strehler explored the Commedia dell'Arte tradition in at least three other plays at the Piccolo Teatro. These plays were Gozzi's The Raven (staged in 1948 and 1949), Goldoni's L'amante militare (produced in 1951 and 1952), and Molière's The Flying Doctor (1951 and 1952). Strehler also announced the staging of a one-act Commedia play, titled I capricci delle maschere, in the Piccolo Teatro's programme for its 1949-1950 theatre season (Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 81). It is unclear, however, whether this play was ever produced. Strehler also staged two reformed plays by Goldoni, La putta onorata (in 1950) and Gli innamorati (in 1950 and 1951) (Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 98-103). By 1952, the actors working at Piccolo Teatro were therefore already familiar with traditional Commedia characters, with some performance techniques with mask, and with the frantic rhythm Strehler associated with the Commedia dell'Arte. They had also performed in reformed plays by Goldoni, and had likely acquired a deeper knowledge of this author and of Commedia in performance. This knowledge certainly contributed to the success of Strehler's second production of The Servant of Two Masters in 1952.
15,000 lire and 60,000 lire per evening (with the exception of those performing at the Eliseo) \cite{Ibid}. Strehler's new staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, as Trabucco suggests in his article, generated more profits than any previous Piccolo Teatro productions, at least during the opening week.

After only four performances, the production left Rome to tour mostly Italian cities. In 1952, Strehler's second staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* was performed in Siena, Florence, Milan, Turin, Parma, Bergamo, Varese, Piacenza, Crema, Brescia, Mantua, Padua, Trieste, Treviso, and Venice \cite{Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 33-34}. It was also presented in Paris, at the Théâtre de Paris, from May 6th to 12th 1952. In 1953, the production returned to Paris, went to Bologna and Milan, but also visited Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Germany \cite{Ibid. 34}. In 1954, it was performed in Buenos Aires, Sao Paolo, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Venice. A year later, the production visited Austria, Germany, Switzerland, as well as many cities in today's Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia, then part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia \cite{Ibid.}. By 1955, Strehler's second staging of Goldoni's play was the Piccolo Teatro's most toured production and had become its ambassador around the world.

The widely performed 1952 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* arguably fulfilled the Piccolo Teatro's social mandate that proposed to “meet everyone's exigencies and to expend the circle of its spectators to social groups that [are] usually excluded from the theatre by those enjoying economic and cultural privileges.” \cite{Grassi quoted in Morosini} The production met this mandate first by visiting cities that were outside of other theatre companies' regular touring circuits. As Vice posited in his review of the production:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\footnote{3}]{These cities are Rijeka, Split, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, Novi Sad, Belgrad, Zagreb, Lubiana, and Koper \cite{Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 34}.}
\item[\footnote{4}]{My translation of parts of this sentence: “En ce qui concerne le choix du répertoire, me dit Grassi, nous sommes partis du principe qu'un théâtre subventionné doit être un véritable service public, doit répondre aux exigences de tous et élargir le cercle de ses spectateurs aux couches sociales habituellement exclues du théâtre par des privilégiés économiques et culturels. [...]” (Grassi quoted in Morosini)}
\end{itemize}
Let us console ourselves. For once, Trieste, which always remains in the margins of touring companies, much like a beach that slowly dries out as the tide progressively retires, has entered the circuit of a stable [i.e. publicly funded] theatre, that of Paolo Grassi and Giorgio Strehler, which is the stable theatre par excellence in that it seeks to have a permanent artistic voice.\(^5\) (Vice)

Then, the production catered not only to the wealthy, but also to members of the working class. On June 7\(^{th}\) 1952, for example, *The Servant of Two Masters* was performed in Murano, for an audience of glass-workers. As an article in *Corriere Lombardo* commented:

*Arsenice Servitore di Due Padroni* was performed in front of 700 glass-workers in Murano. For this occasion, the refectory of the Venetian beads and crystal [factory] was transformed into a temporary theatre. The Piccolo Teatro of Milan ended its current season with this sympathetic and significant initiative that was received with moving understanding and enthusiasm by the popular audience to whom the joy and food of the theatre is [usually] denied.\(^6\) ("Goldoni agli operai")

Finally, because it was rooted in Strehler's highly visual interpretation of the Commedia dell'Arte, the 1952 production of Goldoni's play was chosen to represent and to propel the Piccolo Teatro in Europe and the world. When it was presented in Paris in 1952, it catered to the Italian diaspora, but also permitted a dialogue with a French speaking audience. In 1948 and 1949, Strehler had already presented a Commedia dell'Arte inspired production in Paris: his staging of Gozzi's *The Raven*. Strehler freely adapted this play by creating, probably with the help of his actors, a text based on Gozzi's scenario. Strehler apparently changed the name of Zan Ganassa (Truffaldino) for Arlecchino and made this character speak in dialect (*Piccolo Teatro 1947-58* 69). It appears from photographs of the production that the acting style of Antonio Battistella, who played Scapino-Brighella, and of Marcello Moretti, in the role of

\(^5\) My translation of: “Consoliamoci. Una volta tanto Trieste, che resta sempre più ai margini delle Compagnie di giro, come una spiaggia lentamente inaridita dal progressivo ritirarsi della risacca, è entrata nel circuito d'un teatro stabile, quello di Paolo Grassi e Giorgio Strehler, il teatro stabile per antonomasia come espressione di una coraltà artistica stabilmente perseguita.” (Vice)

\(^6\) My translation of: “Arlecchino servitore di due padroni’ è stato rappresentato di fronte a 700 operai delle vetrerie di Murano. Per l'occasione il salone della mensa delle conterie e cristallerie veneziane era stato trasformato in un teatro di fortuna. Con questa simpatia e significante iniziativa coronata da una comprensione e da un entusiasmo conmoventi da parte di quel pubblico popolare al quale viene negata la gioia e lo alimento spirituale del teatro, il Piccolo Teatro di Milano ha chiuso la corrente stagione.” ("Goldoni agli operai")
Arlecchino/Zan-Ganassa/Truffaldino, was highly physical, even acrobatic (*Ibid.*). These two performers, at least, wore solid masks in the production. It is unclear, however, whether actor Giulio Stival, in the role of Pantalone, played with a solid mask or with a painted face. Moretti's and Battistella's solid masks appear to have been made of paper-maché, and their rough finishing suggests that they could have been made by the actors themselves.

Strehler's staging of *The Raven* was metatheatrical. Indeed, it appears from archival photographs of the production that while some actors performed Gozzi's play, others stood in the background and observed their colleagues. When they watched the play from a distance, the actors removed their mask and either sat, stood or leaned against the decor. Two stories were therefore enacted on stage: Gozzi's play, and the story of the actors performing it. Strehler later adopted this focus in his third staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* (see 4.1.2). His adaptation of *The Raven* premiered in Venice on September 26th 1948 (*1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 65*). It was performed in London, Paris and Milan the same year (*Ibid. 66*). In 1949, it played in Turin, Bologna, Zurich, Knokke-Le Zoute, Paris and Brussels (*Ibid.*). Finally, in 1954, the production was adapted for an audience of young people (*Ibid.*).

Strehler’s metatheatrical staging of *The Raven*, though it had been poorly received in Venice (*1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 65*), had been successful in the French capital. When asked why, of all its productions, the Piccolo Teatro chose to present plays inspired by the Commedia dell’Arte in Paris, Paolo Grassi replied that it was because both nations, French and Italian, shared an interest in Commedia, and because “the Comedia [sic] dell'arte, popular performance tradition *par excellence*, is accessible to everyone, beyond [geographical] borders and languages.”7 (Grassi quoted in Morosini) In other words, the Piccolo Teatro's productions of

7 My translation of: “[...] la Comedia [sic] dell'arte, spectacle populaire par excellence, est accessible à tous, au-delà des frontières et des langues.” (Grassi quoted in Morosini)
Commedia dell'Arte plays, like *The Raven* and *The Servant of Two Masters*, were perfect vehicles for exporting the Piccolo Teatro's artistic vision abroad since, rather than relying solely on spoken text to convey meaning, they relied mostly on rhythm, physicality, striking images as well as characters and situations that were already familiar to most Italian and French audiences.

On tour, the Piccolo Teatro's artistic vision, and Strehler's interpretation of Commedia, was also presented to the public as an expertise. In 1952, for example, after a series of performances in Paris, Paolo Grassi organized a conference on Commedia dell'Arte that shared his vision, or Strehler's and the Piccolo Teatro's vision, of the Commedia tradition. As the *Ufficio stampa ministero della pubblica istruzione* (the Italian Ministry of Education's Press Office) reported, “[Paolo Grassi] particularly insisted that this type of performance, far from being a Theatre of ideas, solely aims at presenting the [dramatic] action in its purest form.”

(“Teatro”) The conference was attended by important French actors and directors, such as Béatrix Dussane, Armand Salacrou, Jean Pierre Grenier and Jean Mercure (*Ibid.*). Apparently, the Parisian success of Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* subsequently influenced the programme of various French theatres. Bruno Romani indeed reported in his review of the production that, after attending *The Servant of Two Masters*, Edwige Feuillère and Jean Vilar expressed an interest in staging (or performing, in the case of Feuillère) Goldoni's plays in the following theatre season (“Conquistati i parigini”). Before *The Servant of Two Masters* left the French capital, Grassi, capitalizing on the general interest in Goldoni and Commedia, announced

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8 It is important to note, however, that *The Raven* and *The Servant of Two Masters* were neither the first nor the only Piccolo Teatro productions that toured outside of Italy. Strehler's 1947 staging of Luigi Pirandello's *The Mountain Giants*, for example, was performed in Knokke-Le Zoute in 1949; his staging of *Tonight We Improvise*, by the same author, was performed in Paris in 1949; Strehler's 1951 staging of Silvio Giovaninetti's *L'oro matto* went to Buenos Aires and Sao Paolo in 1954; and between 1951 and 1954, his staging of Sophocles' *Electra* toured extensively in Italy but also visited Paris, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and Sao Paolo (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro).

9 My translation of: “[...] [Paolo Grassi] ha tenuto particolarmente a sottolineare quanto questa forma di spettacolo sia lontana dal Teatro di idee e come essa si proponga unicamente di presentare l'azione allo stato puro.” (Ufficio stampa)
that he would organize an exhibition on the history of Commedia dell'Arte the following year (1953), in Turin (Ufficio stampa). With its production of Goldoni's play in Paris, the conference that followed it, and the forthcoming exhibition on Commedia, the Piccolo Teatro presented itself as an ambitious artistic institution to be taken seriously, and advertized itself as a leader in highly visual and physical performances in the Commedia tradition.

To a certain extent, Strehler's second staging of Goldoni's play also promoted the newly founded Scuola del Piccolo Teatro, the Piccolo Teatro's acting school. This school, founded in 1951, aimed at training a new generation of actors and at securing the continuation of the Piccolo Teatro's style (Morosini). “We are trying,” Grassi explained, “within the limits of our budget (which is far smaller than that of a ‘Comédie Française’), to be an autonomous and stable theatre organization on all fronts.”\(^\text{10}\) (Grassi quoted in Morosini) The Scuola offered various programmes, including one for actors, one for radio production,\(^\text{11}\) one for dancers, and a last programme of mime and physical education. The courses offered by the school's acting division during the 1951-1952 academic year were: speech delivery for the theatre\(^\text{12}\) (instructor: Giorgio Strehler); theatre history (instructor: Enzo Ferrieri); mime, improvisation and physical education (instructor: Jacques Lecoq); poetry and drama (instructor: Attilio Borgognoni); history of music and singing (instructor: Gino Negri); voice\(^\text{13}\) (instructor: Dora Setti); and dance (instructor: Rosita Lupi).\(^\text{14}\) Arguably, the actors in The Servant of Two Masters advertized the Piccolo Teatro's acting school, even if they did not attend it themselves. Their athletic performance in

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\(^\text{10}\) My translation of: “Nous essayons, dans la limite de nos moyens (qui sont loin d'être ceux d'une 'Comédie Française'), [d'être] une organisation théâtrale autonome et stable à tous les échelons.” (Grassi quoted in Morosini).

\(^\text{11}\) It is unclear whether this programme was intended to train radio announcers, radio drama writers and performers, or both.

\(^\text{12}\) Listed as dizione poetica in the Scuola del Piccolo Teatro's course list.

\(^\text{13}\) Listed as ortofonia in the school's course list.

\(^\text{14}\) This information was included in a list of courses offered at the Scuola del Piccolo Teatro from 1951 to 1955. This list was provided by Lia Cotarella, librarian at the Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi, in Milan.
the play, their highly musical vocal production and diction, their ability to work with masks and
their successful attempt at reviving the Commedia dell'Arte arguably showcased what the
school was proposing to achieve with its students. Such a connection between the production
and the school was indeed implied in Morosini's review:

It is now the intermission and we can see from here Marcelle [sic] Moretti and
France [sic] Parenti (Brighella) entering their dressing room with their leather mask
in their hand, exhausted, dead tired, sweating through all the pores of their skin.
“This is a real tour-de-force,” says Grassi. “It's exhausting: in order to perform in
this show, one needs to be both an actor and an acrobat.” (Wasn't it for this type of
performance that the “Piccolo” created a school of physical education in Milan?)\(^\text{15}\) (Morosini)

The Piccolo Teatro's social, educational and promotional agendas were thus fulfilled, at
least in part, with Strehler's second staging of Goldoni's play. The theatre's artistic mandate was
also met with this production. While the 1947 staging of The Servant of Two Masters was
heavily stylized and allusive, that of 1952 was placed within a precise social context and period.
This focus was expressed in the historical details of the production's scenography, costumes and
masks. The general historicization of the production was arguably influenced by Brechtian
theories, which, by 1952, Strehler had already started to explore.\(^\text{16}\)

The structure of Gianni Ratto's set design remained close to that of 1947; it highlighted
the metatheatricality of Strehler's staging and showed some theatre conventions. The actors
played on a small, elevated platform limited in the back by a painted backdrop and on the sides
by rotating panels. There were three backdrops, each of them representing a location in

\(^\text{15}\) My translation of: “C'est l'intermède et nous apercevons d'ici Marcelle [sic] Moretti (Arlequin) et France [sic]
Parenti (Brighella) qui rentrent, le masque de cuir à la main, dans leurs loges, fatigués, morts, transpirant de tous
les pores de leur peau. ‘C'est un véritable tour de force’, dit Grassi. ‘C'est harassant : pour jouer cette pièce, il
faut être des acteurs et des acrobates.’ (Pour ce genre de spectacle, le ‘Piccolo’ n’a-t-il pas monté une école
d'éducation physique à Milan?).” (Morosini)

\(^\text{16}\) The Piccolo Teatro advertised a staging of Brecht's Mother Courage for its 1950-1951 theatre season. This
project, however, was abandoned because of the difficulty to find an appropriate cast for the play, and because
of challenges experienced while translating the original German text into Italian (Piccolo Teatro 1947-1958
101)
Goldoni’s play. In order to indicate a new location on stage, the actors, in character, rotated the panels and slid away the backdrop to reveal a new image. Like in 1947, all scene changes were performed in front of the audience. But unlike those of 1947, the painted backdrops and panels in 1952 clearly situated the action of the play in the eighteenth century. They also indicated the social class to which the characters belonged and located the play more clearly in Venice.

Pantalone’s house, for example, was signified by painted panels and a backdrop adorned with a door, a standing screen, a chair and trims painted in *trompe-l’oeil* in the Regency style (Douël dell’Agnola, “Cinq versions d’‘Arlequin’” 144). Oval shaped illustrations showing “exotic subjects” (*Ibid.*) were also painted on the top of each rotating board (see fig. 3). These “exotic subjects” were in fact romanticized depictions of black African (or Caribbean) men and women wearing white clothing and, in some cases, playing a music instrument, carrying baskets or just posing in front of palm trees.17 These painted details, Catherine Douël dell’Agnola claims, indicated the wealth and bourgeois status of the owner of the house, Pantalone. Then, the backdrop representing a street in Venice was adorned with a series of wavy horizontal lines that suggested the Grand Canal’s high waters and the roofs of houses and palaces. On the rotating panels bordering this backdrop, Ratto painted doors and windows, details that situated the action in a residential area of Venice. Finally, the backdrop and boards signifying Brighella’s inn were adorned with trimmed doors. Each door was identified by a number and was topped with a lamp. Large wooden beams were also painted at the top of the backdrop and represented the inn’s ceiling. “[These] decorations in *trompe-l’oeil*,” Douël dell’Agnola posits, “[made] the acting space appear larger and bourgeois.”18 (*Gli spettacoli* 41) They also indicated the middle-class

17 These images can be observed on archival photographs of the production as well as on Gianni Ratto’s sketches of the set. While it is possible to identify the subject of each oval shaped painting on the photographs, it is difficult to judge the execution, colouring and specific details of each painting.

18 My translation of: “Le decorazioni a *trompe-l’oeil* sembrano allargare lo spazio scenico e imborghesirlo.”
status of Brighella and implied that the average client of his inn was somewhat wealthy. Significantly, Ratto painted series of wavy lines on every backdrop that simulated the pleats in a theatre curtain. Placing the action of the play and its characters in a precise social context, in a distant historical setting, and within a self-proclaimed theatrical environment certainly indicated the influence Brecht's work started to have on Strehler's at the time (Douël Dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 41). These choices also suggested Strehler's greater understanding of Goldoni's body of work, which, especially with the reform, fed from his observation and interpretation of the relationships between social classes, commented on the social fabric of eighteenth-century Venice, and was shaped by his knowledge of theatre productions' imperatives.

Like Gianni Ratto's set design, Ebe Colciaghi's costumes too were more detailed than those created for the previous production of 1947, and they situated the action of the play in Goldoni's time. They were modelled after eighteenth-century attires and, in some cases, were almost exact copies of traditional Commedia dell'Arte costumes. For example, the costume Marcello Moretti wore was a faithful replica of an eighteenth-century Arlecchino costume owned by stage director and critic Renato Simoni (*Piccolo Teatro 1947-58* 38). “Since then [1952],” a Piccolo Teatro publication states, “we followed this illustrious model, and custom made Arlecchino's costume with various pieces of cloth that were diversely coloured, one by one.” (Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 38) Strehler's attention to the costumes certainly indicated his

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19 In a presentation he made at a conference in 1972, Strehler stated that Brecht and Goldoni were the two pillars of his theatre research (“Brecht e Goldoni” 24). In this paper, Strehler established parallels between the life, work and theatre battles of both men, and attempted to draw ideological continuity between them. For Strehler, both Brecht and Goldoni attempted a scientific analysis of society, both of them sometimes placed their plays in exotic settings to better perform this analysis, and both engaged in reforms that attempted to change how and why to do theatre (Strehler, “Brecht e Goldoni”).

20 My translation of: “Da allora, seguimmo quell'ilustre modello, facendo confezionare il costume di Arlecchino con vari pezzi di stoffa, che ad uno ad uno venivano diversamente colorati.” (Piccolo Teatro 1947-58 38)
interest in the performance history of the Commedia dell'Arte. This interest was also reflected by the masks in the production.

The masks Strehler used in 1952 were made of leather by Amleto Sartori (see chapter 3). Though they were inspired by the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, Sartori's masks were adapted to twentieth-century actors who had no previous training in masked performance. The eye-openings on the Arlecchino mask Sartori made for Marcello Moretti, for example, were much larger than those of some traditional Commedia masks (see fig. 4). They revealed the skin around the actor's eyes as well as part of his eyebrows. The movements of Moretti's eyes were visible under his mask, and this arguably gave the illusion that his character's solid leather face was mobile. The white of the actor's eyes, contrasting with the dark leather mask, also brightened under the electric spotlights and perhaps added liveliness to the mask as well. Finally, large eye-openings permitted better lateral vision and thus allowed Moretti to run back and forth on stage, perform acrobatics, and move at a rapid pace safely.

By 1952, Sartori had made various Arlecchino masks. Strehler reports that Sartori conveniently associated the expression of each mask with an animal; he created, for example, an “Arlecchino-cat” mask, an “Arlecchino-fox,” and an “Arlecchino-bull” mask (Strehler, “In margine” 60), all of which Moretti is believed to have worn during his career at the Piccolo Teatro. According to Strehler, the first leather mask Moretti tried and adopted was the “Arlecchino-cat” (see 3.2.2). Moretti likely used this mask in a staging of L'amante militare at the Piccolo Teatro in 1951. The mask he used in The Servant of Two Masters the following year was slightly different; it had larger, more elongated, and pointier eye-openings. According to Moretti's fellow performer Narcisa Bonati, the mask he wore in The Servant of Two Masters was the “Arlecchino-fox.” Sculptor Donato Sartori, Amleto's son, however, always refers to

21 Whether he associated all Commedia masks with animals, however, remains unclear.
Moretti's mask in *The Servant of Two Masters* as the “Arlecchino-cat,” while Strehler has argued that Moretti first wore the “Arlecchino-cat” mask, then the “Arlecchino-fox” and, finally, a mask he called the “primitive zanni” (Strehler, “In margine” 60). Since Moretti is known to have worn the “Arlecchino-cat” first, and since the mask he wore in *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1952 differed from the one he used in *L'amante militare* in 1951, I will refer to the mask he used in 1952 as the “Arlecchino-fox.” I recognize, however, that Amleto Sartori named each Arlecchino mask for convenience sake and that each name might not have been definitive. I am also aware that he might have made different versions of the so-called “Arlecchino-cat” mask, and that one of these versions might have been used by Moretti in *The Servant of Two Masters*.

The “Arlecchino-fox” mask had wide eyes that gave it a distinctly feline look, and its overall design undoubtedly influenced the public's perception of Moretti's performance. Many theatre reviewers in 1952 readily associated Moretti's movements (and mask) with those of a cat. As critic Henri Magnan commented: “[...] this mask gives Arlequin's physionomy the look of a tomcat roaming on some gutter of the Palais Royal, from Colette's window to Cocteau's balcony, as if it had been abandoned there by Mme d'Aulnoy or Mme de Beaumont.”

Similarly, Henriette Dagauld reported in *Paris-Presse*: “[Marcello Moretti] inhabits this strange character [...] with the casualness of a tightrope walker, the acrobat's audacity, the suppleness of a cat, of which he wears the mask.”

Yet, while some critics, like Magnan and Dagauld, highlighted the feline nature of Moretti's Arlecchino, others saw a grounded, popular and historical quality in it. Anton Giulio Bragaglia,

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22 My translation of: “[...] ce masque prête à la physionomie d'Arlequin l'aspect d'un matou rôdant sur je ne sais quelle gouttière du Palais-Royal, de la fenêtre de Colette au balcon de Cocteau, comme s'il avait été abandonné là par Mme d'Aulnoy ou Mme de Beaumont.” (Magnan)

23 My translation of: “[Marcello Moretti] habite cet étrange personnage [...] avec la désinvolture d'un funambule, une audace d'acrobate, la souplesse d'un chat dont il porte le masque. (Dagauld quoted in Douël dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 56)
for example, even called Moretti's performance “rustico locale” (that is rustic and local) (“Redivivo”).

Marcello Moretti was not alone in wearing a leather mask in the production; all other actors who played traditionally masked characters did. It appears from archival photographs of the production that two performers also wore make-up under their mask: Moretti traced the contour of his lips with make-up to make the movements of his mouth more visible, and Armando Alzelmo (Dottore) painted his cheeks opaque white, from his temple to his jaw. Alzelmo's heavy make-up completed his mask – a traditional Dottore, black, T-shaped mask that only covered the actor's forehead and nose. Critic Henri Magnan observed that the actor's whitened cheeks gave him a clown-like appearance (“Arlequin serviteur de deux maîtres”).

Unlike Moretti and Alzelmo, however, actor Antonio Battistella (Pantalone) did not wear make-up. His black leather mask, with the traditional wrinkled forehead and aquiline nose, was enhanced with white bushy eyebrows (probably made of fur, horse hair or synthetic fibres). A pointy, triangular, white beard, a white wig, and an oriental looking hat completed the general look of his mask. While the eye-openings on the Arlecchino, Dottore and Pantalone masks were relatively big, those on Brighella's were small and roundish. Franco Parenti's vision in this mask must have been greatly reduced. Such little eye-openings were however harmonious with Parenti's chicken-like interpretation of Brighella since in order to see, he was almost certainly obligated to move his head briskly, in a nervous, animal-like manner (see 2.1.3). Enhanced or not with make-up, the four leather masks added to the historical focus of the production. They were a token of authenticity of Strehler's vision of Commedia since they pointed to a performance practice of the eighteenth century, when it is believed that many Commedia actors performed with solid masks.
Strehler's second staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* integrated the Piccolo Teatro's multifaceted agenda. It expended the Piccolo Teatro's audience in Italy and abroad, showcased the craftsmanship, diligent training and expertise of the Piccolo Teatro's actors, directors and mask-maker, and engaged into a stylistic and historical exploration of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition in performance. The historicization of the production, through its scenography, costumes and masks (and, consequently, its acting style), testifies to Strehler's discovery of Brecht and to his increasing knowledge of Goldoni's work. The shift from the stylized and allusive production of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1947 to the more historically focused staging of 1952 set the basis of a research on the reality of eighteenth-century Commedia actors, a research that was further developed in Strehler's third staging of Goldoni's play in 1956.

### 4.1.2 3rd production: 1956

The international contribution to the drama programme of the Edinburgh Festival is always something of a gamble, and with one exception the festival programme planners in past years have played safe by inviting French companies to give the bill a European flavour.

An experiment with theatre from Germany in the early years of the festival has never been repeated, but this year, greatly daring, the Piccolo Teatro di Milano were invited to Edinburgh.

Last night's performance of Goldoni's comedy “Arlecchino, the servant of two masters” by this brilliant company triumphantly justified such enterprise.

[...] The company of the Piccolo Theatre bring to the performance of this play a vitality and a comic genius which has no parallel in this country. (I.C.)

Giorgio Strehler signed his third staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1956. The production premiered on August 27th in Edinburgh. This was the first time the Piccolo Teatro ever presented a production in an English-speaking country. The play was performed in Italian,
but the Piccolo Teatro provided an English synopsis to its British audience.\textsuperscript{24} The Edinburgh's theatre reviewers generally wrote positive critics of the production. All of them commented on the experience of attending a play in a language other than English, and some urged the public to attend the performance despite the language barrier. For example, I.C. of the \textit{Glasgow Herald} posited:

> The speech, however, is a subsidiary factor in the playing of the Italian actors; it is just another factor with which to delineate the plot, to underline the comedy. Half the lines are lost in laughter anyway as the gestures and movement illuminate the action with un\textsuperscript{sic} unflagging theatrical rhythm which carries the piece bounding through three acts of hilarious delight, in which language is no barrier to laughter. (I.C.)

Unlike I.C., however, other reviewers were less enthusiastic about the language, storyline, rhythm and acting style of Strehler's staging. As the \textit{Evening Dispatch}’s critic commented:

> To a non-Italian speaker much of the dialogue is something of a bore once the novelty of hearing torrents of passionate words is over.

> Then, too, it is next to impossible to follow the plot. An English synopsis is thoughtfully provided with each programme. But – put it this way – as soon as the play starts one seems to be in a Hampton Court maze of misunderstandings and double identities.

> [...] Their formula seems to be – keep things going at a cracking pace, fling in lots of unnecessary comedy and a song now and then, be quite uninhibited in your acting, have the stage occupied by as many people as possible quite often, and – Roberto's your uncle.

> [...] While all the fun is quite in keeping with the spirit of the play I am not sure if it is always to British taste. It is always spirited but often a bit too unsubtle and obvious. (A.T.)

Sharing the opinion of the \textit{Evening Dispatch}’s reviewer, Alan Dent of the \textit{News Chronicle and Daily Dispatch} added:

> It has all the improvised airs of the stock Italian comedy of the eighteenth century, it is indescribably complicated, and quite impossible to follow in detail, even if one knows some Italian, since it is written and played in the coarse Venetian dialect. [...]
It is, in short, primitive and vivacious and unending. It is well danced and mimed, rather than well acted.

Even for those armed beforehand with an English translation this Goldoni must seem, compared with Moliere [sic], rather small beer, and rather small Italian beer at that. (Dent)

Though some reviewers disliked the acting style of the Piccolo Teatro's players, most critics agreed on their high level of physical skills. In their review of the production, Andrew Porter of the *Financial Times* and Philip Hope-Wallace of *The Manchester Guardian* readily compared the actors' athletic performance and superlative style to classical Chinese theatre, and more specifically to the Beijing Opera.\(^{25}\) The production's foreign nature and its Mediterranean flavour – in other words, its novelty and otherness – were also generally acknowledged. And while the players' exuberant and somewhat exotic performance was in turn praised and criticized, the set design, which unequivocally located the action in Italy, was apparently unanimously well received. As the theatre critic for the *Edinburgh Evening News* observed:

> As soon as the curtain rose there was a spontaneous outburst of applause for the novel setting – a level platform of bare boards with a series of curtains at the back. These were easily interchanged to indicate the various scenes without interrupting the progress of the play. On the wings of this stage within a stage the players could be seen awaiting their cue to come on. They did not always stand idly by, but occasionally, by gesticulation, added their [sic] silent share to the comedy, and, being Italian, they sometimes burst into song. (“Infectious gaiety”)

The set in 1956 was designed by Ezio Frigerio. Frigerio kept the elevated platform that Gianni Ratto had created for the Piccolo Teatro's past productions of Goldoni's play. He, however, reduced the platform's dimensions to four metres wide by four metres deep (Douël dell'Agnola, “Cinq versions d'"Arlequin’ ” 145), eliminated the rotating boards that previously limited the stage from the sides, and painted new images on each backdrop. These images were much more detailed and realistic than those in 1952. For example, Brighella's inn was not

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\(^{25}\) In his article, Hope-Wallace mentions the visit of a Chinese theatre company in Edinburgh in 1955, hence his and Porter's comparison of the Piccolo Teatro's staging of Goldoni's play with the style of classical Chinese theatre.
signified by a series of painted doors anymore, but by a realistically depicted kitchen, with plates, pans and utensils carefully stacked on a series of shelves, or standing on a buffet located between two columns and two doors. This kitchen was also adorned with elaborate moldings and a tiled floor. All of these details were of course painted in trompe l'oeil on the backdrop that signified Brighella's inn and evoked, as Catherine Douël Dell'Agnola points out, “more a neo-classical palace rather than the back-room of an inn at an indeterminate period.”

Frigerio also situated the raised platform within a broader context that, as critic Hope-Wallace observed, suggested “the existence of a shabby but real world going on off-stage [...].” (“Goldoni Comedy”) The elevated platform now stood in the middle of ruins behind which stood a wide, blue cyclorama that covered the entire back of the stage, realistically representing a mid-afternoon sky and, as critic Patrick Gibbs noted, suggesting “an open-air performance” (“Harlequin in Energetic”). A series of white rectangular pieces of cloth, through which “filtering sunlight” was simulated (Hope-Wallace), was also carefully hanging from above the trestle stage (see fig.5). These long pieces of cloth purposefully resembled screens some eighteenth-century touring Commedia companies used to protect themselves from the sun. Such protective devices are portrayed in Marco Marcola's 1772 painting titled *Una commedia italiana nell'Arena di Verona*. Paintings like Marcola's were in fact primary sources of inspiration for the set in 1956. As Frigerio explained:

The set in 1956 was inspired by Guardi's and Canaletto's paintings, but also by an eighteenth-century drawing by Marcola that shows a company of actors performing outdoors under a wide awning to protect themselves from the sun. The idea, in short,

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26 For detailed descriptions of the three backdrops in the 1956 production, see Catherine Douël Dell'Agnola's “Cinq versions d'Arlequin. Evolution de la scénographie,” pages 145 to 147 (see bibliography).
27 My translation of parts of the following sentence: “Des assiettes, des bocaux, des instruments de cuisine, un buffet d'une autre époque sont dessinés dans un ordre parfait sur la toile, entre les colonnes de cette salle qui évoque davantage, là aussi, un palais néo-classique qu'une arrière-salle d'auberge à l'époque indécise.” (Douël dell'Agnola, “Cinq versions d'Arlequin” 147)
was to create a story, including visually, of human relationships through the journey of players arriving at an Italian *piazza* and installing a trestle stage where they would perform... Strehler wanted to recreate a Venetian atmosphere [on stage], I added the ruins taken from some romanticized paintings of Venice by Guardi or, perhaps, by Marieschi, and costumes that successfully added some warmth and poetry [to the set.]²⁸ ("Arlecchino' storia" 48-49)

The story of touring Italian actors Strehler wanted to tell with his third production of *The Servant of Two Masters* was made possible by Frigerio, who divided the performance space into two distinct zones. One zone was the small trestle stage, where Goldoni's play was performed. The second zone was the visible wings around this stage, where theatre conventions were displayed. In these wings stood a band of musicians that accompanied the performance of Goldoni's play. When the actors in the play were not performing in a scene, they stepped off the small trestle stage, lifted their mask and joined the musicians in the wings. There, they rested, watched the play, waited for their cue to come on, and sometimes commented on the action unfolding on stage. Though the actors' interactions in the wings were probably rehearsed to some extent, they appeared spontaneous and informal. Doubling the acting area, Myriam Tanant argues, codified the acting style on the trestle stage while allowing the players in the wings to improvise more freely, in the spirit of the Commedia tradition (“Strehler et Goldoni” 130).

The two acting areas (the trestle stage and the wings) and the two corresponding acting styles (one heavily stylized, the other perhaps more realistic and *extempore* in appearance) were connected together by a new character, the prompter, who does not appear in Goldoni's published text, but was introduced in Strehler's production in 1956. His presence reminded the spectators of the process that leads to a production and suggested that the performance was

²⁸ My translation of: “Quella scena del 1956 è nata da delle suggestioni pittoriche del Guardi e di Canaletto ma anche da un disegno settecentesco di Marcola che mostra una compagnia di comici che si esibisce all'aperto sotto una grande tenda per ripararsi dal sole. L'idea, insomma, era quella di costruire una storia anche visiva di rapporti umani attraverso la vicenda di teatranti che arrivano in una piazza italiana e li sistemano una pedana dove recitare... Strehler voleva che si sentisse un po' d'aria di Venezia, io ci aggiunsi le rovine prese da qualche capriccio veneziano del Guardi o forse del Marieschi e costumi che riuscissero a trasmettere un po' di calore e di poesia.” (Frigerio, “Arlecchino’ storia” 48-49)
informal or, perhaps, a rehearsal. The *Evening Dispatch* reviewer indeed noted: “The overall effect [of the set design] is pleasing – one gets the impression that the players are not treating the play as a vitally important art form but at the same time are trying to give an impression of what it would have been like when originally performed.” (A.T.). Frigerio's stage within a stage, the visible band of musicians in the wings and the prompter were kept in all subsequent productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro.

Through his staged story of a touring Commedia company, Strehler shared his vision of the social realities that might have been experienced by eighteenth-century actors; he also paid homage to past and contemporary touring players and arguably commented on the place of theatre in history, of theatre in the world, and of the world of theatre. The staged relationships between the members of the fictional Commedia company also served as a metaphor for Strehler's vision of society. This focus arguably contained “lessons” Strehler had received from Goldoni (who he perceived as a mentor) and from Brecht (who he considered to be one of his teachers).

That Strehler drew a parallel between Brecht and Goldoni has already been acknowledged, first by Strehler himself,29 and by scholars, like Bernard Dort. In his “Premier itinéraire brechtien,” Dort identifies the similarities between Strehler's discourses on Brecht and Goldoni by comparing two passages from his *Un théâtre pour la vie*. In a first passage, what Strehler states he learnt from Brecht was a “rich, 'human theatre,' that is entirely 'theatre' (in a sense like Jouvet's), but that is not an end in itself, that is not only theatre.” (“Mes maîtres” 121) “Not a theatre outside of history, outside of time,” he continues, “not the eternal theatre of

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29 Strehler's text titled “Brecht e Goldoni” was first published in *Per un teatro umano*, in 1974. “Brecht e Goldoni” was originally a presentation Strehler gave in Hamburg in 1972, when he received the Goethe Preis for the year 1971 (“Brecht e Goldoni” 30). In this text, Strehler draws a parallel between the work of Brecht and Goldoni and, through this parallel, reveals how the form, content and ideology expressed in this work influenced his vision of the theatre.
always, not history against theatre, but *history and theatre*, world and life at the same time, in a continuous dialectical relationship, difficult, sometimes painful, but always active, always attentive to global evolution."\(^{30}\) (Ibid.) In a second passage, Strehler tells of Goldoni's "plain acceptance of a theatrical mission, of theatre as something related to the world, Theatre and World *at the same time*, with its good and bad sides, the pains it causes, the battles it triggers; the convergence of *everything* in the theatre [...]."\(^{31}\) ("Goldoni 'génie de la vie' " 81) These two passages demonstrate that Strehler saw a continuity, or reciprocity, in the work and ideology of Goldoni and Brecht. While Strehler suggested this continuity on the page, as Dort clearly highlighted, he also proclaimed it on stage, where some of his work, including his third production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, became points of convergence for his vision of Brecht and Goldoni.

Brechtian influences on Strehler's third staging of Goldoni's play was first visible in Frigerio's metatheatrical and heavily historicized scenography that incorporated, within the same image, world and theatre, history and theatre. Brecht's influence was also perceptible when the players alternated between two acting styles, one of them used to represent Goldoni's fictional story on the trestle stage, the other associated with the "real world" of the wings. Arguably, one style commented and, perhaps, opposed the other, especially when the actors in the wings commented on the athletic, superlative, well-rehearsed and codified performance unfolding on

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\(^{30}\) My translation of parts of the following sentences: "Ce que Brecht m'a enseigné (parmi tant d'autres choses) et qu'il continue à m'enseigner, c'est un 'théâtre humain' riche, entièrement 'théâtre' (celui de Jouvet d'une certaine façon), mais qui n'est pas une fin en soi, qui n'est pas seulement théâtre. [...] Non pas un théâtre hors de l'histoire, hors du temps, non pas le théâtre éternel de toujours, non pas l'histoire contre le théâtre, mais *histoire* et *théâtre*, monde et vie en même temps, en un rapport dialectique continu, difficile, parfois douloureux mais toujours actif, toujours attentif au devenir général." (Strehler, "Mes maîtres" 121)

\(^{31}\) This passage is Strehler's description – dating around 1970 – of the third episode of a projected television series on Goldoni. Above is my translation of the following passage, published in translation in *Un théâtre pour la vie* and thus in French in Dort's article: "[...] la franche acceptation d'une mission théâtrale, du théâtre comme 'chose liée au monde', 'Théâtre et Monde à la fois, avec son bon et son mauvais côté, la peine qu'il occasionne, les luttes qu'il entraîne ; la convergence de tout dans le théâtre [...]." (Strehler, "Goldoni 'génie de la vie'" 81) Another reference to this text was made in section 1.1 of this thesis.
the trestle stage. This dialectical relationship between “real world” and fiction perhaps constituted an attempt at creating a distancing effect.

In “Le théâtre ne se raconte pas,” Strehler admits the difficulty of fully understanding Brecht's theories on the theatre and argues that only reading *The Little Organum for the Theatre* is insufficient to create an epic-dialectical theatre or to produce a distancing effect on stage (15). “Only the examples, the small theoretic-practical tales, the 'street scenes' that Brecht so often gives us can help us to better 'understand' [his ideas].”32 (Strehler “Le théâtre ne se raconte pas” 16) Later in his career, Strehler attempted his own definition of distancing effect in the theatre:

> Epic distancing, this mysterious thing whose substance no-one seems to be able to grasp. But in the end, what is “distancing” if not a “poeticizing” process? [...] Here is what Brechtian *Verfremdung* means to me. Something humanly simple and whose complication only results from the fact that men are infinitely rich and full of possibilities. Somehow, epic estrangement consists in giving resonance to a concept – an idea, an image – to extend something in a way – in a thousand ways. It helps the public, who should receive the “poetry,” discover the extraordinary complexity of all that is human, the mutability of all human things, the novelty of an “old” concept; [...]" 33 (Strehler, “Rencontre” 106-107)

Like Brecht's ideas published in *The Little Organum*, Strehler's definition of distancing effect would also benefit from live examples. The passage cited above, however, suggests that Strehler's might have used every component of the performance to create “Brechtian *Verfremdung,*” from set design to manipulation of props, and from lighting to, as we will see below, acting style and masks.

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32 My translation of: “Seuls les exemples, les petits récits théorico-pratiques, les 'scènes de rue' que Brecht nous offre si souvent nous aident à 'comprendre' davantage.” (Strehler, “Le théâtre ne se raconte pas” 16)

33 My translation of: “Distanciation épique, cette chose mystérieuse que personne n'arrive à saisir dans sa substance. Mais qu'est-ce que finalement la 'distanciation', sinon une opération de 'poésie'? [...] Voilà ce qu'est pour moi la *Verfremdung* brechtienne. Quelque chose d'humainement simple et qui doit sa complication uniquement au fait que l'homme est infiniment riche et plein de possibilités. Le détachement épique consiste, en quelque sorte, à donner une résonance à un concept – une idée, une image – à prolonger quelque chose d'une certaine façon – de mille façons. C'est faire découvrir au public, à celui qui doit recevoir la 'poésie', l'extraordinaire complexité des choses humaines, la mutabilité continuelle des choses humaines, la nouveauté d'un concept 'ancien'; [...]” (Strehler, “Rencontre” 106-107)
By 1956, Strehler had already started exploring Brechtian Verfremdung. He first explored this idea in his production of *The Measures Taken* in 1955, which he staged with a group of students from the Piccolo Teatro school. Though he does not explain how a distancing effect was produced in this staging, Eberhard Fechner, who apparently saw the production, indicates that the effect looked “neither artificial nor imposed from the outside” and that it brought about a “new type of natural [...] that allowed the spectators to take a critical position towards the characters in action.”³⁴ (Fechner quoted in Dort, “Premier itinéraire” 171). Then, in his production of *The Three Penny Opera* in 1956, Strehler notoriously asked his actors to perform in the “epic style.” Narcisa Bonati, who performed in *The Three Penny Opera* and also played Smeraldina in *The Servant of Two Masters* the same year, remembers that Strehler's understanding of distancing effect and epic acting was actualized on stage through the players’ slightly exterior performance style, “representing” rather than “trying to be” the characters, as if telling a story “in the third person.”³⁵ Bonati specifies that it took some time to the Piccolo Teatro actors to understand how to perform in the epic style. She also suggests that Strehler, rather than talking about what he expected from his players, demonstrated everything in the first stages of rehearsal. When asked in an interview if she thought the 1956 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* was also influenced by Brechtian theories and epic style, Bonati confirmed:

“Yes. Because the way you act is like this: you start from reality and throw a character at the audience, a character that is not you. There is already something Brechtian, something epic in the Commedia dell’Arte.”³⁶ The actress however specified that *The Servant of Two Masters*

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³⁴ My translation of parts of the following passage: “[Brechtian ‘V-Effekt’ as Strehler staged it in *The Measures Taken*] ne paraissait ‘ni artificiel ni imposé du dehors’. Au contraire, il permit ‘d’atteindre à un naturel de type nouveau qui donnait au spectateur la possibilité de prendre une position critique vis-à-vis des personnages en action’.” (Fechner quoted in Dort, “Premier itinéraire” 171)

³⁵ This is taken from an interview I conducted with Narcisa Bonati in Milan in 2009.

³⁶ This is the English translation of parts of an interview I conducted with Narcisa Bonati in Milan in 2009. Bonati’s comment in the original Italian: “Sì, perché il modo di recitare è anch’esso: si parte da una verità e si
performance style was also “natural,” that it was not caricaturing, that the actors' every word and action came from a “real place” and that masked performers, she believed, could have acted the same way without a mask. Also, during this interview, Bonati did not distinguish between “distancing effect” and “Brechtian” or “epic” acting style, and thus implied that, for her, these terms were interchangeable. Finally, she accompanied her testimony with live demonstrations that illustrated her point but cannot be translated on the page satisfactorily. Bonati's generous interview nonetheless suggests that the acting style in Strehler's 1956 staging of The Servant of Two Masters was to some extent influenced by his exploration of Brecht's work and might have been chosen for the potential distancing effect it could produce.

Finally, Brechtian influence on the production was also obvious in the display of theatre conventions, like those related to the use of masks. The masks in Strehler's third production of Goldoni's play were those of 1952. Moretti still wore Sartori's “Arlecchino-fox,” a dark brown mask with wide elongated eyes (see 4.1.2). Archival photographs of the 1956 production, however, show that Moretti changed mask at times, and alternated between the “Arlecchino-fox” and another mask, whose design resembled the “Arlecchino-cat” of L'amante militare. This new mask, with small eye-openings, roundish features and several superficial wrinkles (see fig. 6), likely was the “primitive zanni” Moretti is known to have worn after the “cat” and the “fox” (Strehler, “In margine” 60). While all other masks in the production (Pantalone's, Dottore Lombardi's and Brighella's) remained the same as in 1952, the ways actors manipulated them changed. As mentioned above, performers lifted their mask as they left the trestle stage for the

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37 Chances are that some of the masks had been repaired or replaced since 1952, but replicas and original masks were likely made from the same mold. Mask repairs and replacements were always performed by Amleto Sartori, in his studio in Padua.

38 Moretti might have changed mask because he had broken his regular “Arlecchino-fox” mask and had sent it away for repair. Alternating between two masks might have also been an artistic decision of Strehler, who could have wanted to add an acting challenge to Moretti or to explore new facets of his Arlecchino.
wings. The manipulation of masks on and off stage participated in telling the story of fictional Commedia actors and thus added to the production's metatheatrical dimension.

Masks, in Strehler's third staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, identified a player with his character and reminded the spectators that they were attending a theatre performance. They also represented more or less accurately an acting tool that was used by players in Goldoni's time, and thus helped historicize the production. Masks also acted as a metaphor for the theatre since they reminded the public of the fictional nature of Goldoni's play, represented Commedia characters independently from this play and, more broadly, symbolized theatre. Finally, they were also a metaphor for the world since they represented key instruments in an actor's trade, and since the materiality of the leather masks was displayed by the actors manipulating them. Masks in this production also de-individualized the players and arguably represented not only Arlecchino, Brighella, Dottore and Pantalone in *The Servant of Two Masters*, but the working class and the bourgeoisie more generally. This focus was revealed in a decision Strehler considered, but failed to make: masking Smeraldina to de-individualize this character and make her a stage representative of the popular classes.

In 1956, Smeraldina was first played by Marina Bonfigli. Later that year, however, another actress, Narcisa Bonati, interpreted the role.39 In an interview conducted in Milan in 2009, Bonati recalled that Strehler considered masking her in the production to proclaim the popular nature of the female character she was playing:

When Strehler approached me to play Smeraldina, all the previous Smeraldinas had been somewhat Molieresque. [...] Instead, since we had worked together before (I played in the *Cherry Orchard* the first year and in *The House of Bernarda Alba* the second year, then I did *NOS Milan* and *The Three Penny Opera*, which Brecht attended), he [Strehler] told me: “Listen, we want to do another tour and since you are available I would like to create a different Smeraldina for you, that is a mask of

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39 Bonati interpreted the role from December 1956 to 1964, and again for four performances in May 1987 (this information is taken from the programme of the 10th edition of the production in 1997).
Smeraldina.” [...] Smeraldina is the only character that is plebeian and she represents, let's say it like this, the working class woman: astute but not cunning. The maid Corallina and all the others are slightly more malicious. Instead he [Strehler], seeing me, said “I want to create a popular Smeraldina [with you].” (Bonati, Personal interview)

One of Strehler's strategies to create this popular character was to mask Bonati. She and Strehler met Amleto Sartori in Padua and asked him to create a mask that resembled Moretti's original “Arlecchino-cat” mask. In the end, Strehler decided not to mask Bonati, arguing that her very expressive face was already her mask. Strehler nonetheless “popularized” Bonati's Smeraldina with costume, make-up and acting directions. While the Smeraldinas in Strehler's previous productions of Goldoni's play wore a form-fitting bodice adorned with a flower and a voluminous skirt topped with a small apron that was more decorative than utilitarian, Bonati's Smeraldina in 1956, wore a large apron, a simpler skirt, a white shirt and a corset laced in the front. Her hair was covered by a white scarf, and she apparently drew circles (probably pink or red) on her cheeks. Rather than projecting the idealized image of a coquettish maid, this new Smeraldina looked like a popular, working-class woman of the 1700s who projected both strength and innocence. As Bonati explains:

I was asked: “Why are people speaking so much of your performance?” It's because I created a character that was popular, but not vulgar. When Arlecchino comes close to me and touches my breast when we are reading the letter, I do this: “[acting surprised and disoriented] Hey! But...what are you doing?”

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40 My translation of parts of an interview conducted in Milan, in 2009, with Narcisa Bonati. In the original Italian: “Quando Strehler mi ha interpellato per fare Smeraldina, tutte le altre Smeraldine precedenti erano Smeraldine tipo moliereana. [...] Invece, quando essendo me che aveva già lavorato con lui – io ho fatto il Giardino dei ciliegi il primo anno e la Casa di Bernarda Alba il secondo anno, poi ho fatto Nos Milan e L'opera da tre soldi... con Brecht in sala – poi mi dice: ‘senti, vogliamo fare un altra tournée e, avendo te a disposizione, io ne vorrei fare una Smeraldina differente, cioè la maschera Smeraldina.’ [...] Smeraldina è l'unica maschera che viene dal popolo ed è la rappresentante, diciamo così, della donna del popolo: furba ma non scaltra. La servetta Corallina e quelle altre sono quelle un po’ fino più maliziose. In vece lui, con me – ve’ la mia faccia! – mi dice: ‘io voglio fare una Smeraldina popolare.’” (Bonati, Personal interview)

41 Marina Bonfigli, who played Smeraldina in the theatre season 1956-1957, and Narcisa Bonati wore similar costumes in the production. The main differences in their respective costumes were the shoes (photographs of the production show that Bonfigli wore period high heel shoes while Bonati wore flats) and shirts (the same photographs show that Bonfigli's shirt was more adorned than Bonati's and, of the two actresses, only Bonati wore a visible corset).
actress would say: “[sensually, as if pleased to be touched on the breasts] Aaaaah...” This is the difference between the popular and the vulgar.42 (Bonati, Personal interview)

Bonati's physical appearance as Smeraldina and her strong, clever and yet innocent demeanour on stage arguably reflected Strehler's vision of the eighteenth-century (and perhaps twentieth-century) working-class woman. That Strehler considered to mask Smeraldina in order to make her more “popular” suggests that, by this point in his career, he viewed masks as theatrical objects that, by erasing the actor's facial traits, had the potential to stand for social types rather than individual characters only. This use of masks would suggest a Marxist reading of Commedia dell’Arte characters in which each of them would potentially represent a social class or economic power. This reading could mirror the Marxist ideology and left-wing political convictions Strehler is known to have served throughout his adult life and suggests that his political inclinations influenced his vision of the Commedia dell’Arte and even found an expression in his stagings of The Servant of Two Masters or, at least, in the process that led to the productions of this play. Strehler's vision of characters as representatives of social types and the care with which he attempted, in 1956, to display the interrelationships between these types in a production that integrated both World and Theatre, finally reveals the influence Goldoni's and Brecht's work had on him at the time.

Strehler's third staging of The Servant of Two Masters was destined to extensive touring. After it left Scotland, it visited, among other countries, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Italy, Libya, Holland (1947-58 Piccolo Teatro 36-38), as well as Russia, Roumania, Canada and the United States. For the performances in the United States in 1960, the Piccolo

42 My translation of parts of an interview conducted in Milan, in 2009, with Narcisa Bonati. In the original Italian: “In vece mi dicevano: ‘Perché di te si parla tanto?’ Perché io ne ho fatto un personaggio popolare ma non volgare. Quando Arlecchino viene dentro qui e mi tocca il seno quando leggiamo la lettera, io faccio ‘He! Ma che cosa fai?’ Quell’ altra fa: ‘Aaaaaah....’ Ecco la differenza tra il popolare e il volgare.” (Bonati, Personal interview)
Teatro was required to hire an understudy for Moretti – this was apparently imposed by the American theatre union. Strehler recruited a young actor, with a background in dance, who had trained at the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica in Rome. His name was Ferruccio Soleri.

Soleri was trained by Strehler in and outside of rehearsals, but mostly by Moretti, whose performance style and technique he needed to emulate in a short period. Strehler remembers:

Marcello, outside of the normal rehearsal hours, helped me train the young actor, the new Arlecchino. This simple act of daily work contained a whole story within itself. How can we not think of the “continuity” in the theatre, of the transformation of theatre generations, of legacies of practical knowledge that are passed on in time? Miraculously, in present times, a process was happening that was typical to the Commedia dell'Arte; commedia meaning the actor's “craft.” A craft that one player passes on to the other, with a bit of himself.

I let Marcello alone during these rehearsals. He preferred it this way. Both of them wearing gymnastic outfits, in the darkness of the stage, the old and the future Arlecchino rehearsed. I perfectly remember how they rehearsed in low voices, mysteriously. These were strange rehearsals, conducted without a method, as the experience unfolded, with exemplifying words and gestures, and some quite personal bits of theory thrown here and there. It was like attending a ritual without knowing its purpose and imagery. Marcello saw this Arlecchino evolve day by day, a shy, uncertain [Arlecchino], who followed exactly in his steps, [copying] the voice, the movements; and in whom, however, naturally emerged here and there elements of a different Arlecchino. And he watched him with a complex feeling [made of] of love and refusal, of indifference and protection. Some kind of, I intuitively guess, bizarre maternal love, also made of jealousy and despair.  

(Strehler, “In margine” 61-62)
Ferruccio Soleri, perhaps because of a complex relationship with Strehler, the Piccolo Teatro and Marcello Moretti, now denies Moretti's contribution to his training as Arlecchino. Other actors, however, like Bonati, confirm that Moretti did teach his colleagues, especially those hired to play the roles of servants. Moretti, however, did not have formal students, and was more a model and a periodical coach rather than an instructor. The transmission of performance knowledge from one actor to the next, though real, might also have been idealized by Strehler in the passage cited above, which was written in commemoration of Moretti, who died in January 1961.

Giorgio Strehler's 1956 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* was a milestone in the history of this production at the Piccolo Teatro. It introduced a new story (that of an eighteenth-century touring Commedia company), set design (a stage within a stage), character (the prompter), live music (by the visible musicians in the wings) and an actor (Ferruccio Soleri) that have remained in the production ever since. The metatheatrical, heavily historicized scenography and the double acting style integrated both Theatre and the World on stage, commented on the place of theatre in history and on the world of theatre. These scenic choices testify to Strehler's exploration of Brechtian ideas at the time and to his deeper understanding of Goldoni's life and work. The masks and the ways in which they were manipulated by actors also contributed to the historical and social focuses of the production: they represented a historical

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44 On this matter, mask-maker Donato Sartori revealed in a personal interview conducted in Abano Terme in June 2009: “When I was a boy, Ferruccio was the understudy. The great actor was Marcello, and it is true that Marcello did not have students. [...] During rehearsal, Ferruccio stood behind. [...] Ferruccio watched *Arlecchino* [*Servant of Two Masters*] from backstage, not as a student, but as a copy [i.e. understudy]. [...] The second Arlecchino [Soleri] needed to be like the main Arlecchino [Moretti]. He had to be a copy, a photocopy. Consequently, he could not assume another identity, he could not even change a thing.” (Donato Sartori, Personal interview)*

* My translation of: “Quando ero un ragazzino io, Ferruccio era praticamente il sostituto. Ciòè: il grande attore era Marcello, e Marcello non aveva allievi, questo è vero. [...] Quando provava, Ferruccio era dietro. [...] L'Arlecchino l'ha visto da dietro le colonne, non come allievo, ma copiando. [...] L'Arlecchino secondo doveva essere come l'Arlecchino prima. Doveva essere una copia, una fotocopia. Quindi non poteva essere una propria identità. Anzi non poteva cambiare una virgola.” (Donato Sartori, Personal interview)
performance tool tied to a practice with social, artistic and economic implications; and they signified Strehler's vision of popular and upper classes.

The third production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro came to an end with Marcello Moretti's death in 1961. Mask-maker Amleto Sartori passed away soon after Moretti, in 1962. Strehler, Grassi and the rest of the Piccolo Teatro's team hesitated to produce Goldoni's play again. But *The Servant of Two Masters* came back in 1963 in a new staging that launched two careers: that of Ferruccio Soleri, the new Arlecchino in the production, and, arguably, that of Donato Sartori, a young sculptor, mask-maker, and son of Amleto Sartori.

4.1.3 4th production: 1963

After this long pilgrimage around the world, Arlecchino [*Servant of Two Masters*] is back at the Piccolo Teatro. And it returns with a new purpose that is no longer to seek applause and glory for the Italian theatre abroad, but to bring the theatre closer to a new public, that of the suburbs, which sixteen or so years ago – when Arlecchino was first produced – were not part of the city. With what has been called “the most famous production in the world,” the Piccolo Teatro reaches out to these new spectators who live too far away from downtown to attend its theatres.45 (From the programme of the production in 1963)

Strehler's fourth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* premiered on July 10th 1963 in Villa Litta of Affori.46 The production was specifically intended for this space located outside of

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45 My translation of: “Dopo questo lungo pellegrinaggio mondiale, Arlecchino ritorna sul cartellone del Piccolo Teatro. E vi ritorna con una nuova funzione, che non è più quella di raccogliere all'estero applausi e gloria per il teatro italiano, ma di avvicinare al teatro un pubblico nuovo: quello della periferia cittadina che sedici anni or sono – quando l'Arlecchino iniziava la sua esistenza – non faceva parte della città. A questi nuovi spettatori troppo lontani dai teatri del centro per poterli portare la propria presenza, il Piccolo Teatro si rivolge dunque con quello che è stato definito “il più celebre spettacolo del mondo”’. (From the programme of the production in 1963)

46 In *Gli spettacoli goldoniani di Giorgio Strehler*, Catherine Douël dell'Agnola specifies that this was not the fourth production of *The Servant of Two Masters* but the third production *bis* (45). She argues that Strehler himself was reluctant to call it his fourth production of the play. Yet, the 1963 production is generally known as the fourth version of Strehler's staging of Goldoni's play. Even the Piccolo Teatro, in its most recent programmes of *The Servant of Two Masters*, refers to this production as the fourth one in a series of ten. I will
Milan's city centre. This new staging, as Strehler noted in the production's press release, was a key event in an effort of cultural decentralization (“Affori Parco Villa Litta”). The Piccolo Teatro had already engaged in this effort during its 1961-1962 theatre season by bringing 82 “popular performances” to towns located in Milan's periphery (“Il nuovo Arlecchino: Anche la banda”). These performances, conveniently called “Incontri del Piccolo Teatro” (literally “Piccolo Teatro meetings”), were held in a variety of places, from regional cooperatives to factories in the suburbs (“Il nuovo Arlecchino: Anche la banda”). These meetings inserted themselves within broader municipal and provincial initiatives that aimed at, as the theatre critic for Avanti! explained, “overcoming the constant impoverishment of local cultural life [...]” (“Ogni sera”) “[...] It is no coincidence,” he added, “that Villa Litta – the splendid eighteenth-century villa in whose park Arlecchino will be staged again – hosts a public library that was recently created precisely for that [decentralizing] purpose.” (“Ogni sera”)

Publicity for the new production of The Servant of Two Masters was made in newspaper articles, of course, but also by local business owners who displayed the production's posters in the windows of their shops. Publicity was also secured by a car, equipped with megaphones, that circulated in Affori's streets announcing the arrival of the production of Goldoni's play in town (“Il nuovo Arlecchino: Anche la banda”). The production's social underpinnings were also reflected in the low prices of tickets and democratic arrangement of seats. The price of tickets was set at 500 lire per adult and 300 lire for children under 10, as well as for individuals in groups of 30 people or more (Comunicato stampa P.T. italiano). No reservations were taken, no place was assigned and, apparently, all seats had an equally good view of the stage. As the

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47 My translation of: “[...] ovviare a quel costante impoverimento della vita culturale locale [...]” (“Ogni sera”).

48 My translation of: “[...] non a caso Villa Litta – la bella villa settecentesca nel cui splendido parco rivivrà Arlecchino – è sede di una biblioteca civica recentemente istituita con quella precisa mira.” (“Ogni sera”)
theatre reviewer for *Il giorno* noted, Grassi and Strehler adopted the system of payment and place distribution of cinemas rather than that of theatres ("Il nuovo Arlecchino: Anche la banda").

For the first time in the history of the Piccolo Teatro, *The Servant of Two Masters* was presented outdoors. The historical Villa Litta and its gardens were the production's new backgrounds (see fig. 7). Set designer Ezio Frigerio placed chandeliers in Villa Litta's real windows, a detail that, as Catherine Douël dell'Agnola observes, “added festive connotations to the set and, at the same time, put it in a historical perspective.”49 (Gli spettacoli 46) In front of the Villa stood a trestle stage limited in the back by three superposed backdrops that, like in all earlier productions, indicated the locations in the play. The stage was illuminated by electric lights that, as Domenico Manzella mentioned in his review of the production, gave a special, fluorescent glow to the surrounding trees and gardens ("Arlecchino ritrova"). The stage was also lit by a series of candle footlights that had aesthetic and historicizing functions.

On each side of the trestle stage stood a carriage that, as Douël dell'Agnola observes, alluded to both Thespis' waggon and carriages of the American West (Gli spettacoli 46). The actors in the production, when they were not performing Goldoni's play on the trestle stage, could enter these carriages to rest. The players' silhouette, however, would always remain visible to the spectators, since each carriage was lit from the inside. The resting actors could also stand or sit in between the edges of the stage and the carriages. In these visible wings, the players were surrounded by a wide variety of objects that included musical instruments, costumes for tragic roles, Commedia masks, an Incas idol and a papier-mâché chicken, among other things (Strehler quoted in Douël dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 47). Some of these objects were used during the

49 My translation of: "[…] caricano la scenografia di connotazioni festose e nello stesso tempo la pongono in una prospettiva storica." (Douël dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 46)
performance of *The Servant of Two Masters*, while others only alluded to the wide repertoire of plays a travelling eighteenth-century Commedia company might have performed.

The story Strehler told with his new production of Goldoni’s play was the same as in 1956: namely that of touring Commedia players arriving in a new town, installing their stage in an outdoor space, and performing *The Servant of Two Masters*. The realism of the set, however, as well as the detailed actions in the wings before and during the performance of Goldoni’s play pushed this story farther than ever before: the life of the Commedia actors unfolding in the wings became a focal point of the staging. This focus was clearly stated in Strehler’s directorial notes for the production. These notes reveal that Strehler staged an introductory scene at the beginning of the production's first act that showed the actors preparing for their performance:

([...]*The actors circulate among the wagons, stage and various objects, entering and exiting the patron's mansion or villa, in front of which they have installed their travelling theatre. The owner of the house – a nobleman or a rich merchant – has kindly made a few rooms on the main floor available to the actors, where they can get some refreshments – a few sips of wine – also graciously offered.*

*The public takes their seat; the sun has gone down: the evening's first shadows are descending.*

*As the beginning of the performance approaches, the stage comes to life: we now hear the voice of actors. And [we hear] the sound of a bell that a stage assistant in ringing as he moves between the waggons, and the stage, and the props, towards the villa, as if to gather the actors and notify them that the show “is on” soon.*

**IL DOTTORE** Is it time yet?

**THE STAGE ASSISTANT** In ten minutes. (Strehler, “*Arlecchino’ a Villa Litta*” 77-78)
And this introductory scene, as imagined by Strehler, goes on for several pages. It includes lines and actions for every performer – some of the stage business in this scene is carefully written down, some of it is left to the actors’ creativity in performance. The player in the role of Dottore, for example, warms up his voice and plans the delivery of a few lines with the actor interpreting Brighella. The performer in the role of Pantalone – the chief-actor of the fictional company – rehearses a speech with the prompter, and coaches Silvio. The actress playing Smeraldina almost drops water on Florindo only moments before Arlecchino crosses the trestle stage with a piece of cloth on his shoulders. This preparation scene also includes a salute of the players to the public, a musical introduction, and an almost father-and-son interaction between the actor playing Dottore and a young performer (or stage assistant) in charge of announcing the beginning of the play.

The realistic display of the dynamics between the members of the fictional touring company in the 1963 production reflects Strehler's work in the early 1960s, a period of his career characterized by, as Dort claims, “[a certain form of] realism rooted in an almost naturalistic depiction of daily actions, but that becomes an evocation of history in the epic style.”

(Dort quoted in Douël dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 46) This style and focus, Douël dell'Agnola suggests, culminated sometimes between 1961 and 1963, when Strehler produced

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52 On the basis of Dort, who associates Strehler’s exploration of realism with epic style, one could easily assume that Strehler read Brecht as a representative of the realist style. Strehler, however, was here less concerned with the theory of the relationship between epic and realism than he was with the aesthetic desire to show eighteenth-century settings in a realistic manner. In Strehler’s perspective, realism becomes a strategy to evoke history and to show the making of a play as a work of art enjoyable for its aesthetic qualities. My translation of: “[...] d’un réalisme enraciné – secondo Bernard Dort – dans une description presque naturaliste des faits et gestes quotidiens mais ouvrant sur une évocation historique de type épic.” (Dort quoted in Douël dell'Agnola, *Gli spettacoli* 46)
Brecht's *Schweik in the Second World War, The Exception and the Rule, Life of Galileo* and Bertolazzi's *El Nost Milan (Gli spettacoli 45).

The specificity of Strehler's fourth staging of Goldoni's play did not only lie in its remarkably realistic setting and metatheatrical premises. A major change in the production was the replacement of Marcello Moretti by Ferruccio Soleri, a change that, at first, did not come easily to Strehler and Grassi. As Strehler mentioned in the press release:

*Arlecchino* stopped when Marcello Moretti, who had been [the production's] soul for fourteen years, fell victim of an incurable disease. For two years, despite the invitations that came from around the world asking the Piccolo Teatro to stage the famous production again, the Piccolo's directors could not bear hearing the lines, [and] seeing the multicoloured costume of a character that was so closely related to the memory of the lost Comrade. But life goes on, and though a man's death requires a thoughtful pause, it also calls for the resumption and continuation of the work He left behind.  

53 (“Affori Parco Villa Litta”)

Ferruccio Soleri, Moretti’s successor and the new Arlecchino in the production, was born in Florence in 1929, from a middle-class family. Self-trained in acrobatics, he won a provincial gymnastic championship at the age of 18 and joined the youth division of “Assi Giglio Rosso,” a Florentine sports organization (Chinello 6). Soleri was formally introduced to acting in university, where he participated in student productions. He then trained for one summer at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, where he took movement and danse lessons with Clotilde and Aleksandr Sakarov (*Ibid.* 9). In 1952, Soleri entered the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica in Rome. There, he first performed the role of Arlecchino in Goldoni’s *La figlia obbediente*,

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53 My translation of: “L’Arlecchino si fermò quando Marcello Moretti, che per quattordici anni ne era stato l’anima, scomparve vittima di un male incurabile. Malgrado gli inviti che da ogni parte del mondo sollecitavano il Piccolo Teatro a riprendere l’ormai famoso spettacolo, per due anni mancò il cuore ai dirigenti del Piccolo di risentire le parole, di rivedere il costume variopinto della maschera tanto legata nel ricordo al Compagno scomparso. Tuttavia la vita ha le sue giuste leggi, e la morte di un uomo impone si una sosta pensosa ma anche la ripresa e la prosecuzione del lavoro che Egli ha lasciato.” (Comunicato stampa P.T. italiano)
staged by Giacomo Colli. This production, Gian Giacomo Colli (Colli's son) reveals, willingly exploited Soleri's acrobatic skills.\(^5^4\)

Soleri joined the Piccolo Teatro in 1959 and first played Arlecchino in *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1960, when he was hired as Moretti's understudy for an American tour. Between 1960 and 1963, Soleri performed in a variety of productions at and outside of the Piccolo Teatro. In 1960-1961, he was hired to play Arlecchino in Glauco Pellegrini's film *Italienisches Capriccio* (Chinello 23). He then perfected his interpretation of Arlecchino on stage in 1961, when he was cast as Tristano Martinelli in Vito Pandolfi's staging of *Isabella comica gelosa*. By the time Strehler asked him to become the Piccolo Teatro's new Arlecchino in 1963, Soleri had already explored the role in school with Colli, with the Piccolo Teatro in America, on camera, and in Pandolfi's staging.

According to the theatre reviews of the time, Soleri's interpretation of Arlecchino in 1963 was reflective of Moretti's work in its form, but was lacking in depth and, perhaps, ease. The critic for *Corriere Lombardo*, for example, could not resist comparing Soleri to his predecessor:

> Expectations were high also because, here in Milan, we were seeing for the first time in the costume of the great Goldonian Mask this Ferruccio Soleri, who became Arlecchino with the guidance of poor Marcello Moretti, whom he had already replaced abroad. Mission accomplished, without a doubt, even if the apprentice lacked the brilliance and explosiveness that were typical of the master.\(^5^5\) (“Due su tre andate”)

Similarly, critic Ulrich Seelmann-Eggebert noticed:

> Anyone who saw [Soleri] at that time reported that he tried to be Moretti's faithful copy, but without this strange Arlecchino melancholy that made Moretti's performance so deeply moving. Yet, Soleri plays the role with an almost perfect acrobatic technique, he does all of Moretti's signature gestures and even adds new

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54 I met Gian Giacomo Colli in 2011 at the University of Toronto. In an informal conversation, he discussed his father's staging and Soleri's performance in it.

55 My translation of: “L'attesa era viva anche perché, qui a Milano, vedevamo per la prima volta nel costume della grande Maschera goldoniana, quel Ferruccio Soleri che è diventato Arlecchino sotto il diretto insegnamento del povero Marcello Moretti del quale, all'estero, fu già il sostituto. Prova superata, non c'è dubbio; anche se mancano, all'allievo, la brillantezza e le folgorazioni che erano proprie del maestro.” (“Due su tre andate”)
ones, but, for now, he lacks the human depth Moretti displayed at every moment.⁵⁶ (“Strehlers neuer Arlecchino”)

Both reviews point to Soleri's novelty in the role and also speak to his training as Arlecchino. For the American tour, Soleri needed to emulate Moretti's acting style in a short period, and though Moretti discussed the role with him, most of Soleri's initial learning process was based on “copying” his teacher. In this process, Moretti did share some tricks of the trade. For example, he advised Soleri never to speak Arlecchino's lines decisively, but instead suggested to start each sentence with “ah” (Soleri quoted in g.p.t., “Il nuovo Arlecchino”).

The reviews in 1963 also started to identify the direction towards which Soleri would eventually bring his Arlecchino. Unlike his predecessor, Soleri had a formal training in gymnastics and dance. In time, he gave to the masked protagonist aerial qualities that were backed up by strong miming techniques and sustained by impeccable acrobatic skills that allowed him to perform movements at a level of difficulty that Moretti might not have been able to reach. As Donato Sartori explained, Soleri's Arlecchino soon became lighter, more dancer-like and decorative than Moretti's, who was more grounded, archaic and, I would add, popular (Donato Sartori quoted in Cacco 66). In 1963, the individuality of Soleri's Arlecchino was only emerging. Soleri, however, matured in the role throughout the 1960s and gradually dissociated his Arlecchino from his predecessor's. In the production's programme of 1966, he explained:

[...] I think that my Arlecchino, which originates from Moretti and cannot ignore his great “human” lessons, was “historicized” little by little until it became, as I see it, the image of a man struggling between two worlds (the two masters) with all the contradictions, the treachery, the tricks and – why not? – the pandering [that it implies]. [My Arlecchino expresses the] Vengeful psychology of the oppressed men and of those who are forced to save themselves from incomprehensible but always

⁵⁶ My translation of: “Wer ihn damals gesehen hat, berichtete darüber, er habe eine getreuliche Kopie des Spiels von Moretti zu geben versucht, ohne allerdings diese eigenartige Melancholie des Harlekin, aus der Moretti seine menschlich bewegendsten Wirkungen zog, wiedergeben zu können. Auch jetzt spielt Soleri die Rolle mit einer beinahe perfekten akrobatischen Technik, er gibt all die vielbelachten Gesten Morettis und sogar noch ein paar eigene dazu, aber jene Tiefe des Menschlichen, die bei Moretti in jedem Augenblick spürbar war, fehlt ihm einstweilen.” (Seelmann- Eggebert, “Strehlers neuer Arlecchino”)
adversarial forces that tend to crush and erase them. Deep down, on stage, I defend myself.\textsuperscript{57} (Soleri, “Il mio Arlecchino”)

Soleri's interpretation of Arlecchino also gradually became more aggressive. Narcisa Bonati, who played alongside Moretti in the 1950s and with Soleri in the 1960s, indeed noticed the difference between the old and the new Arlecchino. During the lazzo of the fly\textsuperscript{58} in the production's second act, she explained, Moretti gently prayed the public not to speak so that he might have a chance to catch the fly and eat it. Soleri, instead, swiftly ordered the audience to stay quiet while he was attempting to catch his prey. To Bonati's surprise, the public accepted and even enjoyed being commanded by Arlecchino. This welcoming of a reversal of hierarchy, she believes, revealed a change of mentalities in the public and on stage.

The mask Soleri wore in Strehler's fourth production of The Servant of Two Masters was a copy of Moretti's mask, made to fit the dimensions of Soleri's face. It is unclear when Soleri finally got a new mask, reflective of his interpretation of Arlecchino. A close examination of the production's photographs, especially those that were published in the programme, reveal that by 1966 Soleri was wearing a new mask. This mask was made of leather by Donato Sartori – who carried on his father's mask-making business after he passed away in 1962. While the design of Moretti's mask was soft with superficial carved lines, Soleri's was more angular, with pronounced reliefs. It was a variation on Moretti's “Arlecchino-fox” mask. The nose on the new mask appeared slightly larger then the one on the original model; new lines were also added to

\textsuperscript{57} My translation of: “[…] penso che il mio Arlecchino, che parte e non può prescindere dalla grande lezione 'umana' di Moretti, si è venuto via via 'storicizzando', fino a diventare, così come io lo sento, l'immagine di un uomo in lotta fra due mondi (i due padroni) con tutte le contraddizioni, le furberie, le astuzie e – perché no? – le ruffianerie; psicologia rivalsa degli oppressi e degli uomini costretti a salvare se stessi di fronte a forze, in genere incomprensibili ma sempre avverse, che tendono a schiacciare e ad annullarli. In fondo, sulla scena, io mi difendo.” (Soleri, “Il mio Arlecchino”)

\textsuperscript{58} This gag does not appear in Goldoni's text, but is based on an eighteenth-century description by Luigi Riccoboni and was developed by Moretti in rehearsal. This lazzo begins as Arlecchino jumps on stage from under a backdrop and crawls on all four from up-stage centre to down stage right, his body tense, his articulations flexible, his face following an imaginary fly. The public understands that the fly has landed when Arlecchino's face stops moving and points to the floor across the stage. The character then slowly crawls towards the fly before he suddenly leaps on it, like a cat on its prey, and eats it.
the design that made it appear “busier”; some of these lines connected the cheeks of the mask to its upper lip; and a triangle was carved in the mask's forehead that somewhat simulated frowning brows. While the surface of Moretti's mask offered a fair amount of plain surfaces on which light could bounce, Soleri's mask, because of its many carved lines, might have appeared darker, generally more contracted and, only to a certain extent, slightly more menacing. There certainly was a certain decorative attempt on the part of the mask-maker that meant to reflect Soleri's interpretation of Arlecchino. “It was me,” Donato Sartori posits, “who took care of Soleri's mask and who attempted to create a prototype of Arlecchino suitable for him. One could say that Soleri is in search of a certain aesthetic, and in making the mask I tried to respect his personality and the greater lightness he gave to the character.”59 (Donato Sartori quoted in Cacco 66) This new mask was used by Soleri in all subsequent productions of The Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro, from the mid 1960s to the present day (2012 as of this writing).

The fourth staging of The Servant of Two Masters, after it premiered in Villa Litta in 1963, toured extensively in Italy and abroad, sharing with new audiences Strehler's vision of the life and working practices of eighteenth-century Commedia companies. The production also marked the formal introduction of Ferruccio Soleri as Arlecchino. With the change of actor, the role slowly shifted from the representation of a soft, grounded and submissive plebeian man to that of an aerial, acrobatic, cunning and defensive Arlecchino. The full maturity of this new Arlecchino was displayed in Strehler's next staging of the play, in 1973.

59 My translation of: “Fui io ad occuparmi della maschera di Soleri e cercai di individuare un prototipo di Arlecchino che gli si adattasse. Forse si può dire che Soleri va alla ricerca di un estetismo ed io ho cercato di seguire, nella realizzazione della maschera, il suo carattere e la maggior leggerezza del suo personaggio.” (Donato Sartori quoted in Cacco 66)
4.1.4 5th production: 1973

The 1973 edition, still designed to be performed in the open (at Villa Comunale in Milan), creates the same visual impact as it did ten years earlier, but it stands out and differs [from previous productions] because of how much farther Soleri went in his interpretation of Arlecchino, [which stood somewhere] between pure physicality and calculation, between the inescapable faith of the victim and the intriguing games of a plot master. (Gregori 91)

Strehler's fifth staging of The Servant of Two Masters, sometimes known as “Edizione dei carri” (the Waggon production), opened on June 24th 1973, in Villa Comunale in Milan. This production, as Maria Grazia Gregori noted above, was expressly created to be performed outdoors. After Villa Comunale, the show was performed in Villa Litta at Affori, in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice (Tosi), in an outdoor setting during the Salzburg Festival (“A Strehler lo scettro”), in Dubrovnik for its International Theatre Festival (“Arlecchino di Strehler”), and in the Roman theatre of Verona (“Spettatori sugli alberi”), among other venues. The positive reviews of the production suggest that it was generally well received everywhere it was performed. Critic G.A. Cibotto, for example, claims that Strehler's fifth staging of Goldoni's play had been so successful at the Biennale that it had the potential to convince Venician municipal authorities to revisit their cultural practices. In his words:

Now that we have touched upon the structure of the play, [...], and that we have highlighted the quality of the acting, [...] we cannot ignore that the success of the Venetian performances is also due to the public's vibrant and passionate participation: a varied, eclectic public, mostly made of foreigners and commuting mainlanders, faithfully mirroring the new face of summer tourism, which has changed in past years. Our hope, now that the wonderful success has stirred the stagnant air of obvious indifference to issues of the theatre, is that the city's

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60 My translation of: “L'edizione del 1973, pensata sempre per essere recitata all'aperto (alla Villa Comunale di Milano), ripropone figurativamente lo stesso impatto di dieci anni prima, ma si segnala e si differenzia per l'approfondimento compiuto da Soleri nel ruolo di Arlecchino fra fisicità pura e calcolo, fra l'ineluttabile destino della vittima e gli intriganti giochi di un maestro d'imbrogli.” (Gregori 91)

61 Catherine Douël dell'Agnola, in Gli spettacoli goldoniani di Giorgio Strehler, specifies that Strehler considered his staging of The Servant of Two Masters in 1973 to be his fourth production of this play (48).
administrators study for a time a programming worthy of the name “theatre season” for the upcoming years.\(^{62}\) ("La maschera di Arlecchino fa scoprire la realtà")

The production's Venetian success was not isolated. As the reviewer for *Avanti!* described:

Spectators in the trees, on metallic poles supporting the production lights, on the roof and inside of the booth next to the technicians, on their knees on ordered lines in between the rows of seated and standing spectators: [altogether] more than 3000 people have managed to enter the Roman Theatre of Verona each night to attend the performances of Giorgio Strehler's staging of Carlo Goldoni's *Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters*.\(^{63}\) ("Spettatori sugli alberi")

This successful new production explored the same themes and told the same story as it did in the previous staging, in 1963. The show once again expressed Strehler's vision of the life of members of a fictional eighteenth-century Commedia company. The staging was metatheatrical, highly realistic and heavily historicized. As Douël dell'Agnola posits, the new production exploited the dialectical relationship between “Stanislavskian realism and Italian theatricality” and reflected how Strehler navigated between “dramatic, political [and] philosophical theories”\(^{64}\) in his personal and artistic research on theatricality (*Gli spettacoli 49*).

The realistic style of the production was perceptible in Ezio Frigerio's set design. The backdrops indicating the locations in the play were painted with naturalistic images of indoor and outdoor spaces. The backdrop representing Pantalone's house showed a rich room decorated

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\(^{62}\) My translation of: “Una volta accennato alla struttura della commedia, [...] e sottolineate le qualità della interpretazione, [...] non si può tuttavia passare sotto silenzio che il miracolo degli esauriti veneziani va attribuito anche alla partecipazione vibrante e appassionata del pubblico; un pubblico vario, eterogeneo, composto soprattutto di stranieri e di pendolari, rispecchiando fedelmente la nuova faccia del turismo estivo, assai diverso da quello di un tempo. La speranza, adesso che la dolce ala del successo ha smosso l’aria stagnante di una palese indifferenza ai problemi dello spettacolo, è che gli amministratori comunali studino per tempo un cartellone degno di questo nome per gli anni a venire.” ("La maschera di Arlecchino fa scoprire la realtà")

\(^{63}\) My translation of: “Spettatori sugli alberi. [sic] sui tralicci metallici dell’impianto luci, sul tetto e dentro la cabina elettrica accanto ai tecnici dello spettacolo, in ginocchio in file ordinate tra le file di spettatori seduti e quelli in piedi: oltre 3000 persone per sera sono riuscite ad entrare al Teatro Romano di Verona per assistere alle repliche di *Arlecchino servitore di due padroni* di Carlo Goldoni con la regia di Giorgio Strehler.” ("Spettatori sugli alberi")

\(^{64}\) My translation of parts of the following passage: “Due anni prima del *Campiello*, epico-dialettico, realismo stanislavskiano e teatralità all’italiana flirtano in un rapporto storico-drammatico che dimostra come Strehler, ben lontano dall’essere prigioniero delle teorie drammaturgiche, politiche o filosofiche, le utilizza al servizio di una personalissima ricerca sulla teatralità.” (Douël dell’Agnola, *Gli spettacoli 49*)
with a large door and two equally big windows adorned with elaborate moldings in the Rococo style. The windows were coloured in such a way as to give the illusion that they were illuminated from behind, from a fictional street outside of the house. Then, the backdrop that indicated a street in front of Brighella's inn was painted in perspective and showed a canal (and its bridge) flanked on each side by rows of palaces that extended to the horizon. More than ever before, this backdrop situated the action of the play in Venice. As for the room in Brighella's inn, it was now signified by a backdrop realistically depicting a kitchen, in warm tones, with various pots, bottles and food items (including a large head of lettuce) carelessly placed on two sideboards. This backdrop also showed two doors, wooden beams supporting the kitchen's ceiling, and a large chimney at the centre of the image in which a bright orange and yellow fire was painted. While the kitchen depicted on the backdrop in 1963 could have belonged to a cool, clean, well organized Baroque palace, the one in 1973 depicted a large, warm, welcoming, rustic inn. The illusion of reality created by these three backdrops was disrupted by the frequent scene changes performed before the audience. This illusion was also broken by the actors who rested and interacted with each other in the visible wings, on each side of the trestle stage. Finally, as Douël dell'Agnola observes, the unnaturally fast rhythm of the production also contrasted with the realistic backdrops and affirmed the metatheatrical nature of the production (Gli spettacoli 49).

The realistic setting of Strehler's fifth staging of Goldoni's play was brightly lit. “Eight spotlights,” Douël dell'Agnola describes, “now appear on the wooden frame where the backdrops are hanging; they correspond to the nine quinquets [i.e. candle footlights] placed on the edge of the stage that are lit [at the beginning of the play] by the prompter.”

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65 My translation of: “Otto proiettori fanno la loro apparizione sul portico di legno al quale sono fissati i fondalini; corrispondono ai nove quinquets posati alla ribalta, che vengono accesi dal suggeritore.” (Douël dell'Agnola, Gli spettacoli 65)
48) Large electric spotlights attached to metallic beams also illuminated the stage. It was perhaps this new lighting design that allowed the Piccolo Teatro to film the production. Indeed, in order to be able to successfully produce a video recording of a performance, the acting area often needs to be abundantly lit. Strehler was fascinated with light and preferred to illuminate his actors dimly from the sides and from behind rather than directly. This is why, Piccolo Teatro archivist Franco Viespro explained, Strehler rarely allowed the filming of his productions: he did not want to change his lighting design to accommodate the cameras.66 Strehler's choice to brightly illuminate his new, outdoor staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, however, allowed for easier video recording. The production was filmed in 1973, at Villa Comunale.

This video recording allows us to fully witness the speed at which the actors were performing. The rhythm of Strehler's fifth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* was perhaps faster than ever before. Ferruccio Soleri adopted a frantic tempo that appears to have dictated the pace of all other players in the production. During the meal scene, when Arlecchino brings plates to both his masters, Soleri's running, which included high jumping, gave him the appearance of flying from one end of the stage to the other. The tempo of this scene, as critic Angelo Ceccarelli suggests, revealed Strehler's vision of the modern working pace imposed by the ruling classes and highlighted the survival instinct of workers. In his words:

> [Arlecchino conveys an] ante litteram Pantheism that is not “Arlequinesque” but becomes so because of [his] survival [i.e. primary] instincts. For Soleri-Strehler – without forgetting the old Moretti – the challenge has been to strip the “mask” of a patina of pedantry and conformism built up through “tradition” (mission accomplished), [and] to give the comic, jumping mime a new place on stage, providing him with the possibility to represent another “comic anthropomorphism,” closer to today's reality.

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66 This information was taken from a conversation I had with Franco Viespro at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan in May 2009.

67 Here, “mask” refers to the character, Arlecchino, and not the physical object on the actor's face.
For example, the “lunch scene” was accelerated, sped up like precise beats of labour.68 (“Arlecchino per la fame”)

Though critics like Ceccarelli saw in the new Arlecchino (Soleri's) a platform to comment on the realities of the working class, there was too, in Soleri's interpretation, aerial qualities pushed to the extreme that revealed a non-human, almost devilish aspect of his Arlecchino. As Donato Sartori describes:

At a certain point [Ferruccio Soleri] departed from his master [Moretti] and became Ferruccio: a more elegant Arlecchino. He was coming from the world of dance and thus practically became an Arlecchino that was closer to the eighteenth century and not so much to Goldoni. Strehler put a lot of effort into curtailing embellishments. [Soleri] could jump very high, but no: Arlecchino is not a dancer. Arlecchino is a hungry character, therefore he is not playing frivolously, he is not [leaping about]. No. [...] Arlecchino is a servant, he is a peasant, he is hungry, he is inseparable from the sixteenth or the seventeenth century — though you can make him eighteenth-century-like with a very elegant costume, laces, decorations, etc. But Arlecchino, in Goldoni's time, was a character connected to the earth, related to the social realities of the time, which were poverty, illnesses, great social differences, very rich people, and very poor ones. Arlecchino's hunger became famous because, at the time, hunger existed. Now, this hunger could be that of Vietnam and African countries; they don't make jokes about hunger. [...] This is what Ferruccio has perhaps forgotten. Eventually, he became an Arlecchino that resembled more an aesthetic abstraction than a concrete character. But as he evolved in the role, something different emerged. He became more aggressive and more diabolical, diabolical in the details of his interpretation, in his acrobatics, [...].70 (Donato Sartori, Personal interview)

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68 My translation of: “Un panteismo ante litteram quello di Arlecchino che non ha niente di ‘arlecchinesco’ ma che diventa tale per istinto di sopravvivenza. In Soleri-Strehler – non dimenticando il vecchio Moretti – l'impegno è stato quello di ripulire la ‘maschera' dalla stessa patina di pedantesco e di conformistico venutasi a creare nella ‘tradizione' (lavoro di lima riuscito), per concedere al mimo comico saltatore una nuova collocazione scenica, offrendogli la possibilità di riproporsi con un altro ’antropomorfismo comico’ aderente alla realtà di oggi.

69 In interview, Donato Sartori talked about a decorative eighteenth century Arlecchino and compared it to Goldoni's Arlecchino. I believe that Sartori's decorative Arlecchino especially referred to late eighteenth century and nineteenth century interpretations of the role and to later depictions of Arlecchino in paintings, opera, ballet and sculpture rather than to all eighteenth century Arlecchinos. His discourse, however, does not make this clear.

70 My translation of parts of an interview with Donato Sartori conducted in Abano Terme in June 2009: “A un certo punto si stacca dal ruolo del maestro e diventa Ferruccio: Arlecchino più elegante. Lui proviene dalla danza, quindi diventa praticamente un Arlecchino più settecentesco, non più tanto goldoniano. Strehler ha fatto un po’ di fatica per non esagerare in questa decorazione. Perché lui [Soleri] faceva grandi salti. No! Calma! Arlecchino non è un ballerino, Arlecchino è un personaggio che ha fame, quindi non gioca, non fa il volo [word inaudible]. No. È un personaggio per quanto elegante tu voglia farlo apparire, ma attenzione: è la Commedia dell'Arte e Arlecchino è un servo, è un contadino, è un personaggio che ha fame, è una struttura legata al cinquecento e al seicento. Lo poi farlo diventare settecentesco con il costume elegantissimo, con un merletti, con
To this, Donato Sartori added that Moretti's mask—meaning both his interpretation of the role and his leather mask—was calm, popular and grounded, thus implying that Soleri's was not. Soleri's decorative, aesthetically refined and aerial Arlecchino—literally kept closer to the ground by Strehler's repeated warnings, according to Sartori—was nonetheless highly praised in 1973. Reviewers admired the actor's acrobatic skills and fast acting rhythm. And, perhaps because Soleri spoke of his Arlecchino in terms of class struggles, some theatre critics of the time also saw in Soleri's Arlecchino a metaphor for urgency, hunger and the working class daily battles:

The matrix is hunger which the masses can never satisfy because they lack a regular income, [and because they] depend on their masters’—rare—good luck and [frequent] reversals of fortune. “Arlecchino's” sole fight is for dinner, he has no time to establish that he has a “soul.” His comedic power resides in this alternation between the rhetoric of others—power—and his obligation to satisfy more immediate needs. [This dialectic] is the symbol of a future “conscience” that takes time to materialize since those living in similar conditions are more “servants” than him.71 (Ceccarelli)

Soleri has long insisted that his Arlecchino is tributary to Strehler, that he is “Strehler's Arlecchino.” In a personal interview conducted in May 2009, Soleri explained how Strehler helped him to find a voice for Arlecchino, how he indicated him what gesture was appropriate for the character, which movement conveyed meaning, and which one was unclear and unnecessary. The gestural research, Soleri revealed, started from the public or, more exactly,
from what the public needed to understand in order to follow the play. If the audience needed to understand that Arlecchino was sad, surprised or euphoric, Soleri had to communicate these emotions clearly, both vocally and physically. Strehler, Soleri admitted, did not tell him what gesture to perform in order to convey meaning; instead, he let the actor experiment physically and told him when his movements were effective and when they were not. This exploratory phase took place in rehearsal, but the live reactions of the public during each performance must also have instructed Soleri.

By 1973, Ferruccio Soleri had become the Piccolo Teatro's Arlecchino, an Arlecchino whose aggressiveness, devilish nature and aestheticism were reflected in the actor's high speed actions, artificial screeching voice, excellent acrobatics skills, aerial demeanour, decorative gestures and elaborate new mask (see 4.1.3). As Gregori posits in the programme of The Servant of Two Masters in 2007, Strehler's fifth staging of Goldoni's play differed from earlier stagings not so much in the story it told or in the visual impact it created, but in the more mature, elaborate performance of its new Arlecchino.
Figure 3: A room in Pantalone's house. *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1952. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.

Figure 4: Marcello Moretti in Strehler's second staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, in 1952. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Figure 5: One of Ezio Frigerio's drawings for the set of Strehler's third staging of The Servant of Two Masters, in 1956. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.

Figure 6: From left to right: Checco Risone (Dottore Lombardi), Marcello Moretti (Arlecchino) and Gianfranco Mauri (Brighella) in Strehler's 1956 staging of The Servant of Two Masters. Moretti's mask on this image greatly differs from his Arlecchino-fox mask and might be what Strehler called the “primitive zanni” mask. © Archivio Fotografico Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Figure 7: Trestle stage and carriages in front of Villa Litta at Affori. Strehler's staging of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters* in 1963. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
4.2 *Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters from 1977 to 1997*

4.2.1 6th production (“Edizione del Odeon”): 1977

It is precisely in France, the shining soul of Europe, that the adventure of actors who invented the theatre needs to be told [...], [those actors] who spoke a different and yet universal language, who learned other languages and adopted them, who allowed themselves to be snatched and assimilated by France, who became French actors (ah! Carlo Antonio Bertinazzi, Thomassin, Silvia, first Italian and then French. Ah! The adorable actors who inspired Marivaux); it's exactly here that it's become necessary to perform this story.¹

Giorgio Strehler signed his sixth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1977. The production took place at the Théâtre de l'Odeon in Paris and is commonly referred to as the “édition Odéon,” “Arlecchino dell'Odéon,” or “Edizione dell'Odéon” (literally “Odéon Edition,” which is how I will refer to this production in this section). This production was staged in the framework of a triennial agreement with the French Ministry of Culture and constituted one of the highlights of the Odéon's second season of “Italian Theatre.”² Though the show was primarily directed at a French audience, it was performed in Goldoni's native language. However, a programme in French with a brief description of the action³ of the play was made available to the public. Soon after the production left Paris, it briefly toured Italy. The Odéon Edition also visited Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) in a celebration of the twinning of that...

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¹ My translation of: “Proprio in Francia, anima lucente dell'Europa, questa avventura di comici che inventano il teatro [...] e che parlano una lingua diversa e pur universale, che imparano i linguaggi altrui e li assimilano, che si lasciano prendere ed assimilare a loro volta dalla Francia, che diventano attori francesi (ah! Carlo Antonio Bertinazzi, Thomassin, Silvia, italiani e poi francesi, ah! gli attori adorabili e adorati di Marivaux) proprio qui ha acquistato una sua necessità di essere rappresentata.” (Strehler, “Ancora e sempre 'Arlecchino’” 83)

² To my knowledge, the Odéon organized three theatre seasons dedicated to Italian theatre and titled “Saison du Théâtre des Italiens” (which alluded to the historical Théâtre des Italiens – or Comédie-Italienne – of the seventeenth and eighteenth century).

³ At present, it is not clear whether the programme supplied a French description of each scene or of each act of the play, or if it only contained a synopsis. This is why I use the word “action” instead of “scene” or “act”.

170
city with Milan (from the programme of the production in 1979). Despite its short touring history, the 1977 production of *The Servant of Two Masters* was first and foremost created with the Odéon in mind. As Strehler posits, “It was thought of, rehearsed and performed in that theatre, for that theatre, for those dimensions, that atmosphere, and even for this painted curtain, this piece of fake red velvet that Arlecchino, at a certain point [during the production], raises painfully with his hands and shoulders to allow the show to continue.”

As a result of this focus, certain inventions, metatheatrical games and other actions only belong to the French production (Strehler, “Ancora e sempre ‘Arlecchino’” 83). One of these inventions is the final scene in which Arlecchino, chased from the stage and into the audience by his masters, tries to get back on the acting area. The theatre's heavy curtain, however, has gone down and the character cannot lift it. The stage machinery is suddenly activated, and Arlecchino reenters the stage as an immense cloud descends. The starving servant exits in a flight, lifted by glory, like “Arlecchino-Medea” (Monod 190), in an image that seems to be directly borrowed from the Baroque theatre (see fig. 8).

If we consider the Odéon Edition in relation to Strehler's previous stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, it presents itself as the third chapter in a staged history of touring Commedia companies (from their debut to their apogee and decline). The first chapter of this story, the production of 1956, shared a moment in the life of a group of actors who had stopped in broad day light in the middle of ruins to perform a play. The bright colours of the set design and costumes, the luminous acting area, and the painted horizon that appeared to bathe in sunshine seemed to impart an optimistic beginning to the company's journey in Italy and Europe.

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4 My translation of: “È stata pensata, provata e recitata in quel teatro, per quel teatro, per quelle dimensioni, quell'atmosfera e persino per quel sipario dipinto, quel drappo di velluto rosso finto che Arlecchino ad un certo punto solleva a fatica con le sue mani e le sue spalle perché lo spettacolo continui.” (Strehler, “Ancora e sempre ‘Arlecchino’” 83)

5 Theatre critic Richard Monod observed a similar relationship between the productions of 1977 and 1956 (Monod).
As Douël dell'Agnola argues, this set and lighting design suggested “the hope for a better future.” (Gli spettacoli 50) In the second chapter of the story, the subsequent productions of Villa Litta (1963) and Villa Comunale (1973), Strehler staged the glory days of a Commedia dell'Arte company that travelled in well equipped caravans and performed at night, for large crowds, on an abundantly lit trestle stage. In his 1977 production, however, Strehler significantly darkened his staged history of Commedia troupes. In it, a group of exhausted and starving Italian actors, “chased from the capital,” find shelter in a castle in ruins. The gloom of the production is brought home by a description in the 1997 programme, “The walls are decrepit, crumbling, in a corner a stone horse is abandoned like the remain of an old equestrian statue. Among the actors, deprived of a theatre in which to perform, discontentment and melancholy rule.”

With the Odéon Edition, Strehler shared his vision of a decadent Commedia tradition. The acting style of the Commedia actors within the play, once fresh and brilliant, has been mechanized. The growing animosity among members of the fictional company, reduced to performing on “second rate stages” (Douël dell'Agnola, Gli spettacoli 50), is palpable. As theatre critic Richard Monod observed, “a taste of death has hit this theatre.”

With the Odéon Edition, Strehler arguably drew a parallel between his vision of the decline of Commedia dell'Arte and Goldoni's late life, as he imagined it. The fictional actors' fatigue and irritability, their modest working conditions and the moderately prestigious fictional

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6 From the programme of the 1997 production of Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters.
7 It is not clear in what country Strehler situated that castle. It appears from his writings that France inspired the production in 1977. It is therefore possible that the story of starving Italian actors told in this production of The Servant of Two Masters was situated in France. Strehler's decision not to clearly locate the action in a specific city or country could also indicate his effort to tell the pan-European story of touring Commedia actors. Interestingly, many French theatre reviewers situated the action in Venice or, more generally, in Italy, and none of them set the play in France. It appears that these reviewers did not understand the story as something that was part of a common heritage with Italy, but as a chapter that belonged to Italian theatre history only.
8 Translation of the following passage originally published in the 1997 programme of Arlecchino servitore di due padroni at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan: “I muri sono decrepiti, scrostati, in un angolo un cavallo di pietra ricorda un'antica statua equestre.”
9 Translation of: “[...] un goût de mort s'est abattu sur ce théâtre.” (Monod).
venue where they performed mirrored a situation Goldoni might have experienced when he lived in Paris. Indeed, Goldoni, after his bitter and incisive quarrels with Carlo Gozzi on Italian theatre, left for the French capital. From 1762 to approximately 1764, he wrote Commedia scenarios for players who performed at the Comédie-Italienne. These scenarios probably obeyed and entertained the well established rules and old acting habits Goldoni had previously tried to reform (see chapter 1). Later in his life, he was granted a pension from the king of France and retired in Versailles, where he taught Italian to Louis XV’s daughters and occasionally wrote plays (Corvin). For example, his Bourru bienfaisant, written for the occasion of Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI's wedding, was a success and remains today a prestigious title among his plays. Despite his impressive body of work and his contribution to the Parisian theatre scene of the late 1700s, Goldoni died poor and almost generally ignored (Ibid.). His pension, that had ceased during the Revolution, was restored one day after his death. The heavy atmosphere of the 1977 production of The Servant of Two Masters might therefore have reflected Strehler's interpretation of Goldoni's later years in a foreign country, far from Venice — the geographical cradle of his reform — and away from his original public.

Through his Parisian production, Strehler also established another connection with historical events, this time more joyous. The Odéon Edition is believed to have corresponded to the four hundredth anniversary of the arrival in Paris of a prestigious Commedia company. “It is in fact in January 1577,” Nico Pepe observes, “that, officially, the Gelosi Company, [...], planted its banner in Paris, invited by the king of France.”¹⁰ (“Commedianti”) With his production, Strehler arguably attempted to draw an almost prophetic connection, even a parental affiliation,

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¹⁰ Some historical documents reveal the presence of the Gelosi company in France (including in Paris) as early as 1571 (Richards 61). The company performed in Paris again in 1577 (Ibid. 62). This second visit lasted several months during which the Gelosi apparently enjoyed great popular success (Ibid.). My translation of: “E’ infatti nel gennaio 1577 che, ufficialmente, la Compagnia dei Gelosi, [...], plantava le sue tende a Parigi, invitatavi dal re di Francia.” (Pepe “Commedianti”)
between his theatre activities in Paris, those of Goldoni two hundred years earlier, and those of
the Gelosi and other acclaimed theatre companies. In other words, with the Parisian production
of Goldoni's play, Strehler inserted himself in a lineage of iconic Italian theatre artists who left
permanent traces in the French cultural landscape.

Much like his three previous productions, Strehler's sixth staging of The Servant of Two
Masters was thoroughly historicized. The details of the costumes situated the play somewhere
in the late eighteenth century; the set, which represented a room in an empty castle, suggested
that the story happened soon after 1789. Scenographer Ezio Frigerio's colour palette appeared
darker and cooler than those he used in previous stagings of the play; perhaps this impression
comes only from the dim lighting. The elevated platform used in the previous productions of
Villa Litta and Comunale, as well as the wooden frame and the candles attached to it, were
absent from the French production. At the Odéon, only the intensity and the direction of lighting
indicated the two acting areas on stage. The wings, where the personal stories of the performers
unfolded, remained in the dark, while the area where the fictional company enacted The Servant
of Two Masters was dimly lit (see fig. 9). The line that separated the world of Goldoni's play (the
“stage”) and the resting zone of the performers (the “wings”) was otherwise invisible. Strehler's
actors, however, modified their level of energy, general attitude, and acting style as they moved
from one part of the set to the next. As Macabru describes:

We see the actors changing character and attitude whether they are on stage, lit by a
few candles, or in the shade, resting, killing time. Better, we see them stepping
across an imaginary line that divides the stage and the wings, and modifying
themselves in an instant. They literally break down from their roles, and it is
absolutely extraordinary.

Nothing on stage, however, located the performance in a particular country. While Strehler implied in several of
his writings that the story enacted in the 1977 production was a tribute to Italian actors who performed in France
during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, French critic Dominique Jamet was quick to place the story in
eighteenth-century Venice, and Guy Dumur noted the resemblance between the “refined and luxurious” visual
aesthetic of the Odéon production with the “poetical and, [...] realistic” paintings exhibited at Ca'Rezzonico and
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the Querini Stampalia Museum in Venice.
Here is a heavy trunk; the actor who carries it moves as though exhausted; suddenly it is not heavy anymore; the actor rises up; he has just entered another universe. There, an actress waits, her face is closed, almost sad; one more step, and here she is carried away, petulant, enthusiastic, with laughing eyes; she is perfectly foreign to what she was [moments before] (“Arlequin serviteur de deux maîtres”)

The metatheatrical devices in the production, namely the performers’ double roles with different acting styles for each performed story, were essential elements of what Strehler called “il gioco del double a teatro” (literally “double play”). Strehler's refinement of this “double play” in the Odéon Edition resulted in greater discrepancies between the performance style in the two acting zones and gave more importance than ever before to the development of the fictional actors' personal stories.

The “double play” seem to have triggered various reactions in the audience and led to different, yet complementary, interpretations. First, it was perceived as a sign of Brecht's influence on Strehler. Theatre critic Pasquale Guadagnolo posits, “Only to state the most obvious fact, from 1947 to the present day ‘Arlecchino’ went through, or has been traversed by, the discovery and the teachings of Brecht: and now we see in this production, for example, outside of the dramatic canon, what estrangement, critical distancing means.” Critic Jean-Pierre Leonardini's reaction to the production, however, suggests that other spectators, like himself, felt transported back in time in an almost Proustian journey. “We remain speechless,” he commented, “in front of this theatre of a recovered memory. The colours of Ezio Frigerio's

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12 My translation of: “Nous voyons les acteurs changer de nature et d'esprit selon qu'ils sont sur scène, éclairée par quelques chandelles, ou dans l'ombre, au repos, s'occupant à tuer le temps. Mieux, nous les voyons, en franchissant une ligne imaginaire, celle qui sépare la scène des coulisses, se modifier en un instant, littéralement se décomposer, se défaire de leur rôle comme on abandonne un habit, et c'est absolument prodigieux.

Ici, cette malle pèse, le comédien qui la porte avance comme épuisé, brusquement elle ne pèse plus, le comédien se redresse, il est entré dans un autre univers. Là, une actrice attend, visage fermé, presque triste, un pas de plus, et la voilà emportée, pétulante, enthousiaste, les yeux rieurs, parfaitement étrangère à ce qu'elle était.” (Macabru)

13 My translation of: “Per dire solo il fatto più evidente, dal '47 a oggi ‘Arlecchino’ ha attraversato, o è stato attraversato, se non altro, dalla scoperta e dalla lezione di Brecht: e allora vediamo qui, per esempio, fuori dai canoni, che cosa significa straniamento, distanziazione critica.” (Guadagnolo)
set design and costumes [...] seem to be projected by a very magical lantern, a true machine to go back in time. Somewhere inside us, an ancestor sees again this stage that he had forgotten.”

(“Une mémoire retrouvée”) Leonardini does not explicitly attribute his experience to the “double play” on stage. However, he describes his reaction to the production after commenting on the actors' performance, and thus implies that a relationship exists between what he felt as he watched the production and the actors' “double play.” Finally, critic Michel Cournot's reception of the production suggests a more uncanny, even paralysing effect of the production on the public:

A very bizarre phenomenon sometimes occurs to the theatre spectator: disconnection.

A peculiar synthesis emerges from the stage and acts on the public a little bit like curare would. But the spectator is not asleep: he is desensitized.

In this situation of awake narcosis, the spectator stays immobile, sits straight, the neck is tense, the eyes are fixed, the pupils are dilated. The most obvious symptom is a grin: until the end of the performance, the lips draw a slightly crisped, unalterable smile.

The disconnected spectator feels no sensation.

Here is what's strange: neither thoughts nor feelings go through the spectator's mind.

Even stranger: when the disconnected spectator wakes up, he believes he had fun and even felt happy. He believes he has just experienced beatitude for three hours.

(“’Arlequin serviteur de deux maîtres’ par le Piccolo”)

In his review, Cournot identifies the causes of the desensitizing effect. One of them is the performers' acting style, especially the players' fast rhythm and mechanized gestures when

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14 My translation of: “On reste pantois devant ce théâtre d'une mémoire retrouvée. La palette des décors et des costumes d'Ezio Frigerio [...] semble projetée par une lanterne très magique, véritable machine à revenir en arrière. Quelque part en nous l'aiuel revoit cette scène dont il avait égaré le souvenir.” (Leonardini)


De la scène se dégage une synthèse particulière, qui agit sur le public un peu comme le curare. Mais le spectateur n'est pas endormi : il est insensibilisé.

Dans cette situation de narcose éveillée, le spectateur reste immobile, assis très droit, cou tendu, yeux fixes, pupilles dilatées. Le symptôme le plus frappant est un rictus : jusqu'à la fin de la pièce, les lèvres dessinent un sourire à peine crispé, inaltérable.

Le spectateur déconnecté n'eprouve aucune sensation. Et voici plus étrange : il n'est traversé par aucune pensée, aucun sentiment.

Plus étrange encore : au moment où le spectateur déconnecté se réveille, il croit qu'il s'est amusé, et même qu'il a été heureux. Il croit avoir baigné trois heures dans une béatitude.” (Cournot)
acting Goldoni's play. That three theatre critics seem to have experienced the production differently, but all in an intense manner, shows that in his Odéon Edition Strehler deployed a rich arsenal of theatrical means, only to a certain extent influenced by his Brechtian experience, to affect the audience emotionally, intellectually, and even physically. The masks, and more specifically the effect of light on them, were also part of this carefully studied and employed arsenal.

The leather masks used in 1977 were the same as those used in previous productions. They had all been designed by Amleto Sartori, with the exception of Soleri's Arlecchino mask, which was Donato Sartori's original creation. Similar to the previous three stagings of 1956, 1963 and 1973, the actors lifted their masks when they moved from the area where Goldoni's play was performed to the wings, where actors both interacted and rested. It was however at the Odéon, I would like to suggest, that Strehler made his most significant discovery regarding lighting design for masked performance. “Lighting that comes from above and falls on the mask does not serve it well,” he explained to Odette Aslan in an interview in 1989, “on the contrary. Footlights, however, show the relief of the features of the mask much more effectively than more elaborated lighting.” Strehler continued: “We notice that the moving light of candles contribute to animating the expression of the mask. Even if the actor does not move, even if the traits of the mask cannot move, the light that moves on them gives them life.”16

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16 My translation of: “Le masque supporte mal la lumière qui tombe d'en haut et descend sur lui ; au contraire, la lumière venant de la rampe donne un relief aux traits du masque, bien plus efficacement qu'un éclairage très poussé. On s'aperçoit que la lumière mouvante provenant de bougies contribue à animer l'expression du masque. Sans que l'acteur fasse un mouvement, sans que les traits du masque puissent bouger, la lumière bougeant sur eux les rend vivants.” (Strehler quoted in Aslan, “L'Arlequin” 175)
A survey of the photographs of all of Strehler's productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* shows that spotlights illuminated the actors from below in 1947, 1952 and 1956. In all likelihood, these spotlights were electrical and did not replicate the subtle movements of candle footlights. Moreover, they were located farther from the actors, in front and above the elevated stage or slightly on the sides. Candle footlights were used for the first time in the fourth staging of the play, in 1963. This production, which was performed outdoors and at night, required elaborate lighting that combined electric spotlights with candles. Light was coming on the actors from behind, above and probably from the front and sides of the stage as well. Heavier electric spotlights were likely attached to beams located farther from the acting area, perhaps even in the audience. The elaborate, intense lighting in 1963 must therefore have diluted or even cancelled the subtle effect of candlelight on masks. The primary function of the candle footlights in 1963 was aesthetic and historical; the candles on stage exemplified the lighting technology of a distant past, conferred a warm atmosphere to the production, and added to the authenticity of the director's vision of an eighteenth-century Commedia performance.

Two observations suggest that Strehler better understood the animating effect of candlelight and footlights on the masks in 1977, at the Odéon. First, the actors in this production were more dimly lit than in previous stagings, and this allowed the director to better observe the movement of candlelight on the masks. Then, a technical incident occurred at the Parisian theatre that suddenly and unequivocally revealed the full potential of candlelight illuminating solid masks from below. As Strehler remembers:

One evening, in fact, by accident, during the production we call “the Odéon edition” of Paris, exactly in that theatre, during the last act, there was a power failure. The theatre remained in complete darkness. The audience was in the dark; the stage was dark. The actors were perplexed and even afraid; then one of them had the idea of lighting a candle from one of the chandeliers on stage. And rapidly, as if it was orchestrated, they started to light other candles. Some of them rushed into the wings, and into the dressing rooms, to look for lights and came back, and performed what
was supposed to be, what needed to be acted and brought to an end in front of the public, for the public. They did this, illuminating each other, in an improvised and almost desperate game that moved us all.17 (“L’Arlecchino' dell'addio” 86-87)

I believe it was precisely that night, when the actors were exclusively lit by candlelight, that Strehler fully grasped the importance of illuminating the solid masks from below. It is then that he realized the livening effect vacillating flames had on masks. Strehler included more chandeliers in his subsequent productions of The Servant of Two Masters and significantly dimmed the lights on stage in such a way that footlights, from 1977 on, gained in importance, revealed more than ever before the plasticity of the masks, and created an aura of mystery and nostalgia around the masked characters.

4.2.2 7th production (“Edizione dell'Addio”): 1987

We called our last production of Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters “Edizione dell'Addio.” This was not a pathetic gesture, but an act of love and faithfulness by a group of actors who had interpreted the play's characters for decades in Milan, in Italy, [and] around the world [...].18 (Strehler, “Buongiorno 'Arlecchino’” 88)

Strehler signed his seventh staging of The Servant of Two Masters in 1987, for the fortieth anniversary of the Piccolo Teatro. It was envisaged as Strehler's last production of the play, at least with its current cast, and was titled “Edizione dell'Addio” (literally “Farewell

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18 My translation of a part of the following sentence: “Chiamammo l'ultima nostra edizione dell'Arlecchino servitore di due padroni 'Edizione dell'Addio'. Non era un segno patetico, ma il gesto di amore e fedeltà di un gruppo di attori, da decenni interpreti dei personaggi dello spettacolo, a Milano, in Italia, nel mondo e che erano arrivati a fare a meno di tutto, a spogliare l'avvenimento scenico di ogni suo apparato esteriore, per recitare in nudità assoluta e poesia, qualcosa che ha accompagnato la vita del Piccolo da più di quarantacinque anni.” (Strehler, “Buongiorno Arlecchino” 88)
Edition”). For the opening night, the grounds around the Milanese theatre were covered with candles; each of them is believed to have represented an actor who had worked at the Piccolo Teatro in the previous four decades. For many spectators and theatre critics who attended it, the Farewell Edition appeared to celebrate the funeral of a theatre phenomenon (Strehler's stagings of The Servant of Two Masters) that had begun soon after the war and had successfully reimagined the Commedia dell'Arte and Goldoni in performance in the second half of the twentieth century.

“How does a production ‘die’,” theatre critic Renato Palazzi rhetorically asked, “how does a theatre event cease to exist under the stage lights and enter into this other realm that is the archives of historical memory?” (“Arlecchino, addio”) His answer: “[...] when a symbolic production, an emblem of the Italian theatre tradition around the world like ‘Arlecchino servitore di due padroni’ reaches its last moments [...] sumptuous funerals are needed.”19 (Ibid.)

A mixture of melancholy and attractive visual poetry thus filled the stage of the “funeral-production.” This atmosphere was created by a series of choices Strehler made regarding the production's costumes, scenography, lighting, and cast. The colours of the costumes were softer than those in previous stagings, and the patina on the fabric suggested the old age of each costume. “The multicolour patches are still there,” Soleri said of his Arlecchino garment, “but the colours are different. Then, the fabric is not gaudy, but opaque, bleary. And I have a low waist: I wear the belt on the buttocks. And the shoulders are narrower. I appear stranger, more

19 My translation of: “Come ’muore’ uno spettacolo, come cessa un evento del teatro di esistere sotto le luci di scena per passare in quella specie di ultraterreno aldilà che è l'archivio della memoria storica? [...] Ma quando uno spettacolo-simbolo, un emblema della tradizione teatrale italiana nel mondo come l’Arlecchino servitore di due padroni’ giunge agli ultimi colpi [...] ci vuole un funerale sontuoso.” (Palazzi)
archaic [than in previous productions]." (quoted in Altarocca) In addition to the changes in costumes, the set too was transformed.

The scenography Strehler and designer Ezio Frigerio imagined for the production was minimal, abstract; it was purged of the painted backdrops and historicizing props used in previous stagings. Only a few elements indicated each location in the play. The street in Venice, as the critic Ugo Ronfani succinctly described it, was represented only by a foggy background behind a vast naked stage, while Pantalone's house was indicated by two servants holding chandeliers (“Ora Arlecchino”). Brighella's inn was signified by three screens behind which plates, pans and other kitchen utensils occasionally “flew” and smoke came out (Ibid.) (see fig. 10). Archival photographs of the production as well as a video recording of it also reveal that a private room in Pantalone's house was signified by two screens illumintated from behind, and by two small tables indicating a communal area in the house. Behind each location stood a wide, grey, translucent backdrop that resembled a giant veil. This backdrop covered the entire back of the stage for the duration of the performance and gave the impression that the actors were suspended in time and space, in some sort of theatrical limbo. The colour palette of the set design combined grey, white and pastel tones, which accentuated the dream-like atmosphere of the production. This pale, naked acting area did not situate the play in a particular geographical location, nor did it place it in an easily identifiable time period; instead, it attempted to achieve a “poetical abstraction,” Frigerio reported, that was “charged with emotions, with memories in which speech and gestures were the main protagonists.”

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21 My translation of parts of the following sentence: “Si arrivò a un vuoto che era molto diverso da quello della prima edizione del 1947: era un vuoto carico di sentimenti, di ricordi dove assumevano una rilevanza fortissima la parola, il gesto.” (Frigerio, “Arlecchino” 50).
therefore, seemed to perform in a dream, or in a memory (that of Strehler or that of the audience).

The lighting design reinforced the dreamlike, poetic and melancholic atmosphere of the production. The vast acting area was bathed in candle light coming from the front of the stage, the wings and from chandeliers manipulated by the actors. Dim electric lighting also illuminated the players laterally and from the back. These lights changed tone according to the location presented on stage. In an personal interview conducted in May 2009 at the Piccolo Teatro, Claudio De Pace, who served as electrician on the production in 1987, explained that for the street scenes, Strehler wanted the lighting to simulate the slow progression of daylight from afternoon to evening; for Pantalone's house, he asked for warm colours that slightly reinforced the candlelight on stage; for Brighella's inn, he requested even warmer, fiery tones. The light at the beginning and at the very end of the production was cold, dim and diffused; it simulated thick fog and only revealed the dark silhouettes of the actors, as if they were emerging from another world or as if they were the ghosts of Commedia actors from the past (see fig.11). The darkness on stage as well as the abundance of candles alluded to the technical incident that occurred at the Théâtre de l'Odéon ten years earlier (see 4.2.1). But this was not the only allusion to past stagings Strehler made in his Farewell Edition. De Pace recalls that Strehler inserted various elements from past productions in the lighting and set design of his new staging. Some of these elements were only barely visible to the audience. For example, a single string that crossed the stage acted as a vestige of the painted backdrops used in all previous productions of The Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro. On that string, Strehler hung a small piece of garland he had used in his production of Goldoni's Il campiello in 1975. Then, for the last scene, Strehler imagined a great wind that traversed the stage, shook the screens, moved the actors, and blew a few leaves across the stage. These leaves had already been used in 1974 in his production
of Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*. As the wind rolled at the end of the production, Pantalone exclaimed, as if improvised: “Chiude la finestra... La tempesta! La tempesta!” This line and the simulation of a storm that threatened the set alluded to Strehler's 1978 production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which ended with the destruction of the stage. The Farewell Edition of *The Servant of Two Masters* therefore contained traces of Strehler's pivotal theatre achievements and summarized forty years of artistic activities under his direction at the Piccolo Teatro.

Although the allusions to former productions added to the nostalgic atmosphere on stage, it was perhaps the cast that most filled the audience with both enthusiasm and melancholy. It was composed of older actors who had performed in earlier productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro; most of them had first joined the production in the 1950s and in the late 1970s. Even the young lovers in the play, Clarice, Silvio, Florindo and Beatrice, were interpreted by mature actors. Only the actress in the role of Beatrice, Andrea Jonasson, was new to the production. The style in which the players performed, according to Soleri and Jonasson, was epic and alienating. “He [Strehler] adored Bertolt Brecht,” Jonasson remembers, “and did not like naturalism on stage. So everything needed to be acted out a little bit more than usual. When we spoke, without being [too] ‘theatrical,’ we needed to adopt a style [...] that created an alienating effect.” She explained, “It was as if someone talked at a distance from oneself, as if looking at oneself, controlling oneself slightly in order not to fall into too much sentimentality [...]”. He had a style that was detached from deep sentimentalism, without ever being cold. [...] And [the acting style in *The Servant of Two Masters*] was slightly exterior, even a little bit

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22 Andrea Jonasson's description of the acting style privileged by Strehler in the Farewell edition of Goldoni's play is part of a longer interview I conducted with the actress in May 2009 at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan.
amusing.” (Jonasson, Personal interview) Most performers in the 1987 production would have already been familiar with the acting style Strehler privileged in his productions. Previous knowledge of this style was an advantage since Strehler, Jonasson specified, was directing another production at the time and only attended the last few days of rehearsal. When asked to describe the rehearsal process of the Farewell Edition, Jonasson explained that the performers in the roles of masked characters rehearsed bare-faced. She also implied that Gianfranco Mauri (actor in the play since 1956, Strehler's assistant since 1963, and Brighella in the production in 1987) and Ferruccio Soleri acted as some sort of mentors among the cast. Coaching the actors was one of Mauri's tasks, since he was one of Strehler's assistants. Soleri's advice, however, arguably came from his position as the central figure and star-actor in the show.

Working with Ferruccio was beautiful, in that it made me understand that ours was a work by the centimetre, physically. When [in the second act of the play] I kicked him in the behind, if I hit him a little too high or a little too low, he yelled at me so loudly that I thought I had just killed him. I asked: “What happened?” He answered: “For thirty years I have been accustomed to being hit exactly on the same spot. If you hit me somewhere else, I will not fall well.” It is like in the circus. If the person on the trapeze or performing a somersault doesn't throw the rings [i.e. the bar of the trapeze] properly, or something like that, the other [performer] will fall. Even when I hit him [Ferruccio] on the back, everything was calculated. It appears simple, but it's not. (Jonasson, Personal interview)

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24 My translation of parts of: “Il lavoro con Ferruccio era bellissimo nel senso che ho capito che era un lavoro proprio di centimetri fisicamente. Se gli dai un calcio nel sedere, se vai troppo in alto o troppo in basso, lui mi urlava, sembrava che io l’ho ucciso. Io ho detto 'che cosa successo?' Lui dice: 'Io da trenta anni sono abituato che mi danno il calcio esattamente a questo punto, se me la danno a un altro punto io non ci casco giusto.' È come nel circo. Se loro al trapezio o quelli al salto mortale non danno giustamente gli anelli, o così, quello cade. Ho tremato durante il lavoro. Ho detto 'Dio! Sbaglio con Ferruccio!' Anche se gli dai un colpo sulla schiena era tutto calcolato. Sembra facile, ma non è facile per niente. Soprattutto per un acrobata come Ferruccio Soleri.” (Jonasson, Personal interview)
In all likelihood Soleri's and Mauri's advice and directions were informed by their experience in developing a precise gestural vocabulary, stylized demeanour and modulations of vocal and physical rhythms for masked performance.

The role Mauri and Soleri assumed in rehearsal indicates how significant masks and masked performers were in the Farewell Edition. Two other observations can be made on the matter. One concerns the function of masks in the production. The smooth, rigid and ageless traits of the leather masks highlighted the physical maturity of the players who acted bare-face. During the performance, the audience could forget the age of the masked performers, but was always reminded of the other players' maturity. “[The mask] hides my age. I am now more than fifty years old,” Soleri confessed to a journalist, “If I showed my face, no one would believe in this [older] Arlecchino! The mask can also hide some moments of physical fatigue, [or] relaxation of the face.”25 (quoted in Capitini) On various occasions during the performance, however, the actors in the role of Pantalone, Brighella, Dottore and Arlecchino lifted their masks and observed their colleagues from the wings. In those moments, the public realized that the agile and energetic masked characters were in fact performed by middle-aged actors. Displaying ageing faces was part of the performance. The contrast between the rigid traits of the masks and the players' wrinkled visage generated surprise, admiration and melancholy among the public. As critic Ugo Ronfani observed:

Then the young man lifted the black, “cat-like,” leather mask, and the face of Ferruccio Soleri appeared, with sparse white hair. Even Enzo Tarascio, the verbose doctor, Ettore Conti, the choleric Pantalone, and Gianfranco Mauri, the stuttering Brighella, lifted their noses and masks, [and] showed the audience “the abandonment to age and fatigue”: and then yes, without a word, we were overcome

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25 My translation of: “Mi nasconde l'età. Sono ormai più di cinquanta... Se mostrassi il mio volto, nessuno crederebbe a quell'Arlecchino! La maschera può anche nascondere certi momenti di stanchezza fisica, un rilassamento del viso...” (Soleri quoted in Capitini)
with emotion; we said farewell, with Arlecchino, to a part of our life.26 (“Ora Arlecchino”)

Strehler arguably used the masks in the 1987 production to create a distancing effect articulated on the contrast between rigid masks and wrinkled faces, between ageless fictional characters and mortal performers. By creating this effect, Strehler stood for the potential of his actors who could still play physically demanding roles despite their age. The manipulation of the masks and the revelation of the actors' face was also a metaphor for the Piccolo Teatro's age and for the age of Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play. As Frigerio noted, “[...] behind the masks, under the thick make-up and the old costumes, all the old actors reappear after many years and many adventures in the theatre. [...] forty years of theatre and life are told in the candlelight of Poetry.”27 (“Tutti i colori”)

A second observation on the role of masks in the production concerns how many theatre critics perceived the masked performers, especially Ferruccio Soleri. Several articles, such as Gabriella Monticelli's “Duemila volte Arlecchino,” Carlo Rosati's “Quaranta anni di Arlecchino: quaranta anni di 'Piccolo'” and Carlo Capitini's “Soleri, servitore di un padrone: Arlecchino,” feature extensive interviews with Soleri. Only one article focuses on Agostino Contarello (Pantalone in the production), and no review speaks at length of the other performers. The emphasis theatre critics put on Soleri's interpretation of Arlecchino, his skills as a Commedia performer, and the longevity of his career elevated him to the rank of sole star of Strehler's production. “One actor, Ferruccio Soleri, who perpetuates a legend: namely that of a masked

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26 My translation of: “Allora il ragazzo si è tolto la maschera di cuoio nero, 'a gatto', ed è apparso il volto di Ferruccio Soleri, coi radi capelli bianchi. Anche Enzo Tarascio, il dottor sputasentenze, Ettore Conti, collerico Pantalone, e Gianfranco Mauri, farfugliante Brighella, si son levati nasoni e maschere, hanno mostrato alla ribalta 'il consentimento all'età e la stanchezza': e allora si, senza retorica, la commozione si è impadronita di noi; abbiamo detto addio, con Arlecchino, a un pezzo della nostra vita.' (Ronfani, “Ora Arlecchino”)

27 My translation of: “[...] dietro alle maschere, sotto il pesante trucco e i vecchi costumi, gli attori di sempre si ritrovano, dopo tanti anni e tante avventure a fare teatro. [...] sono quarant'anni di teatro e di vita raccontati al lume di candela della poesia.” (Frigerio, “Tutti i colori”)
character and of a Theatre, the ‘piccolo,’ both of which have become a point of reference and [a source of] pride on our stage; our Comédie-Italienne”28 (“Quaranta anni”) – thus Carlo Rosati celebrated Arlecchino-Soleri in his review of the play. He and the other critics listed above clearly presented Soleri as the embodiment of Arlecchino and the Commedia tradition in contemporary Italy; they implied that with the end of Strehler's production and Soleri's retirement from his role, acting techniques with Commedia masks would likely disappear, and Italian theatre would lose its flagship around the world.

Masks and masked performers therefore played three key roles in Strehler's Farewell Edition of The Servant of Two Masters. First, at least two masked performers used their knowledge, skills and vision of Commedia in performance to instruct their peers, especially the new actress in the production. Then, the leather masks and the way players manipulated them highlighted the age of bare-faced actors, made a plea for the potential of the Piccolo's mature performers, and recalled earlier productions of Goldoni's play. Masks thus instilled a nostalgic atmosphere to the show. Finally, the masked performers in the production, and especially Ferruccio Soleri, arguably stood for a recovered national theatrical tradition, at least as far as theatre critics were concerned.

To this day (2012 at the time of writing), a special aura still surrounds Strehler's seventh staging of The Servant of Two Masters, which marked the end of the production performed by a cast of veteran actors. But the production in 1987 also announced renewal. As the Farewell Edition unfolded on stage, Strehler inaugurated his new theatre school, the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro. As he celebrated the “funerals” of a production, he was already imagining his

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28 My translation of: “Un attore, Ferruccio Soleri, che perpetua una leggenda: quella di una maschera e di un Teatro, il ‘Piccolo’, che sono divenuti un punto di riferimento e di orgoglio della nostra scena; la nostra Comédie-Italienne.” (Rosati)
next staging of Goldoni's play, this time with young actors who would soon graduate from his school.

4.2.3 8th production ("Edizione del Buongiorno") and 9th production ("Edizione del Bicentenario"): 1990 and 1993

Strehler's eighth production of The Servant of Two Masters premiered on October 26th 1990 at the Piccolo Teatro and is known as the "Edizione del Buongiorno." Thirty actors performed in it; twenty nine of them, aged between twenty and twenty-six, were former theatre students who had recently completed the three year programme at the nascent Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro (the Piccolo Teatro's acting school) (Manzoni). "This group," Strehler posited, "to which I gave the name, rich in responsibility, of 'the Piccolo Youth,' is our Acting School's first graduating class, dedicated to Jacques Copeau." ("Buongiorno 'Arlecchino'!" 89) The production, though it was part of the Piccolo Teatro's regular season, also constituted the cohort's saggio finale, its final examination. Due to the large number of students, each character of the play was performed by multiple actors. Strehler also chose to cast most actors in two or more roles. As a result of this decision, three actors played Pantalone; three, Dottore Lombardi; two, Silvio; five, Florindo; three, Brighella; one, a servant; one still, a porter; and four, a prompter. Three actresses played Clarice, eight interpreted Beatrice, and five were cast as Smeraldina. Among this youthful crowd stood actor Ferruccio Soleri, as Arlecchino. Soleri, who

29 To my knowledge, this staging has never been examined by scholars. No video recording of it is available to the researcher, and I therefore base my study on photographs kept at the Piccolo Teatro archives, on theatre reviews in Italian newspapers, on an archival video of the 1993 production (production that was closely modelled after that of 1990), on Strehler's note published in the production's programme, and on a series of interviews I conducted in May 2009, in Milan, with selected actors who worked on the production.

30 My translation of: "Questo gruppo al quale ho dato il nome, certo ricco di responsabilità, di 'I Giovani del Piccolo' è l'ex Primo Corso della nostra Scuola di Attori dedicato a Jacques Copeau." (Strehler “Buongiorno 'Arlecchino'!” 89)

31 The prompter is not in Goldoni's published play. Strehler first added this character in the production in 1956, and kept it ever since (see 4.1.2).
had been sole interpreter of this role at the Piccolo Teatro for almost thirty years, declared in an article on his experience in 1990: “Strehler says that ‘I am Arlecchino,’ but it is also true that we have not found any one among these young actors who was ready to interpret the role.”

(Soleri, “Il gioco continua”) Soleri was therefore the only senior player in the cast.

He and the twenty-nine student actors performed on a set designed by Ezio Frigerio, that closely resembled the one created for Strehler's 1987 staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* (see 4.2.2). The decor was minimal, candles were placed on the edge of the stage, two servants holding chandeliers signified a room in Pantalone's house, and three standing screens indicated Brighella's inn. The masks used in the production in 1990 were created by Donato Sartori and Natale Panaro. They were made of leather, following the mask-making technique and designs developed by Amleto Sartori in the 1950s (see chapter 3). These masks had several functions within the context of the production. First, they fulfilled the convention within the Commedia tradition of identifying a character with its mask and costume. Then, masks enabled the young actors to quickly transform into different characters. Masks also gave the illusion of an homogeneous cast since by covering the performers' face they also hid their age. Under the solid, ageless traits of Arlecchino's mask, Soleri blended into a large group of young players. Then, the masks displayed the physical skills of those who wore them. Masked performers needed to adopt a precise gestural vocabulary that relied heavily, though not exclusively, on basic mime techniques. By successfully interpreting masked characters, the student actors proved that they possessed a very particular set of skills that could be attractive to artistic directors, producers and other potential employers in the audience. The use of masks in the

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32 My translation of: “Nel personaggio di Arlecchino mi calo ancora io. Strehler dice che ‘Arlecchino sono io’, ma è vero anche che non abbiamo trovato nessuno di questi ragazzi pronto ad interpretarlo. Se l'avessimo trovato... Forse un giorno si ripeterà il passaggio di testimone che ci fu tra Marcello Moretti e me.” (Soleri, “Il gioco continua”) This passage, taken from the article “Il gioco continua,” follows Giacoma Debenedetti's review of the production published in *Spettacoli a Milano* on October 1st 1990 (see bibliography).
production finally revealed that at least one aspect of Strehler's vision of the Commedia dell'Arte remained very conservative. In Commedia, masked characters are generally male and are performed by men, while female protagonists are usually interpreted by women, bare-faced. Of all of Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play, that of 1990 perhaps offered the best occasion to cast actresses in masked roles since its premise was based on the multiplication of the same characters, on competition, and on confusion, as we shall see below. Despite the fact that the cast was made of twelve men and seventeen women in a play that numbered only three female characters, Strehler adopted a conventional model of role distribution. This choice reveals that Strehler's vision of the woman's place in the Commedia dell'Arte remained traditional, in spite of his re-imagining of Commedia for the twentieth century. Masks were still men's business.

The production's thirty players, acting either with or without a mask, did not gather on stage all at once. While some performers acted on the proscenium stage, others, the characters' doubles, stood or sat in the wings or in front of the stage, at the same floor level as the spectators (see fig. 12). Two stories therefore unfolded simultaneously. On stage, the student actors played Commedia characters in Goldoni's story, while off stage and in the wings, they represented fictional members of three or four Commedia dell'Arte companies, competing for the stage, waiting for an occasion to substitute for another player and grab everybody's attention. The rivalry between these fictional companies increased as the show progressed, and culminated when actors jumped on stage, refused to leave it and proceeded to act Goldoni's play with their character's doubles (see fig. 13). In the final scene, for example, Arlecchino was surrounded by many incarnations of the same character. As critic Giovani Raboni describes it:

[...] the entire production proceeds of a crescendo of playful discoveries and “competition” [that operates] on two levels: Goldoni's story [...] and the exhilarating and almost menacing agitation, all around, of the various characters' “doubles” competing for the stage, with their ever less suppressed rivalry for earning space and attention, their incursions on stage, their comic yet sometimes pathetic and finally
desperate attempts to cling on to the stage: until the magnificent last scene where Arlecchino is constrained, in order to obtain the hand of one of the multiplied Smeraldinas, to implore the help of two Beatrices and two Florindos and the consent of two Clarices...33 (“Arlecchino trionfa”)

Strehler later explained that at a certain point in the creation process, the performers and himself decided that there would be moments in the production when spectators should not recognize who was playing what role, and that unity as well as “moral and professional dedication” should emanate from the production (“Buongiorno 'Arlecchino'!” 90). In other words, the double story performed on and off stage and the confusion generated by the duplication of roles aimed at displaying the importance of collective work over individual performances.

This orchestrated confusion presented Arlecchino, the only character that had not been duplicated, as the sanest and stablest character on stage. He appeared as though fighting to remain in the eye of a hurricane of gestures, words and changes that grew ever bigger as the production progressed. As we know, in Goldoni's play, Arlecchino is the most agitated character since, attracted by the prospect of earning twice his usual amount of food and money, he duplicates himself by creating an alter-ego, Pasqual, and then serves two masters at once. The precarious situations in which Arlecchino finds himself in the play are the result of his own doing. However, in Strehler's 1990 production, Arlecchino's misfortunes are generated by an environment that has gone wild, an environment where masters are multiplied while their concerns, needs and struggles are blown out of proportion. The growing hysteria on the proscenium stage comments on the social iniquities between working and upper classes, the

33 My translation of: “[...] l'intera rappresentazione procede, in un crescendo di trovate ludiche e 'agonistiche', su due binari: il racconto goldoniano [...] e l'agitarsi esilarante quasi minaccioso, tutt'intorno, dei vari 'doppi' dei personaggi in attesa di guadagnarsi la scena, con le loro lottte sempre meno soffocate per contendersi spazio e attenzione, le loro scorribande in platea, il loro comico ma anche, a tratti, patetico e fin disperato aggrapparsi al proscenio: fino alla magnifica scena finale in cui Arlecchino è costretto, per ottenere la mano di una moltiplicata Smeraldina, a implorare l'aiuto di due Beatrici e di due Florindi e il consenso di due Clarici...” (Raboni)
former at the mercy of the latter. This directing choice reflects a socialist ideology, which
Strehler had officially served not only in the theatre, but also in a parallel, and yet
complementary, political career.\textsuperscript{34} Then, the ferocious competition between the fictional
Commedia companies perhaps alluded to a reality of the theatre market Goldoni's players might
have experienced and humorously foresaw what the student actors in the production could
expect from the professional world.

Ferruccio Soleri's function in this frenetic production was that of a mentor and anchor.
Having performed in the play for almost three decades, he provided the rest of the cast with a
model of acting style and acted as the barometer for the energy level on stage.

Strehler said that my presence on stage would be a great help for them [the other
actors]. [...] This is how, for the first time, I had to think of Arlecchino not only as
my role, but also as an opportunity to help, encourage and support young people
who started to walk in my footsteps. [...]  
[...] I then found myself to be not only the sole reference to the tradition of
[Strehler's] Arlecchino on stage, but also the equilibrator of the interpretations of the
same character by actors who differed in personality, temperament and ability. It
was essential that, in spite of everything, there be in the show a unitary rhythm, a
common breath.\textsuperscript{35} (Soleri, “Servo vostro”)

By putting Soleri in the middle of a student cast, Strehler secured the transmission of his vision
of the Commedia dell'Arte from one generation to the next. Indeed, Soleri had drawn from

\textsuperscript{34} Strehler's political trajectory within Italian and European governing bodies is not easy to follow in the available
literature about him. In 1978, Strehler apparently participated in the Congress of the Socialist Party in Lille
(Aslan et al., Strehler 374). In 1979, as a member of the Socialist Party of Italy, he likely represented Italy at
Strehler 374). Strehler was elected senator of the Italian Republic in 1983, either as a representative of the
Communist Party, as suggested by Stella Casiraghi (226), or perhaps as a member of the Socialist Party, as
suggested in the online archives of the European Parliament, which identify Strehler as a Socialist deputy in the
European Parliament from September 26\textsuperscript{th} 1983 to July 23\textsuperscript{rd} 1984. Strehler was reelected senator in 1987, this
time, it appears, as a member of the Sinistra Indipendente (literally “Independent Left”). What is certain is that
from 1978 to 1989, at least, Strehler was active in politics at a national and international level.

\textsuperscript{35} My translation of: “Strehler aggiunse che la mia presenza in scena sarebbe stata per loro di grande aiuto. [...] Per
la prima volta ho così dovuto pensare ad Arlecchino non solo come ad un mio ruolo di attore, ma anche in
quanto possibilità di aiuto, incoraggiamento e sostegno per dei giovani che iniziavano la mia stessa strada. [...]  
[...] Mi sono così trovato a essere in scena non solo l'unico riferimento alla tradizione dell'Arlecchino ma anche
l'equilibratore delle interpretazioni dello stesso personaggio da parte di attori diversi per personalità,
temperamento, capacità. Era indispensabile che nonostante tutto, nello spettacolo ci fosse un ritmo unitario, un
respiro comune.” (Soleri, “Servo vostro”)
Strehler his interpretation of Arlecchino, his understanding of Goldoni's play and his vision of the Commedia dell'Arte, and this is what he would pass on to novices. “It was while working with him [Strehler],” Soleri claimed, “that I understood what was Arlecchino [referring to Goldoni's play] and what the Commedia dell'Arte had been well beyond the books I had read. [...] I owe my Arlecchino to Strehler, who gave me everything.”36 (“Arlecchino, la mia vita” 33)

Soleri was not alone in coaching the young actors in the production; Strehler specified that Giulia Lazzarini, Franco Graziosi, Andrea Jonasson and Gianfranco Mauri should also help in rehearsal, thus replicating a centuries-old actor-training process: the transmission of knowledge from masters to apprentices (“Buongiorno ‘Arlecchino’” 89). “The actors of Arlecchino, all of them, those of yesterday and those of centuries ago, pass down a heritage to a group of youngsters and, on stage or from the wings, they follow, smiling, those who repeat the old lazzi, rediscover and transform the old plots, and make them theirs.”37 (Ibid.) Strehler's efforts to pass on his vision of the Commedia tradition was obvious in the rehearsal process that led to the production in 1990, but these efforts had already begun behind closed doors, at his newly founded Scuola di Attori.

The Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro was founded in 1986 and welcomed its first students in 1987. That year, Strehler announced that his next staging of The Servant of Two Masters would be interpreted by the school’s first graduating cohort. Strehler had already created a first acting school in 1951 known both as Scuola del Piccolo Teatro and Scuola Civica d’Arte Drammatica,38 which, by 1987, was no longer attached to the Piccolo Teatro. Among the faculty

36 My translation of: “È stato lavorando con lui che ho capito cosa era Arlecchino e cosa era stata la Commedia dell'Arte ben al di là dei libri che avevo letto. [...] Il mio Arlecchino lo devo proprio a Strehler, che mi ha dato tutto. (Soleri, “Arlecchino, la mia vita” 33)
37 My translation of: “Gli attori dell'Arlecchino, tutti, quelli di ieri e quelli di secoli fa, lasciano in mano ad un gruppo di giovanissimi la loro eredità e, in quinta o in platea, li seguono sorridendo mentre essi ripetono i vecchi lazzi, ritrovano le vecchie situazioni e le trasformano, le fanno loro.” (Strehler, “Buongiorno 'Arlecchino'!” 89)
38 This first school now exists under the name of Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi.
employed in 1987 were Marise Flach and Ferruccio Soleri. Flach had arrived at the Piccolo Teatro in 1953 as Etienne Decroux's assistant. Decroux had been hired by Strehler and Grassi to teach movement at the first Piccolo Teatro school, and to fill the position Jacques Lecoq had just vacated. Lecoq, then a young mime, movement and physical educator, had been employed at the school in 1951. Two years later, believing he would sign a contract in Paris with Jean-Louis Barrault, he unexpectedly left Milan, leaving no assistant to take his place. In an interview conducted in May 2009, Flach remembered that Decroux agreed to replace Lecoq because a tour of one of his productions had recently been cancelled. While Decroux returned to Paris after a year, Flach remained in Milan and continued to collaborate with the Piccolo Teatro. In 1987, she became the movement and mime instructor at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro. Her teaching methods were based on guided improvisation and on mime techniques, and she used masks, especially neutral masks, as pedagogical tools, which both Decroux and Jacques Lecoq had already started to use at the Piccolo Teatro in the early 1950s. Actor Giorgio Bongiovanni, who attended the school from 1987 to 1990 and played both Pantalone and Brighella in Strehler's “Edizione del Buongiorno” reported that working with neutral masks with Marise Flach taught him to communicate laughter, melancholy and various other emotions and actions without using facial expressions. This work prepared him to learn Commedia dell'Arte acting techniques and style. In his words:

Because she came from the French school of mime, [Flach] also taught us many exercises with the neutral mask. This mask covers the face completely, while Commedia dell'Arte masks are half-masks that leave the mouth free and therefore available for expression. The neutral mask hides the whole face and has an absolutely “neutral” expression. [...] With the neutral mask, the actors need to give an expression to the mask. They need to make it laugh, cry, be melancholic... in short, [the actors give to those masks] all the different expressions. We studied this with Marise Flach as well. Thanks to this work, either with Marise or with Ferruccio,

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39 This information comes from letters of personal correspondence between Lecoq and Grassi. The letters are kept at the Piccolo Teatro archives.
it has become easier to use the mask. And with the years, it has become very
difficult to perform Commedia dell'Arte without it since [using the mask] is much
like speaking another language, a foreign language (Bongiovanni, Personal
interview).  

While Flach taught movement and mime techniques at the school, Ferruccio Soleri
taught Commedia dell'Arte. “In fact,” Soleri revealed, “since the [school's] first year, Strehler
has asked me to teach Commedia dell'Arte, because it's a good training for a young actor: it
requires vocal [and] gestural skills, strength, lung power, [and] agility."  
Soleri introduced the students to Commedia characters and masked performance, probably
using Sartori's masks and undoubtedly drawing from his thirty year experience in The Servant of
Two Masters. Like Flach, he strongly based his teaching on basic mime techniques. With Soleri,
students learned that when a masked character looks in one direction, not only the actor's eyes,
but also his head, must turn in that direction. In other words, a masked character looks with the
entire face. Students had already worked with Flach on looking in the mask and moving the
head accordingly, but with Soleri they apparently rehearsed head movements until they became
automatic and attained utmost precision. Like Flach, Soleri also taught how to express
emotional and physical states with body postures and gestures. In order to show hunger, he
explained to me in interview, the masked performer can, for example, touch his stomach; the
head slightly inclined on one side can indicate tenderness; fear is shown by bringing the mask

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40 My translation of parts of a personal interview conducted with Giorgio Bongiovanni at the Piccolo Teatro of
Milan in May 2009: “Perché provenendo da la scuola francese di mimo [Flach] cioè ha fatto fare anche molti
esercizi con la maschera neutra. La maschera neutra è una maschera che copre completamente la faccia, tutta,
mentre le maschere della Commedia dell'Arte sono mezza maschera, lasciano la bocca libera e quindi questo
può servire per l'espressione. La maschera neutra chiude tutta la faccia e ha una espressione assolutamente
"neutra". [...] Con la maschera neutra gli attori devono dare l'espressione alla maschera. Quindi devono fare
ridere la maschera o piangere la maschera, essere malinconico... in somma, tutte le varie espressioni. È uno
studio che abbiamo anche fatto con la Marise Flach. Grazie a questo studio, sia con Marisa o con Ferruccio,
dopo diventa più semplice utilizzare la maschera, e a dirittura con gli anni diventa anche molto difficile fare la
Commedia dell'Arte senza la maschera perché proprio è un altro linguaggio, è come parlare in un altra lingua.”
(Bongiovanni, Personal interview)

41 My translation of: “Infatti Strehler già dal primo anno mi fa insegnare la Commedia dell'Arte, perché è una
buona scuola per un giovane: ci vogliono abilità vocale, gestuale, forza, fiato, agilità.” (Soleri quoted in Si. Ba.)
backward, and attraction by bringing it forward, towards the object of interest. Such indications, as technical as they seem, first resulted from an exploration Soleri conducted with Strehler in rehearsal (see 4.1.4). Soleri's pedagogical methods and teaching material were also undoubtedly influenced by Flach's presence at the Piccolo Teatro, by Strehler's admiration for Decroux, by the Europe-wide popularity of Marcel Marceau at the time, by Strehler's collaboration with Lecoq in his early career, and by Strehler's exploration of masked performance with Marcello Moretti in the 1950s. By the end of his acting training, and with time, Giorgio Bongiovanni explained, it felt impossible to play Commedia dell'Arte without a mask since training the body for the mask had been like learning a foreign language, Commedia's language.

It is this language, among other things, that the student actors in the 1990 production showed to the general public and to a crowd of internationally renowned theatre educators. While the first cohort of his theatre school performed *The Servant of Two Masters*, Strehler organized a pan-European symposium on actors' training. Among those expected to attend the symposium were representatives from the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro, the Civica Scuola D'Arte Drammatica “Paolo Grassi” (now also known as Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi), the school of the Royal Shakespeare company and that of the Moscow Art Theatre, the National Conservatory of Paris (known in France as the “Conservatoire national supérieur d'art dramatique”), Budapest's Katona Theatre, the Berliner Ensemble, Bucarest's Bulandra Theatre, and the Accademia nazionale d'arte drammatica “Silvio D'Amico” (Garassini). Lecoq, whom Strehler had consulted prior to creating his acting schools (in 1951 and in 1986), as well as Marie-Hélène Dasté and Orazio Costa were also expected to partake in the discussion (*Ibid.*). The symposium's objective, Stefania Garassini explained, was to “provide a complete panorama
of the actor's training methods."^{42} ("Buon giorno Arlecchino") This event, paired with the performance of *The Servant of Two Masters* by student actors, presented Strehler as a theatre educator on the same level as some of the top iconic figures of European contemporary theatre pedagogy. It also marketed his school as one of the rare institutions featuring courses of masked performance in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition that were based on a master/apprentice model and taught by an established Commedia actor, Soleri.

In 1993, Strehler remounted *The Servant of Two Masters*. This new staging, his ninth production of Goldoni's play also known as “Edizione del Bicentenario,” was modelled after the “Edizione del Buongiorno.” The cast of both productions was similar and roles were multiplied, with the exception of Soleri's, who remained sole interpreter of Arlecchino. The main difference between the 1990 staging and that of 1993 was the performance space; the former production was performed on the Piccolo Teatro's proscenium stage of via Rovello (see 4.2.4) while the latter was designed for the three year old Teatro Studio in Milan, a flexible space that had been configured as an arena for the occasion. Actors were performing at the same floor level as the first row of spectators. The decor consisted of only a few benches, chandeliers and night tables.

An archival video recording of this production reveals that the atmosphere of the 1993 production was, like that of 1990, youthful and frantic. The story told on stage as well as the use of masks were similar to those of 1990. However, because the “Edizione del Bicentenario” was produced three years after the students had graduated from the Scuola di Attori, the actors' general skill and confidence level had likely improved.

In retrospect, the 1990 and 1993 stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro represents an undeniable aspect of Strehler's legacy to contemporary Italian theatre since

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^{42} My translation of a part of this sentence: “Scopo dei quattro giorni di lavoro è fornire un panorama completo dei metodi di formazione dell’attore.” (Garassini)
they consolidated and transmitted forty years of research on Goldoni in performance, mask
work, and the Commedia dell'Arte tradition to a new generation of actors. These productions
and the pedagogical process that led to them also secured the longevity of Strehler's stagings of
Goldoni's play, since they trained a new distribution that could lead the production into the
twenty-first century.

4.2.4 10th production: 1997

Arlecchino [Servant of Two Masters] is an extraordinary
event in the history of world theatre. This show has
accompanied us all our life, renewing itself time after time.
Hundreds of actors performed in it. Some spectators have
seen it at its earliest stages. Then, years later, they have seen
it being revived. Others, still, have recognized it in Italy or
around the world... Today these same spectators and others
will see it again, on the occasion of our anniversary.43
(Strehler, “L’Arlecchino è un fatto straordinario” 92)

This last section of chapter 4 part 2, dedicated to describing and analyzing Strehler's
successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters, examines Strehler's tenth and last production
of that play. This production premiered on the 14th of May 1997, exactly fifty years after the
Piccolo Teatro's inauguration, and celebrated the theatre's anniversary. Most of the cast was
young, had trained at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro, and had already performed in
Strehler's 1990 and 1993 productions of Goldoni's play (see 4.2.3). Two actors in the production,
however, were veteran players who had performed in The Servant of Two Masters for several
decades. One of them, Gianfranco Mauri, played Brighella, a role he had already assumed at the
Piccolo Teatro from 1956 to 1968, from 1973 to 1979, and from 1984 to 1988. The other veteran

43 My translation of: “L’Arlecchino è un fatto straordinario nella storia del teatro mondiale. Questo spettacolo ci ha
accompagnato per tutta la vita, rinnovandosi volta per volta. Centinaia di attori lo hanno recitato. Ci sono degli
spettatori che l'hanno visto nascere, poi, anni dopo, l'hanno visto rinascere; dopo altri, l'hanno riconosciuto in
Italia o nel mondo... Oggi questi stessi spettatori ed altri ancora lo rivedranno, in occasione del nostro
anniversario.” (Strehler, “L’Arlecchino è un fatto straordinario” 92)
player among the cast was Ferruccio Soleri, who remained the production's Arlecchino, despite
the publicized announcement that another actor, Paolo Rossi, would soon succeed him. An
article in Primafila indeed advertized, “[The production is] An occasion to remember the
historic actor [who first played Arlecchino at the Piccolo Teatro], the fabulous Marcello Moretti,
who [re]invented the 'mask' in our time, and to applaud his extremely active and excellent
successor, Ferruccio Soleri. [...] During the performances, the baton will pass to Paolo Rossi.”
(“Il cartellone”) Another article, this time published in Il manifesto, also announced “The [main]
protagonist remains Ferruccio Soleri (pending the announced new Arlecchino of Paolo Rossi),
Brighella remains Gianfranco Mauri, but all other actors are young [graduates] from the
Piccolo's School.” (Ponte di Pino) This awaited transmission of the role from Soleri to Rossi,
however, never happened. Spectators would have to wait until the early 2000s to see Arlecchino
being performed in alternation between Soleri and his chosen successor, Enrico Bonavera.

Mauri and Soleri, Strehler implied in the production's programme, did not only perform
in the production in 1997, but also helped staging it (“L'Arlecchino è un fatto staordinario” 93).
This suggests that by the late 1990s, Strehler had decided to pass on some directorial
responsibilities for The Servant of Two Masters to long-lasting collaborators who, by then, knew
his vision of Commedia dell'Arte, had already mentored young actors in this tradition, could
remain somewhat faithful to Strehler's ideas on Commedia, and were equipped to carry his
production of Goldoni's play into the following years. There was therefore a sense of continuity,

44 Here, “mask” stands for the character, Arlecchino.
45 My translation of: “Un'occasione per ricordare l'interprete storico, il favoloso Marcello Moretti, inventore della
'maschera' nella nostra epoca, e per applaudire il suo attivissimo ed eccellente successore, Ferruccio Soleri
(nella foto). Duante [sic] le repliche il testimone passerà a Paolo Rossi.” (“Il cartellone”)
46 My translation of: “Protagonista resta Ferruccio Soleri (in attesa dell'annunciato nuovo Arlecchino di Paolo
Rossi), Brighella resta Gianfranco Mauri, ma tutti gli altri attori sono giovani usciti dalla Scuola del Piccolo.”
(Ponte di Pino)
transmission of a legacy and role transfer within the directorial process leading to the production.  

The production's opening night – which was part of the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary gala evening – was also included in the theme of continuity since it took place on the Piccolo Teatro's historical stage of via Rovello, where Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play premiered in 1947. “[We staged the production on the Piccolo Teatro's historical stage] because this space vibrates with history,” Strehler declared in the programme, “Countless memories are clinging on to the walls, the rooms are inhabited; in each seat sat someone dear to us, waiting or listening.” ("L'Arlecchino' è un fatto straordinario" 93) The production's opening night also re-imagined the Piccolo Teatro's inaugural evening since it ended with a performance of Mozart's Eine kleine Nachtmusik, a piece that closed the theatre's opening night in 1947 (Provvedini). But The Servant of Two Masters had not been the first play to be performed at the Piccolo Teatro; Gorki's The Lower Depths had opened the theatre's first season while Goldoni's play had closed it. However, rather than using Gorki's play in his re-imagination of the Piccolo Teatro's inaugural evening, Strehler remounted The Servant of Two Masters. This decision connected the Piccolo Teatro's history, longevity and success with Strehler's successive

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47 The responsibility transfer to collaborators perhaps also reveals Strehler's attempt to finally part with the production. Indeed, in an interview conducted in 2009, Piccolo Teatro's chief archivist Franco Viespro affirmed that Strehler liked Goldoni's reformed plays best, and that his successive productions of The Servant of Two Masters were almost a "curse."

48 This theme is not new to the production and can be traced throughout the history of Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play. Strehler himself used the word “continuity” to describe his work with The Servant of Two Masters. In the 1954 production programme, for example, Strehler posited “[...] The Servant of Two Masters [...] has become, little by little, the ideal sign of continuity of our work as well as our banner.” (Strehler “Un segno di continuità” 62) Strehler's note in the 1954 programme was also, unsurprisingly, titled “Un segno di continuità” (A Sign of Continuity). This title has later been used by various scholars and theatre critics to qualify Strehler's other productions of Goldoni's play at the Piccolo Teatro and to describe Strehler's journey with the play.

* My translation of: “[...] Il servitore di due padroni di Carlo Goldoni [...] è diventato, a poco a poco, il segno della continuità ideale del nostro lavoro e al tempo stesso una bandiera.” (Strehler “Un segno di continuità” 62)

49 My translation of: “[...] perché in quel luogo palpitava la storia. Ai muri sono aggrappati infiniti ricordi, le stanze sono abitate; in ogni poltrona si è seduta una figura cara in attesa o in ascolto.” (Strehler, “L’Arlecchino’ è un fatto straordinario” 93)
stagings of Goldoni's play. In other words, Strehler used his newest production of *The Servant of Two Masters* as the symbol of his theatre.

The place of Strehler's tenth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* within the context of the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary gala\(^50\) reveals not only the production's symbolic value but also expresses Strehler’s vision for the future of Piccolo Teatro and points to some of Strehler’s frustrations with municipal politics at the time. The new staging summarized and advertized the Piccolo Teatro's multidisciplinary agenda; it highlighted the long lasting success of an artistic product (the production of Goldoni's play at the Piccolo Teatro), of a school (which had trained most actors in the production) and of a publicly administrated theatre (which, by 1997, was famous worldwide). The exhibition of the Piccolo Teatro's artistic, educational and public mandate through Strehler's staging of Goldoni's play was not only destined for the general public, but for the culturally, politically and financially influential guests who attended the production's opening night. Among them, critic Claudia Provvedini reveals, were celebrated actors such as Valentina Cortese, Andrea Jonasson, Eva Magni, Ernesto Calindri, and Giancarlo Dettori; fashion designers such as Krizia (that is Mariuccia Mandelli), Marta Marzotto, and Mila Schön; other cultural figures such as theatre director Guido De Monticelli, writer Vincenzo Consolo, and visual artist Emilio Tadini; publishers, namely Inge Feltrinelli, Gabriele Mazzotta, and Roberto Calasso; politician and writer Mario Capanna; and entrepreneurs Ennio Presutti and Massimo Moratti (“Cosi Arlecchino”). Vincenzo Salafia (from Milan's Court of Appeal) and Milan's mayor Gabriele Albertini\(^51\) were also in the audience (*Ibid.*). Arguably, Strehler's presentation of his theatre's immediate and long-term agenda to such a highly connected

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\(^{50}\) In her insightful article “Piccolo Teatro: la cultura oltre il palcoscenico,” Luisella Carnelli specifies that the public celebrations of the Piccolo Teatro's anniversaries were moments during which the artistic and administrative bodies of this theatre reflected on their stylistic and administrative goals, evaluated the efficiency of their financial and artistic strategies, and examined future courses of actions (149).

\(^{51}\) For a more complete guest list, I will refer the reader to Claudia Provvedini's “Cosi Arlecchino strega il Piccolo cinquantennne.” (see bibliography).
assembly and through his newest staging of The Servant of Two Masters was politically, artistically and financially motivated, as we shall see in what follows.

The choice of physical space in which the production was to be performed was also, to some extent, politically motivated. By 1997, the Piccolo Teatro had three venues: the Piccolo Teatro historical stage of via Rovello, inaugurated in 1947; the Teatro Studio, which was inaugurated in 1986 and shared the same building as Strehler's theatre school; and a third theatre space, now known as Teatro Strehler, which had been under construction since the early 1980s, was only recently available for use and, by 1997, still to be officially inaugurated. The city of Milan had agreed to finance the construction of this new building for the Piccolo Teatro's use. This venue was an essential element of Strehler's vision for what he called the “Nuovo Piccolo Teatro” (literally “New Piccolo Teatro”). In order to realize this vision, Strehler articulated a plan that extended from 1997 to 2000. This project was called “Progetto 2000.” It was twofold: (1) the Piccolo Teatro would produce theatre from across Europe, including productions in languages other than Italian and staged by various leading European directors; (2) the Piccolo Teatro would also be a leading European institute of theatre education that would provide its students with a laboratory space to develop their craft and present their work to a broad audience (Strehler, “Progetto 2000” 211). Arguably, Strehler considered that the Progetto 2000 would not be possible without the legislative and financial support of the State and the city, and without the new, promised venue: the Teatro Strehler (Strehler, “Progetto 2000” 215). In 1996 however, the city's administration ended its support of the construction of this venue, a decision that jeopardized the theatre's financial future and stirred quarrels between the city's administrators and Strehler. These quarrels arguably motivated Strehler's resignation as the Piccolo Teatro's

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52 For a more complete overview of the Piccolo Teatro's various theatre spaces from 1947 to 2002, I will refer the reader to Francesca Vigna's article “Dietro il sipario: il difficile equilibrio tra arte e tecnologia” (see bibliography).
director; Jack Lang succeeded him (Carnelli 152). Strehler's decision to celebrate the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary by staging its most popular production at via Rovello and not in the newly built Teatro Strehler was in part justified by the production's history, as Strehler mentioned in the programme in 1997 (“L'Arlecchino' è un fatto straordinario” 93). But this choice was also a stand against Milan's cultural policies, a stand that, as Luisella Carnelli suggests, vexed the city's administrators and generated further financial cuts. She explains:

The relationships with the local institutions, and with the city council in particular, worsened when Strehler, for the [Piccolo Teatro's] anniversary gala, decided to stage Arlecchino Servant of Two Masters in the historical venue of via Rovello, and not in the new theatre. In April, the mayor revoked his contribution of one billion and a hundred million [lire to the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary celebrations], the entire event seemed to be on the verge of an inevitable collapse, until Giorgio Fantoni, Electa's former editor, made a donation to compensate for the city's withdrawal of financial support.53 (“Piccolo Teatro” 152-153)

By staging The Servant of Two Masters at via Rovello, for the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary gala, and in the midst of financial uncertainties, Strehler reminded the Milanese public, the city's administration, and the gala evening guests of what the Piccolo Teatro and himself had given them, perhaps in the hope to pressure the city council and secure further public funding. Strehler's tenth staging of Goldoni's play was therefore a symbol of and a plea for the continuity of the Piccolo Teatro's artistic, pedagogical, and public mandates.54

On stage, the thematic of continuity was reflected in Ezio Frigerio's scenography, which closely resembled that of 1987. This choice reminded an older generation of spectators of the

53 My translation of: “I rapporti con gli enti locali, e in particolare con la giunta comunale peggiorano quando Strehler, per la sera di gala dell'anniversario, decide di fare rappresentare Arlecchino servitore di due padroni nella sede storica di via Rovello, e non nella nuova sede: nel mese di aprile il sindaco revoca il finanziamento di un miliardo e cento milioni, tutta la manifestazione sembra sull'orlo di un inevitabile collasso, senonché Giorgio Fantoni, ex editore dell'Electa, sopprima al mancato finanziamento del comune con una donazione.” (Carnelli 152-153)

54 For more ample information on the evolution of the Piccolo Teatro's multidisciplinary vision, for a fuller discussion on the Piccolo Teatro's relationship with the city of Milan, and for detailed information on the physical spaces of the Piccolo Teatro from 1947 to 1997, I will refer the reader to a collection of articles published in Il Piccolo Teatro di Milano edited by Livia Cavaglieri (see bibliography).
successful Farewell Edition and introduced a younger audience to the production's history. While no major changes were made to the set, the lighting design was slightly modified; blue tight spotlights and follow spots were inserted in the production.\textsuperscript{55} The purpose of this addition, Claudio De Pace remarked in an interview, was to highlight the festive nature of the production.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, coloured tight spotlights and follow spots arguably alluded to outdoor performances at fairs, to stand-up comedy and, perhaps most importantly, to contemporary circus arts, where these lighting devices are often used to direct the spectators' attention towards the skillful performers as they execute their perilous acts.\textsuperscript{57} Significantly, an archival video recording of a 1999 performance of the 1997 production kept in the Piccolo Teatro's archives\textsuperscript{58} reveals that the tight spotlights often illuminated masked characters exclusively. This illumination was not random; a tight blue spotlight was shedding light on the masked characters when they performed particularly lengthy and elaborate \textit{lazzi}. For example, at the beginning of the second act of the play, blue tight spotlights were directed at Dottore and Pantalone as they engaged in an argument that Strehler staged through a succession of gags. These gags were articulated around gestural and vocal transformation. For example, in the midst of his quarrel with Pantalone in act 2 scene 2, Dottore slowly modified his posture and breathing to resemble those of a bull, and then charged his opponent. This action momentarily changed the fictional setting of the scene; the characters in the play seemed to have been transported from Venice to a...

\textsuperscript{55} It is not clear whether Strehler only used one blue tight follow spotlight, or if he used two or more blue spotlights, at least one of them a tight follow spot, at various moments during the show.

\textsuperscript{56} I conducted a personal interview with Claudio De Pace at the Piccolo Teatro of Milan in May 2009.

\textsuperscript{57} On this point see Julie Boudreault's insightful doctoral thesis on circus arts “Les Nouveaux cirques : Rupture ou continuité?”, and especially to pages 233 to 239, where she surveys the evolution of lighting design in circus productions from the late 1700s to the late 1900s (see bibliography). See also Agnès Perron's \textit{Dictionnaire de la langue du cirque : des mots dans la sciure}, especially her entry on the \textit{gammelle}, a tight projector sometimes used to follow the circus artists in performance (see bibliography).

\textsuperscript{58} I consulted this document during a research trip in Milan, at the Piccolo Teatro, in May 2009. This video recording was apparently made for internal, non-commercial use only. It is not available outside of the Piccolo Teatro and can be viewed at that theatre, with the permission of chief archivist Franco Viespro.
Spanish bull-fighting arena. Moments later, Dottore and Pantalone engaged in another fight where they attempted to intimidate one another by amplifying their voice and gestures, and by finally engaging in a mock duel in which they used their fingers as if they were spades. Strehler had already staged these gags in earlier productions of the play, but only in 1997 did he illuminate the masked characters with tight spotlights. Then, during scene 14 of act 2, the spotlight exclusively lit Pantalone as he soliloquized on good food and company. At another moment in the production, during the frantic meal scene at the end of act 2, a blue tight spotlight followed Arlecchino as he ran from one side of the stage to the next. Only at the end of this scene was the tight spotlight directed at a moving object rather than at a masked protagonist. This object was a pudding plate that became “alive” and moved from one end of the stage to the next, imitating a movement Arlecchino had performed moments earlier. The tight blue spotlights, in addition to conferring a popular and festive atmosphere to the production, momentarily isolated the masked actors and pudding plate from the rest of the cast and set. This visual isolation directed the spectators' attention at the masked performers' skills, announced virtuoso performances, highlighted the physical, gestural and verbal strangeness of the masked characters (and of the pudding plate), and show-cased their potential for transformation. The tight spotlights seem to have also highlighted some grotesque elements in Strehler's vision of the Commedia dell'Arte, elements that were already present in previous productions. For example, since they illuminated only masked characters and one object, the tight spotlights and blue follow spots associated the hybrid nature of the moving pudding plate with that of masked characters, the former being an inanimate object momentarily transformed into a “living” creature, the latter, with their leather face, being half humans-half puppets, half moving-half static, half organic-half mechanical, and able to transform parts of their body into objects (spades) or animals (the bull). Finally, the blue spotlights, since they were primarily directed at
the masked protagonists during the execution of virtuoso performances, helped assert the star status of masked actors.

Masked characters, especially Brighella, were given a renewed importance in the production, not only because of how they were sometimes illuminated, but also because of the ways in which they used the performance space. For example, a 1999 archival video recording of the 1997 production shows that during the first act, Brighella left the proscenium stage and sat on a small bench at the same floor level as the audience. From there, he watched Beatrice soliloquize about her escape from home, her love for Florindo, and the purpose of her visit in Venice. At that moment, Mauri (playing Brighella) did not lift his mask, but remained in character. He commented on the beauty of the scene, reacted with surprise at Beatrice's speech, and confessed to the spectators that though he had been in the production for forty years, he never quite understood Beatrice's story. These reactions and comments revealed that in Strehler's production, Brighella knew that he was a character in a play and was aware of the fact that he had been part of the re-enactment of this play several times before. This focus revealed that at least one character was aware of living in a world different from that of the spectators, a world that could only exist on stage, during the performances of *The Servant of Two Masters.*

Furthermore, though he explained having seen and performed the play for some years, Brighella reacted to it as if attending it for the first time. This suggests that the characters' notion and experience of time was different from that of the spectators. Significantly, Brighella did not allude to other plays he might also have seen or lived in, nor did he mention a world he might inhabit in between each performance of *The Servant of Two Masters.* Brighella's comment also pointed to actor Gianfranco Mauri's forty year long career in the production. This acknowledgement blurred the line that separated Mauri from his character and somehow created a new “creature,” namely a self aware Brighella-Mauri that did not live in Goldoni's written text,
but in Strehler's stagings of the play at the Piccolo Teatro. Because he sat at the same floor level as the spectators during his “commenting lazzo,” and because he addressed his reactions directly to the public, Brighella-Mauri arguably functioned as a bridge between the world of the characters and the real world of the spectators. He and other characters already spoke to the spectators in previous productions of *The Servant of Two Masters*; Strehler's abolition of the fourth wall in these productions, as we saw in chapter 2, helped him renegotiate the hierarchy between the stage and the public. However, Brighella-Mauri's asides to the public in Strehler's tenth staging of Goldoni's play were particularly significant since they were not made from the stage, but from the audience, and thus re-enforced the popular, democratic nature of Brighella-Mauri in the production.

Masked actors, then, especially Ferruccio Soleri, were the undisputed stars of the production. This focus was reflected in applause-triggering mechanisms and by the relationship between Soleri and the performance space. For example, Soleri made his first entrance from the audience. As he walked slowly in the theatre's central aisle, at the same floor-level as the spectators, towards the stage, the scene that was being performed on stage at that moment stopped. This interruption directed the spectators' gaze at the incoming character, it announced the arrival of the star of the production, namely Arlecchino-Soleri. As soon as they recognized who had entered the theatre, the spectators applauded. When he reached the edge of the stage, Arlecchino-Soleri made a sign to silence the audience. He then adjusted his hat, and jumped on stage. Only then did the scene resume at its signature rapid pace. Other characters in the play, such as Smeraldina and the prompter, also entered the stage from the audience at some point in the production. Their entrances, however, unlike Arlecchino-Soleri's, did not suspend the action unfolding on stage, nor did it aim at triggering applause; they were instead among Strehler's
many devices to re-negotiate the relationship between the production and the audience, and to spatially assert the staging's popular nature.

Arlecchino-Soleri's solemn walk and noticeable, bride-like first entrance conferred a particular aura to both the actor and the character; it announced their authority over the stage and, as we shall see bellow, over the audience as well. It is unclear from the video recording of the production if Soleri wore his leather mask when he walked slowly towards the stage. It appears, however, that he did not lift his mask when he moved from one area of the stage to the next during the production.

As in previous stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, the stage in 1997 was divided in two: the area where Goldoni's play was performed, and the wings where actors watched their colleagues, commented on the performance, argued, and relaxed, as if they were the various members of a fictional Commedia dell'Arte company. It appears from the video recording mentioned above that all masked actors but one lifted their mask – at least sometimes – when they stood or sat in the wings. Soleri, however, did not lift his mask; instead, he briefly paused and lowered his face when he left the space where Goldoni's play was performed, and walked slowly, head down, towards the players' resting zone. Whether he revealed his face or not when he stood in the wings remains unclear.

Soleri's solemn first entrance and the solicited applause that accompanied it, his conventional and choreographed 'disappearance' from the play's main acting zone, and the possibility that he never parted from his mask on stage blurred the line between him and his character and cultivated the image of Arlecchino-Soleri, the chief actor and main attraction in the production. Arlecchino-Soleri was not only the object of everyone's admiration, he was also,
as Paolo Bosisio explained in a conversation, the head of the production. He indeed appeared to command the production's rhythm, as the example of his first entrance showed. He also allowed himself to dictate the spectators' behaviour. For example, after the meal scene, Arlecchino-Soleri asked the public to stop applauding so that he may speak. These directing choices highlighted Strehler's decision to orchestrate the production around Arlecchino-Soleri, an Arlecchino he helped create—as he so often posited; an Arlecchino he considered to be of equal importance as Thomassin's and Bertinazzi's; an Arlecchino, finally, he hoped would make history and be recognized as part of his legacy to twentieth-century European stage. In his words:

This production of *Arlecchino* [*Servant of Two Masters*] has the singular characteristic of shedding light on “another” Arlecchino. I gave two Arlecchinos to twentieth-century theatre at a time when this extraordinary Italian mask [i.e. masked character] was still remembered by people, but had vanished from the stage. These two names, Moretti and Soleri, are now written in the book of the world's greatest actors next to Bertinazzi, Thomassin, and many others. This is History that lives.\(^{60}\)

(“L'Arlecchino’ è un fatto straordinario” 93)

This quote reveals that Strehler's decision to highlight the importance of Arlecchino-Soleri in his tenth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* might appear, at first, as the result of a Marxist ideology. Arlecchino is indeed an ever hungry servant and an immigrant from Bergamo who arguably represents the working class. But Arlecchino-Soleri is not all Arlecchinos, but an Arlecchino Strehler chose, trained, and proclaimed to be not only the star of his production, but also his legacy to theatre history. Arguably, the central role of Arlecchino-Soleri in the production reflected the high opinion Strehler had of himself as a director and as a pioneer in re-discovering Commedia in the second half of the twentieth century. His choice to make

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\(^{59}\) This conversation took place in Milan in May 2009.

\(^{60}\) My translation of: “Questa edizione dell'Arlecchino ha la caratteristica fondamentale di gettare luce su un 'altro' Arlecchino. Ho dato al teatro del Novecento due Arlecchini, quando già si era spenta non la memoria ma la presenza di questa straordinaria maschera italiana. Moretti e Soleri: sono due nomi, ma scritti nel gran libro della storia dei comici del mondo, accanto a Bertinazzi, Thomassin e molti altri. Storia che vive.” (Strehler, “L'Arlecchino è un fatto straordinario” 93’


Arlecchino-Soleri the undisputed star of the production might therefore also be understood as a self-agrandizing mechanism. Arlecchino-Soleri's commanding attitude on stage and from the audience mirrored Strehler's authority at the Piccolo Teatro and, perhaps, in the European theatre landscape at the time.

The tenth staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro concluded Strehler's journey with Goldoni's play. Strehler passed away in 1997, seven months after the Piccolo Teatro's fiftieth anniversary evening gala. The presentation of his new staging for this gala, as we saw in this last section of chapter 4, was both symbolic and politically charged. The production was used as a symbol for the Piccolo Teatro's longevity, success, sense of continuity and spirit of renewal. Since most actors in the productions had been trained at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro, the production also advertized the educational mandate behind Strehler's theatre. And since it premiered in front of wealthy and influential guests, in the historical venue of via Rovello, and in the midst of financial uncertainties at the Piccolo Teatro, Strehler's tenth staging of Goldoni's play was also a plea for the continuity of his theatre's multifaceted agenda.

The masked characters in the new production were given renewed importance. Blue tight follow spotlights directed the spectators' gaze on these protagonists and highlighted the masked performers' skills during the execution of selected *lazzi*. Brighella-Mauri momentarily bridged a gap between the characters' world and that of the spectators. And Arlecchino-Soleri was consecrated chief protagonist and star of the production, a focus that highlighted the Marxist ideology behind the production as well as Strehler's perception of his contribution to Italian and European theatre.
The 1997 production was performed until 2002. In 2003, Soleri staged a new production of The Servant of Two Masters that was directly inspired by Strehler's earlier productions of the play. Soleri brought the trestle stage and painted backdrops back on stage and meticulously choreographed the actions of the new actors. These actors had all trained with Soleri either at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro or elsewhere during their early career. Two main versions of this eleventh production have been performed since, an “at home” version of the play and a touring production that is often referred to as the “architettonica” by the Piccolo Teatro's technicians and actors. Significantly, these new productions, though signed after his death, are attributed to Strehler in the programmes and on the Piccolo Teatro's website.

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61 Gianfranco Mauri remained the production’s directing assistant, and arguably the mentor of the new actors, until his death in 2000.

62 Though it is not explicitly said that Soleri staged this new production of The Servant of Two Masters, a series of interviews I conducted with the actors and lighting designer in the production made it clear that he did.
Figure 8: Arlecchino exits on a cloud inspired by Baroque stage design and machinery. The Servant of Two Masters, theatre season 1977-78. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.

Figure 9: Stage and lighting design of Strehler's staging of The Servant of Two Masters, theatre season 1977-78. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Figure 10: A room in Brighella's inn. *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro, theatre season 1987-88. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.

Figure 11: Beginning of Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*, theatre season 1987-88. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Figure 12: The characters' doubles sitting at the spectators' level waiting for their moment to go on stage. *The Servant of Two Masters* stage by Strehler at the Piccolo Teatro in 1990. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.

Figure 13: Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1990. Note the duplication of Pantalone. © Foto Luigi Ciminaghi/ Piccolo Teatro di Milano – Teatro d'Europa. By permission.
Conclusion

Analogous to a man's life, the trajectory of Strehler's successive stagings of The Servant of Two Masters starts with the rejection of previous generations, a youthful desire for change and the search of a style (see chapters 1 and 2); it slowly comes to maturity, with the acknowledgement of its own success and of its place in society and in history (see 4.1.1, and 4.1.2); it declines (see 4.2.1) and foresees its ending (see 4.2.2 ) before it is revived (see 4.2.3) and shows the promises of a lasting legacy (see 4.2.4).

Solid and painted masks, as was discussed throughout this thesis, served several purposes within the ten different productions of The Servant of Two Masters at the Piccolo Teatro; they partook in Strehler's re-imagining of the Commedia tradition on twentieth-century stages; expressed his understanding of the place of theatre (and performers) in history; revealed some of the political underpinnings of each production; had a lasting impact on the Piccolo Teatro actors; and arguably shaped the careers of mask-makers Amleto and Donato Sartori.

Because they dehumanized and theatricalized the actors' body and broke the intimacy of illusory theatre, the solid and painted masks in Strehler's first staging of The Servant of Two Masters renegotiated the relationship between the spectators and the theatre event, and thus participated in Strehler's proposed reform of Italian theatre (see chapters 1 and 2). Because they addressed the public directly, evoked a long tradition of popular performances, and pointed to identifiable social types, masked characters also participated in Strehler's efforts to democratize theatre. And since they pointed to the “Golden Age” of Italian theatre, masks and masked characters in Strehler's first staging of Goldoni's play in 1947 had nationalistic underpinnings
that arguably participated in the Piccolo Teatro's efforts to re-build, or re-shape, the Italian cultural landscape after World War II.

The leather masks Amleto Sartori made for Strehler's second staging of the play in 1952, because they were inspired by the iconography of the Commedia tradition and, possibly, by the peasant class of Padua, helped situate *The Servant of Two Masters* in a more specific historical and geographical context, and thus, along with the costumes and set design, functioned as historicizing and italicizing tools. Solid masks, especially when lifted and manipulated by the actors in front of the public from 1956 on, also created a distancing effect that testified to Brecht's influence on Strehler's work during the second half of the 1950s.

In 1987, Strehler's choice of having mature, bare-faced actors performing next to equally experienced masked performers reminded the public of how old each actor was, symbolized the Piccolo Teatro's journey across decades, testified to Strehler's endorsement of his actors' potential in performance over time, and arguably helped creating a nostalgic aura around the latest in a series of stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro. In 1990 and 1993, when the same play was revived and performed by recent graduates of the Piccolo Teatro's new acting school, masks arguably promoted a relatively unique speciality of this school (masked performance in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition) to international audiences and to members of a pan-European cultural elite.

While the Marxist ideology Strehler served during his adult life, paired with fifty years of re-working and re-imagining Goldoni's play in performance, provided a motive and countless occasions to put a mask on some of the female characters in the play, or to train actresses to perform traditionally masked protagonists, masks in Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* were solely worn by men. This choice, as was discussed in both parts of
chapter 4, suggests that Strehler had read the available literature on the Commedia tradition, and that his vision of Commedia, despite his political convictions, remained somewhat conservative.

But the masks in Strehler's successive productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* also triggered anxiety in the performers, and especially in Marcello Moretti, the first Arlecchino at the Piccolo Teatro, who refused to wear a solid mask in 1947 (see chapter 2). Unlike make-up, solid masks impeded the performers' ability to see, and could have caused them to fall from the stage and injure themselves. Masks also forced those who wore them to control their breathing differently; they modified how actors heard their voice and that of others; and they arguably altered how masked performers perceived their own body in space. Masks, because they hid the actor's face, also prevented the performers to communicate information with facial expressions, obliging them to discover (or re-discover) performance techniques and conventions radically different from those prevailing in a more realistic acting style. Masks also de-individualized the actors who wore them, and literally placed the character before the performer – the public, for example, would have recognized the Commedia character before it could identify the artist behind the mask, something that might not have been appealing to young actors at the beginning of their careers. In short, and as was demonstrated throughout chapter 2, solid masks obliged the actors in Strehler's productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* to renegotiate their place on stage, to adopt a heavily stylized acting style, to develop new skills related to a performance tradition they knew little about, and, more generally, to rethink themselves as artists. In the production of *The Servant of Two Masters* in 1947, Moretti, who had rejected the solid mask, resolved to paint his face with black, wax-based make-up, something that he had seen and done on stage before he joined the Piccolo Teatro. This thick make-up “theatricalized” his body and fulfilled the convention within the Commedia tradition of identifying Arlecchino with his mask.
Though Marcello Moretti first refused to wear the solid mask of Arlecchino, he subsequently wore at least four Arlecchino leather masks in various stagings at the Piccolo Teatro, including in productions of *The Servant of Two Masters*. Alternating between these different masks, all of which were hand made by Amleto Sartori, enriched Moretti's interpretation of Arlecchino since each design was associated with an animal (or a typified character, like the “primitive zanni”) and thus suggested a new dimension to his character that could be translated in his vocal and physical production.

While the solid mask influenced the actor's interpretation of a role, the performer's struggles and discoveries in the mask also inspired the mask-maker. Moretti's difficulty to see in the mask, for example, led Amleto Sartori to create an Arlecchino mask with large eye-openings that was better suited to a reluctant twentieth-century actor trained in a more realistic style. Then, Moretti's identification of the relationship that exists between small eye-openings in the mask and the need to execute short movements of the head in order to see in this mask might have also influenced Sartori's subsequent designs. That is, the causality between elements of design and the movements of actors certainly helped Sartori understand better how he could create masks with specific physical performances in mind. In other words, making a mask also meant shaping a whole body, at least to a certain extent (see chapter 3).

But imagining – and drawing – a masked character's entire body prior to making a solid mask seems to have already been part of Amleto Sartori's mask-making process, at least when he designed the first leather masks for a production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the Piccolo Teatro in 1952. As we saw in chapter 3, Sartori's familiarity with the visual representations of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition, his formal training as a sculptor and wood engraver, his friendship with the actors for whom he made masks, his professional relationship with Jacques Lecoq, Gianfranco De Bosio and Ludovico Zorzi at the University of Padua, his preference for
the grotesque style – which he saw in the architecture and population of his home town, Padua – and, arguably, his experience during the war all contributed to his imagining of the four Commedia masks in *The Servant of Two Masters*. These leather masks almost immediately became the property of the Piccolo Teatro; they did not change much – if at all – from 1952 to 1997, and appear not to have been used in any other productions at and outside of the Piccolo Teatro.

Donato Sartori, who succeeded to his father, Amleto, after his death in 1962 also received a formal training in the visual arts and eventually entertained a professional relationship with actor Ferruccio Soleri, Moretti’s successor in the role of Arlecchino. Donato designed a new Arlecchino mask with Soleri’s performance in mind. Soleri, who had a formal training in acting, but also in dance and gymnastic, gave an athletic, almost aerial bent to his interpretation of *The Servant of Two Masters*’ central character. Soleri’s stylized movements, high jumps in performance, and the screeching voice he gave to Arlecchino made him appear more aggressive than his predecessor. Aware of the focus Soleri gave to the role, Donato Sartori shaped a mask that mirrored and perhaps further encouraged the almost diabolical bent Soleri gave to the part. This new mask, whose basic shape resembled Moretti’s “Arlecchino-fox” mask, was characterized by deep carved lines, large, pointy eye openings, and sharp angles.

Soleri's new Arlecchino mask, as well as all the other masks Amleto and Donato Sartori made for Strehler’s successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* were seen by thousands of spectators around the world. The exposure these masks received when the production toured in Italy and abroad made them prime examples for subsequent designs of Commedia masks by other sculptors and mask-makers. The actors' performance in these masks also became a model *par excellence* of twentieth-century interpretation of the Commedia tradition.
Given the extensive touring history of Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, masked-performance techniques and conventions were arguably passed on through exposure, at least to some extent. Some actors, directors and theatre movement educators in the audience likely tried to emulate some aspects of what they witnessed on stage, and perhaps attempted to include them in their own artistic practice, whenever they dealt with the Commedia tradition and masked performance.

But acting techniques and conventions were also transmitted in rehearsal from director to performer, and from one actor to the other. Giorgio Strehler, for example, admitted learning masked performance techniques from Marcello Moretti that he then taught to other actors he directed. Jacques Lecoq, who was hired by the Piccolo Teatro in 1951-1952 as a choreographer and a movement coach, also witnessed Moretti in performance, and even worked with him on a staging of Goldoni's *L'amante militare* at the Piccolo Teatro. Like *The Servant of Two Masters*, this play was also inspired by the Commedia dell'Arte tradition. While Moretti and Lecoq had different artistic sensibilities and career paths, they likely influenced each other's vision of movements for actors, masked work, and Commedia dell'Arte. It is therefore possible that, when he founded his own acting school in Paris, Lecoq passed on some of Moretti's (and Strehler's) acting tips and performance techniques to his students.

Then, as we saw in chapter 4, Moretti (Arlecchino in *The Servant of Two Masters* from 1947 to 1960), Gianfranco Mauri (Brighella from 1956 to 1968, from 1973 to 1979, from 1984 to 1988, and in 1997), and Ferruccio Soleri (Arlecchino from 1960-62 to the present day) functioned as acting coaches within *The Servant of Two Masters*. Soleri has also been an acting instructor at the Scuola di Attori del Piccolo Teatro and in other venues, teaching Commedia dell’Arte, theatre history, voice work, and movement (*mimica*) in various theatre institutions around the world, such as the Otto Falckenberg-Schule in Munich, Mudra School in Brussels,
the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna, and Santa Clara University in the United States (Chinello). He also trained several actors in the role of Arlecchino at the Piccolo Teatro, among whom were Carlo Boso and Enrico Bonavera. Both of them have long been involved in directorial (in the case of Boso) and pedagogical activities. Boso, for many years considered a major figure in the transmission of Commedia-related performance knowledge in Europe, has taught master classes and workshops of masked performance, clown, improvisation and Commedia dell'Arte in France, Italy and Belgium, to name only these few countries, and currently teaches at the Studio Albatros in Paris. As for Enrico Bonavera, he has taught Commedia courses at VeneziaINscena (an acting school in Venice), at the University of Parma, the University of Rome-La Sapienza, the University of Rio de Janeiro, and the Tisch School for the Arts' special summer acting programme in Florence.

Other actors in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* have also conducted workshops and given talks in Italy and abroad. Giorgio Bongiovanni (Pantalone in the production since 1990), for example, spoke of his experience in *The Servant of Two Masters* and taught masters classes of Commedia dell'Arte at the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali in 2010, and at the University of California, Berkeley in 2005. Mace Perlman, an actor in Strehler's staging of Goldoni's play in 1990, regularly teaches acting classes, and has given demonstrations of masked performance in the Commedia dell'Arte tradition in Canadian and American universities and theatre conservatories, such as Boston College, Harvard University, Stanford University, Notre Dame University, Washington University in St. Louis, and Glendon College/York University in Toronto, to name only these few.

Finally, Donato Sartori also passed on Strehler's and Amleto Sartori's legacy to new generations of actors, directors, and designers, this time through his teaching of mask-making techniques at the training centre he co-created, the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali.
Though this is not an exhaustive listing of all of Strehler's actors and collaborators who combined their regular artistic practice with teaching, it already gives an idea of the extent to which some elements of Strehler's vision of the Commedia dell'Arte (with masks) were passed on through pedagogical endeavours.

While they have had dramaturgical, ideological, and arguably pedagogical roles in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*, the leather masks used at the Piccolo Teatro had image-building functions off-stage as well. And this is what I would like to conclude my thesis with, because, to my knowledge, the use of masks by the Piccolo Teatro outside of performances has not been explored in any academic or non-academic research on Strehler.

A series of letters and newspaper articles kept at the Piccolo Teatro archive in Milan informs that, during the 1950s, Paolo Grassi – then the director of the Piccolo Teatro – would sometimes organize exhibitions of Amleto Sartori's masks in the lobby of theatres that presented Strehler's staging of *The Servant of Two Masters*. The public could see masked characters on stage, in the production, and also closely examine (and even buy) leather masks in the theatre's lobby, before or after the performance, or perhaps during the intermission.¹ Though the masks exhibited and sold parallel to the production were not those used in performance, they nonetheless advertized the Piccolo Teatro's activities, promoted its artistry, and evoked *The Servant of Two Masters*.²

Furthermore, letters of correspondence between Grassi and Amleto Sartori suggest that masks were used to promote not only *The Servant of Two Masters*, but also Sartori's work and

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¹ Correspondence letters by Paolo Grassi to Amleto Sartori from the 1950s kept at the Piccolo Teatro's archives reveal that Italian audiences did not often buy the masks that were exhibited in the theatres' lobby. However, these same letters suggest that German spectators eagerly responded to exhibitions held simultaneously to a production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, and bought more masks than their Italian counterparts.

² The masks displayed in the theatre lobbies parallel to performances of *The Servant of Two Masters* were not necessarily Commedia masks. Moreover, never were they copies of the leather masks used in Strehler's staging of Goldoni's play. The masks used in *The Servant of Two Masters* were apparently not for sale, and were exclusive to this Piccolo Teatro production.
the Piccolo Teatro more generally. Masks created by Sartori for marketing purposes were indeed distributed by Grassi to the artistic directors of European theatres where *The Servant of Two Masters* was performed during the 1950s. In a first letter dated July 18th 1957, Grassi mentions having recently offered three masks to Peter Diamand (then the general secretary of the Holland Festival in Amsterdam), to E. [Erich] Schumacher (of the Vereinigte Städtische Bühnen in Krefeld) and to Johannes Klein (of the Europäische Wochen Passau). Grassi then promises the sum of 150,000 lire to Sartori, perhaps as a payment for these three masks. In the same letter, the Piccolo Teatro's director also provides the name of each person to whom he gave a mask in the previous year (1956). Among these people are Bertholt Brecht, Ernst Marboe (then the general director of Vienna's state theatres), Adolf Rott (of the Burgtheater in Vienna), Agne Beijer (professor and theatre scholar in Stockholm, Sweden), Arvi Kivimaa (then the director of Kansallisteatteri, Finland's National Theatre in Helsinki), Eduardo De Filippo, as well as the artistic directors of Rostock's Volkstheatre, Dresden's Staatstheater, Halle's Landestheater, East Berlin Volksbühne, Leipzig's Volkstheater, and Chemnitz's Städtisches Theater. In another letter, this time dated December 18th 1957, Grassi announces that he gave two Commedia masks (an Arlecchino and a zanni mask) to Antonio Pitta, from the newspaper *La Notte*, and to the artistic director of Berlin's Komische Oper, Walter Felsenstein. Significantly, Grassi also suggests to Sartori that he should send a letter and a mask to Francesco Siciliani, who was then the artistic director of the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, as a sign of friendship on the eve of a possible collaboration between this theatre and the Piccolo Teatro. These two masks were apparently offered independently of a performance of *The Servant of Two Masters*. Many other letters from the same period, however, confirm that Grassi usually gave masks to artistic directors during international tours of *The Servant of Two Masters*. For example, on June 26th 1957, Grassi asked Sartori to produce two Arlecchino masks to be gifted to two artistic directors.
of theatres where this play had recently been performed (the touring circuit of the show for that year suggests that these theatres were located in Holland and in Germany). It is unclear, from these letters, how much Grassi paid Sartori for each mask, how far in advance he asked for them, and when he actually purchased them.

But these promotional masks were not only destined to theatre directors and administrators. They were also used to approach prominent international artists in other fields.

As Fulvio Fo reminiscences:

In Mentone, in early August, there came Virginio Puecher, Strehler's assistant, to make some adjustments to the production, and Paolo Grassi, who was in a particularly good mood. I understand by the voluptuous and satisfied way in which he rolls his thumb on the palm of his hand that he [Grassi] has a pleasant surprise in store [for me]. “Dear Fulvio,” he begins, “I announce to you that you will live an unforgettable moment today. This afternoon, we are going together to Vallauris to pay a visit to Pablo Picasso and to invite him to tomorrow evening's show.”

Though Picasso first refused to meet Fo and Grassi, he received them in his home on the following day.

Picasso welcomed us in a manner that was completely formal but not impolite. The vitality of this seventy-five year old man is surprising. The Arlecchino leather mask sculpted by Sartori we brought as a present [to Picasso] is received with the admiration of a child who gets an unexpected gift. He [Picasso] turns it over in his strong hands, as if he wants to remodel it himself. He thanks us for the invitation, but he will not be able to attend the show because of the humidity.

Masks at the Piccolo Teatro were therefore important rhetorical tools both on and off stage. They were reflective of Strehler's evolving vision of Commedia, Goldoni, the work of

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3 Fulvio Fo accompanied the actors and served as an administrator on a European tour of The Servant of Two Masters in 1956 (Fulvio Fo 32). He accompanied the production on tour again, in 1957 (Ibid. 33)
4 My translation of: “A Mentone, ai primi di agosto, arrivano Virginio Puecher, aiuto di Strehler, per una messa a punto dello spettacolo e un Paolo Grassi particolarmente in forma. Dal modo voluttuoso e soddisfatto con cui rigira il pollice sul palmo dell'altra mano, si capisce che ha in serbo una piacevole sorpresa. “Cavo Fulvio”, esordisce, “Le annuncio che oggi lei vivrà un momento memorabile. Questo pomeviggio ce ne andremo insieme a Vallauris per far visita a Pablo Picasso e invitavrlo allo spettacolo di domani seva” (Fulvio Fo 37).
5 My translation of: “Picasso ci riceve con modi affatto cerimoniosi ma non scortesi. La vitalità di quell'uomo settantacinquenne è sorprendente. La maschera in cuoio di Arlecchino scolpita da Sartori e portatagli in dono, è accolta con l'ammirazione di un bambino che riceve un regalo sperato. Se la rigira fra le forti mani come volesse riplasmarla lui stesso. Ringrazia per l'invito ma non potrà assistere allo spettacolo per via dell'umidità.” (Fulvio Fo 37-38)
actors, and the role of theatre in society and in history. But they also promoted the Piccolo Teatro in Italy and abroad, and arguably permitted Paolo Grassi – and perhaps, to a certain extent, Strehler and the Piccolo Teatro actors – to access cultural icons like Picasso at a moment when the Piccolo Teatro was reaching to foreign markets. Offering masks to prominent public personalities helped the Piccolo Teatro artists and administrators feel a certain way about themselves and about their young theatre; knowing that “their” masks had made it in the hands, offices, and homes of influential people belonging to a pan-European artistic community was a way to position themselves within that milieu, and to congratulate themselves of the discoveries (the masks and masked performance techniques, conventions, and style) characteristic of Strehler's successive stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters*.

As I hope to have demonstrated in this thesis, masks in Strehler's stagings of *The Servant of Two Masters* have come to symbolize the high level of artistry Strehler proposed to achieve in his work, and arguably speak to the “recovery” and “continuation” of (a certain interpretation) of one aspect of Italy's theatre history at the Piccolo Teatro. In the light of my research, I would even go as far as to suggest that masks helped propel Strehler's stagings of Goldoni's play into the theatre arena of Europe and the world.
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All interviews with actors, lighting designers and mask-makers conducted in the framework of this research were cited in this thesis with the prior consent of the interviewees.