

# The Big Idea: Performance Skills

## Commedia Dell Arte

### Key Knowledge:

Comedy of the Arts was developed in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It's roots are in traditional clowning, Story-telling and travelling Minstrels.

Companies toured from town to town with performances taking place outside in the market squares.

The performances were loud, colourful and gestures were exaggerated so that everyone could clearly see. This is where slap-stick comedy originates from. It's called 'slapstick' comedy, as they used two pieces of wood strapped together to make a slapping sound when it was hit.

**Commedia dell'Arte** (which translates as “theatre of the professional”) **began** in Italy in the early 16th Century and quickly spread throughout Europe, creating a lasting influence on Shakespeare, Molière, opera, vaudeville, contemporary musical theatre, sit-coms, and improvisational comedy. All actors learn Commedia, as the stock characters appear in every modern play in different guises. In year 8 students will explore the 6 main characters from commedia including Il Capitano, Il Dottore and the Zanni.

### Key Language:

**Exaggeration** – Over the top gestures or facial expressions

**Harlequin** and **Columbina**-Servants of higher status

**Il Capitano** - the Captain, boastful, braggart but cowardly

**Il Dottore** - the Doctor, windbag.

**Innuendo**-an allusive remark typically suggestive or disparaging.

**Pantalone**-old, rich man, miser

**Physicality** – A characters stance and body language

**Status** – Refers to a characters place in society in the world that they live in.

**Stock-characters** - stereotypical fictional characters who audiences recognise from their frequent recurrences.

The Lovers-Isabella and Flavio infatuated with each other.

**Zanni** - servants/clowns of various status.

### Key Skills and techniques:

- Audience participation
- Comic timing
- Exaggerated gestures and physicality
- Loud confident characterisation
- Use of slap-stick comedy and clowning
- Status
- Using masks
- Tragedy
- Comedy
- Satire

