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## An Analysis Of The Title Role In Scapino!

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE TITLE ROLE IN SCAPINO!

by

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2015

This thesis, submitted by Joseph Dwain Bussey in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This thesis is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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Date

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Joseph Dwain Bussey

04/13/2015

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to serve as documentation of the performance of the title role in *Scapino!*. It is separated into three parts including a play analysis, a character analysis, and a summation of the rehearsal process. Each section is linked directly to the plays commedia roots, and draws a link between Moliere's original play *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, and the work that resulted from the Young Vic's production *Scapino!*. The conclusions that are reached serve as an informational tool for the performance of the character of Scapino.



## CHAPTER I

### PLAY ANALYSIS

In 1971 Frank Dunlop directed *Scapino!* starring Jim Dale. This thesis is in preparation for the performance of the role of Scapino at the University of North Dakota and will be explored in three parts, a play analysis, a character analysis, and a brief summation of the rehearsal process. The play analysis is a discussion of the relationship of the play's protagonist and antagonist, what is learned from the plays performance history, and an analysis of commedia dell'arte as it applies to the text of *Scapino!* The character analysis will look at the plays main characters focusing on Scapino in an effort to determine their objectives, their tactics, and their given circumstances, and will conclude with a comparison of the character of Scapino to his commedia founded stock character also called Scapino. The thesis will conclude with a reflection on the rehearsal process and its effect on the performance of *Scapino!*

#### **Protagonist and Antagonist**

James Thomas author of *Script Analysis for Actors, Directors, and Designers* offers, "The focus of dramatic interest of a play is the conflict between the leading character and his or her chief opponent. Citing Aristotle, writers call these characters the *protagonist* and the *antagonist*" (Thomas

166). Thomas's definition is succinct, but also defines the characters by their relationship to each other. In considering this definition it becomes clear that in order to determine the play's protagonist and antagonist it is first necessary to discover the play's major conflict or as stated earlier by Thomas, the conflict between the leading character and his chief opponent. This conflict will naturally spur from an inciting action, which Thomas defines as, "the single action that sparks the main action of the entire play" (Thomas 136). The relationship will build through conflict and eventually reach what is called the major climax, defined again by Thomas as, "the highest peak of emotional intensity in the play" (Thomas 139). Once the protagonist and antagonist have reached this emotional intensity the play then comes to its resolution, or what Thomas defines as, "the gradual quieting of the tension and a return of the original opposing forces to a state of near equilibrium or adjustment" (Thomas 142).

The previous format will now be briefly applied to the script of *Scapino!* It is brief because the majority of the play analysis will come from a later discussion of the play's commedia roots, and this analysis is to interpret at an intellectual level the structure of the play's relationship between protagonist and antagonist. *Scapino!* opens with Ottavio hysterical, pleading with Sylvestro to help him with his familial quarrel. The scene through exposition reveals that Ottavio has married without his father's consent, and his father has just returned to Naples. Sylvestro is unable to help Ottavio, because he was the person Argante, Ottavio's father left to look after Ottavio. This sets the play's major conflict as one between father and son over arranged marriage. Since neither character bears the intelligence or the gall to

speak to Argante, they need an outside character to solve their problem, Scapino (Dunlop 16).

While it would seem from Thomas's definition of the relationship between protagonist and antagonist that Ottavio would be the protagonist, and Argante would be the antagonist, it is in fact Scapino who plays the role of protagonist in the play *Scapino!*. This role reversal is out of Ottavio's failure to take action and fight for what he wants. Scapino is the character that fights for Ottavio's beliefs thereby assuming the role of protagonist. This happens at the play's inciting action when Scapino decides, after seeing the love Giacinta and Ottavio have for each other, to help secure their marriage vows. Thomas further explains inciting action saying, "It occurs at the point when the leading character is set in motion or where a feeling arises in the character that sets the action in motion. It becomes the chief driving force for all the succeeding action of the play" (Thomas 136-137). This moment occurs in *Scapino!* when Scapino after the previously stated action makes his decision to help saying, "Right, I've been argued 'round. You get along then; I'll do some thinking on your behalf" (Dunlop 18).

Later, it is discovered that Leandro, the son of Geronte, has found himself mixed up in a similar business and also, after a series of chases, enlists Scapino's help in making amends with his father. Scapino has now taken on the role of protagonist for both Ottavio and Leandro and with both of the boys' matrimonial futures squarely in his hands, Scapino must create a web of confusion to ensure a happy ending for everyone. The relationship then between the protagonist Scapino and the antagonists Argante and Geronte becomes the focal point of the show and

the rest of the play is spent undoing the web spun by Scapino throughout. The fathers create obstacles for Scapino, an example of this is when Argante first arrives back and Ottavio is overwhelmed to the point of hysteria. Scapino, in order to have a meaningful interaction with Argante, must first put Ottavio at ease. Argante's entrance however is enough to frighten Ottavio off, and it is left to Sylvestro and Scapino to deal with him.

Soon though, upon seeing Sylvestro, Argante becomes enraged and it is now Scapino who is left to pick up the pieces. The entire conflict of the play is based on the fact that nobody can speak to the father characters, which creates a need for Scapino, and also why he is placed as the play's leading character. There is a need for Scapino because he is well liked within the community, and the fathers trust and listen to him, something they do not do with the other characters in the play. Scapino as the protagonist has obstacles put in his way by Argante and Geronte to prevent him from helping Ottavio and Leandro. These obstacles come in the form of money, which is needed to buy Zerbinetta's freedom, revenge, which Scapino gets from Geronte for lying to Leandro and causing distrust between Scapino and Leandro. The obstacles create conflict and conflict leads to action.

The play builds to its major climax after the infamous sack scene. During this scene the characters of Argante and Geronte discover that they were actually upset over nothing as their sons had chosen the very women they had planned for them to marry in the first place, and the confusion was all due to Geronte having a false identity explaining, "Don't call me Pandolfo here. Call me Geronte. The reasons which forced me to take another name in Marseilles exist no longer" (Dunlop 77).

Now upon these revelations the lies are all but untangled and Scapino, rascal that he is, decides to trick everyone one last time because he must alleviate the hatred that has been created between him and the fathers due to the tricks he has played on them. He pretends to be in a fatal accident where his skull has been fractured. He is able to achieve his goal of forgiveness and everyone is able to enjoy the happy ending, thus returning the protagonist and the antagonist to the state of equilibrium, which Thomas spoke of.

*Scapino!* reaches its major climax on the play's last line when Geronte exclaims, "All right, I forgive him" (Dunlop83). It is the climax because it solves the last remaining conflict between the fathers and Scapino resulting in forgiveness. It also as much of this show does includes the audience. In a way the audience chooses Scapino's fate, and after everything they have been through with Scapino, they decide to forgive Scapino as well.

### **Performance History**

Scapino has been through several rewrites over the course of its existence. The show is actually based on a play by Moliere called *Les Fourberies de Scapin* or *The Double-Dealings of Scapin*. Frank Dunlop originally wrote Scapino as a one act, but over the course of roughly twenty years, multiple appearances at the Edinburgh Festival, and a complete overhaul and expansion into the two act version that is know today, it opened at the Young Vic Theatre in 1971. Dunlop recalls,

"That's when I did this version of it. I extended the first version. We added music and it got bigger and bigger through rehearsals. So much so that, at

the moment, about two-thirds is close to Moliere, and then there's another third which is improvised additions and music" (Dunlop 25).

Even after all of the rewrites, the improvisations, and the updated language, Moliere's original play is still left largely in tact.

The Young Vic theatre where *Scapino!* opened in its entirety for the first time is a theatre that thrives on an atypical audience. It is a theatre that claims, "We have the most diverse and engaged audience in London, enjoying work of the highest quality at low prices" (youngvic.org). Dunlop creates an environment of learning and fun when he directs. In the authorized acting edition of *Scapino!* there are numerous stories of how he deals with actors as equals and with respect. It is also of note that by fostering this environment of respect as a director the actors felt free to improvise, leading to many of the choreographed moments that appear in the play's stage directions. For these reasons Dunlop is thought of as an actors director (Dunlop 21-38).

Through the stories that come out of the rehearsal process for the Young Vic production of *Scapino!* many things can be learned, but none of them can be replicated. Frank Dunlop believes in using the talents of the actors around him, and using the space he is given as creatively as possible. Dunlop says,

No one expects amateurs to be as skilled. But you must have some native talent, a lot of energy, and an open mind. It is very important if you want SCAPINO to work, to find actors who are not conventional-looking or who do conventional acting... You need people who are capable of original thinking. People who can make their characters work for them. So look for people

who are lively, intelligent, and full of energy first. Acting school credits, and previous stage experience may mean nothing (Dunlop 30).

*Scapino!* is unique in that it is not written with traditional scenes, nor is it written with a traditional actor in mind. Jim Dale, the man who played the role of Scapino summarizes the experience as being “made up of ten thousand moments... He insists that SCAPINO is not a triumph of feeling or emotion. It is not felt; it’s choreographed” (Dunlop 40). Throughout the accounts of what went into the creation of *Scapino!* there is a common drum beat that permeates this show. This show is about creativity, fun, and it is an intensely strict form that has rules, which must be adhered to, or someone will get hurt.

Finally, Dunlop puts an enormous amount of attention on audience interaction. Often, during the course of the play, lines are directed at the audience with the intention of enticing them to participate or be a part of the plays action. One such exchange occurs in the spaghetti scene. Argante and Scapino together say, “It’s very true. It’s very true. It’s very true” (Dunlop 26). The lines themselves are banal and almost boring, but the simple act of looking at the audience brings them to life. The stage directions add clarity. “(To each other.) It’s very true. (To the audience.) It’s very true. (To the audience with Carlo.)” (Dunlop 26). The reading of the lines may still seem lifeless, but something happens when performed. The inclusion of the audience seems to help add variety, and establish a relationship with them.

A few words from Frank Dunlop to further explain the vital relationship the audience plays in this production. “It’s very important for SCAPINO that the

audience feel actually involved, not detached, from it” the point is further illustrated, “I tell the actors generally not to notice the audience sitting beside the dock sipping their drinks. But sometimes they can choose to see them and mix them into the action (Dunlop 29). Although his words may seem contradictory, there is an emphasis placed on the word choose. He later delineates that the actors should not be seeing the audience as audience members, but as members of this dockside experience. By treating the audience in this way, the actor is not conscious of the spectators as paying customers that they have to entertain; instead they are the people who bear witness to the events that unfold at a Neapolitan café (Dunlop 21-30).

### **Commedia dell’arte**

The reason the story plays out in the ridiculous fashion it does is truly determined by the genre and style of the play. The play being adapted from Moliere’s attempt at the Italian form of comedy known as *commedia dell’arte*, still contains its roots. Dunlop confirms this stating the acting in *Scapino!*, “...historically is part of the fabric of Italian commedia dell’arte, an improvisational comic form on which Moliere based the tricks and jests of his Les Fouteries de Scapin” (Dunlop 22). *Commedia* is a performance technique that functions under several understood rules. These rules will be enumerated below as they pertain to performance, as discussed in John Rudlin’s book *Commedia dell’Arte an Actor’s Handbook* except where explicitly cited as otherwise.

According to Rudlin there are ten required elements when attempting to play *commedia*, or at least there are ten separate topics discussed under his chapter on



playing commedia. They include, staging, the scenario, non-improvised elements, Lazzi, improvisation, Grummelot, concerted playing, music, properties, and the stock characters. The following terms will now be applied respectively to the text of *Scapino!* in an attempt to further analyze the play from its Moliere conception.

### **Staging**

Staging as it pertains to commedia is the where and how of the performance. It is a rudimentary understanding of what is now understood in the world of theatre as the set, but also speaks to the way in which commedia is staged, or performed. Beginning with the where side of staging, Rudlin speaks of commedia being played outdoors on the platforms of the piazzas. The platforms were overly tall so as to provide a better view for all of the audience members who would all be standing at ground level. Atop this raised platform is a curtain of nearly seven feet high, which provides a background for the action of the performance, but is also short enough that characters are able to pop out from over the top. Rudlin finishes the description of staging explaining, "The basic locus of *commedia dell'arte* is a street, with either side of the stage conventionally representing a house...in indoor theatres these become set-pieces with a downstairs door, and an upstairs window...the change to an indoor setting can be indicated by the addition of a chair or a stool" (Rudlin 50). From Rudlin's description of how the where of a commedia performance takes place it is evident that it is an extremely minimalistic set, requiring no more than a raised platform and a curtain that inevitably is set up in view of the public. It is also of note that since these commedia performances

typically perform outdoors they are subject to any person who may be walking by at any moment (Rudlin 48-50).

The UND production provides its locus through the use of a set, which is constructed indoors. Without breaking down the concepts of set design, the set for *Scapino!* takes advantage of many of the nuances of the traditional commedia idea of staging. First, the stage that *Scapino!* is being performed on is in fact raised from the audience level, providing the opportunity for everyone to see. Second, in considering that the typical setting for commedia is a street, the play places its action on a dock outside of a café. This aligns with the idea of performance happening outdoors, even though the performance is indoors. Also the dock and the café help to create a feeling of the outdoor marketplace. The set also takes advantage of the curtain concept placing two buildings on the stage, one stage left, and one stage right. They not only serve to fulfill the curtain concept, but also feature dual levels including the ground door, and the upstairs window. In addition the upstairs of the buildings are fully functional, which allows the characters opportunities to appear above the other characters, much the way that the curtain was kept short enough for the commedia actors to appear above it.

The “how” of staging is mostly a reminder to the actors of what is required of them, Rudlin writes, “Incidentally, nobody ever speaks in a low voice in *commedia dell’arte*, except for stage whispering when called for by the scenario” (Rudlin 50). This makes it simple to surmise that the actor is supposed to use their full voice. The full voice is important, especially when performing outdoors to a crowd of standing spectators who could easily leave whenever they choose. Along with the

voice Rudlin speaks to the importance of how the movement is to be performed stating, “If you are using wooden rostra you will soon discover another basic law: Commedia is played with extreme lightness of foot – it is virtually an aerial form since nothing kills comedy more than the booming and clonking of feet on planks or rostrum lids” (Rudlin 50). Clearly the actor must be part athlete and have a great awareness of their body and how it functions in their environment.

### **The Scenario**

A scenario in terms of commedia is a way of structuring the performance. According to Rudlin a scenario often includes the three desires of money, love, and vengeance. These three desires are used as complications for the plot and are presented in a three-act structure. Each act should contain a proposition, a development, and a solution. Rudlin does not describe or define these terms, but common sense can draw similarities between them and standard play analysis terms. The proposition is analogous to the inciting incident, the development to the play’s rising action, and the solution to the play’s resolution. The entire three acts should not exceed two hours, including any time that would be allotted for music, or any added stage movement, and the scenes are separated into what are known as French scenes or are determined by the entrance and exit of characters (Rudlin 52). He concludes that the content may come in the form of “arranged marriages, masters beating servants, the ridiculing of old age, attempted sexual harassment, and other stocks-in-trade of the Renaissance aversive to contemporary sensibilities” (Rudlin 55). The scenarios seem to have an open ended quality that allows the

performers to play with the situations, as long as they include the basic rule enumerated above (Rudlin 51-55).

*Scapino!* as a text is steeped in this rich tradition of scenario based performance. What follows is a breakdown of *Scapino!* into its base scenario parts, divided by French scenes. Keep in mind that *Scapino!* is a two act play so the scenario will only be described in its relationship to two acts.

Act one Scene one: Ottavio and Sylvestro

Ottavio reveals to Sylvestro that his father has returned to Naples and is determined to marry him off to a daughter of Signor Geronte. Ottavio has married without the consent of his father, and Sylvestro is responsible because he was left in charge of Ottavio while his father Argante was away. Scapino enters and overhears Ottavio's plight. Giacinta enters and upon seeing the affection the lovers have for one another Scapino agrees to help and Giacinta and Ottavio exit (Dunlop 8-20).

This scene serves to set up the first of the three desires present in a commedia scenario, love. It also provides the proposition for act one, in which Scapino has been asked to help persuade Argante to allow the marriage of Ottavio to Giacinta. In addition the scene takes advantage of the arranged marriage motif that commedia scenarios are sometimes centered around.

Act one Scene two: Scapino and Argante

Argante enters having just arrived back home and is seeking out Sylvestro to uncover the business with his son. Sylvestro unable to speak to Argante relies on Scapino to solve his and Ottavio's problem concerning the unapproved marriage.

Scapino tricks Argante into believing that Ottavio was forced to marry Giacinta. All characters exit (Dunlop 21-31).

This scene serves the purpose of ridiculing old age, another of the story centers for commedia. It also establishes necessary exposition for the spectator in order to understand the relationships involved in the performance.

Act one Scene three: Argante and Geronte

Argante and Geronte meet up to discuss the repercussions of Ottavio's decision to marry without his father's consent. Argante divulges that Geronte's son Leandro has committed a similar treason as Ottavio. Geronte angry with Scapino who he has left to look after Leandro seeks out an explanation. Leandro enters and Geronte confronts his son for the slight on his families honor claiming that Scapino has told him everything of his marriage plans and Argante and Geronte exit (Dunlop 33-36).

This scene continues to provide exposition for further clarification of the plays major conflict. At this point the play has created a situation where two sons have decided to marry against their wishes to women who are not part of the fathers pre-arranged marriage plans. The scene also fuels Leandro and prepares him to seek vengeance, one of the three desires present in a commedia scene, on Scapino for ratting him out to his father.

Act one Scene four: Leandro

Scapino and Ottavio enter unaware of the information Leandro has recently received from his father. Leandro seeking vengeance on Scapino for telling Geronte the secret of his marriage intentions wants Scapino to admit his wrongdoing.

Scapino not knowing what Leandro is talking about seeks refuge in his escapist style. Carlo enters and reveals that gypsies are holding Zerbinetta, Leandro's love interest, hostage and won't part with her unless a monetary ransom is paid. Scapino quickly creates a plan for obtaining the money from the miserly fathers and everyone but Scapino exits (Dunlop 37-44).

This scene serves the scenario by introducing the desire of money. The moment that Carlo enters and introduces the new conflict of money the plot is furthered. Rudlin refers to this moment as the development. The money development will then become the problem which needs to be solved by the end of act one, and the marriages themselves will not come to solution until act two.

Act one Scene five: Scapino

Argante enters trying to solve the problem of his son's perceived forced marriage. Scapino manipulates Argante into paying him money so that the marriage can be dissolved. Argante willing to do anything to preserve his reputation in the city pays Scapino and exits (Dunlop 45-51).

This scene again shows the importance placed on the desire of money, while also serving to ridicule old age and miserliness. Scapino by conning the old man out of his money in this scene takes the first step toward moving the first act into solution.

Act one Scene six: Scapino

Geronte enters and Scapino who is angry with him for the lies he has told Leandro about him is out for vengeance. Scapino realizing that the money is a greater desire at the moment however begins to con Geronte out of the money

required to rescue Zerbinetta from the gypsies. Geronte falling for Scapino's slick words pays him the money and exits. Leandro and Ottavio enter and collect the much-needed money and all exit (Dunlop 53-58).

This scene is the solution to act one. The money has been raised to pay of the gypsies, and now the scenario is free to move into its second act. It is a scene that is characterized by money, vengeance, ridiculing of old age, and still bears the original conflict of arranged marriage.

Act two Scene one: Sylvestro, Giacinta, Zerbinetta

Scapino enters in time to overhear Zerbinetta having doubts about Leandro's love for her. Scapino with the intention of helping Leandro speaks on his behalf convincing her to stay the course. Giacinta having similar doubts about her marriage shares in Zerbinetta's sadness, but ultimately stays the course as well, then all but Scapino exit (Dunlop 63-66).

This scene is again filled with exposition, but from it the following things can be determined. Zerbinetta has been rescued from the gypsies and Scapino is still fighting on behalf of the boys for their matrimonial futures. This is also a scene which reintroduces the proposition from act one placing Scapino in direct conflict with the fathers, and still needing to exact his revenge on Geronte.

Act two scene two: Scapino and Geronte

Geronte enters inquiring about the safety of his son. Scapino ready to get his revenge on Geronte beats him mercilessly and then exits (Dunlop 67-72).

The scene is a backwards application of the master beating the servant, but since the scenario is comic in nature the beating works, especially in achieving

Scapino's vengeance. It all plays out for Scapino's advantage, and once again the elderly are ridiculed.

#### Act two Scene Three: Geronte

At differing moments all characters will enter. It is revealed by the Nurse that Giacinta is the daughter of Geronte, and therefore their marriage is allowable since it was the original intended marriage of Geronte and Argante. It also is revealed that Zerbinetta is the long lost daughter of Argante, which provides Geronte no option except to allow the marriage of Zerbinetta and Leandro. Meanwhile, Scapino has exited (Dunlop 72-78).

This is the scene that features act two's development. It comes in the form of two discoveries, which are the identities and relationships of the lovers, and the fathers. All things in the play have reached their respective solutions except for the fate of Scapino, whom the fathers want revenge against for the money that has been taken from them.

#### Act two Scene four: All but Scapino

Scapino enters with one last trick up his sleeve. He convinces everyone that he is on his deathbed and must be forgiven before he dies. The characters after realizing the happiness that they have achieved forgive Scapino, and all live happily ever after (Dunlop 78-83).

The scene is the final moment of the solution of the scenario. It resolves the plays major conflict, because the fathers no longer stand in the way of their children's marriages. Not only has the major conflict of the play been resolved, but all issues of money, vengeance, and love.



The scenario is an important portion of the commedia genre because it defines the plot without expressly detailing how the plot points are carried out. It is a documentation of the characters entrances and exits. It clearly lays out for the actor what actions they are to carry out and when, but leaves the performance of those actions up for interpretation. This is a perfect way to operate a scenario that functions with understanding that the performers will be acting through improvisation. For the purposes of the production at UND it is vital to see how the play is laid out structurally in order to understand how the play flows from one moment to the next. The scenario is not intended to be an in depth, or detailed account, simply a brief synopsis of French scenes (Rudlin 51-55).

### **Non-improvised Elements**

Many of the elements that work together to form commedia are not improvised. As the section on scenario has shown many things are fixed. Rudlin argues, “The amount of improvisation to be done in performance can be overestimated: all the exits, entrances etc. are fixed by the scenario and used to be gone through by the choregos or actor-manager (Italian *corago*)” (Rudlin 55). The best way to describe a corago is through the description offered by Andrea Perrucci,

The *corago*, the leader...the one most capable of instructing others, should rehearse...so that the actors are familiar with the content of the play, know where to conclude their speeches, and can explore in rehearsal some new witticism or new *lazzo*. The person in charge of the rehearsal does not restrict himself to just reading the scenario, but explains the names and qualities of the characters, the argument of the play, the location of the

action, the stage houses, the distribution of the *lazzi* and all the necessary details, taking care of props required for the play...as listed at the end of the scenario (Perrucci 205).

It is evident from this description that the corago is a combination director/stage manager and serves the function of keeping the scenario moving in the proper direction. This description also brings to life another set of non-improvised elements, the masks. The masks are important in commedia, as they are symbols of the stock characters they represent. The characters do not change in commedia; the scenario around the characters is what changes. The final non-improvised element discussed in Rudlin's book is the idea of what is termed *aparte* or asides. Rudlin maintains that certain characters are required to keep a continuous channel to the audiences open (Rudlin 55-57).

In the UND version of *Scapino!* the team of Ali Angelone and Sarah Lawler serve the function of corago or director/stage manager respectively. Angelone has gone to great lengths to choreograph the action of the play and dictate all of the entrances and exits, and so forth, while Sarah has diligently maintained a written record, or documentation of those directions. The cast with the guidance of Ali has created their characters as they pertain to the text of *Scapino* through a period of experimentation in rehearsal in which Ali is able to give feedback as to whether the actor's performance is coinciding with the play's scenario. In comparison with traditional commedia, the production at UND is more in the direction of non-improvised elements than improvised.

## **Lazzi**

Lazzi are moments of the play that are inspired by the action of the play, but not necessarily credited with furthering it. Luigi Riccoboni concludes, “in sum they [lazzi] are bits of uselessness which consist only in comic business invented by the actor according to personal genius” (Riccoboni 65). Since lazzi is essentially comic business it can readily show up throughout a scenario, and Rudlin insists that in order to perform the lazzi of commedia the actor must always be ready for the give and take that occurs with other actors during performance, because a commedia character must stay in the scene if they are called to do so (Rudlin 57-58).

*Scapino!* is chock full of lazzi, so much so that they are too numerous to mention here. In order to clarify how they occur in *Scapino!* the following example will be given. In the UND version of *Scapino!* the character of Sylvestro is eating something in nearly every scene he is a part of. His eating becomes a comic bit as the show goes on since he never seems to be eating the same thing twice. These are subtle changes that happen in performance. They are not expressly written into the script, but have become a part of the performance since the actor has created them. This is why they are referred to as lazzi. What worked for Jim Dale and Frank Dunlop is a record of what happened in their performance, but lazzi is, as Riccoboni states is invented by the actor according to personal genius.

## **Improvisation**

Rudlin only speaks briefly on the topic of improvisation, but conveys the idea that it is a constant search for form not content. To this end he informs, “The wine is no problem: it is the skin to put it in which is needed if the audience are to be able to

drink it. To change the metaphor, a foundation, once established, needs building on, not swapping for another” (Rudlin 59). This makes complete sense, improvisation is not about how many words are said, but how effectively those words tie up the objectives of a scene as laid out in the scenario. All of the characters on the stage are working together as an ensemble, and their improvisation must do the same.

(More on improvisation in Chapter 3 in discussing the rehearsal process.)

### **Grummelot**

Dario Fo is credited with using this technique a lot, but instead uses the term grummelot. Fo defines, “*Grummelot* means the onomatopoeic flow of a speech, articulated without rhyme or reason, but capable of transmitting with the aid of particular gestures, rhythms and sounds, an entire rounded speech” (Fo 36). Rudlin furthers the notion of onomatopoeic speech as a character first needs to speak but lacks of knowing what to say. It is the beginning of many improvisations for an actor first learning their character. Once actors are able to express themselves in what can only be imagined as baby talk, they will naturally graduate to spoken words. Later grummelot may be interjected into the scenes of scenarios when a character does not know what to say, which can have a comic effect in hectic situations (Rudlin 59-60)

The main instance in *Scapino!* where grummelot is used as discussed above is in the sack scene, or as it is labeled in the scenario Act two Scene two. The beating that Scapino gives Geronte occurs in a sack in the script. Scapino has invented many characters that are searching for Geronte, and pretending to help him he hides him in a sack. Scapino then portrays the different characters that are looking for

Geronte, while beating the old man in the sack. The grummelot comes most notably during the portrayal of a Japanese ninja. Since Scapino is not fluent in Japanese (nor is the actor playing him) it is left to grummelot to fill in the words that the ninja says. The text includes this in the stage directions as “Long “spiel” in stage Japanese al la Karate” (Dunlop 70). The actor is left to improvise the Japanese and in turn is connecting back to the Moliere roots of the show based in commedia.

### **Concerted Playing**

Rudlin describes concerted playing as a flea that gets passed around the members of the company. As a company member begins to laugh at the pain of another company member they are soon afflicted as well, and eventually it leads to all company members scratching. The description is provided as an acting exercise for the ensemble. It is clever because it helps to reinforce the idea that not only is the scenario affecting one performer, but all performers equally. There is not a performer who is more important in the playing of commedia. Carlo Mazzone-Clementi postulates,

The Commedia actor never works alone. His virtuoso excursions must never proceed from his own ego. There must be a constant awareness of the whole. He must know and understand his partners, balancing and contrasting them, working together with such sensitivity and unity that we are caught up in their game before we know what has happened. Nonsense is more important than sense...Trust and confidence, based on real, existing skills and knowledge of one another, must be present in a Commedia company. You are literally all in it together (Mazzone-Clementi 62-63).

It is apparent the amount of unity that is required by the ensemble to be able to work effectively together. This is true of the actors, and then becomes true of the characters in performance, as all of the stock characters must interact well with each other (Rudlin 60-61).

Scapino is a master of the idea of concerted playing. Often the stage directions, or the text itself plays into this fact. An example is during the spaghetti scene or what in the scenario is referred to as Act one Scene two. The way that Scapino is able to trick Argante into believing Ottavio was forced to marry Giacinta is through concerted playing. Scapino has involved the entire café in the ruse. There are waitresses bringing food and wine, and the bum Carlo is shining his shoes, all combined with the quick wit and tongue of Scapino. By the end Argante is not sure which end is up, but it is only due to the efforts of everyone involved. Scapino could not by himself trick Argante, and being intelligent he realizes this; therefore he involves everyone around him to participate.

### **Music**

Rudlin does not speak at length about music, but the few words he offers help to delineate the style of commedia. Rudlin offers, "It would be strange if an Italian performance genre did not have musicality: in fact it is best not to think of Commedia as being action and dialogue with interposed songs and musical interludes, but as being inherently musical and constantly on the brink of tipping over into operetta" (Rudlin 61). The style of the performance then is something that more accessibly can be compared to a musical. Understanding that there are

certainly differences between operetta and musical, but also exemplifying the heightened form of acting required.

Dunlop's script includes these musical interludes in his text. They were all set to music, which was played by the multi-talented Jim Dale. Angelone, however, has recreated many of these musical interludes. They now feature dance and the music has been updated to a more modern time period, but still Italian in style. These interludes are filled with lazzi and concerted playing, but also serve to build character relationships and move the story forward, much the way a song does in musical theatre today.

### **Properties**

The term properties, or props as they are more commonly called, were objects that were kept in stock and the actors always knew what they had in stock, and the comedic potential of each object. The list of stock objects was always included at the end of the scenario. Rudlin asserts, "Props should be as authentic as possible, not token or stagy. Objects should only be mimed in *commedia dell'arte* when speculating or fantasising" (Rudlin 61-62). Since props are true to form and determined by the scenario, an example of a few of the props that appear in *Scapino!* include but are not limited to, baguettes, sausage links, newspaper, chocolate bar, plate of spaghetti, etc. (More on props in chapter 2 under the topic of character analysis)

### **The Stock Characters**

There are many stock characters that appear in *commedia*. They are typically represented with a mask that determines the actions and life of the

characters. Rudlin in an attempt to clarify the term argues, “The critical point is that they are more stock than they are characters, cartoon figures, but by no means all drawn by the same artist” (Rudlin 62). It is plain to see that the stock characters are as diverse as the artist who plays them. It was also rare for one actor to take on multiple stock characters, but instead would master one and then pass the details and traditions of that stock character down to the next generation (Rudlin 62-63).

In sum, play analysis for *Scapino!* benefits from both the traditional Aristotelian analysis and from understanding the play’s commedia dell’arte roots. When the two are meshed together and set alongside the play’s creators Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale it becomes easier to understand why this play exists and how it is to be performed. The topic of Chapter Two is an in depth character analysis and will feature further description of how the stock character informs the text of *Scapino!*, and vice versa.



## CHAPTER II

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Character analysis is an extensive process. It starts with reading the script, and then is followed by reading the script. Typically by the third time reading through the script an actor can begin to wrestle away some useful information. The information that comes from these readings then is organized and used to develop a character's given circumstances, objective, and tactics. As a tool for reading the following definitions should help to demystify the actor jargon into something more accessible for the purpose of this thesis. The following terms are defined not specifically within the text of Mira Felner's *Free to Act*, but as conclusions based upon her text. They are not intended to be an extensive understanding of her acting theory, but rather provided as clarification for basic acting technique. The bulk of the character analysis will come from the analysis of the commedia character the Scapino and its relationship to the self-titled text. Given circumstances are defined as the undeniable facts given through the text regarding the action of the play. An objective is something a character wants, a goal (usually singular and covers the span of the play). Tactics are the multitude of ways a character goes about achieving their objective (typically expressed through action verbs). All of the acting theory is based on conclusions drawn from Felner except where specifically cited as otherwise (Felner).

## **Given Circumstances**

Since the given circumstances determine the world in which the play takes place, it is then necessary to begin here. Frank Dunlop sets the action of *Scapino!* at the seaport of Naples, in a dockside café bar. While it is not prudent to enhance the setting at all there are certainly many opportunities to create within the provided geographic location. For instance, knowing that the play is set dockside tells the actor that they are near a body of water. The café implies there is food nearby, and that there is a sense of public space. There is a smell of salt water and fresh baked bread in the air, and the characters of this production are living in Naples, the capital of the Italian region Campania, and the third largest municipality in Italy. It is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, and was also known for being severely bombed during World War II (Hazzard 2014).

Naples, meaning new city, is experiencing a period of rebuilding during this 1950's time period it has been set. There is nothing textually to place the play in the 1950's, but sometimes as an actor the facts of a play are given to you directly as decided upon by director and design team. Using this time period helps to fortify the text with some substance, because it gives the fathers a reason to be so blatantly frugal with their money. Economic despair and uncertainty of the future is reason enough for Argante and Geronte to hold tightly to everything they have earned. It also helps to provide Scapino with a solid foundation for the deceptions that he comes up with later in the text. It is far more likely that a Turkish gentleman would kidnap a man's son in a time of economic unrest than at a time of economic prosperity (Hazzard 2014).

The old men are considered miserly by everyone in the created world of Naples, and most likely align with a conservative viewpoint. Argante's conservative nature has caused him to force an arranged marriage for his son with Geronte's daughter. The short scene plays out on pages 33 and 34 of the script and it comes to light that not only does Geronte blame Ottavio for his brash decision, but also blames Argante for failing to educate his son properly arguing, "That if like a responsible father you had brought up your son properly he would not have played this trick on you" (Dunlop 33-34). The two continue to argue the follies of youth like grumpy old politicians and neither has sense enough to realize the hypocritical nature of their conversation. The scene devolves into Argante telling Geronte that he should not be so quick to criticize, even though that is exactly what he is doing to his own son. This helps to provide a political climate of conservative and liberal, which places the old men at the conservative end of the spectrum, and children at the liberal.

Ottavio and Leandro are at the liberal end of the spectrum because they are less preoccupied with money and economic stability and are more focused on matters of the heart. They are both desperately in love textually expressed for Ottavio; "No father shall make me break my word to you" (Dunlop 17). Then textually for Leandro; "I beg you to save my life in saving my love" (Dunlop 42). There is an inherent fear in the father son relationships that stem from respect. The fathers feel they have a position of power because of their standing within the city as financially well off, but are worried for their reputations within that city if their sons were to marry someone of lesser repute. The inability of the sons to confront

their fathers directly leads to the involvement of Scapino, who is easily placed in the role of bureaucrat, safely playing both sides in an attempt to achieve happiness for Ottavio and Leandro. Scapino wraps the circumstances of the play in so much red tape that even as it starts to untie itself at the top of act two when Sylvestro prods why Scapino must create trouble now that everyone appears to be happy, Scapino replies, "because it makes me happier still to risk my chance" (Dunlop 65). While political affiliations are not expressly written into the text the simple intimations help to illustrate the character relationships within the text, a sort of reading between the lines.

### **Objective**

An objective is a character specific term that allows the actor to discover the wants and needs of a character. It is typically written the form, "I want  (verb)   (receiver)   (desired response) " (Ball 92). A superobjective is singular, meaning that it stays constant throughout the play. It may be affected as the play goes on, and typically is at the climax of play. Without creating too much anxiety into how a superobjective works and is created, suffice it to say a superobjective is the main goal of a character. In the play *Scapino!*, Scapino operates under the superobjective, "I want to manipulate Argante and Geronte so that they will allow Ottavio and Leandro to marry whomever they choose." The wording is important in an objective because each part serves an important function.

First the objective should always be phrased from the point of view of the character. For example, instead of writing "Scapino wants," the objective should read, "I want". This allows the actor to personalize the role by allowing them to

identify with the character they are portraying (Felner 4). Second, the verb in the objective is vital to the performance of the character. The verb should be active, thereby providing the actor the ability to physicalize the role. It is difficult to act passive verbs such as “to explain” because the actor is trapped in their mind trying to figure out what to do physically. If the actor simply changes the verb to an active one, it frees them to engage with their scene partner rather than focus on what they are doing. In the example of “to explain” the actor could change the verb to “to convince.” In swapping the verbs the objective immediately becomes more active. It becomes more active because the verb “to explain” implies that it does not require the participation of another person to complete, whereas “to convince” requires another person in order to know if you have succeeded (Felner 122). Third, the objective needs a clear receiver, or person who is listening. A clear receiver is necessary because it helps the objective to remain active. If at any moment the objective becomes inactive the play and the energy come to a halt. The intention of the receiver is rooted in the natural give and take experienced between actors. The character of Scapino cannot talk at Argante; he must talk to Argante, only then is he aware that Argante is listening. When the receiver is listening then it is possible to gauge whether the desired response is being achieved (Felner 93-96). The final portion is the desired response or how the actor expects the receiver to respond. Desired responses are critical to the ongoing action of a play. When a desired response is not achieved the actor must try another means of getting what he/she wants, called a physical action, or known as tactics (Felner127).

Thinking back to the scenario provided in chapter one, objective will now be discussed in relation to act two as a means of providing a few examples. In Act two Scene one the aforementioned objective works for the action of the play because within the text Scapino is attempting to come up with a new way to manipulate Geronte mentioning, "At the moment I am trying to think up a little revenge on old Geronte" (Dunlop 65). In this instance Scapino though supposedly listening to the female love interests doubts about marriage, is still focused on the bigger picture of solving the quarrels with the fathers. Later in Act two scene two when Geronte comes to see how Scapino is fairing in rescuing his son, the objective is upheld by the text because the entire scene is the literal beating of Geronte. Scapino manipulates him by making him think that people are searching for him to murder him. Geronte asks why he should be locked up safe at home and Scapino answers, "Why, at this very moment, sir, they're searching everywhere to murder you" (Dunlop 67). The manipulation continues when Scapino acts out the different characters that have come to murder Geronte. It continues until Geronte finally realizes the trick that is being played on him.

### **Tactics**

Tactics are all of the ways a character goes about achieving their objective. Tactics also should be phrased, at least in their creation with the same structure as objectives. Some will begin to break scenes into units and create objectives for each scene, but this would be an intellectual exercise, rather than a character one. These intellectual exercises are a great way to help the actor understand the psychology of a character, but since *Scapino!* is a light hearted comedy more will be gained from

the analysis of his stock character later. Using the objective created for Scapino, “I want to manipulate Argante and Geronte so that they will allow Ottavio and Leandro to marry whomever they choose” it can then be applied universally to the different character interactions that occur on stage.

The tactics, which are based on the given circumstances and are created with the intention of achieving the objective, then are capable of revealing to the actor who the character is. Since the scenes in *Scapino!* are largely repetitive it could become laborious to break down every single tactic used throughout the play, but for the purposes of character analysis the spaghetti scene or Act one Scene two. The following is an example of how tactics are created over the course of a play, but again with the frivolous nature of *Scapino!* more is understood from the analysis of the stock character, than from his psychology. Before this can be completed however, it is necessary to define the use of another term, beat. A beat is an area of the script where the tactic changes. Tactics change textually because the tactic currently being used is not achieving the objective and the character decides to attempt another route to achieving the objective (Felner 127).

The spaghetti scene happens early on in the production and is also the first time the character of Argante is seen. In the scene Scapino must confuse Argante so that he will allow Ottavio to be married to Giacinta. With this in mind, and the objective previously created, the spaghetti scene can now be scored for tactics.

(Stage directions have been removed at the director’s request)

The scene begins with Scapino exchanging pleasantries with Argante. The tactic reads, “I want to embrace Argante so that he will trust me” (Dunlop 22). If Scapino

can gain Argante's trust he is then capable of confusing him, which ties the tactic back to the objective. The tactic has the potential to work because Scapino, although a trickster who has had several legal mix-ups in the past, is also the servant of Leandro. This makes him essentially family provided Ottavio marries Geronte's daughter as was agreed.

The tactic changes when Argante angrily continues to rant, "A son to get married without the consent of his father" (Dunlop 23-24). Since Argante is not embracing Scapino, he does not completely trust him, therefore, it is not possible to effectively confuse him. This is where the beat is placed, and Scapino's next line is a new tactic that reads, "I want to coddle Argante so that he will trust me." This continues for sometime and includes Scapino calling members of the wait staff to help with the deception. The ability of Scapino to manipulate all of the people around him is a testament to his reputation in the city. Not only is Scapino a double dealer, he is a loved member of the community. The coddling results in Argante being prepared for his spaghetti dinner complete with bib around his neck, napkin in his lap, shoeshine at his feet, and utensils placed into each hand.

Argante is still angry at the notion of his son getting married without his consent, but he is starting to show signs of weakness, he is beginning to ask questions. Argante asks, "What kind of clever double-talk is this? There's nothing wrong in getting married ...point blank...to a stranger" (Dunlop 25)?

This marks another beat in the action and Scapino changes tactic once more, knowing he has Argante on the ropes, and that he is about to trust him. The new tactic reads, "I want to convince Argante that Ottavio had no choice in the marriage.



If Argante can be successfully convinced his son was forced to marry he will accept the marriage, and in turn be successfully confused, thus achieving the objective.

Scapino like a fisherman begins feeding Argante the bait, in this case spaghetti bread and wine. The tactic reads the same throughout the feeding and eating, but the tactic changes physically from the feeding of bread, an appetizer, to the feeding of spaghetti, main course, and the drinking of wine, just before one final forkful of spaghetti for good measure. The eating that takes place moment to moment coincides with the lines of the text adhering to the earlier notion of *Scapino!* not being felt, but choreographed.

### **Commedia and Scapino**

There are many knowledgeable facts to be garnered out of the more traditional character analysis written above, but the heart of the character of Scapino comes from his stock character. Rudlin describes the character in brief, and what follows is a recounting of that description. Scapino is derived out of the word *scappare*, which means to flee or escape. His type is known for playing a great number of instruments and is thought to have grown out of the stock character Brighella as a handyman. The character is famous for his wiry frame that allows for his cowardly escapes, which are light-footed. Rudlin furthers elucidates, "A bird. In temperament Scapino is very like a starling. He skims away, swoops back, twitters and warbles, pilfers right and left, flies off, but never fails to return" (Rudlin 148). Rudlin continues his analysis of Scapino using the topic headings of relationships, plot function, and characteristics, which are to be the basis for the character analysis (Rudlin 147-148).

## **Relationships**

This topic heading is completely deferred to Duchartre who writes, He is as amorous as birds in spring, and for him it is spring the whole year round. He deserves some credit for his modesty, for he is not an amorous Don Juan in his amours: he invariably prefers make off with a servant-girl rather than a king's daughter. He falls in love for the sheer joy of it, and, like a bird, flits from one love to another, never becoming deeply involved and always obeying every impulse that enters his flighty head (Duchartre 166).

From Duchartre's comment many observations about Scapino in *Scapino!* can be made. First, the idea of it always being spring, which has long been associated with lovers, helps to explain why Scapino is inclined to help secure marriage vows for Ottavio and Leandro. Scapino himself is amorous in his endeavors, albeit in a more promiscuous fashion. In addition, understanding that Scapino functions on gut reaction illuminates why he is so quick to meddle in the affairs of others. The text requires Scapino to work to save two separate marriages, which supports the idea of him flitting from one love to another, even if they are not his own. Scapino also interacts with the waitresses in the show and from time to time makes a friendly pass, always in a playful manner.

## **Plot Function**

The plot function of Scapino is so basic, Rudlin dedicated only one sentence to it stating, "Schemes against old men for the sake of money, revenge, or both" (Rudlin 148). The comparisons at this point are obvious, and shall be explicated below in terms of scheming for money, and scheming for revenge.

## **For Money**

In Act one Scene five Scapino tricks Argante out of two hundred thousand lire. This happens initially on what appears to be a whim, as Ottavio requires no money to secure his marriage. Scapino at this point is simply acting on impulse, as he knows that he has a ruse planned in which Sylvestro is to play the thug brother of the girl Ottavio married. Scapino describes Sylvestro's character exclaiming,

He's one of these roughnecks, one of these toughs who stand on street corners poking people on the nose, beating them with chains, talking about nothing but punching and slashing and shooting, standing there with cut-throat razors waiting for streakers, and thinks no more of killing a bloke than drinking a glass of wine (Dunlop 45-46).

This short passage shows the lengths of Scapino's imagination. It is truly stream of consciousness and could sound improvised to an audience. The only proof of its correctness is Dunlop's script. In fact, Jim Dale, was often accused of simply improvising lines. Dunlop asserts, "There should be no improvisation in front of the audience...Even those SCAPINO speeches of Jim Dale's which sound like spontaneous remarks are actually set...Jim just makes them sound impromptu" (Dunlop 13). By the end of the scene Scapino has used Sylvestro to play this ruffian and convinces Argante that he can pay off the thug in order to dissolve the marriage. Scapino is quick witted, and in the next scene gets money from the other old, miserly father

In Act one Scene six, Scapino is able to acquire five hundred thousand lire from Geronte. In this scene Scapino has a plan for the money he is able to get out of

Geronte. It is to go toward paying the ransom to the gypsies who have Zerbinetta. Scapino working quickly from impulse once again creates a story to fool Geronte.

Scapino begins,

There we were admiring the boats...when up came a young fellow Turkish he was...shook us by the hand and invited us on board...while we were eating and drinking, he ordered that the boat to put to sea...he threw me overboard...and sent me to tell you that if you don't send him by return by me five hundred thousand lire he'll kidnap your son and sail him off to Algiers (Dunlop 53).

In this story the embellishment has been excluded in order to preserve the facts. From this story Geronte discerns that he must pay the Turkish fellow in order to save his son from death. Scapino collects the money and then later hands it to Leandro, but Scapino says, "On one condition. That you allow me a little revenge on your father" (Dunlop 58). Scapino, although he wants to help the Leandro, cannot deny his base instincts, which are to scheme against old men for money and in this case revenge. The revenge he executes on old Geronte is the next scene to be discussed

### **For Revenge**

In Act two Scene two, Scapino exacts his revenge on Geronte. This scene serves not other purpose in the play except to function as Scapino's revenge. It is elaborate, but not overly well thought out. Scapino upon seeing Geronte starts to persuade him of the peril he faces from friends of the thug brother of the girl Ottavio married. There is added humor in this scene because that thug brother would

technically be Leandro, a lover, since Geronte is the father of Leandro and Giacinta, the girl Ottavio married. When Geronte understands the danger he is in, Scapino invents a way to rescue him, but tells him, "First you must get into that sack" (Dunlop 69).

The sack is a prop from the commedia stockpile that has long been associated with Scapino. Rudlin informs that Scapino carried "a *zanni*-style porter's sack, a sort of swagbag which he carries at all times in case of opportunity" (Rudlin 148). Dunlop does not include the sack as a prop that Scapino has with him at all times, but does however invent the means for it to appear onstage at the moment Scapino needs it. The stage directions read, "(Enter WAITER 1 from café, carrying a large sack)" (Dunlop 66). The stage directions continue and describe a scene of *lazzi* in which Scapino tricks the waiter out of the sack admitting that he/she is not Scapino's equal. This reunites the commedia character with his most recognizable of commedia props and the scene continues.

Geronte now hidden within the confines of the sack is beaten in many different ways by many different characters. The scene is an excellent example of grummelot as discussed earlier, *lazzi* as the sack scene is inspired by the events of the production but do not necessarily drive the story forward, and improvisation. On the topic of improvisation Dale recounts, "I love improvising, but I'm only allowed two instances in SCAPINO...The first time is when I'm onstage with another actor in a sack" (Dunlop 41). The improvisation is only in the attempt to exact the necessary revenge on Geronte that Scapino so craves. In fact the grummelot, the

lazzi and the improvisation are all the inspiration of Scapino's revenge. They serve not only to that end, but are wonderful throwbacks to the Italian commedia form.

### **Characteristics**

Rudlin, in providing the characteristics present in the stock character Scapino, reminds that Scapino is a liar by instinct. He does not operate in a logical world and is concerned more with how he can make a buck. He is a master of making confusion out of everything he undertakes, and his lies are typically of little importance (Rudlin 148). Barry Grantham in his book *Playing Commedia* offers the additional comment, "He [Scapino] flees from danger, he evades the consequence of his misdeeds, he eludes the object of previous romantic entanglements, to embark on yet more escapades" (Grantham 238). There are many conclusions to be drawn about the character of Scapino from these basic characteristics. Scapino is a liar, he is out to make money, and in the end escapes all consequence. These are the final discussion points for character analysis.

### **A Liar**

Scapino tells so many lies because he is always thinking on his feet and is never given the opportunity to make a legitimate strategy. He is content however to try anything, evidenced by his proclamation, "Look I've never been stopped by danger. I just can't stand those boasters who are so busy working out the risks they are going to take, they don't take any" (Dunlop 66). Here it is seen that Scapino is prone to take on risk blindly, but more than that he welcomes that risks, and cannot understand why anybody else would not do the same.

There is one lie in particular that drives the story of Scapino forward. Earlier Rudlin explained that Scapino's lies are usually of little importance, but in this instance it is vital to the plot. Scapino as a stock character according to Rudlin is one of the lesser know masks and is classified under other masks in his book. Since the plot *Scapino!* revolves around Scapino and his web of deceit, his lies have to be of consequence. Rudlin infers, "Moliere's Scapin in *Les Fourberies de Scapin* is perhaps slightly too 'heavy'" (Rudlin 148). The weight placed on Scapino's lies by Moliere, and indeed by Dunlop is a natural progression from improvisation to written play. A written play cannot leave to chance that the conflict will resolve itself in the same way that an improvised scene can.

The lie that drives the story forward is introduced in Act one Scene two, the spaghetti scene. Scapino tells Argante that Geronte's son Leandro has committed a worse atrocity than his son Ottavio. Scapino argues, "Now take our Leandro, for example...in spite of all I've taught him, in spite of all my remonstrances, has gone and done worse than your son" (Dunlop 26). At this point in the script Scapino has not encountered Leandro or Geronte and is not privy at this point to the mess Leandro has created. That does not come out until later in the chase scene in Act one Scene four.

This lie shows up again later in Act one Scene three when Argante and Geronte meet. Geronte opens the scene by accusing Argante of raising his son poorly, but Argante has the false information up his sleeve to use against Geronte. When Geronte learns of his son's escapade, he seeks him out. Upon finding him, Geronte uses Scapino's original lie to get information out of Leandro, who in turn

blames Scapino for divulging information to his father, which is played out in the chase scene. Scapino, having not even spoken to Geronte at this point is legitimately confused and does not know what Leandro is talking about until they work their differences out over the course of the chase scene. It is the lie that perpetuates the story, and in this case Scapino's lie carries weight.

### **Money**

While Rudlin discusses how Scapino is out to make money for himself, that does not play out as the case in the play *Scapino!*. Scapino's relationship to money within the context of the play is purely to help Ottavio and Leandro with their fathers. This is function of the fact that Scapino is also not pursuing his own amours. The amours belong to the boy's, and therefore the money does as well. As discussed earlier, Scapino is serving as protagonist on behalf of the son's and in that respect; the son's desires become Scapino's as well. This is again because of the transformation from improvisation to written form. Since *Scapino!* is a written text, the details of the scenario are more clearly expressed than they would be in improvisation. Money then is a desire of Scapino's, but only in as much as it serves to help Leandro and Ottavio.

### **Escape Artist**

Scapino is the ultimate escape artist. Whether it is escaping from the sack scene unscathed, or fleeing the bill at the café, there is no escape as grand as the one that occurs at the end of *Scapino!*. Scapino manages to obtain forgiveness from both of the father's and all he has ever offended. He accomplishes this by faking his own death. Scapino enters with his head bandaged, and the ensemble gathers around



him as he begs on his deathbed for forgiveness. It could easily be argued that this scene contains the theme of *Scapino!* unconditional forgiveness, which Scapino is able to obtain just as the play comes to an end. In a last moment of audience inclusion Geronte asks the audience if he should forgive Scapino, and at that moment hopefully Scapino has developed enough of a rapport with the audience that they will spare his life.

Upon the completion of this character analysis it is now understood that the traditional understanding of protagonist and antagonist is not sufficient in understanding the character of Scapino. Further, the role is not completely defined by its commedia stock character, nor is it completely understood from traditional acting methods. Only in the marriage of all of this information is the complete character of Scapino embodied. It is necessary to understand the commedia roots in order to see how the character functions at a visceral level, the acting method helps to demystify the characters intellectual psyche, and the combination of traditional play analysis and commedia scenario analysis inform how the script came into its current existence. This coupled with the real life accounts of Frank Dunlop and Jim Dale have brought about the role of Scapino.

### CHAPTER III

#### REHEARSAL

Rehearsals from the first day were frenetic, fast paced, and extremely physical. Since this third chapter is a response to the work completed in the rehearsal process, it will be necessary from time to time to reference experiences from the first person, in order to protect clarity. A typical first rehearsal, or at least a typical first rehearsal for the shows I have been in previous include some form of read through of the script, or some explanation of where the production is heading. This portion of rehearsal is generally speaking laboriously, and unfocused from my previous experiences. Ali, the director, chose instead to begin working on stage from the beginning, which is perfect for this style of show. The script itself has little to offer from a simple reading, and since the show requires a precision in physical movement, this method is the most logical. Physicalizing from the start has provided the ensemble ample opportunity to perfect certain choreography.

With a play like *Scapino!* it is difficult for the homework that was previously discussed in chapter two to benefit the actor, at least in physicality. This is probably why Dunlop was so adamant that a traditional actor would not necessarily be a good fit for this production. The choreography of the production is painted onto the actor in the beginning stages of rehearsal, and then it is the actor's duty to justify that

choreography. This may seem backward to some, but this was the experience I had in creating the role of Scapino. In some cases I was given strict and specific choreography that my lines had to fit exactly with as in the case of what I will refer to as the “no scene” since there are no specific scenes in *Scapino!*. In this scene the word “no” is repeated several times in fast repetition by several characters. Each time the word “no” is repeated it is followed by a movement. These movements are precise and exact, meaning the movement dictates the intention of the line, rather than the text. This is merely one example of such a moment, but suffice it to say that when Jim Dale says, “It’s [SCAPINO] made up of ten-thousand moments. If we drop all of these moments, we’re left with nothing. Nothing” (Dunlop 40) it is entirely true. The moments of pure actor movement are what our rehearsals have been staged and focused on.

This does not however mean that we have ignored the text. Daily in rehearsals Angelone is harping on the cast for enunciation, and pronunciation of words. She is creating the world that we must live in, but we must find a way to match our vocal intention to our physical intention. Rehearsals have been a struggle for me in this respect because Scapino has a brain that works faster than most, and since I am playing Scapino my brain must also work just as fast. The trap I have been falling into is that since my brain is processing information more quickly, it makes me speak at a near unintelligible speed. Angelone mentioned to me it is not that you are not enunciating, it is that you are speaking so fast nobody will be able to process what you are saying. This state of confusion is what Scapino is creating for

the father characters, but it cannot be the state that the audience is in, and as a result I am forcing myself to slow the rate of speed at which I speak.

Rehearsals have been a time for experimentation, but as technical runs are nearing much of the show is now set. This means that there is no longer room for improvisation. The movement is so precise that if someone were to improvise at this point it could throw the entire production off, or worse result in serious injury. Interestingly enough Jim Dale has much to offer on the topic of improvisation and it boils down to this statement, "It's not fair to improvise on stage. Oh, I can improvise any time, but I don't" (Dunlop 41)! This again has detracted from the creation of an objective and tactics in advance of rehearsal, because it has been the rehearsal process that has dictated the objective and the tactics.

For instance, in rehearsal we were working on a scene in which Scapino is attempting to con Geronte out of five hundred thousand lire. During this scene there is a section where both Geronte and Scapino say the line, "What the devil was he doing on board that boat" (Dunlop 57)! Nick who plays Geronte, an excellent actor, was missing the humor and continuing to say the line freely with whatever he was feeling emotionally. The line is funny because he has said it so many times by this point that everyone including the audience knows exactly what and how he is going to say it. Phil Killian, an American actor who took over the role of Geronte claims, "Once you know it is physically right, you can recreate it. That's the technical part. It's not: 'I feel it's emotionally right.' You may not get that feeling next time. You have to know it with your body, know that it's right, and then you can recreate

it eight times a week” (Dunlop 72). Our rehearsal process has been an exercise in proving this point.

The physical nature of *Scapino!* has led to several injuries in rehearsal most notably to Chris, who plays the role of Carlo, a street bum. He sprained his ankle early on in rehearsals, and has been doing his best to keep up while his foot is in a boot. I myself am currently dealing with shin splints that are incredibly painful. Some might question our sanity to keep showing up to rehearsal, a place where the common phrase, “Is anything or anyone broken?” and “Are you bleeding?” have been common phrases. Jim Dale during the run of his version of *Scapino!* broke a bone in his heel during the first act, he completed the show, and because of the pain he was feeling he was inspired to create the role of Long John Silver during the infamous “sack scene.” He is quoted as saying, “If you slip, as I’ve done, unbeknown to the audience, you have just torn your shin from ankle to knee. But they don’t see that – and they shouldn’t” (Dunlop 42)! His words and energetic spirit are a testament to the dedication and respect he has for his craft. Not to mention it makes the bumps and bruises we experience in rehearsal feel infinitely more tolerable. After all, the work we put in to *Scapino!* today will never be known, but an audience who sees the finished product will have an opportunity to enjoy our blood, sweat, and tears.

There has been nothing traditional about the creation of *Scapino!*. It has been tiresome, and required massive amounts of effort that can never be seen or truly respected by anyone who was not involved. This is a testament to the ensemble that has been created through the process. As we near our technical rehearsals, our

director Angelone has requested that everyone be present from beginning to end, even though some characters do not appear until the second act. She has reinforced within the cast that each of us is part of an ensemble. Hopefully the idea that there is no star of this production is taken seriously. As it has been stated numerous times this is not a show about the lines, or who has them, but about the story that is communicated.

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