The Servant of Two Masters revolves around a wild cast of characters who will do anything to get what they want in the funniest ways! There’s Alrecchino—and all he wants to do is eat a good dinner. So he decides to work for two masters to try to get twice the food but he can’t let them know it. Then Beatrice who arrives in town dressed up like a man and pretending to be her brother in order to make money and find her true love. Of course that’s a problem for Clarice who used to be engaged to Beatrice’s brother...As the plot and characters get more complicated and tangled, hijinks and hilarity ensue in this classic Italian comedy.
Warning

The Show features sword fights, violence, and talk of suicide.
Marco Luly

Marco Luly is a renowned practitioner of Commedia dell’Arte and is the Founder of the Theatre Company Luoghi dell’Arte, a remarkable theatre company based in Rome, Italy, and dedicated to the practice of Commedia dell’Arte, one of the world’s primary theatrical art forms. Commedia is a very physical, comedic theatrical form which originated in Italy in the 16th century and is characterized by large physicality, innovative masks, and stock characters. Commedia remains an influential theatrical form today in that many of Commedia’s characters, scenarios, and physical humor can be seen in contemporary films, Saturday Night Live, and countless TV sitcoms including Seinfeld and others.

All theatre students learn about Commedia in history classes, but very few American students have the experience of physically learning this magnificent art form in person with a master. Also, very few American audiences have the opportunity to enjoy the delightful comedy of one of the world’s most important theatrical forms, and a Commedia-inspired production at Butler University would be unique for Indianapolis audiences.
The title, *Commedia dell'arte* ("Comedy of Art" or "Comedy of the profession"), means unwritten or improvised drama, and implies rather to the manner of performance than to the subject matter of the play. This peculiar species had a long life in Italy, probably of about four hundred years (from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century); but it flourished especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Of course in actual practice the play was not, in any sense, the result of the moment’s inspiration. The subject was chosen, the characters conceived and named, their relations to one another determined, and the situations clearly outlined, all beforehand. The material was divided into acts and scenes, with a prologue. The situations were made clear, together with the turn of action and the outcome of each scene. When this general outline (called also scenario or canvas) was satisfactorily filled out there was left an opportunity for actors to heighten, vary, and embellish their parts as their genius might suggest. The necessity for smoothness, constant surprise, clearness, and wit called forth histrionic abilities which had been unknown to the medieval stage. The Commedia dell’arte introduced the professional actor into Europe.

**Full History**
Classics in a Contemporary World

Classics are still being performed on stage and read in classrooms today but keeping them relevant and interesting is a challenge.

The options for staging classics seem to fall in three main choices:

• Staging it historically and with the text
  • (think full out Shakespearean)
• Maintaining the classical text but setting it in a contemporary setting
  • (think R+J with Leonardo DiCaprio)
• Or changing the dialogue or even plot points to make it entirely contemporary
  • (She’s the Man is based of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night)

Discuss:

• Why do you think classics are contemporized?
• Which method do you like the best?
• Why is there a need to still see and learn about the classics?
Theatre and Language

Art is something that can transcend the barriers of language. Whether it is visual art, dance, or theatre. Every summer students from Butler head to Moscow, Russia where they experience theatre in an entirely different culture and language yet they still are moved and comprehend it.

Discuss:

• Why do you think art can transcend language and cultural barriers?
• Why do you think art is important in most cultures?
• Why is it important to experience art of different cultures?
• How can we relate this to other problems in the world?
Other Resources

Check out some other amazing study guides for more information and activities:

BYU study guide

Yale Rep study guide

Utah Festival study guide
Butler Theatre

Butler Theatre focuses on creating well rounded artists that will pursue their own path. They produce four mainstage productions a year and every other year welcome an international artists like Marco Luly to direct one of their productions. They encourage well-rounded liberal arts education and student initiated work. For more information check out the website or contact Butler Theatre Chair Diane Timmerman.
Now that You’ve Seen the Show...

- What was your favorite part?
- How does this relate to curriculum?
- What new questions do you have?
- Did it give you any ideas?
- Now, why do you think it is important to produce the classics?
- What did you learn about Commedia, seeing it on stage?
Thank you for experiencing a live performance with us at the Butler Arts Center! We want to make sure your visit is educational, engaging, and entertaining for you and your students.

For additional information about this matinee performance and upcoming events at the Butler Arts Center, visit [www.butlerartscenter.org](http://www.butlerartscenter.org)

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