



The Venetian Origins of the Commedia dell'Arte

By Peter Jordan



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The Venetian Origins of the Commedia dell'Arte is a striking new enquiry into the late-Renaissance stirrings of professional secular comedy in Venice, and their connection to the development of what came to be known as the Commedia dell'Arte. The book contends that through a symbiotic collaboration between patrician amateurs and plebeian professionals, innovative forms of comedy developed in the Venice region, fusing 'high' and 'low' culture in a provocative mix that had a truly mass appeal.

Rich with anecdotes, diary entries and literary – often ribald – comic passages, Peter Jordan's central argument has important implications for the study of Venetian art, popular theatre and European cultural history.

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Review

'Peter Jordan has, in *The Venetian Origins of the Commedia dell'Arte*, written a impeccable, funny, learned and extremely well-documented book. Jordan was for many years the head of Acting at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and has thirty years of experience in European theatres as actor, composer, musician, director and translator.' *Angelo Paratico, Asian Review of Books*

'[*The Venetian Origins of the Commedia dell'Arte*] is a successful infusion of practical experience into research which is based on solid academic criteria...This book is thoughtful, comprehensive, and based on a full direct acquaintance both with archival sources and with recent scholarship...Jordan's arguments provide genuine food for thought, and direct our attention more firmly to facts which cannot be overlooked.' *Richard Andrews, Modern Language Review*

'Peter Jordan is the first scholar to take up the "origin" challenge in years, and he rises nicely to the challenge in his important, interesting, and persuasive book...which makes a vital contribution to commedia dell'arte studies.' *Robert Henke, Renaissance Quarterly*

About the Author

Dr Jordan has been a theatre practitioner for over thirty years, touring throughout Europe and elsewhere, performing in English, Italian and Cantonese. He was a founder member of the Fortunati and an actor with TAG Teatro of Venice. He has variously acted in, directed and translated plays by Goldoni, Ruzante, Molière, Marivaux and Shakespeare. As an instructor, he has worked at a number of leading drama schools and universities, and was for many years Head of Acting at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Apart from his acting and directing credits, his professional portfolio also includes fight direction, movement choreography, script development, musical performance and composition. His productions have toured to Canada and Australia. In recent years, he directed and composed for award-winning versions of *Les Misérables*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit*, as well as directing the world premiere of *Ho Chi Minh in Hong Kong*.

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