

## Legacies of Commedia dell' Arte Conference



### *Legacies of Commedia dell' Arte: "Others" and the production of theatre from Early-Modern Italy through modern-day California*

November 21, 2019 • 8:30 am- 6:00 pm

*Free and open to the public*

Emerging in the middle of the sixteenth century, *commedia dell'arte* featured stock characters representing different languages and cultures in improvised performances that allowed actors to adapt their narratives and languages to different audience groups. Although considered by some a quintessentially "Italian" artform, recent scholarship emphasizes the extent to which *commedia dell'arte* also included performance modalities inspired from Asian, Middle Eastern and minority cultures as well as Christian European ones. This revised view coaxes us to think differently about what it means when an "Italian" theatre mode is revealed to have also been created by non-Europeans and non-Christians. While these questions emerge from a study of the early-modern period, they are urgent questions for us today, as we work on theatrical expressions of identity, belonging and citizenship in an ever-changing, global world in which borders and boundaries are increasingly contested. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence to suggest that *commedia dell'arte* played a central role in establishing what modern European (and, through the colonial encounter, American) theatre is.

Given these new research pathways and our particular cultural moment, this conference at the University of California Riverside (UCR) stands to galvanize crucial conversations around physical and political performance traditions inspired by *commedia dell'arte* historically and today. This conference, therefore, provides an important and timely opportunity for examining the historical place of "others" within *commedia dell'arte* and the legacy of *commedia dell'arte* on Californian theatres such as El Teatro Campesino and Culture Clash, the Actor's Gang and Dell' Arte International. The work of these companies provides important analogies to the *commedia dell'arte* performers' methodology and vice versa.

In order to probe the question of the "other" in *commedia dell'arte*, this interdisciplinary conference will bring together various scholars from across the UC as well as the US and Canada and from the fields of history, comparative literatures, theatre, performance studies, cultural studies, poetry, music, dance and art.

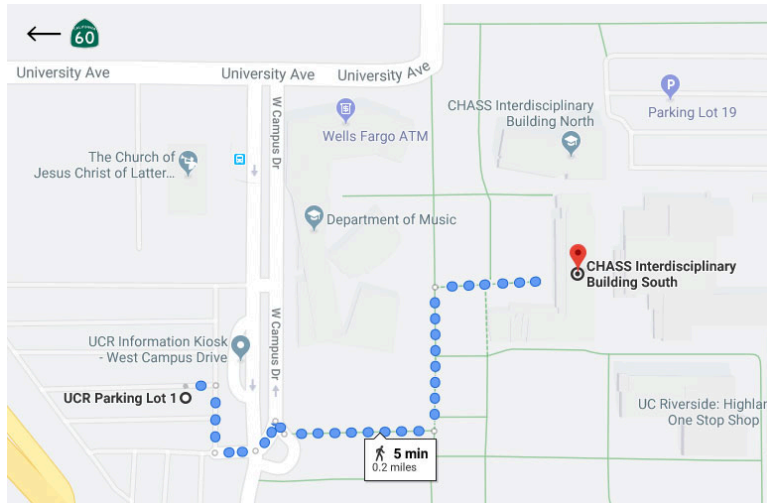
While the *commedia dell'arte* is historically-rooted, it extends to performance traditions on the West Coast of the US; its political and social focus lives on in the theatre of protest with which our students and many of our faculty engage. Going back to the *commedia dell'arte's* Northern Italian roots from the vantage point of Southern California allows us to reimagine the *commedia dell'arte*, taking full stock of its many legacies. The original cultural exchanges provide several examples of how an early-modern society wrestles with cultural difference, and moral and aesthetic ideals across religious, ethnic and cultural divides. Furthermore, the themes of the conference, the importance of under-represented groups to the *commedia dell'arte*, takes advantage of our student body's diversity, and leverages UCR's strong programs in theatre and digital media as well as a long tradition of outreach and collaboration with the Inland community.

It is especially meaningful that this interdisciplinary and international conference will be held at the campus of the UC Riverside as our campus has been recognized as one of the most diverse (ethnically and culturally) campuses within the UC system and in the United States. It is a top-ranked, institution serving under-represented groups within the US, and designated as a historically Black-serving and Hispanic-serving institution.

## Location & Parking

University of California, Riverside  
CHASS Interdisciplinary Building South 1113

Complimentary permits available at the Information Kiosk Booth, located on West Campus Drive at University Avenue. Refer to map below or [view our campus map](#).



For more information, contact the Center for Ideas and Society at (951) 827-1556 or [CISevents@ucr.edu](mailto:CISevents@ucr.edu).

## Organizer

Organized by Professor Erith Jaffe-Berg, Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production.

## Sponsors

Sponsored by grants from the UC Riverside Center for Ideas and Society, UCOP MRPI Funding through the UC Humanities Research Institute, the UCR Departments of Theatre, Film and Digital Production, History, Comparative Literature and Foreign Languages, Religious Studies – Maimonides Chair in Jewish Studies, UCR International Affairs, and UCR Research and Economic Development.

## Participants

**Keynote Address: Domenico Pietropaolo**, Professor of Italian Studies, Associate with the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama and Centre for Medieval Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Toronto, Canada.

**Marta Albalá-Peigrín**, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Modern Languages, Cal Poly Pomona

**Rodgerio Budasz**, Professor and Chair, Department of Music, UCR

**Claudio Fogu**, Associate Professor, Department of French and Italian, UC Santa Barbara.

**Kyna Hamill**, Senior Lecturer and Assistant Director of the Boston University College of Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum, and Lecturer in the School of Theatre, Boston University.

**Javier Hurtado**, Ph.D. student, Tufts University

**Rosalind Kerr**, Professor Emerita, Department of Drama, University of Alberta, and Fellow at the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at Victoria University in the University of Toronto.

**Elsa Martinez**, Independent scholar.

**Domenico Pietropaolo**, Professor of Italian Studies, Associate with the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama and Centre for Medieval Studies and Comparative Literature, University of Toronto, Canada.

**Duman Riyzazi**, Ph.D. student, Department of History, Archeology, Geography, Art and Theater, University of Florence, Italy.

**Guilia Vittori**, Ph.D., Stanford University.

**Emily Wilbourne**, Associate Professor of Musicology, Queens College and Graduate Center in the City University of New York.

**Fariba Zarinebaf**, Professor, Department of History, UCR.

**Ariane Helou**, Lecturer, Department of French & Francophone Studies, UCLA.

**Erith Jaffe-Berg** is a Professor at the Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production at the University of California, Riverside. Her research focuses on the *commedia dell'arte* and performances by minority groups in Early Modern Italy. She has authored two books: *Commedia dell'Arte and the Mediterranean: Charting Journeys and Mapping "Others"* (2015) and *The Multilingual Art of Commedia dell'Arte* (2009), along with other articles and essays. She is a member of the Son of Semele Theatre Ensemble (SOSE) has been awarded a UC Humanities Research Institute fellowship, a Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation grant, a National Endowment for the Humanities grant and a grant from the Canadian embassy.

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## Conference Schedule

9:00- 9:30 am

### **Registration and coffee**

9:30- 9:45 am **Welcome words by Erith Jaffe-Berg**

and the Chair of Theatre, Film and Digital Production, Prof. Rickerby Hinds. Prof. Kimberly Guerrero, leads us in an invocation and acknowledgement of Native traditions and cultures.

9:45-10:45 am

### **Session I – Commedia dell'Arte and cultural diversity: Looking Eastward**

Moderator: Prof. Annika Speer, Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production, UCR

**Fariba Zarinebaf**, Professor, Department of History, UC Riverside

"Secular and Religious Festivals in the Middle East: The Parade of Guilds in Istanbul and the Muharram Ta'ziye theatre in Tabriz according to Evliya Çelebi"

**Elsa Martinez**, Independent scholar

"Leone de' Sommi and Jewish Theatre in Italy"

10:45-11:00 am **Coffee Break**

11:00-12:00 pm **Keynote Address**

**Domenico Pietropaolo**, Professor of Italian Studies, University of Toronto, Canada

"Minority Dramaturgy in the *Commedia dell'Arte* Tradition"

Introduced by Prof. Jaffe-Berg

Questions and Answers Moderated by Prof. Rodgerio Budasz, Chair, Department of Music, UCR

12:00-1:00 pm **Lunch**

1:00-2:00 pm

### **Session II: Women, Diversity, and the CDA Commedia dell'Arte**

Moderator: Prof. Donatella Galella, Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production, UCR

**Ros Kerr**, Professor Emerita, Department of Drama, University of Alberta

"A #MeToo Movement on the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Commedia dell'Arte Stage"

**Guilia Vittori**, Italian Program at the Department of European Languages and Studies, University of California, Irvine

"I am a woman – I am Harlequin – I can play with tragic. Otherness in gender and genre in contemporary Italian *commedia dell'arte*"

2:00-3:00 pm

### **SESSION III: Music, soundscapes of Otherness and the Commedia dell' Arte**

Moderator: Claudio Fogu, Department of French and Italian, University of California, Santa Barbara

**Emily Wilbourne**, Associate Professor of Musicology, Queens College and the Graduate Center, in the City University of New York

"Stock Roles, Black Servants, Song: Race, Musical Performances, and the Legacy of the *Commedia dell'arte* in Mid-Seventeenth Century Italian Opera"

**Ariane Helou**, French and Francophone Studies, UCLA

"Orpheus and Others: Moving Voices in *Commedia dell'arte* and Opera"

3:00-3:10 pm **Coffee Break**

3:10-5:30 pm

### **SESSION IV: Legacies of Conquest, legacies of Kinship and image in the Commedia dell' Arte: Spain, France, Mexico and California**

Moderator: Jeanette Kohl, Department of Art History, UCR

**Marta Albalá Pelegrín**, English and Modern Languages, Cal Poly Pomona

"Spanish Theater of Conquest: Performing the Fall of Granada in Early Modern Rome and Naples"

**Javier Hurtado**, Department of Theatre, Tufts University

"The Family that Plays Together: The Legacy of Transnational Performance and Kinship from *Commediato* to California"

**Kyna Hamill**, Assistant Director of the Boston University College of Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum and lecturer, School of Theatre, Boston University  
"Callot's *Balli di Sfessania*: Inventing Commedia dell' arte in Print Culture"

5:30-5:40 pm **Adjourning words**

From Erith Jaffe-Berg and comments from participants

5:40-8:00 pm **Dinner Break**

8:00-9:30 pm **La Mirtilla – Evening Performance and Talkback, Question/Answer session**

in Studio Theatre, ARTS 113

Scenes from a play by Isabella Andreini (1588)

A production by [L.A. Camerata](#), directed by Marilyn Winkle

Seventeen years before the first performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1605), Isabella Andreini dedicated her pastoral drama, *La Mirtilla* (1588), to Lady Lavinia della Rovere. Yet, there is no evidence that this work has ever been performed! Andreini represents many shades of love in a comedic tapestry that stands out from other pastorals with its moments of gravity that resonate with today's #metoo movement. Our staged reading (in English, translated by Dr. Julie Campbell) with live music by women composers on period instruments.

Featuring: Corryn Cummins, Matthew Hancock, Amy K. Harmon, and Donnie Smith

This play includes adult subject matter, sexual situations, violence and strong language.

[L.A. Camerata](#) strives to tell the stories of women and "others" silenced throughout history. Our performances highlight works by early-modern women from across the world. Inspired by the original renaissance camerati—philosophical societies that debated aesthetics in the arts and society—we seek to blur the boundaries between music and drama, resurrecting lost or underrepresented voices live on stage. Recent musical-theatrical productions include a world premiere staged-reading of Isabella Andreini's *La Mirtilla* (1588) and a staged performance of Camilla de Rossi's secular cantata *Frà Dori, e Fileno* with baroque gesture. In 2016, we performed a fully-staged production of the first woman-composed opera, Francesca Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero* (1625). Our 2018-19 Inaugural Season also featured a program works by Latin American artists (including women), which was selected as a WINNING program by the 2019 Beverly Hills National Auditions committee.

Parking: Complimentary permits available before 8:00 pm at the Information Kiosk Booth, located on West Campus Drive at University Avenue.

Information: (951) 827-3245 [performingarts@ucr.edu](mailto:performingarts@ucr.edu) [www.theatre.ucr.edu](http://www.theatre.ucr.edu)

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[Learn more](#)

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